
THE IMPACT OF POLITICAL CORRECTNESS ON BRAND IMAGE AND PURCHASE INTENTIONS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF BIRELL, EGYPT

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***Abstract :** This study investigates the correlation between viewer demographics and the perception of political correctness in advertising, and its impact on brand image and purchase intentions. Using a mixed methods case study research approach, we conducted brand manager interviews, 17 consumer interviews, and a survey with n = 296 participants, all of whom were familiar with the non-alcoholic beer brand Birell. Our analysis examined the relationship between demographic variables and the perceptions of political correctness. Our findings indicate a statistically significant correlation between perceived political correctness in advertising and brand image. Furthermore, we observed a negative correlation between political correctness and purchase intention. The results are significant given the variety of consumer social and moral values that exist in Egypt. The paper proposes marketing policy implications and recommendations for organizations, advising the use of tag lines more suitably and avoiding endorsing actions perceived as reinforcing gender roles when targeting specific gendered product consumers.*


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1. Introduction

Though in use for decades previously, the term ‘Political Correctness’ (PC) gained wider recognition in the 1990s (Andrews, 1996). As a contemporary concept, ‘Political Correctness’ emerged, initially on university campuses in the USA, as an extension of debates on multiculturalism and the ‘politics of identity’. The notion of being ‘politically correct’ implies cultural sensitivity (CS) in that everyone should be recognized for his or her unique identity. The challenge at hand pertains to the distinctive identity's responsiveness towards either disregard or conformity with a prevailing majority identity. In instances where societies, enterprises, and established political frameworks overlook or undermine individuals based on their group characteristics, the potential repercussions may encompass difficulties in gaining acknowledgment and encountering situations that deviate from accepted norms (Pérez de la Fuente, 2019).

The main objective of the present study is to assess the impact of political correctness or incorrectness within the realms of advertising, whether online or bricks and mortar, and the effects of PC factors on brand image and purchase intentions. The research also aims to further prove political correctness positive outcomes and actuate its practice in the rapidly developing and changing digital revolutionized age.

The paper is structured according to the following manner: In *Section 1* we present key definitions and different views on ‘political correctness’ from the academic literature, and we consider the effects of ‘political correctness’ on advertising. In *Section 2* we explain our research hypotheses, research approach, and research methodology which consists of qualitative and quantitative analysis. In *Section 3* we present the findings from our qualitative data collection: which includes interviews with two industry experts and 17 consumers to explore. The different views and perceptions on ‘political correctness’, brand image, and purchase intentions. In *Section 4* we report and analyse the findings of the quantitative survey. Finally, in *Section 5* we discuss the significance of our research findings, consider marketing implications, and offer suggestions for further research.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The concept of “Political Correctness”

The term "political correctness" (PC) is a complex and divisive concept that has been presented from different perspectives and analysed for different conceptual reasons (Minhoto, Amato & Barros, 2022). PC is a fluid concept, and its meaning and purpose have evolved over time, subject to different ideological positions. Providing a clear-cut definition for PC is challenging, as it can mean different things to different people. In its most general sense, the term 'political correctness' refers to individuals or groups deliberately avoiding linguistic words associated with race, ethnicity, sexuality, gender, religious belief system, and sexual orientation that are considered offensive or likely to cause offense (Minhoto, Amato & Barros, 2022).

The concept of political correctness can be divided into three elements: inclusiveness, politeness, and micro-aggressions (Koopman et al., 2022). Inclusiveness involves establishing politically correct norms to enable demoted groups to participate more freely. 'Politeness' refers to treating others with good manners and respect, regardless of their background (Koopman et al., 2022). Micro-aggressions are statements or actions that communicate indirect discrimination. The concept of political correctness is broader than politeness, as it goes beyond manners and is often regulated by penalties for addressing sensitive subjects in the wrong manner (Minhoto, Amato & Barros, 2022). It is important to acknowledge that PC is not universally self-evident, as it is typically elucidated from various positional viewpoints.

'Political correctness' is a term that often sparks debate between the political left and the political right (Schwartz, 2017). Liberals argue that political correctness reflects respect for the human dignity and individuality of others, while conservatives view it as excessively focused on implementing insignificant linguistic changes, referring to it as "disappearingly." Those on the left assert that language can influence social perceptions on issues such as class, race, and culture, and that linguistic improvements are crucial in shaping attitudes among individuals. On the right side of the debate, cultural reforms are seen as an attempt to prohibit anti-liberal vocabulary and behaviour, which includes attitudes and language that value and endorse traits different from one's own.

2.2 *Political Correctness in advertising and social media*

Political correctness has influenced advertising practice. Global trends and cultural changes have resulted in the emergence of 'marketing correctness,'

(Mustak, et al., 2023). Companies seen as politically correct are perceived as socially responsible and attentive to societal issues, while politically incorrect brands may be seen as ignorant of important topics. Marketers need to consider sensitive groups, those responsive to social issues and marginalized, to avoid negative reactions and brand damage.

Integrating social responsibility and PC concerns into advertising strategies can enhance competitiveness and help predict and plan for potential problems (Schwartz, 2017). Although some provocative ads may gain attention, they also risk alienating customers who disagree with the message (Marlin-Bennett & Jackson, 2022). The platform where an ad is placed can influence its impact, with politically incorrect ads facing backlash on certain media (Sabri, 2015). Others argue against the use of PC language (politically correct language) in advertising, as it can hinder communication and creativity due to the lack of clear guidelines on what may be deemed offensive (Felaco, et al., 2023).

However, advertisers and marketers often do not always have full control over their marketing messages. Web 2.0 is a social networking platform that facilitates personal interaction and encourages the sharing of experiences and opinions (Kadić-Maglajlić et al., 2017). Content and personal opinions can be easily spread and manipulated, reaching millions of people instantly. Business processes have the potential to operate effectively, although there are always possibilities for modification, adaptation, or innovation. Agile business process management entails the practise of decision-makers embracing novelty, spontaneity, and experimentation. Emerging trends and technology have the ability to enhance business processes, while conversely, business procedures may present opportunities for automation or enhancement (Badakhshan, et al., 2020; Smart, 2016). Such spontaneous, unfiltered messages can be damaging to a brand. An example illustrating this phenomenon is the controversy surrounding the name "Redskins" for an American football team. While most Native Americans were not offended by the name, non-Native Americans expressed offense, sparking a conversation and calls for a name change (Moore, et al., 2018). This case highlights how consumer opinions on social platforms can influence perceptions and discussions about brands.

2.2 The Relationship between Political Correctness, Brand Image, Purchase Intentions

Hesse, et al. (2022) highlight the significant relationship between political correctness, purchase intentions, and brand image, which has been demonstrated through various cases. Political correctness is a crucial practice that brands should adopt in their advertisements to avoid potential offense and negative

consequences. Instances of wrong wording that may be perceived as racist or discriminatory have led to severe backlash and crisis situations for brands, adversely affecting their brand image and consumer behaviour.

In the digital age, word-of-mouth and social media play significant roles in shaping consumer behavior and brand perception. People feel the need to interact with others online and showcase their self-identity or social self-image through their social media profiles (Vallius, 2019). Social media users often curate a personal brand that reflects their values, interests, and beliefs, and this brand becomes prominent on their social media pages. For example, a person's Instagram profile may portray them as an "artsy" individual, an "activist," or someone who supports animal rights. When such individuals come across a racist or sexist advertisement, it aligns with their self-identity to share the advert and express negative commentary towards it. This behavior is evident in social media reactions to campaigns that perpetuate offensive content.

