

FEMININITY, MASCULINITY, AND ANDROGyny: AN ASSESSMENT OF TOXIC AND POSITIVE CONSUMER CHARACTERISTICS

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ABSTRACT

A research model is designed to assess toxic and positive consumer behavior based on masculinity, femininity and androgyny. New definitions of androgyny are developed resulting in two types of consumer androgyny – hypo-androgyny and hyper-androgyny. Also, the hypotheses of the research model are assessed using a snowball sample beginning with young consumers enrolled in upper-division marketing classes at a large U.S. university.

Four types of consumers were examined in this study – feminine consumers, masculine consumers, hypo-androgynous consumers, and hyper-androgynous consumers. These consumers were studied in relationship to toxic vs. positive consumer traits. Based on this study's findings, all four types of consumers possess some toxicity and all four types of consumer possess some positivity.

Feminine consumers tend to have the toxic characteristics of interpersonal influence susceptibility, materialism, and possessiveness. Masculine consumers tend to have the toxic characteristics of arousal-seeking tendency, conformity motivation, and possessiveness. Hypo-androgynous consumers (those with low scores in both femininity and masculinity) have the toxic characteristics of arousal-seeking tendency and materialism. Finally, hyper-androgynous consumers (those with high scores in both femininity and masculinity) have the toxic characteristics of arousal-seeking tendency, conformity motivation, interpersonal influence susceptibility, and possessiveness. Thus, both feminine and masculine consumers possess the same quantity of three toxic consumer characteristics. The only characteristic that is common to both masculine and feminine consumers is possessiveness.

Hypo-androgynous consumers possess the lowest number of toxic consumer characteristics. The two toxic characteristics they have are evenly split between one shared with masculine consumers (arousal-seeking tendency) and one shared with feminine consumers (materialism). In addition, hypo-androgynous consumers share only one toxic consumer characteristic with hyper-androgynous consumers – arousal-seeking tendency.

Hyper-androgynous consumers possess the largest quantity with four toxic consumer characteristics. They share three of these characteristics (arousal-seeking tendency, conformity motivation, and possessiveness) with masculine consumers. They share two of these characteristics (interpersonal influence susceptibility and possessiveness) with feminine consumers.

Feminine consumers tend to possess only one positive consumer characteristic – involvement with education. Of the four types of consumers examined in this research, masculine consumers tend to possess four positive consumer characteristics – involvement with education, self-confidence, self-esteem, and time management. Hypo-androgynous consumers possess the two positive characteristics of self-confidence and time management. Finally, like masculine consumers, hyper-androgynous consumers tend to possess four positive consumer characteristics – involvement with education, self-confidence, self-esteem, and time management.

Unlike toxicity, where feminine and masculine consumers possessed the same number of characteristics, masculine consumers possess the tendency to have more positive consumer characteristics. The one characteristic possessed by feminine consumers – involvement with education – is also possessed by masculine consumers.

Hypo-androgynous consumers possess two positive consumer characteristics. Both of these positive characteristics (self-confidence and time management) are also possessed by masculine consumers. These two positive consumer characteristics are also possessed by hyper-androgynous consumers. Hypo-androgynous consumers share no positive consumer characteristics with feminine consumers.

All four positive consumer characteristics possessed by hyper-androgynous consumers are also found in masculine consumers. Hyper-androgynous consumers also share one positive characteristic (involvement with education) with feminine consumers. They also share two characteristics (self-confidence and time management) with hypo-androgynous consumers.

Interesting to note is that none of the four categories of consumers tend to possess the toxic consumer characteristic of ethnocentrism. In addition, none of the types of consumers tend to possess the positive consumer characteristics of acceptance of authority and coping with life.