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**The influence of cultural values and gender role attitudes on the perception and
evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions**

An examination of Indian consumers

Master's Thesis in International Business

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	5
LIST OF TABLES	5
ABSTRACT	7
INTRODUCTION	9
1.1. Relevance and justification of the study	10
1.2. Research gap, research questions and objectives	12
1.3. Structure of the Study	14
2. CROSS-GENDER BRAND EXTENSIONS AND GENDER	16
2.1. Brand extensions	16
2.1.1. Effect of the parent brand on brand extensions	17
2.1.2. Perceived fit of brand extensions	19
2.1.3. Functional versus symbolic product categories	20
2.2. Gender, gender role attitudes and identity in a consumer behavior context	21
2.2.1. Gender-relevant empirical findings: shift from sex classification to gender-specific analysis	23
2.3. Cross-gender brand extensions	27
2.3.1. Jung and Lee's research findings	27
2.3.2. Ulrich's research findings	28
3. CULTURAL CONTEXT	30
3.1. Culture and consumer behavior	30
3.1.1. Definition of culture	31
3.1.2. Consumer values and cultural values	31
3.1.2.1. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture	33
3.1.2.2. The GLOBE Project	35
3.1.2.3. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and the GLOBE Project: usability of the models for marketing strategies and deficits	37
3.1.3. Gender roles as a social process and changeability	39
3.1.3.1. Social Role Theory	39

3.1.3.2. Changeability of culture and social roles	40
3.2. Indian culture	42
3.2.1. Gender equality and gender role attitudes in India	42
3.2.2. Indian's scoring according to Hofstede's dimension and the GLOBE Project	45
3.3. Summary and conceptual framework	47
3.3.1. Summary	47
3.3.2. A conceptual framework for the effects of culture and gender role attitudes on cross-gender brand extensions	50
4. METHODOLOGY	53
4.1. Data collection technique and sample	54
4.2. Procedure and data analysis	57
4.3. Credibility of research	58
5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	60
5.1. Values and practices in India	60
5.2. Gender roles in India	62
5.3. Evaluation of Cross-Gender Brand Extensions for Indian consumers	66
5.4. Perception of gendered products	70
5.5. Depiction of men, women and gender roles in Indian advertisements	73
6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	76
6.1. Findings related to the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions	77
6.2. Managerial implications	79
6.3. Limitations of the study	81
7. REFERENCES	83
APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE	90
APPENDIX 2 – IMAGES USED FOR CROSS-GENDER-BRAND-EXTENSIONS SCENARIOS	92
APPENDIX 3 – IMAGES USED FOR GENDERED PRODUCTS	94

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Simple model of the social role theory.	40
Figure 3. Cultural Dimensions of India according to Hofstede's 6-D Model.....	45
Figure 4. Cultural Practices and Values in India according to GLOBE Project.....	47
Figure 5. conceptual framework for the effect of gender role attitudes on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions.	52

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Dimension of national cultures. Definitions taken from Hofstede (2011).	33
Table 2. Themes covered during the interview.....	55
Table 3. Sample.	56
Table 4. Evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions (summary).....	69

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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly globalized and connected world and therefore, in an increasing competitive market, establishing brands is becoming more challenging for companies. It is well-known that creating a new brand needs a lot of investment. Hence, one convenient and promising approach for many companies is the implementation of brand extension strategies to enter new markets. Brand extensions refer to the usage of a current brand name to enter a new market segment. One major advantage to use an established brand is that consumers are already familiar with the brand and thus, less marketing effort and expenses are necessary. Furthermore, an established brand increases the competitive advantage for a company when entering a new market. One specific approach during the last years has been the so called cross-gender brand extensions. Cross-gender brand extensions mean to use an established brand name and extend it to target the opposite sex.

This master's thesis aims to gain a better comprehension of the sociocultural context regarding cross-gender brand extensions in a fast growing and newly industrialized economy like India. Thereby, the master's thesis takes up various research areas to adopt a holistic understanding of the research problem. The results are based on the analysis of ten semi-structured interviews with Indian consumers. The findings of the study suggest that cross-gender brand extensions are marketable in Indian despite the traditional values and gender role attitudes this country holds. However, those results refer mostly to urban areas. Moreover, regardless of the high gender inequality prevailing in India, gender role attitudes hardly seem to have any relevance among the interviewees on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions.

KEY WORDS: Cross-gender brand extensions, culture, gender role attitudes, values, gendered products, Indian consumers

INTRODUCTION

Particularly in Western societies, cultural change increasingly distorted gender categories in the last years. Women are much more present in prestigious jobs whereas men are increasingly responsible for the housework (Palan 2001). An increased assimilation of the responsibilities as well as the division of labor along the society results in more mutual experiences. This phenomenon is described through the social role theory. As a consequence, gender role attitudes among the society become more and more egalitarian (Schwartz & Rubel 2005). The increasing change from traditional norms and role distributions and hence, also traditional gender role attitudes, to more modern and egalitarian individualistic cultures, suggests that a gender-specific segmentation will become progressively significant for marketers.

Frank et al. (2013) emphasizes that companies should use their marketing expenditures more efficient. Therefore, marketers should understand gender preferences and differences to utilize new market potentials. Adopting a gender-specific analysis might enables chances for innovative marketing strategies. For example, Ulrich (2013) exhibited in his study that individuals with more traditional gender role attitudes are more unenthusiastic toward cross-gender brand extensions. Cross-gender brand extensions refer to brands which usually possess either a strong masculine or feminine image and then extend to the opposite gender. Therefore, Ulrich (2013) derives that “the potential market for these extensions is primarily limited to consumers with egalitarian attitudes to gender”.

Another advantage of a gender-specific analysis is, that it is considering culture. Likewise, Jung and Lee (2006) published a paper about cross-gender brand extensions. Thereby, they found that female participants were significantly more receptive for cross-gender brand extensions than their male counterparts. In contrast to Ulrich’s (2013) study, their sample was based on South Korean students. A possible reason for the different results might be the dissimilar values, Western and Asian societies hold. The findings of Schwartz’s and Rubel’s (2005) study endorse these thoughts. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) investigated the value prioritization of men and women across nations and exposed that those value priorities varied significantly across different nations. Moreover, they could

exhibit that the value prioritization of men and women become increasingly alike the more individual and richer the country is (Schwartz & Rubel 2005).

Consequently, understanding the sociocultural context of nations and societies seems to be a major advantage in order to create or implement new gender-specific marketing strategies (Palan 2001).

1.1. Relevance and justification of the study

In an increasingly globalized and connected world and therefore, in an increasing competitive market, establishing brands becomes more and more challenging for companies (Aaker & Keller 1990). Moreover, consumers nowadays are more aware and immune toward marketing tactics and advertisement which is also referred to as persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright 1994). It is well-known that creating a new brand needs a lot of investment. However, firms either do not always have the capital for such an investment or do not want to invest too much according to the optimization principle. According to Aaker (1990), the cost of introducing a new brand name can range from \$50 million to \$100 million. Nowadays, the necessary amount will probably be even much higher. Hence, many firms have continuously increased the implementation of brand extensions strategies to enter new markets (Busacca et al. 2009; Doust & Esfahlan 2012). Brand extensions refer to the usage of a “current brand name [...] to enter a new market segment in its product class (Aaker & Keller 1990). The advantage to use an established brand is that consumers are already familiar with the brand and thus, less marketing effort and costs are necessary. In addition, an established brand increases the competitive advantage for a company when entering a new market. Brand extensions offer opportunities for companies to directly influence the value creation of new products. According to Busacca et al. (2009) brand extensions have been intensively studied, however, merely little is known about the influence that the quality of the relation between brand and customer may have an effect on brand extension strategies.

One specific approach during the last several years has been the so-called cross-gender brand extensions (cf. Jung 2006; Jung & Lee 2006; Ulrich 2013). Such strategies have a growing trend on the marketplace lately, partly because of the unisex trend in consumer

goods (Jung 2006; Ulrich 2013), e.g. shower gels (Dove for Men); skincare (Nivea for Men); perfumes (Chanel Allure Homme) (Ulrich 2013). However, this can also be applied on brands which used originally a universal brand for all its consumers but extended their portfolio later to target a specific group, e.g. sports (Adidas Woman) or toys (LEGO® friends). For instance, LEGO®'s strategy to create a new product line, LEGO® friends, targeting explicitly girls, has been a huge success. Since launching LEGO® friends in 2011, already the following year net sales for the first period of 2012 increased almost for 25% (Lego Annual Report 2012) as well tripled their amount of sales to girls in the US market (Wieners 2013).

Even if brand extensions and more specifically cross-gender brand extensions seem to be a promising approach at first glance, those strategies have its drawbacks as well. On the one hand, the original brand name can fail such an extension by creating a subtle or even not subtle association which harms the new brand extension. On the other hand, the extension can be successful but harm the original brand by weakening existing associations or adding new, undesirable ones (Aaker 1990).

That is why it is crucial for firms to estimate the possible effect of such a cross-gender brand extension on consumer perception before launching an investment in a certain region and thus, to understand the possible relationship between consumer group and brand. However, it is not surprising that practices and values differ strongly across the world due to cultural differences. Important and popular studies in that regard are Hofstede's cultural dimensions as well as the GLOBE Project (Hofstede 2001; House et al. 2004).

Therefore, it seems crucial to understand how gender role attitudes and with them associated values have an impact on the success of cross-gender brand extensions. Especially in regard of our current, global economic status, where firms must "think local, act global" and cope with resources and capital efficiently due to the high competitive global market. Marketers should understand gender preferences and differences to utilize new market potentials.

Another important key point is that consumption behavior is influenced by the culture and values the society shares. However, culture should not be understood as a static construct but rather a dynamic one. Culture is learned behavior that can change and develop over time and therefore, alter the consumption behavior (de Mooij 2011: 213 - 217). Especially in Western societies, cultural change. Cultural change increasingly distorted gender categories in the last years. This trend of more egalitarian societies in Western countries will probably continue and implies to rethink simple male and female segmentation in future. However, this does not merely hold true for Western societies but can also affect traditional societies as well. For instance, Shukla (2015) investigated the extent of change in attitudes toward the role and status of women in India throughout three generations. Though India is a country which is relatively traditional toward gender role attitudes, she found that younger generations demonstrated greater gender role egalitarianism regarding employment and social roles than older ones.

Gathering early knowledge about the relationship of cross-gender brand extensions and consumers of different cultures can help companies to understand better the quality of the relationship between brand and consumer and support the right management choices in future in a continually changing world.

1.2. Research gap, research questions and objectives

As already mentioned Busacca et al. (2009) argued that merely little is known about the influence that the quality of the relation between consumer and brand may have on the effectiveness of brand extension strategies. However, recently several studies were published which analyzed the effect of gender on cross-gender brand extensions showing the relevance of gender role attitudes and gender identity in a certain society have a crucial impact on the acceptance of such extension.

Still, most studies which investigated the issue of brand extensions and cross-gender brand extensions chose a quantitative approach such as the above-mentioned papers of Jung & Lee (2006) and Ulrich (2013). In addition, it is not only important to observe the empirical relation between gender role attitudes and cross-gender brand extensions but also to understand the meanings the consumers attach to those extensions. Therefore, a

qualitative research method as counterbalance seems to be a logical consequence for the underrepresented qualitative methods in the field of cross-gender brand extensions in comparison to quantitative methods. That information could give firms and marketers insights whether consumers react more sensitive or even reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions for specific product categories. Moreover, Ulrich's (2013) dataset is primarily based on French consumers, whereas the study of Jung and Lee (2006) was conducted in Korea and Singapore. Hence, another culture in this master's thesis will be investigated to get a more versatile picture of the topic.

Considering that the sociocultural context has an influence on consumer behavior, this influence should be taken into account when global companies develop branding strategies for specific countries. This master's thesis seizes to take up this issue from Jung and Lee's (2006) and Ulrich's (2013) papers to get a better understanding of the sociocultural context regarding cross-gender brand extensions. Specifically, the thesis intends to focus on the gender role attitudes and values which are associated with those to analyze their impact on the perception of cross-gender brand extensions. The country under investigation, chosen for this thesis, will be India. India is a country which holds relative traditional gender role attitudes. However, there is a positive trend that younger generations tend to be more nontraditional than older ones (Shukla 2015). Whereas there are countries which score much higher in 'masculinity' (Hofstede) and lower in gender egalitarianism, e.g. South Korea, empirical findings and investigations should not merely be based on extremes but be also derivable from research subjects which are less pronounced. Moreover, India is the world's largest democracy with an enormous economic growth potential and thus, its market plays an increasingly important role on the global stage.

Therefore, the research question to be answered in this thesis is: How does gender role attitudes and value priorities in India have an influence on the perception and evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions?

Following theoretical and empirical objectives have been couched so far to narrow the subject under analysis:

- Reviewing existing literature about brand extensions and adapting relevant findings on the more specific type of cross-gender brand extensions. Moreover, introduce the advantages of a gender-related analysis along with gender role attitudes.
- Examining the cultural context, especially values, as well as the influence of cultural change on consumer behavior along with the social theory.
- Developing a conceptual framework which reflects the impact of culture and gender role attitudes on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions
- Investigate and discuss relevant aspects based on the theoretical knowledge which possibly influence the effect of gender role attitudes in India when evaluating cross-gender brand extensions

1.3. Structure of the Study

To support the thought process and to substantiate the arguments of this study, several studies and theories will be presented.

In *chapter 2*, the thesis gives its attention to the phenomenon of brand extensions. behavior and decision-making process of consumers which will be applied on cross-gender brand extensions. Furthermore, this chapter focuses on the characteristics of a gender-specific analysis, especially gender role attitudes. Combined, sufficient knowledge should be gathered to comprehend the peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions and which factors may influence the evaluation of those.

Chapter 3 focuses on the cultural context with its specifics. In the first half of the chapter, the importance of consumer values will be outlined. As values stimulate motivation for behavioral response, it is crucial for marketing purposes to understand the values of a specific society. Thereby, the GLOBE Project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions of national culture will play a central role in the analysis. In a next step, the Indian culture, especially in respect of gender equality, will be presented.

Chapter 4 encompasses the methodology applied in the thesis. First, the research design is presented, followed by methodological approaches and research method. The Sample and the data collection technique will also be presented. Lastly, the approaches to ensure the validity and reliability of this study will be described.

Chapter 5 presents the collected interview data. Thereby, the empirical results will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the study. Thereby the results with regards to the theory will be reexamined. Moreover, managerial implications and limitations of the study will be stated.

2. CROSS-GENDER BRAND EXTENSIONS AND GENDER

The topic of the master's thesis takes up various research areas which need to be condensed. Because of the lack of research on cross-gender brand extensions it is not possible to acquire all necessary knowledge from studies which dealt explicitly with cross-gender brand extensions as main issue. Thus, study findings about brand extensions in general will be presented first. Afterwards, this knowledge will be applied on the peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions (chapter **2.1**).

The second half of this chapter (**2.2**), addresses gender in the context of consumer behavior. First, gender and terminology connected with it, i.e. gender role attitudes will be defined as one of the core subjects of this paper. Especially, in this case it is necessary to frame unambiguous definitions due to the interchangeable use of the terms gender, sex and sexuality in the media and even research (Palan 2001).

With the gathered knowledge of the previous subchapters, chapter **2.3** focuses on research which investigates cross-gender brand extensions. Thereby, study findings of Jung and Lee (2006) and Ulrich (2013) will be presented.

2.1. Brand extensions

An increasingly globalized and connected world makes the market more and more competitive. Consequently, the establishing of brands becomes increasingly challenging for companies (Aaker & Keller 1990). Moreover, consumers nowadays are more aware and immune toward marketing tactics and advertisement. This phenomenon is also referred as persuasion knowledge (Friestad & Wright 1994). It is well-known that creating a new brand needs a lot of investment. However, firms either do not always have the capital for such an investment or do not want to invest too much according to the optimization principle. Hence, one convenient and promising approach for many companies is the implementation of brand extension strategies to enter new markets. Brand extensions refer to the usage of a current brand name to enter a new market segment (Aaker & Keller 1990).

The advantage using an established brand is that consumers are already familiar with the brand, and thus less marketing efforts and expenses are necessary. Also, the use response tends to be quicker because of the familiarity of the brand. Hence, the introduction phase in the product life cycle, where costs still outweigh the profits, is decreased to a minimum (Saedi 2016: 50). In addition, an established brand increases the competitive advantage for a company when entering a new market. Brand extensions offer opportunities for companies to directly influence the value creation of new products. Also, the distribution of brand extensions is much easier, e.g. shelf space, whereas companies already have contracts with distributors. The value of a brand is not merely calculated by its current status but more by its future potential to thrive and to enter new unexploited markets. Thus, brand extensions represent a promising approach as a growth strategy (Saedi 2016: 50). Especially, cross-gender brand extensions seem to be a very promising approach as the new potential market theoretically is theoretically doubled when the same sales figures for the opposite sex are achieved.