Consumers have become an extension of advertising based on how they react to campaigns and share them online (Li, Kim & Alharbi, 2022). Positive reactions to campaigns enhance the brand's reputation, while negative reactions can harm the brand's image. Positive word-of-mouth is driven by the motivation to showcase one's self-identity to others, while negative word-of-mouth serves as a defensive mechanism to reaffirm one's identity. Additionally, consumers may share content to connect with like-minded communities. In recent years, numerous companies around the world have experienced how political correctness can affect their brand reputation. The impact and speed of word-of-mouth on social media have given consumers increasingly more power. Brands must exercise caution in their communication to avoid negative backlash and ensure alignment with their target audience's values and beliefs. As a result, social media and word-of-mouth have become critical elements that brands need to consider and navigate effectively (Vallius, 2019; Li, Kim & Alharbi, 2022).

H&M fashion brand. Hennes & Mauritz (H&M) is a global fashion and design company founded in 1947 in Sweden. H&M has sparked a contentious incident that illustrates a problematic lapse in adhering to political correctness within their advertisements. This incident resulted in a significant backlash, severely impacting H&M's brand reputation and leading to notably adverse and even aggressive shifts in consumer behavior. In January 2018, H&M published an advertisement on its online store which gathered more attention than the brand probably anticipated. The advertisement featured a product whereas a black child model was shown wearing a green hoodie with text that read "COOLEST MONKEY IN THE JUNGLE". The advertisement caused intense outrage from celebrities and the public, whereas some accused the advertisement to be directly

racist, and others accused the brand itself to be built on racist foundation. Actions from celebrities also costed H&M heavily; for example, singer, songwriter, and record producer The Weeknd and rapper G-Eazy both cancelled future partnerships and collaborations with H&M on their collections wanting complete disassociation from the brand. Also, in South Africa, H&M stores were then vandalized and destroyed as a reaction to the advertisement, deeming it necessary for H&M to temporarily close its stores after the advertisement's period. Accordingly, to such neglect of political correctness, H&M reported losses of 14.55 percent in stocks, and after their reporting of their annual results of 2017, analysts claimed the crisis has severely impacted the brand's corporate image. The extensive backlash induced by the advertisement forced the brand to publish a press release with an official apology, and several posts on their global Instagram account addressing the issue (Minhoto, Amato & Barros, 2022).

Dove personal care brand. Dove is a renowned personal care brand originated in United Kingdom in 1957, Dove has a huge following and sizable reach as it is sold in nearly all countries with products developed for women, men, and children. Dove, however, has developed a reputation for the poor screening and representation of women of color, along as advocating white supremacy, deeming the brand subject to myriad critics asserting the brand as racially-insensitive throughout the brands advertisement. A recent Dove advertisement that caused controversy was a three-second clip with a frame showing a black woman and a bottle of Dove body wash in the corner. The black woman reaches down to remove her t-shirt, revealing a white woman underneath. Then, the white woman removes her t-shirt to reveal a woman of another ethnicity. With multiple news outlets and media coverage excluding the last part of the clip leaving out the representation of the third ethnicity, probably delivering the advertisement's message to, then, be advocating diversity, the advertisement was then met with negative feedback.

The advertisement was posted on Dove's US Facebook page and has since been deleted and the marketing material associated with the campaign has not been further used in any of Dove's marketing output. Dove has then admitted through its twitter account that it has "missed the mark with representing women of color thoughtfully", and later publishing a lengthy apology asserting that the campaign's intention was to remark the celebration of diversity. Nevertheless, Dove is also a brand that has been lauded in the past for its "Real Beauty" advertisement, one that honours women. Branding analysts, though, suggest that this new multimedia commercial may turn out to disprove all that Dove has been attempting to construct over the last decade, since that the apparent meaning of the advertising seems to conflict with the promotion of women's diversity. It is therefore suggested that this, which Dove even admits as a misunderstanding,

may cause to lose the brand edge that it spent years developing (Minhoto, Amato & Barros, 2022).

Gillette personal care brand. Trach (2019) analysed the sales status for Gillette razor products before and after an advertising campaign aired. The campaign was termed by the author to be too politically correct, and he claimed that it “shamelessly capitalized on the aftermath of the Me-Too movement against sexual harassment. The campaign shows wrong toxically masculine behaviours in the begging like objectifying and talking over women, it puts these men in a bad light, then goes on to show caring and well-behaved men at the end. The results were that rather than the intended effect of encouraging women and motivating men, the ad was interpreted as blaming and weakening men.

Later ads from the same campaign illustrated acceptance of all body- shapes and an ad portraying a father teaching his female-to-male transgendered child how to shave. In the first quarter of 2019, after the airing of these ads, Gillette undertook a significant decline in sales in the male grooming product section. The case discussed here shows that being too politically correct can also lead to negative results. The author continues to state that activism only works if your target audience are a very niche market that you are sure will react positively, while mass-marketing should stay away from both controversial politically incorrect advertising or activist/overtly politically correct ads, they should stay neutral in order to avoid risk of customer loss or sales loss.

“Buy local” Australian meat promotion. Drew & Gottschall (2018) examined an Australian nationalist lamb-brand commercial. This TV ad airs on national holidays. The ad portrays a male Australian sporting legend saying racist and obscene monologue and pushing excessively masculine behaviour in the name of "Being a real Australian". “They know their way to the airport,” the main character says of foreigners, hippies, vegans, and feminine males in the advertising. After consumer complaints, the brand released "Meat that Doesn't Discriminate" in 2016. The commercial promotes diversity while maintaining the brand's image of the straight, white, masculine Australian guy. In Australia, the ad was well-received, but later that year, Americans and Brits on social media criticised it. Drew & Gottschall (2018) claim that cultural theorists believe brands are adopting progressive ideas popular among youth to win market share and ride current trends. The ad mocks diversity in a white man narrative. The ad's protagonist utilises politically incorrect humour. In the advertisement, “a black male replaces the white male, but the character literally wears the suit and walks in the shoes of the White male character, embodying the White male character’s personality in all ways but skin colour.” He then says “we’ve got everyone in the room” and shows a variety of people from middle eastern, Latin-

American, Indian, Asian, Gay.... He replies, "Hey! Let's not be Spacist—a covert jab at easily offended folks. When the main character said, "and to introduce 'All the Stans: Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and... this guy," it was subtly disrespectful. Stan!" The advertising was well-received in Australia by brand customers. Offence and humour seem to be culturally determined.

Sexism in beer advertising. In a New Zealand study, researchers identified a beer advertisement that depicted a brewery entirely staffed by women (Benton-Greig, Gamage & Gavey, 2018). In the advertisement, the women as sexually stylized and presented as unintelligent because a group of men steal beer without their knowledge. The research noted 753 furious responses from consumers saying that they would no longer buy the product due to its misogyny. Huhmann & Limbu (2016) found that after airing sexist ads, brands almost always lose a percentage of their female customers. Snell & Tsai (2017) and Snell (2017) examine American commercials' unrealistic and prejudiced beauty standards for women of different races. These articles show that advertising stereotypes Latin American and Asian women, insulting them and opening the door to negative headlines that could damage a brand's image and lose customers. Gurrieri & Hoffman (2019) conclude that activists against sexist media are attacked online, legal restraints have worked in some countries, and the best way to reduce this type of discrimination is to raise awareness that this portrayal of women has hurt various brands. Sexism is more common in beer ads and racism in soap ads (Davis, 2018). A 2016 study found that over 30% of soap commercials were racist, and those aired after 2013 received a lot of backlash and lost sales, except for Asian brands because beauty equals light skin was still prevalent in Asia until recently (Bloomfield, 2018).

