IMPACT OF TYPE FONTS ON BRANDED PRODUCT PURCHASE IN SUSTAINABLE EMERGING ECONOMIES OF AFRICAN REGION – EVIDENCE FROM MAURITIUS ON A GENDERED BASED STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the influence of type fonts on the purchase of branded products from a gendered point of view and whether type fonts used by brands can be utilized in brand re-gendering of a product in emerging economies.

Four quantitative studies were conducted, collecting data from people aged 18 and above in Mauritius. In total, 150 valid questionnaires were used in the analysis of data using the statistical package for the social sciences.

The results have revealed that brand femininity is associated with 'script' type fonts and brand masculinity is paired with 'display' type fonts in an emerging country such as Mauritius. Further outcomes of the research have indicated that product categories do not impact on type fonts being used for brands and consumers do not classify products in different genders based on their product category. Moreover, men and women are not much influenced by type fonts when purchasing and recommending products in emerging countries such as Mauritius. Finally, the results have also revealed that type fonts do not assist in brand re-gendering and more branding cues need to be altered to successfully change the existing brand gender perceptions of a product for emerging economies.

This present research has several practical implications for brand managers and businesses and the way they communicate their brand gender using type fonts to customers of emerging countries in African region.

Keywords: Brand Gender, Type Fonts, Product Purchase, Brand Re-gendering, Branding Strategies.

Paper Type: Research paper.

INTRODUCTION

Brand gender forms part of brand personality which consists of two dimensions: brand masculinity and brand femininity – and describes gender traits that consumers associate with brands (Grohmann, 2009; Grohmann et al., 2013). Brand gender is important for brand managers for two main reasons: firstly: brands use masculine/feminine cues to express their masculinity/femininity and enhance the relationship they have with their consumers (Fournier, 1998). Secondly, brand positioning with regards to brand gender is an important strategy in many

product categories in which consumers are segmented as per their gender (Grohmann, 2009; Grohmann et al., 2013; Lieven et al., 2019).

International Context

Type fonts (which form part of brand design) are a crucial element to consider when planning brand gender positioning strategies as they add to competitive advantage, promote brand recognition and recall, influence brand personality and works with other brand design components such as colours, pictures and layouts as clearly specified in several studies carried out in an international contexts (Childers, 2002; Brumberger, 2003; Doyle, 2004, Grohmann et al., 2013; Evans, 2014; Puškarević et al., 2014; Lieven et al., 2019). Type fonts are important brand cues as they can influence people's behavior and promote positive attitudes towards a brand, event, cause or service (Haenschen, 2019). European consumers seek products which are congruent to their gender and previous studies have suggest that brands using gender-congruent type fonts enjoyed better success in several international contexts (Thangaraj, 2004; Grohmann et al., 2013; Peate, 2018; Lieven et al., 2019). Lieven et al. (2015) have narrowed down brand gender perceptions when using type fonts and classified them into highly feminine, feminine, neutral, masculine, highly masculine and stated that type fonts influence brand emotion such as excitement, sincerity and sophistication as outlined in another research study conducted by (Henderson et al., 2004).

African Context

With globalization happening at a fast pace, many firms and businesses from emerging countries are having better chance to develop their brand positioning. It has been that by 2025, 85% of the global economic growth will come from emerging economies such as African and Asian countries (Coffie, 2018), the recent global pandemic has made it very difficult for emerging African economies to meet their prior expectation while having sustainable growth. The Global Economic Prospects Anon, (2020) has suggested that emerging market and developing countries will face major economic challenges from various sectors: weak healthcare systems, decrease in foreign trade and tourism, subdued capital flows, tight financial conditions and lower purchasing power amongst others. Along these lines, businesses operating in emerging African economies are in a more vulnerable position for sustainable growth or development. In a similar vein, there is no research on the influence of type fonts on product purchases from a gendered perspective for emerging economies. This research represents one of the pioneer studies that is addressing this research gap in gendered brand purchases for emerging states in African context.

Sheth & Sinha (2015) identified four critical skills that businesses will need to favour to ensure competitive positioning of their brands on the market which are 1) collaborations – the ability to collaborate with every stakeholders to ensure the brand perceptions are seen in a similar light across all platforms and communication, 2) network building – the ability to develop long-lasting relationship with key partners in foreign countries or locally who can help promote the brand and ensure sustainable development, 3) patience – the ability to take time to research and understand the market in which the business is operating in to better position the brand and leverage sustainable growth, and 4) practice – the ability to realize that branding is not a one-shoe-fits-all process and should constantly be revised to adapt to new situations.

Based on the importance of brand gender and type fonts for consumers' self-expression, it is crucial for brand managers of emerging African countries to know how to go about designing brands that convey the right brand gender. The main objective of this paper is to investigate whether type fonts affect consumers' perceptions of brand gender in situation when consumers are not familiar with a brand name (for instance, newly introduced products) and may have little information to classify the brand with a specific brand gender which could ultimately influence product purchase. Specifically, the objectives are as follows:

1. To find out whether type fonts influence gender perception of brands.
2. To investigate whether type fonts affect product purchase and recommendation of products by men and women.
3. To analyze whether type fonts can assist in the brand re-gendering (changing the initial brand gendered perception of a product or service) of a product or service.

To measure each of these objectives, four quantitative studies were carried with 150 respondents using quota sampling to avoid any biases. The first study investigates whether type fonts affect brand gender perceptions when consumers are exposed to unfamiliar brands and have only the brand type font to make up their perception. Results show that when exposed to brand names with different type fonts, consumers classify brand gender inferences on the brand's appearance using type fonts as their guide. In study 2, consumers are provided with a little information about the brand (i.e., product category) and they still relied on type fonts when judging brand gender. Study 3 aims to understand product purchase from a gender perception view by asking consumers to choose the brands they would buy from by taking into consideration the type font of the brand. Results show that consumers are typically not influence by type fonts when purchasing products. The final study analyzed whether brand re-gendering is possible by changing the type font of an existing brand name.