The following subchapters will outline findings from different studies about brand extensions and specially, focus on the evaluation of brand extensions from the consumer's viewpoint, the effect on the parent brand, the fit perception of the brand extension and the significance of the product category and type of extension.

2.1.1. Effect of the parent brand on brand extensions

When a company launches a new brand extension, consumers evaluate it based on their attitudes toward the parent brand as well as the extension category (Czellar 2003: 6). However, when consumers are not familiar with the parent brand at all, they will evaluate the new brand extension solely based on their experience with the product (Czellar 2003: 6) which in turn would correspond to a conventional product launch. Consequently, if the product category of the extension is unfamiliar to consumers but the parent brand is familiar, their attitude toward the novel product will merely be based on the attitudes toward the parent brand. If both, the parent brand and the product category of the extension, are familiar, the fit perception plays another crucial role for evaluating the brand extension. The fit perception between parent brand and the extension is according to researchers one of the most significant factors for the evaluating process of an extension,

(Czellar 2003; Doust & Esfahlan 2012; Saedi 2016) and thus will be discussed later separately.

Researchers found out that consumers' attitudes toward brand extensions are mostly founded on the perceived quality of the parent brand. Hence, perception of quality associated with the core brand is a critical factor for a successful extension. The reason is that the consumers' quality assumptions of the extensions are mostly driven by the perceived quality of the core brand (Aaker & Keller 1990). This also implies that an extension benefits from a strong brand equity of the parent brand because the existing brand will trigger a recall of already familiar feelings, beliefs and experiences associated with the core brand. Hence, a special feature of brand extensions compared to conventional product launches are that the attitudes and beliefs of the core brand are transmitted to the extension, and thus consumers already hold attitudes of a currently released extension or even for an extension which just have been announced but still is not on the market (Roedder-John et al. 1998; Saedi 2016: 50-53).

Considering the peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions, some features seem to be more specific. As above mentioned, consumers can be either familiar with a parent brand or not. Familiarity with a brand does not mean that consumers necessarily have real consumer experience with a brand's product. An individual can know of the existence or be familiar with advertisements of a specific product, however, he/she never consumed it because the product was originally designed for the opposite sex. Most cross-gender brand extensions are line extensions and not category extensions. Hence, it is necessary to consider that the consumer experience toward the parent brand which launches a cross-gender brand extension can be very limited. Therefore, the attitudes and beliefs toward a cross-gender brand extension prior the first consumption is often limited to the brand image itself (which in turn has built up its reputation by promoting solely for the opposite gender) rather than with consumer experience of the original product. Instead, the perception of fit between the parent brand and the cross-gender brand extension plays an increasing role for the evaluation of the brand extension.

2.1.2. Perceived fit of brand extensions

Like above mentioned, the perceived quality of the parent brand has a great influence on the evaluation of the brand extensions. However, a precondition for a positive interrelation between the quality of parent brand and brand extension exists only if there is a fit between those two product classes (Aaker & Keller 1990). Fit variables are substantial factors in attitude formation. The significance of perceived fit between two product classes while evaluating brand extensions has been highlighted by many researchers (Saedi 2016:51). Perceived fit can be described as the accumulation of shared associations between the brand extension and the brand. Thereby, the perceived fit can be categorized either as *product category fit* or *brand-level fit*. Product category fit refers to the similarity between the extension category and the product category of the parent brand. Brand-level fit in contrast, refers to the similarity between the parent brand image and the brand image of the extension product (Czellar 2003: 9). The most positive evaluations of brand extensions are given to those brand extensions which exhibit a high extent of fit on product category fit and brand-level fit (Saedi 2016:51).

Nevertheless, the perceived fit or similarity between a parent brand and its extension is not always apparent. For instance, even if the product category fit between the motorcycle product category, e.g. motorcycles from Harley-Davidson, and the tobacco product category seems to be far-fetched at first glance, both product categories can represent a relative appropriate brand-level fit (rough, freedom, masculinity). However, there are many examples where companies failed to extend their brands because of a poor perceived fit. A famous example was Colgate's attempt to extend their portfolio to food products called Colgate's Kitchen Entrees. The idea was to make a vertical product diversification by offering consumers a Colgate meal and let them afterwards use the Colgate toothpaste to brush their teeth (Haig 2005: 97). Clearly the original brand name which consumers associated with oral hygiene did not work favorably for many people to think about a "delightful" Colgate meal and thus, Colgate withdraw that brand.

In contrast, an extension with good fit is anticipated to lead to associations similar to those of the parent brand, which in turn not only may strengthen the parent brand's existing image but also lead to more favorable parent brand attitudes. To sum up, consumers

highly consider the extent of perceived fit between the parent brand and its extension. Thereby, the consistency of the extensions with the original brand concept is also a crucial factor (Saedi 2016: 51).

When it comes to cross-gender brand extensions, brand-level fit seems to be the crucial factor. Cross-gender brand extensions are in general extensions to the same product category. Hence, associations which are triggered on the original brand image and brand concept play a more significant role than the product category fit. It seems logical that extending the offer to the opposite gender may be challenging in terms of perceived fit. Throughout history, companies gendered their brands and consumers have built upon gendered products as a possibility to express their gender identities (Avery 2012: 3-4). Nowadays, gendered brands are present in a plethora of product categories as, for instance, razors, chocolate, drinks or even pens etc.

Therefore, consumers will associate a cross-gender brand extension with the attitudes and beliefs they shared about the parent brand. As gender is still a focal point in many brand narratives (Avery 2012: 3-4), companies offering gendered brands, spent their marketing strategy and efforts explicitly on attracting the original target group. However, this may be a critical factor for cross-gender brand extensions because this implies that the brand image of the parent brand may rather be unattractive for the opposite gender.

2.1.3. Functional versus symbolic product categories

Another crucial factor which has an impact on the evaluation of brand extensions is the type of product category, or respectively types of brand positioning. Park et al. (1986) also refers to the *brand concept*. Brand concept refers to the meaning of the brand toward the consumer and can be either functional, symbolic or experimental¹ (Park et al. 1986: 136). Functional needs arise from the motivation to solve consumption-related problems of any kind. That is why brands, which display a functional product type, offer solutions to these problems, e.g. tooth paste for oral hygiene. Symbolic needs in contrast, represent

¹ Park et al. (1986: 136) defines experimental needs as “desires for products that provide sensory pleasure, variety and/or cognitive stimulation”. However, this brand concept will not be specified any further because the subsequent studies cross-gender brand extensions only concentrate on functional any symbolic product categories as well

an individual's desire for products that fulfill needs for self-enhancement, role position or ego-identification (Park et al. 1986: 136). Hence, symbolic product types allow consumers to be associated with a desired group, role or self-concept of their choice (Czellar 2003: 12).

Park's et al. (1986) classification of brand types is especially valuable for the examination of cross-gender brand extensions. Symbolic products evoke more extrinsic motivation for consumers as social approval and personal expression. Hence, consumers fear that wrong symbolic products may lead to a social and psychological risk. Functional products, however, are linked to basic motivations and their value is mostly determined by how well they succeed in solving consumption-related problems. Hence, the desired benefits from such products are more intrinsic in nature. The social and psychological risk of functional products is much lower compared to symbolic products.

Because of the self-expressive and emotional attributes, a symbolic product offers, it is more likely that such products evoke more rejection than functional ones when evaluating cross-gender brand extensions (Jung & Lee 2006: 68-69).

2.2. Gender, gender role attitudes and identity in the context of consumer behavior

Throughout history, investigating behavioral differences between men and women, both in psychology and consumer behavior, were primarily based on sex. However, gender analysis has taken an increasing role in consumer behavior research regarding sex and gender differences (Fischer & Arnold 1994: 164-166).

The term *sex* refers to an individual's biological sex, i.e. whether an individual is male or female. *Sexuality* refers to the sexual orientation of an individual, so whether an individual is heterosexual, homosexual, transsexual etc. In contrast, *gender* encompasses traits and behavioral characteristics derived from society and culture, i.e. a set of cultural roles (Palan 2001). Deaux (1985: 51) refers to gender as "the psychological features frequently associated with these biological states". However, a clear distinguishability between sex and gender is not always easy and there are still many differences of opinion when it

comes to the definition of those terms. For instance, the Oxford English Dictionary (2017) defines gender as:

“either of the two sexes (male and female), especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones. The term is also used more broadly to denote a range of identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.”

The American Heritage Dictionary (2018) adds to their definition of gender in its Usage Notes:

“Some people maintain that the word sex should be reserved for reference to the biological aspects of being male or female or to sexual activity, and that the word gender should be used only to refer to sociocultural roles [...] In some situations, this distinction avoids ambiguity, as in gender research, which is clear in a way that sex research is not. The distinction can be problematic, however.”

So, what does referring to sociocultural roles mean in particular when denoting the term gender? Determining whether an individual is male or female, by biological means, is unambiguous. However, its role, traits and behavioral characteristics can strongly vary across societies and cultures. The biological sex itself does not explain those ultimately. For instance, women from the small Chinese ethnic group Mosou are the heads of household, whereas men play a subordinate role in society (Genova 2017). In contrast, women’s rights in Saudi Arabia is very limited compared to other countries (rank 138 out of 144 according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2017 (Johnson 2017)). The allocation of men and women to occupational and family roles leads to different experiences which in turn determine to a great extent how skill, behaviors and attitudes as well as gender stereotypes are developed and fostered (Schwartz & Rubel 2005). Hence, the surroundings and culture influence how the roles between men and women (gender role attitudes) are perceived in a particular society as well as individuals are identifying (gender identity) themselves with those traits and roles.

Gender identity and *gender role attitudes* are important features of gender and have been increasingly studied in consumer behavior research (Palan 2001). More explicitly, gender role attitudes refer to beliefs which roles are appropriate for men and women. Gender role attitudes are individual for each person, however, they are strongly influenced by culture and society. Those attitudes can vary from egalitarian (tendency to believe that the same roles are acceptable for men and women) to traditional ones (tendency to believe that different role men and women are appropriate) (Fischer & Arnold 1994: 166-167).

Gender identity is an individual's perception of his or her gender or the degree an individual identifies with specific traits. Those traits can be classified as masculine traits, e.g. dominant, competitive, aggressive, and feminine traits, e.g. sensitive, expressive, tender. However, men and women have characteristics of both traits to differing degrees (Fischer & Arnold 1994). Bem (1974) claims that there are also neutral traits (e.g. truthful, conventional, adaptable) next to masculine and feminine traits. Thus, gender identity can correlate with the biological sex or can differ from it, i.e. men identifying primarily with female traits and vice versa. In other words, gender identity can also be defined as an individual's psychological sex (Spence 1984: 83).

2.2.1. Gender-relevant empirical findings: shift from sex classification to gender-specific analysis

One of the main objectives of this master's thesis is trying to point out the possible impact of gender role attitudes on the perception and evaluation on cross-gender brand extensions. Because of lack of research on cross-gender brand extensions it is not possible to acquire all necessary knowledge from studies which dealt with cross-gender brand extensions as main issue. Hence, the reader firstly gets to know what scholars could distill for consumer behavior research in the past by focusing on a gender-related analysis in general before the newly topic of cross-gender brand extension is pursued. Moreover, the approach of the researches and their findings should be very useful for conceptualizing the theoretical framework as well as for formulating adequate interview questions. Therefore, this subchapter aims to outline several findings in consumer behavior research which focused on a gender-related analysis.

Since the 1960s, the attention in consumer behavior research changed increasingly from simple sex classification (male - female) to a focus on gender-specific variables like gender identity and gender role attitudes (Palan 2001; Ye & Robertson 2012). Research has shown that focusing simply on biological differences between men and women is not sufficient. Researchers who tried to analyze consumer and psychological differences between men and women have focused especially on cognitive differences in abilities and processing because these are relevant for the consumption process (Fischer & Arnold 1994). Researchers believe that differences in consumer behavior could be explained by the different physical make-up of men and women and are mostly explained by chromosomes, hormones and brain lateralization (Fischer & Arnold 1994; Putrevu 2001).

For instance, testosterone is the central hormone which evokes a different development of men and women and thus, impacts the behavior to a large extent. Brain lateralization is also considered to explain sex differences. The diverse brain structures of men and women trigger disparate cognitive processing. In particular mathematical, visual and verbal abilities appear to differ between men and women (Fischer & Arnold 1994: 164-166; Putrevu 2001: 3-5).

However, research found early that observations based on biological differences by itself are not enough to explain all differences in behavior between men and women. First, it is acknowledged the fact that men and women hold characteristics of masculine and feminine traits. In the mid-1970s, this approach dominated the gender identity research and the rise of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Palan 2001). Both measures are self-report questionnaires where participants state to which extent they identify to certain traits (masculine, feminine and neutral in the BSRI) and are popular until today to measure someone's gender identity for research purposes.

Moreover, social explanations for differences between men and women have been extensively investigated and there is reasonable support for several claims. Putrevu (2001: 11) expressed succinctly the interaction between physical sex differences and the socioeconomic system of a society, "while it is undoubtedly true that significant biological differences exist between men and women, it is also true that the socialization

process is likely to enhance rather than diminish these differences”. In addition, social approaches and theories can also explain behavior differences between cultures whereas biological explanations fail at this point. The above-mentioned aspects will be revisited in detail during the next chapter.

Subsequently, an overview over important empirical findings concerning gender in consumer behavior will be presented. On the one hand, a better understanding is created by the potential extraction of gender-specific analysis for research and marketing purposes. On the other hand, the findings will generate the requisite know-how to conceive the theoretical framework within the scope of the master’s thesis.

A research conducted by Coughlin and O’Connor (1985) investigated the reactions of individuals to different women portrayals in advertisements. The results exhibited that the purchase intention of women differed significantly based on their personality traits and role attitudes. Women which held more feminine traits than other participants were much more favorable toward advertisement which portrayed non-traditional female roles. Hence, they also showed greater purchase intentions than their counterparts with relatively more masculine traits (Coughlin & O’Connor 1985). In conclusion, their research showed that masculine gender identity and gender role attitudes describe more differences in purchase intention as a reaction to female role portrayals in advertisements than biological sex (Coughlin & O’Connor 1985; Palan 2001: 8). On the other hand, as Coughlin & O’Connor (1985) expected, androgynous² males and females reacted similarly to the advertisement. Jaffe and Berger (1988 & 1994) also linked gender role attitudes to gender role portrayals in advertisement in their studies and found that gender identity and gender role attitudes are significantly associated to preferences for gender role positioning in advertising. However, the relationship and effectiveness vary from product category to product category. Consequently, they concluded that it is important for marketers to identify the overall preferences and cultural changes of a society to enhance advertising effectiveness. Therefore, regarding this master’s thesis, it is important to understand the cultural situation in India in respect of gender role attitudes in detail. Though India is still seen as a relatively traditional country in respect of gender

² having characteristics of both sexes

role attitudes compared to the Western societies, India is witnessing substantial changes in the social as well as economic status of women (Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994: 53-54). Therefore, possible differences between the generations should be identified and integrated in the analysis. Furthermore, several product categories should be considered during the interviews because of the varying relationship between gender role attitudes and specific products.

The results derived from Coughlin's and O'Connor's (1985) study also show the possible drawbacks which can occur if marketing strategies address explicitly specific gender portrayals. Moreover, it shows the dangers of extending the original brand to the opposite gender because it may not be accepted by the new customer group.

Another popular study concerning gender role attitudes and gender identity was undertaken by Fischer and Arnold (1994). They conducted a field study on Christmas shopping behaviors. They could show that sex, gender identity and gender role attitudes are unique independent constructs as well as that gender identity and gender role attitudes have a greater impact on shopping behavior than biological sex. Those individuals in the field study which held more or stronger feminine traits (independently from the biological sex) showed not only greater involvement in Christmas shopping but also a greater enjoyment. Furthermore, individuals who had more egalitarian role attitudes, in particular regarding female roles, enjoyed the task more as well. Moreover, men identifying themselves more with egalitarian gender role attitudes, for instance, participating more in housework, were physically more active in the task and spent more time for shopping as well. While during this field research relatively more women enjoyed the task than men, the study could nonetheless reveal the great impact of gender role attitudes and gender identity regarding shopping behavior carried out by the individuals. Fischer and Arnold (1994) also concluded that gender role attitudes are better predictors of behavior than gender identity, due to its demonstrated relevance to consumption (Fischer & Arnold 1994: 178-179). The latter is very important for the investigation of this master's thesis as India is assumed to be a country with relatively traditional gender role attitudes. Hence, the inverse conclusion of the previous presented study is that more traditional gender role attitudes should result into greater discrepancies between men and women concerning shopping behavior or the evaluation and perception of cross-gender brand extensions.

