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Femvertising and authenticity: a fragile
equilibrium. Analysis of mixed audience
reactions to female empowerment
advertisements

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Introduction

Advertising presents a hyper-ritualized perspective of the world, meticulously choosing what to emphasize and conceal (Goffman, 1979: 84). Over the decades, it has perpetuated a degrading portrayal of women, contributing to the reinforcement of a misogynistic culture rooted in gender inequalities. Feminism has steadfastly opposed this representation.

Feminists have continuously championed societal change, relentlessly striving for gender equality—a goal still far from realization. Feminist movements have raised awareness and publicly denounced detrimental depictions of women in advertising, critiquing gender stereotypes and the excessive sexualization of women used as marketing tools. Their efforts have spurred many companies to reevaluate their marketing strategies and seek more authentic and respectful representations. Inspired by feminism, numerous brands have actively supported movements advocating gender equality, creating innovative advertising campaigns directed at empowering women: femvertising.

This research aims to accurately depict femvertising's nature and investigate the mechanisms that enable brands to engage with the feminist movement authentically and supportively, thereby contributing to the existing body of literature. To achieve its objective, this study commences by carefully observing the elements characterizing femvertising's essence: brand activism and the feminist movement.

Chapter 1 begins with an exposition of the brand activism strategy, identifying its principal features and emphasizing the significance of authenticity. Subsequently, it offers a meticulous account of feminism's evolution, tracing its journey from inception to the current fourth wave. The primary communication media employed by the various waves are also identified. Understanding the media transformations that paved the way for the emergence of women's empowerment advertising is essential. Towards the chapter's conclusion, attention is turned to femvertising. Firstly, it identifies the types of stereotypical representations of women used in advertising over the years, shedding light on the magnitude of the 'opponent' that both empowerment advertising and the feminist movement confront. Lastly, femvertising, its characteristic traits, and instances of 'best practices' are described.

Chapter 2 highlights the challenges faced by brands aiming to craft effective femvertising campaigns. At the core of this discourse lies the issue of authenticity, a crucial element for creating impactful campaigns that support feminist discourse while safeguarding the brand's reputation against potential pitfalls, such as the perils associated with 'woke-washing'. In the final section of this chapter, research gaps in the field of femvertising studies are identified, and the study's research question is presented: 'How does the effect of

authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?

Chapter 3 elucidates the methodologies employed to address the research question. Two distinct yet complementary qualitative analyses were utilized: a semiotic analysis and a sentiment analysis. The study sample encompasses four authentic femvertising campaigns, two made by brands with a predominantly male target group and two made by brands with a predominantly female target group. This categorization aims to discern the potential influences of the brand's target demographic on campaign execution and user reactions. The semiotic analysis centers on segmenting each femvertising campaign into its textual components, delineating narrative styles and strategies employed. Meanwhile, the sentiment analysis involves scrutinizing YouTube comments from male and female users, with manual coding to discern positive or negative sentiments. This is complemented by an NVivo frequency analysis of terms employed to reveal underlying themes that triggered observed reactions.

Lastly, in Chapter 4, the results of the analyses are presented, collectively addressing the research question. A comprehensive discussion of the study ensues. Finally, managerial implications, acknowledged limitations and recommendations for future research are outlined.

Chapter 1: Brand Activism, the feminist movement, and the use of femvertising to support it

1.1 Brand activism: the mirror of a changing society

The development of the media, with its ultimate transformation into online platforms and social media, has characterized the shaping of modern society. In this scenario, socio-political causes have had a greater chance of gaining support and inserting themselves into the social fabric. This process was facilitated by the operations of the most influential brands, defined by Holt as 'iconic', which were able to anticipate the transformation brought about by the media evolution. These, acting as cultural activists, invited people to review their pre-existing conceptions of themselves, making them more inclined to accept the change (Holt, 2004:9). Social media platforms have played a crucial role in democratizing the flow of information and opening spaces for the expression of opinions, offering global confrontation. They have become the main arena for consumers to openly discuss social issues and evaluate brands' actions and responses to them (Edelman in Mirzaei et al., 2022). This is compounded by the over-supply of products and services of the same type, leading consumers to use their own beliefs and values and the alignment of these with brands as the decisive means of purchase choice (Eyada, 2020). According to Kotler, Karatajaya, and Setiawan (2010:6), value is at the heart of the latest evolution of marketing, which they call Marketing 3.0. It is where, with careful use of social responsibility and transparency, brands create a deep connection with the public. It represents the development of the previous currents. In fact, Marketing 1.0, characterized by a focus on products, and Marketing 2.0, with a focus on consumers' emotions, merge and evolve to create an innovative type of marketing that wants to meet the deepest needs and values of its consumers' social, economic, environmental, and political consciousness (Kotler et al., 2010). This final type of marketing focuses on brand activism.

Comparison of Marketing 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0			
	Marketing 1.0 Product-centric Marketing	Marketing 2.0 Consumer-oriented Marketing	Marketing 3.0 Values-driven Marketing
Objective	Sell products	Satisfy and retain the consumers	Make the world a better place
Enabling forces	Industrial Revolution	Information technology	New wave technology
How companies see the market	Mass buyers with physical needs	Smarter consumer with mind and heart	Whole human with mind, heart, and spirit
Key marketing concept	Product development	Differentiation	Values
Company marketing guidelines	Product specification	Corporate and product positioning	Corporate mission, vision, and values
Value propositions	Functional	Functional and emotional	Functional, emotional, and spiritual
Interaction with consumers	One-to-many transaction	One-to-one relationship	Many-to-many collaboration

Figure n.1 Comparison of Marketing, 2010 (retrieved from Marketing 3.0: From Products to Customers to the Human Spirit)

Additionally, more and more brands have decided to implement brand activism driven by governmental and regulatory behavior. The growing popularity of protest movements for mainly social and environmental

causes has increased the attention of governments towards them, resulting in a multiplication of regulatory levels. These have blurred the line between public and private, prompting more companies to take an interest in public activities as they are morally legitimized and publicly incentivized to participate in a good cause (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019).

The strong changes described have led consumers to move increasingly towards expressing their awareness of the problems of modern society. They translate their beliefs into purchasing behavior and prefer brands that reflect their values, boycotting those that do not. Globally, more than a third of consumers make purchasing decisions influenced by brands' social initiatives (Amed et al. in Mirzaei et al., 2022). Symbolic consumption has become the means through which consumer ethics is reflected in the economic sphere, helping to trace the contours of modern culture and its evolution. The meaning of goods is in fact not fixed but varies with the passage of time and the personal evolution of members of society. Consumers reinterpret them to suit their everyday needs, ranging from demonstrating solidarity with their social group to participating in mainstream culture. In this context, the act of symbolic consumption emerges as a powerful tool for influencing consumer cultural formation (Oswald, 2012:131). It creates an ecosystem characterized by the brand's communication with people through its values and the issues it addresses. A brand involves the audience through personalized messages, discussions, and the creation of content together. Activism, advertising, and choosing the right media help them reach their audience, and then people evaluate and share these values that reflect their personal beliefs. A value chain is thus created (Eyada, 2020).

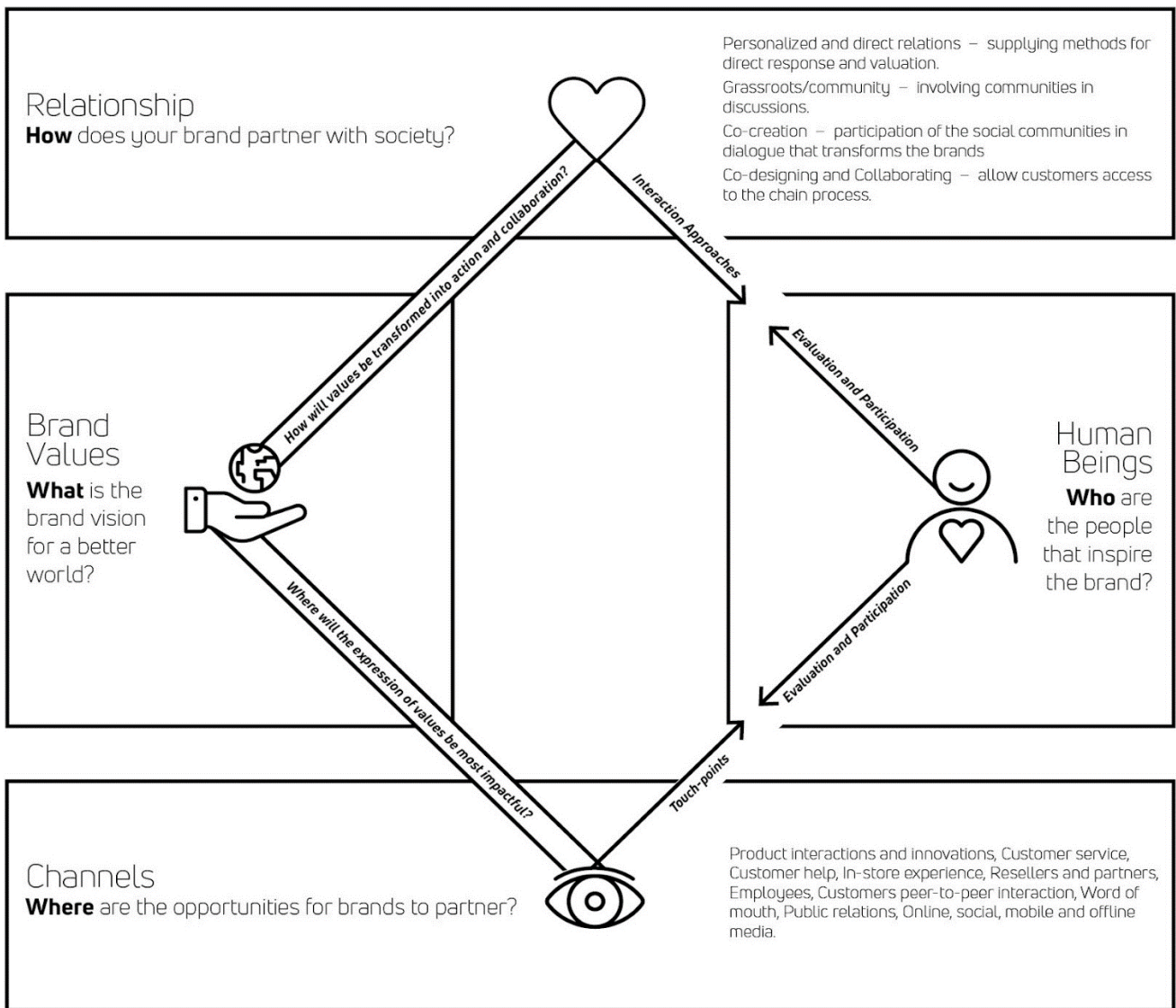


Figure n.2 Brand Activism Framework, 2020 (retrieved from The Marketing Journal)

The concept of brand activism encompasses corporate social and political advocacy, with the aim of communicating awareness of sensitive issues to the target audience. It is often referred to as 'woke' (Hess in Mirzaei et al., 2022). Active brand participation in the activist efforts of supported issues goes beyond the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR), where companies often limit themselves to philanthropic activities. 'Woke' brands proactively support activist causes that challenge the dominant production system and build political connections to establish an emotional connection with the target community and develop a relationship based on shared values (Carroll and Hackett in Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). This conflictual nature of brand activism is what most distinguishes it from CSR. Indeed, CSR initiatives are unlikely to elicit negative responses in consumers, whereas actively fighting for a controversial social issue is more likely to create positive and negative reactions in consumers (Mukherjee and Althuizen, 2020).

