Gillette's Controversial Advertisement: A Content Analysis on Commercializing Social Issues
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Introduction

On January 13th , 2019 Gillette released an advertising campaign highlighting the responsibility men have to stand up against bullying, sexual harassment, and sexism. The campaign aligns with the #MeTooMovement, by exposing the toxic masculinity present in their previous advertisements as well as in other media. Gillette currently dominates the male personal-care product industry, holding over half of the global market share for razors (Tiffany, 2018). Is Gillette recognizing their social responsibility or are they catering to Millennials to stay competitive?

Gillette is a 117-year-old brand that was created by King C. Gillette. King's patent was granted for the 'safety razor' in 1904. He opened The Gillette Safety Razor Company in South Boston, and although his sales started off steady, they peaked in WWI after the US Government ordered 3.5 million razors to issue to soldiers (Mulreany, n.d.). After the troops returned home, the ex-service men became loyal customers and continued to buy Gillette products. The brand went through a lot after the passing of King Gillette in 1932, including diversifying products in 1936 with the introduction of Gillette shaving cream, purchasing Paper Mate Co. in 1955, having a rivalry with Bic, paying $188.5 million for Oral-B Laboratories in 1984, and much more history. Gillette remained competitive by evolving their products as consumer demand changed (Mulreany, n.d.). Although their past financial decisions deemed successful, their taste in advertisements have not always been the most progressive.

The brand released an advertisement campaign on social media in January. It included a video that they called a short film, a website, and a donation of a million dollars pledged for the next three years. After the video was released on Twitter, users responded in an uproar of

differing opinions. An oppositional stance was taken by people who felt Gillette was trying to 'emasculate' men. Others directed their frustration at the hypocrisy of the situation because of Gillette's long standing advertisements based on the over-sexualization of women in order to sell products. An overarching question was determining whether Gillette had attained some social responsibility and was rebuking their previous offenses, or using the current political climate to entice a younger generation to buy more Gillette branded razors. Many of those who supported Gillette felt the progressiveness of the statement overshadowed the consumerist-based reality. It may take a brand that holds a stake in men's products to shift popular culture, to make it 'cool' to be respectful to women, and break the repeated toxicity perpetuated by brands.

In 2018, Forbes ranked Gillette #32 on their World's Most Valuable Brands list, valuing it at $17.1 billion ("Gillette on the Forbes," 2018). Their legacy has shaped what it means to shave, and has been one of the leaders in creating different ways to do so. During the Superbowl in 1989, Gillette released an ad claiming the slogan for the first time, "The Best A Man Can Get" (Gillette Co., 2003). The ad asks, "Is this the best a man can get?" to challenge their brand slogan. The ad shows images of young boys fighting and an army of dads on the grill repeating, "boys will be boys" repeatedly. There is a scene of a male-dominated conference room, and after the only woman in the room speaks, a condescending boss touches her on the shoulder and exclaims, "I think what she was trying to say is…" (See Figure 1 in Appendix A) All of these encounters are a reality for many women, and that is why analyzing the public's response to this commercial is important. It is also interesting to get the reaction of people from Twitter because that platform is known for its open, opinionated users.

Researching this advertising campaign is important because it speaks to a larger social issue. How many times have you heard, "boys will be boys" to explain seemingly 'harmless' violence amongst young males. Companies are recognizing their impact in popular culture and are owning their misogynistic past to better their future. With the eruption of the #MeTooMovement, women are coming forward to speak against sexual harassment, and are holding men accountable. Whether this is a marketing ploy, or a progressive ad campaign, Gillette and many others are rebranding to break those long-held stereotypes. With this study, I will gauge the public's reaction, and see how people respond to marketing campaigns that use controversial social issues to further their brand.

Literature Review

In order to identify gaps in existing research, this study explored literature in three main theoretical and applied areas of research: controversial branding, advertising masculinity, activism in social media. These themes were chosen to explore past research that can relate to the Gillette advertisement, while taking into account the dialogue that erupted after its release. Included below are case studies, social media movements, examples of impactful advertisements, and much more.

Controversial Branding

There have been previous attempts by brands to culminate buzz through controversial campaigns. By commenting on any social issue, it already creates a dichotomous reaction by separating those who agree and those who disagree. Pepsi wanted to advertise unity while there

was much animosity in the media, but while the message seemed positive, it received much backlash on social media (Taylor, 2017). The campaign was designed to show the power of youth to combat social issues such as racism and police brutality. The commercial starring Kendall Jenner depicted her finding her way to the front of an organized rally, and the crowd rejoiced as she handed a police officer a can of Pepsi (See Image 2 in Appendix A). Consumers went to Twitter to offer their opinions about Pepsi using a social movement such as Black Lives Matter in an ad. Martin Luther King Jr's youngest daughter tweeted, "If only Daddy would have known about the power of #Pepsi." She was clearly upset that Pepsi made the simple exchange of a cold beverage the answer to ending racism in America. Just like Pepsi, Gillette's ad seemed to over-simplify hegemonic masculinity, with the answer being 'just be a better person'. The question presides, "Is this a brand feeling empowered to exercise social responsibility? Or aligning with a social movement for profit?"