Thus, being politically incorrect is risky for the brand and will likely decrease brand image and sales (as shown in most cases discussed above), but there are exceptions if the brand has a niche and limited target market that they know will understand the message without offending (like the Lamb advert in Australia). Like Gillette, being too politically correct might backfire depending on your target. Thus, before airing a controversial or upsetting message, a brand must assess its audience and its impact.

2.3 Demographic factors, marketing, and political correctness: generational and gender trends

A significant percentage of young adults seek approval from their social circles before making purchasing decisions, making consumer-created

information influential (Hoarau, Gendre & Ricard, 2018). Millennials are a highly attractive market segment known for their empathetic nature and strong focus on global issues such as racism, sexism, and marginalization (Moreno, et al., 2017). Their upbringing in a diverse and interconnected world has shaped them to be politically correct and aware of micro-aggressions in public media (Schneider, 2018). A significant percentage of millennials believe in having a politically correct attitude, with 71% acknowledging personal biases (Brad, Spisz & Tanega, 2019). This generation is vocal about their opinions, with over half sharing their views on brands, products, and services online, thereby making word of mouth a powerful tool in promoting or damaging a brand's reputation (Moreno, et al., 2017). Millennials prefer to support brands that align with their values, making it crucial for businesses to be mindful of political correctness to avoid alienating their target audience.

Women are more likely to be affected by political incorrectness in advertising due to their status as a minority group that faces discrimination. Movements like #MeToo and #TimesUp have emerged to address issues of sexism and harassment, leading to organizations fighting against sexism in advertising, such as The Women's European Coalition against Media Sexism (O'Driscoll, 2019). Women's experiences of discrimination make them more sensitive to racism and other forms of discrimination, leading to a greater demand for equality in media representation. In culturally diverse cities, younger generations are actively advocating for fair representation in media to combat stereotyping, making it imperative for brands to be aware and avoid isolating potential customers (Spring & Yang, 2019).

2.4 Theory of Self-Congruity

Hoarau, Gendre & Ricard (2018) conducted a thesis study exploring how political incorrectness in advertising campaigns influences consumers' perception of a brand. The research concludes that political incorrectness has a negative impact on brand image, leading to changes in consumer purchase behaviour and their willingness to share their opinions online. To understand the power of online word-of-mouth and its effects on brands, it is essential to grasp why people are motivated to share their opinions. The theory of self-congruity (TSC) plays a key role in this process, wherein consumers compare a brand's image with their own self-concept. For instance, if individuals perceive Apple computer users as innovative, and they also see themselves as creative, they are more likely to buy an Apple computer (Sirgy, 2018).

Similarly, in the context of the fashion industry, Hoarau, Gendre & Ricard (2018) found that young adults adhere to a "herd" rationale, where they mirror

the consumption behaviours of their social circle to align their self-concept with their social self-concept. If brand image does not match their own self-concept, negative emotions may arise, leading to feelings of guilt when purchasing products from that brand. This phenomenon is evident when consumers stop buying from brands that promote sexist or racist messages, as it goes against their own self-identity and values (Hoarau, Gendre & Ricard, 2018). In essence, the focus is not solely on political correctness or incorrectness, but rather on the brand's ability to avoid offending their target audience and supporting values that align with their consumers' beliefs and preferences.

The Theory of Self-Congruity is identified as the key factor linking these elements to word-of-mouth on online platforms and social media. The theory suggests that if a brand's values align with an individual's values, they are more likely to share the advertisement, contributing to the construction of their online social identity. On the other hand, if a brand's values contradict an individual's beliefs, they may also share the advertisement, but with negative comments or connotations (Schivinski, et al., 2022).

2.5 Hypotheses

From our review of the previous literature and using the theory of self-congruity, we establish the following hypotheses:

H1: Viewer's demographic factors have an effect on how influenced they are by the political correctness/incorrectness of an advertisement.

H2: There is a relationship between the degree of political correctness in advertising and the brand's image

H3: There is a relationship between the degree of political correctness in advertising and purchase intentions.

3. Methodology: Exploratory mixed methods case study

In this research, we used both qualitative research which is primarily exploratory research, in-depth interviews and focus groups (online), as well as quantitative research which is the online questionnaire. We have collected, compared, analysed, and interpreted data in order to understand better the impact of political correctness on brand image and purchase intentions. The aim of this research is to measure the impact of political correctness on brand image and purchase intentions as applied to Birell's ads and their tagline "estargel" ("Man up!"). Qualitative research embraces methodologies of research that examine experiences, actions, and interactions without the use of statistics, mathematics, and computational data analysis. The qualitative method typically offers responses to Questions such as: (a) what, (b) how, (c) when and (d) where and

is known as word-based research approach to analysis. Qualitative analysis, may be described as a sequence of interpretive techniques that try to explain them, Decode, and translate ideas and patterns rather than document the number of incidents. In Certain anomalies in the culture (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

The term "exploratory research" refers to an undefined theoretical framework (Ren & Lin, 2023). It is sometimes used interchangeably with "qualitative analysis," despite the fact that this association is not accurate. The primary objective of exploratory analysis is to determine the viability of continuing with a specific research strategy. This process is frequently characterised by a nuanced evaluation based on the available evidence and literature. Advertising, gastronomy, and the social sciences frequently employ exploratory research techniques (Szymaska et al., 2015; Griffin & Ragin, 1994).

Exploratory research is also renowned for its adaptability, providing numerous investigational avenues. This strategy typically entails the review of written literature and sourced documentation. Moreover, exploratory research includes informal discussions, systematic observations, experimental tests, and case studies. Concerns may be voiced by stakeholders, employers, and colleagues. Choosing impartial sources guarantees a complete perspective. Exploratory research may have implications for the selection of study methods. A thorough comprehension of the topic facilitates the resolution of research-related dilemmas, thereby enhancing the credibility of the subsequent report. This analysis determines the optimal path for accomplishing research goals (Kamila & Jasrotia, 2023). For instance, if empirical evidence indicates that one characteristic is a more reliable indicator of a medical condition than another, the former should be the focus of future research.

Exploratory research is valuable because it can identify potential knowledge deficits early on, resulting in significant time and cost savings. In the context of healthcare, for example, exploratory phase II clinical trials have been utilised to evaluate the anticipated therapeutic effects and historical adverse reactions of a drug in a small cohort of patients prior to conducting larger-scale investigations (Dudley, Laughlin, & Osterwalder, 2021). This strategy permits the prompt cessation of drug production if the anticipated therapeutic effect or safety profile falls short, potentially sparing the company substantial unwarranted expenditures in the future.

Birell (figure 1) is an Egyptian non-alcoholic malt beverage (The Taste of Egypt, 2023) brewed by Al Ahram Beverages Company and marketed as a non[-alcoholic 'beer'. Birell is expressly presented as a 'masculine brand' (Al Ahram Brewing Company, 2023).



Figure 1. Birell non-alcoholic natural malt beverage (source: Al Ahram Brewing Company, 2023, <https://www.alahrambeverages.com/brands/Birell/>)

In the present study, we employed a mixed-methods case study research methodology (Yin, 2009). Our qualitative data are drawn from interviews with two company representatives of the Birell beer brand in Egypt and interviews with 17 consumers of the brand. Then quantitative data were collected from n = 296 research participants using a convenience sampling technique. Our approach and analysis are holistically integrated, not merely in parallel, as recommended by Yin (2006).