The risk of triggering negative reactions in an audience that does not agree with the battles for which the brand stands is mitigated by the great reputational benefits that brand activism brings. This type of corporate engagement has been shown to be a strong differentiator in the modern marketplace. Consumers have

growing expectations regarding the entry of big brands into the socio-political debate. An estimated 65% of the global population with purchasing power wants companies to engage in environmental and social issues (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Companies that move away from simply promoting the benefits of their products and embrace the concept of brand activism can capture three times the market share of a similar one without such a strategy and expand three times faster (Deloitte in Naumovska and Purcarea, 2021), gaining a major competitive advantage.

1.1.1 Main characteristics and areas of application of brand activism

Brand activism is a series of activities, carried out with marketing and communication strategies, created to influence, and raise awareness of sensitive issues among citizen-consumers through messages supported by primarily social, political, and environmental values. It is inspired by the campaigns of social movements and their recurring characteristics. A brand activism campaign must have a symbolic value independent of a product or service. Indeed, the focus of such a campaign is not to sell a product but to support a cause, creating an intangible asset of a reputational nature, intrinsic in emotional values. A distinctive social value is thus created. The campaign must also support the positions of progressive members of society, who demand, for example, environmental protection or equal rights for the discriminated classes. It must avoid identifying itself within conventional political structures by explicitly supporting a political party. If it were to do so, it could alienate a section of the public that shares the causes for which the brand stands but not the clear political position taken. Brand activism must be able to go global, in line with the aspirations of the supporters of the causes it advocates, who want to broaden their outreach. This is possible thanks to the strong use of digital media. The digital essence is an important characteristic of the analyzed phenomenon, which uses the languages, techniques, and objects of the digital generations (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). Brand activism can transform the markets and societies in which it operates by giving an indication of what is considered right and wrong (Wieser et al. in Naumovska and Purcarea, 2021). These mechanisms of transformation have been applied mainly to 6 categories, which often merge. Those are:

- Social activism: refers to social causes, closely related to gender and racial discrimination and equal access to schooling. A practical example can be found in Nike's 2018 'Just Do It' campaign, in which the brand chose former NFL quarterback Colin Kaepernick as its 30th-anniversary testimonial. He was famous for being an activist against racial discrimination and US police brutality against black citizens, kneeling during national anthems before games as a sign of protest. That cost him his dismissal in 2016 from the National Football League (NFL). Nike's campaign reads 'Believe in something. Even if it means sacrificing everything' without any advertised product. In this way, it makes explicit its support for movements against racial discrimination (Guardian Sport, 2018).

-Legal activism: is related to political and legal issues affecting companies, such as employment and taxes. It is often not limited to simply raising public awareness but involves practical actions involving the legal

system to promote the changes necessary to protect corporate values. An example can be seen in Apple's 2016 campaign for privacy protection and data encryption, supported over the years by the slogan 'Privacy. That's iPhone' (Wuerthele, 2019). In extreme cases, the brand has always stood up for its values when it comes to protecting privacy, such as when it was involved in legal disputes with the US Department of Justice for refusing to give access to data from an iPhone used by a terrorist. To do so, they would have had to create a tool to unlock access to that phone that would have endangered the data of all Apple users, going against its transparency policies, and undermining the security of consumer data (Benner and Lichtblau, 2016).

- Business activism: refers to governance issues, such as labor relations, corporate organization, and control of a fair production process. The Starbucks brand actively engages in corporate activism to improve conditions in its own sector and for suppliers working in the coffee industry. For this reason, it established the C.A.F.E. (Coffee and Farmer Equity) Practices program in 2000, which guarantees coffee farmers fair wages, safe working conditions, and environmental sustainability. This has supported ethical labor relations over the years (Starbucks, 2020).

-Economic activism: acts on issues that affect the economy, such as the minimum wage and income inequality in a society. Barclays' '#ThisIsMe' campaign, launched in 2016, addresses issues of inclusion in the workplace, focusing on the gender pay gap and zeroing it out (Barclays, 2016).

-Political activism: a rarer cause than the other types of activism, it is very close to social activism. It focuses on designing and implementing activities that influence public policy, such as voting rights issues. An example can be found in Levi's 2018 'Use Your Vote' campaign. In this campaign, the jeans brand Levi Strauss & Co encouraged voter participation in the US presidential election. It included partnerships with non-profit organizations such as Rock the Vote to provide resources for voter registration and promote civic engagement (O'Brien, 2018).

-Environmental activism: refers to issues related to sustainability and environmental protection (Naumovska and Purcarea, 2021). It is one of the most widespread types of brand activism, partly due to the influence of the 2030 agenda for countries participating in the United Nations, where sustainability is the main theme and many initiatives have been taken to improve companies from an environmental perspective. Coca-Cola's 'World without Waste' campaign, launched in 2018, is a good example of how the brand is acting to make a concrete change in sustainability. Coca-Cola launched a campaign to tackle plastic waste and improve recycling rates. It has pledged to make its packaging 100% recyclable by 2025 and to reduce the environmental impact of its products year on year through packaging innovation, community involvement, and awareness campaigns (The Coca-Cola Company, 2021) (Naumovska and Purcarea, 2021).

Brand activism thus aims to engage the public and create an emotional bond. This bond can have a positive impact on profits, customer loyalty, and connection with those who share similar values. However, it is

crucial that brand activism is genuine and aligned with the company's values and vision; otherwise, it could be perceived as mere advertising opportunism, alienating the core customer base, and leading to a decline in sales and reputation (Eyada, 2020). The determining factor for the successful implementation and success of the 'woke' campaign is how authentically it is done and how much this authenticity is perceived by the audience (Mirzaei et al., 2022).

1.1.2 Authenticity, the fundamental element of brand activism

Woke activism is becoming increasingly popular and offers new opportunities for brands to show their social engagement. However, this may carry risks as consumers may be skeptical about the authenticity of brands' virtue-signaling efforts (Mirzaei et al., 2022). Such skepticism is well justified as the practice of carrying out inauthentic activism campaigns, also referred to as 'woke washing', is widespread. In these cases, marketing activities aimed at communicating a brand's support for a sensitive cause are not really aligned with its values, aims, and business practices (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Appropriating the competitive advantages of laudable behavior that is not one's own can appear to be a cunning strategy. However, this entails very high risks for brands. In case of misbehavior towards social causes, 53% of consumers might complain and 47% might choose a direct competitor (Accenture in Mirzaei et al., 2022). This decreases consumer brand engagement (CBE), i.e. consumer involvement in brand activities, resulting in a competitive disadvantage (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

The authenticity of woke activism is demonstrable through the presence of six recurring factors, identified by Mirzaei, Wilkie, and Siuki (2022), which guide brands to carry out their social initiatives correctly, reducing the perception of falsehood (Mirzaei et al., 2022).

These are:

-Practice: refers to how much a brand puts into practice what it claims. It is important that the brand keeps its promises by demonstrating its commitment to social issues with concrete actions. This helps build the perception of authenticity. For example, if a brand talks about diversity but its board of directors is mainly composed of people of one ethnicity, consumers will perceive it as inconsistent and inauthentic. The size of the practice is also based on the company's past behavior and whether it lives up to its promises. Woke activism campaigns that result in concrete actions are considered more authentic.

-Inclusion: refers to how gender, race, age, and political neutral the target audience perceives the message to be. For example, if a brand addresses toxic masculinity, to be inclusive, it must also celebrate positive masculinity. A 'woke' brand appears more authentic when it communicates a neutral and inclusive message when it takes sides on social issues.

-Fit: indicates how well the topic of a social cause fits with a brand's core business, image, positioning, and culture. When there is a good fit between the social cause and the company, the authenticity of brand

activism campaigns is perceived. The degree of 'fit' between the social cause and the brand's core business influences the perception of authenticity and has a positive impact on donations in cause-related marketing.

- Motivation: it is based on the public's perception of the intentions of 'woke' brands. These intentions can be seen as profit-centered, selfish, corrupt, sincere, or exploitative. Previous research suggests that if corporate initiatives are perceived as altruistic and transparent, they can increase brand authenticity. If a brand has performed past actions that are not praiseworthy with respect to the cause it is pursuing but has tried to 'make amends' for what it has done and improve upon it, it can positively influence perceived authenticity.
- Social context independency: is a consequence of the fact that brands claiming to be social activists are increasingly common, leading to increased consumer scrutiny of their motivations. If consumers perceive that a brand is exploiting popular social issues to gain visibility, they will feel alienated from it. The perceived authenticity of 'woke' activism is influenced by the ability of brands to be independent and uninfluenced by the social context.
- Sacrifice: relates to how much a 'woke' brand is willing to give up profit to support society and its audience. Brands could take actions that require a significant financial commitment to prove their authenticity. This concept is based on the theory of 'costly signaling', which suggests that, to be considered authentic, the brand must take actions that involve real costs and not just empty signaling (Kane and Zollman in Mirzaei et al., 2022). Sacrifice can also come in the form of the loss of possible consumers, discouraged from buying a brand's products because they do not share the battles it stands for and its values. (Mirzaei et al., 2022). These dimensions and the possible interactions between them create the 'woke activism authenticity framework' (WAAF). Implementing activities in line with these principles can allow brands to mix both commercial and social aspects. Consumers are willing to see the coexistence of profit- and cause-related initiatives when they are authentically part of the action (Schmidt et al. in Mirzaei et al., 2022).