While Pepsi apologized for their ad, there was no further action. This was not the case for the United Kingdom when they banned Tourism Australia's ad. The slogan, "Where the bloody hell are you?" was used by Tourism Australia to inspire more visitors. It was covered by press all over the world not only for its blunt phrase, but because a bikini-clad model was included. Kerr, Mortimer, Dickinson, and Waller (2012) conducted a content analysis, and analyzed 200 blogs. The study found that 64.5% of bloggers were well informed about the advertisement. Due to the fact that it was banned made it controversial, so does that initiate a higher awareness? The bloggers in this study felt they were informed about the advertisement because of what they read online. In addition, as each person interprets a message, one could influence another. This study

leaves us with many remaining questions like: who decides what content is considered controversial? Are people more aware of content when it is deemed controversial?

A question brands should ask themselves, as well, is if consumers want a brand to have an opinion. An experiment surveyed 306 Egyptians on their attitudes toward advertising using ethical issues. In their findings, the respondents showed concerns involving morality, culture, and deception (Mostafa, 2011). An interesting measure was taken to ensure an unbiased answer by warning the reader of 'social desirability biases'. This means that individuals have a tendency of portraying themselves in a "generally favorable fashion." (Mostafa, 2011) This might be a factor in our study because many people feel the need to be agreed with. If a user is scrolling through Twitter and all of their constituents are disapproving of the Gillette ad, they might be influenced to feel the same. The survey continued to describe generational differences, finding younger age groups to respond with more liberal attitudes. Unfortunately, Twitter doesn't have much demographic availability, but assumptions could be made that the same finding would reflect in this study.

A consumer's relationship with a brand could change based on what values are accredited to them. Gillette made a bold choice by creating a commercial that challenged men to 'do better'. Celebrity endorsements have been around for decades, their prevalence noted specifically in sports. A study done by Do, Ko, and Woodside (2015) found that sponsorships impact relationship quality, and being able to communicate with a brand on social media makes for a more positive experience. The affiliation with a celebrity could encourage or deter a consumer from buying a product or service. Gillette released the video on Twitter, building on their social media presence, and reaching out to their followers. Users responded by including their hashtag,

mentioning Gillette, or discussing the commercial in general. Social media is a tool that can be utilized to break down parasocial walls and create a conversation. There is power behind the ability to direct a comment toward something/someone you would not otherwise have the means too.

Advertising Masculinity

Gillette's history is the pinnacle of advertising masculinity to the masses. In America, many products are made to target either men or women. Such becomes problematic because this narrow representation then seeps into popular culture, and becomes the norm. When Gillette, a male-represented brand, came out with a video exposing that negative stereotypical male attributes are being engrained within us, consumers argued hypocrisy. GÜL (2017) cites Connell's pioneering work in understanding the concept of hegemonic masculinity and explains that it "represents the dominance of men within gender relations over both women and 'other' men." Whether media recognizes it or not, they create popular culture that is consumed then regurgitated as a social norm. Advertisers use social values as a factor to help promote products and services to increase sales (GÜL 2017, p.2). Gillette's slogan, "the best a man can get" is inadvertently creating what the definition of a man is. By claiming male values as a virtue of their brand, adversaries claim contradiction.

Continuing with hegemonic masculinity, interviews were conducted by GÜL (2017) in Turkey to explore the role men play in social gender relations as portrayed in advertisements. One participant responded, "In advertisements, physical strength of men is always highlighted more than other aspects. For instance, men perform all tasks that require strength; they break and

tear things to pieces" (GÜL, 2017, p.127). This interpretation of Turkish advertisement is that of many in America. Gillette was trying to break the trend of seeing men only as muscular machines by giving them a more nurturing role. Too often, in advertisements, men are 'either-or', "We see a family man or a muscular man who does bodybuilding" (GÜL, 2017, p. 124) said a business owner from the study. There are patterns of one-dimensional characters that are portrayed in advertisements, instead of real dynamic people.

Over time, a brand develops a personality by adopting human characteristics (Grohmann, 2009). Brands accomplish this by positioning their brand to appeal to a certain demographic. In order to gain the attention of that demographic, they must be able to relate to the brand. Male consumers identified with Gillette because it centered itself as a male product. Grohmann (2009) found that consumer's sex role identity positively influences behavioral brand-related responses. This information could aid in understanding why the commercial was so controversial to many male consumers. Findings related to that conclusion are congruent in a study about advertisements featuring same-sex couples. Heterosexual respondents preferred the 'in-group' ads, those featuring a heterosexual couple, to the ad featuring a same-sex couple (Read, van Direl, & Potter, 2018). For example, a heterosexual male is more likely to respond positively to an advertisement featuring a heterosexual couple, because he can identify with him.

Activism in Social Media

From bra-burnings to boycotts, activism has been a right of passage for many Americans. Before the Internet, people would organize through word of mouth or traditional media to get like-minded individuals to fight for a common cause. With the advancement of social media,

things have changed. Now with the click of a button you can donate to your favorite charity, sign

a petition, or spread awareness through a "copy & paste" post. In more current times, this may be

helpful but with so many causes you can contribute a minimal amount too, one can spread

themselves too thin to make a difference.