2.3. Cross-gender brand extensions

Cross-gender brand extension means to use an already established brand name and extend it to target the opposite sex. The term cross-gender brand extension is a relatively new one and was first introduced by Jung and Lee in 2006³. However, cross-gender brand extensions are not a new phenomenon. In history already several masculine brands like Levi's and Gillette, extended their portfolio to female customers. However, there is an increasing trend of cross-gender brand extensions to target male customers (Jung & Lee 2006: 67).

2.3.1. Jung and Lee's research findings

In their quantitative study Jung and Lee (2006) examined the consumers' evaluations of cross-gender extensions to identify possible conditions for successful cross-gender brand extensions. Gender of the brand, gender of consumers, and product type were considered as main factors that may influence the evaluation of cross-gender extensions. The experimental design of their study contained two functional (hair gel/spray) and a symbolic (high-end fashion) product category. The reason for this was that Jung and Lee (2006) anticipated differences in the evaluation because symbolic products exhibit a higher level of social and psychological risk than functional ones. In order to measure the manipulation of gender crossing extensions for both product categories, a masculine and a feminine brand were chosen⁴. During the experiment, it was announced that those brands would launch new product lines to target the opposite gender group, e.g. Hugo Boss Ladies. 233 undergraduate students took part in this study. As a result, Jung and Lee (2006) showed that all three key conditional factors (gender of the brand, gender of consumers, product category) had an influence on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. An interesting finding was that an extension which was made from a masculine brand to target women were more accepted than the other way around. Moreover, the gender of the consumer as well as the product category showed significant

³ A custom Google Web Search for "cross-gender brand extension" until the time range 2006 leads to no results

⁴ Hugo Boss and Chanel were chosen for masculine and feminine brand for high-end fashion whereas Gatzby and Sifone were chosen for hair gel/spray

effects on the evaluation of the simulated cross-gender brand extensions. However, female students were more open-minded toward cross gender extensions than men. Also as expected, the acceptance of cross-gender brand extensions for the symbolic product category was minor than for the functional product category (Jung & Lee 2006). The results also exhibited a pattern that the brand extension effected the attitude of the participants toward the original brand itself. This explanation supports previous research findings about brand extensions which may also influence the original brand (Aaker 1990; Jung & Lee 2006: 73).

2.3.2. Ulrich's research findings

The more recent study by Ulrich (2013) continued the approach of Jung and Lee (2006), however, it integrated the effect of gender identity and gender role attitudes additional to the biological sex of the participants. Thereby, Ulrich (2013) tackled some limitations of Jung and Lee's (2006) study. First, they expanded the experimental design to three product categories instead of two. Second, Ulrich criticized that the product categories in the above-mentioned study hold respectively a moderate masculine or feminine image because those product categories are used by both sexes in general. Thus, Ulrich chose product categories which are attributed as highly masculine or feminine⁵. Finally, the research of Jung and Lee (2006) was conducted in Korea and Singapore, both countries which exhibit a relatively high level of masculinity (Ulrich 2013: 796). Ulrich (2013) points out that it is necessary to investigate western cultures which pursue more egalitarian role models. Hence, gender identity and gender role attitudes were also integrated as measures as it was assumed that those will have a major effect next to biological sex of the participants. Gender identity and gender role attitudes were measured through self-report questionnaires. Considering the above-mentioned aspects, Ulrich (2013) collected a sample of 420 French consumers. The aim of the study was to examine how the independent measures influenced the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions⁶. In contrast to Jung and Lee's (2006) findings, the biological sex of the participants had no significant effect on any of the dependent variables, meaning that

⁵ the chosen categories were face skincare, shampoo and soda drinks

⁶ The dependent variables in detail were: 1) attitude toward the extension, 2) purchase intent of the extension, 3) attitude toward the mother brand, 4) and perception of overall fit.

male and female participants were similarly receptive to cross-gender brand extensions (Ulrich 2013: 802-803). Ulrich (2013: 805) explains the disparity of results with the different values which are distinctive in Western and Asian societies. France displays higher femininity compared to Korea and Singapore which score high on masculinity. A high degree of masculinity in turn equals traditional gender role attitudes. In contrast, gender role attitudes showed a significant impact (as assumed) on the attitude toward cross-gender brand extensions as well as on the purchase intended. Participants which held more traditional gender role attitudes were more reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions than those with more egalitarian ones. Unexpectedly, the gender identity of the participants had no significant effect on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. Only a slight tendency of consumers which could be classified as highly masculine could be detected as they showed a lower attitude toward the extensions compared to their counterparts (Ulrich 2013: 803-804). These findings are consistent with the results of Fischer and Arnold (1994) who also concluded that gender role attitudes are better predictors of behavior than gender identity.

The studies of Jung and Lee (2006) as well as of Ulrich (2013) give crucial insights and starting points for the topic of this master's thesis. First, the study of Ulrich (2013) shows that gender role attitudes have a significant impact on the evaluation on cross-gender brand extensions. Whereas, Jung and Lee (2006) could show that the biological sex significantly influenced the perception of cross-gender brand extensions, Ulrich (2013) contested those results. However, both samples were quite different and it is very possible that the biological sex in Jung and Lee's (2006) study indirectly represented traditional gender role attitudes because of the relative high masculinity which prevails in Korea and Singapore. Hence, this implies the importance of integrating cultural aspects into the analysis of this thesis. Moreover, both studies prove that a simple sex classification is not sufficient but rather sociocultural aspects of gender must be considered to get a better comprehension of consumer behavior and in specific the arising differences between men and women.

3. CULTURAL CONTEXT

While brand extensions and the possible effects of gender have been reviewed in the previous chapter, this chapter will concentrate on the cultural context with its specifics. Though, gender itself is already a culture related term, reviewing consumer behavior in a cultural context gives a more holistic understanding of consumerism and integrates important factors like cultural changeability. In the first half of the chapter, the importance of consumer values will be outlined. As values stimulate motivation for behavioral response, it is crucial for marketing purposes to understand the values of a specific society. Thereby, the GLOBE Project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions of national culture represent popular models which measure cultural values across the globe through an enormous collective effort. Moreover, both models integrate a value dimension which explicitly refers to gender issues and thus, both contain valuable information for gender related marketing strategies like cross-gender brand extensions.

In a next step, the Indian culture, especially in respect of gender equality, will be presented. The aim is to get a better understanding of Indian gender issues and attitudes about gender roles which in turn may affect the evaluation of cross-gender brand extension. Furthermore, a fundamental understanding of the culture is a requisite for preparing purposeful interview questions as it is for companies to implement effective marketing strategies. Lastly, India's cultural value scores according to GLOBE Project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions of national culture will be introduced and evaluated based on the prior presented study findings about Indian gender issues.

3.1. Culture and consumer behavior

The constant challenge of consumer behavior is its variability. First, consumer needs are heterogeneous around the world. Each culture desires and values goods differently which makes it for global companies highly important to adapt to the local circumstances. Second, several different factors like technology, environment or culture continuously change consumer needs and desires, and thus also consumer behavior changes (De Mooij 2011: 67 - 108). Moreover, culture is learned behavior that can change and develop over time and therefore, alter the consumption behavior, i.e. the social process. Hence, the

changeability of consumer behavior as well as the factors which influence the consumer behavior is crucial for firms and marketers to understand how to successfully launch brands.

Consumer behavior in a cultural context is a vast research field. Hence, this master's thesis will only focus on few areas. Thereby, topics have been chosen which are crucial for the research topic of this master's thesis.

3.1.1. Definition of culture

An often cited description of culture is Hofstede's definition in which he refers to culture: "as the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede 2001: 9). Culture is an organized system of patterns which does not only bind people together but also helps them in interacting and living together. Individuals are outcomes of their culture and social groupings, meaning they are molded and influenced by their environment. Moreover, culture includes shared beliefs, roles and values which are passed on to the following generations (De Mooij 2011: 26).

Basically, culture can be applied to any collectivity as an organization, profession or an entire gender (Hofstede 2001: 10). Cultural groups are often delineated by national borders. Even though there is much diversity within national borders, nations should not be equated to societies. A dominant first language, mass media as well as a national education system lead to further integration of the people living within these national borders. Moreover, nations are political units for which vast statistics exist such as, for instance, GDP per capita, demographics etc. Such statistics help companies to estimate the potential market in a given nation (De Mooij 2011: 30).

3.1.2. Consumer values and cultural values

Values are centrally held cognitive elements which stimulate motivation for behavioral response. Values are not only held by individuals but also by collectives for which culture is a necessity (Hofstede 2001: 5). Different value orientations cause disparities in

preferences for brands as well as products (Vinson et al. 1977). Values in turn, are mold by culture. Therefore, it is necessary to comprehend how culture functions (de Mooij 2011: 23).

Values refer according to Rokeach (1973: 5) to a belief that one end-state of existence is desirable to an opposing end-state of existence. In other words, values can be defined as a belief about things we consider to be worth and are often measures along a continuum between those to end-states, e.g. modern vs traditional. Thereby, value refers to a single belief whereas attitudes are a belief system about a specific object (De Mooij 2011: 24). Moreover, attitudes as gender role attitudes are a lasting evaluation of people, objects or issues. However, “consumers” attitudes are guided by their values which in turn make them culture-bond (de Mooij 2011: 113).

Important characteristic about values are their stability and endurance across generations. Moreover, children already develop stable value systems at a young age. Value systems are a set of beliefs about desirable end-states of existence. However, values are invisible unless they become visible in behavior (Hofstede 2001: 10). While several studies proved the stability of values, other socioeconomic researches state that values are converging over time because of modernization (Inglehart & Baker 2000: 20).

Cultures can also be categorized into value categories or so-called dimensions of national culture. Labeling nations through cultural dimensions enables to compare countries and working on an empirical base. Dimensions can be divided into individual-level dimensions and into culture-level dimensions. Individual-level dimensions focus on the exploration of individuals whereas culture-level dimensions mirror how individuals are molded by the society in which they live. Especially national cultures, i.e. culture-level dimensions, are relevant for marketing strategies. Advertising is mostly equated to mass marketing because companies want to reach as many consumers as possible. Hence, marketers need to know what most people want. Thereby, the individual’s personality is merely of secondary importance (Anholt 1999: 66).

Subsequently, two models will be presented in greater detail which will also be used later to determine Indian’s national culture: Hofstede’s dimensions of national culture and the

GLOBE study. Those models were chosen for one main reason. Besides the popularity of those models, both include a dimension which exclusively refer to gender.

3.1.2.1. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture

Hofstede's five dimensions of national culture are one of the most popular cultural models. Each dimension for a specific country is measured along a scale from 0 to 100. This does not only allow to comprehend basic value differences quickly but also to compare different countries with each other. Originally Hofstede integrated four dimensions into the model: Power Distance (PDI), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV) and Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS). Based on the results of other researchers, two additional dimensions were added: Long-term versus Short-term orientation (LTO) and Indulgence versus Restraint (IND) with the result that nowadays the model contains in total six dimensions of national cultures. The model is based on quantitative research and assesses 76 national cultures (Hofstede 2011: 5-10). Table 1 summarizes the content of each dimension.

Table 1. Dimension of national cultures. Definitions taken from Hofstede (2011).

Dimension	Characteristics
Power Distance	the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally
Uncertainty Avoidance	extent to which a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations
Individualism versus Collectivism	degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups
Masculinity versus Femininity	distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society
Long-term versus Short-term orientation	extent to which a society exhibits future oriented perspective rather than short term perspective

Indulgence versus Restraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human desires related to enjoying life and having fun • society that controls gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms
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Though each dimension has surely its influence on consumer behavior, the dimension of Masculinity versus Femininity is of primary importance for this study. However, the dimension of Individualism versus Collectivism seems to be also of great importance for the topic of gender role attitudes and gender identity. Hence, both dimensions will be analyzed in greater detail.

The Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS) dimension refers to the “distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society” (Hofstede 2011: 11). Masculine societies appreciate achievement, success and competitiveness. There is also a greater difference between men’s and women’s values. Masculine societies are also characterized by great social role differentiations between genders. Moreover, countries which score high on masculinity tend to hold moralistic attitudes about sexuality. Feminine societies in contrast, put much greater value on the quality of life than competition. Women as well as men tend to be more modest and caring. The gap between men’s and women’s values are much smaller as well as the social role differentiation (Hofstede 2011: 12-13). Those differences also affect consumer behavior. In masculine cultures people tend to consume to show off whereas in feminine cultures, where status is not so important, people consume more for use (de Mooij 2011: 35).

The Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV) dimension refers to the “degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups” (Hofstede 2011: 11). The ties between people are relatively loose in individual cultures. Moreover, people strive for individualism and uniqueness, i.e. they want to be different from others. Self-expression plays a greater role than conformity to public roles. Individuals have the possibility to join many different groups and express various social roles (Carducci 2012: 414). This implies that individual needs and the expression of them are more accepted among

countries with high individualism. A logical consequence should be that those societies are also more receptive to cross-gender brand extensions. In contrast, in collectivistic countries people are integrated into strong and cohesive groups, e.g. strong family bindings (Hofstede 2011: 11). People in such societies found their identity on the social environment (De Mooij 2011: 34). Uniqueness of the individual needs is less emphasized. Hence, standing out in collectivistic cultures is often seen as something negative. Moreover, expatriations, duties and roles are highly related with being a member of a group. For instance, even though a young Japanese student does not like to study economics, nevertheless, he/she may choose this career path to avoid conflicts with his/her parents (Carducci 2012: 414). This implies that consumer decisions are stronger influenced by subjective norms than in individualist societies. For example, though there might be a behavioral intention for an individual to perform a certain action (i.e. buying a specific product), he/she may refuse not to get in conflict with the social norms and attitudes in her environment. The issue that the behavioral intent of an individual is only a part of the actual behavior function, was conceptualized by Fishbein and Ajzen's (1967) in their popular Theory of Reasoned Action. Thereby, social norms play a crucial role in consuming behavior (Ajzen 2012).

Hence, it should be expected that collectivistic countries, especially in combination with masculine cultures, are more reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions. In collectivistic countries individuals learn from the beginning specific values and social norms which they rather will not question and hence, dislike products which are not aligned with them. Moreover, even if some consumers have the behavioral intention to try out cross-gendered products, they may refuse to buy the product in order not to "lose their face" by consuming products which were originally designed for the opposite sex.

3.1.2.2. The GLOBE Project

Based on Hofstede's dimension of national culture, the GLOBE (Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research) Project arose which was conceived by Robert J. House in 1991. The aim of the GLOBE Project was to investigate cross-cultural interactions. Based on a questioning of over 17.000 managers from 62 different societies, cultural competencies were grouped into nine major dimensions of culture and leadership.

However, not only values relevant to the nine dimensions were scored but also practices (House 2004: 3). Practices are acts or the “way things are done in this culture” whereas values can be also understood as beliefs how “things should be done” (House 2004: XV). Values and practices were measured at industrial, organizational and societal level. Compared to Hofstede, additional dimensions were added and a more specific distinction between the dimensions was made, e.g. distinction between *institutional* and *in-group collectivism*.

Hence, the nine dimensions of the GLOBE Project are: *Performance orientation*, *Assertiveness*, *Future orientation*, *Humane Orientation*, *Institutional collectivism*, *In-group collectivism*, *Gender egalitarianism*, *Power Distance* and *Uncertainty Avoidance* (House 2004: XV-XVII).

In the same way as with the Hofstede’s model, this study will only concentrate on the most relevant dimension for the topic of the thesis, i.e. *Gender egalitarianism*. The *Gender egalitarianism* dimension differs from Hofstede’s *masculinity versus femininity* dimension as it focuses exclusively on the cultural beliefs whether men and women are determined to specific roles in society. House (2004: 344-347) points out that Hofstede’s approach comprises several subdimensions, hence, it is very difficult to work with the masculinity versus femininity dimension. First, it encompasses the performance orientation or the degree to which a culture fosters rewards respectively. On the other hand, it also describes the extent to which a culture encompasses traditional gender roles versus egalitarian gender roles. Moreover, typical behavior patterns are allocated to masculinity and femininity, e.g. masculine societies are characterized by success striving whereas feminine societies are more human oriented. That is why the masculinity versus femininity dimension was split up into three distinct dimensions for the GLOBE Project: *Gender egalitarianism*, *Performance orientation* and *Assertiveness*.

The more a culture tends to be gender egalitarian, the more the society beliefs that men and women are suited for the same social roles. Thereby, the model of gender-egalitarianism was based on two components: value-based manifestations and behavioral ones (practices). Value-based manifestations have integrated gender stereotypes and a

gender-role ideology whereas practices were measured through gender equality and gender discrimination (House 2004: 386).