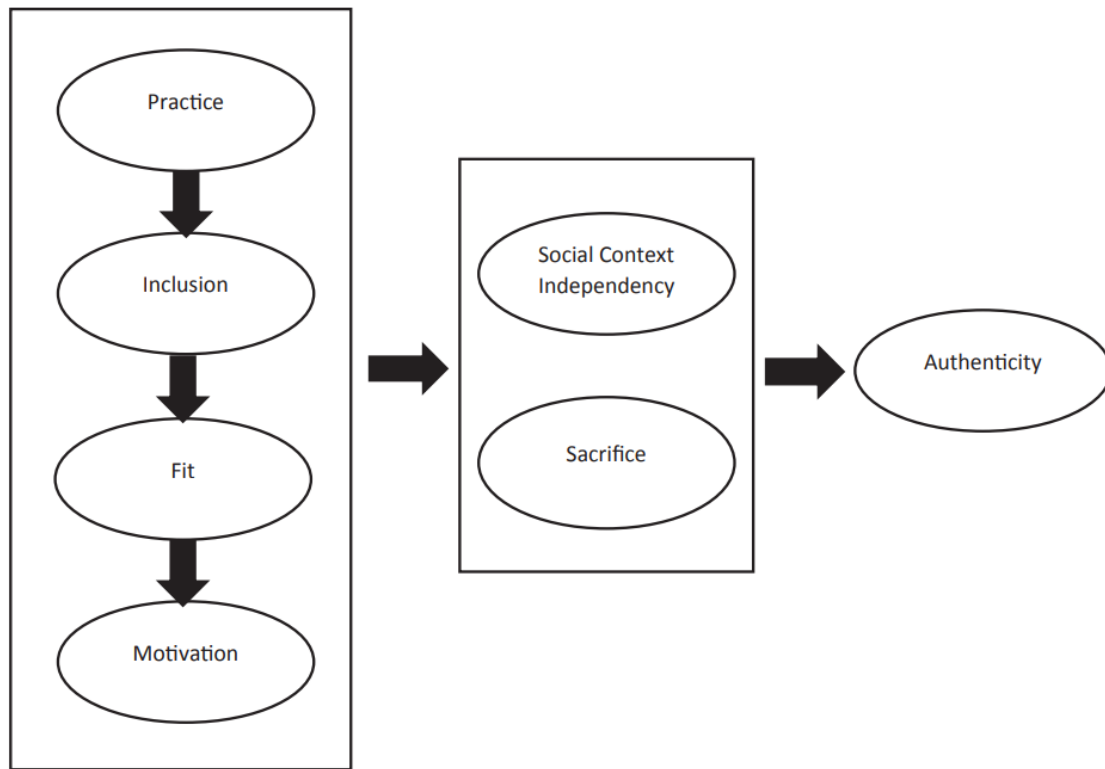


Figure n.3 Woke activism authenticity framework, 2022 (retrieved from Journal of Business Research)

The application of inauthentic brand activism is not always to be condemned as cunning conduct with the sole purpose of deceiving one's customers. In fact, authentic activism is the last step in the evolution that companies undergo when implementing activism policies. These companies must have time to change their internal dynamics, test and find the mechanisms best suited to them and their internal organization, and align themselves with what is advertised. Therefore, it is possible to catalyze the types of brand activism into four categories with blurred boundaries, which represent the evolution toward true activism. This division is based on the type of activist marketing messaging and the degree of prosocial corporate practice implemented (Vredenburg et al., 2020):

-Absence of brand activism: is that of brands that have not yet adopted pro-social business practices and do not have such goals and values. Their consumers do not expect involvement in brand activism and the sectors in which they operate are not influenced by collaborations with socio-political causes to define the legitimacy of their activities. This is a category in sharp decline, as the evolution of the marketing system and social norms is leading many of them to have to take a stand in socially critical situations (Barton et al. in Vredenburg et al., 2020).

-Silent brand activism: is the one adopted by brands that are interested in and work for socio-political causes as a strategic objective and main mission. Despite this, they do not externalize, by communicating through appropriate marketing techniques, their actions, silently working on social practices related to their values. Companies that engage in this type of activism are often small and with little market power and seek to establish and strengthen a mechanism for working in collaboration with social causes to be stable even after

possible future expansion. When using activist marketing messaging, they have a high probability of being aligned with it, gaining a competitive advantage, and strengthening their reputation in the eyes of the public.

-Inauthentic brand activism: is that of brands that implement activist marketing messages without having a corporate purpose, values, and practices aligned with the advertised socio-political causes. This makes marketing practices appear disingenuous and deceptive. To stand a better chance of survival in the modern marketplace, they must strive to improve their internal dynamics to align with the advertised causes, otherwise, they will lose brand equity and consumers.

-Authentic brand activism: represents the latest evolution of previous situations. The purpose and values of brands entering this category are highly aligned with their brand activism campaigns. It is the superior form of activism as it acts as a necessary catalyst for effective social change and offers better brand equity results, increasing the chances of positioning oneself better than competitors.

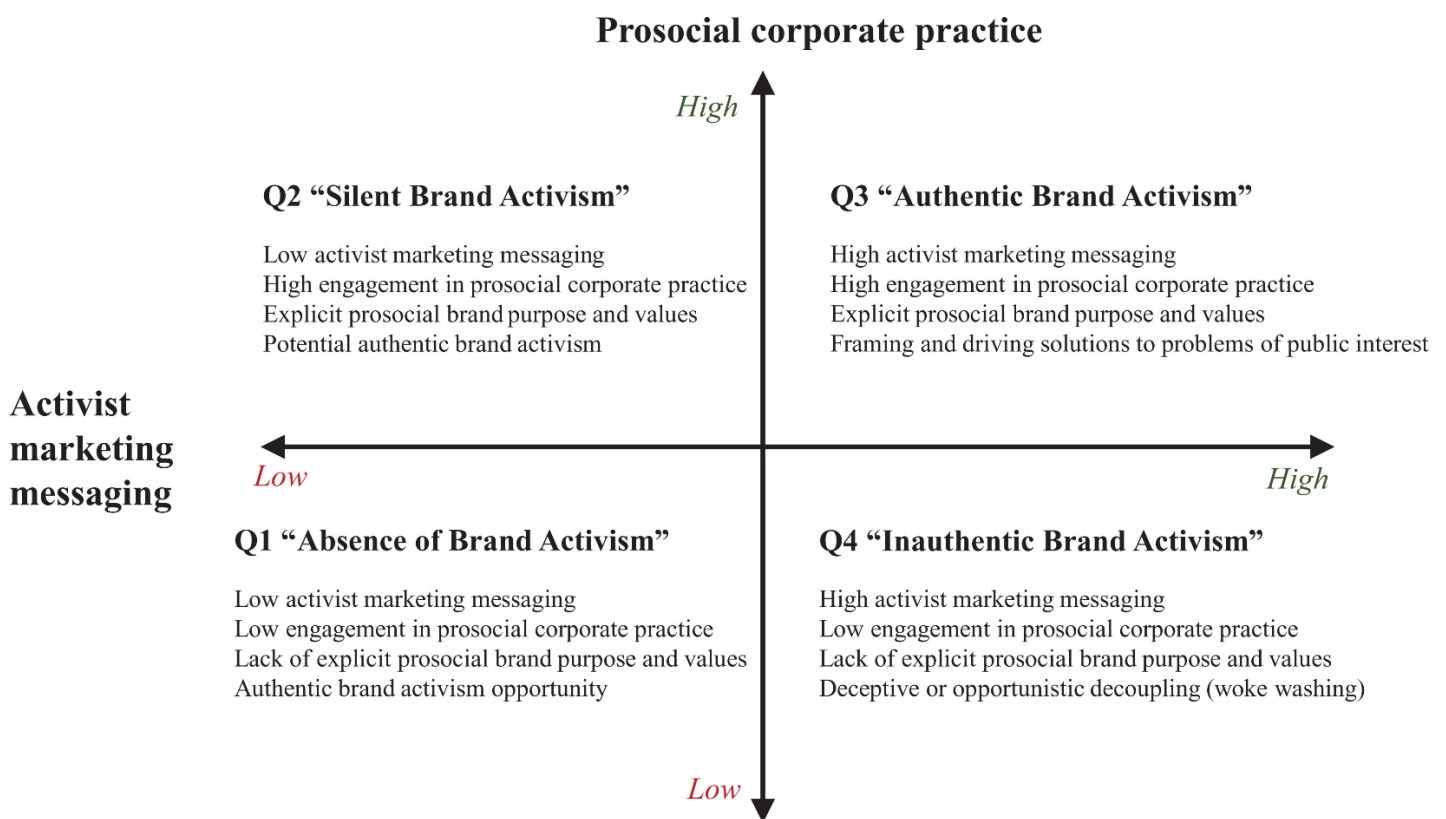


Figure n.4 Typology of brand activism, 2020 (retrieved from Journal of Public Policy & Marketing)

The difference between authentic and inauthentic brand activism is one of the main themes of the modern feminist dialogue. The last decade has seen increasingly fervent activism on the part of movements fighting for gender equality. This has become one of the causes most pursued by social justice movements, followed reactively by the corporate sector. Companies have taken and continue to take very clear positions in support of these movements, focusing their brand activism on the issue (Naumovska and Purcarea, 2021). It represents an evolution, as until the beginning of the fourth feminist wave (2010s) women's causes were not actively considered by companies, and the female figure was instead exploited as a mere advertising

medium, reinforcing gender stereotypes and discrimination. The boom of feminism and its spread online meant that brands used its principles to reinforce their own end values. The problem, however, is that many brands saw its popularity as a tool to gain more notoriety, without following the steps of brand activism listed above but using feminist terms extemporaneously as a wrapping for marketing campaigns empty of content and real pro-social activities. This is why it is important that pure feminist values are communicated in the campaigns of brands that want to support such causes. In this way, consumers will be better able to distinguish authentic from inauthentic campaigns and will not fall into the deception of 'commodity feminism', which does not help achieve social change but makes it even more difficult to achieve equal rights (Manfredi-Sanchez, 2019). To better understand how feminist discourse has evolved and how it has been integrated into modern marketing, the following paragraphs will present an overview of its social evolution and the changes it has brought about in the field of advertising.

1.2 Evolution and social battles of the Feminist Movement

The term feminism denotes a wide range of political and social movements that share a desire to combat gender discrimination and achieve equal rights and opportunities (Ahmad Raina, 2017). Feminist movements, since their emergence, continue to fight to elevate the historically oppressed and marginalized female figure by combating the various stereotypes embedded in the structure of society. Society presents itself as both a malleable and harsh communicative terrain for feminist movements. This in fact turns out to be an element shaped by the various battles for gender equality, in which the effects of their victories can be observed, but at the same time, it remains their main enemy, as it is very resistant to change. An example of this duality can be observed in the counterproductive effect of feminist success. Since feminist values are mainly received by a determined set of institutions, such as education, law, and medicine, major achievements in these areas are publicized as the ultimate achievement of equality (McRobbie, 2004). On the one hand that shows that gender battles are indeed leading to a revolution in the structure of society, however, at the same time, their misrepresentation reinforces the idea among millions that gender equality has already been achieved, making feminism no longer necessary (Caprino, 2017). This widespread thinking is also called 'Modern Sexism' (Council of Europe, 2023). 'Modern sexism' is joined by two other types of sexism that are redundant in feminist literature and fought by it: 'Traditional Sexism' and 'Neo-Sexism' (Council of Europe, 2023). 'Traditional Sexism' indicates the mere stereotypical representation of women, who find themselves confined to traditional gender roles that demean them in comparison to their male counterparts. It is because, since the beginning of human civilization, women have been segregated into a secondary status in social discourse and subordinated to men in positions of power. Women's unique identity has often been defined based on male ideals, enslaving them to a macho and patriarchal system. This type of sexism does not exclude the physical universe, sexualized, and shamed for communal complacency (Ahmad Raina, 2017). 'Neo-Sexism', of a more recent temporal nature, indicates competence-based gender

discrimination, i.e., the prejudice that the male sex is more competent in certain job roles, such as leadership positions (Council of Europe, 2023). This contributes to vertical segregation that forces women to occupy the lowest points in the power hierarchy (Fernandez et al., 2022). The dance that the feminist movement performs to struggle and survive within an ever-changing society has led it to change unstoppably since its inception. This is why 'four waves' can be identified, as very different from each other but united by the common goal of achieving gender equality and the redemption of the female figure (Pruitt, 2022).

