



Designing Masculinity: The Role of Typography in Constructing Power, Strength, and Dominance in Product Branding

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Abstract. Typography has communicated messages through images displayed on a package. The thickness of the letterforms, the sharpness of their corners, and the proportions in the placement of symbols carry meaning. These characteristics not only convey information but also shape an identity. This study highlights how the systematic process of typography in producing masculine meanings in product branding. Therefore, this study developed the Typographic Masculinity Index (TMI), an original semi-quantitative framework, and then applied it to eight male-oriented brands spanning the energy drink and grooming product categories: Red Bull, Extra Joss, Monster Energy, Warrior Energy, AXE, Old Spice, Gillette, and Biore Men. This analysis is based on Roland Barthes' visual semiotics and R.W. Connell's theory of hegemonic masculinity. The research findings confirm that bold, sharp-angled, condensed typographic forms and the use of capital letters consistently function as visual codes for authority, power, and dominance. Energy drink brands achieved significantly higher TMI scores ($M = 36.5/40$) than personal care brands ($M = 23.5/40$), reflecting deliberate strategic differences in how masculinity is visually packaged across product categories. From these patterns, four typological categories emerged: dominant masculinity typography, aggressive masculinity typography, heroic masculinity typography, and modern masculinity typography. Overall, these findings support the argument that typography is not a neutral vessel for verbal content, but rather an active participant in the cultural production of gendered identities.

Keywords: Branding; Consumer Culture; Gender Representation; Masculinity; Visual Semiotics.

1. INTRODUCTION

Walk down any convenience store aisle and the visual language of male-oriented products becomes immediately recognizable. Energy drinks, performance supplements, grooming products their packaging shares a visual vocabulary of heavy strokes, angular letterforms, compressed proportions, and aggressive stylistic treatments that signals, before any product claim is read, that this item belongs to a particular gender category. Typography is doing significant cultural work here. Yet the specific mechanisms through which typographic form constructs masculine meaning have received remarkably little systematic scholarly attention.

This is a gap worth addressing. Typography is among the most fundamental elements of visual communication design, and its role extends well beyond legibility. As Lupton (2010) and van Leeuwen (2006) have argued, typographic design constitutes a semiotic resource through which cultural meanings, emotional registers, and social identities are communicated. In branding, the choice of a typeface is a strategic act: letterform weight, proportion, and stylistic treatment collectively shape how audiences interpret a brand's character and values

(Henderson et al., 2004; Hormuth & Mattes, 2017). The question is not whether typography communicates gender observation suggests that it does but how that communication works, and with what consistency.

Existing scholarship on typography and meaning tends to concentrate on readability, emotional response, or general brand personality (Brumberger, 2003; Stöckl, 2005). Gender studies of advertising, meanwhile, have prioritized imagery, narrative, and overall visual composition rather than the granular analysis of typographic form (Schroeder & Zwick, 2004; Williamson, 1978). Neither body of literature has developed tools adequate to the systematic, comparative analysis of typographic gender coding. This study aims to fill that gap by introducing the Typographic Masculinity Index (TMI) a framework that makes the analysis of typographic masculinity replicable, transparent, and suitable for cross-brand comparison.

Two theoretical traditions inform the study. Roland Barthes's visual semiotics (1972, 1977) particularly his account of denotation, connotation, and the naturalization of cultural meanings through myth provides the conceptual vocabulary for understanding how typographic signs carry ideologically loaded associations. R.W. Connell's (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, developed further by Connell and Messerschmidt (2005), explains how dominant cultural ideals of masculinity are maintained and reproduced through representational practices, including visual design. Together, these frameworks enable an analysis of typography not as mere form but as cultural practice with measurable, describable properties.

The study pursues three aims: to identify the typographic characteristics that recur in male-oriented product branding; to analyze how these characteristics function semiotically to communicate masculine values; and to develop a typological classification of masculine typography that has descriptive and analytical utility for design research and practice.