3.1.2.3. Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and the GLOBE Project: usability of the models for marketing strategies and deficits

Like already mentioned Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and the GLOBE Project were mainly chosen because both include a "gender dimension" which is highly important for the topic of this thesis. However, no matter how popular a framework is, the value for companies and marketers is determined by the usability for potential marketing strategies. That is why this subchapter tries to record possible advantages as well as limitations of those models.

First of all, both models provide country scores which allow a comparability between countries. There only exist a few dimensional models which provide country scores (de Mooij 2004: 32), hence, having the possibility to compare countries with scales containing absolute numbers is a major advantage. Comparing countries also enables the creation of cultural clusters as done for the GLOBE Project (House 2004). Deploying similar marketing strategies for clustered regions may decrease marketing efforts and expenditures. Moreover, in case a company wants to enter a new country it can use its experience from another country which holds similar values. Second, as already mentioned in **chapter 2** a gender-specific consideration of markets has clear advantages over a simple male-female classification. Analyzing the market based on the socioeconomic environment is highly important as it can be a much better predictor how the consumers will behave. Thus, gender role attitudes and gender identity play an important part for consumer behavior. Hence, a framework with a dimension which explicitly refers to gender egalitarianism and values connected with it, is another major advantage of those models. Third, both frameworks are based on tremendous data sets. Hofstede's database contained over 100.000 questionnaires and 93 countries and regions have been scored so far (Hofstede 2011) whereas the GLOBE Project is based on the questioning of 17.000 managers from 62 different societies. Moreover, those frameworks and their data collection have been constantly expanded. In short, such collective effort

is nearly irreplaceable and probably one of the reasons why those studies enjoy such great popularity.

Nevertheless, those frameworks also have their downsides. Even though the samples of both frameworks are vast, the representatives of the samples should be critically questioned. Hofstede's database consists merely of people which worked in one of the local subsidiaries of the multinational corporation IBM (Hofstede 2011: 6). The GLOBE Project collected their data from 951 different organizations, however, only managers were questioned (House 2004: XV). However, culture is not limited to national cultures. Culture also occurs in industries, companies, professions and functions which even go beyond national cultures. Each subculture shares its own values and beliefs or underlying assumptions (Schneider & Barsoux 2003). For instance, the professional culture between bankers and teachers may completely develop differently because both undergo a different education, training, peer pressure, etc. It may be assumed that a database which merely is based on surveys from one multinational corporation is at least partly biased by this specific corporate culture whereas a dataset merely based on questioning managers is biased by a specific professional culture.

Another limitation can be the comparability between countries. Researchers measure values or behavior respectively within social systems. The data collection in both cases were mostly based on self-report questionnaires. However, individuals make subjective judgments, comparing themselves with others in their social system which in turn can make a comparison between different cultures difficult (de Mooij 2004: 28). For instance, in some societies equal payment between men and women may be seen as an egalitarian intervention whereas for other societies granting women the right to obtain driving licenses may be seen as a progress for equal treatment between men and women. Thus, measuring values by itself can be misleading. In contrast to Hofstede's dimensions of national culture, the GLOBE Project also scored practices next to values. As practices represent how things are actually done in a given culture, it is no surprise that practice scores differ much more than value scores between the countries.

3.1.3. Gender roles as a social process and changeability

As the above chapter concentrated on explaining the culture as the total of shared values a group of people holds, this subchapter focuses on the presentation of cultural values and gender roles, as social process and its changeable characteristics.

3.1.3.1. Social Role Theory

Whereas there is evidence that biological differences between men and women lead to different behavioral patterns and thus, different consumer behavior, lot of scholars claim that the origin of sex differences in human behavior evolved mostly through social processes.

A very popular theory in that respect is the social role theory (Putrevu 2001; Schwartz & Rubel 2005). The social role theory deals with gender-specific relationships as well. The underlying idea of this theory is that the allocation of tasks and responsibilities between men and women in a given society determines to a great extent how skill, behaviors and attitudes as well as gender stereo types are developed and fostered. The reason for this, is that the allocation of men and women to certain occupational and family roles leads the people to experience the environment differently. Those varying experiences in turn mold the behavioral skills and attitudes etc. For instance, until now men have predominated the labor market in many professions as well as prestigious jobs with higher status and power. Therefore, men have had more opportunities to exercise power, and thus attributes like dominance and power are rather values which are assigned to men rather to women.

In contrast, women experienced in most societies more dependency from men rather than the other way around. Consequently, traits like dependency and fearfulness are rather assigned to women (Schwartz & Rubel 2005). Summarized, all these factors ultimately contribute to the actual gender differences which are noticeable in a society as seen in **Figure 1**. However, the social role theory also implies that the role structures in a society are not static but can be altered.

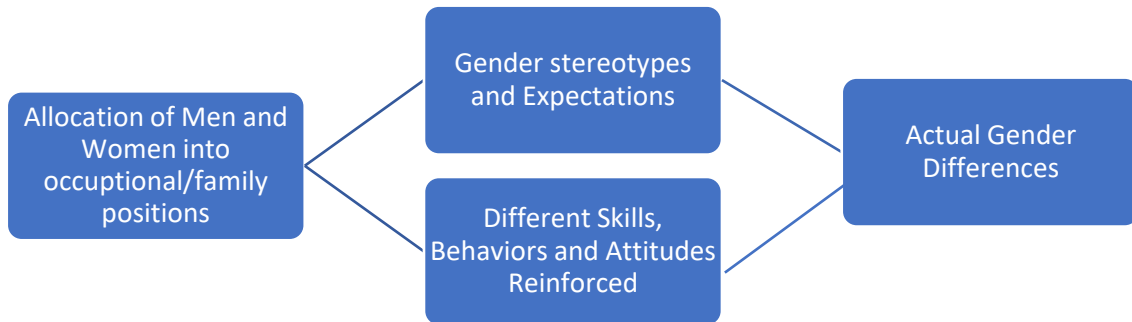


Figure 1. Simple model of the social role theory.

3.1.3.2. Changeability of culture and social roles

Shifts in the role structure between men and women could be shown in various studies. Qualls (1982) showed in his study that there is an increasing tendency for joint-decision making by husband and wife for crucial family decisions like vacations, automobiles, children's education, housing, savings. Moreover, Qualls (1982) could exhibit great differences between gender-role modern spouses and gender-role traditional spouses. Whereas gender-role modern family members perceived a more egalitarian influence on family decisions, family members which reported a more traditional view on gender roles experienced less joint-decision making.

Another study conducted by Cinamon and Rich (2002) investigated gender role differences. Participants were 126 married men and 87 women working either in computer or law firms. Cinamon and Rich (2002) categorized the participants into three profiles. The profiles defined whether a participant assigned the highest priority to work (*Work profile*), family role (*Family profile*) or to both roles equally (*Dual profile*). They found that women were underrepresented in the work profile compared to men. Moreover, more women fit the family category than men. However, Cinamon and Rich (2002) could not identify any gender differences for participants with the Dual profile.

About 40% of female participants were in the dual profile which can mainly be explained by the choice of sample were women worked in “nontraditional” jobs, and thus demonstrated nontraditional work attitudes (Cinamon & Rich 2002: 538).

There is a global trend that equality between men and women is rising in terms of job opportunities and pay. Hence, it is expected that gender differences will decrease even more over time due to the increased blur in the division of labor and responsibilities between men and women. (Palan 2001; Schwartz & Rubel 2005). As a consequence, the traditional family image is increasingly fading and alternative ways of living appear (Blackwell et al. 2001). However, this does not only concern the role of women but also the change of masculine roles. As the men’s contribution to family income steadily decreases, it is increasingly common that men participate more in family functions as housekeeping activities and child care (Blackwell et al. 2006: 508; Palan 2001: 16). In turn, men undergo new experiences which lead to change in men’s behavior. In the 21st century, men see themselves as being more sensitive which is also reflected in the shopping behavior and purchased products (Otnes & McGrath 2001) as it can be seen, for instance, in the increasing market for male personal care products (Blackwell et al. 2006: 508).

In conclusion, the above presented study findings as well as the observable trends in social roles and consumer trends along with the Social Role theory give interesting insights about the way social roles can influence values and the behavior of individuals in a society. It also gives a possible explanation why societies with relative traditional gender-roles are more reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions. Gender expectations as well as different beliefs and attitudes, that result from the allocation of societal positions, may lead to negative attitudes toward cross-gender brand extensions. In contrast, in societies with relative egalitarian gender-roles, cross-gender brands extensions may be more accepted because both, men and women, share more familiar experiences, and thus behavior and attitudes.

3.2. Indian culture

This subchapter takes up the theoretical knowledge of the previous chapters and outlines the situation about gender equality and gender roles in India. Because of the constant rapid socio-economic changes in India, an intergenerational consideration is necessary. Furthermore, the scores of Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and of the GLOBE Project will be presented and reflected.

3.2.1. Gender equality and gender role attitudes in India

India still experiences a relative high level of gender inequality and gender discrimination (Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2016; Venkatesh 1994). In the Global Gender Gap Report 2017, India only ranks 108 out 144⁷. Gender inequality is measured primarily through economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health (in India especially sex ratio at birth) and political empowerment. Nevertheless, India faces a decline in its overall gender gap (The Global Gender Gap Report 2017: 3-4; 22-23).

An explanation for the differences between men and women in the Indian culture are the dominant religious and cultural institutions. The role of women in respect of family structure and gender hierarchy is often clearly defined. Venkatesh (1994: 45-46) also refers to the "tridependent" relationship. Women are along their lifetime attached to men. Until marriage females are under protection of their fathers, during marriage they are attached to their husbands and later to their sons. Thereby, the system of patrilocality is predominant. The wife joins her husband's family whereby the husband provides for his parents. In return, parents have more incentives to favor their sons whom they give the inheritance. That is why families in India often show fewer incentives in investing into their daughters (Dhar et al. 2015: 1).

However, generalizations about the Indian society and gender roles suffer often from oversimplification (Chadda & Deb 2013; Venkatesh 1994: 43-44). For instance, there can be found great differences of gender inequality between urban and rural areas as well as

⁷ ranks for comparison: Finland (3), Germany (12), United States (49), China (100), Saudi Arabia (138)

between Indian classes and castes respectively (Venkatesh 1994: 43-44). In general, women from the urban middle-class experience more privileges than in poor rural areas. Especially, women who managed to achieve high positions in the society may be treated coequally to men (Venkatesh 1994: 43-48). Nevertheless, the role and status of women is still suppressed and far away from real egalitarianism and empowerment (Dhar et.al 2015; Jyothsna 2016; Shukla 2015). For instance, women still suffer much discrimination in education. Even if the literacy rate of women improved in the last decades⁸, females are still relatively far behind men. In 2011, men's literacy rate was 82.1% whereas women's literacy rate was only 65.5% (Jyothsna 2016: 144-145).

Especially in rural areas where traditional Indian cultures predominate, women suffer from discrimination. Such traditional attitudes about gender roles also have lasting effects on the following generations. Dhar et al. (2015) investigated the transmission of attitudes toward gender equality in India. Thereby, attitudes among children and their parents in rural India were measured. Dhar et al. (2015) could show that parents had a strong influence on the gender-equality attitudes of their children. However, girls were considerably more gender equitable than boys, disagreeing much more to traditional role expectations.

Nevertheless, there are great differences between the generations. Shukla (2015) compared the change in attitudes toward the role and status of women in India over three generations. The sample size was $n = 200$, whereby a family belonging to three generations⁹ was equated with one unit. Thereby, not only the attitudes in different gender role areas were measured but also customs and practices related to inheritance and dowry, marriage and violence against women. The results have been split into differences between genders as well as differences between generations. Significant gender differences were found in four out of ten areas: employment, social roles, attitudes toward dowry and violence against women. Whereas, women were more gender equitable regarding employment and social roles, men were more against the system of dowry and violence against women (Shukla 2015: 123-124). Nevertheless, men showed less gender

⁸ the women's literacy rate rose from 39.2% (1991) to 65.5% (2011)

⁹ ,young', ,not so young' and ,old'

egalitarianism in every area. Regarding differences between the three generations, significant differences were detected in all attitude areas. The younger generation, regardless of gender, were more gender equitable than older generations. Thereby, women from the 'young' and 'not so young' generation were more gender equitable than their male counterparts. However, women from the 'old' generations were surprisingly more traditional than men (Shukla 2015: 125).

Shukla's (2015) recent intergenerational investigations of gender roles confirm many of the above-mentioned statements. First, the findings are aligned with the study results of Dhar et al. (2015) who found that girls are more gender equitable than boys. Though men were more against the system of dowry and violence, such practices together with the women's right to inheritance are still very resistant to change (Shukla 2015: 119), showing that the "tridependent" relationship still has great impact. As criticized in chapter 5.1.2.3., this also shows that taking only values into account is not sufficient. The practices within societies must also be considered to get a better understanding of cultures and their preferences. An approach to explain those differences in values and practices is Fishbein and Ajzen's (1967) Theory of Reasoned Action. Due to the collectivistic nature of Indian culture, and thus the importance of social cohesion and social norms (Chadda & Deb 2013; Venkatesh 1994: 51) individual values may differ strongly from actual performed behavior. Moreover, the high extent of collectivism in India may rather slow down than accelerate cultural changes in certain areas at an early stage.

This short outline about gender roles exhibited the contrast about the status of men and women in India. However, it became apparent that the gender question and recent changes in general develop very versatile in India. Whereas certain sections of urban areas in India undergo drastic development, e.g. as nuclear families are becoming the predominant family structure, rural as well poor areas are still mainly affected by traditional Indian cultural values (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994). This leads to the development of two distinct and extreme profiles in India (Venkatesh 1994: 48). The status of a newly industrialized economy may reinforce the development at a different pace.

3.2.2. Indian's scoring according to Hofstede's dimension and the GLOBE Project

According to Hofstede's dimensions of national culture, India scores 56 on masculinity. As comparison, Germany (66) and the United States (62) score even higher than India whereas Finland (26) still scores much lower. Compared to the findings about gender inequality and gender discrimination presented above, 56 on a scale of 100 seems relative moderate when not even contradictive. However, it is important to remind two aspects. First, the scores represent merely values and not practices based on self-report questionnaires whereby individuals are comparing themselves with others in their social system. Moreover, the IBM's corporate culture may have had an influence on the results. Second, in contrast to the GLOBE Project, Hofstede's Masculinity versus Femininity dimension consists of several subdimensions. It encompasses, amongst others, performance orientation, gender role attitudes as well as the extent to which a society is characterized rather by masculine and feminine behavior (e.g. success striving, human oriented). As House (2004: 344-347) points out the masculinity versus femininity dimension is not transparent enough.

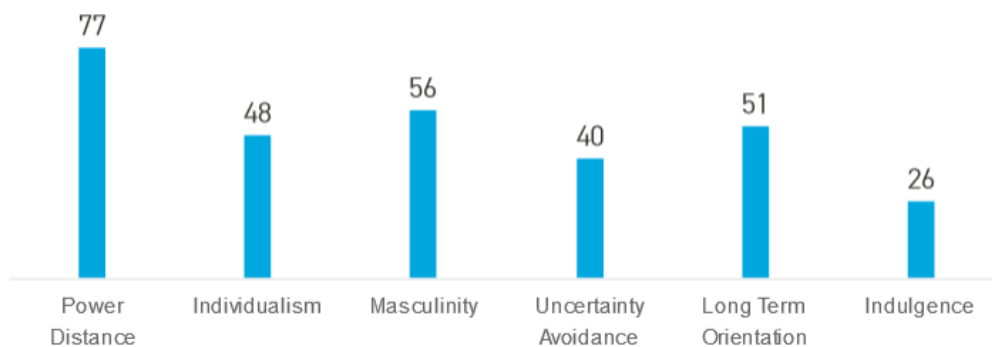


Figure 2. Cultural Dimensions of India according to Hofstede's 6-D Model. (Source: <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/india/>).

When it comes to Individualism versus Collectivism India scores 48. Compared again to Germany (67), Finland (63) and the United States (91), India scores relatively low but higher than China (20). Regarding the literature, India's relative low score is comprehensible, however, several researchers emphasized the strong cohesion of Indian

families (Chadda & Deb 2013; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994) which in turn a score of 48 out of 100 does not reflect that much. Hence, the presentation of the GLOBE Project where *Institutional collectivism* and *In-group collectivism* are treated as separate dimensions seem as a more instructive approach.

The GLOBE Project encompasses nine cultural dimensions for India, whereby not only value scores but also practice scores are depicted. In Gender egalitarianism India's Value Score is 4.51 which is equivalent to the Average GLOBE Score¹⁰. However, India's Practice Score (2.9) for Gender egalitarianism is relatively low and under the Average GLOBE Score for practices (3.37). The Practice Score reflects much better the presented literature about gender inequality and gender roles in India, whereas the Value Score once again like in Hofstede's model seems rather delusive. The great difference between India's Value Score and the Practice Score only confirms that measuring practices together are necessary to get a more realistic view of a given culture.