1.2.1 The First Feminist Wave

The first wave of feminism, a term coined and first used by journalist Martha Weinman in 1968 (Mohajan, 2022), denotes the period between the late 19th and early 20th centuries in which the first feminist movements arose. This first phase of the feminist revolution developed mainly in England and the United States and focused on increasing political rights, with an emphasis on obtaining women's suffrage (Malinowska in Mohajan, 2022).

The first wave of the feminist movement is historically linked to the first formal convention to obtain American women's rights, held in July 1848 in New York, and organized by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, prominent figures in equal rights initiatives (Pruitt, 2022). Although the event indicated represents by historical convention the starting point of feminist history, many first-wave feminists were inspired and influenced by the exploits of some participants in the French Revolution, Temperance, and Abolitionist movements (Alexander, 2021). In the French Revolution, women entered powerfully into the political life of their country and fought for the defense of their rights, as evidenced by the march of October 5, 1789, where thousands of Parisian demonstrators moved all the way to Versailles to demand initiatives from the king concerning the food shortages plaguing the country. In addition, after the issuance of the 'Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen' many women protested that they were not included in that document and campaigned for the recognition of equal rights. Playwright Olympe de Gouges in 1791 created her own version of the document by titling it the 'Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen' and stating in the first point: 'Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights. Social distinctions may be founded only on the common good' (De Gouges in Warman, 2016). Her writing remains a strong inspiration for the feminist movement to this day. Even in North America, there were political participation movements prior to 1848. In the early 19th century, a 'moral reform' devoted to the prohibition of alcohol consumption was established. Many middle-class white women, guardians of their families' morality, created pamphlets and vignettes in support of the cause. They then organized themselves into groups dedicated to the 'promotion of temperance,' marching in the streets and going to stores to demand a halt to the sale of alcoholic beverages, thus participating in a part of the political life of the country (Burton in Alexander, 2021). Of particular importance is the American abolitionist movement, which started around 1600 and

included women of different ethnicities who were racially segregated and/or enslaved. Their actions and perseverance over the centuries contributed to the end of slavery (Paquette and Blackett, 1984). This movement saw the activation of white middle-class women who wanted to fight for the cause but were prevented by their being women in a society that did not grant them rights. Among the abolitionists appear Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who fought along with other Protestants to participate in the first World Anti-Slavery Convention, held in London in 1840 (Alexander, 2021), where, however, they were denied active participation. This incident then led them to organize the first 'Women's Rights Convention' in 1848, in which they announced their desire to obtain equal rights with men. From here began the first feminist wave that would lead to the movement as we know it today.

The first wave is characterized by liberal feminism, which seeks to pursue equality primarily through obtaining political reforms (Mohajan, 2022). This historical period saw the birth of the protest movement led by the Suffragettes, activists who organized marches and protests to gain the right to vote and political representation. To do so they resisted violence, public pillories, and imprisonment (Cowman, 2010). Perseverance in demonstrating, and the key contributions of key figures such as Millicent Fawcett in the United Kingdom and Susan V. Anthony in the United States, succeeded in inspiring thousands of women to join the movement (Holton, 1996). This led to an important success in 1893, when the government of New Zealand, then a British colony, on revolutionary urges approved the right to vote for women, thus setting a precedent used as an example in the suffragette battles (Pickles, 2018). In the United Kingdom the 'Representation of the People's Act' was passed in 1918 granting the right to vote to women aged 30 with home ownership, conditions later fought by later feminist movements. In the United States, the right of women to vote was granted with the creation of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution in 1919 (Mohajan, 2022). Many other European states were inspired by British and American feminist initiatives and followed their evolutionary courses, arriving at women's suffrage at the same time (Mohajan, 2022). In addition to suffrage, the first wave of feminism sought to challenge discriminatory laws and practices in areas such as marriage, labor employment, and private property. There were few successes in these areas, but they set the stage for the movements perpetuated later by the second feminist wave (Cowman, 2010).

These movements led to some positive results but also to some not-so-happy nuances. In fact, it went on to further widen the social divide as the initiatives analyzed focused mainly on the rights of white women belonging to the Western middle class (Mohajan, 2022). The movement focused on obtaining the vote and other rights for women, however, the nuances and diversity of the female population were completely overlooked. Battles were waged for an 'abstract woman,' a simplified idea of what it is to be female, sometimes stereotyping it and leaving behind dimensions such as identity, class, race, and sexuality and muting different voices of revolt (Katef, 2002).

1.2.2 The Second Feminist Wave

The second wave of feminism denotes the period of feminist activism between the 1960s and 1980s, which, like its predecessor, developed mainly in Europe and North America (Baxandall and Gordon in Hewitt, 2005). In addition to the continuation and expansion of the struggle for equal political rights initiated by the first wave, there was a broadening of the issues addressed. Indeed, the participants in the second wave fought principally for the obtaining of reproductive rights and the recognition of sexual autonomy, the achievement of economic independence through access to work and college education, and the fight against domestic violence, rape, and harassment (Mohajan,2022).

The time frame included between the end of the first and the rise of the second feminist wave is mainly characterized by the event of World War II, which radically transformed the structure of society. Many women found themselves occupying work roles historically held by their male counterparts, employed at the front, thus transforming themselves from figures relegated to the domestic sphere to the main workforce (Baxandall and Gordon in Hewitt, 2005). Once the conflict ended, the forced return to the role of mothers and housewives was not accepted and led to revolutionary uprisings for equal rights not only in the political sphere. In addition, during the postwar period, the writer and philosopher Simone de Beauvoir published 'The Second Sex' a fundamental writing for the evolution of feminist discourse that set the initial tone for the second wave. In her work, Beauvoir outlines how the definition of femininity is only a consequence of the bending of female beings to the will of a patriarchal society and how women have historically been relegated to a much lower rump than that occupied by men. The summary of her writing can be deduced from her phrase: 'One is not born, but becomes a woman,' meaning that the socially acceptable female figure is a construct and not a natural evolution (De Beauvoir in Alexander, 2020a).

The milestone of the second feminist wave can be traced to the 1963 publication of the book 'The Feminine Mystique' by writer and feminist Betty Friedan. In the work, Friedman, after an analysis of the lives of American suburban housewives in the 1950s and early 1960s, challenged the widespread idea, called the 'feminine mystique', that women's fulfillment could and should take place solely in the home. She argued instead that this 'problem that has no name' was a societal compulsion, which made women's aspirations conform and judged them poorly if they wanted to step out of their stereotypical role. This led to a call for equal opportunities and employment and a reevaluation of women's roles (Friedan, 2010[1963]).

What was revolutionary about that work was its wide distribution to the public. More than 3 million copies were sold to a target audience mainly characterized by middle-class women, who, feeling represented by the situation described, began their own movements for social equality (Grady, 2018).

The results of the main radical second-wave feminist movements were not long in coming. In 1963 the Equal Pay for Comparable Work Act was signed by resident John F. Kennedy, U.S.A. This was made possible by the inclusion of activist Esther Peterson and a group of female supporters in the White House (Alexander, 2020a). In 1964, the National Organization for Women (NOW), still in existence today, was founded. It was primarily concerned with fighting for the recognition of sexual autonomy and the right to abortion and denouncing the domestic and sexual violence suffered, a stigma that had not been addressed until then (NOW, 2023). The political representation and numerous demonstrations made led to various successes in Europe and the United States that saw the establishment of various laws to guarantee educational equality and reproductive freedom, with free access to contraceptive means. This historical period also saw the rise of various help centers for victims of rape and violence, redeeming visible a hitherto socially hidden and silenced problem (Tong in Mohajan,2022).

This period saw the emergence of protest movements against the stereotyped image of women based on a sexist and misogynist view perpetuated in society. Famous in 1968 was the demonstration against the Miss America pageant in Atlantic City, New Jersey (Gay, 2018), which later inspired the demonstration against the Miss World pageant held in London, England in 1970 (BBC, 2020). At these events, hundreds of women interrupted the broadcasts protesting the perpetuated beauty standards and the type of representation made of the contestants, comparable to that observed at cattle auctions (Snyder in Grady, 2018). To do this they would throw bras, high heels, and various feminine products into an imaginary 'freedom basket'. Although there was not actually a burning of intimate products, from here to the present day the feminists were given the nickname 'bra burners' (Lee in Gay, 2018).

The nickname represents one of the main problems found in the second wave of feminism. The feminist figure was accused by public opinion of carrying forward an image of women as angry, unpleasant, and dealing with petty issues too fiercely, thus alienating the younger generation from the movement (Grady, 2018). They were stereotypically viewed as man-haters, which contributed to the movement's decline in the late 1970s (Gay, 2018). In addition, the second wave lost steam and began to crumble as many conflicting internal subgroups emerged, such as 'anti-porn feminists' and 'sex-positive feminists', who carried on antipodal thoughts (Alexander, 2020a). Another problem of the second wave, an outgrowth of the mentality of the first, is the lack of 'sisterhood' and representation towards feminists of other ethnicities and the discrimination of other groups of individuals, such as members of the current LGBTQ+ community. The second wave perpetuated the first wave's lack of intersectionality, for example, forcing Black feminists to often fight their battles, inextricably linked to race discrimination, independently (Gordon, 2016). Lesbian feminists, on the other hand, were accepted by the movement only from 1970 onward, after strong initial resistance (Alexander, 2020a).

1.2.3 The Third Feminist Wave

The third wave of feminism can be placed between the 1990s and the beginning of 2010, when, thanks mainly to technological development, it transformed into the fourth wave. Unlike its predecessors, it spread globally, finding in the happenings of the United States of America the main inspiration for protest movements (Pruitt, 2022). Feminist initiatives of this era have been characterized by strong intersectionality and inclusiveness, going to consider different types of discrimination in addition to the gender one, increasing the number of people involved. There has been a shift from feminist movements made primarily for a stereotypical group of white middle-class women to strong individual empowerment (Mann and Huffman, 2005).

Before this wave was able to emerge, feminism suffered, mainly during the 1980s, a moment of severe crisis. It had to regain its value in the eyes of public opinion. They were associated with the negative image of 'man-haters', alienating younger activists. They also worked to resolve the internal conflicts created by the second wave, which prevented a united fight for equal rights (Alexander, 2020b). Moreover, much of the movement's attention focused on the fight against a new stigma that led society to discriminate: the AIDS crisis. Many feminists focused on combating the negative stereotypes associated with the disease. They also campaigned to promote safe sex and sex education, contributing to the support of research at the same time. This represents one of the highlights that led the movement to have more intersectional characteristics. Not only did activists have to fight discrimination against people with AIDS, but they also had to fight a situation in which they were discriminated against once again. Indeed, although women were, and still are, more vulnerable to infection, economic and social factors hindered them from accessing prevention and treatment (Gunnarsson, 2020).

