



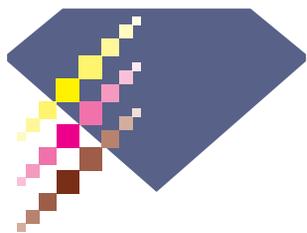
# Gender Wars

RESEARCH SUGGESTS CONSUMERS PERCEIVE GENDER IN BRANDS. SO IS IT TIME TO PAINT THE STORE PINK OR BLUE IN THE NAME OF BRAND EQUITY? ANGELA TUFVESSON REPORTS.

**I**s Cartier male or female? What about Rolex or Guess? Or Pandora? While determining whether jewellery and watch brands are masculine or feminine might seem irrelevant to the sales process, it turns out the way consumers perceive a brand's gender can have a significant effect on the power of that brand.

According to new Swiss research published in *Psychology & Marketing*, brands with stronger impressions of a masculine or feminine personality have higher brand equity. This implies that adhering to gender stereotypes could be a wise branding strategy. Will retailers benefit more if they only stock brands with strong gender signals and should jewellers move towards gender-defining store marketing?

The findings from the report, *The effect of brand gender on brand equity*,



# LOST RIVER DIAMONDS

UNIQUE TIMELESS EXQUISITE



Fancy Coloured Diamonds

Collection Pink Diamonds

Argyle White Diamonds

Coloured Diamond Jewellery

## PERTH

3rd Floor, 105 St Georges Terrace  
Perth, Western Australia 6000

Phone: +61 8 9481 0526  
Fax: +61 8 9226 0740  
sales@lostriverdiamonds.com

## SYDNEY

Suite 914, 155 King Street  
Sydney, NSW 2000

Phone: +61 2 9231 3560  
Mobile: +61 470 333 070  
gina@lostriverdiamonds.com

[www.lostriverdiamonds.com](http://www.lostriverdiamonds.com)



PANDORA

come from a study of 130,000 consumers who rated brands that were described as adventurous, aggressive, brave, daring, dominant and sturdy as having a masculine personality.

Brands labelled as fragile, graceful, sensitive, sweet and as expressing tender feelings were attributed a feminine personality.

According to the research, Mercedes, Audi and Levi's are male while Dove, Chanel and Olay are female. The researchers discovered that consumers ascribe a higher value to brands such as those that can be easily classified as masculine or feminine.

Lead researcher of the study Theo Lieven, from the Center for Customer Insight at the University St Gallen in Switzerland, says consumers prefer brands with strong gender signals precisely because they're easier to categorise. Instead of having to spend time making sense of what a brand represents, consumers can easily slot it into an existing gender category for easy reference.

"Human cues can be interpreted in milliseconds and gender is one of the most salient personality traits," Lieven states. "The theory behind it is the animism, which describes how we attribute human personality traits to unanimated objects such as 'the majestic mountain' or 'the spirited car.'"

Fellow researcher Bianca Grohmann, associate professor at the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University in Canada, explains that characterising a brand as masculine or feminine helps consumers



**"IF YOU WANT TO  
HAVE A STRONG  
FEMININE BRAND,  
IT SHOULD COME  
ACROSS AS NICE,  
GENTLE AND  
NURTURING."**

EUGENE CHAN



## BRAND STRATEGY

use the brand to highlight their own personality or identity.

"Strongly masculine and feminine brands help consumers express themselves," she says. "For example, they can signal their own level of masculinity or femininity to others by wearing a particular jewellery brand. Because the brand brings this self-expression value to the product, it results in higher brand equity."

Unsurprisingly, Grohmann says most well-known retail brands have adopted this strategy. "Most global brands are highly masculine or highly feminine," she adds. "We find a few brands that are androgynous or unisex but very few brands that are undefined."

When it comes to what constitutes masculine or feminine brand traits, good old-fashioned stereotypes yield the strongest returns.

"Basically, a strong gendered brand should really play into gender stereotypes that are most prevalent," says Dr Eugene Chan, a consumer psychologist and marketing lecturer at UTS Business School. "A man is more likely to find a masculine brand appealing, and the same goes for a woman and a feminine brand. For example, if you want to have a strong masculine brand, your brand and product should come across in your positioning as tough, rugged and physically strong whereas if you want to have a strong feminine brand, it should come across as nice, gentle and nurturing."