The term "slacktivism" has been used to describe the disconnect between awareness and

action through the use of social media. Briones, Madden, and Janoske (2013) studied Kony 2012,

a social movement to find a man named Joseph Kony, as an example of slacktivism. Their

content analysis used a mixture of blog posts, tweets, Facebook comments, and YouTube video

responses, many of them believing the online campaign had limited real-world impact . It was

found that the majority of the comments were negative towards the conception and execution of

the video. The Kony 2012 awareness campaign produced a video that prompted supporters to

buy "action kits," which were full of posters to put all over the United States to put pressure on

the government to find Kony after he was forcing children in Africa to fight in war (See Figure 3

in Appendix A). While spreading awareness is helpful, without mobilization, it's sort of useless.

Does anyone who bought an action kit even know if Kony was ever captured? Does it matter? It

seems like online philanthropy has become more a 'feel-good' pastime instead of a passion.

There are many cases of people acting online, but in actuality, not accomplishing anything.

In 2017, there was a movement on social media urging Uber users to delete their accounts

(Mihulka, Rivera, & Zepeda, 2018). The hashtag #deleteuber circulated the Internet after the

New York Workers Alliance withheld their services at the JFK airport in protest of President

Trump's travel ban. Around the same time taxi drivers began their demonstration, Uber

announced on Twitter that they are temporarily canceling the price surge around the JFK airport.

Many disapproved of Uber's response, seeing it as an attempt to profit instead of respecting the protest. By mobilizing Twitter users to delete the app, it sent a message to Uber and other companies to think about how their actions will be perceived by the public. This case study is an example of utilizing social media to exercise your rights, and slacktivism because despite Uber's reputation, rises to takes up to 70% of the market share for ride-hailing services (Iqbal, 2018).

In Gillette's case, did the video mobilize change? Was that its objective? The video ended with directions to visit the website 'thebestmencanbe.org' that directs you to their commercial website. Their message includes sympathizing with the average man because, "...many find themselves at a crossroads, caught between the past and a new era of masculinity" ("The Best Men Can Be", 2019). Furthermore, Gillette is distributing $1 million per year for the next three years to nonprofit organizations "designed to help men of all ages achieve their personal best". Is this activism? A million dollars spread out from a company owned by Procter and Gamble that reported to make $2.5 billion in one 2017 business quarter (Coolidge, 2017)?

In order to address the gaps in research posed above, this study poses three research questions.

RQ1: What is the relationship between tone and @Gillette?

RQ2: What is the relationship between @Gillette and Boycott variable?

RQ3: Among tweets containing Gilette, what is the prevalence of toxic masculinity?

Methodology

For this study, I conducted a content analysis using a sample of 300 tweets. This an appropriate sample to take from the population because it will give a clear representation of the population. Also, due to time and financial restrictions, this is a realistic amount to code. These

limitations will be addressed in the conclusion to better future research.The sample was obtained using Twitter's advanced search to find tweets containing the keyword 'Gillette' from a date range of January 14, 2019 to January 20, 2019. In order to acquire the most relevant tweets concerning the advertisement I chose the date it was released and the following 6 days. All of the tweets were posted from public accounts, meaning they were accessible to everyone. As opposed to private accounts, where only people who have permission to follow that account are able to view it.

A content analysis was chosen to establish an objective assessment of the content. This method allows researchers to "recover and examine the nuances of organizational behaviors, stakeholder perceptions, and societal trends" (Andrevski, 2012, p. online). Twitter was the perfect platform to pull from because Gillette released its video there. The video was created specifically for the Internet because of its length time of 1 minute and 49 seconds. If it were for television, it would have had to fit in a 15, 30, or 60 second block (Ciccarelli, 2019). With Twitter's ability to respond, like, and share, it has created a forum to express opinions. Users are also more inclined to respond because the platform is more open about talking to strangers. Unlike Instagram, you can see content from people who you don't follow. This blurs the lines of unsolicited conversation, because the user feels less intrusive.

Some variables included whether or not the unit mentioned the #MeTooMovement, #TheBestMenCanBe, or discussed purchasing behavior. The first hashtag was created to unify survivors of sexual harassment online. After celebrities started coming forward to speak of the sexual assault they've endured in the industry, people used that hashtag to stand in solidarity. Overwhelming support from strangers inspired many to speak out to exemplify the magnitude of

the issue. This movement is relevant to Gillette's ad because in the beginning of the video, a reporter's voice mentions it. Therefore, even Gillette felt their ad is connected to a discussion about sexual harassment. #TheBestMenCanBe was created by Gillette in association with the advertising campaign. Hashtags allow people to easily follow topics they are interested in, and be a part of the conversation dedicated to that hashtag ("How to use hashtags", n.d.). The purpose of including this as a variable was to see if users felt it was necessary to attach themselves to the trending topic in order to respond.