Although the contours of the emergence of the third wave are very blurred and fuzzy, it can be traced to two main events: the 1991 Anita Hill-Clarence Thomas court case and the rise of riot grrrl in the music scene (Grady, 2018). Anita Hill, a U.S. law professor, accused Clarence Thomas, a U.S. Supreme Court nominee and Hill's boss, of sexual harassment. The comments characterizing the entire hearing and the accused's actual participation in the Supreme Court highlighted how there was an overrepresentation of men in leadership roles (Grady, 2018) and how the issue of harassment was not addressed with the proper weight. That case and the injustice that had been perpetuated served as an example for many women who began to report sexual harassment, particularly that experienced in the workplace (Alexander, 2020b). The process is also linked to the figure of Rebecca Walker, a feminist writer, who after witnessing the court case published an essay entitled 'Becoming the Third Wave' (Walker in Ryan, 2001:78). Here she described her experiences as a young woman and asserted how there was no right way to be a feminist, reinforcing the idea that one could fight against gender discrimination in an intersectional and personal way. She is also credited with the

primacy of the use of the term, as in the essay she wrote: 'I am not a feminist of postfeminism. I am the third wave' (Walker in Ryan, 2001:80).

What characterized the third wave feminists was the desire to impose themselves and be represented within popular culture and the media, which until then had perpetuated a distorted image of women and an obstacle to the achievement of equality (Snyder, 2008). Crucial to this purpose were the figures of the riot grrrl. The riot grrrl was a feminist movement that developed in the early 1990s mainly in the punk and grunge music scene and fought for the causes of the representation of femininity, sexual violence, and women's empowerment (Feliciano, 2013). The term comes from a play on words with 'girl' being translated into a growl. Through their songs, they especially inspired young girls to freely express their individuality and sexuality (Pruitt, 2022). Musical groups in the movement, such as 'Bikini Kill' and the 'Heavens to Betsy,' also moved away from the negative image of the neglected, bra-burning feminist that had been in the way of the second wave. They took back the concept of femininity, they wore high heels, they wore makeup, and they were provocative. This was because they were convinced that the rejection of femininity was a misogynistic legacy that affixed that meaning to a weakness, when in fact femininity was just as valid as masculinity and should not be hidden (Grady, 2018). This allowed the movement the rapprochement of young women, having new blood ready to fight for their rights. The music movement was also supported by the Guerrilla Girl art movement, a group of feminists that arose in the mid-1980s and intensified their activities throughout the third wave. Through Guerrilla Marketing activities, the group reported that almost all nudes exhibited in museums represented women, while works by female artists were almost nonexistent (Demo, 2000).

Both artistic and musical movements lost following with the rise of the 2000s due to the mixed messages communicated by the media in terms of girl power and the emergence of 'pop feminism' and 'commodity feminism', linked to capitalism (Feliciano, 2013). Those are the few criticisms that can be made of the third wave, which with the fast technological development had managed to spread the message of all its internal movements on a large scale, having as an inescapable side effect that some of these were then exploited for profit and not out of true attachment to the cause (Snyder, 2008). In fact, one cannot speak of the end of the third wave, but of its development into the fourth.

1.2.4 The Fourth Feminist Wave

The fourth wave of feminism represents the ultimate evolution of the gender equality movements and, having arisen around 2010, is still ongoing and changing. Unlike previous waves, which arose after moments of great crisis in the movement and changes in society, the fourth wave does not represent a change of the third wave but an evolution of it. This brings two different currents of feminist thought, one that states that

modern activism is still part of the third, as opposed to the more widespread thinking that states that feminism is in its fourth phase (National Museum of Women's History, 2021). Although the emergence of the fourth wave is very confusing, there is one key element that distinguishes it from previous waves: digital activism. It allows feminists to address major issues of violence, gender discrimination, and representations of women in modern culture, not only in physical and geo-limited spaces but on digital platforms. Means such as social media have ensured that fourth-wave movements reach very large audiences and supporters around the world, causing this wave to develop on a global scale. So much so that the dawn of the fourth wave feminist Jessica Valenti claimed that the fourth wave was online (Grady, 2018).

Indeed, thanks to digital platforms, the main movements characterizing the fourth wave, the 'Me Too' movement and 'TIME'S UP' developed. These were underpinned by strong hashtag activism, or the use of hashtags on social media to declare support for the cause or make individual testimonies public (National Museum of Women's History, 2021). The 'Me Too' movement was created by feminist Tarana Burke in 2006, after years of collecting numerous experiences from survivors of sexual abuse. Initially, the movement was targeted at women from black American culture, as they represented the main witnesses Burke heard, however, it spread globally due to its strong intersectionality (Burke, 2023). The movement reached global fame in 2017, with the spread of millions of #MeToo hashtags and several protest marches. Indeed, that year saw the release of the sex scandal of Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein, who, for more than 30 years, sexually harassed and exploited many women belonging to the film industry. This led victims to recount their experiences publicly and inspired millions of women to go public about the episodes of sexual assault and harassment they experienced, juxtaposing the stories with the hashtag mentioned earlier (Burke, 2023). This movement made a wide public aware of the problem of rape culture and the importance of sexual consent, while also fighting against the recurring accusation of victimhood aimed at victims of such crimes.

The #MeToo movement was joined by the sexual harassment victims' advocacy organization TIME'S UP, founded in Hollywood on Jan. 1, 2018. This was inspired by the letter of support written by more than 700.000 Latino farmworkers belonging to the Alianza Nacional de Campesinas (the National Alliance of Farmworker Women), in which they recounted their experiences and proclaimed their support for the victims of sexual violence that had emerged the previous year (National Museum of Women's History, 2021). In TIME'S UP, a document was drafted by entertainment workers in which they denounced the situation in their work environment and pledged to support and defend victims of sexual violence, regardless of their gender, race, and sexual orientation, to have support and advocacy from lawyers (National Museum of Women's History, 2021). These purely digital forms of activism there has been support for more traditional means such as marches to demonstrate one's rights. This marked a link between traditional feminism and the new wave.

The fourth wave is characterized by strong intersectionality and the rise of hundreds of different internal movements representing the various types of feminists that exist. What distinguishes it most from previous waves is that the fourth is much more inclusive. It is queer and trans-inclusive, so many movements act in conjunction with the LGBTQ+ community. There is a strong focus on body positivity and revulsion toward the stereotypical image of women perpetuated in the media (Bustle in Grady, 2018).

In addition to merging with movements of various kinds to achieve equal rights, the fourth wave was able to increase the participation in its activities of a gender seen for years as the movement's main enemy: men. Feminism is not a concept limited to women but is fundamental to achieving a more equal and fair society for the entire population, making men directly affected by feminist victories (Adichie, 2014). However, male responses to the fourth wave can vary widely. There are genuine activists who accept and support the movement, recognizing the importance of their struggles and the need to demolish a patriarchal societal structure. Others are uncertain about the movement, having difficulty navigating the feminist world and questioning their own privileges. For these types of people, it is important for feminist movements to promote neutral dialogue areas and inclusive environments to engage them more and understand their points of view. Finally, there are the men who are completely opposed to feminism and their quest for equality because it threatens their perceived power. They often go to hinder the movement with misogynistic reactions and sexist behavior. To foster greater acceptance and involvement of men in fourth-wave feminism, it is crucial to promote education and dialogue that address gender issues and challenge harmful norms (Waling, 2017). Men's involvement in feminism can contribute to a more inclusive and effective movement, and achieving this could represent the future of feminism.

1.3 Main communication media used by the waves of the Feminist Movement

The media's portrayal of women represents one of the main elements in the perpetuation of gender discrimination. For this reason, the use of them by the various feminist movements is not simply an outline of their campaigns but a necessary activity to combat the stereotypes and discrimination that have been established in society. Media misrepresentation over the years has led to a symbolic annihilation of women. The mass media have historically underrepresented women. The few representations made followed the gender stereotypes of the period in which these were published. Such female depiction trivialized and often omitted, shaped social perceptions of gender, reinforcing existing power structures (Tuchman, 2000[1978]). Feminists in various waves have sought to understand how cultural constructions and images are linked to patterns of inequality and oppression. Building on these studies, each wave then used types of media with different messages and tones shaped by the period of application (Gill, 2007:16). Not all feminist media campaigns were successful and popular with the public, strengthening movements and attracting new

activists. However, from the birth of feminism to now, there has been a remarkable development in the decrease of the male/female binary, with the male pole being considered dominant (Hall, 1997:235). During the first wave of feminism, the media landscape did not offer a wide choice. It is important to point out that the media of the time were predominantly controlled by men. The latter manifested a strong hostility toward early feminist movements, forcing suffragettes and activists to use alternative solutions such as songs and plays to educate and protest (DuBois, 1975). The united blockade that the various activists of the period faced from newspapers and magazines led them to found their own. Examples of early feminist media can be found in 'The Suffragette' newspapers in the United Kingdom (The National Archives, 2019 [1913]) and 'The Woman's Journal' in the United States (American Woman Suffrage Association, 2016). Inspired by the lecture tours made by abolitionist activists, even the most influential suffragettes began to display their ideas and initiatives in public places to achieve a high number of endorsements. These activities were often accompanied by the distribution of pamphlets describing information about the feminists' program of action and arguments in favor of suffrage. It was also common to see posters, often illegally put up, with catchy slogans in favor of women's suffrage (Alexander, 2021). One peculiar practice was to disseminate caricatures and satirical cartoons to criticize traditional gender roles. The problem with this activity is that it quickly backfired and became commonplace for opponents of the movement (O'Neill, 2015).

The second wave of feminism was established at the same time as a significant evolution in the media landscape, which, for example, saw the large-scale diffusion of television devices (Wilson, 2020). The increase in the type of media usable by the population, particularly the Western population, has consequently increased stereotypical and discriminatory representations of the female figure. News reports, radio, magazines, television programs, movies, and various advertisements highlighted how much the common desire of society was to force women into the domestic sphere, into the role of mother and wife (Gill, 2007:17). For this reason, feminists used the same media to counter the twisted image that was spreading and try to regain their rights. Crucial, as with the first, was the print media. The 1963 book 'The Feminine Mystique' in which author Betty Friedan recounted the dissatisfaction with the imposition to be a housewife and how this unhappiness was widespread among many women with similar fates, was necessary to birth and inspire the entire second feminist wave (Friedan, 2010 [1963]). This publication was joined by other printed works focused on the theme of perceived inequality purely in the work sphere and female appropriation of the sexual sphere, such as Kate Millett's 'Sexual Politics' in 1969 and Juliet Mitchell's 'The Subjection of Women' in 1970 (Alexander, 2020a).

