

# ASSESSING GILLETTE ONLINE ADVERTISING BACKLASH IN QUORA USING NETNOGRAPHY

Feri Sulianta

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37178/ca-c.23.1.070>

-----  
*Feri Sulianta*, The Department of Informatics Widyatama University

Email: [feri.sulianta@widyatama.ac.id](mailto:feri.sulianta@widyatama.ac.id)  
-----

## Abstract

*The advertisement with the theme "The Best Men Can Be" is an advertising campaign for the Gillette brand with social nuances carried out by the company Procter & Gamble. The campaign was aired online on January 13, 2019 in the form of a short film entitled We Believe: The Best Men Can Be. The release of this short film became controversy and negative response by various online commentators, and became one of the most disliked videos on YouTube. In addition, various news portals and personal blogs also discussed the impact of Gillette's advertisements. To reveal the perspective of a certain audience that represents people's thoughts and opinions as a whole proportionally, then in this case Quora can be used as a social site for netnographic research about the Gillette controversial ad case.*

**Keywords:** Gillette Controversial Ad, Netnography, Quora, Social Site.

## INTRODUCTION

Netnografi berasal dari kata internet dan ethnography, yang keduanya merupakan perluasan dan metode etnografi yang digunakan untuk situasi kehidupan dan aktivitas dunia maya yang dibangun dengan infrastruktur internet. Metode penelitian netnografi ditujukan untuk mendapatkan pemahaman mendalam tentang kehidupan komunitas virtual dari sudut pandang peneliti, dan masyarakat digital yang diteliti umumnya dikenal dengan istilah netizen, di ranah media sosial. Netnografi berfokus pada pengguna internet di komunitas online yang mengalami kehidupan sehari-hari yang substantif. Netnografi umumnya menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif online dan dapat menggunakan penelitian kuantitatif online sebagai pelengkap. The qualitative research approach is aimed at revealing the culture and views of netizen groups regarding controversial online advertisements.

### Controversial Ads

The Best Men Can Be, which replaced the previous slogan ("The Best a Man Can Get") in P&G's pre-owned commercial with Brand Gillette's men's shaver, released an ad aimed at addressing behaviors that are perceived as negative among men, but otherwise the ad has drawn criticism. However, the ad actually drew criticism and was boycotted[1]. As well, critics and viewers objected to advertising messages accused of castrated men. British journalist and television personality Piers Morgan described the campaign as "a direct consequence of radical feminists" aimed at fighting masculinity".

Marketing Week claims the ad boomeranged on the Gillette brand and affected sales. A YouTuber in his video with Channel WOKE BRANDS[2], he and cultural critics Harry Brewis argues that the intention of the advertisement was actually to cause controversy, as a form of anger marketing. Furthermore, one news portal launched an effort that Gillette did as a follow-up to the criticism it received. The news portal

launched a news story with the theme: "Razor brand Gillette says it is "shifting the spotlight from social issues to local heroes" after an ad delving into "toxic masculinity" caused a customer backlash."

One of the alerts at Marketingweek.com written by [3], said that Gillette's new ad would ruin its sales and be the worst marketing move of the year[3]. The efforts driven by Gillette's aim to revitalize its slogan, 'The Best men Can Be', were not only a waste of advertising budgets but became costly lessons that destroyed its dominant market share.

### ***Quora as Social Site***

Quora is a knowledge exchange site founded in June 2009 and first launched in December 2009 for a limited number of people. This site was opened to the public on June 21, 2010 [4].

Quora was founded by [5] who is a former chief technical officer at Facebook and Charlie Cheever. D'Angelo was inspired to create Quora because he thought that "there are lots of questions-and-answers sites on the Internet, but none of them think they are good". Quora users experienced rapid growth in December 2010. In March 2010, Quora received capital from Benchmark Capital and put the start-up at a value of \$86 million.

Quora's mechanism is to collect questions and their answers, which are organized around specific topics. Quora users are allowed to collaborate by voting or suggesting improvements to answers. Quora's significant competitors are social bookmarking sites like Reddit, and social networking sites like Yahoo! Answers, LinkedIn, Answerbag and Answers.com

### ***Quora Platform Advantages and Disadvantage***

The advantages of the Quora Platform include: There is no debate that annoys other Quora users. The answers are very satisfying because of the credential system so that the answers can be more trusted. Quora has a fair judging system, which is "Support up" and "Support down" which is the same as YouTube which has features to give "likes" and "dislikes." With the Quora mechanism, there is no appropriate answer or mischievous information[6].

Apart from the advantages, some of the disadvantages of Quora compared to other platforms are that Quora does not have a feature to block incoming answer requests so that there may be answers that do not match the question. In this case, a qualitative method-based Netnography study was used to dig deeper into the feedback due to controversial advertising alerts.

### ***METHOD***

[7], which was originally intended as a marketing analysis tool, is currently growing and being used in research in various disciplines, such as education, computer science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, geography, urban planning, tourism, hospitality, gender, health in others[7].