The discussion of purchasing power was included as an interval variable, with levels included to describe three different responses. One was positively towards the campaign, and against the boycott. The user would have to clearly state they will start and/or continue to use Gillette products after seeing the ad. There is a neutral option, in case you are not sure, or if they're just discussing others changing their purchases in general. And a third level that supports the boycott and disapproves of Gillette. These users will threaten their business by boycotting, switching brands, or just making fun of those who use their products. After coding, and realizing there was not much discussion about purchasing power, I changed the variable measurement to nominal. This is further explained in the discussion section, but it was during the analysis I made it so there were two levels; one if a discussion took place, and zero if there was not.

Other variables include the mention of social responsibility, toxic masculinity, or coding for the tone of the tweet. By logging the amount of people using the word 'social responsibility' I hope to gauge people's responses to the Gillette ad. Does that user feel Gillette created this ad to positively impact people? Or were they joining on the bandwagon of controversy for attention? Another key word, toxic masculinity', is a variable because it is mentioned in the video. It's also

interesting because many big newspapers that wrote about it, including Time (McCluskey, 2019), The Guardian (Topping, Lyons, & Weaver, 2019), Teen Vogue (Johnson, 2019), the Washington Post (Stanley-Becker, 2019), and many others referred to it as Gillette's "toxic masculinity ad". This will help us see if the public will mimic the rhetoric, and use this term. A full list of variable names, descriptions, and levels of measurement are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Variable Descriptions

Variable Name	Variable Description	Level of Measurement
Likes	# of likes	Ratio
Retweets	# of retweets	Ratio
Comments	# of comments	Ratio
Word Count	# of words	Ratio
Verified	Is the account verified?	Nominal
Image	Does the tweet contain an image or meme?	Nominal
Video	Does the tweet contain a vie or gif?	Nominal
@Gillette	Does the tweet mention Gillette's handle?	Nominal
Social Issue	Does the tweet include another social issue?	Nominal
Toxic Masculinity	Does the tweet include the words 'toxic masculinity'?	Nominal
#MeTooMovement	Does the tweet include #MeTooMovement or Me Too Movement?	Nominal
#TheBestMenCanBe	Does the tweet contain #TheBestMenCanBe?	Nominal

Purchasing Power	Does the tweet mention changing or continuing their purchasing habits of Gillette products?	Interval
Social Responsibility	Does the tweet include the words 'social responsibility'? If so, in a positive or negative context?	Interval
Tone	What is the tone of the tweet, from 1-5 (1 being very positive, 5 being very negative)	Interval

Establishing Intercoder Reliability

The accounts that I analyzed are unaware of their participation. Due to its placement in a

public forum, there is no need to gain permission. I went through the list and took screenshots of

tweets pertaining to the Gillette advertisement, using the sampling method described above.

After assigning numbers to each post, I established intercoder reliability with a fellow student.

To do this, 10% of the units were randomly selected using a random number generator (Haahr,

n.d.). We both coded that 10% of the sample, $(n = 30)$, and compared our results. After tweaks

to the codebook, we achieved intercoder reliability. I continued to code the remaining 270 units,

careful to cross-reference the codebook when necessary. An appropriate benchmark for

intercoder reliability is .80, with scores of 1 representing perfect agreement between coders. A

full list of the intercoder reliability scores is located below.

Table 2: Intercoder Reliability

Variable Name	Intercoder Score
Likes	1
Retweets	1

Comments	1
Word Count	.97
Verified	.86
Image	1
Video	1
@Gillette	1
Social Issue	1
Toxic Masculinity	1
#MeTooMovement	1
#TheBestMenCanBe	1
Purchasing Power	1
Social Responsibility	1
Tone	.92

Results

First, I will present the descriptive statistics for each variable. In Table 3 you will see that the average amount of likes are 1,451, 254 retweets, 68 comments, 31 words, and an average tone of 2.58 on a 5 point scale, with 5 being 'very negative'.

To summarize Table 4, 23 percent of accounts were verified, 91 percent did not contain an image or meme, 98 percent had no video or gif, 13% did tag or 'mention' Gillette's official Twitter account. 24 percent mentioned another social issue on top of the Gillette controversy, 15

percent of tweets included the words 'toxic masculinity', 98 percent did not mention the Me Too Movement, 98 percent did not include the hashtag #TheBestMenCanBe.

Around 9 percent either discussed changing, continuing, or neutrally brought up purchasing Gillette products after seeing the ad, and only one unit contained the words 'social responsibility'. After the descriptive statistics I will answer the three main research questions.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Ratio Variables

Variable Name	Mean	Standard Deviation
Likes	1451.42	13778.507
Retweets	265.10	2265.806
Comments	68.16	483.907
Word Count	30.89	13.440
Tone	2.58	1.105

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Nominal and Ordinal Variables

Variable Name	Frequency	Percentage
Verified		
Not Verified	230	76.4%
Verified	70	23.3%
Image		
No Image	273	90.7%
Contains Image	27	9.0%
Video		
No Video	294	97.7%