The books were joined by various newspapers and magazines, which were created by second-wave activists or otherwise supported their cause. The most famous feminist magazines were 'Spare Rib' in the United Kingdom and 'Ms.' in the United States. The magazines denounced the situation of women's rights and

challenged stereotypes, inciting readers to activism and contrasting the domestic issues addressed in mainstream newspapers. (Team, 2021). Many smaller feminist journals sprang up, often founded by university women who suffered from nonrepresentation within the academic environment (Team, 2021). Noteworthy is the case of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, reborn in the 1960s under the editorial direction of Helen Gurley Brown. At the time, the magazine mainly targeted young women and incited them to take full ownership of their lives, with references to feminist doctrine and topics considered taboo at the time, such as the sexual sphere and contraceptive methods (Benjamin, 2007).

On the television side, few were the feminist programs and films that passed, as these were mainly produced by agencies formed by men who frowned upon the activism taking place. In 1970, however, the sitcom 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show' aired on American television screens. This series narrated the story of the character Mary Richards, a single woman in her 30s and a working woman, showing for one of the first times a woman outside the home and without the company of a husband. This was the first female-dominated television sitcom, a phenomenon that was also reflected in the creative cast, with a very high number of female authors. It represented an example of television without the use of the stereotypical housewife image, a first for society at the time (Reese, 2013).

The music world saw the arrival of female artists who conveyed through their songs a willingness to address women's issues and support feminist ideals. The success of these songs, mainly due to their numerous radio airplay, was crucial in broadening the flow of reception of feminist messages. There are many songs of this nature, such as artist Lesley Gore's single 'You Don't Own Me', in which she asserts the right to free will. The song became one of the most-played singles according to the Billboard Hot 100 in 1963. Other examples of feminist songs include Helen Reddy's '*I Am Woman*', Nancy Sinatra's 'These Boots Are Made for Walkin' and Aretha Franklin's 'Respect'. In 'Respect' Franklin flipped the original meaning of the song, written in 1965 by Otis Redding, in which the man sang about how he wanted respect from his partner, and sang it in the female version. In 1975, the song 'The Pill' by Loretta Lynn, which openly addressed the issue of the birth control pill and how it could positively revolutionize women's lives (Ramnath,2021), was broadcast on the radio. Early women's music festivals also arose, such as the 1973 Sacramento Women's Music Festival (Ramnath, 2021).

The use of all these media, always supported by the classic rallies and demonstrations, allowed feminist thought to spread on a large scale, increasing following and support.

Third-wave feminism, unlike its predecessors, sees strong participation within popular culture, actively manifesting itself in the world of entertainment, particularly music. The movements that arose in this wave were able to take advantage of a revolutionary communicative media: the Internet.

Necessary for the characterization of the third wave was the use of media made in the art world by the feminist group 'Guerrilla Girls' starting in 1985. As in the name calling, they mainly used Guerrilla Marketing techniques such as posters, stickers, billboards, and performance art to criticize and publicize the problem of the lack of display of women artists' works in museums. The redundant use of printed media can also be observed in the issuance of 'zines', self-published publications used to spread their ideas, during their manifestation activities. The group's most famous initiatives were the 'Guerrilla Girls Code of Ethics for Art Museums,' distributed in flyer form, and the famous poster series 'Do Women Have to Be Naked to Get into the Met. Museum?' (Manchester,2016). Their interventions and demonstrations, which continued throughout the third wave, were an inspiration for the 'Riot grrrls'.



Figure n.5 Guerrilla Girls, 1985 (retrieved from Guerrilla Girls website)

As in previous waves, important is the contribution of the books and articles published by feminist writers. Through them, it was possible to give a clear and unchangeable vision of the issues that the movements had to tackle to combat gender inequality. Of note was the publication in Ms. magazine of Rebecca Walker, who first identified with the third wave of feminism (Walker in Ryan, 2001:80). Another notable writing was Susan Faludi's 'Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women' from 1991. Here the author exposed the problem of society's backlash against the feminist movement, primarily using stereotypical and fictitious female representation in the media and politics. Faludi thus made public the unspoken problem of society's preemptive attack on women to keep them from achieving their goals (Faludi in Goldberg, 2023). The riot grrrls published, rather than books, many zines, and alternative publications. During their concerts, it was customary to distribute zines with information about ongoing activism campaigns, sexual harassment, and listening centers for victims and abortion clinics (Ramnath, 2021). Important was Bikini Kill's 'Riot Grrrl Manifesto,' distributed in flyer form during their concerts. The pamphlet marked the reasons why it was necessary to fight for equality. An iconic phrase extrapolated from the manifesto is: 'BECAUSE we are angry at a society that tells us Girl = stupid, Girl = bad, Girl = weak' (Kathleen, 1991).

The most popular self-published magazines of the period were 'Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture' now discontinued, and 'Bust' still in operation. These were very active in the late 1990s, and early 2000s, with the rise of pop groups, such as the Spice Girls and Destiny's Child, who used highly sexualized performances to claim 'girl power'. The contested problem was that their performance style conformed with traditional expectations of femininity, leading not to female empowerment but to no advancement in society (Keenan, 2015).

The protagonist of the third wave was, indeed, the music industry, in which riot grrrls manifested through the lyrics of their songs, distributed mainly in independent and college radio stations. Their performances were comparable to performance art, in which the audience became an integral part of the show. They delivered clear messages, such as writing words like 'Rape' and 'Slut' on their bodies to bring attention to the problem of victim shaming (Ramnath, 2021). Riot grrrls represented the inspiration for a good chunk of the music sector, and once they gained acclaim and popularity, they were able to participate in music festivals, such as Rock for Choice against anti-abortion activism, and inspire other groups of artists, including male artists (Keenan, 2015). It should be noted, however, that the Riot Grrrls were followed purely by the white upper-middle class demographic, mainly because of the type of music made. Genres such as hip-hop and R&B, which only became mainstream in the dawn of the 2000s, were those most listened to by the black feminist community. Here, artists such as Queen Latifah, Mary J. Blige, and Missy Elliott became feminist icons, using rap language to be able to address topics such as violence, catcalling, and the strong misogyny in the industry (Ramnath, 2021), (Keenan, 2015). In the following decade, the problem of musical genre and audience distinction was mitigated, mainly thanks to the widespread use of the Internet. After the most critical moment in the early 2000s, with the extreme stereotypical sexualization of performances and music videos by female artists screaming 'girl power', the sector arrived to have singles with strong feminist denotations. Those reached a global audience and enjoyed strong radio distribution. Examples can be found in Beyoncé's 2008 single 'If I Were a Boy' and the release of the single 'Bad Girls' by Sri Lankan-born artist 'M.I.A.' which represents one of the last feminist musical manifestations of the third wave (Ramnath, 2021).

As for film and television, the number of films and series with a strong feminist spectrum increased greatly compared to the rare cases of the second wave. Films such as 1991's 'Thelma & Louise' in the United States (Waxman, 2016) and 2002's 'Bend It Like Beckham' in the United Kingdom (Hall, 2022), led viewers to realize how captivating women's stories could be and deserved to be told. Moreover, 'Bend It Like Beckham' was revolutionary in that it addressed feminist issues along with race discrimination. It combined analysis and satire of prejudice against women's soccer teams with issues that a girl of Indian descent might encounter in a Western culture such as England (Hall, 2022). Another important film for the movement was the Disney cartoon 'Mulan', 1998. This was pivotal in that it was aimed at children and departed from the

female princess-to-save image that characterized earlier cartoons. Here the protagonist challenged the rules of patriarchy and the imposition of her role in society, making young viewers understand how important it is to fight for one's freedom of choice (Arvind, 2020). A strong television impact was made by the series 'Sex and The City,' although its approach to feminist issues was considered unhinged by many activists of the time. The portrayal of a group of four friends, white and upper class, is made using the common thread of passion for fashion, a stereotypical and criticized view of women. Yet at the same time, women are the protagonists of the series, and issues prominent in the feminist movements of the time, such as sexual freedom and the right to fair treatment in the work environment, are loosely addressed, making it a case for women's empowerment (Crawford, 2018).

The advent of the Internet and social media allowed third-wave feminists to begin to broaden the spectrum of reception of their messages, organize physical activism movements, and build a global community. The messages communicated in the media listed earlier were poured out onto online platforms, allowing them to be known to people unaware of what had happened in the present decades and inspiring the emergence of new feminist movements. It was an early phase of use in which feminists began to become familiar with the media (Gill, 2007:40). With the arrival of the constant use of social media and online platforms, the third wave turned into the fourth.

The fourth wave can be defined as the technological evolution of the third wave. The media used are purely digital, as is the battleground in which the current battles for gender equality have been and are being fought since around the beginning of 2010. The massive use of online platforms and the increasing global attention to feminist issues, thanks in part to widespread hashtag activism campaigns, has brought about a radical change in the representation of women even by some brands that can no longer ignore the change taking place and want to support the fourth wave. These are committed to not falling back on the advertising mistakes made in the past and are doing so by adopting a revolutionary new advertising technique: femvertising, i.e., feminist brand activism campaigns dedicated to the empowerment of women.

The shift to digital terrain has not caused traditional media to be forgotten. What is published in these has found and still finds a very strong sounding board in the online world. Among the most important print publications of the fourth wave should be mentioned the collection of essays 'Men Explain Things to Me' by Rebecca Solnit, 2014. She described the problem of 'mansplaining', i.e., men not considering women's voices and their skills, especially in the work environment, treating them as cognitively inferior (Solnit in Nast, 2020). Another pivotal publication was Roxane Gay's 'Hunger: A Memoir of (My) Body', 2018. In this, the issues of body positivity and the misogynistic and fatphobic comments to which women are often subjected are addressed (Gay in Kellaway, 2018). These writings not only sold millions of copies and lent themselves as a testimony for issues still being addressed by feminist movements, but also rebounded strongly in the

world of social media and online magazines, serving as the basis for online dialogues that focused on the issues described. Far more particular is the case of Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's essay 'We Should All Be Feminists', published in print in 2014. This essay first saw life as her TEDx talk in 2013. The video of the talk then went viral on social media such as YouTube and Facebook, garnering millions of views. A printed version was then released and used as a dialogue prompt within physical forums and online journals. At the same time, it became established in the music sphere, on radio, and television thanks to the video clip, as a quote version in the song '***flawless' by artist Beyoncé (Nast, 2014). It represents an example of the power of good media use by the fourth wave. A speech or an idea can reach millions of viewers because of the power of dissemination of social media and online pages, consequently being reflected in traditional media as well.

The same is the fate of TV and film productions, which by nature are also digitally translated to online streaming channels, such as Netflix and Amazon Prime. Feminist-oriented TV series, such as 'The Handmaid's Tale' or 'Orange is the New Black' enjoy great success due to comments on social media, where millions of users recommend it and reflect on its meaning as a mirror of society. The first mentioned, based on Margaret Atwood's novel, describes a totalitarian society that subjugates women and all their reproductive rights in a very violent way. This has become a symbol and collaborator in the battles of the fourth wave. Many activists against the anti-abortion movements have done different demonstrations dressed as the characters in the series, to make people think about how current society is too similar to a fictitious and violent dystopian reality (Armstrong, 2018).