[7] in this study is categorized as humanist netnography focusing on research questions with deep social meaning, this type of netnography uses social media data to answer various questions and find out things that affect social change.

[7] research was chosen, because this research uses digital content objects, and is intended to reveal reactions that are part of online culture that requires online audience interaction on the internet. Some steps and a summary of netnography are as follows:

1. Define the research question, the scope of the research (social sites) or the topic to be researched
2. Identify and select communities

3. Observing the community and participants (engagement & immersion) and collecting data (based on ethical standards of data collection)
4. Analyzing data and interpreting findings that are carried out iteratively
5. Write, present and report research findings, theories and policy implications

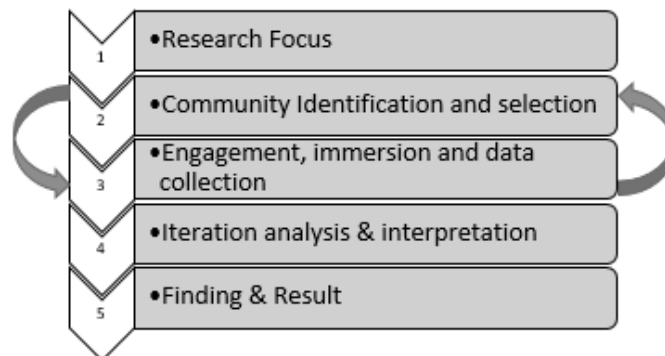


Figure 1. Netnographic research [8]

Netnography researchers will engage and interact socially online in the same way as members who are members of social media and communities they research, and follow ethical requirements as researchers.

**ANALYSIS**

"The Best Men Can Be" is the corporate social advertising campaign of Procter & Gamble's safety razor and personal care brand Gillette. The campaign has led to calls for a boycott of Gillette and Procter & Gamble

This was due to the release of a short film, themed We Believe: The Best Men Can Be, directed by Kim Gehrig. "The Best a Man Can Get" ad, asking "is this the best a man can do? Get?" This is followed by scenes showing behavior including bullying, sexism, sexual harassment, and toxic masculinity, social movements like #MeToo, etc. The ad goes on to explain that "we believe in the best in men: To say the right thing, to act in the right way", because "boys watching will be the men of tomorrow."

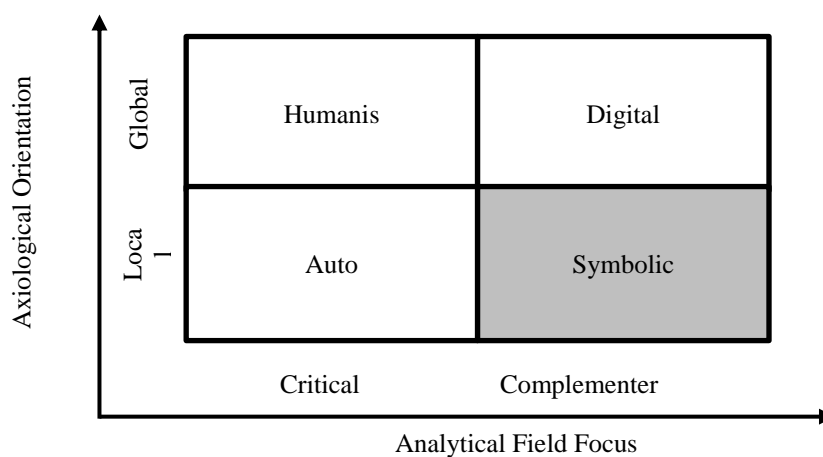


Figure 2. Categorization of Netnographic Research [9]

The category of the scope of this research's netnography belongs to symbolic netnography, which is the most commonly used netnography, local and complementary. Symbolic netnography uses information and social media interactions to identify individuals or websites as information for decision making (usually for business decisions).

There are several articles discussing the controversial Gillette ad on Quora, including:

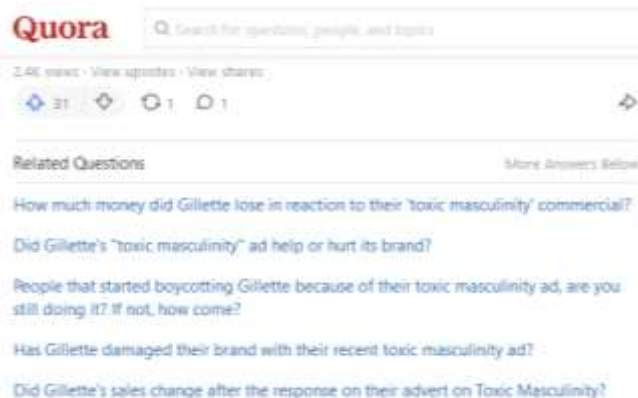


Figure 3. Quora related question about controversial ads

Initialization: Are Gillette sales down because of the toxic masculinity ad? <https://www.quora.com/Are-Gillette-sales-down-because-of-the-toxic-masculinity-ad>  
 This question asked has 8 members who respond in response to the main question and there are comments written by the Quora members for each answer given. From the questions submitted on Quora, it was identified that there were 15 Related Questions.