Research Questions

- a. What typographic characteristics are commonly deployed in male-oriented product branding, and how do these vary across product categories?
- b. How do typographic elements function as visual codes that communicate masculinity through semiotic processes of denotation and connotation?
- c. What typological patterns of masculine typography can be identified and systematically described in contemporary branding?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Typography as Semiotic Resource

The scholarly understanding of typography has shifted considerably over the past three decades. Early accounts were largely preoccupied with legibility with the functional transmission of verbal content in conditions that varied by lighting, distance, and reader capacity (McLean, 1980; Spencer, 1969). This was useful work, but it left unanswered a question that practitioners had long since recognized as central: why do certain typefaces feel authoritative, others playful, others threatening? Contemporary design theory has reframed this as a question of semiotics. Typography, on this account, is not simply a delivery system for language but a system of visual signs that generates meaning through its own formal properties (Lupton, 2010; van Leeuwen, 2006).

Stöckl's (2005) formulation is particularly precise: he argues that typography constitutes a distinct signing mode positioned at the intersection of language and image, simultaneously carrying verbal content and producing visual-material meaning through properties including weight, rhythm, proportion, and spatial arrangement. A letterform is therefore doubly meaningful as a linguistic unit and as a visual object with its own communicative affordances. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) extend this into a broader social semiotic framework, proposing that typographic variables such as weight, slope, and curvature function as culturally conditioned resources for meaning-making. Their concept of modal affordances is especially relevant here: a heavy typeface affords connotations of weight and power not because the relationship between visual form and conceptual meaning is natural, but because sustained cultural convention has made it feel that way.

Empirical work has confirmed these theoretical claims with some precision. Brumberger (2003) found that readers attribute consistent personality traits to typefaces — heavy sans-serifs tend to generate associations of directness and strength, while lighter faces evoke elegance or delicacy. Henderson and colleagues (2004) demonstrated in an experimental setting that typeface design functions as an impression management tool, influencing consumer evaluations of brand warmth and competence. These studies establish that typographic choices carry systematic connotative meanings: the associations are not random, and they are not merely individual.

Typography and Brand Identity

Within branding, typography has long been understood as a primary vehicle for communicating brand identity not just brand name, but brand character, values, and cultural positioning (Davis, 2012; Meggs & Purvis, 2016). What is less often examined is the

ideological dimension of this communication. The relationship between typographic style and brand perception operates through what Barthes (1972) called mythology: the process by which culturally produced meanings come to appear self-evident and natural. A consumer who interprets bold, angular typography on a men's product as naturally masculine is experiencing this mythological effect the cultural construction has been so thoroughly naturalized that its contingency has disappeared.

Research specifically addressing gender in typographic branding is limited, though the studies that exist point consistently in the same direction. Conley (2018) demonstrated experimentally that typefaces with higher stroke contrast and angular letterforms produced significantly higher ratings of perceived strength and dominance, while rounded, low-contrast typefaces registered as gentle and approachable. Edwards (2011) employed semantic differential scales across demographic groups and found robust cross-group associations between heavy, condensed, sans-serif typography and masculine attributes. Both studies suggest that the typographic gender codes observed in branding reflect conventions that are widely internalized which, from a critical design perspective, makes them all the more worth examining carefully.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Visual Culture

Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity remains the most productive theoretical framework for understanding how dominant constructions of masculine identity are produced and maintained. Hegemonic masculinity, in Connell's account, is not a fixed personality type but a relational configuration a pattern of practices that legitimizes men's dominant position by subordinating other gender identities and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. Crucially, this configuration is reproduced through cultural practice, including the practices of media representation, advertising, and visual design.

The advertising literature has documented this reproduction in considerable detail. Schroeder and Zwick (2004) analyzed advertising images across product categories and found systematic emphasis on physical power, sexual dominance, and competitive achievement as markers of masculine identity. Messner (1992) examined sports branding and showed how a visual language of masculine heroism and physical supremacy is constructed through consistent representational choices. Gill's (2003) analysis of the so-called "new man" in grooming advertising is particularly relevant to the present study: she traced how brands incorporated practices of grooming and aesthetic self-investment traditionally coded as feminine into a masculine identity framework by recasting them as expressions of rational self-

management and competitive self-improvement. The typographic choices of brands like AXE, as this study's analysis will show, are legible within exactly this cultural logic.