This research seeks to contribute to the literature by (1) examining consumers' processes to determine and classify brand gender based on appearance cues (type fonts); (2) adding to the research of type fonts, brand gender perceptions and product purchase; (3) investigating the influence of type fonts in a variety of contexts (i.e., limited information about the brand in Study 1, existing brand information in Study 2, product purchase and recommendation to other consumers based on type fonts in Study 3 and type fonts contributions to brand re-gendering in Study 4) that adds to previous studies and by (4) considering the effects of type fonts to increase the generalizability of findings and its applicability in branding practice.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Brand Personality Based on Appearance

Brand personality is the human traits (i.e., caring, funny, trustworthy, creative, adventurous and more) that consumers associate with a brand. Aaker (1997) identified four main types of brand personality models (sincerity, excitement, ruggedness and sophistication), and Machado (2018) associated different aspects to brand personality such as target market, brand values, brand name and logo, quantity and variety of product offered to each targeted gender, brand style and product design, intrinsic product characteristics, product category, people representing the brand, and advertising methods. In terms of brand gender perception, Grohmann (2009) further states that the spokesperson representing the brand influences the brand gender perceptions and personality.

Brand gender forms part of brand personality which consists of 2 dimensions: brand masculinity and brand femininity (Grohmann, 2009). Ulrich (2011) came up with 6 dimensions of brand gender, namely The Gender of the Typical User of the Brand, Gendered Personality Traits of the Brand, Gendered Attributes of Brand Communication, Gender of the Brand name, Gendered Attributes of the Logo, and The Gendered Attributes and Benefits of Brand Products. Brand gender congruency is formed from various advertising cues namely: brand name, brand logo, product attributes and category, advertising methods used, and type fonts used. Lieven et al. (2011; 2015) stipulate that brands that position themselves into a particular gender enjoy higher equity than brands that follow an undifferentiated or androgynous approach. Brands having some gender congruent attributes (i.e., positioning themselves as either masculine or feminine) are also easier to market, have more positive responses from consumers, receive higher brand loyalty, and prosper better among buyers (Grohmann, 2009; Oakenfull, 2012; Abdullah, 2014; Tilburg et al., 2015; Neale, 2016; Machado, 2018). However, this is contradictory to what Sultana & Shahriar (2017) discovered when it comes to millennials as the latter target audience are more influenced by gender neutral communications. Existing literature suggests that masculine brands are perceived as adventurous, aggressive, brave, daring, dominant and sturdy while feminine brands are deemed as tender, fragile, graceful, sensitive and sweet (Grohmann, 2009; Lieven et al., 2015; Machado, 2018). Based off Grohmann's 2009 study on masculine and feminine brands, the following conclusions are drawn when classifying brands as either masculine or feminine (Table 1):

Table 1 FEMININE AND MASCULINE BRAND PERSONALITY TRAITS BY GROHMANN (2009) IN GENDER DIMENSIONS OF BRAND PERSONALITY	
Feminine Brand Personality	Masculine Brand Personality
Express tender feelings	Adventurous
Fragile	Aggressive
Graceful	Brave
Sensitive	Daring
Sweet	Dominant
Tender	Sturdy

Brand Perceptions Based on Type Fonts

Another thing to consider when thinking about brand gender is the type fonts used to represent the brand. Typography is the art or skills of developing communications by using printed words and consumers associate brand personality and brand gender perceptions with different type fonts (Thangaraj, 2004). Type fonts form part of the brand design elements and add to competitive advantage, promote brand recognition and recall, positively influence brand harmony and equity and complements other brand design aspects such as colours, pictures and designs (Childers, 2002; Brumberger, 2003; Doyle, 2004; Thangaraj, 2004; Puškarević et al., 2014; Peate, 2018). Type fonts trigger different emotions and consumers respond more to type fonts that depict harmony, flourishment, excitement, sincerity, sophistication, ruggedness and competence. Previous research findings suggest that type fonts depicting harmony were more liked by consumers but showed little engagement and prominence. Henderson et al. (2004) investigated on 6 types of type fonts and their responses in his empirical study and discovered that *'script'* type fonts enjoyed more pleasing responses and were more engaging while *'serif'* type fonts were more prominent. Type fonts such as *'Stencilset'* and *'Industria Inline'* were

deemed not effective and rather dull-looking while type fonts such as *'Baphomet'* and *'Chiller'* were seen to be highly engaging but not really prominent. Other type fonts such as *'BigDaddy'* and *'Maiden Word'* were seen as engaging and pleasing respectively. This is further supported by the empirical findings of Grohmann (2012) which suggests that increased type font enhances ruggedness and competence while the reverse signals sincerity, excitement, and sophistication. Some fonts and their perceptions are listed in Table 2.

Table 2	
TYPE FONTS AND THEIR PERCEPTIONS BY HENDERSON ET AL. (2004) IN IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT USING TYPEFACE DESIGN	
Fonts	**Perceptions**
'Baphomet', 'Bandstand'	Sincere
'Paintbrush', 'Chiller', 'Ranson'	Exciting
'Playbill', 'Stencilset'	Rugged
'Schcherozack', 'Author'	Sophistication
'Janson Text', 'Ancient Script'	Competent

Interestingly, Velasco et al. (2018) found that type fonts can even convey taste attributes, with curved or symmetrical shapes being associated with sweetness and angular or asymmetrical shapes being paired with other tastes such as sour or bitterness. There are typically 2 types of fonts; *'Serif'* and *'Sans-Serif'*. *'Serif'* fonts usually have a small *'tail'* on the edges of the alphabet while *'sans-serif'* fonts do not have any small lines projecting from the corners (Mawhinney, 2014). Peate (2018) and Pahwa (2019) came up with more in-depth analysis on different type fonts and their examples, along with the meanings associated with them and which companies make use of which type fonts. Their theoretical findings are summarised in Table 3.

Table 3			
TYPE FONTS, MEANINGS, AND USAGE FROM PEATE (2018) IN FONT PSYCHOLOGY AND TYPOGRAPHY INSPIRATION IN LOGO DESIGN AND PAHWA (2019) IN FONT PSYCHOLOGY – USE THE RIGHT TYPEFACE FOR YOUR LOGO			
Types of Fonts	**Examples**	**Meanings Associated**	**Companies Using the Fonts**
'Serif'	'Times New Roman', 'Georgia', 'Garamond', 'Baskerville', 'Book Antiqua'	Reliable, Respectable, Dependable, Reputable, Conventional, Neutral, Trust, Formal	HSBC, Wikipedia, The New York Times, Yale, Time
'Slab Serif'	'Courier', 'Rockwell', 'Museo'	Confidence, Solidity, Boldness	SONY, HONDA, VOLVO
'Sans Serif'	'Arial', 'Century Gothic', 'Helvetica', 'Calibri'	Clean, Simple, Contemporary, Straight-Forward, Futuristic, Neutral, Engaging, Sensible	Microsoft, Chanel, Facebook, Google, Evian, Nike
'Script'	'Lucida Script', 'Lobster', 'Zapfino', 'Sofia', 'Pacifica'	Creative, Interest, Feminine, Emotional, Fancy, Elegance	Coca Cola, Instagram, Ford, Oglivy
'Modern'	'Matchbook', 'Politica', 'Klavika', 'Futura', 'Bedini', 'Bodoni', 'Empire', 'Orgreave'	Elegance, Intelligent, Distinct, Determination, Forward-Looking, Simple, Legible, Exclusive	Hulu, Red Bull, Calvin Klein, Shutterfly
'Display and Decorative'	'Bombing', 'Jokerman', 'Gigi'	Fun, Unique, Casual, Direct, Stylized	McDonald, Disney, Fanta, Lego