Contains Video	6	2.0%
@Gillette		
No @Gillette	260	86.4%
Contains @Gillette	40	13.3%
Social Issue		
Does not contain	227	75.4%
Does contain	72	23.9%
Toxic Masculinity		
Does not contain	254	84.4%
Does contain	46	15.3%
#MeTooMovement		
Does Not Contain #MeToo	295	98.0%
Does Contain #MeToo	5	1.7%
#BestMenCanBe		
Does not contain	295	98.0%
Does contain	4	1.3%
Purchasing Power		
Does Not Mention	272	90.4%
Yes, against boycott	14	4.7%
Yes, neutral	4	1.3%
Yes, in support of boycott	10	3.3%
Social Responsibility		
Does Not Contain	299	99.3%

Does Contain	1	0.3%

Research question 1 states, "What is the relationship between tone and @Gillette?" To answer RQ1, I conducted a *t*-test, examining the relationship between @Gillette and tone of tweets. Posts that contain @Gillette tended to be more negative (*M* = 2.93) than posts that did not contain @Gillette (*M* = 2.52). The relationship is approaching significance $t(46.95) = -1.83$, $p = .07$. Equal variances are not assumed.

RQ2: What is the relationship between @Gillette and Boycott variable?

As defined in the descriptive statistics chart (Table 4), only 3.3% of posts contain a mention of a 'negative boycott' ($f = 10$). 'Negative boycott' means that they mentioned the boycott using negative language, and were in favor of purchasing Gillette products. Since so few posts included any mention of boycotting, I recorded the variable to create a dummy variable, where "0" equals no mention of boycott and "1" equals any mention of boycott, regardless of tone. Then, I conducted a chi-square test of comparison between mentions of boycott and @Gillette. Mentions of boycotts were less likely to tag Gillette (64.3%) than posts that did tag Gillette (35.7%). $\chi^2 = 13.39$, $p < .001$.

RQ3: What is the prevalence of toxic masculinity?

To answer this research question I found the frequency of when the words 'toxic masculinity' appeared in my sample. In Table 4, you can see that the words 'toxic masculinity' was present 46 times. It was really important to find the amount of times it came up in the sample because the advertisement is known by many as "Gillette's toxic masculinity ad". This research question is further explained in the discussion section.

Discussion

After answering the research questions, it is important to consider what these findings mean and how they relate to previous research in advertising masculinity, controversial branding, and activism in social media. Research question 1 explores the relationship between tone of tweets and presence of @Gillette. I found that the tweets that tagged Gillette are more likely to be negative. Although this relationship is not statistically significant (at $p < .05$), it is still worth exploring on a deeper level. It seems that the user wanted to make sure they were a part of the conversation by directly tagging Gillette. By @ing an account, they are notified of being mentioned in that tweet. So, if users want to be acknowledged by a brand then tagging them would help that happen. As assumption could be made that when people are angry, they want to be heard. While all tweets contained the word 'Gillette', the ones that tagged the brand were more likely to disagree with the ad.

If you exclude music videos, the Gillette ad is ranked the 12th most disliked video on Youtube (Nash, 2019). Its controversy sparked conversation through all media, even the like/dislike ratio on YouTube. This relates to past research done by Do, Ko, and Woodside (2015) that harps on the importance of using social media to identify with consumers. They advise companies to utilize social media "not just for short-term promotional purposes but also to induce genuine brand consumer interaction through active communication…" (Do, Ko, & Woodside, 2015, p. 667). Users were tagging Gillette for an interaction, often expecting a certain response that resembles the brand's personality. This aligns with a study done by Grohmann (2009) that found brands tend to develop human characteristics that translate into a predictable personality. After this video was released, people know where the brand stands on certain issues. Bullying, sexual harassment, sexism were all main themes of the ad, targeting men as the

solution. This is now embedded in their identity, and those values reflect in the consumers that buy their products. The results of Grohmann (2009) found that people are more likely to enjoy something when they can identify with it, in that case it was specifically sexual-orientation, but I think that can be extended to other forms of identity. Being very close to significance, we can explore why so many negative responses also tagged Gillette. But mainly I think it's because they wanted to be heard.

RQ2: What is the relationship between @Gillette and Boycott variable?

Most posts (90.4%) did not even mention boycotting at all. This is interesting because it seems like every time people are upset, they threaten a boycott. "You lost my business!" is a declaration heard by many customer service representatives. Once people feel let down by a company, they no longer want to support it. This goes along with the Gillette ad, because although razors don't harbor moral values, the company itself is perceived to. Advertisers use social values as a factor to help promote products and services to increase sales (GÜL, 2017, p. 2), and then a consumer feels like the company values don't align with theirs, they no longer want to be associated. Gillette has chosen to become a voice in a controversial discussion.

Even though few tweets (9.6%) mentioned changing purchase behavior, it is interesting to note that over half of those posts (51.3%) were positive and 10.7% were very positive, while only 22.7% of posts were either negative or very negative, collectively. Instead, people wanted Gillette to know that they were supporting their brand because of the message from the ad. This again relates to Grohmann (2009) because of the relation to identity. Another study congruent to these findings was done by Read, van Direl, and Potter (2018). After showing advertisements

depicting different relationships, heterosexual and homosexual, it was revealed that the ads displaying their own sexual orientation were more likable to them.