What remains underexplored in this literature is the contribution of typography specifically. This study proposes that typographic form is not a neutral background against which other elements of masculine representation are staged, but an active participant in the construction of masculine visual identity one whose contribution can be analyzed systematically.

Semiotics and Advertising Analysis

Barthes's semiotic framework is the analytical foundation for this study's approach to typographic meaning. In "Rhetoric of the Image" (1977), Barthes demonstrated that visual signs in advertising operate simultaneously at two levels: the denotative, which corresponds to the literal visual content what the image or form actually shows and the connotative, which carries culturally specific associations and ideological values. His argument in *Mythologies* (1972) adds a third dimension: the process of naturalization, by which connotative meanings present themselves as denotative ones, as simple facts about the world rather than culturally produced associations.

Applied to typography, this framework is productive. At the denotative level, a logotype's bold, condensed letterforms simply appear as what they are: thick strokes, narrow proportions. At the connotative level, these formal properties activate associations weight reads as strength, condensation reads as urgency and intensity, angularity reads as aggression. And at the mythological level, these connotations present themselves as natural: of course a strong man's product would have bold, angular typography. The ideological work is invisible, which is precisely what makes it effective. Williamson (1978) made a similar point in her analysis of advertising: the meanings that appear most self-evident are typically those most thoroughly produced. *kalimat tanya*.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study combines qualitative visual analysis with a semi-quantitative scoring instrument, the Typographic Masculinity Index (TMI). This design reflects a tension inherent in visual research: the need for interpretive depth, which resists reduction to numbers, and the need for analytical transparency and comparability, which benefits from them. Noble and Bestley's (2005) visual research methodology offers a framework for holding both needs together, and Creswell's (2014) mixed-methods approach provides a broader methodological

warrant. The qualitative analysis supplies the interpretive substance; the TMI provides a structured vocabulary for making analytical decisions explicit and their results comparable across brands.

Sample Selection

Eight brands were selected through purposive sampling from two product categories central to male-oriented consumer marketing: energy drinks and grooming products. These categories were chosen because they represent different constructions of masculine identity — energy drinks tend to emphasize raw physical performance, while grooming products navigate a more complex territory that includes traditionally "feminine" self-care practices. Sampling across both categories makes the typological analysis richer and more revealing.

Selection criteria required that each brand: (a) explicitly target male consumers as a primary audience; (b) hold significant market presence in global or Southeast Asian contexts; and (c) deploy a distinctive typographic identity in product branding. The inclusion of Indonesian brands Extra Joss, Warrior Energy, and Biore alongside global brands introduces a cross-cultural dimension to the analysis. The final sample comprises:

Energy drinks: Red Bull, Extra Joss, Monster Energy, Warrior Energy
Grooming products: AXE/Lynx, Old Spice, Gillette, Biore Men

The Typographic Masculinity Index (TMI)

The TMI is an original analytical instrument developed for this study. It evaluates five typographic variables: weight, letterform shape, capitalization, proportion, and visual styling, each scored on a five-point scale from minimal (1) to maximal (5) masculine expression. Variables are weighted according to their theoretical significance in constructing typographic masculinity, drawing on both existing empirical literature (Brumberger, 2003; Conley, 2018) and grounded theoretical reasoning. Weight and letterform shape carry the highest weighting ($\times 2$ each) because they constitute the most perceptually immediate and symbolically loaded typographic features in this context. Capitalization and proportion carry moderate weighting ($\times 1.5$), and visual styling carries the lowest ($\times 1$), reflecting its status as a supplementary rather than constitutive feature of masculine typographic identity.

Table 1. Typographic Masculinity Index (TMI): Variables, Scoring, and Weighting.