India's Value (5.32) as well as Practice Score for *In-group collectivism* (5.92) are relatively high and reflect the findings of the presented literature. For *Institutional collectivism* India scores, both in values and practices, much lower. As predicted separating Institutional collectivism and In-group collectivism is more insightful than the approach in Hofstede's cultural dimensions where no distinction is made.

All in all, the GLOBE Project seems to be more align with the presented literature about gender issues and gender roles in India. Also, the In-group collectivism which represents the strong family cohesion in India seems more accurate than Hofstede's Individualism versus Collectivism dimension. The GLOBE Project mostly profits from the practice scores which are absent in Hofstede's model. Moreover, due to the finer subdivision, the GLOBE Project is more instructive which in turn may help marketers to get a better overview about a specific culture.

¹⁰ average of all countries which were evaluated in the GLOBE Project

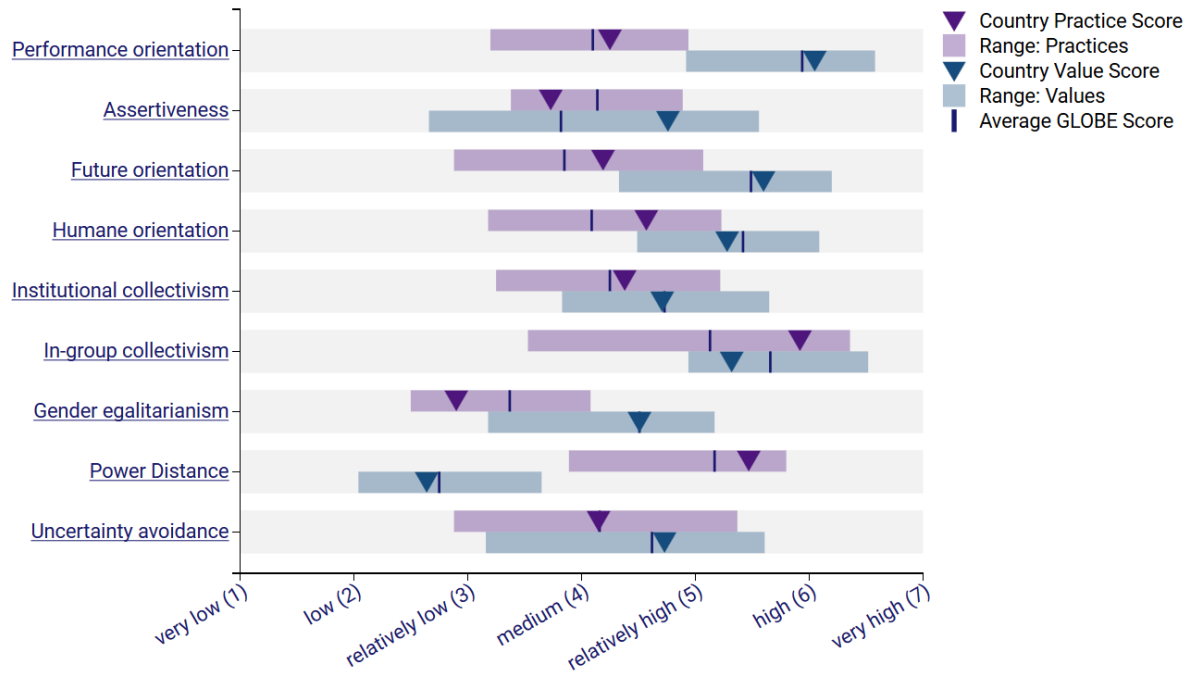


Figure 3. Cultural Practices and Values in India according to GLOBE Project. (Source: <http://globeproject.com/results/countries/IND?menu=list>).

3.3. Summary and conceptual framework

3.3.1. Summary

The topic of the master's thesis touches several research areas. Cross-gender brand extensions seem to be a promising marketing strategy to reach a new customer base. However, they are a specific type of brand extension and thus, the specific peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions must be considered when extending gendered brands to the opposite sex. First, brand-level fit is a crucial factor. Associations which are triggered on the original brand image and brand concept play a significant role because cross-gender brand extensions relate to the same product category (Aaker & Keller 1990; Czellar 2003; Saedi 2016). The fact that companies spend much marketing efforts on attracting the original target group can make an extension to the opposite sex a critical factor (Avery 2012: 3-4). Moreover, the consumer experience toward the parent brand which launches a cross-gender brand extension can be very limited and hence, the

attitudes and beliefs toward the new extensions are often limited to the brand image itself. Another important factor to consider when launching cross-gender brand extensions is the product category. Because of the self-expressive and emotional attributes a symbolic product offers, it is more likely that such products evoke more rejection than functional ones when evaluating cross-gender brand extensions (Jung & Lee 2006: 68-69). Symbolic needs represent an individual's desire for products that fulfill needs for self-enhancement, role position or ego-identification which can be conflicting with the brand concept of the original brand (Park et al. 1986: 136).

All those things marketers should consider when setting up cross-gender brand extensions. However, this is only one side of the medal. When analyzing the specific peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions, one must also think which attitudes in particular influence the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. Hence, a gender-related analysis is important. Gender encompasses traits and behavioral characteristics derived from society and allows to understand consumer behavior from a different angle compared to simple sex classification. Especially gender role attitudes and gender identity enjoyed special attention in consumer behavior research (Palan 2001). Gender role attitudes refer to appropriate behaviors for men and women whereas gender identity is an individual's perception of his or her gender or the degree an individual identifies with specific traits. Including those variables in consumer research, scholars found that they have significant impact on the consumer's decision making (cf. Coughlin & O'Connor 1985; Fischer & Arnold 1994; Jaffe & Berger 1988; Palan 2001; Ulrich 2013). Several studies claim that gender role attitudes and gender identity are better predictors for consumer behavior than the biological sex, whereby gender role attitudes had the biggest impact (Coughlin & O'Connor 1985; Fischer & Arnold 1994; Jaffe & Berger 1988; Ulrich 2013).

Jung and Lee's (2006) and Ulrich's (2013) result findings in particular are important for the master's thesis topic as they examined the evaluation of cross-gender extensions. Both resume that the gender of the brand, the gender of the consumer as well as the product category influenced the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. However, Jung and Lee (2006) referred to gender as biological sex. That is why their results showed that biological sex significantly influenced the perception of cross-gender brand extensions,

Ulrich (2013) contested those results, claiming that gender role attitudes and not the biological sex have a significant impact on the evaluation. However, both samples were quite different and it is very possible that the biological sex in Jung and Lee's (2006) study indirectly represented traditional gender role attitudes because of the relative high "masculinity" which prevails in Korea and Singapore.

Hence, this shows that it is even more important to integrate cultural aspects into the analysis of this thesis. This was done in the next step by outlining how culture affects consumer behavior. Culture can be defined as: "the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another" (Hofstede 2001: 9). The thesis specifically focused on values which in turn are molded by culture. Values are centrally held cognitive elements which stimulate motivation for behavioral response and therefore, affect attitudes as, for instance, toward gender roles. They are not only held by individuals but also by collectives for which culture is a necessity (Hofstede 2001: 5). Different value orientations cause disparities in preferences for brands as well as products (Vinson et al. 1977). That is why it is important to understand the value orientations of each culture to effectively comprehend the consumer preferences. As advertising is mostly equated to mass marketing, since companies want to reach as many consumers as possible, the individual's personality is merely of secondary importance (Anholt 1999: 66). Even if there are many cultural disparities between countries, nations are political units for which vast statistics exist as, for instance, GDP per capita and demographics. Moreover, nations share one dominant first language, mass media and a national education system also leads to a further integration of the people living within the national borders. Hence, national cultures constitute a practical unit for marketing purposes (de Mooij 2011: 30).

Thereby, the GLOBE Project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions represent popular models which measured national cultural values across the globe through an enormous collective effort. Moreover, both models integrated a value dimension which explicitly refers to gender issues, and thus both models were presented and investigated in particular within the master's thesis.

As values differ across countries it also was necessary to investigate India's values toward gender roles. According to the Social role theory, social roles can influence values and the behavior of individuals in a society. Studies showed that there are great differences between individuals which share traditional gender-role or egalitarian gender-role attitudes (Cinamon & Rich 2002; Qualls 1982). India, however, still experiences a relative high level of gender inequality and gender discrimination (Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2016; Venkatesh 1994). However, it became apparent that the gender question and recent changes in general develop very versatile in India. Whereas certain sections of urban areas in India undergo drastic development, e.g. as nuclear families are becoming the predominant family structure, rural as well as poor areas are still mainly affected by traditional Indian cultural values (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994). Due to those differences and the fact that India is a newly industrialized economy which rapidly changes, it is important to take a closer look at Indian's consumers to determine how cross-gender brand extensions will be received.

However, the analysis of Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and GLOBE Project along with the Indian studies about gender equality showed great discrepancies between the values the Indian culture shares and their practices. Individuals usually make subjective judgments, comparing themselves with others within their social system (de Mooij 2004: 28). As a result, marketers need to be critical when comparing countries solely based on values. Practices are another crucial factor which determine gender role attitudes of a culture and hence, should be included in the analysis.

3.3.2. A conceptual framework for the effects of culture and gender role attitudes on cross-gender brand extensions

Overall, the evaluation process for a product or the decision-making process to buy a product is highly complex. The proposed framework is an enormous simplification and depicts only a part of the cognitive processes which influence the evaluation of a product. Thereby, the framework only concentrates on the specific peculiarities of cross-gender brand extensions. When investigating cross-gender brand extensions as subject of discussion, the gender issue is clearly the interesting object under analysis. Otherwise the situation would be just equally to "conventional" brand extensions for which already a

lot of research has been conducted (cf. Aaker & Keller 1990; Busacca et al. 2009; Czellar 2003; Doust & Esfahlan 2012; Saedi 2016). Hence, this framework focuses on the condensed findings and theories presented in the theoretical part. Even if the framework constitutes a simplification of the whole issue, it helps to provide a good overview of the relevant relations and exhibits where attention should be paid when trying to launch a cross-gender brand extension in a given culture.

Values are molded by culture and decisively influence gender role attitudes. However, as pointed out during the analysis of Hofstede's dimensions of national culture and the GLOBE Project, practices are also a fundamental part influencing gender role attitudes. Both, values and practices, create social norms which can be very pronounced in a society like India.

Another central element which culture may affect, is the personality and the evaluation or buying intent of the cross-gender brand extensions respectively. That is because individuals do not want to get in conflict with their social environment and respect social norms (Theory of Reasoned Action). It is very reasonable that the effect of social norms in collectivistic cultures like India have greater impact than in individualistic cultures (Carducci 2012: 414; de Mooij 2011: 34). This effect can be enhanced by symbolic product categories because symbolic products often stand for self-enhancement, role position and ego-identification (Park et al. 1986: 136). Moreover, the brand concept, the perceived brand-level fit and quality of the cross-gender brand extensions, just as it does for "conventional" brand extensions, are important factors which influence the attitudes toward the product (cf. Aaker & Keller 1990; Czellar 2003; Doust & Esfahlan 2012; Saedi 2016).

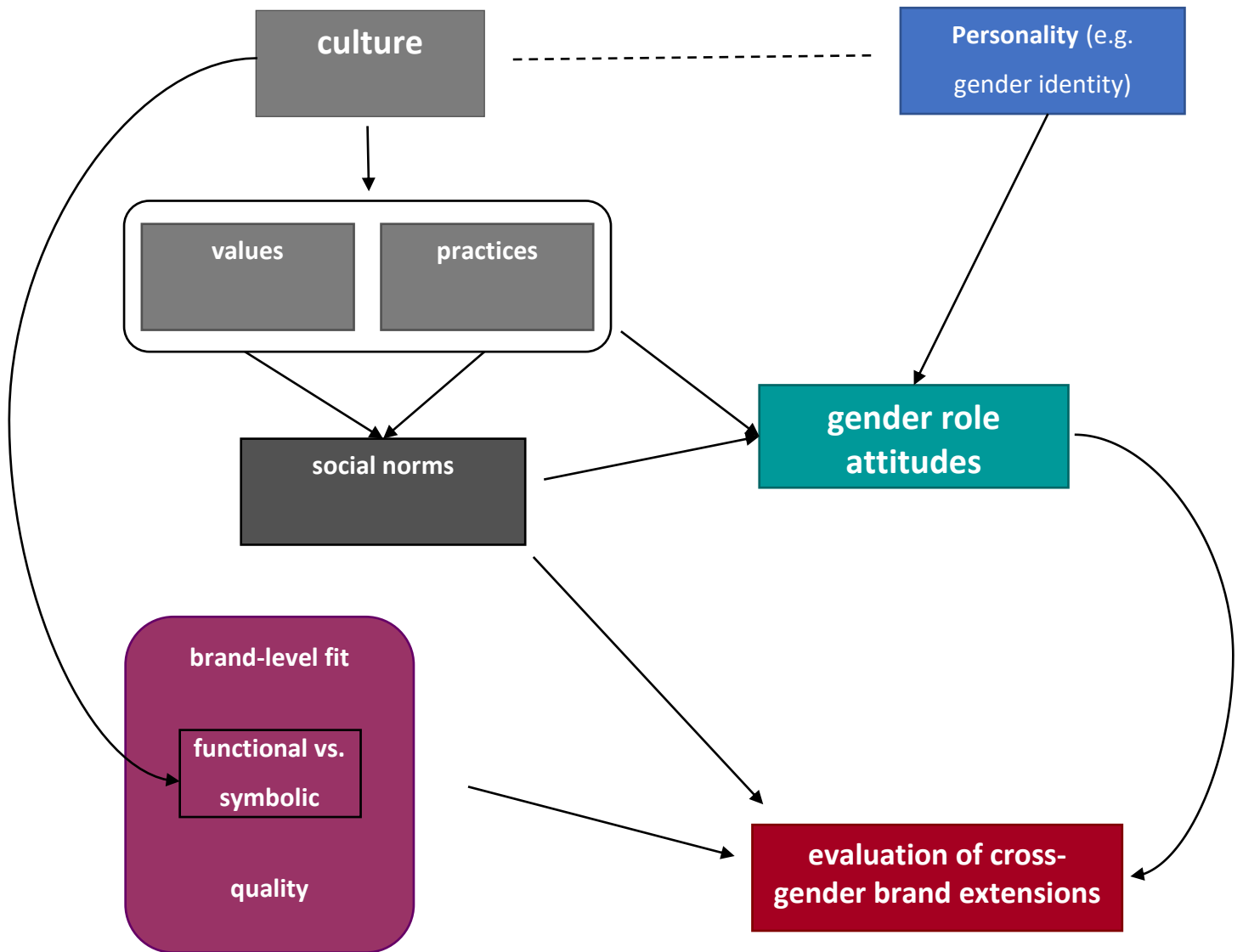


Figure 4. conceptual framework for the effect of gender role attitudes on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions.

4. METHODOLOGY

This chapter aims to convey the choice of method for this research. Subsequently, the methodological approach, data collection technique and expected samples will be described.

The study aims to achieve an in-depth understanding of culture and gender role attitudes on the perception of cross-gender brand extensions. However, the research approach is two-sided. On the one hand, most knowledge will be recovered by reviewing existing literature. This information will be used to conceptualize a theoretical framework and to improve the quality of the data collection, i.e. a deductive approach. On the other hand, this study needs to consider an inductive perspective as well. The topic of this thesis was inspired by the study results from Jung & Lee (2006) and Ulrich (2013). As the purpose of the paper is to get a better understanding about the nature of the issue, an appropriate inductive approach fits (Saunders et al. 2016: 147). In addition, both studies chose a quantitative method to analyze the effect of gender on cross-gender brand extensions. Consequently, a qualitative research method will most likely provide new insights which first need to be put in a context and second, possibly can lead to a modification of the original theoretical framework.

Qualitative research is based mostly on two research traditions. First, qualitative research makes use of the broad area of psychology. Second, qualitative research builds on methods associated from sociology and anthropology (Malhotra & Birks 2000: 158). Not only that both research traditions highly relate with the topic of the thesis but they also fit with an inductive research approach because an induction perspective helps to get a more profound understanding of the way humans interpret their social environment (Saunders et al. 2016: 147). In contrast to the quantitative research, contextualization plays a far greater role in qualitative research. This means that results are assumed to be specific to time, place, people and culture, and therefore are also not generalizable (Belk et al. 2013: 3). That is why it also was crucial to illuminate the Indian culture as this is the specific context in which the investigation takes place. Quantitative research is ideal for measuring variables such as how many people are reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions. Moreover, such approaches are very helpful for identifying patterns between

psychological variables as gender role attitudes or gender identity (Belk et al. 2013: 5) and the acceptance to cross-gender brand extensions. Qualitative approaches, however, may help to comprehend the distinct views people in India hold about cross-gender brand extensions or help to understand what consumers do like or do not like in particular about those products, so marketers may extract where the limits are.