If the acts of the brand you are supporting do not follow your moral code, then you probably will not longer want to support them. This was the purpose of the purchasing power variable, to see if people's ability to consume products were affected as a result of the ad. A study examining the #deleteuber movement, found that people were threatening their business because of Uber's interference with the New York Workers Alliance's demonstration. While people mobilized on social media, in the end, Uber was unaffected. The sample did not include many occurences of discussion about purchasing power, this might be because people know their behavior probably won't change just because of an advertisement. Their feelings towards Gillette as a brand might change, but my findings might explain the lack of discussion could because of people's unwillingness to change their behaviors.

RQ3: What is the prevalence of toxic masculinity?

This specific question did not need further testing, I just looked to the descriptive statistics to find the frequency of toxic masculinity in my sample. This was important to look at because the campaign became known as Gillette's 'toxic masculinity' ad. This new term has become very popular in recent years, especially with the Me Too Movement. It is interesting to see if cultural terms like this seep into people's everyday language. Although only 46 units (15.3%) contained 'toxic masculinity', had you coded this 5 years ago there would have been a lot less.

If you type "toxic masculinity ad" in Google, Gillette's video on YouTube is the first search result. An entire section of this study's literature review was dedicated to researching how masculinity is used in advertising. I found a study done in Turkey by GÜL (2017) that conducted interviews asking about the role men play in advertisements. The responses could be compared to the discourse heard in America. One person commented, "In advertisements, physical strength of men is always highlighted more than other aspects. For instance, men perform all tasks that require strength; they break and tear things to pieces." (GÜL, 2017, p.127) In the Gillette video, two young boys are pictured wrestling on the ground, with a chant of "boys will be boys" coming from a line of dads tending to a grill. This double standard of acceptable behavior is targeted by Gillette, questioning why its "boys will be boys" but if it were girls instead, the fight would be broken up immediately.

The term 'toxic masculinity' has been attached to Gillette's advertisement. In more controversial content, Kendall Jenner received a lot of backlash after starring in a Pepsi commercial in 2017 (Taylor, 2017). It was criticized for appropriating the Black Lives Matter movement to sell soda. In my results, I found that 15 percent of the sample discussed toxic masculinity. While many, previously mentioned, magazines tagged that specific word to define the Gillette ad. The Pepsi commercial was 'Kendall Jenner's Pepsi ad', rather than the Black Lives Matter (BLM) ad.

The same magazines like the Guardian titled their articles "Kendall Jenner cries over Pepsi backlash" (Yahr, 2017), Teen Vogue's headline was "Why people are not happy about Kendall Jenner's Pepsi Commercial" (Elizabeth, 2017), and TIME's had "Why the Kendall Jenner Pepsi Ad Was Such a Glaring Misstep" (D'Addario, 2017). While Kendall Jenner is a

celebrity, the main issue was about using BLM for profit. Kendall wasn't the visionary; she was just hired as an endorser. While the magazines focused on the issue for Gillette, but when discussing Pepsi, instead focused on the celebrity.

Conclusion

Gillette's advertisement was controversial for many reasons; its purpose was to spur conversation with a message of challenging yourself and others to do better. Due to the backlash it faced on social media, I wanted to do a content analysis of tweets retrieved the week of its launch. Through prior research, I found that there have been many other accounts of controversial advertisements including the Kendall Jenner Pepsi scandal. By including the term 'toxic masculinity' and referencing the #MeTooMovement, it triggered a defense mode for those who felt attacked by this message of manhood. Instead of embracing Gillette, some took to Twitter threatening a change of brands. Supporters saw a different ad, one that called to squash adversaries that are present in our society.

To help the cause, Gillette is distributing $1 million per year for the next three years to nonprofit organizations "designed to help men of all ages achieve their personal best" ("The Best Men Can Be", n.d.). We saw this in other studies, like the Kony 2012 movement that sold action kits to raise money for resources in ending the use of children soldiers in Africa. This initiative is the opposite of slacktivism, but many are asking if that is enough to make a difference. Even though Gillette is a predominantly male-used company, they decided to direct the challenge to men. This raised concerns about the company's motives. I still do not think we know if Gillette did this as an act of social responsibility, or to join to bandwagon on feel-good messages for

profit. This question is beyond the scope of this study, but future research can address this concern.

Many of my results came back insignificant, but that is just as important to discuss. The closest to being significant was the tone and @Gillette t-test. I found that if the tweet mentions Gillette, it is more likely to be negative (See Figure 6 in Appendix A). I interpreted this to mean that those who felt it was necessary to personally tag the brand meant that they wanted to be acknowledged. And those who are upset are more likely to want to be heard. By mentioning Gillette, they know the brand account will receive notification that they have been tagged. This feels more like a personal attack, rather than making a statement towards a public audience.