4. Qualitative method, results and discussion

4.1 Qualitative methodology

Based on Birell's identification of their primary target market, which consists predominantly of men between the ages of 22 and 30, we decided to conduct interviews primarily with men in this age range. In spite of this, we also included two female participants in the interviews as a result of the significant negative response, primarily from females, which prompted Birell to withdraw the Facebook post within a week of its initial publication.



Figure 2. Take down SEXIST Birell ads (source: <https://www.change.org/p/https-m-facebook-com-Birelleg-take-down-sexist-Birell-ads/c>)

This research used in-depth phone interviews with both the company representatives and consumer participants all of whom viewed the advert.

Our line of questioning aimed to gather accurate information and understanding towards if the participants found the advert offensive and politically incorrect and what the general effect on brand image and purchase intentions the advert had. We further analysed the effect of word of mouth on the brand by asking certain questions to industry officials and also ask the viewers if they were likely to share the advert. The interviews were in-depth and structured it terms of questions asked but we gave freedom to interviewees to make more comments or motivate additional questions, we encourage as much discussion as possible. The interview is one single respondent talking to one interviewer who tries to uncover underlying attitudes, beliefs and motivations towards the topic. We encouraged an environment and choice of words that were casual and informal so that respondents could feel comfortable to share their honest opinions, so if inappropriate language was used, we did not stop it so that we would not harm the flow and authenticity of the responses. Different interview questions were used for the company representatives and the consumer group (see appendix) in order to gain views from their different perspectives.

4.2 Qualitative results and discussion: company representatives

We held telephone interviews with two representatives from Birell. The first interviewee was (BP1), who works as a brand manager for Birell at Al Ahrum Beverages and is 29 years old. The second company interviewee was assistant digital brand manager (BP2), aged 27 who is responsible for social media at Birell.

Company Representative 1

(BP1), has worked for the Birell company for six years, and was there when the Facebook advertisement aired by Birell. She said Birell targets upper- and middle-class men between 22 and 38, although they recently discovered a significant 38+ consumer base. She said the ordinary individual likes beer but does not drink it. She defined the typical Birell consumer persona as *“an average Egyptian man who comes home from work and loves a cold drink in front of the TV for a few hours”*. He is also a sports fan with a sense of humour.



Figure 3. Take down SEXIST Birell ads (source: <https://www.behance.net/search/images?search=Birell>)

(BP1) said that the advertisement was a spontaneous post “A spontaneous post in the context of our study refers to an unplanned social media update that is not part of the pre-approved monthly social media plan. Such posts are often created in response to emerging trends or opportunities to engage with the target audience in a timely and relevant manner. This concept is discussed in the literature on agile marketing strategies, where brands leverage real-time events to connect with their audience (Smart, 2016).” that did not require her approval as she approves the monthly social media plan, and the social media team normally comes up with spontaneous ideas if they uncover amazing trends and chances “Regarding the content of the specific post by Birell, the advertisement in question featured an image that humorously portrayed a scenario related to the product's attributes. It involved men tagging each other, which was initially perceived as light-hearted and meme-worthy. However, a comment from one individual expressing concerns about unethical behavior and sexual harassment ignited a chain reaction of responses, both negative and supportive.”. She replied that the advert did create a bad image, noting that at initially a lot of men were tagging each other, which appeared amusing and meme-worthy, but subsequently one man's comment inspired a million more. After the man expressed concern that Birell's content encourages unethical behaviour and sexual harassment, the post's comment section was filled with angry people (mostly women but some men) saying that this is offensive and a few men saying that it's just a joke. Traffic prompted a social media feminist group member to write an essay for Cairo-Scene, which led to other pieces. Birell removed the post and asked them to remove the articles a few days later.

She said the feminist pushback did not hurt sales, but if the marketing team had let it continue, it would have hurt brand image and sales if it went viral. She explained that even if Birell's main target market is men, their wives or sisters might complain when they catch them sipping a Birell, so there is no reason to risk it damaging the brand. Since the ad was unplanned, she said the marketing

team did not consider different options. She said Birell promotes bravery and manhood in a hilarious way, aspirational to males. To appeal to males, the principles match their lifestyles. She said that their customers seem to admire their bravery as long as they do not cross an ethical line, but they're trying not to cross it. Birell's ads are original, innovative, and funny, she said. The performers in the adverts speak harshly and avoid seeming like salespeople.

(BP1) stated that Birell have slightly changed the way they talk about being a man because they are aware that the new generations are more sensitive to not being sexist and that the term "toxic masculinity" is used a lot. She slowly described a 2017 world cup advertisement that showed "real men" born in the 1990s working to provide, making sacrifices for their children, etc. with the slogan *"Elli etwalado f sannat 90 dool regala msh 3eyal, regalla shafoo kteer Zella Masr f kaas el 3alam"* *"Men born in 1990 are truly men, not children, saw many things, but they didn't witness Egypt playing in the World Cup."* She said that their definition of a guy is manly, likes sports, doesn't wear thin jeans, isn't a stay-at-home dad who cooks and cleans, isn't in touch with his feminine side, and doesn't allow women order him about, but is responsible. This was her favourite ad that conveyed being a man, but she commented that sometimes it's too funny.

She called Birell's brand "Funny, Manly, and Challenging". She stated her answer to critics who believed Birell's advertisements promote sexual harassment and toxic masculinity depends on the ad, but she would respect and try to understand their point of view before explaining the ad's meaning. People often seek offence. She then argued that *"Egyptian comedy, is never 0% offensive"*.

(BP1) said that most young men in their late 20s and older appreciate Birell's humour and laugh at the ads, sometimes making fun of their more feminine male friends: *"It's all good fun."* She added that while younger women are harsher in their judgements, older women can sometimes giggle. She noted that the advertisement's key message was that real men should not focus on the dress's colour, but on the woman wearing it. The advertisement was about the woman, not her body, but she recognises that if someone is trying to be offended, they would see it that way. She added that they are attempting to be less violent and offensive while maintaining their machismo and sense of humour because they know younger generations are different, but they should not abandon brand individuality.

In summary, it appears that this brand manager for Birell was not overly concerned with the possible negative ramifications of the advertisement. Despite

the user-generated content, the manager expressed confidence any harmful impacts of the advertisement could be contained through pro-active response and control, if needed. The primary measure of harm to the brand was impact on sales. A significant negative impact on sales would cause the Birell marketing team to take responsive action. The required extent of any such negative impact before action would be taken was not made clear interviewee. The impression was given that the interviewee, as brand manager for Birell, has some managerial discretion on the response taken if any. The fluid dynamic of the situation suggests the need for flexibility in response in order to be able to adapt to the events as they unfold.

Company Representative 2

The second company representative interviewed (BP2) was 27-year-old assistant digital brand manager, who handles social media for Birell. He moderates social media and responds to messages and comments.

(BP2) described Birell's target market as typical Egyptian men aged 22–30 who aspire to be more manly, someone who works and struggles, watches action films and sports, has a sense of humour and has fun with friends. He joked that it is *'not the modern man who wears these stupid long t-shirts and puts on sun-block'*. He said Birell removed the ad due to unfavourable feedback. (BP2) said the brand is unapologetic. He ignores social media criticism. He said the marketing team should not have deleted the article because it attracted traffic and put the brand's name in people's mouths, making them subconsciously crave the product. He concluded that Birell should have unapologetic stated what the post implies.

(BP2) said the advert post was too short to harm sales. When questioned if Birell considered other ad tactics, he said Birell was *'just riding the trend'*. He said Birell's ideals are *'hilarious, macho, and honest'*, and *'they don't pretend to be something they're not just because a bunch of people are sensitive'*. He expressed pride and confidence in the brand: “We are a brand that has personality, we’re not the president, we can be fun if we want to,” he remarked.