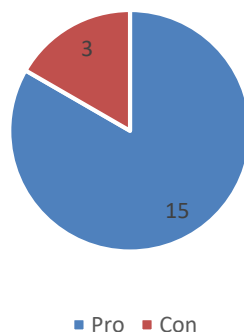


Figure 4. Proportion of agree and disagree controversial advertising sentiment

Refers to the answers, 18 users agree and 3 disagree or do not support the statement that Gillette sales down because of the negativity of the toxic masculinity ad message. This analysis involves answers as well as related answers identified by Quora.

Users on Quora upvote answers that agree that Gillette's sales have decreased because of ads that spit toxic masculinity. Pro answers generally get more upvotes than disapproving answers. Answers who disagree only get a maximum of 23 upvotes with an average of 11 upvotes while those who agree have 137 upvotes with an average upvote of 32.86. What is interesting is that the answers that agree are far more than those who disagree.

Table 1

## Sentiment analysis on Quora about the Controversial Gillette Ad

No	Pro/Con	Upvote	View (K)
1	+	116	10
2	+	35	2.5
3	+	137	18
4	+	17	1.3
5	+	62	9.6
6	+	16	1.4
7	+	6	9.4
8	-	9	4.8
9	+	12	2.2
10	+	50	4.2
11	-	23	2.1
12	+	16	0.901
13	+	17	4.1
14	+	2	0.219
15	+	1	0.414
16	+	4	0.029
17	+	2	0.252
18	-	1	0.065

The features available on Quora allow researchers to perform further analysis, such as by viewing comments and sharing of answers, but in the case of answering research questions, analyzing first-level answers involving sentiment is sufficient.

### **RESULT**

Based on a sentiment analysis of controversial Gillette advertising, it refers to a question published on Quora, the subject of which is: Is Gillette's sales decline due to toxic masculinity advertising? It can be concluded that based on netnography research using qualitative methods, the community on Quora representing online users on the internet gave negative sentiments which were identified that the majority of Quora users agreed that Gillette's controversial advertisement that raised the topic of toxic masculinity actually harmed Gillette.

There are many other questions that are related to the main question, but in this case it is to reveal the answer: Are Gillette sales down because of the toxic masculinity ad. So it is enough to analyze qualitatively which is then represented in the form of a sentiment analysis table.

### **CONCLUSION**

The controversial Gillette ad has many pros and cons. To find out specifically the effect of these advertisements, a small-scale research can be carried out aimed at certain groups or in this case communities on certain social networks although it could involve various platforms to get a clearer picture in the community regarding sentiment analysis on the advertisement. In this case, a qualitative-based netnographic research was conducted on the Quora site which has a mission to share and develop knowledge of the world community. Quora basically seeks to connect people who have knowledge with people who need it, unite people with different perspectives so they can understand each other, and empower everyone to share knowledge for the benefit of mankind.

Gillette ads often generate negative backlash, which triggers themes of toxic masculinity, and analyze a sentence by including answers recommended by Quora and related answers. Although it would be very interesting if it were also revealed that some of the answers given were shared on the network and it would be very interesting to reveal the impact of the answers that were shared. But in this case the limitation of the answers and the related answers are sufficient to answer the main question. For further research, several other related questions can be analyzed qualitatively and also if the scope of research expands, analytical tools such as data crawlers and text mining can be used.

## REFERENCES

1. Krueger, R.F., et al., *Personality traits are linked to crime among men and women: evidence from a birth cohort*. Journal of abnormal psychology, 1994. **103**(2): p. 328. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843X.103.2.328>.
2. Sparvero, E. and L. Chalip, *Professional teams as leverageable assets: Strategic creation of community value*. Sport Management Review, 2007. **10**(1): p. 1-30. DOI: [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523\(07\)70001-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1441-3523(07)70001-3).
3. Nunan, D., *The future isn't what it used to be: Research in the age of evidence*. 2020, SAGE Publications Sage UK: London, England. p. 259-261.
4. Wang, G., et al. *Wisdom in the social crowd: an analysis of quora*.
5. D'Angelo, A., *Adam D'Angelo*. Facebook-Unabridged Guide, 2012: p. 22.
6. Mohanty, S., et al., *Assessment of Long Short-Term Memory Network for Quora Sentiment Analysis*. Journal of The Institution of Engineers (India): Series B, 2021: p. 1-10. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40031-021-00677-4>.
7. Kozinets, R.V., *The field behind the screen: Using netnography for marketing research in online communities*. Journal of marketing research, 2002. **39**(1): p. 61-72. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.39.1.61.18935>.
8. Kozinets, R.V., *Click to connect: netnography and tribal advertising*. Journal of advertising research, 2006. **46**(3): p. 279-288. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849906060338>.
9. Tavakoli, R. and S.N.R. Wijesinghe, *The evolution of the web and netnography in tourism: A systematic review*. Tourism Management Perspectives, 2019. **29**: p. 48-55. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tmp.2018.10.008>.