Type Fonts and Brand Gender

Men and women interpret language and type fonts differently (Bromberg, 2003) and type fonts used for brand logos affect the product and brand gender perceptions. Lieven et al. (2015) identified a set of neutral, highly feminine, feminine, masculine, and highly masculine fonts in their empirical study which are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 TYPE FONTS AND GENDER ASSOCIATIONS BY LIEVEN ET AL. (2015) IN THE EFFECT OF BRAND DESIGN ON BRAND GENDER PERCEPTIONS AND BRAND PREFERENCE	
Gender Association	**Type Fonts**
Neutral	'Arial', 'Courier'
Highly Feminine	'Monotype Corsiva', 'Rage Italic'
Feminine	'Gigi', 'Kristen ITC'
Masculine	'Agency FB', 'Courier New'
Highly Masculine	'Rockwell Extra Bold', 'Impact'

Previous empirical findings point to the fact that display type fonts *('Agency FB', 'Courier New', 'Rockwell Extra Bold', 'Impact')* are perceived as more masculine while script type fonts (*'Gigi', 'Rage Italic', 'Kristen ITC', 'Monotype Corsiva'*) are considered as more feminine (Grohmann, 2016; Browne, 2017; Yildrim & Büyükateş, 2020). Further empirical findings suggest that type fonts such as *'Arial'* and *'Serif'* are perceived as neutral type fonts and can be used as controls during research for type fonts and brand gender. This mainly reinstates that brand name does not influence brand gender perceptions but type fonts play a major role in the brand gender perceptions among consumers. Further empirical findings from Doyle's 2004 research proved that consumers choose products in appropriate type fonts as evidenced by 67% of respondents who answered that type fonts are important when choosing products. Moreover, consumers want brands to be type font conformant as per the product category they are in and brand gender they are perceived as. Interestingly, Doyle's research also suggests that women does not prefer lighter, more scripted and scrolled type fonts and that gender does not influence type font choices at all, thus suggesting that gender does not inform brand gender perceptions.

The existing literature suggests that script type fonts (*'Gigi', 'Monotype Corsiva', 'Rage Italic', 'Lucida Handwriting'*) are perceived as feminine, whereas display type fonts (*'Agency FB', 'Courier New', 'Impact', 'Rockwell Extra Bold'*) appear more masculine (Bromberg, 2003; Lieven et al., 2015; Grohmann, 2016; Browne, 2017). However, it was also noted by Doyle (2004) that women do not have a preference for script type fonts. Based on these findings, this present research focuses on whether type fonts (i.e., script and display) influences brand gender perceptions. It is expected that type fonts affect brand gender perceptions such that script type fonts promote perceptions of brand femininity and display type fonts increase perceptions of brand masculinity.

Hence, the following hypothesis was developed based from the preceding evidence whereby the independent variable is type fonts and the dependent variable is gendered brand perceptions:

H_1: Type fonts have an impact on gendered brand perceptions, such that script type fonts increase brand femininity and display type fonts enhance brand masculinity.

Type Fonts, Product Gender and Purchase Intentions

The gender perception of a product is influenced by one's gender, sexual orientation, educational level, cultural belonging, demographics and more (Güngör, 2016). Product gender perceptions are influenced by the overall brand gender perceptions and consumers classify products as either masculine or feminine based on various marketing cues such as advertising method used, the brand colours, the product design and shape and the brand name (Fugate & Philips, 2010). Fugate & Philips (2010) classified products such as beer, car, coffee, athletic shoes, lawn mower and potato chips as masculine products and products such as bath soap, wine, digital camera, facial tissue, food processor, frozen vegetables and hairspray as feminine in their empirical study on product gender. Brand name influences brand gender perceptions such that brands with more back vowels are perceived as more masculine while brands with more front vowels are perceived as more feminine (Klink, 2012). That may be because back vowels require a deeper voice to pronounce compared to front vowels, and deeper voice is most of the time associated to masculinity. Brand designs and name influences brand gender perceptions such that brands using letters like *'k'* or *'b'* are perceived as masculine and brands using letters like *'f'* and *'s'* are perceived as more feminine (Klink, 2009; Wu, 2013; Grohmann, 2015; Lieven et al., 2015). Although there exists the brand gender perception among consumers, existing knowledge suggests that consumers associate brand names with masculinity more often than with femininity and that masculine brands fair much better than feminine ones (Fugate & Philips, 2010; Ridgway, 2014; Lieven et al., 2015; Neale, 2016; Browne, 2017; Machado, 2018).

Consumers associate different products with different type fonts and classified them as per their brand gender perceptions. Previous empirical findings suggest that consumers respond more to type fonts that are in harmony with the product types being advertised and tend to choose products that use type fonts that are complement to the product they are purchasing (Childers, 2002; Bromberg, 2003; Brumberger, 2003; Doyle, 2004; Thangaraj, 2004; Henderson et al., 2004; Fugate & Philips, 2010; Grohmann, 2016; Peate, 2018). The current research aims to identify if consumers select type fonts as per the product category and product being advertised. It is expected that script type fonts are selected for products having high feminine perceptions while display type fonts are associated with products having high masculine perceptions (Fugate & Philips, 2010). Although, Yildrim & Büyükateş (2020) suggest that cross-gender strategy can be applied whereby masculine brands are marketed to women and feminine brands are marketed to men. It is to be noted that the type font *'Impact'* is the least appropriate and liked by consumers while the type font *'Monotype Corsiva'* is well preferred among consumers (Ottaway, 2020).

In view of the above literature, the following research hypothesis is developed whereby product category and perceived product gender are the independent variables and type fonts' appropriateness is the dependent variable:

H_2: Product category and perceived product gender impacts on brand type font's appropriateness such that products that are perceived as feminine are paired with script type fonts and products that are highly masculine are paired with display type fonts.