The music world has no longer been able to detach itself from feminist issues and silence female artists who support the battles of the movements. A case that has caused discussion is that of singer Kesha, an advocate for survivors of sexual violence as she belongs to them. She used her social media following to denounce the sexual violence she suffered from producer Dr. Luke and the injustice of having to endure a process that has been going on since 2014 with no resolution (Peltz, 2023). She has participated in the #MeToo movement, and she carries on her testimony using performances that count millions of views and shares across YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok, such as the one at the 2018 Grammy's (Yang, 2018). This shows how in addition to the traditional media that artists referred to, such as radio and television, social media are necessary to expose their ideas and see their feminist actions shared.

Beyond the analysis of how traditional media marry digital media, however, it is necessary to consider how online has revolutionized fourth-wave activism and how the younger generations are the main proponents. Feminism in this decade is represented as 'cool' by mainstream media. Girls, especially teenage girls, are using social media and streaming podcasts to challenge the harassment, sexual assault, and sexism

encountered in everyday life, thus taking on a strong political identity (Jackson, 2018). The online battleground is driven by hashtag activism, which serves both to facilitate the grouping of testimonies and information on social and to mark the 'true meaning' of what is shared, associating it semiotically with a clear and distinguishable discourse of denunciation. Hashtags, such as #MeToo, allow them to focus a wide audience on the same issue and then move to compact action in the terrain of physical reality, with marches and political demands (Bonilla and Rosa, 2015).

As the population is increasingly attentive to feminist issues and younger generations have shown themselves to be active participants, brands can no longer perpetuate a stereotypical advertising image. Furthermore, more and more women and feminists are an active part of the global work fabric, having decision-making power and bringing internal changes to move closer to equal rights. Hence, the revolution of the fourth wave is the rise of femvertising in advertising, an industry that has for decades damaged the female image. Authentic femvertising campaigns, without the pure profit motive, pass messages devoted to making users and their consumers aware of issues for which the feminist movement stands. They often depict women, of all ethnicities and ages, standing up for their own values and happiness. Issues, such as body positivity and equality, are addressed, and a message dedicated to inspiring the public is always shared (Iqbal, 2015). These types of campaigns are often associated with the use of a hashtag to offer a call to action. Emblematic is the case of #LikeAGirl, aired by the feminine hygiene products brand Always. The advertisement overturns the discriminatory notion that doing things 'like a girl' means doing them badly or frivolously. The commercial illustrates that when a group of teens and adults are asked to do actions 'like a girl' they impersonate a caricature image of being female. When the same question is asked to young girls, they engage in doing the required actions to the best of their ability. This underscores how the image of girls as weak and often stupid beings is a fallacious social construct. The campaign is accompanied by the hashtag #LikeAGirl, which collects testimonials from thousands of women and their successes on social media, inviting the public to share about when they did something 'like a girl' that is, at their best (Goldberg, 2014).

1.4 Femvertising as a mean of strengthening feminist discourse and countering stereotypical advertising

Greater than any other type of media content, advertising has been the subject of extensive feminist discussion and critique that has been passed down from wave to wave (Van Zoonen in Gill, 2007:71). This is due to the industry having heavily used gender ideology as the basis of its work. By thus presenting values selected by society, gender advertising has offered and still offers a 'hyper-ritualization of the world' emphasizing particular social constructs and helping to reinforce gendered subordination (Goffman 1979: 84). For this reason, since the 1960s, feminist research has focused on the issue of advertising, trying to analyze what constructs needed to be changed to no longer have a harmful representation for the

achievement of equality. Many protest movements and boycott campaigns were initiated against companies that used women in their advertisements in offensive and degrading ways. Acts of semiotic 'guerrilla' were repeated, in which feminists rewrote sexist advertising texts in subversive ways (Gill, 2007:71). These practices, which began as protest movements, later became officially embedded in the industry's advertising typologies, to find their ultimate form in femvertising.

1.4.1 'Woman as image, man as gaze-bearer'. Analysis of advertising campaigns with the use of the stereotypical female image

Gender stereotyping of women has been a widely used feature of advertising strategies. The roles that have historically been attributed to the female figure do not represent factual reality but reflect society's will for it. Advertising has strongly contributed to gender inequality by promoting distorted and sexist symbols of the female image as valid and acceptable (Grau & Zotos in De Genero et al., 2021). Gender stereotypes based on binary assumptions have resulted in large-scale reinforcement of the distorted belief that defined attributes differentiate men and women, attributes that move women to a lower social rung than men. According to economist Eisend, there are four basic categories that the advertising field has influenced to create a stereotypical image of women: physical characteristics, personality traits, role behaviors, and occupational status (Eisend in De Genero et al., 2021). Working on these elements, the advertisements that were disseminated mainly in the historical periods of the first three waves of feminism portrayed an image of women:

- Small and helpless
- Unintelligent
- Occupant of the role of domestic agents
- Subordinate to and dependent on the male figure
- Compared to 'decorative objects'
- Highly sexualized

Feminist intellectual Laura Mulvey, after various analyses of the major advertisements that characterized the 1960s and early 1970s, realized how 'the woman was an image while the man was the bearer of the gaze'. Thus, she summarized the semiotic roles that were also reflected in the society of the time in which such campaigns aired. The gaze was male, and the object was female. The pleasure of looking was divided between active/masculine and passive/feminine, emphasizing how the advertisements did not even consider women as the target audience (Mulvey in Goldblatt et al., 2017 [1975]: 137).

As feminist battles changed with the historical periods in which they occurred, the types of stereotypes perpetuated by advertisements also evolved and shaped. From its inception, through magazine and catalog advertisements, advertisements depicted not the product but an ideal of use. Since it was a social convention

between the 19th and 20th centuries that women should stay at home, advertisements reflected this stereotype. An example of the type of advertisement running at the time can be found in that of 'Gold Dust' soap in 1893. In this one, the woman is subjected to figurative and dialectical stereotypes. The image depicts her as a housewife and kneeling, a position that symbolizes her subordination to the role. The message 'The wives of men who work for fourteen hours need Gold Dust detergent. To enable them to get through work as early as their husbands' states how women's work is that of housewives. Moreover, they have no identity except as wives of workers (Everyday, 2022).

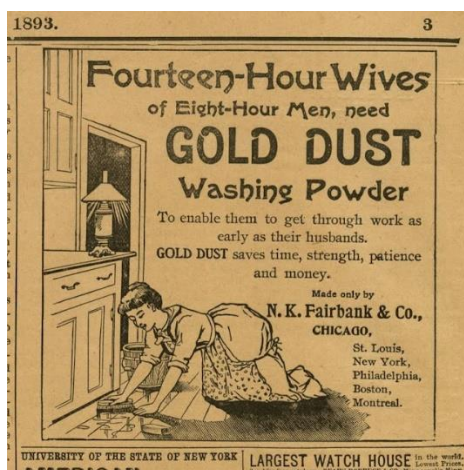


Figure n.6 Gold Dust adv.,1893 (retrieved from Vintage News Daily website)

During the period of World War I and with the arrival of the 1920s, women, in addition to being subordinated to men, were increasingly sexualized in advertisements. The image of what women had to be like to be desirable began to take hold: thin, sexy, and obedient (Ewart,2020).



Figure n.7 Bovril adv., 1916 (retrieved from Google Images)

The situation improved with the arrival of World War II and the growth of the female workforce. Advertising images were used, later to become icons of women workers of the period, such as 'Rosie The

Riveter'. Women regained labor value as the wartime government needed women to join the workforce for the survival of society (Duke University, 2019).



Figure n.8 Rosie The Riveter adv., 1943 (retrieved from Google Images)

Unfortunately, the development that advertising had taken during World War II was completely abandoned with the end of the war and the return of men to their original jobs, reconstituting women to the domestic sphere. The advertisements of the 1950s and 1960s passed the message that women were not able to make decisions and do important things. In the representations, they operated independently only for inexpensive household purchases such as food and cleaning products. Even advertisements for household appliances, related to the domestic sphere, were aimed at a male audience, who held the economic power (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971).

A representative advertisement of those running in the era is that of 'Kenmore Chef', a kitchen appliance. On a purely figurative level, the woman is petite and clinging to her husband, in subordination to him. She is smiling and happy, to indicate how the role she plays fulfills her, an element later strongly criticized by Friedan and second-wave feminism (Friedan, 2010[1963]:166). The text is aimed at a male audience, who is urged to buy the appliance so their wives can cook, their natural job (Swiski, 2022).



Figure n.9 Kenwood Chef adv., 1961 (retrieved from Google Images)

Beginning in the 1970s, the amount of advertising in which women were highly sexualized increased. Their bodies were often objectified as a product metaphor, completely alienating them from the concept of personhood (Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). In the 1974 advertisement for Weyenberg Massagic shoes, a naked woman is depicted lying down with her shoes in the foreground. The words 'Keep her where she belongs' are striking, passing the message that a woman's role is at a man's feet. The ad was published in *PlayBoy* and later highly criticized by feminists in *MS. Magazine* (Anglely, 2015).



Figure n.10 Weyenberg Massagic adv., 1974 (retrieved from CNN website)

These representations hindered feminist progress over time and collaborated in the creation of three constructs about female identity. Women could be characterized as capable housewives, guilt-ridden mothers, or self-indulgent 'flappers' (Macdonald, 1995: 76-86), thus trivializing the female cosmos.

The arrival of the 1980s brought about a development in advertising representation. This was mainly because women were increasingly entering the workforce and beginning to have economic power, so they became a target of interest for brands. The problem was that from a subordinate, homely image, they moved to the depiction of a 'superwoman', an image first used in the Enjoli perfume advertisement. The 'superwoman' was a worker, a mother, a wife, and a homemaker who managed everything as best she could. The domestic sphere had not been expanded to include men, but women had to manage to fit their work within the roles society wanted them to play (Anglely, 2015). Moreover, the sexualization made of their bodies had not diminished, as they were represented as hyperfeminine even intent on pursuing a career.

The third wave, between the 1990s and 2000s, led to the almost complete abandonment of the image of the homely woman. However, the female body became the star of advertisements and the main topic of feminist debate. The image of the glamorous woman was getting closer and closer to that of a very thin doll. The

term 'heroin-chic' was coined to describe the models depicted in the advertisements, as they were thin and emaciated as if they were addicted to heroin (Ewart, 2020). This ideal female body model has been taken to a dangerous extreme, triggering eating disorders, especially in young women. Added to this representational problem was the extreme violence with which women were objectified. Many advertisements simultaneously used violent and erotic images to create a thrill of risk and danger in the public. The result was an increase in violence and abuse done to women, a logical consequence of the objectification of their bodies (Gill, 2007:77).



Figure n.11 Dolce&Gabbana adv., 2007 (retrieved from Google Images)

What contributed to representational violence was the establishment of a particular method of female advertising portraiture: cropping. This sexist practice consists of using only depictions of pieces of the person's body, removing their face to remove identity and personal characteristics. This is the ultimate demonstration of the objectification of the female body (Gill, 2007:77).