Variable	Descriptor	Score Range	Weight	Max Weighted Score
Weight	Light (1) → Extra Bold (5)	1–5	×2	10
Letterform Shape	Rounded (1) → Sharply Angular (5)	1–5	×2	10
Capitalization	Lowercase (1) → All Caps (5)	1–5	×1.5	7.5
Proportion	Extended (1) → Ultra-Condensed (5)	1–5	×1.5	7.5
Visual Styling	Plain (1) → Extreme Texture/Effect (5)	1–5	×1	5

The maximum possible weighted score is 40 points. Scores in the 30–40 range indicate high masculine typographic expression; 20–29 indicates moderate expression; below 20 indicates low expression. It should be acknowledged that TMI scoring involves interpretive judgment the instrument does not eliminate subjectivity but makes analytical decisions explicit and documentable. All scoring decisions are recorded to support critical evaluation of the interpretive process.

Data Collection and Analysis Procedure

Typographic data were drawn from official brand packaging, brand websites, and advertising materials accessed through verified brand channels during the data collection period. For each brand, the analysis focused on the primary logotype and headline typography these elements represent the most deliberately designed and strategically significant typographic expressions of brand identity, and they carry the greatest semiotic load in consumer encounters with the brand.

Analysis proceeded in three stages. First, formal typographic analysis produced TMI scores for each brand. Second, semiotic interpretation following Barthes's denotation/connotation framework examined the cultural meanings these typographic forms carry. Third, typological classification identified patterns across the sample and organized brands into four categories of masculine typographic expression. All analytical decisions are documented to enable critical scrutiny.

Metode yang sudah umum tidak perlu dituliskan secara rinci, tetapi cukup merujuk ke referensi acuan (misalnya: rumus uji-F, uji-t, dll). Pengujian validitas dan reliabilitas instrumen penelitian tidak perlu dituliskan secara rinci, tetapi cukup dengan mengungkapkan hasil pengujian dan interpretasinya. Keterangan simbol pada model dituliskan dalam kalimat.

4. RESULTS

Typographic Characteristics in Male-Oriented Branding

The eight-brand sample reveals five typographic characteristics that recur with sufficient consistency to be treated as defining features of masculine branding typography. What is notable is not simply that these features appear, but that they appear in combination — masculine branding typography tends to be heavy and angular and condensed, not merely one of these things in isolation. The cumulative effect of these features reinforces each other, producing a typographic register that is unmistakably gendered.

Typographic weight is the most universally present feature. Seven of the eight analyzed brands rely on bold or extra-bold letterforms as their primary typographic style. Thick stroke widths create an impression of visual solidity and mass that operates as a metaphor for physical strength the letterform's weight stands in for the body's weight. The single exception, Biore Men, is revealing in its divergence: its medium-weight typeface signals a different construction of masculine identity, one oriented toward self-care and refinement rather than physical force.

Angular letterform geometry is most pronounced in energy drink branding. The typefaces in this category deploy sharp terminals, pointed apexes, and diagonal stress that produce visual tension and a sense of forward momentum. The semiotic relationship between angular geometry and aggression is documented in visual perception research (Winkielman et al., 2006), and the consistent deployment of angular letterforms in this product category suggests that branding designers are deliberately exploiting this association.

Capitalization specifically, all-uppercase setting appears in six of the eight analyzed brands. Uppercase letterforms occupy more visual territory, create stronger visual rhythm through greater regularity of form, and eliminate the vertical differentiation between ascenders and descenders that characterizes mixed-case typography. This last point is significant: mixed-case text has a more variable, informal silhouette; uppercase text presents a solid, uniform visual mass that connotes authority and institutional register. The cultural function of capitalization as a typographic marker of power is long-established, and these brands are drawing on it.

Condensed proportions produce visual density and urgency by compressing letterforms horizontally while maintaining their full vertical height. The resulting high information-to-space ratio creates a sense of contained energy of something compressed that wants to expand. This formal quality maps onto branding narratives of explosive performance and concentrated power with considerable precision.