When looking at mentioning Gillette and the purchasing power variable, it wasn't significant. But one can see that 51.3% of those that did mention Gillette were positive. This is interesting because it does not align with our previous assumptions. Why did those who threatened to stop using Gillette's products not mention Gillette? It was the users that wanted to prove their loyalty that mentioned them. Many of the tweets that were positive toward the campaign used their platform to mock the people who threatened their business. One user (see Figure 5 in Appendix A) wrote, "So you spent YOUR money… bought @Gillette products... threw them away and you think that you hurt their feelings?" This mockery was in response to someone tweeting that they bought all of the Gillette products from their local CVS just to throw them away.

On the other hand, someone tweeted that after watching the ad they will buy every Gillette product on offer (See Figure 7 in Appendix A). It is also interesting to note that this person called it Gillette's "toxic masculinity" ad. This means he defines it specifically as *that* ad,

and not the #MeToo ad or #BestMenCanBe ad. Even though Gillette specifically associated that hashtag with the ad campaign, only 4 units contained the hashtag. Even though the frequency represented in this research is not impressive, it has been known now as the 'toxic masculinity' ad. Just search it on Google.

Although there were many limitations, this content analysis has shown some interesting results, and has room for a lot more discussion. Overall, the Gillette advertisement was very successful in creating a conversation, which can be seen throughout different social media platforms. I found that although that much of my research came back statistically insignificant, its findings help nurture a larger discussion.

Future Research

There were a few issues faced during this research, but overall it was interesting to see the way people used a social media platform like Twitter as a space to discuss controversial topics. At first, I wanted to take tweets only using the hashtag Gillette associated with this ad campaign, #BestMenCanBe. The purpose of that was so make sure my sample included tweets about that ad specifically. The population of those tweets were surprising to me, there was maybe 180. This shows that people do not always utilize the hashtag created by brands. Instead, I decided to narrow my search by including any tweet that had the keyword 'Gillette' in it. This ended up being what I used to generate my sample.

During the sample retrieval, I faced many technological difficulties. Twitter's advanced search tool is not the most researcher-friendly so it was hard to keep track of what tweets I had already screenshotted. If I made a wrong move, the page would reload which sent me back to the

starting point. There was also the issue of not loading specific days. After inserting a date range, it would completely skip over some days, which complicated the process. In the future, I would recommend evenly distributing the amount of tweets taken for each day. In my case, 300 units over a 7 day range which would come out to approximately 42 units from each date. This would lessen the likelihood of a technological interruption. The even distribution would also create a more balanced response, in case a topic dominates the conversation on one specific day.

That exact thing happened on January 19th, when a video of a teenage boy and a Native American man face to face circulated the internet. Twitter acted as a forum for opinions pertaining to a Covington Catholic school student named Nick Sandmann and a Native American activist, Nathan Phillips (Ortiz, 2019). What's interesting is how people connected this to the Gillette advertisement. One user wrote, "The irony of #Gillette being slammed for reminding men to raise respectful boys within days of this #covingtoncatholic group of boys shamefully disrespecting a Native American elder says so much." (See Figure 4 in Appendix A) Due to the boys wearing MAGA attire, it was coded as a social issue, which raised the frequency present in the sample. Twitter is unpredictable, and something that you might not be coding for can make itself relevant.

While this may not be something that necessarily went 'wrong', it was not accounted for. Something else that I wish I had created a variable for was mention of political party. It was assumed by many that if you were supportive of the ad, that you were a liberal Democrat. On the other side of the spectrum, those who disapproved of the ad were called out as conservatives, or Republicans. Had I included that, it would be easier to tell how many people took a political spin on the message from Gillette. This could prompt further questions like, "Was a political

interpretation intended by Gillette? Has this conversation further divided people by associating others opinions/beliefs with their political parties?"

Furthermore, if this research was imitated then having more than one coder would be beneficial. The data was coded by one person because of the imposed time and financial restrictions. Even though intercoder reliability was established, that was only 10% of the sample. And, if you had more coders then you could take a larger sample size making it a more accurate representation of the population. Something else to consider would be to include different mediums. Twitter has a character limitation of 280, so it limits the ability to articulate user's full thoughts and opinions. The date range is also limiting, because with more time comes more information. It would be interesting to see if there was a difference from the data taken a week after its launch to a few months after its launch, because certain factors might influence people's thoughts.

Appendix A: Figures

Figure 1 Screenshot of Gillett's advertisement on YouTube

Figure 2 Taken from Google image search for 'Kendall Jenner Pepsi'

Figure 3 Taken from Google Image search for 'KONY 2012 action kit'