According to Saunders et al. (2016: 176-177) an exploratory study is valuable for seeking new insights as well as seeing a phenomenon from a different angle. Malhotra and Birks (2000: 77) claim that the key value of the exploratory approach is to “explore or search through a problem or situation to provide insights and an understanding” of marketing phenomena. New ideas and insights may redirect the exploration (Malhotra & Birks 2000: 78). Hence, this seems an appropriate match to investigate the thoughts of Indian consumers about cross-gender brand extensions.

The method chosen for the present study is a mono method research. A mono method research uses a single data collection technique, namely a single qualitative data collection technique (Saunders et al. 2016: 168). To fulfill this purpose, semi-structured interviews are chosen as the research strategy.

4.1. Data collection technique and sample

Semi-structured interviews are ‘non-standardized’, meaning that the researcher prepares a list of themes or possible key questions respectively. As the interviews are ‘non-standardized’ the questions will be open-ended. The key questions covered may vary from interview to interview as well as in which order the questions are asked. Furthermore, additional questions are needed in order to explore the research topic more in-depth (Saunders et al. 2016: 391). However, in order to have some comparability among the interviewees’ answers or detecting patterns, it will be important to cover the main theme or some crucial key questions in all interviews. Subsequently, in **Table 2** the main themes where information needs to be collected will be presented.

Table 2. Themes covered during the interview.

Theme	Sought information	Comments
general information	age, profession, city of residence	
cultural information	individualistic/collectivistic; social norms	
gender-role attitudes	opinion about the role of men and women; observable changes	
gendered products	opinion, thoughts about gendered products; experience	
advertisements	How are women and men depicted in Indian ads? differences between Western ads and Indian ads	
cross-gender brand extensions without concrete examples	attitudes and opinions about cross-gender brand extensions	general thoughts on cross-gender brand extensions without influencing the participants with specific examples
cross-gender brand extensions examples (situations or images)	attitudes, feelings and opinions about cross-gender brand extensions	aim is to evoke emotions and thought processes which are omitted in the above-mentioned theme

The interviews will be conducted in English as it is the lingua franca in India. The average interview duration lasted for 35 minutes. For further analysis, the data has been audio-recorded and transcribed. Moreover, some preliminary remarks have been prepared to introduce the interviewee into the topic.

Primary qualitative data was collected through phone interviews. The interviews were semi-structured interviews with Indian consumers. Although the original goal was to obtain a diverse sample, only young consumers have been interviewed, mostly students. As it was not possible to get any contact with Indian people living in rural areas, it constitutes a substantial limitation to the study. In order to get access to further interviews some participants were asked to provide new possible contacts, i.e. the snowball effect was used.

Finally, twelve contacted persons offered their availability for conducting an interview, however, only ten interviews were actually settled as seen in **Table 3**.

Table 3. Sample.

No.	Gender	Age	Profession	Birthplace	City of residence
01	Male	25	student	Proddatur	Proddatur
02	Female	38	student	Pune City	Vaasa
03	Male	20	student	Kerala	Chennai
04	Male	21	student	Chennai	Chennai
05	Female	21	consultant	Chennai	Chennai
06	Female	26	school manager	Visakhapatnam	Chennai
07	Female	21	student	Chennai	Chennai
08	Male	24	mechanical engineer	Koillpatti	Koillpatti
09	Male	37	engineer	Chennai	Chennai
10	Female	27	Software Developer	Mumbai	Berlin

4.2. Procedure and data analysis

Whereas in a qualitative research the meanings depend on social interaction and are derived from words or images, qualitative data is associated with elastic and complex interpretations. This also means that the data will be very extensive as well as complex in nature which needs to be explored and analyzed (Saunders et al. 2016: 568). Hence, the data first must be summarized and condensed. To achieve a meaningful analysis, the data also needs to be reduced, categorized, coded (either data driven, or theory driven) and prepared for the analysis (Saunders et al. 2016).

Since the existing theory was used to formulate the research question and research objectives, and hence also the conceptual framework, the main themes for this research have been already covered. Thus, the categorization of the interview data will be based on the main themes presented in **Table 2**. There are several analytical procedures for analyzing qualitative data. Pattern Matching is based on theoretical propositions to explain what researchers expect to find from analyzing the data and arrange those data in patterns (Saunders et al. 2016: 592-593). As the conceptual framework and the themes for the interview are based on existing literature, pattern matching will be used as technique to analyze the data. Through analyzing the data and the pattern of the data matches, the appropriateness of the conceptual framework will be reexamined and complemented or adjusted.

Hence, to successfully perform pattern matching, it is necessary to specify the related outcomes that are expected. Saunders et al. (2016: 593) also refers to those outcomes as dependent variables. In this study the related outcomes, for instance, would be attitudes toward the role of men and women in the society as well as the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. In contrast, independent variables would be the Indian consumers who are influenced by their cultural values. After the related outcomes are specified, the process of data collection and analysis begins (Saunders et al. 2016: 593). Basically, there are two options which arise from such an analysis. Either the related outcomes are found in the empirical data or not. If the latter is the case, alternative explanations have to be sought (Yin 2014).

4.3. Credibility of research

Defining reliability and validity in qualitative studies is more difficult than in quantitative studies. In general, the priority is to establish trustworthy and credible quality studies (Golafshani 2003: 600 – 604). Validity refers to the “appropriateness of the measure used, accuracy of the analysis of the results [...]” (Saunders et al. 2016: 202).

Validity can be subdivided into internal and external validity. Internal validity characterizes the degree to which the results are measuring the causal relationship between variables or rather some other alternative explanations (Saunders et al. 2016: 203). One way to ensure internal validity in qualitative research is pilot-testing. Pilot-testing may identify and eliminate potential problems (Malhotra & Birks 2000: 336). Hence, pilot-testing was used to improve the questionnaire. Thereby, the focus was on formulating the questions in an unambiguous and clear way as well as to cover enough material for all themes which was necessary for the analysis. The questions were based on the conceptual framework which was worked out carefully with the help of the theoretical findings.

External validity, in contrast, characterizes the degree to which the study findings are generalizable (Saunders et al. 2016: 204). However, due to the characteristics of qualitative research the results are in general not generalizable because the data is measured in a specific context, i.e. specific time, place, people and culture (Belk et al. 2013: 3). Moreover, as noticed, the Indian values and practices may differ strongly between urban or rural areas as well as between the Indian classes or castes respectively. The size, population and the status of a newly industrialized economy reinforce the disparities within the country. Nevertheless, as the purpose of this study an exploratory research is aiming to explore the nature of the research problem, generalization is not a priority.

Malhotra & Birks (2000: 305) refer *reliability* as the “extent to which a scale produces consistent results if repeated measurements are made”. According to Robson (2002) there are four potential threats to reliability: participant's error, participant's bias, observer's error and observer's bias (Robson 2002). As for the validity, formulating the questions in

an unambiguous and clear way is important for reliability to reduce participant's error and bias. Whereas qualitative studies are often non-representative because of their small data set, it is important to consider a proper selection of the sample. Hence, only participants who are motivated and willing to open their ideas will be included into the study. Furthermore, reducing the observer's error key questions and a specific order for the questionnaire had been processed for carrying out the interview.

5. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research methods presented in the previous chapter, this chapter analyses the data and shows the empirical results of the proposed themes. This includes the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions for Indian consumers but also gendered products in general as well cultural information derived from the interview. This is the only way to create a comprehensive knowledge over the topic. Finally, the key findings about the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions will be summarized.

In order to exemplify the results, direct quotation of the interviews will be a major part in this chapter. This way the reader not only gets a clear comprehension of the thought processes of the Indian consumers interviewed but it also enables a better discussion of the results.

5.1. Values and practices in India

The cultural values and practices of Indian consumers constitute the context of this research, and hence also played a crucial role in the interview. Individualism, collectivism and traditions in India were topics not only concerning values and practices but also the influence of those on gender roles.

When it comes to evaluating India as an individualistic country or a collectivistic country, most interviewees highlighted that India is collectivistic.

“Culture is a very strong collectivized, social institution that we have here.” (Interviewee no. 3)

“So, there is this saying that everyone in India will know. It’s ‘log kya kahengae’. That means: ‘what will people say’. So, it’s something you hear on and on and on in India which is like what are you doing in life, what will people say, what course of study you’ve taken, what will people say. This person you are talking to, what will people say. So, it’s ingrained in everything. So, yeah, definitely 90% is like that.” (Interviewee no. 7)

“Yeah, it is more collectivistic. It is because we have very strong family bonds, and very strong social bonds and religious bonds.” (Interviewee no. 10)

“We are used to live as a family. So, we are used to give more importance to our family. Whenever we are earning more money, we are used to spend it for our family and we are used to keep our family very strong.” (Interviewee no. 8)

Reasons for this view can be tracked down on one hand, both, Indian traditions as the cast system and arranged marriage as highlighted by Interviewee no. 3:

“Mostly, the marriages that happen in India they are still in the rural areas it is always an arranged marriage where the family decides the bride and the groom, and they just have to say “ok” for it. And say, regarding the religion, every child will be like automatically born into a religion and then they are born the religion will be put upon their heads and basically they do not have any choice.” (Interviewee no. 3)

However, many participants considered the idea more differentiated and distinguished between age groups or even observed a change over the last years.

“So, the current youth is definitely individualistic because with the exposure of social media where you can find out what’s happening in any part of the world and you now with just so much news coming on them, they would definitely like to live in very Western way.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“... the youth of the country [...] is exposed to a lot of international work. So, they are more individualistic whereas anyone say above the age of 30 are more collectivistic. They react more collectively because they have their own ways of thinking. They have been part of a certain way and they have been exposed to a more orthodox culture and authentic way of Indian living”. (Interviewee no. 5)

“I think, I can relate it to then I was a child, as I grew I found it more as a collectivistic, so it was more like to do with the group voice, we were in groups and it was more collectivism then but as people started educating themselves they started thinking we should also raise voice individually, so I think it started to be more individualistic culture because of the education I can say”. (Interviewee no. 2)

As elaborated in the theoretical part of this thesis, it was assumed that a high degree of collectivism may influence the buying behavior of individuals. Hence, a question about the impact of social environment had been included in the interview. Most participants endorsed that family and the society in general have a crucial impact on the buying

behavior. However, there are great differences between rural and urban areas in India as pointed out by Interviewee no. 2:

“if you are from the [...] rural area it would be more that the family or the group or the society has more to say and there is lot of pressure from the society but if you are from an urban area, so like commercial cities, it has more to do with you having your own say. So, you can decide what you want to do.” (Interviewee no. 2)

5.2. Gender roles in India

From the marketing and business viewpoint it is important to notice how potential gender role differences possibly impact the consumer behavior. As in the theoretical part noticed, there are great differences between modern and traditional gender-role spouses when it comes to decision-making (Qualls 1982). Moreover, as Cinamon and Rich (2002) showed in their study that women which worked in “nontraditional” jobs, demonstrated nontraditional work attitudes (Cinamon & Rich 2002: 538). The social role theory gives a good foundation to tackle those above observations. Hence, besides asking how the gender role situation in India is, decision-making in Indian families, work and education opportunities as well as possible differences in the buying behavior between men and women were surveyed.

When it comes to gender roles, all interviewees share the same opinion that there are great differences about the understanding of roles between men and women and gender inequality is still a big issue in India.

“Yeah, frankly speaking, [...] women equality is slowly rising but it’s still a men dominant country. Yeah, there are many differences between men and women.” (Interviewee no. 10)

“I mean definitely, I do see great differences because a lot of times men are given a lot of privilege, especially when you go to villages and, so I live in a city, in Chennai. So that is completely fine but when you go to the smaller towns and when you go to villages, women are just not allowed any sort of work.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“So, most of, if you considering the whole population, decisions are always made by men. Then the head of the families should be a man or the husbands

in the family, the father of the family makes all decisions. Women are still not allowed to make their own decisions, they cannot study the course they want, they cannot take the job they want, and gender roles are still fixed and yeah, that's it." (Interviewee no. 3)

"I feel it is a very unequal society and we have to progress a lot to reach a level that it called an egalitarian society." (Interviewee no. 3)

Moreover, as stated in the theoretical part, the participants mostly pointed out differences between the situation in rural and urban areas.

"Again, it is which area you come from, so in urban now they treat men and women mostly it is considered equal, so in the rural it is not so... still. So, it has also to do with some traditions and rural area is still full of traditions..." (Interviewee no. 2)

The interviewees which have been asked about the work and education situation described great inequality between men and women. Until today, especially men predominate the work environment and decision-making about the children's education.

"women in India have very few leadership roles, like extremely few leadership roles" (Interviewee no. 5)

"So, I am actually in my last year of my college, and I go to job at a company (car company), so in that company they are like recruited 40 students from my college out of which 38 are men, boys and two girls." (Interviewee no. 3)

"... so, I live in a city in Chennai. So that is completely fine but when you go to the smaller towns and when you go to villages, women are just not allowed any sort of work. They are just asked to sit at home and act more like a home maid" (Interviewee no. 5)

"I have a really good friend of mine. She studied while she has done her Bachelor's in Commerce and then she is doing her Master's in Business Administration, she is doing the MBA and then she is also doing fashion designing but then she is not allowed to work because her parents they told if you want to study you can study but I don't want you to go outside and work for somebody else" (Interviewee no. 5)

Thinking again about the social role theory, such extreme allocations of men and women in occupation and family roles not only may foster gender stereotypes, expectations and

judgements but it also reinforces the mentality that men and women hold different skills. This was also noticed by some interviewees:

“You do not see a lot of female leaders in India as such because a lot of times they think that probably women will not be able to take a lot of stress and probably they would not as good as, you know, as good as men with finance because women have generally perceived to be more creative and not very logical. So, that’s what the Indian mentality is” (Interviewee no. 5)

“And they [Indian society] even have this judgmental view about them, [...] like let’s just say there is woman who can drive a car and a man who doesn’t know. So, they will be seeing it as a very bad thing that the woman knows, and the man doesn’t know.” (Interviewee no. 4)

The participants also told about discrepancies in the decision-making process in Indian families. The majority noticed that males have a greater say when it comes to buying expensive products.

“Regarding the buying behavior, normally the things which are required for the children, those are bought by the women in the family [...]. For the entire family in general, the husband or the father of the family buys it. That is a buying behavior that we normally see here.” (Interviewee no. 3)

“Ok, so in general it’s mainly the males get to decide about cars or money aspects. Men take care of it mostly and women are more into the groceries stuff, like what’s required in the house or what are the new materials which need to be purchased. My family is a bit different, my mom does most of the decision-making, my dad supports my mom.” (Interviewee no. 4)

Summarizing, the responses of the interviewees highly correspond with the presented literature about the Indian culture, specifically the gender roles. The contrast between the status of men and women in India seems still predominant. Attitudes and expectations about the gender roles are fostered that way and this may affect the Indian consumerism in many ways. Though, there have been vast changes lately as noticed by researchers (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994), the “stubborn” inequality between men and women still seem to prevail in large parts of the Indian country. However, it also became apparent that the gender question and recent changes in general develop very versatile in India. Whereas urban areas in India undergo relative

drastic development, rural as well as poor areas are still mainly affected by traditional Indian cultural values (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994), leading to the development of two distinct and extreme profiles in India (Venkatesh 1994: 48).