Finally, stylistic treatments metallic gradients, distressed textures, angular shadow effects, kinetic visual treatments are particularly prevalent in energy drink branding and function to transform typography from an informational element into a dramatic visual event. These treatments are worth noting because they indicate the degree to which typography in this product category is treated not as a functional element but as a primary vehicle of brand emotion and identity.

TMI Results by Brand

Table 2 presents TMI scores for all eight brands. The most striking finding is the magnitude of differentiation between product categories.

Table 2. Typographic Masculinity Index Scores Across Analyzed Brands.

Brand	Category	Region	Raw TMI	Weighted TMI	Typology
Extra Joss	Energy Drink	Indonesia/Asia	23/25	38.5/40	Aggressive
Red Bull	Energy Drink	Global	21/25	36.0/40	Aggressive–Dominant
Monster Energy	Energy Drink	Global	22/25	37.5/40	Aggressive
Warrior Energy	Energy Drink	Indonesia	20/25	34.0/40	Dominant
AXE / Lynx	Grooming	Global	16/25	27.5/40	Modern
Old Spice	Grooming	Global	14/25	24.0/40	Modern–Dominant
Gillette	Grooming	Global	13/25	22.0/40	Modern
Biore Men	Grooming	Southeast Asia	12/25	20.5/40	Modern

Energy drink brands record a mean weighted TMI of 36.5/40; grooming brands record a mean of 23.5/40. This 13-point gap represents not a minor difference in degree but a qualitatively different typographic register the visual language of masculine energy in performance products is far more extreme than that of masculine identity in grooming. Extra Joss leads the sample at 38.5/40, combining maximum-weight strokes, sharply angular letterforms, all-caps setting, ultra-condensed proportions, and distressed visual effects. At every available typographic dimension, the brand amplifies masculine expression to its maximum.

Within the grooming category, the variation between brands is itself informative. AXE (27.5/40) and Old Spice (24.0/40) score notably higher than Gillette (22.0/40) and Biore Men (20.5/40), reflecting strategic differences in positioning. Old Spice invokes a heritage

masculinity through archival typographic styling slab serifs with letterpress-era construction suggest reliability and traditional authority. AXE, conversely, constructs a contemporary urban masculinity through geometric sans-serif forms that connote precision and controlled self-presentation rather than raw force. Both are recognizable as masculine, but the masculinity they construct is meaningfully different.

Typology of Masculine Typography

Four typological categories emerge from the combined TMI and qualitative analysis. These categories represent distinct typographic strategies for constructing masculine visual identity. They are not mutually exclusive some brands draw on adjacent categories but they describe recognizably different approaches with different semiotic effects.

Table 3. Typological Matrix of Masculine Typography.

Typology	TMI Range	Typeface Features	Barthesian Connotation	Brand Examples
Dominant	28–32	Bold, caps, geometric, minimal styling	Authority, stability, institutional power	Gillette, Warrior Energy
Aggressive	34–40	Extra-bold, angular, condensed, distressed effects	Raw power, combat energy, primal force	Extra Joss, Monster, Red Bull
Heroic	30–36	Monumental scale, metallic/cinematic effects, extended caps	Epic narrative, valor, heroic fantasy	Sports & gaming specialty brands
Modern	18–27	Geometric sans-serif, balanced proportions, clean styling	Precision, sophistication, controlled confidence	AXE, Gillette sub-lines, Biore Men

Dominant Masculinity Typography

Dominant masculinity typography communicates authority through weight and scale rather than dynamic visual effect. Bold uppercase letterforms with geometric construction and minimal ornamentation this is a typographic language that borrows from the visual conventions of official signage, sporting organization identities, and governmental communication. The authority it conveys is structural and institutional rather than aggressive. Gillette's logotype is a clear instance: clean, heavy, and authoritative without the sharp angles or distressed effects that would signal aggression. The typographic message is control, not force.