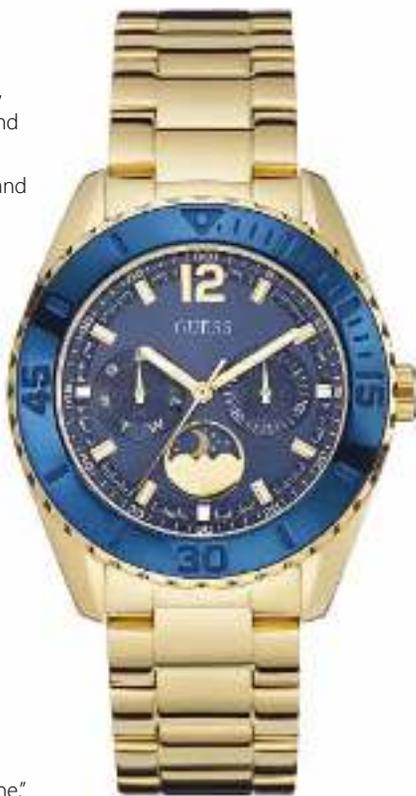
### CHOOSING A PATH

Australian jewellery stores generally rely on a two-pronged marketing approach to target the women who wear the majority of the jewellery and the men who buy it for them. Should these jewellers now choose a masculine or feminine branding approach?

"In general, men find it difficult to buy into feminine concepts while women find it easier to buy into masculine concepts," Adam Ferrier, global chief strategy officer of brand consultancy Cummins & Partners, states. "Therefore, if you want a brand to appeal to both sexes you err towards the masculine and have as few feminine cues as possible. For example, a car appealing to both sexes is normally [marketed as] a neutral colour and driven by a male."

Conversely, Grohmann says a feminine approach is best because the end users of most jewellery products are women.

"In terms of evaluation of brands, both men and women like brands better when they are clearly positioned as masculine or feminine,"



GUESS WATCHES

## QUALITY AND DESIGN



THE DORA COLLECTION OF  
WEDDING RINGS IS AVAILABLE AT  
AUSTRALASIA'S FINEST JEWELLERS.  
VIEW ONLINE [DORA.COM.AU](http://DORA.COM.AU)

# DORA

WEDDING RINGS FOR HIM

[FACEBOOK.COM/DORAAUSTRALIA](https://www.facebook.com/doraaustralia)

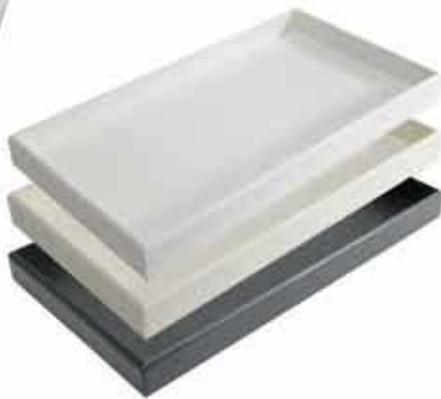


## Grant Austin Display Packaging

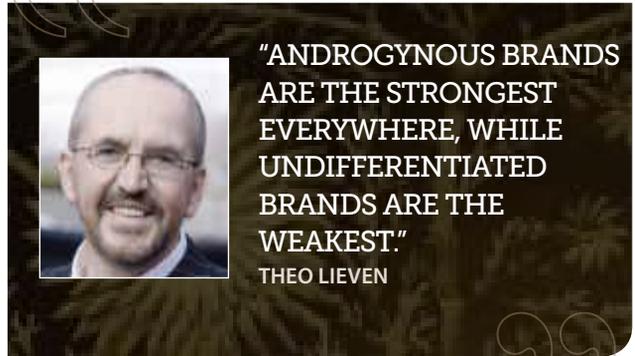
- ♦ carry bags
- ♦ labels and pricing systems
- ♦ boxes and displays
- ♦ Ice Grip displays
- ♦ gem cases and trays
- ♦ gem boxes



Mention this advertisement for free printing on bags  
(print plate costs excluded)



New address!  
 43 – 47 Regency Road (cnr of Goodall Ave),  
 Kilkenny, South Australia, 5009  
 Ph: 08 8342 4880  
 admin@grantaustinpackaging.com  
 www.grantaustinpackaging.com



she says. "This may be important for jewellers in the sense that men would be likely to choose highly-feminine brands if they were to buy a gift for a woman."

But the issue is confounded because of the popularity of giving jewellery as gifts to men as well as women.