Not only do type fonts influence brand and product gender perceptions but they also affect product purchase and brand loyalty such that women tend to purchase products that use script type fonts and men tend to purchase products that use display type fonts (Childers, 2002; Thangaraj, 2004; Puškarević et al., 2014; Peate, 2018; Yildrim & Büyükateş, 2020). It has been noted that gender of brands do influence consumer purchase and product recommendation (Alwis & Ramanathan, 2019). Brands with a strong positioning and clear gender associations as

either masculine or feminine have stronger brand equity compared to undifferentiated and androgynous brands. Moreover, previous findings found that consumers preferred products that are congruent with their own gender or that mirror their perception (Worth et al., 1992; Till & Priluck, 2001). The conclusions note that men are more likely to buy masculine perceived and gendered brands and women are more likely to purchase feminine perceived and gendered brands. Moreover, it is to be noted that neutral brands with ungendered names or messages are more likely purchased by women (Till & Priluck, 2001). And although most literature investigated on brand gender in regard to brand association, loyalty or equity (Lieven et al., 2014), the direct effect of purchase intention was not intensively researched.

Based on existing literature, it is concluded that type fonts influenced product purchase and that consumers respond more positively (e.g., purchase of products and likelihood to recommend to another consumer) to brands using gender congruent type fonts (Worth et al., 1992; Till &Priluck, 2001; Childers, 2002; Thangaraj, 2004; Puškarević et al, 2014; Peate, 2018) such that women will be more likely to purchase products and recommend the brand if the brand uses a script type font while men will be more likely to purchase products and recommend the if the brand uses a display type font.

Hence, a similar effect is addressed in the following hypothesis whereby type fonts are the independent variables and consumer behaviour (such as product purchase and likelihood to recommend) is the dependent variable:

> H_3: *Type fonts influence consumer behavior (i.e., purchase of product and likelihood to recommend to other consumers) such that women responds more positively to brands using script type fonts while men respond more positively to brands using display type fonts.*

Type Fonts and Product Regendering

As previously mentioned, brands possess strong gender identities that are used to sell products, attract a specific target market and increase the overall brand equity. However, the practice of re-gendering is something that many companies are interested. This stems from the fact that men are gradually purchasing products branded for women and vice versa (Jung, 2006). As such, most brands classify themselves as *'unisex'* or try to extend their product line to attract the opposing gender target market. The car industry has seen this change whereby cars are now classified as masculine and feminine, which is a big change for this highly masculine dominated market. Sandhu & Singh (2017) proved gender bending of products is possible and do succeed, although the type of product is highly dependent on this process.

Along the same line, script type fonts (*'Gigi'*, *'Rage Italic'*, *'Kristen ITC'*, and *'Monotype Corsiva'*) were noted to be highly feminine while display type fonts (*'Agency FB'*, *'Courier New'*, *'Rockwell Extra Bold'*, *'Impact'*) are perceived as highly masculine. Although empirical findings also suggest that consumers tend to most likely choose brands using masculine type fonts and that gender does not play any part in type font and brand selection. Women are also not always attracted to scripted and scrolled type fonts (Doyle, 2004; Fugate & Philips, 2010; Ridgway, 2014; Lieven et al., 2015; Grohmann, 2016; Neale, 2016; Browne, 2017; Machado, 2018; Yildrim & Büyükateş, 2020). This current research attempts to investigate whether brand re-gendering is possible by simply changing the type font of an existing brand with a solid prior brand gender perception. This study is further built upon Grohmann's 2016 research titled *'Communicating brand gender through type fonts'* where type fonts' impact on brand re-gendering is addressed but not fully investigated upon.

Therefore, the following research hypothesis is developed whereby type fonts are the independent variable and brand re-gendering is the dependent variable:

H4: Changing the type font of an existing brand will impact its current gender perception (masculinity or femininity) and lead to brand re-gendering.

Table 5 DEMOGRAPHICS OF PARTICIPANTS IN THE FOUR STUDIES					
	Female		Male		Grand Total
Age & Occupation	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban	
18 - 25	43	26	27	34	130
Employed	9	4	2	8	23
Self-employed	1	-	-	3	4
Student	33	22	25	23	103
26 - 33	2	4	8	2	16
Employed	1	4	8	2	15
Student	1	-	-	-	1
34 - 41	-	-	1	2	3
Employed	-	-	1	2	3
42 and Above	-	-	-	1	1
Employed	-	-	-	1	1
Grand Total	45	30	36	39	150

METHODS

Four studies were carried with 150 participants whereby quota sampling was used to avoid any biased results. The same respondents took part in all of the studies for convenience and consistency of results. Table 5 is a summary of the demographics of the respondents whereby details such as age, occupation, gender and residing region of the participants are illustrated.

Study 1

The first study examines whether the type fonts used to print brand names influence brand gender (i.e., brand masculinity and brand femininity – H1). A questionnaire (Cronbach's Alpha, α= 0.6) was distributed which included 4 script type fonts (*'Kristen ITC'*, *'Lucida Handwriting'*, *'Rage Italic'*, *'Gigi'*; Shaikh et al., 2006; Grohmann, 2016), 4 display type fonts (*'Agency FB'*, *'Rockwell Extra Bold'*, *'Arial Narrow'*, *'Impact'*; Shaikh et al., 2006; Grohmann, 2016) and 2 neutral type fonts (*'Arial'*, *'Courier New'*; Shaikh et al., 2006; Grohmann, 2016) as controls. A total of 150 participants evaluated fictitious brand names (which were pretested for (un)familiarity and liking beforehand) on five-point scales whereby 1 represented highly masculine and 5 represented highly feminine. The type fonts used for this study are as listed in Table 6 along with their respective prior gender association:

Table 6 TYPE FONTS USED IN STUDY 1 AND THEIR RESPECTIVE PRIOR GENDER ASSOCIATION

Gender Association	Font Types
Neutral	'Arial', 'Courier'
Highly Feminine	'Monotype Corsiva', 'Rage Italic'
Feminine	'Gigi', 'Kristen ITC'
Masculine	'Agency FB', 'Courier New'
Highly Masculine	'Rockwell Extra Bold', 'Impact'

No brand or product information was provided to respondents. A one-way ANOVA test (See Table 7) was performed with masculine and feminine type fonts serving as the independent variables. The results revealed significant effects of type fonts category: brands represented by script type fonts were perceived as feminine while brands represented by display type fonts were considered as masculine (M_{script} = 3.88, $F(1, 147)$ = 1.133, p = .289; $M_{display}$ = 2.42, $F(1, 147)$ = 0.497, p = 0.482).