Aggressive Masculinity Typography

Aggressive masculinity typography occupies the high end of the TMI scale. Extra-bold weight, sharply angular letterforms, ultra-condensed proportions, and distressed or kinetic visual effects combine to produce a visual experience of explosive energy and concentrated physical power. The type appears, in some cases, to be under pressure the letterforms seem to strain against their own outlines. Extra Joss and Monster Energy exemplify this category. The typographic language draws on the visual conventions of extreme sports and action media, and it leaves little ambiguity about the kind of masculinity being constructed: raw, physical, and competitive.

Heroic Masculinity Typography

Heroic masculinity typography elevates masculine identity into a register of extraordinary capability and epic achievement. Letterforms are typically monumental in scale and incorporate cinematic visual treatments metallic finishes, directional lighting, dimensional effects. The visual language draws on film title design and commemorative iconography, constructing masculinity as a narrative of heroism rather than simply a quality of strength. This category appears most prominently in specialist sports branding and gaming products, where the aspiration to extraordinary performance is central to the brand's value proposition.

Modern Masculinity Typography

Modern masculinity typography is the most complex of the four categories because it navigates a cultural contradiction: how to construct masculine identity through practices grooming, aesthetic self-investment that have traditionally been coded as feminine. The typographic solution is to emphasize precision, rationality, and control. Geometric sans-serif typefaces with balanced proportions, controlled spacing, and minimal stylistic treatment communicate a masculinity that is self-possessed and deliberate rather than physically aggressive. AXE and Biore Men exemplify this approach. The masculinity they construct is consistent with what Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) describe as emergent configurations of hegemonic masculinity forms that accommodate self-awareness and aesthetic investment within a framework that continues to emphasize control and effectiveness.

Discussion

Semiotic Analysis: Denotation, Connotation, and Myth

Barthes's semiotic framework reveals the ideological work that masculine typography performs in product branding. At the denotative level, what is present is simply formal: a thick stroke, a sharp terminal, a condensed proportion. These are visual facts. At the connotative level, however, these formal properties activate culturally embedded associations weight

connotes power, angularity connotes aggression, compression connotes urgency. Table 4 illustrates how this two-level semiosis operates across selected brands.

Table 4. Semiotic Analysis of Typographic Signs in Selected Brands.

Brand	Typographic Sign	Denotative Meaning	Connotative Meaning
Extra Joss	Extra-bold condensed, distressed	Thick letterforms compressed tightly, textured surface	Explosive energy, bodily force, raw masculine power
Red Bull	Bold italic caps, dynamic angle	Slanted uppercase letters, heavy stroke, forward lean	Speed, competitive aggression, winning mentality
AXE	Geometric sans-serif, mixed case	Clean, balanced letterforms at moderate weight	Urban sophistication, controlled confidence, modern self-presentation
Old Spice	Slab-serif, archival styling	Bracketed serifs with letterpress-era construction	Heritage, reliability, traditional masculine trustworthiness

The mythological dimension of this process in Barthes's (1972) sense is where the most significant ideological work occurs. The consistency with which heavy, angular, condensed typography appears in male-oriented branding tends to naturalize the association between these visual forms and masculine identity. Bold typefaces begin to seem inherently masculine rather than conventionally coded as such through sustained cultural repetition. The cultural construction disappears behind the appearance of perception.

This naturalization operates differently across the two product categories in the sample. Energy drink brands deploy what might be called a mythology of pure masculinity a visual language that equates masculinity with raw physical force, competitive aggression, and explosive energy. Grooming brands, particularly those with higher TMI scores, deploy a more complex mythology. AXE's geometric, controlled typography participates in the cultural recoding of grooming as an expression of masculine self-management rather than feminine vanity. The self-care practice is absorbed into masculine identity by being reframed as precision, strategy, and control and the typography does significant work in that reframing.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Typographic Reproduction

The typological categories proposed in this study correspond broadly to different configurations of hegemonic masculinity. Dominant typography reflects institutional masculine authority; aggressive typography reflects the physical and competitive dimensions of hegemonic masculinity; heroic typography reflects its aspirational and mythological dimensions; and modern typography reflects the emergent configurations that accommodate self-awareness and aesthetic investment within a framework of masculine control.