(BP2) said that Birell make fun, real-insight advertising. He then cited a campaign showing how guys criticise footballers when they make mistakes but become "batta balady" “Duck” when they try to play half as well. *“I think it's refreshing to have a brand that isn't trying to kiss your a** all the time,”* he said of Birell's advertising, which mock customers and themselves. (BP2) believes that Birell successfully convey that a man is someone who isn't afraid to speak up, is assertive and unapologetic, responsible, and doesn't worry about petty

issues. He described Birell as "*unapologetic, manly, and brave.*"

As assistant brand manager responsible for social media, (BP2) expressed his decision not to engage with Birell's critics who have expressed sexist and misogynistic viewpoints. This choice is rooted in the fact that these individuals do not constitute Birell's intended audience. He elaborated on the rationale, mentioning that, due to certain perceptions, younger individuals might occasionally be more sensitive, and a notable portion of women holds negative sentiments towards the brand. In contrast, he highlighted that men aged over 25 tend to hold a more favorable regard for Birell.

During the interview, we asked if adding women into their target demographic would help Birell to increase its market share. (BP1) responded that Al Ahram Beverages already has its separate Fayrouz drinks brand (figure 4), which targets women, and that "*a brand should know itself and not strive to please everyone*".



Figure 4. Fayrouz drinks brand (source: Al Ahram Beverages Company, 2023, <https://www.alahrambeverages.com/brands/fayrouz/>)

(BP2) concluded that the advertisement's message is that "*the dress's colour doesn't matter because men have other concerns*", suggesting that such populist debates are of little concern. He said "*the people who got offended are actually dirty-minded probably*" because it was only a message and people overreacted. The participant concluded that consumers should man up and stop getting offended.

In summary, again the company participant's interview responses exhibited confidence in the Birell brand and managerial discretion on how to respond. As with the first interviewee, little detail was provided as to how consumer reactions are measured (e.g. how is "overreacted" measured?) other

than by impact on sales. In light of the numerous examples of problem advertising given in the earlier part of this paper, we suggest that Birell should pay more attention to ‘soft’ damage to the brand, not just wait until such brand damage actually hurts sales. The attitudes expressed by the respondent suggest a more relaxed turn compared to previous advertising mishaps by Birell, for example in an incident in 2016 where the company apologised profusely for an advertisement that was deemed offensive to the Egyptian military by Egypt’s Consumer Protection Agency (CPA)

“Birell asserts its profound apology for the published post. The company’s administration stresses that the ad was published without following relevant administrative measures and no approval from the high board, especially that it contradicts completely with the company’s policies that do not mix between its media campaigns and any state institutions,” (Ahram Beverage Company, quoted in El-Din, 2016)

However, neither of the two company representatives interviewed in our research mentioned any “administrative measures” or “approval” mechanisms for reviewing or filtering Birell advertising prior to release.

4.3 Qualitative method, results and discussion: consumer respondents

In this part of our qualitative data collection, we captured the views of 17 consumers who held varying perspectives regarding the Birell advertisement.

According to (CP1), a 27-year-old graphic designer, the advertisement is humorous and lacks any derogatory connotations. Additionally, the advertisement evokes nostalgia for the brand's traditional slogan. The individual holds the belief that the advertisement effectively communicates a message that prioritises the significance of women over their clothing choices. The consumer perceives the brand to possess a stable and uniform identity, and expresses a willingness to make a purchase subsequent to being exposed to the advertisement. (CP2), an assistant brand manager aged 25, maintains a divergent viewpoint. The individual holds the belief that the advertisement in question is discriminatory towards a particular gender and lacks aesthetic appeal. The individual holds the view that Birell's portrayal of stereotypical masculine figures and adherence to traditional gender norms are antiquated and incongruous with her personal beliefs regarding appropriate male behaviour. The individual holds a favourable view towards the product, however, has ceased purchasing it due to a negative perception of the brand's values and principles. She would express a critical viewpoint while disseminating the advertisement.

(CP3), a professional in the field of account management, aged 26, holds the view that the advertisement in question is discriminatory towards a particular gender. He disagrees with the notion presented by Birell regarding the characteristics that define masculinity. The author characterises Birell as appealing to a broad demographic of male consumers in Egypt by promoting the notion that consumption of the beverage is synonymous with masculinity, despite the lack of any inherent correlation between the two concepts. The individual in question refrained from purchasing Birell subsequent to viewing an advertisement due to a negative perception of the brand's values. The individual in question holds a negative opinion towards the brand's slogan, however, they do not perceive it as being provocative. Furthermore, they express a lack of interest in the advertisement, which results in their decision not to share it. According to (CP4), a 25-year-old music producer, the advertisement conveys the notion that adhering to a particular way of looking at women, disregarding their attire or fashion preferences, is a prerequisite for exhibiting masculinity.

(CP5), (CP6), (CP7), and (CP8) proffered their viewpoints regarding Birell's advertisement. According to (CP5), a student of engineering, the advertisement endorses toxic masculinity and he disagrees with both its message and slogan. The individual perceives the Birell brand as misguided and irrelevant, resulting in a decision to abstain from purchasing the product subsequent to exposure to the advertisement. (CP7), a student of marketing, holds the view that the advertisement is discriminatory towards a particular gender and endorses an artificial form of masculinity, which is not in accordance with his personal conception of the ideal male persona. The individual characterises Birell as a brand that espouses sexist attitudes and expresses a disinclination to disseminate the advertisement via social media. According to (CP8), a United Nations employee, the advertisement aligns with the societal construct of masculinity in Egyptian and Middle Eastern cultures. She perceives the brand as unattractive. (CP9), an alumnus of the Asia Pacific University of Technology and Innovation, expressed his view that the advertisement is highly misogynistic and perpetuates a negative stereotype of masculinity. The individual expresses dissent towards the overall notion and marketing strategy of Birell, including their slogan "estargel," which they perceive as objectionable. The individual ceased purchasing the item due to this issue and declined to disseminate the advertisement on their social media platforms. The consensus among viewers is that the advertisement does not ridicule women, but instead objectifies them.

According to (CP10), a 24-year-old student of languages, the advertisement is guilty of objectifying women. Wilson suggests that Birell should consider altering their tagline to adopt a more gender-neutral approach or alternatively, introduce new flavours. (CP11), a 21-year-old student, contends that the advertisement advances the objectification of women and suggests that Birell should reconsider its methods of market segmentation and targeting. (CP12), a legal professional aged 25, perceives the advertisement as comical and opines that Birell ought to maintain its present perspectives. (CP13), a 24-year-old student of business, expresses offence at the message being presented to children and suggests that Birell consider a more amiable portrayal of men. The Birell advertisement has elicited divergent views among its audience, with some perceiving it as humorous, while others contend that it reinforces negative aspects of masculinity and patriarchal norms.