"Gift-giving contexts differ significantly from buying for one's own use," Grohmann explains. "This means that jewellers should expect that men buying for women would use the femininity of a brand to guide their purchase decisions, whereas women would prefer masculine brands if they buy for men."

"In gift-giving situations, strongly masculine and feminine brands will likely be more appealing to consumers rather than androgynous or unisex brands. For jewellers, the message is that a brand will be more appealing if it matches the gender profile of the person who will eventually wear it."

### EXPLORING THE MIDDLE GROUND

There is some evidence to suggest that brands that elicit strong masculine and feminine signals may be just as effective as brands that sit at either end of the gender spectrum, especially given the increasing push for gender equality in most major institutions.

A more recent study by Lieven published this year, also in *Psychology & Marketing*, found that androgynous products with above-average masculine and feminine traits were more appealing to consumers than those that were highly masculine or highly feminine.



CARTIER

Lieven says this effect is evident around the world: "Androgynous brands are the strongest everywhere, while undifferentiated brands are the weakest everywhere."

Catering to both masculine and feminine audiences is a difficult task, although one of the world's most recognisable androgynous brands is also one of the most successful.

"It's possible to have a strong unisex brand but it's also quite difficult since then you need to build your brand through some other positioning in order to appeal to your target market," Chan says.

"Apple is a great example. It's not masculine or feminine but it positions itself as a simple, elegant, modern and technologically-advanced brand. It works for them and Apple obviously appeals to both men and women."

**A CHOICE APPROACH**

Practically speaking, jewellers keen to adopt a branding strategy in line with this phenomenon appear to have three options: stock brands and fit out the store to appeal to females; stock brands and fit out the store to appeal to males; use a combination of both approaches.

For many jewellery brands, the gender allegiances are obvious.

"Jewellery is historically and culturally a 'woman's thing' so many jewellery store names and brands are female like Tiffany, Victoria Buckley, Pandora and Swarovski," Chan says. "Their advertising also tends to appeal primarily to women, featuring pictures of women in jewellery, engagement rings and so forth – and feature few men.

"Other brands are masculine or gender-neutral, like De Beers and Michael Hill, although these are limited," Chan continues. "These brands work because masculinity also suggests quality – the jewellery and diamonds are upper-class or of superior quality. Female names stereotypically tend to convey kindness and sensuality but not strength or quality."

Chan believes Priceline is a good example of an Australian retailer that has successfully targeted women and men, albeit with more emphasis on female customers.



**"BRAND LEVERS THAT MAY DRIVE THIS KIND OF [GENDER] IDENTIFICATION INCLUDE COLOUR, AESTHETIC, SCENT AND SOUND."**  
KARL TREACHER



Handcrafted  
with care  
since 1935.



My Little Angel™

**Rose Gold**  
plating option  
now available.



**PATERSON FINE JEWELLERY**

(03) 9555 9344

[pfj.com.au](http://pfj.com.au)

Register your online account today  
for latest product updates and specials



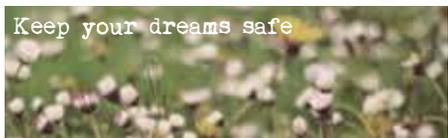
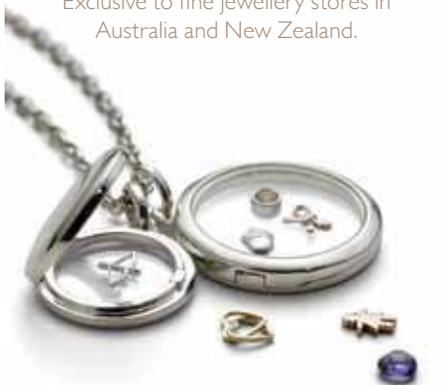
# STOW

LOCKETS

*precious stories*

A stylish, petite collection, finely handcrafted from solid sterling silver, solid gold and rose gold, gemstones and pearls.

Exclusive to fine jewellery stores in Australia and New Zealand.



Stockist enquiries please contact  
sales@stowlockets.com  
Phone: +64 3 578 5866

Be a part of our beautiful story.  
stowlockets.com #stowmystory



TIFFANY & CO

"The store name itself is very generic and not gender-specific but they started their loyalty program with the name 'Sister Club,'" he says. "Would guys want to be seen carrying a Sister Club card in their wallets? Probably not. So they offered a card that is still under the Sister Club name but the card itself says 'Brother Club' instead. More men have signed up and, as a result, more men now shop at Priceline."