The continued dominance of aggressive and dominant typographic categories in the energy drink segment reflects the enduring cultural hegemony of physically-oriented masculine ideals in this product space. What is particularly worth noting, from a critical standpoint, is that typography accomplishes this reproduction quietly. A brand that represented masculinity through aggressive imagery would be legible as making a gendered argument; a brand that communicates the same values through typographic form presents them as simply the natural visual language of its product category. Typography's apparent neutrality is an ideological resource.

The emergence of modern masculinity typography in grooming branding is consistent with Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) observation that hegemonic configurations of masculinity are not static but historically dynamic. As aesthetic self-investment becomes increasingly normalized among male consumers, branding has developed typographic strategies that incorporate these practices into masculine identity without disrupting its core associations with control and effectiveness. This is hegemony adapting rather than yielding.

Implications for Design Research and Practice

For design research, the TMI offers a replicable and adaptable instrument for the systematic analysis of gendered meaning in typographic design. The framework is not limited to masculine branding it could be extended or modified to analyze feminine, gender-neutral, or gender-nonconforming typographic identities, enabling comparative analyses across a broader terrain of gendered visual culture.

For design practice, the findings draw attention to the consequences often unexamined of typographic choices in male-oriented branding. Designers in this space routinely deploy typographic conventions that reproduce narrow and potentially limiting constructions of masculine identity. This does not mean those conventions should be abandoned, but it does suggest value in understanding them analytically rather than simply inheriting them as defaults. Awareness of how typographic form constructs gender may support more intentional practice and, where designers and brands seek it, the development of visual languages that represent a wider range of masculine identities.

For design ethics, the naturalization of hegemonic masculine ideals through typographic convention raises questions about professional responsibility. Felton (2019) argues that design is never politically neutral, and this study's findings support that claim at the level of a single design element. Typography participates in the construction of the cultural environment within which consumers understand themselves, each other, and what is normal or desirable as masculine identity.

5. CONCLUSION

This study set out to examine a question that is easy to overlook: how does typography, specifically, construct masculine identity in product branding? The findings confirm that it does so through a consistent and describable set of formal strategies heavy weight, angular letterforms, uppercase setting, condensed proportions, and energetic stylistic treatments and that these strategies vary systematically across product categories in ways that reflect different constructions of masculine identity.

The Typographic Masculinity Index provides a framework for measuring these strategies that is transparent, replicable, and sensitive to gradations of masculine typographic expression. The 13-point TMI gap between energy drink and grooming brands is not just a numerical curiosity; it reflects a genuine difference in the cultural work these two product categories ask typography to perform. Energy drinks construct masculinity as explosive physical force; grooming products negotiate a more complex terrain, using typographic precision and restraint to absorb self-care practices into masculine identity without surrendering the core associations of control and effectiveness.

The four-category typology dominant, aggressive, heroic, and modern offers a descriptive vocabulary for these differences. Through Barthes's semiotic lens, these categories are revealed as sites of mythological naturalization: typography makes gendered cultural constructions appear as natural visual facts. Through Connell's theoretical lens, they are revealed as sites of gender reproduction: the visual reiteration of hegemonic masculine ideals that shapes cultural understandings of masculinity across product contexts.

Several limitations should be acknowledged. Eight brands constitute an analytically productive sample but not a representative one; future research would benefit from larger, more systematically stratified samples and from inter-rater reliability protocols that address the interpretive dimensions of TMI scoring. The study also focuses exclusively on visual text consumer reception data would significantly deepen the analysis by examining whether the typographic codes identified here produce the meanings they appear designed to produce.

Future research directions are numerous: cross-cultural comparative studies of typographic masculinity conventions across different national markets; diachronic analysis of shifts in masculine typography over time; consumer studies investigating the actual reception of these typographic codes; and extension of the TMI framework to the analysis of feminine and gender-nonconforming typographic identities. Typography, this study proposes, is a primary site of gender construction in visual culture. Its influence tends to be proportional to its apparent invisibility which makes it an especially important subject for systematic research.

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