According to (CP14), a 25-year-old student from the Music Institute of Helwan, advertising is highly discriminatory towards women and promotes their objectification. The author proposes that Birell should discontinue the promotion of harmful conduct and instead support their initiatives with genuine expressions of masculinity. (CP15), a 29-year-old employee in the banking industry, concurs that the concept of non-alcoholic beer is not unfavourable, however, the implementation of Birell's marketing strategy garnered significant publicity for the organisation. The individual opines that Birell ought to relinquish their mild humour and alter their marketing approach to prevent gender-based discrimination. (CP16), a 27-year-old freelance professional in the field of production, maintains a neutral stance and opines that the advertisement is aimed at a specific demographic. The individual holds the belief that Birell ought to focus its marketing efforts towards the female demographic. However, no particular grievances are expressed regarding the brand or its beverage offerings. According to (CP17), a 22-year-old engineering student enrolled at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology & Maritime Transport, Birell's advertising approach is perceived as being non-inclusive towards women. As a suggestion, the company may want to explore alternative marketing strategies that do not exhibit gender discrimination. The individual posits that altering the campaign would have an impact on the brand, however, it would not influence their decision-making process given their existing loyalty as a customer.

We can categorize the consumers participants as follow:

Views on Women/Gender:

CP1 considers the advertisement to be humorous and devoid of derogatory connotations, eliciting nostalgia for the brand's traditional slogan. Considers the message to emphasise the significance of women over their clothing choices and views the brand as having a stable identity, resulting in prospective purchase intent. CP2 considers the advertisement to be discriminatory and unattractive. Objects to stereotypical masculine figures and gender norms, which influences their perception of the brand's values and purchasing decisions. CP3 considers the advertisement to be discriminatory, in contrast to Birell's depiction of masculinity. Considers unsightly the brand's alignment with societal masculinity constructs. CP5 observes the advertisement endorsing toxic masculinity, resulting in negative perceptions of the Birell brand and a decision not to purchase the product. CP7 views the advertisement as discriminatory and endorsing artificial masculinity, resulting in negative brand perceptions and reluctance to share the advertisement. CP8 observes congruence between the advertisement and societal notions of masculinity. Negative opinions regarding the brand's attractiveness. CP9 perceives the advertisement to be misogynistic and objectifying, resulting in a negative perception of the brand's values, cessation of purchases, and reluctance to share. CP14 considers the advertisement to endorse detrimental behaviour and objectify women. Suggests Birell should encourage authentic displays of masculinity. CP17 identifies the advertisement as excluding women and suggests alternative marketing approaches that do not exhibit gender bias.

Advertising as Comedy:

CP1 considers the advertisement to be humorous, devoid of derogatory connotations, and evocative of nostalgia. CP12 considers the advertisement to be humorous and recommends maintaining current perspectives. CP16 takes a neutral stance on the advertisement's targeting of a specific demographic.

Impact on Brand Reputation:

CP2 considers the advertisement to be discriminatory and detrimental to brand values, resulting in the cessation of purchases. CP5 believes that the advertisement promotes toxic masculinity and negatively impacts brand perception. CP7 believes the advertisement endorses discriminatory attitudes and negatively impacts the brand's reputation. CP8 due to its congruence with

societal masculinity constructs, CP8 finds the brand to be unattractive. CP14 considers the advertisement to be discriminatory, damaging to the brand's reputation and suggests the cessation of detrimental behaviour.

Impact on Sales:

CP2 considers the advertisement's discriminatory content to have a negative impact on sales. CP15 recognises unfavourable aspects of the advertisement while emphasising its effect on publicity.

Birell's advertising campaign has elicited a spectrum of responses from its audience, encompassing a diversity of perspectives. While some individuals have expressed concerns about the campaign's potential for discrimination and reinforcement of gender-based norms, others have proposed alternative strategies to increase its impact. In order to respond to your question, interviewees were asked about the campaign in a broad sense, including both the overall campaign and specific advertisements within it.

5. Quantitative method, results, and discussion: consumer survey n = 296

5.1 Quantitative method and sampling

Methodology. Quantitative research involves systematic and analytical study of statistics, arithmetic, and computational data analysis. In quantitative research, the method of estimating numbers and offers the foundation for Connection between empirical scientific observations and mathematical expression Relationships. Data are usually selected and analysed in numerical form in quantitative research (Aspers & Corte, 2019).

Prior to COVID-19, the research consisted of face-to-face group interviews with participants in public places. However, in order to conform with “social distancing” policies during COVID-19, data collection methods for the present research were adapted to enable individual and group interviews online using an online survey. As well as using online questionnaire. From an ethical point of view, there were no main distinctions between face-to-face and online, since each involved the normal ethical protocols, such as securing informed consent and maintaining anonymity, protection and secrecy of the identities of the participants.

A questionnaire was constructed based on the themes identified in the literature review. Our instrument consisted of a structured collection of questions organized to elicit knowledge from people about relevant occurrences, behaviours, principles, and beliefs. The technique is commonly used in business

research. The questionnaire is a systematic technique for the processing of primary data. We included unique questions developed specifically for this case in order to obtain relevant data and details from the respondents (Krosnick, 2018).

According to Chen & Yao (2016), pilot studies are used as tests to evaluate the questionnaire on a smaller sample size than the one needed for the full study. It is preferable to use a diverse sample while testing since it will allow for more interpretation of different perceptions, however, one must not lose sight of or stray away from their original target market. Our questionnaire was created in English and Arabic It was pre-tested on 18 people and the time average it took for each respondent to fill it is around 4-6 minutes. Results show that most respondents did not have a problem with the questionnaire, however, four respondents noted that they would rather change the wording “brand personality” to “brand persona” and six respondents stated that the question “I’d buy Birell because people who inspire me buy the brand” is irrelevant. We adapted the questionnaire accordingly and made these changes stated above.

Sampling: The research population comprised of Egyptian adults over the age of 18 who were familiar with the Birell brand. To assure a variety of perspectives, we strategically selected online groups and forums for the distribution of our questionnaires, each of which represented distinct demographics and research-related interests. These platforms comprised lifestyle and cultural organisations in addition to digital communities centred on beverage preferences and brand discussions. Our selection of these groups was motivated by the need for sample diversity and access to participants with differing perspectives.

Given the lack of a population context for data collection, we opted for a method of non-probability convenience sampling. Three field researchers distributed 296 online questionnaires to respondents who were all familiar with the Birell brand. Before filling out the questionnaire, participants were exposed to the campaign. The overarching purpose of our study was to collect a variety of perspectives from individuals familiar with the Birell brand, particularly regarding its advertising campaign. Due to the absence of a population frame, our sampling technique was based on convenience, but our selection of online groups on Facebook and WhatsApp was deliberate, these groups had diverse interests and backgrounds. Our concentration remained on collecting feedback from individuals with a general understanding of the brand.

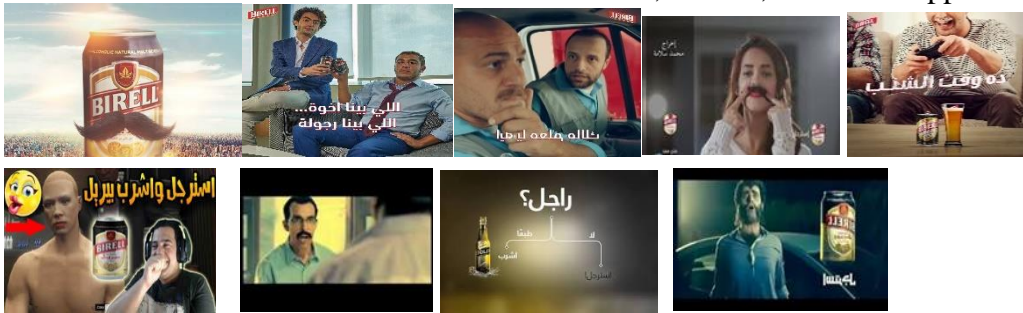


Figure 5. “Estargel” (source: Al Ahram Beverages Company)

Statistical Analysis. We used SPSS to analyse data by using a variety of tables to test the hypothesis between two variables and understand if the relationship between them is positive or negative, and weak or strong. The researchers used different statistical techniques including frequencies, valid percentages, mean, mode and standard deviation. The reliability test was used to attest to the consistency of the whole questionnaire. Then, Kruskal- Wallis test is utilized to find chi-square to find out if the hypothesis between the variables is accepted or rejected. Finally, the Spearman Correlation test is used to measure the relationship between demographic characteristics’ influence on perception of political correctness, and the relationship between political correctness in advertising and brand image and lastly, the relationship between political correctness and purchase intention.