“At least in the cities or at least in small cities and towns it’s getting better. Villages are still at a very slow rate, they are still backward compared to the towns, so I would say that probably still living in some 2005 or something will the cities are close to the present date.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“It’s just very mixed. I cannot give you a definite answer to that because India is a huge huge country with a lot of people. So, I mean there are a lot of sections in my country which are still underdeveloped, and I don’t see them developing in the next five years.” (Interviewee no. 5)

This is one aspect which marketers definitely need to consider when planning and implementing marketing strategies for such a big and versatile country like India. Hence, some marketing campaigns should be adjusted for certain regions. Standardized advertisements can backfire by causing negative reactions to Indian consumers. For instance, advertisements depicting women in an independent and confident way may arise great positive response in modern Indian cities, however, at the same time, such liberal advertisements may be rejected by large parts of the Indian population in rural areas. In contrast, traditional gender roles depicted in advertisements may cause positive response in rural areas, however, they may evoke rejection in modern cities because of the outdated content. A similar kind of dilemma was also noticed by Oakenfull et al. (2008) when analyzing advertisements for gays and lesbians. Reaching out to homosexual consumers through mass marketing would seem beneficial at first glance, as homosexual consumers constitute a big part of the overall consumers. However, it is also assumed that increasingly targeting homosexual consumers may evoke strong negative reactions from many heterosexual consumers. Hence, using mass media to target specific groups more intensely may lead to an alienation to the rest of the population (Oakenfull et al. 2008). Particularly, this might be a problem in traditionally deep-rooted countries like India (e.g. caste system and religion) because such liberal views could be understood as a violation to existing dogmas in some parts of the country, especially when companies from abroad

are involved. As interviewee no. 3 displays, there is a part in the Indian population which rather sees products from abroad critically:

“People buy the products whether it is made in the West or India but there are many people who say that Western products should not be bought, and they are influencing the society. Politically, both the extreme left and the extreme right tells that you should not buy products from outside.”
(Interviewee no. 3)

5.3. Evaluation of Cross-Gender Brand Extensions for Indian consumers

The responses regarding the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions were relative mixed. However, when the opinion about of cross-gender brand extensions without concretizing brands was asked, overall, the interviewees did not negatively perceive or evaluate cross-gender brand extensions. Moreover, such strategies were familiar to them and they understood that kind of strategy as a crucial business approach to be more competitive on the market.

“I don’t care about that whether it was once for women or men” (Interviewee no. 8)

“Ok, so if I am like a regular user like I use it every day, slowly they start moving even for women, I would actually see it as a positive move because they are trying to get more customers and, and you know, just get the range, increase the range to more population, so that’s a pretty good move from the company in that case.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“I would say it’s completely ok because if it makes better business for them to change, I mean to make a product which is central just to the other gender it’s completely fine.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“So, the thing is, a lot of brands do that eventually and I wouldn’t be shocked to see that because it’s just trying to be in the market, the competition.”
(Interviewee no. 6)

“So, if the brand is really known, it doesn’t matter what they sold before, for which gender. So that will not matter for me. The brand that would matter.”
(Interviewee no. 2)

Moreover, only very few mentioned or could mention a brand or even a product category which they do not want to expand to the opposite gender. However, there were some responses against possible cross-gender brand extensions.

“Yeah, I think this is mainly for you know “Axe” deodorant. They are pushing more toward men.” (Interviewee no. 1)

“Yeah, the “Modicare Fairness Creams” which were initially for women and now they are moving on to men. [...] in India it is that fairness is considered to be one of the key factors if a woman has to get married or if she has to find a suitable husband [...] but now they are moving the trend even to men, that men also have to look attractive and beautiful. So, I would say don’t do that for men and don’t even for women (Interviewee no. 2)

“From the female’s probably it’s the cosmetics part which I guess it doesn’t make sense if they come into the men’s section...” (Interviewee no. 4)

As described in the methodology, images and certain scenarios were also included in the interview to evoke emotions and thought processes that otherwise could be omitted when not triggered. Showing images and explaining concrete scenarios of hypothetical cross-gender brand extensions evoked more negative responses as well.

“That I would not probably like because all this time Victoria’s Secret has been promoting women sexiness and women lingerie [...] but the kind of products, Victoria’s Secret comes out, very sexy [...]. So, you don’t have anything called lingerie for men and it’s mainly just like boxers or like box-shorts and... I don’t see how they can make it very sexy. According to the brand value I don’t think going into the men’s underwear section would do them much business...” (Interviewee no. 6)

“But in the case of Axe I would tell you which is majorly for men and when it comes to, like when it starts producing something specifically for women I would just, I would not be very open to the series because I would just feel a little doubtful on how the product will be.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“I would be a bit skeptical you can say about this one, like, I would be totally surprised with the move. So, I would probably not use the product as soon as it comes into the market.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“They name itself is Victoria’s Secret? So, we have a female name and we have men’s underwear. I do not know how that would go along. Yeah, Yeah. I don’t think that can make a positive impact on the market.” (Interviewee no. 4)

However, the interviewees were mostly not completely reluctant to those cross-gender brand extensions.

“Probably, if somebody else uses it, I would ask the review and then go heading try it myself.” (Interviewee no. 5)

Probably, I just see how it does go on with the sales and everything. If it's good, when I would go for it.” (Interviewee no. 4)

The interviewees also often stated that adapting the brand communication is an essential prerequisite for expanding the brand to the opposite gender.

“When you have the Axe deodorant for men, it is mostly black in color or dark colors which are extremely masculine, right. So, how the packing is and the way they are advertising it, selling the brand, that matters a lot.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“I'd say in the initial phases not everyone will be receptive with what the brand wants to do but eventually over time as in when time passes by, as in when marketing strategies improve as well, the products packaging improves or definitely it is more appealing to the other gender, it will definitely will be a hit.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“It is completely fine for me when Axe starts a female deodorant but like they have to completely change the advertisement strategy they do right now have.” (Interviewee no. 3)

Overall, the responses from the participants varied a lot. However, some tendencies could be derived when comparing the results as seen in **Table 4**. First, none of the interviewees had a negative attitude toward cross-gender brand extensions per se (last row). In contrast, most participants classify these kind of brand extensions as a legit business strategy to get access to another customer base or even stay competitive. A few interviewees mentioned brands which they would not like to be expanded to the opposite gender or at least characterize it as a strange decision. However, it was also pointed out that the current brand communication or brand strategy is mostly the cause for the reluctance. The same was already pointed out in the theory part of this study. As cross-gender brand extensions are in general extensions to the same product category, associations from the original brand image and brand concept are triggered, and hence the product category fit plays a

significant role. In many brand narratives, gender is still a focal point (Avery 2012: 3-4), and hence the marketing strategy may be a critical factor for cross-gender brand extensions. This does not mean that the expansion of a brand, which first exclusively advertised for one gender and then is expanding to the opposite gender, is an impasse. However, a very strong association of a brand to one specific gender may complicate an adequate expansion strategy, and thus this should be considered by marketers.

Table 4. Evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions (summary).

Interviewee no.	association toward chosen male brand	association toward chosen female brand	Scenario: CGBE from chosen male brand to female brand	Scenario: CGBE from chosen female brand to male brand	overall opinion about CGBE
1	-	-	indifferent	Indifferent	indifferent
2	positive	positive	indifferent	Indifferent	indifferent
3	positive	-	indifferent	Negative	indifferent
4	negative	-	positive	Negative	indifferent
5	positive	positive	negative	Negative	positive
6	negative	positive	negative	Negative	indifferent
7	negative	positive	indifferent	Positive	indifferent
8	indifferent	-	indifferent	Indifferent	indifferent
9	positive	-	negative	Negative	indifferent
10	positive	positive	indifferent	Negative	indifferent

During the interview two scenarios were presented. As in Jung and Lee's (2006) study, initially, Hugo Boss and Chanel were selected as a masculine and a feminine brand for the cross-gender brand extension scenario. Both brands represent the high-end fashion product category and the hypothesis was that the results would have been better when being compared with each other. However, after conducting the first two interviews those brands have been replaced by the brands Axe and Victoria's Secret. The main reason was that Hugo Boss and Chanel seemed too unfamiliar to the majority of Indian people, and hence this led to difficulties and a rather indifferent view on the cross-gender brand extension scenarios. After switching to Axe and Victoria's Secret it was apparently easier

for the interviewees to express their opinions about the hypothetical cross-gender brand extensions. Moreover, next to Axe, a manufacturer of male grooming products was included which rather is assigned to the functional product category. On the other hand, the high-end women's lingerie manufacturer Victoria's Secret, presenting a symbolic product category, was introduced. As pointed out in the theoretical part, a distinction between functional and symbolic product categories seems relevant. Because of the self-expressive and emotional attributes, a symbolic product offers, it is more likely that such products evoke more rejection than functional ones when evaluating cross-gender brand extensions (Jung & Lee 2006: 68-69). Even though the results of this qualitative study are non-representative, participants from both sexes were apparently more reluctant to a hypothetical cross-gender brand extension of Victoria's Secret expanding its product line by offering men's underwear. Hence, in this case it seems that symbolic product categories indeed evoke more rejection. However, it also must be considered that, although Axe is also an extremely gendered brand, Victoria's Secret feminine brand name itself is problematic in that case. Furthermore, those results correspond with Jung and Lee's (2006) results, as they could show that an extension of an originally masculine brand to target women were more accepted than the other way around.

5.4. Perception of gendered products

Though this study concentrates on cross-gender brand extensions, opinions about gendered products in general were sought to get a reference point. Therefore, sample images of gendered products were shown. To evoke more emotions and more specific opinions, the chosen examples of the gendered products were relative "extreme" (see **Appendix 3**), e.g. Energy Drinks for girls, pink pens for girls etc. All participants shared negative opinions about those products.

"Seeing all the images either only for girls. It's very like just girls or just boys and they are dividing the gender like: 'Oh, that's for boys and that's for girls.' And these are just general items which all of us use, regardless of the gender. So, I will not like it if something like this comes into the market." (Interviewee no. 5)

"Yeah, I hope people will go for a gendered product which is useful because this is the first time I see things like men's bread, men's tea or women's tea."

Yeah, because practically in the market I never saw those differences.” (Interviewee no. 1)

“I do not think, if you would replace a Coke or Pepsi with a Go Girl Drink, how much response that would create. I am not sure of it. I don’t think it will create a good vibe.” (Interviewee no. 3)

“All the things you just showed me, I am not very sure whether the society will be positive that they exist.” (Interviewee no. 3)

“I think it’s a little stupid because they are generalizing a girl. And if you can see the common factor for these pictures is that they are all pink, very shimmery, they’re very stereotyping in general.” (Interviewee no. 6)

The products shown were for all interviewees a new phenomenon as they stated that they haven’t seen such products in India so far. However, asking about other gendered products which are popular in India, evoked more positive answers. This implies that gendered products must serve a functional purpose to positively get accepted by the participants. In other words, as long as the additional value of using a gendered product is doubtful, it may create a negative response to Indian consumers.

“So, when it comes to skincare products or any sort of the even, haircare products, woman’s hair and like when it comes to body care products, it is not stupid, it actually makes a lot of sense because it is being more personalized for the customer.” (Interviewee no. 5)

“You said in the beginning Dove. Dove has very subtle and very muted colors that it uses and doesn’t really show that it is for women, not for men or whatever it is.” (Interviewee no. 6)

Moreover, it was interesting to realize that the idea of gendered products in India are for some interviewees a relative new phenomenon in their country.

“Yeah, I think before a decade, even the slippers which you wear at home or outside were unisex. There were kinds of slippers that were even for a boy or a girl and they used the same slippers, but I think, because of this welcoming western culture these products were told it belongs to girls and these products belongs to boys. And when we see the people before the ‘invasion’, they didn’t care much about if this are men’s products or women’s products. They used commonly.” (Interviewee no. 1)

“Like ever since I was a kid I think my family has been using the same shampoo. Every member of the family used the same shampoo until like we grew up [...] I have to say most of the products that were selling back in 90s were unisex as well. So, we didn’t really care, and I don’t think a lot of people cared about what gender they are using and all.” (Interviewee no. 6)

“So, when it comes to skincare products it was always there for children and the adults separately [...]. But I think in the last five to six years is when there has been a segregation between a woman’s skincare and men’s skincare product.” (Interviewee no. 5)

Another interesting aspect was that the interviewees emphasized an increase of Western influence and its impact on the Indian consumerism.

“Yeah, Western thing we think because now there is when we are growing up we saw the cartoons, English movies and the European cultures and then we used to think, Indian culture there is showing a difference, wish to grow like that and when you are waiting for the products in the market. [...] . Yeah, because in movies we saw, to say an example, pink color. Especially, they will say pink color is for girls and the main color is blue, black or something for boys. Before we didn’t have much difference if it is pink or something. Color is a color. Yeah, when were exposed to a new culture then these people who are following or showing interest into western culture, they are changing their views and they are making a difference: okay, pink color belongs mostly to girls.” (Interviewee no. 1)

“And there is a lot of Western influence in the entire culture, the products that we buy, the movies that we choose to go, the kinds of genres and songs that we listen to. All of that, the Westernization has brought a great change in society, it’s the thought processes, its market and almost everything that we call us India that has influenced a bit.” (Interviewee no. 3)

“Yeah. In terms of products you said, you can say we are having more of these Western products [...]. So, that advertisements or the style of the people and everything, is influenced by the Western culture.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“They would definitely like to live in very Western way. Because this is quite fancy in India, I mean, living in the Western way is very exciting” (Interviewee no. 5)

All in all, the aspects and responses leave some room for interpretation. In general, all interviewees noticed an increase of gendered products in India, mostly referring to skincare products. Those kinds of gendered products or cross-gendered products were positively received by the participants. In contrast, the interviewees were not only

reluctant to the gendered products shown in the example images (see **Appendix 3**) but rather disapproved toward those products. As it seems, such products are not as present in India as in Western societies because most of the interviewees have not seen such products in the market yet. The questionable functionality and added value from gendering products as well as the unfamiliarity may be the main reasons for the negative evaluation. The continuing increase of Western influence in Indian culture through media and products as well as the greater desire of younger generations to be more individualistic may increase the diversity of Indian consumerism, and thus also the demand of gendered products.

5.5. Depiction of men, women and gender roles in Indian advertisements

When it comes to advertisements, the participants exhibit substantial differences how men and women are depicted in the advertisements shown in India. The interviewees reported that men are mostly presented very masculine whereas women are mostly shown as sensitive.

“All of them have like that stereotypical way of advertising which is like, so they spray perfume, and then a bunch of women follow over them and like that’s the typical thing that used to exist.” (Interviewee no. 7)

“Generally, the advertisements depict the best-looking men and the toughest looking men in general over here [...] Women are depicted very delicate, very classy, very beautiful, very bubbly, cute” (Interviewee no. 6)

It is not surprising that men and women are portrayed stereotypically in the advertisements in India. However, the interviewees are very aware of the stereotypical approach in advertisements, which in turn often triggered a negative connotation with those advertisements.

“Then for women’s perfume that’s all like: oh, it’s like curtains fly, like beautiful sunlight and flowers, nonsense like that.” (Interviewee no. 7)

“They show men as this super sexy to girls and everything while the women just fall under men in public. That is how they show the deodorants at least and the remaining products, the advertisements at least what I see in

television at times they are senseless, brainless kind of things, they have no concept in it.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“So, when we have women based in advertisements, these are the things that are normally shown. That if you have a problem, this product will solve your problem and by selling this idea the products are getting a very positive response. That is something which I cannot understand.” (Interviewee no. 3)

Even though the average age of interviewees is relatively low, it was interesting to notice some reported changes in the portrayal of men and women in the advertisements lately.

“I have seen many advertisements now which show men to have the softer side like same as women [...] And it is very well accepted now in the generation now, it is accepted quite well. So, maybe that is because things are changing. The way they look at women is changing. Men fell also equally responsible in their duties what women do. So, I think that could be one reason.” (Interviewee no. 2)

“Like few years like we had a big case in North of India in Delhi. There was a rape case, so from that point a few companies started concentrating on empowering women, so from that point we had a change in that.” (Interviewee no. 4)

“In this advertisement which I saw, it was her second wedding night, maybe she has got a child and she wanted to get married again. I don’t think there are much ads which like stay away from the traditional marriage. Yeah, there are ads which changed much.” (Interviewee no. 3)

Both, the theoretical part of this study as well as the interviews emphasize the central role of families in the Indian culture. Several interviewees also outlined that a family orientation is still prevailing in some Indian advertisements.

“They [advertisements] are pretty family oriented because most of the people over here are living in large numbers like at least four or five in home, so you have all family-oriented advertisements that’s concentrated on that part. That’s mainly for the Indian products you can say. If it’s foreign products, it’s probably the advertisements that you get to see at your place. If we talk about just Indian products, it’s mainly family oriented.” (Interviewee no. 4).

“When they are selling more homely products, then they show the women as a mother or somebody who is like a very good care-taker and everything.” (Interviewee no. 6).”