For jewellers who choose the combination approach, Karl Treacher, CEO of Sydney-based agency The Brand Institute, says attracting male customers is key.

"Generally, women are without question more comfortable browsing and shopping in jewellery stores," he says. "Audience insights into this category suggest that men feel uncomfortable and in many ways lost when

looking at jewellery, so much so that they prefer to shop with their partner, which deprives many men from ever surprising their partners.

"The psychology and conditioning that surrounds the category for the majority of men requires a significant awareness effort in helping men feel at home and, most importantly, welcome shopping in-store."

Chan says making branding adjustments is necessary to appeal to men: "If you want to appeal to men, you need to have a brand name that also appeals to men and your advertising and other communications should also position the masculine traits of your brand."

Ultimately, Treacher says, the jewellery store or chain that designs their customer

## Masculine vs Feminine



- CONSUMERS PLACE A HIGHER VALUE ON BRANDS THAT CAN EASILY BE CLASSIFIED AS MASCULINE OR FEMININE.
- BRANDS WITH MASCULINE PERSONALITIES ARE: ADVENTUROUS, AGGRESSIVE, BRAVE, DOMINANT AND STURDY. THINK MERCEDES, AUDI AND LEVI'S.
- BRANDS WITH FEMININE PERSONALITIES ARE: FRAGILE, GRACEFUL, SENSITIVE, SWEET. THINK DOVE, CHANEL AND OLAY.

\* Source: The effect of brand gender on brand equity



experience in a way that makes it easy for men to engage and transact will revolutionise the sector.

#### IN-STORE CONSIDERATIONS

Both the stocked brands and overall look of the store contribute to gender image. Naturally, the key is cohesiveness between the type of brands stocked and how they fit within the broader branding strategy of the store. Everything from the store name to how it smells can have an effect on gender perceptions.

According to Treacher, masculine, feminine and androgynous branding can encompass any product, service or experience that triggers strong gender identification.

"Brand levers that may drive this kind of identification include colour, aesthetic, treatments, scent and sound," he says.

Grohmann agrees: "Jewellers can apply different colours in order to convey a masculine or feminine image, such a navy blue versus pink. Similarly, solid lettering on brand logos and packaging conveys a masculine image, whereas cursive, handwritten-looking font supports a more feminine image.

"Some of my research even indicates that the use of scents in the store can influence consumers behaviour," she adds. "For example, a vanilla scent in a store carrying lines for women reinforced the feminine image and was more effective for a female target market."

Chances are many jewellers are already incorporating some aspects of gendered branding into their marketing plan, even subconsciously, which is reflected in the stocked brands and store fit-out. For jewellers keen to formalise their strategy, the most important factor is focusing on the target market.

"Defining your target market allows you to better tailor your brand and store to your customers' needs and will help you in implementing a clear brand and store identity," Grohmann says. "Positioning your brand clearly in terms of masculine and feminine personality will help consumers identify and will increase equity."

The message to retail jewellers is that a gendered approach to branding is emerging as a smart way to entice target consumers into stores and attract them to specific products. All that's left is to decide which direction to go. ✱



THE WAIT IS OVER

NEW TRADE WEBSITE NOW LIVE

REGISTER TODAY!

[www.oagems.com](http://www.oagems.com)

- Instant access to an unprecedented range of stock
- Simple, fast and efficient search
- Over 6000 stock lines available
- 100's more added every week.
- Place orders at a time and location that is convenient to you
- All stock listed live and updated in real-time
- Tablets and smart phone friendly
- 24 hour access to your complete trading history
- Secure and convenient payment portal
- Update your details at your own convenience
- Guaranteed prompt delivery via express eParcel
- Login details we be automatically emailed to all account holders with an email address registered with O'Neils Affiliated.

Sales	<a href="mailto:sales@oagems.com">sales@oagems.com</a>
Sydney	ph 02 9233 8900   <a href="mailto:sydney@oagems.com">sydney@oagems.com</a>
Melbourne	ph 03 9654 5200   <a href="mailto:melbourne@oagems.com">melbourne@oagems.com</a>
Brisbane	ph 07 3211 4042   <a href="mailto:accounts@oagems.com">accounts@oagems.com</a> (Admin/Accounts)