Statistical Significance. The statistical significance (p-value) to examine if the hypotheses are valid or not and whether they are accepted or rejected. If the P-value is less than 0.05 this means than there's strong evidence against the hypothesis, so the hypothesis is accepted. However, if the p-value is greater than 0.05, this means than there's weak evidence against the hypothesis, so the hypothesis is rejected.

5.2. Demographics characteristics of the sample

In table 5.1 we present the demographic characteristics of the sample of $n = 296$ participants. The sample featured a slight preponderance of males respondents (54%) The majority (80%) of the sample reported a straight sexual orientation (80%) alongside a significant minority (20%) stating alternative sexual orientations. Most of the respondent’s age is 20-30 years old 75%. Nearly half of the participants were private sector employees 43.2%. Almost half of the participants are bachelor’s degree holders 43.7%. Most of the participants monthly income less than 3,000 L.E 33.1% followed by 3,000 to 6,000 L.E 29.8%.

Table 5.1 characteristics of sample

Gender	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Male	161	54%	296
Female	130	43%	
Others	5	1.7%	
Sexual orientation	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Straight	236	80.8 %	292
Homosexual	11	3.8%	
Bisexual	36	12.3%	
Pansexual	9	3%	
Age	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Less than 20	40	13.5%	296
20 to less than 30	222	75%	
30 to less than 40	30	10%	
40 to less than 50	3	1%	
50 and above	1	0.3%	
The mean age is 26 years old			
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Unemployed	108	37.0%	292
Public sector	8	2.7%	
Private sector	126	43.2%	
Business owner	23	7.9%	
Other	27	9.2%	
Education Level	Frequency	Percentage	Total
High school student	29	9.9%	293
University student	114	38.9%	
Bachelor's degree	128	43.7%	
Postgraduate studies	19	6.5%	
Others	3	1.0%	
Monthly Income	Frequency	Percentage	Total
Less than 3,000 L.E	91	33.1%	275
From 3,000 to 6,000	82	29.8%	
From 6,000 to 9,000	43	15.6%	
From 9,000 to 12,000 L.E and	12	4.4%	
	47	17.1%	
The mean income is 5,144 L.E			

5.2 Hypothesis 1: Testing, results, and analysis

H1: Viewer's demographic factors influence perception of political correctness

Table 5.2 Customers survey about Political correctness.

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	Standard deviation
1) I feel Birell's verbal content in their adverts are respectful	Frequency 76 25.7%	Frequency 75 25.3%	Frequency 79 26.7%	Frequency 44 14.9%	Frequency 22 7.4%	2.53	1.229
2) I feel Birell's ads makes me feel excluded	36 12.2%	56 19.0%	79 26.9%	68 23.1%	55 18.7%	3.17	1.279
3) I feel Birell's ads are sexist	32 10.8%	31 10.5%	35 11.8%	53 17.9%	145 49%	3.84	1.407
4) I feel Birell's ads are discriminating	31 10.5%	31 10.5%	66 22.4%	66 22.4%	101 34.2%	3.59	1.331
5) I feel that Birell's ads promote values that encourage aggressive behaviour	39 13.2%	40 13.6%	50 16.9%	76 25.8%	90 30.5%	3.47	1.389
6) I feel that Birell's ads encourage bullying	31 10.5%	45 15.3%	68 23.1%	61 20.7%	90 30.5%	3.45	1.342
7) I feel heard by Birell if I make a negative comment on their advert(s)	70 23.9%	55 18.8%	140 47.8%	21 7.2%	7 2.4%	2.45	1.008
8) I still socially use their tagline "estargel" as a joke	114 38.5%	33 11.2%	45 15.3%	55 18.6%	48 16.3%	2.63	1.537

According to the previous table, the first statement is the most disagreed with, it has a mean of 2.53 which means they disagree with the verbal content of the ads. Statement 3 has the highest rate of agreement with a mean of 3.84. The participants feel that Birell is sexist. Statement 4 a high rate of agreement of 3.59, the participants agree that Birell is discriminating in their ads. Statement 7 had the lowest rate of agreement with a mean of 2.45, the participants don't feel heard by Birell. Statement 8 had the second lowest agreement rate with a mean of 2.63, the participants, do not like the slogan "estargel". Also, all the statements have a relatively low Standard deviation, that's relatively low. All the previous results are not biased and homogeneous.

Table 5.3 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.650	7

The previous table suggests that, the 7 statements of political correctness had a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.650 which means the statements are reliable. Statement 1 was removed to increase reliability of the analysis. Table 8.2.2 Spearman's correlation & Kruskal Wails Spearman's correlation 0.222 With gender and 0.210 with sexual orientation.

Table 5.4 Kruskal Wallis Test

Kruskal Wallis	
	Gender 0.004
	Sexual orientation 0.046
	Age 0.783
	Occupation 0.857
	Education level 0.367
	Monthly Income 0.441

According to the Spearman's correlation there is a significant relationship between political correctness and Gender (0.222) also between Political correctness and Sexual orientation (0.210). This means that the results not consistent. According to Kruskal Wails test the only two parts of the Demographics that had an assumed significance were Gender and Sexual orientation. (0.04 And 0.046 respectively). This means that the previous factors are significant. All the other demographic factors were higher so that they weren't accepted.

Therefore, H1 is partially accepted.

5.3 Hypothesis 2: Testing, results, and analysis

H2: there is a relationship between political correctness in advertising and brand image

Table 5.5 responses about brand image

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	S.D
1) I think Birell is a well- known Brand	4 1.4%	3 1%	22 7.5%	69 23.4%	197 66.8%	4.53	0.790
2) I feel Birell's brand persona is aggressive	12 4.1%	32 10.9%	65 22.1%	82 27.9%	103 35%	3.79	1.155
3) I feel Birell's brand persona is Stereotypic	5 1.7%	16 5.4%	61 20.7%	85 28.8%	128 43.3%	4.07	1.004
4) I think Birell's brand is humorous	53 17.9%	58 19.6%	86 29.1%	54 18.2%	45 15.2%	2.93	1.305
5) I think Birell's brand is manly	48 16.3%	29 9.9%	57 19.4%	67 22.8%	93 31.6%	3.44	1.436
6) I think Birell's brand is sexist	20 6.8%	29 9.8%	48 16.2%	65 22%	134 45.3%	3.89	1.268
7) I think Birell's brand is outdated	16 5.4%	54 18.4%	80 27%	44 14.9%	102 34.5%	3.55	1.277

The participant agreed with Birell being a well-known brand with a 66% of participants agreeing with a mean of 4.53. This means Birell is a well-known brand. The lowest agreed with statement was statement 4 with a mean of 2.39, this indicates that the participant don't think the ads are funny. Yet, most did not

agree with its message as it being Sexist, aggressive, and stereotypical according to statement 2, 3 and 6 with an agreeing percentage of 35%, 43% and 45% accordingly, with a mean of 3.79, 4.07 and 3.89

Table 5.6 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.727	6

The previous table suggests that, the 6 statements of political correctness had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.527 which means the statements reliability of the statements is Strong.