All in all, two central ideas can be extracted from the interviews about gender roles as well as the depiction of men and women in advertisements. First, the participants are unambiguously aware of the stereotypical way men and women are portrayed in the advertisements. Second, the participants have noticed an increase of portrayals deviating from “traditional advertisements”. This may be the consequence of alternative ways of living which arise in India. Alternative ways of living as well as handling new responsibilities in the society, alter consumer preferences noticeably (Blackwell et al. 2006: 508; Otnes & McGrath 2001; Palan 2001: 16). Moreover, an increasing Western influence on Indian consumerism and the increasing individualistic mindset of younger generations in India may accelerate the effect, and thus may cause not only adaptations of the advertisements but also of the products and strategic organization of the companies in order to meet the new customer preferences.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This master's thesis aimed to gain a better comprehension of the sociocultural context regarding cross-gender brand extensions in a fast growing and newly industrialized economy like India. Thereby, the paper seized to take up the issue from Jung and Lee's (2006) and Ulrich's (2013) papers which investigated the influence of gender and gender roles on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. Whereas the study of Jung and Lee (2006) explained significant differences between the biological sex, Ulrich (2013) showed that gender role attitudes have a significant impact on the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. Though Jung and Lee (2006) have not included gender role attitudes as a variable, their sample may indirectly represent people which hold rather traditional gender role attitudes because of the traditional norms which prevail in South Korea. In contrast, Ulrich (2013) collected the data from French students. Based on those results, integrating the culture was an essential component for this study to get a better understanding of consumerism, and in specific the acceptance and evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. Moreover, gender itself is already a culture related term, meaning that gender as well as gender roles are embedded in a cultural context. The overriding aim was to create a conceptual framework depicting the most relevant and essential factors for an individual when evaluating cross-gender brand extensions as well as to understand the potential of cross-gender brand extensions in India. Another goal was to evoke the awareness that culture should not be understood as a static construct. Especially nowadays, culture is more dynamic than ever leading to alternate consumption behavior (de Mooij 2011: 213 - 217). Blurred gender categories and alternative ways of living are substantially shifting consumer preferences and behavior (Blackwell et al. 2001).

Many renowned studies, which also have been presented in the theoretical part of this master's thesis, show that gender identity and particularly gender role attitudes are significant factors which influence consumer behavior, inter alia, the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions. However, the more advanced the work process of this master's thesis was becoming and the more the theory as well as the empirical results were put into the context of Indian consumerism, the more difficult it was to separately look at gender

role attitudes as the focal point of the analysis. Even though gender role attitudes are a crucial factor for the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions, one result of this study was that prevailing cultural values and practices in a given society must be additionally considered.

6.1. Findings related to the evaluation of cross-gender brand extensions

Surprisingly, none of the interviewees shared per se negative opinions about cross-gender brand extensions. As a matter of fact, the interviewees were even understanding toward such brand strategies. First, they noticed that such strategies are very common lately, especially in the skincare product category, hence, the presented scenarios during the interview of hypothetical cross-gender brand extensions were not surprising for the interviewees. Moreover, the participants even rather classified such extensions as legit or an essential business strategy in order to stay competitive on the market or to get access to another customer base. However, some interviewees could mention some brands which they would not like to expand to the opposite gender. Also, some interviewees saw the cross-gender brands extensions rather critically. The participants reported that the main reason for the reluctance is mostly because of the current brand communication or brand strategy which does not fit with the new customer group. As predicted in the theoretical part, the perceived fit between the parent brand and the brand extension may be a critical issue. On the other hand, another group of interviewees pointed out that the good quality of the parent brand would be the reason to try out the cross-gender brand extensions. Even though the consumer experience toward the parent brand which launches a cross-gender brand extension is very limited, the consumers' attitudes toward the brand extensions are still highly dependent on the perceived quality of the parent brand. This means that the quality of the parent brand is still one of the major aspects not only for the evaluation of conventional brand extensions (Aaker & Keller 1990) but also for cross-gender brand extensions.

Moreover, in the same way as for conventional brand extensions, the type of product category impacts the evaluation of brand extensions (Park et al. 1986). Functional and symbolic products were chosen for the cross-gender brand extension scenarios during the interviews. A distinction between functional and symbolic product categories also seems

to be relevant for cross-gender brand extensions (Jung & Lee 2006: 68-69). Even though the results of this qualitative study are non-representative, a hypothetical cross-gender brand extension from a symbolic product category evoked more rejection among the interviewees.

As explained in the theoretical part, gender role attitudes have a significant impact on consumer behavior (Palan 2001). Gender role attitudes in turn are dependent on culture, social norms and practices. Thereby, the answers of the interviewees highly match with the presented literature about the Indian culture, specifically the gender roles. Though, there have been great changes lately (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994), the “stubborn” inequality between men and women are still prevailing in large parts of India. The interviewees reported great differences when it comes to decision-making for crucial family decisions but also distribution of responsibilities among men and women in India. However, as derived from the literature gender issues develop very versatile in the country. Whereas urban areas in India undergo a relative drastic development, rural as well as poor areas are still mainly affected by traditional Indian cultural values (Chadda & Deb 2013; Dhar et al. 2015; Shukla 2015; Venkatesh 1994), leading to the development of two distinct and extreme profiles in India (Venkatesh 1994: 48).

Though, India is regarded as a country with very high gender inequality and traditional gender role attitudes, the interviewees were very open to the idea of cross-gender brand extensions. Based on Jung and Lee’s (2006) and Ulrich’s (2013) study findings, more reluctance toward cross-gender brand extensions have been expected. However, the interview results showed that such strategies are marketable in Indian urban areas. Though those results do not change the conceptualized theoretical framework of this master’s thesis, the findings show that the focus on just one or several variables might not be always that meaningful in a given context. Rather it is more important to adopt a more holistic understanding of the culture.

Another crucial finding is not only limited to cross-gender brand extensions but also includes gendered products in general as well. As it seems, a positive evaluation about cross-gender brand extensions as well as gendered products depends on the added value

the Indian consumer see in the product. If the added value or functionality of a gendered or cross-gendered product is questionable for the Indian consumer it may evoke a negative evaluation. In other words, for the Indian consumer it is important that the content of gendered products have apparent advantages for the customer. Gendered products which evidently do not differ in their functioning or product content, for instance drinks, pens, etc., but only in the packaging (e.g. pink packaging for female and blue packaging for male), were seen very negatively by the interviewees. Some interviewees expressed serious doubts about whether such products will get accepted by the Indian society. However, the unfamiliarity with such products may be another reason for the negative evaluation of such products. Compared to Western societies, India is a collectivistic country. Uniqueness of the individual needs in such societies is less emphasized and standing out is even seen as something negative in some cases (De Mooij 2011: 34). However, there are signs that individualism in India gains in importance, especially amongst the younger generations. The increasing influence of Western products and media in the Indian society along with the connectivity through the internet effects the Indian consumerism. Most interviewees noticed that tendencies. Even though a collectivistic mind set is still prevailing in India, the younger generations strive for more self-expression than ever before.

6.2. Managerial implications

The practical and managerial implications which can be derived from this study are relative versatile. On the one hand, the study pointed out that it is very hard to constitute cultural and gender values which are affecting the buying behavior in a complex way with a simple scoring model as in Hofstede's model of cultural dimensions or the GLOBE Project. Such models are mostly based on self-report questionnaires where individuals make subjective judgments, comparing themselves with others in their social system. Hence, comparisons between different cultures might only have little meaning. Moreover, such models aggregate the whole population. However, the population might be highly versatile when considering gender, generations or particular regions. For instance, as India might be classified as a very collectivistic country, the interviews showed that the younger generations in urban areas clearly see themselves as individualistic, appreciating the Western lifestyle and products. Such cultural nuances cannot be distilled by simplified

scoring models. Consequently, this study encourages managers and marketers to analyze new markets more carefully, also focusing on the practical circumstances dominating the cultures. While this might be a matter of course for big multinational corporations and global players, smaller companies that are not very experienced with internationalization could neglect such an analysis.

On the other hand, this study attempts to provide that change of culture and especially the understanding of social roles is happening very fast, and thus consumer preferences are also changing respectively. Comparing the period of time where men had predominated the labor market and prestigious jobs, the relative recent increase in share of women in the labor market, especially in the Western societies, brought tremendous changes in the allocations of tasks and responsibilities in the societies. Consequently, those changes contributed to a shift of male and female consumer preferences. Hence, managers and marketers should look carefully at India because it undergoes great social changes at this moment. Even if India is still a very traditional country with much gender inequality, the country is developing economically and socioculturally very fast. Especially, the younger generations exhibit a very different mindset compared to older generations. The same applies to people living in urban areas compared to people living in rural areas where traditional values and practices still predominate. As the interviews showed, younger consumers living in urban areas share a very liberal approach when it comes to social change, gender equality and new products. Hence, when focusing on younger consumers in India, this study emboldens managers and marketers to choose a more “progressive” marketing strategy along with advertisements which represent rather modern views than traditional ones.

With regard to cross-gender brand extensions, this study recommends to continue using such strategies on the Indian market. Cross-gender brand extensions seem marketable in India despite the traditional values and gender role attitudes this country holds. In general, none of the interviewees were reluctant to cross-gender brand extensions. Nevertheless, it is important to remind that those results refer mostly to urban areas. On the contrary, many interviewees understood cross-gender brand extensions as an essential business strategy to stay competitive on the market or to enter new market segments. However, the current brand communication or brand strategy plays a crucial role for the interviewed

consumers. If the perceived fit between the parent brand and the brand extension is insufficient, the Indian consumers reacted rather reluctant. A very strong association of a brand toward one specific gender may complicate an adequate expansion strategy, and thus should be considered by marketers. Hence, companies which offer gendered products only to one sex but want to keep the option open to expand to the opposite gender, should plan their marketing strategies in the long run if possible. The transferability of the brand communication of the parent brand to the new brand extension plays a key success factor for cross-gender brand extensions.

Furthermore, this study encourages to keep track of the marketability of gendered products in India. For the interviewed Indian consumers, the additional value and purpose of a gendered product needs to be clear. Functional gendered products or food, for instance, which only differ in the packaging itself, were much disliked by the Indian consumers. However, as such things seem to be a new phenomenon and individuality might play a greater role in future, companies should detect which gendered products are marketable or will be marketable in India in the near future.

6.3. Limitations of the study

First of all, the data collected for this study is limited to India. Hence, the results cannot be applied to other new industrialized countries. However, this was not the purpose of the paper. In contrast, the thesis tried to explain that a contextual analysis of the given phenomenon is necessary in order to be most effective. As seen with the GLOBE Project and Hofstede's cultural dimensions, a superficial classification of a country or society may be misleading when trying to understand the motives of consumers in a given situation. Especially, for such a huge market like India which develops very versatile, uniform evaluation criteria or rather a uniform marketing strategy may be very inefficient and unsuccessful. Hence, due to the specificity of this study, the results may be inappropriate or not applicable for other markets.

Moreover, the sample size of the collected data was relatively restricted. Every interviewee in this study was born or is currently living in an urban area which probably distorted the results. Urban areas in India are characterized by drastic development

whereas rural areas are still mainly affected by traditional Indian cultural values. Interviews with people from rural areas have been desirable, however, with the available resources it was not possible to arrange that. Furthermore, due to the vast size of India and versatile population the data collection must have been much more extensive anyway, even though it is a qualitative analysis. For reasons of ratibility and quality, it might be more appropriate to concentrate just on a certain region or city in India.

Finally, even though the paper concentrated on a very specific phenomenon and a specific market, the attempt has been made to adopt a holistic understanding about the topic, and thereby to analyze several possible causes and influences on cross-gender brand extensions. Especially, trying to condense an extensive term as culture in a specific topic is a difficult endeavor. As a consequence, many aspects have been left out or could only be covered superficially.

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APPENDIX 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Age

Profession

Born

City of residence

Opening questions for each theme:

1. Would you describe the Indian culture rather as individualistic or collectivistic?
2. When thinking about the role of men and women in your surroundings (India), do you see great differences between those? (Examples)
3. What is your opinion about gendered products? Do you prefer those over unisex products?
4. What does come into your mind when you think about a brand which exclusively advertised for one gender and then expands to the opposite gender?

Further potential questions:

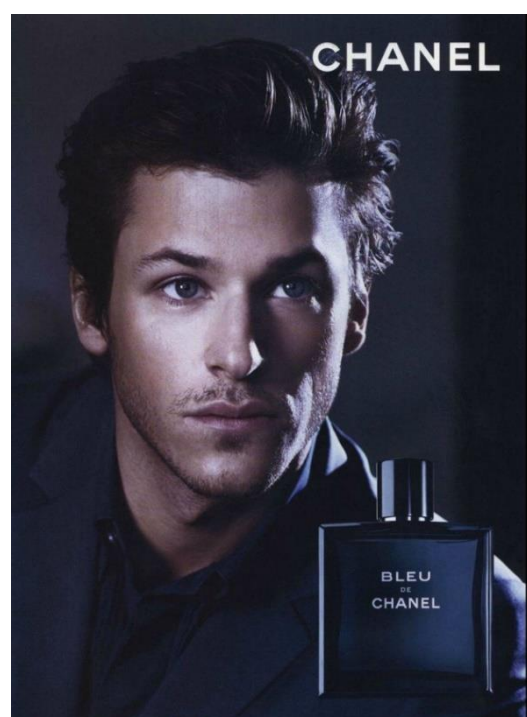
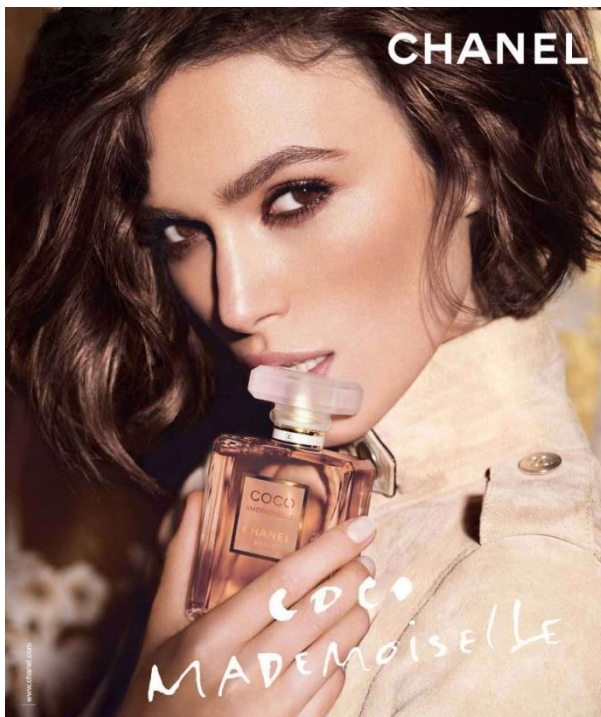
1. When thinking about the role of men and women in your surroundings (India), do you see great differences between those? (Examples?)
2. What is your opinion about the role of men and women? Should they have distinctive roles in society? (Is it convenient/practical in some situations that men/women have different roles?)
3. Do you think there are social changes regarding the role of men and women recently?
4. Differences between the generations?
5. Do you see differences between areas in India?
6. Does the religion or traditions influence the role of men and women? How?
7. Do you think your social environment (family, work place) influences you in your buying behavior, i.e. you think you would try out more products when your environment would not notice it?
8. What do you think about gendered products where the functionality does not differ at all, e.g. disposable razor in pink for women?
9. Are gendered products in India a new phenomenon? What do you think of those?

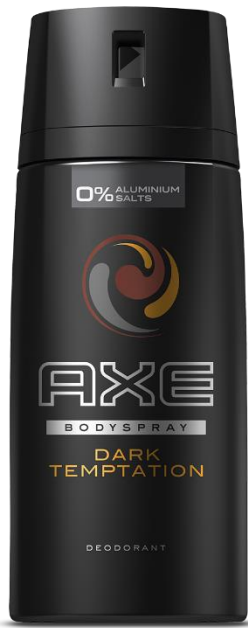
10. Do you see a Western influence when it comes to new products?
11. How do you react do unisex products as for fashion, e.g. gloves, hats?
12. Do you believe that your perception of a product can change when you discover that the product was originally produced for the opposite sex?
13. Do you have any negative perception about cross-gender brand extensions?
14. What thoughts come to your mind when you think about cross-gender brand extensions?
15. What does come into your mind (emotions/feelings) when you think about a brand which exclusively advertised for one gender and then expands to the opposite gender?
16. Do you think cross-gender brand extensions harm the brand-level fit?
17. Are cross-gender brand extension products usual in your country? (you know any products?)
18. Do you think such strategies are/would be successful in your India? (compared to Finland?)
19. Do you think companies who offer gendered products rather mold consumer behavior or reflect consumer preferences?
20. If you think of typical advertisements concerning men. How does such advertisements depict the men?
21. If you think of typical advertisements concerning women. How does such advertisements depict the women?
22. Have you ever tried out a gendered product for the opposite sex? Did you attach any feelings to that?
23. Are there any products or brands where you would not appreciate cross-gender brand extensions?

Questions for images:

1. Which attributes you would assign for Axe/Victoria's Secret (Hugo Boss/Chanel)?
2. Is Axe/Victoria's Secret (Hugo Boss/Chanel) appealing to you?
3. Knowing that the product was originally offered to the opposite sex, does it influence your evaluation about the new product?
4. Does this kind of brand extension influence your opinion on the parent brand?

APPENDIX 2 – IMAGES USED FOR CROSS-GENDER-BRAND-EXTENSIONS SCENARIOS





APPENDIX 3 – IMAGES USED FOR GENDERED PRODUCTS