Table 7 GENDER PERCEPTION OF TYPE FONTS			
Type Fonts	M	F-Value	p-Value
Display Type Fonts	2.42	0.497	0.482
Script Type Fonts	3.88	1.133	0.289

Study 1 supports the first hypothesis (H_1) that script type fonts increase brand femininity and display type fonts increase brand masculinity. These findings are significant as participants classified the fictitious brands without any prior exposure or knowledge about the product or brand (Figures 1-3).
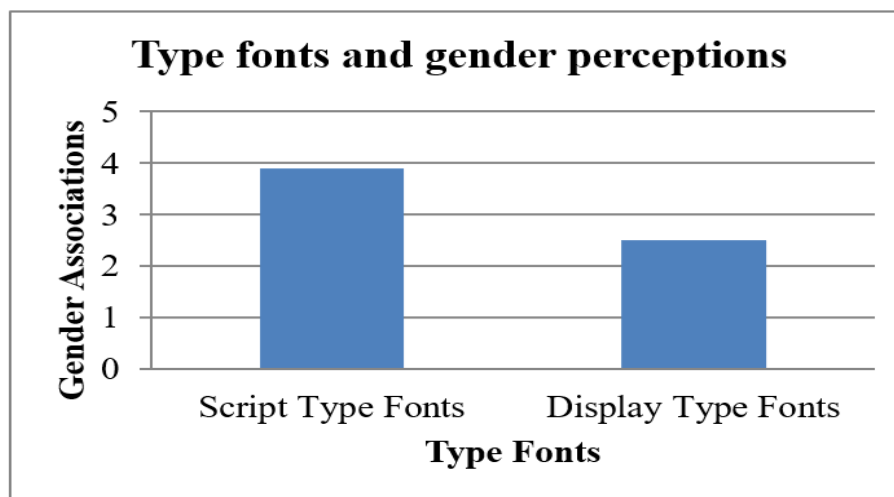

FIGURE 1
TYPE FONTS AND GENDER PERCEPTIONS

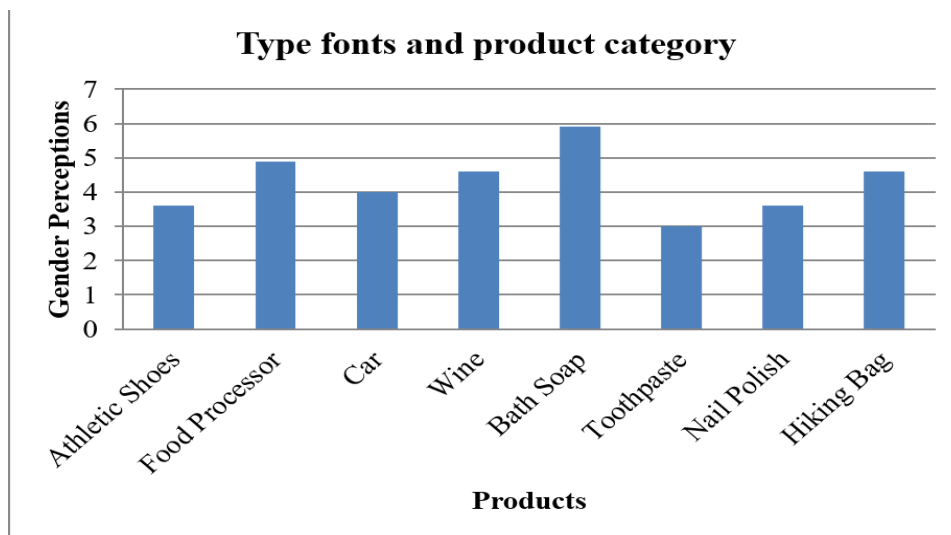## Study 2

The findings from Study 1 extended the investigation of type fonts on brand gender perceptions further to product categories and type fonts. The products chosen for this study were athletic shoes, food processor, car, bath soap, wine, toothpaste, nail polish and hiking bag (Fugate & Philips, 2010). The same fictitious brand names from Study 1 were selected to avoid

brand preference and liking of existing brands. 150 respondents rated eight fictitious brand names as per the product category, not knowing these brands in terms of familiarity, appropriateness for product categories, masculinity or femininity on seven-point scales whereby 1 represented highly masculine and 7 represented highly feminine. A one-way ANOVA test (Table 8) revealed that product categories (independent variable) did not influence type fonts (dependent variable) used (athletic shoes, p = 0.2; food processor, p = 0.26; car, p = 0.86; wine, p = 0.17; bath soap, p = 0.79; toothpaste, p = 0.54; nail polish, p = 0.39; hiking bag, p = 0.38). Furthermore, a chi square test (See Table 9) revealed that there was no relationship between gender of respondents and product categories and type fonts (p = 0.338).

Table 8		
GENDER PERCEPTION OF TYPE FONTS AND PRODUCTS		
Products	**F-Value**	**p-Value**
Athletic Shoes	1.653	0.201
Food Processor	1.275	0.261
Car	0.031	0.860
Wine	1.912	0.169
Bath Soap	0.075	0.785
Toothpaste	0.381	0.538
Nail Polish	0.756	0.386
Hiking Bag	0.787	0.376

| Table 9			
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTICIPANTS AND TYPE FONTS OF PRODUCTS			
	Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi Square	25.248[a]	23	0.338
Likelihood Ratio	33.816	23	0.068
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.024	1	0.878

FIGURE 2
TYPE FONTS AND PRODUCT CATEGORY

Study 2 shows that product categories do not influence type fonts and gender of participants does not have any relationship between type fonts and product category choice. Thus, the second hypothesis (H_2) which assumed that type fonts used is dictated by the product category is rejected. Study 3 examines product purchase and recommendations based on type fonts.