Table 5.7 Spearman's correlation & Kruskal Wails

Spearman's correlation	0.604
Kruskal Wails	0.000

According to Spearman's correlation there is a positive and strong relationship between political correctness and brand image was 0.604. According to Kruskal Wallis test the assumed significance were 0.000 which means there is a significant relationship between variables.

Therefore, H2 is accepted.

5.3 Hypothesis 3: Testing, results, and analysis

H3: there is a relationship between political correctness and purchase intention

Table 5.8 response about purchase intention

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean	S.D
1) I'd buy Birell because the ads represent my values	197 66.6%	54 18.2%	29 9.8%	6 2%	10 3.4%	1.57	0.985
2) I'd buy Birell because the ads motivate me to buy the	173 58.6%	64 21.7%	33 11.2%	19 9.4%	6 2%	1.72	1.030
3) I drink Birell because of dietary or health	117 39.7%	40 13.6%	44 14.9%	57 19.3%	37 12.5%	2.52	1.480
4) I buy Birell because I like malt beverages	96 32.5%	35 11.9%	49 16.6%	69 23.4%	46 15.6%	2.78	1.495
5) I buy Birell because their ads have a message that I agree with	196 66.4%	52 17.6%	27 9.2%	11 3.7%	9 3.1%	1.59	1.009
6) I'd buy Birell because my peers like the brand	176 59.7%	50 16.9%	40 13.6%	19 6.4%	10 3.4%	1.77	1.116

According to the table, all of the statements has less than 3 mean which means that there is a total disagreement. Statement 5 has the lowest mean with 1.59 which is the lowest agreed with statement, which means that the participants don't agree with the message and that affects their purchase intention. Statement

1 had a mean of 1.57 that means disagreement with the statement, this the ads don't represent the values share by the participants. Statement 2 had a mean of 1.72 that means disagreement with the statement this indicates that the participants are motivated by the ads to make the purchase. Statement 5 had a mean of 1.59 that means disagreement with the statement, this indicates that they won't buy Birell because the participants don't agree with the message.

All of the previous statements have a mean of less than 2.7 which means that the participants don't feel like the ads motivates them to buy Birell.

Also, the statements all have a standard deviation of less than 1.49 which means all of the previous statement are not biased and homogeneous.

Table 5.9 Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
0.772	6

The previous table suggests that, the 6 statements of political correctness had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.772 which means the statements reliability of the statements is high.

Table 5.10 Spearman's correlation & Kruskal Wallis

Spearman's correlation	-0.320
Kruskal Wallis	0.000

According to Kruskal Wails test the assumed significance were 0 which means there is a significant relationship between variables. According to Spearman's correlation there is a significant relationship between Political correctness and purchase intention since the assumed significance was -0.320 which assumes there is a negative weak relationship between both variables. The indicates that the degree of political correctness decrease the purchase intention increase. They won't buy Birel from the ads message but they would buy it because of health benefits or other reasons.

H1: Viewer's demographic factors influence perception of political correctness	<p>Cronbach's alpha 0.650</p> <p>P-value for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • gender 0.004 • Sexual orientation 0.046 • Age 0.783 • Occupation 0.857 • Education level 0.367 • Monthly income 0.441 <p>Spearman's correlation gender 0.222 and sexual orientation 0.210</p> <p>H1 is partially accepted</p>
<hr/>	
H2 there is a relationship between political correctness and brand image	<p>P-value 0.000</p> <p>Spearman's correlation 0.604</p> <p>H2 is accepted with a positive strong relationship.</p>
H3 there is a relationship between political correctness and purchase intention	<p>P-value 0.000</p> <p>Spearman's correlation -0.320</p> <p>H3 is accepted and has a negative weak relationship</p>

6. Discussion and marketing implications

After evaluating the hypotheses and findings of the study, the researchers recommend that if Birell wishes to protect its brand from potential criticism from the 'political correctness' sphere, the company should consider the following tactics and approaches:

Firstly, the company should avoid advertising and promotions that may be perceived as masculinist or enforcing of stereotypical gender roles, particularly when advertising is targeted at a particular gender. Although women

may not drink Birell themselves, they may have significant influence over household shopping decisions.

Secondly, Birell's previous "be a man" type advertisements, may be seen by many consumers as perpetuating gender stereotypes and failing to represent the more modern realities of 21st century Egyptian society. Therefore, tag lines should be nuanced in more appropriate way to reflect more progressive modern, especially younger, consumer values. Currently, much of Birell's advertising appears to uphold values that are opposed to a culture in which women and men are equally respected. Trends towards political correctness especially amongst younger adult and female consumers require the company to take a stronger stand they must stand up against bigotry against minorities, misogyny, and other types of discrimination and racism if they wish to preserve and grow their market share. Challenges however will exist in navigating the changing, increasingly progressive demands of the Egyptian market within the more conservative political establishment.

Progressive trends aside, the general social ethos in Egypt continues to accept traditional projections of "manliness" such as those presented in Birell's sometimes controversial advertising. Younger and more diverse brand managers, such as the company interviewees in our research, have a potentially significant role to play at grassroots level to transform this dominant social mindset. For example, we suggest that Birell consider using clever catchlines (rather than potential offensive stereotypical or sarcastic messaging) to capture the attention and loyalty of its consumers by refining and redefining the definitions of existing gender roles. Birell should, accordingly, conform to relatable ads and seek better strategies for actuating conversation without the use of controversy, as it has been proven that controversy impacts brand image and heavily deteriorates a brand's ability to acquire a loyal customer base.

The strategic changes recommended here would evidently actuate the broadening of their segmentation and targeting, with the direct inclusion of women. It is recommended that Birell seeks collaborations with female influencers as founding basis for a new channel to deliver the brand's altered message and embed a new segment within its audience. The brand could create a redefining campaign with the same slogan used "Be a man", but cleverly alter their message and include women respectively. Such implementation could actuate more traction and conversation as per the brand's change of strategy would cause all critiques that previously attacked Birell's campaigns to appreciate and share the positives about the changes.

7. Limitations and suggestions for further research

The present research is limited by its convenience rather than representative sampling approach. We recommend that future research would benefit from larger scale representative sampling to take into account consumers from different education levels, and social classes because such variables can translate into a difference in sub-cultural values and thus extend the results of this study. Emphasis could be places on Birell's main target audience aged 30+ years and further research should explore their opinions on the matter at hand.

Future research could have more qualitative meetings that combine both industry experts and Birell customers in an open discussion suggesting more effective campaigns that would not be offensive to any groups. The research circumstances and Covid-19 did not allow the current researchers to explore the questions as fully and deeply as would have been desired in the consumer interviews. Focus groups should be considered as an additional means of qualitative data collection.

Although the questionnaires in this study showed adequate reliability, some of the questions showed lower reliability than others. Among other difficulties, lower reliability of a measure may hinder detection of the expected outcomes. Future research may consider the development of more reliable measures for examining such constructs.

To conclude, the present advertising case study of the Birell non-alcoholic beer brand has captured and analysed a rich volume of data from multiple perspectives. The Egyptian context provides a dynamic context for the exploration of "political correctness" and multiple social and moral values amongst a fast-evolving consumer base. Marketing in such circumstances will continue to require both ongoing vigilance by the company to protect its brand and a balancing of market and political forces. The findings and analysis presented in this paper offer new knowledge to help equip companies and marketing specialists in Egypt and the region to succeed in their task, whilst also opening up exciting new avenues for future academic research.

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