Figure 4 screen shot from sample

Figure 5 screen shot from sample
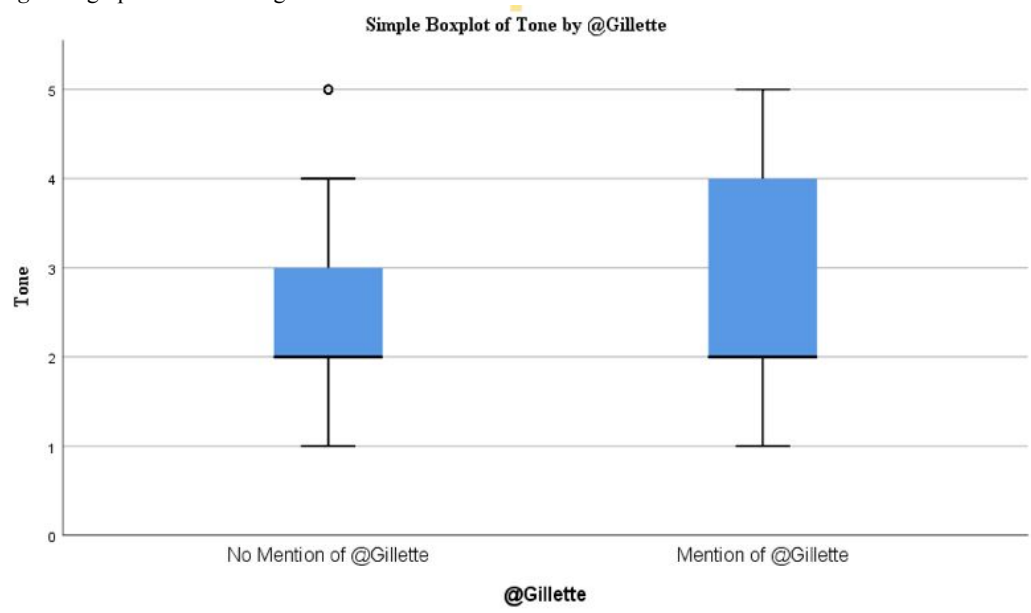

Figure 6 graph created through SPSS

Figure 7 screen shot from sample

Appendix B: Research Codebook and Training Manual

Variable Name	Description	*Coding Instructions*
(Likes)	# of Likes	*Ratio Variable*
(Retweets)	# of Retweets	*Ratio Variable*
(Comments)	# of Comments	*Ratio Variable*
(Word)	Word Count of the tweet	*Ratio Variable*
		A space separates a word Words after hashtag count as 1 word Ex. #TheBestMenCanBe (1 word) #GiletteAd (1 word) @Gillette (1 word) A symbol e.g &, = (1 word) A link (1 word) Numbers count as 1 word Ex. 1700 Acronyms count as 1 word Ex. ATM, LGBT Emojis do not count as words
(Verified)	Is the account verified?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1- yes)
(Image)	Does the tweet contain an image?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1 - yes) Can be from original or responded account/includes a **meme**/includes a completed poll.

(Video)	Does the tweet contain a video?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1 - yes) Can be from original or responded account/ includes **gifs**.
(@Gilette)	Does the tweet tag Gillette?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1 - yes)
(Issue)	Does the tweet mention another social issue?	*Nominal* (0 – no, 1 - yes) *including the Me Too movement, the Catholic school kids in MAGA hats, Trump
(Toxic)	Does the tweet mention 'toxic masculinity'?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1 - yes) *Mentions those words, or alluding to the toxicity of stereotypical male behaviors.
(MeToo)	Does the tweet mention #MeTooMovement or Me Too Movement?	*Nominal* (0 - no, 1 - yes)
(Best)	Does the tweet mention #TheBestMenCanBe?	*Nominal* (0 – no, 1 - yes)
(Boycott)	Change of purchasing power?	*Nominal* (0 – no, 1 - yes)
(Social)	Contains the words 'social responsibility'	*Nominal* (0 – no, 1 - yes)

(Tone)	What is the tone of the tweet?	*Interval*
		1 – Very positive if the account's response was in support of the Gillette ad. It should include: a clear supportive attitude, expressing support for Gillette, dislike for people who disagree with this ad, OR/AND agreement with Gillette.
		2 – Positive if the account's response was positive towards the campaign but with less passion. If they agree with Gillette, but have not taken any further steps code for positive.
		3 – Neutral - if the account's response was neutral to the Gillette ad it should include: not a clear standing of opinion, not support or unsupportive, OR/AND stating facts.
		4 - Negative if the account's response was disapproving of Gillette's message. If they are unsupportive of the advertisement but take no further steps code for negative.
		5 – Very negative if the account's response was clearly unsupportive of the Gillette ad. It should include: a clear unsupportive attitudes towards Gillette, offense taken over the subject of masculinity, disagreement with profiting from social issues.

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Abstract

On January 13th, 2019 Gillette released an advertising campaign that received a lot of controversy. It commented on many social issues including the Me Too Movement, feminism, bullying, sexual harassment, and more. I have conducted a quantitative content analysis using (*n* = 300) tweets regarding the Gillette advertisement that was posted on Twitter. The sample was collected from January 14th to January 20th, 2019 using Twitter's advanced search function, included are tweets containing 'Gillette'. The tweets were used to gauge the public's perception of Gillette using social issues in their advertising, along with answering my research questions. Gillette's motive behind this video was to reposition themselves in the eyes of the consumer as a progressive brand that no longer perpetuates toxic masculinity. Through analyzing the data, one can understand what makes this ad so controversial. I found that tweets tagging Gillette are more likely to be negative, those which discuss their purchasing behavior and tag Gillette are more positive, and that there were few users that included the term 'toxic masculinity' when describing the campaign.

Digital Media Management, content analysis, gillette advertisement, commercializing social issues, quantitative research, toxic masculinity, public perception