Study 3

Study 3 examines type font's influence on product interest, purchase and recommendations. Mobile phone and deodorants served as the main products in this study as both are used by men and women, and visual brand cues such as type fonts are often used to market and position those products in terms of gender associations. The same fictitious brand names were used from Study 1 and Study 2 as they avoided participants to select brands, they liked or preferred, thus their final choice would rest entirely upon type font of the brand name and product category. The survey model from Grohmann (2016) was applied for this particular study whereby the same brand names were chosen for the deodorants (Axis for men and Senseo for women). Participants were first asked about mobile phones and 150 respondents rated their interest in the different brand on five-point scales. A chi square test (See Table 10) also revealed that there was no existing relationship between gender of respondent and type font chosen (p = 0.393). Moreover, it was discovered that participants chose the masculine type font 'Agency FB' (M = 3.42) as their most preferred type font for purchase and the highly masculine type font 'Impact' as their least favoured one (M = 2.23).

| Table 10			
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER OF PARTICIPANTS AND TYPE FONTS CHOSEN			
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	13.737[a]	13	0.393
Likelihood Ratio	16.874	13	0.205
Linear-by-Linear Association	0.046	1	0.830
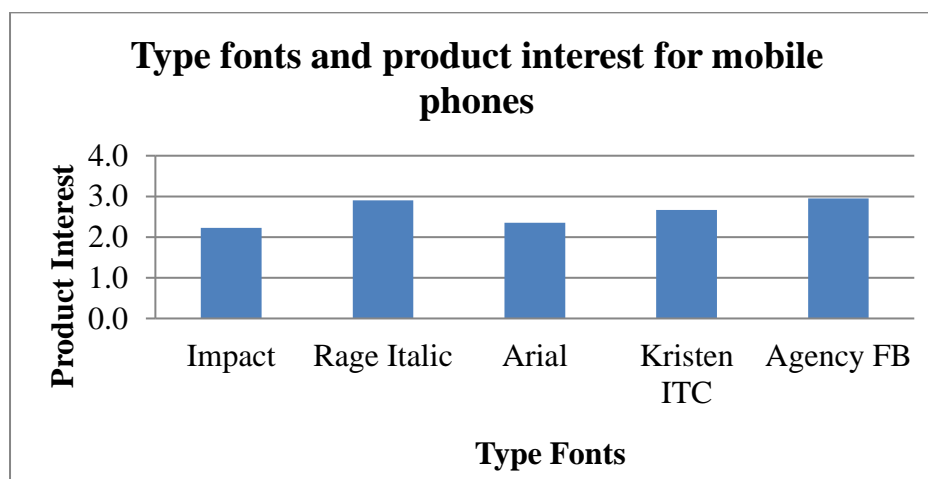
FIGURE 3
TYPE FONTS AND PRODUCT PURCHASE INTEREST FOR MOBILE PHONES

The second part of this study consisted of the deodorants (Axis for men using the type font *'Lucida Handwriting'* and Senseo for women using the type font *'Impact'*) and the same 150 participants who participated in the first part of this study rated their preferences and attitudes for 2 the type fonts. The results obtained from a one-way ANOVA test (See Table 11) for both brand (Axis and Senseo) indicates that respondents thought that Axis (with the type font *'Lucida Handwriting'*) is slightly appropriate, looks slightly strong and established, is fairly difficult to read, looks likely fresh and modern, is quite easy to spot and that they would likely recommend the brand to their male friend. A second one-way ANOVA test (See Table 11) was conducted for the brand Senseo (written using the type font *'Impact'*) and the results shows that the type font is slightly appropriate, slightly looks strong and established, is not difficult to read at all, likely looks fresh and modern, is easy to spot, and that they would likely recommend the brand to a female friend. The findings are further summarised in Figure 4.

Table 11
PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDES OF PARTICIPANTS TOWARDS GENDERED CONGRUENT TYPE FONTS

Characteristics	AXIS ('Lucida Handwriting' Type Font)		SENSEO ('Impact' Type Font)	
	F Value	P Value	F Value	P Value
Appropriateness of Type Font	0.256	0.613	0.000	1.000
Strong and Established Type Font	0.148	0.701	0.598	0.441
Easy to Read Type Font	0.410	0.523	4.491	0.036
Recommendation based on Type Font	0.071	0.790	0.970	0.326
Fresh and Modern Type Font	0.033	0.855	0.704	0.403
Easy to Spot Type Font	0.000	1.000	3.599	0.060
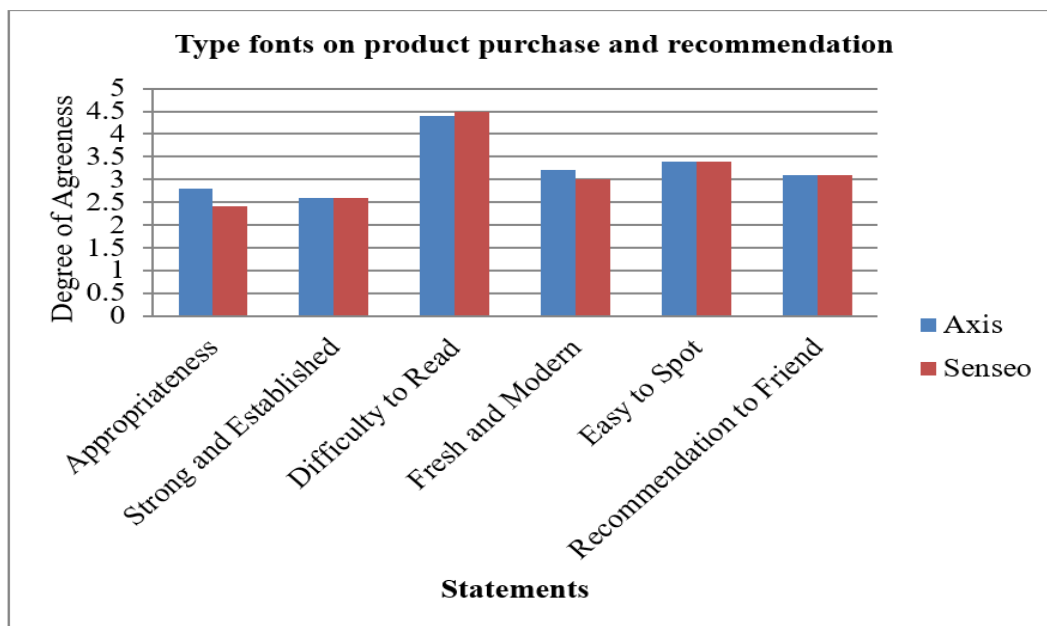
FIGURE 4
TYPE FONTS' IMPACT ON PRODUCT PURCHASE AND RECOMMENDATION

These findings suggest that men and women are not influence by type fonts that are congruent to their gender when they purchase a product or tend to recommend to a friend. The

third hypothesis (H_3) is thus rejected in correlation to these findings. Study 4 further tests this knowledge to investigate whether type fonts can influence brand re-gendering.

Study 4

This study was conducted based on recommendations from Grohmann (2016) who wanted to investigate whether changing the existing type font of a familiar brand in a defined product gender category could change its prior brand gender, thus brand re-gendering. This aspect can be used by marketers looking to enter new markets or changing their product and brand gender perceptions. For the purpose of this study, the brand *Dove* was used as it is a familiar brand in Mauritius with a clear product and brand gender perception. A pretested result shows that Dove is considered a feminine product (n = 40, M = 4.6) among participants. 150 participants were presented with six type fonts (*'Monotype Corsiva'*, *'Agency FB'*, *'Arial'*, *'Rockwell Extra Bold'*, *'Kristen ITC'*, and *'Arial Narrow'*) and asked which one would be better to target a young male audience. An independent sample t-test (Table 12) revealed that participants were not influence by the target audience in selecting the type fonts for brand re-gendering. The least favoured type font was *'Kristen ITC'* (M = 2.77) while the type font *'Monotype Corsiva'* (M = 3.41) was the most preferred one. A chi square test (Table 13) also revealed that gender of respondents did not have any relationship with type fonts chosen (p = 0.113).

Table 12 BRAND RE-GENDERING BASED ON TYPE FONTS			
Type Fonts	**M**	**SD**	**p Value**
'Agency FB'	3.04	0.919	0.290
'Arial'	3.15	1.054	2.277
'Rockwell Extra Bold'	3.04	1.247	0.128
'Kristen ITC'	2.77	1.201	0.587
'Arial Narrow'	3.27	1.115	0.023
'Monotype Corsiva'	3.41	1.327	0.014

Table 13 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GENDER OF RESPONDENTS AND TYPE FONTS CHOSEN FOR BRAND RE-GENDERING			
	Value	**df**	**Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)**
Pearson Chi-Square	24.243[a]	17	0.113
Likelihood Ratio	28.945	17	0.035
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.081	1	0.079
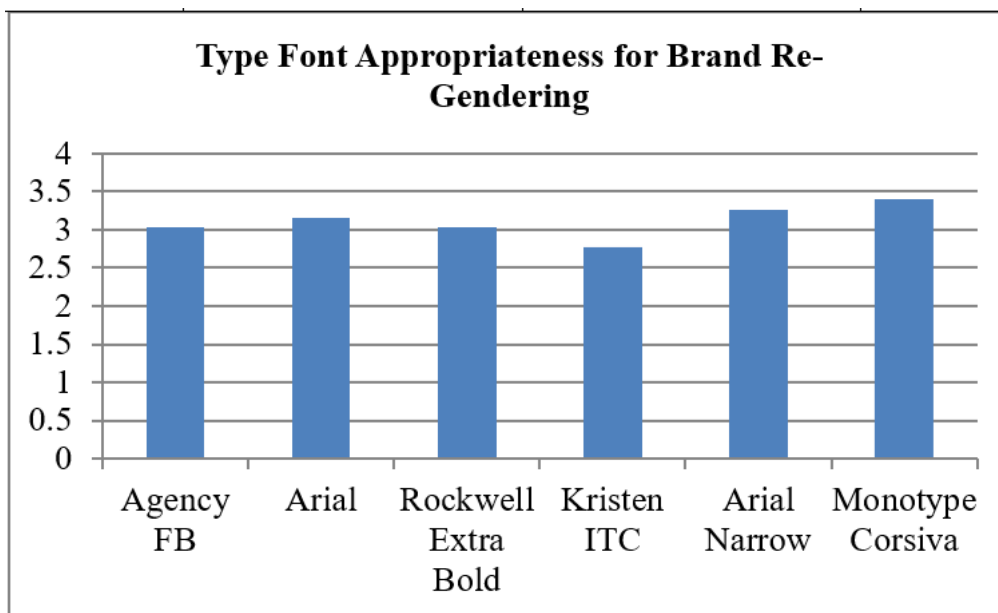
FIGURE 5
TYPE FONT APPROPRIATENESS FOR BRAND RE-GENDERING

The findings from Study 4 show that people do not consider change in type fonts as brand and/or product re-gendering, thus the product is still classified into its prior product gender perception. Hence, the fourth hypothesis (H₄) is rejected. This means that more changes (such as advertising spokesperson, brand colours, product package and more) need to be made for a drastic shift in brand gender perceptions when the product is already known by the public. However, it is also quite interesting to note from Figure 5 that 39.3% of the participants chose a neutral type font (Arial) for brand re-gendering, thus this may mean that neutral type fonts can help in this process Table 14.

Table 14 TYPE FONTS USED IN EACH STUDY			
Study	Type fonts used associated with femininity	Type fonts used associated with masculinity	Type fonts used as control
Study 1	'Kristen ITC', 'Lucida Handwriting', 'Rage Italic', 'Gigi'	'Agency FB', Rockwell Extra Bold', 'Arial Narrow', 'Impact'	'Arial', 'Courier New'
Study 2	'Kristen ITC', 'Gigi', 'Monotype Corsiva', 'Georgia', 'Lucida Handwriting', 'Rage Italic'	'Agency FB', 'Impact', 'Arial Narrow'	'Arial', 'Courier New'
Study 3	'Lucida Handwriting'	'Impact'	-
Study 4	'Monotype Corsiva', 'Kristen ITC'	'Agency FB', 'Rockwell Extra Bold', 'Arial Narrow'	'Arial'

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This research contributes to existing knowledge on type fonts and its influence on brand gender by establishing that consumers do form brand gender perceptions based on the brand type

fonts only such that script type fonts increase brand femininity and display type fonts enhance brand masculinity in emerging countries such as Mauritius. Moreover, this research puts forward that product categories and type fonts do not influence each other and that product purchase, interest and recommendation are not affected by type fonts (although further research is needed in that area) such that women are not influenced to buy a product that uses script type fonts and men are not influenced to purchase from a brand that uses display type fonts. Type fonts may be a subtle visual cue, yet it greatly influences brand gender perceptions and it was also proven that type fonts is not enough for changing the existing brand gender perception of a product. From a theoretical point of view, type fonts and brand gender or personality is a promising avenue to explore in future researches along with other visual brand cues such as logo, graphic designs, brand colours, product shape amongst others for customers of emerging countries in African region.

Type Fonts and Gender Associations

This research has shown that a type font is an effective means to communicate brand gender. Empirical results from Study 1 were consistent across various previous studies on script and display type fonts (Bromberg, 2003; Lieven et al., 2015; Grohmaan, 2016; Browne, 2017; Yildrim & Büyükateş, 2020), that is, script type fonts were matched with femininity brand gender perception whilst display type fonts were considered as masculine. Brand managers can select one of the script or display type fonts to convey their brand gender associations and their unique brand gender profile. This further improves product and brand positioning and should be useful when looking to market to a specific gender only in emerging economies. Neutral type fonts are also advised in cases where brands want to pursue both brand masculinity and femininity perceptions.

Influence of Type Fonts on Product Category

Study 2 demonstrates that product categories do not influence type fonts and customers do not tend to associate product category with type fonts. This is a useful piece of information as brand managers and companies may have long thought that they needed to have a masculine type font if they were marketing a product that is mostly viewed as masculine or a feminine type font if they are selling a product that is highly viewed as feminine. This means that companies can select a type font and not fear that they will be associated with a specific brand gender only. Viewed from a business point of view, this is beneficial as businesses can target both men and women, indifferent of the type font they are using or the product they are selling. These findings differ from previous literature (Thangaraj, 2004; Doyle, 2004; Henderson et al., 2004; Grohmaan, 2016; Peate, 2018) and is a testimony to our changing times and ways of living in emerging economies that are striving to be sustainable in the near future. More specifically, younger generations have no problem buying and using products that were previously marketed or associated with a specific gender that was not their own. In addition, women can now purchase products that were long viewed as masculine (car) and men have no problem using products that were previously viewed as feminine (food processor). The best way would be to use neutral type fonts as this allows associations to none of the brand gender (masculinity and femininity) and promises a bigger target audience for the product offering in an emerging country such as Mauritius.

Impact of Type Fonts on Product Purchases and Recommendations

The third part of this research has revealed further details about type font's effects on product purchase, interest and recommendations. It was found that men and women are somewhat influence by type fonts when making their purchases or recommending a product, they are not entirely influence by this specific visual brand cue. This is not coherent as per previous literature (Childers, 2002; Thangaraj, 2004; Puškarević et al., 2014; Peate, 2018) and raises the stakes for businesses and brand managers in emerging countries. Type fonts played a part in product interest as respondents still favoured products that used type fonts that were congruent with their own gender but type fonts did not affect product purchase and recommendation. This means that brand managers should keep in mind that type fonts are not the only influencing factor when it comes to product interest, purchase and recommendation and additional product information or brand cues should be present. The product performance, product shape, product colours, product usability and after purchase behaviours all serve as additional advertising and marketing cues that increase product interest, purchase and recommendations. This can be applied in the consumer buying journey such that type fonts can be used in the primary section of the consumer journey to raise awareness and gain interest as consumers are interested in brands that use type fonts that are congruent to their gender. Moreover, when it comes to the next step in the buyer journey, brand managers must ensure that further information about the product is present as the type font solely will not be enough to make a sale for companies in emerging countries.

Some other major findings from Study 3 also revealed that script type fonts were not easy to read or spot when compared to display type fonts. This suggests that brand managers should prioritise display fonts when trying to convey important information as they are easily seen and read by everyone. This also helps copywriters and brand managers to understand which type fonts to use under which circumstance – display type fonts can be used on billboards where the audience is on the rush or far away and have little time to read the marketing message, on the other hand, script fonts can be used in brand slogans, written communications in newspapers, websites, magazines and more as people have the time to read and assimilate the message properly. The key takeaway for businesses is that display type fonts should be used to convey important message in little time and script type fonts should be implemented in other types of marketing communications (emails, websites, magazines, newspapers etc). Table 15 shows a summary of the results for the pairings of type fonts and product types.

Table 15 TYPE FONTS APPROPRIATENESS BY PRODUCT TYPES								
	Athletic Shoes	Food Processor	Car	Wine	Bath Soap	Toothpaste	Nail Polish	Hiking Bag
Agency FB	+++	+++	-	-	-	-	-	-
Kristen ITC	++	-	-	+++	-	-	-	++
Gigi	-	++	-	-	-	-	-	-
Courier New	-	-	++	-	-	-	++	-
Arial	-	-	++	++	-	-	-	-
Georgia	-	-	-	-	+	-	-	-
Monotype Corsiva	-	-	-	-	++++	-	-	-
Lucida Handwriting	-	-	-	-	-	+++	-	+++
Impact	-	-	-	-	-	+	+	-

Key: Highly Applicable: ++++, Good Applicability: +++, Applicable: ++, Somewhat Applicable: +, Not Applicable: -

Impact of Type Fonts on Brand Re-gendering Strategies

The last part of this research investigated whether changing the type font of an existing brand is enough to change its current brand gender perception. Using the brand *Dove* for this study, respondents were asked to change the existing script type font of the brand to adapt to a young male audience. Results from Figure 5 suggest that people still selected script type fonts and display type fonts were more of a neutral choice. Although, it is to be noted that neutral type font ('Arial') was also well liked by participants. Findings from Study 4 confirm that people are more attracted to script type fonts and this is in line with previous research (Thangaraj, 2004; Henderson et al., 2004; Peate, 2018). These findings are crucial for businesses looking to either penetrate new market with an existing product or launch a new product in an existing market as they will need to adapt their type fonts to conform with the audience they are targeting – and script and neutral type fonts are seen as the best fit in both cases. This study merely puts forward an idea of how an audience will react if the type font of an existing brand had to change and further research is needed to identify more underlying tones of these effects. This research reveals five major findings, 1: type fonts contributes to brand gender perceptions such that script type fonts increase brand femininity and display type fonts enhance brand masculinity, 2: type fonts is not influenced by product categories and thus neutral type fonts are a good choice to use indifferent of the type of product, 3: people seek products that use gender-congruent type fonts and this is good to create awareness of brands as well as interests from potential consumers, 4: type fonts do not influence product purchase and recommendation and further product and brand information (product performance, product price, unique selling proposition) is needed to ensure the sale, 5: *'script'* and *'neutral'* type fonts are best used for brand re-gendering as consumers are more attracted to those type fonts.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This research was conducted by using fictitious brand names and thus some people had difficulties to answer some of the questions without any clear indication of the brands they were presented. Future research can take into account existing Mauritian brand names and investigate on which type fonts are more memorable or competitive on the current emerging market of Mauritius. The basis for this research was on the gender of participants, although another interesting research can take into consideration the age of respondents (for people tend to like or dislike particular type fonts as they grow older) as the determining factor for type font's preference and effects. Other interesting researches can be carried on type fonts in specific marketing communication channels such as websites, billboards, newspapers and magazines. Type fonts used in digital adverts and on the Internet are yet another promising avenue to investigate, especially when the majority of customers spend a lot of time online and digital marketing is becoming the best way to reach the targeted audience and market the products. The research on type fonts open the doors for other various research works that can be implemented in different contexts – industry and product wise to further shed light on emerging economies to better understand brand purchases from a gendered perspective for greater sustainability.

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