Figure n.12 Sisley adv., 2007 (retrieved from Google Images)



Figure n.13 Tom Ford adv., 2007 (retrieved from NSS website)

Such highly sexist and violent representations were promptly opposed by third-wave feminists. With the fourth feminist wave and the establishment of social media as the main means of communication, the field of advertising was completely transformed. Concepts such as diversity and inclusion became recurring themes. The use of a highly sexualized image of women has been greatly diminished. This is mainly due to the

increased purchasing power of women and the younger generation and their active participation in the advertising industry. It has been shown how for them sexualization represents an impediment to purchasing a product, making it necessary to decrease this practice (Gramazio et al., 2020). Realistic portrayals of people and countering stereotypes is still an ongoing battle, but with the increase in government restrictions against means of propagating sexism and the advent of femvertising an advertising revolution in favor of women is taking place.

1.4.2 Femvertising: emergence and enactment

The evolution of society and the development of feminist struggles meant that during the fourth wave there was an increased demand for more authentic and inclusive portrayals of women, at the expense of stereotypical female depiction. Out of the cultural tension created, a new type of advertising aimed at just female portrayal, femvertising emerged.

This term was first used by She Media in 2014 and was defined as the type of advertising that employs pro-women and pro-girls messages, talents, and images (SHE Media, 2020). Although it is used to refer to empowerment campaigns that have arisen since around 2010, precursors of femvertising can be found in the advertising campaigns of the cigarette brand Virginia Slim in 1968 and Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty in 2004. Virginia Slim did a revolutionary advertising campaign. Images of happy, independent women were juxtaposed with early 20th-century photos in which ladies were humiliated and controlled by men. This was accompanied by the slogan 'You've Come a Long Way, Baby' to indicate how feminist battles were bearing fruit in improving women's social situation. The campaign was not free from the limitations of the time. Words like 'Baby' or the fact that the images of the affirmed woman included a cigarette, which is extremely harmful, are many of the feminist criticisms made. However, in the historical context in which it fits, it represented a revolution (Harris, 2019).



Figure n.14 Virginia Slims adv., 1986 (retrieved from History Daily website)

Instead, the example of Dove's campaign for Real Beauty indicates the beginning of a series of advertising activities by the Brand devoted to women's empowerment. In the start-up phase of 2004, billboards with photographic portraits of different women were posted globally. Above these photos were two opposing inscriptions, such as 'Grey or Wonderful?'. Passers-by were invited to vote online on Dove's web page, through a call to action. The results were positive and since then the Brand activated a series of women empowerment activities, encapsulated under the hashtag #RealBeauty (Dove, 2019).



Figure n.15 Dove adv., 2004 (retrieved from Dove website)

Apart from the example of these precursors, the first uses of authentic femvertising can be observed since 2010. Although this type of advertising is still developing, there are recurring themes. Femvertising, being intersectional, sees the use of different female images. This allows for more opportunities for the audience to feel represented and be engaged by the campaign. Transmitted messages are always pro-women, with themes of inclusion, empowerment, acceptance, independence, and freedom. These advertisements combat gender stereotypes and invite women to challenge public perceptions of what they should be. Reduced sexualization of women is presented in femvertising campaigns. On rare occasions when this is done, skin

and bodily attributes are shown authentically and naturally. Just as authentic must be the representation of the woman herself. The development of these themes in advertising is necessary to influence society and move closer to achieving gender equality. According to cultivation theory, individuals tend to incorporate messages, including stereotypes, shown by the media into their concept of reality, changing their behavior accordingly (Döring and Pöschl in Becker-Herby, 2016).

Brands must consider authenticity as the most important attribute of femvertising. If the proposed campaigns are not in line with the Brand's Corporate Social Responsibility activities, they come across as fictitious and risk having an opposite result to the desired one (Becker-Herby, 2016). In fact, a common feature of fourth wave femvertising is how it departs from commodity feminism. This type of feminism has attempted to link women's empowerment with the sale of goods and services. Feminist ideals were repurposed into advertising for the sole purpose of profiting from it and not contributing to or sharing the feminist cause (Goldman in Becker-Herby, 2016). Commodity feminism inherently passed the message that if a woman wanted to be equal to a man and independent, she should first buy something (Crouse-Dick in Becker-Herby, 2016). Feminist movements have since broken away from these attempts to profit from their own activities, and femvertising represents the most powerful means of combating this bad practice in the advertising world.

1.4.3 Femvertising: best practices examples

To better understand what can be good femvertising practices, the following are examples of advertising campaigns aimed at women's empowerment. The examples have the necessary characteristics to be defined as femvertising campaigns. They all were found to be authentic to the consumer, aligning with the CSR and values of the brands that published them.

- Bumble: "The Ball is in Her Court", 2018

"The Ball is in Her Court" is a commercial for the dating app Bumble, aired during the Super Bowl on 4 February 2018, and stars tennis player and activist Serena Williams. The commercial opens with an image of Williams in training. During it, she begins her narrative about how important it was for her to make the first move and assert herself in places where no one seems to want her. She imposed in a society that says women must wait. If she had not made a move, her successes, sporting and otherwise, would not have been possible. She invites the public, inherently feminine, to do the same, to make the first move, to take their place before society decides for them what that is. She concludes by saying not to wait for power to be granted to them because they already have it. Visually, there is footage of Williams training and enjoying her private sphere, videos of her sporting successes, and frames of a very young girl, metaphorically a younger Williams, finding the courage to train in tennis.

This campaign, besides conveying a very clear message of empowerment, is an example of successful femvertising for several reasons. Firstly, it was aired for the first time at a sporting event with a purely male audience, bringing a novelty to the type of commercials that this audience was used to. It was an invitation for them to address the issue of female empowerment. It was also made by the dating app company 'Bumble', which is strongly active in the field of women's rights. It was one of the first companies to support the #MeToo movement. The founder, Whitney Wolfe, not only supported the movement but was one of the main witnesses, recounting the discrimination and harassment she experienced while working at Tinder, a company she co-founded. For this reason, the message of the commercial is completely authentic (Roberts, 2018). The service offered by the app is not the focus of the femvertising. It plays on the meaning of the slogan 'The Ball is in Her Court' to make a reference to the functioning of the app, which only allows female users, when searching for straight dates, to select and write to male users first. However, in the context of Williams' speech, the slogan indicates how a woman's life is solely in her hands, and only she should decide what to do with it, moving away from any commercial purpose (Kindelan, 2019).



Figure n.16 Bumble femvertising, 2018 (retrieved from YouTube)

- **Barbie: “Imagine The Possibilities”, 2015**

'Imagine The Possibilities' is a widely recognized and celebrated advertising campaign by Mattel's doll brand Barbie. The campaign, released in 2015 on Barbie's social platforms, aimed to push girls to dream big and explore various careers, breaking gender stereotypes.

Femvertising opens with the question 'What happens when girls are free to imagine they can be anything?' Girls are then shown occupying different jobs in various professional environments. There is a girl lecturing in a university class, a veterinarian, a businesswoman, a football coach, and a museum guide. They interact with adults, amused by the situation but at the same time respectful of the girls and the position they are holding. At the end of the video, it is shown that the little girl playing the professor was lecturing her Barbie dolls, transposed from her imagination to a university classroom. This is the only moment in which the brand's products are seen. The campaign ends with 'When a girl plays with Barbie she imagines everything she can become'. 'You can be anything'. The spot beautifully captures the essence of the campaign, challenging society's expectations and showing the unlimited potential of little girls. It conveys the strong feminist message that girls can be anything they want and should be encouraged to pursue their dreams and

explore various career paths without limitations. It is accompanied by a call to action #youcanbeanything, inviting the public to share their successes in defying stereotypes on their social media.

The spot is noteworthy as it makes the viewer reflect on how girls are full of dreams at a young age, dreams that are challenged once they begin to grow up and become aware of the dictates of society. It is consistent with CSR and brand activism, as the company's focus is on inclusivity and equal access for girls to school and work, strong points of fourth-wave feminism. The concept is then reinforced by the 'Dream Gap' project, in which the company strives to raise awareness among its users and customers about the factors that lead young women to doubt their own work potential (Shapiro, 2020).



Figure n.17 Barbie femvertising, 2018 (retrieved from YouTube)

- Guinness: “Liberty Fields”, 2019

The femvertising 'Liberty Fields' by beer brand Guinness was released for the first time during the 2019 Rugby World Cup, held in Japan. The commercial tells the story of a group of Japanese women who, in the Tokyo of 1989, defied social conventions and public opinion to play rugby, in a team called 'Liberty Fields RFC'. Despite having neither a coach, nor a doctor, nor public support, they trained themselves and went on to compete in the Women's World Cup, representing their country. They were pioneers of the sport in Japan and managed to change public opinion on the sport, making women's rugby no longer taboo but a reality in the Asian country (Guinness website, 2020). The spot is composed of original footage combined with footage interpreted by actresses who recount the exploits of the team, with scenes of everyday life, training, victories, humiliation, and female camaraderie in a pub. The whole video is accompanied by a voice-over telling how they were considered strange, troublemakers, and causes of embarrassment but all they saw was the goal. It closes with their original photo and the words 'Pioneers of Women's Rugby'. In addition, there is a reference to the online platform 'Guinness: Made of More', where stories of revolutionary feats, big and small, are told (Guinness website, 2020).

This represents a good example of Femvertising as it was aired in Japan, a country where the feminist movement struggles to develop as fast as in the West, making empowerment messages of utmost importance. It invites the viewer to go against the limits society imposes on them, even in the face of personal humiliation, offering a parable on what it means to overcome a struggle and see changes in society (Ashton, 2019). Guinness over the past decade has demonstrated a strong commitment to being a more inclusive brand and supporting equal rights movements, especially in the sports field. The purpose of femvertising is not commercial, as the product is only a secondary element, while what sticks with the viewer is the courage the women have shown to pursue their dreams.



Figure n.18 Guinness fem., 2019 (retrieved from YouTube)

Chapter 2: Authenticity in femvertising and the dilution of feminist discourse

2.1 The importance of authentic femvertising

Femvertising has become a key feminist propaganda tool of the fourth wave. With this type of advertising, the gender stereotypes perpetuated by classic, sexist advertising are challenged. Its increasing presence in the media is due to the combination of greater social activism and brand-conscious capitalism for a better representation of women in media. It is one of the main means used by companies that support feminist movements and want to fight for gender equality, turning into a powerful type of brand activism. The increasing use of femvertising leads an ever-growing public to judge and boycott brands that contribute to the use of the female image as a mere object to sell their products. This is compounded by increased scrutiny by regulatory bodies on gender role representations, forcing some companies to abandon discriminatory advertising choices (Varghese and Kumar, 2020). However, the great growth in the use of this practice represents a controversial point in the feminist landscape. On the one hand, it is positive that the marketing world is moving away from the stereotypical use of the female figure and focusing on the empowerment of women. This is because the role of advertising not only draws on cultural tensions to create layered meanings but also has the power to resolve these tensions in the imaginary-symbolic realm (Oswald, 2012:87), leading to practical repercussions in society. Moreover, brand activism has strong economic power for companies, which can thus differentiate themselves and attract consumer groups with increasing purchasing power, such as millennials and Generation Z. They look beyond the physical characteristics of a product, focusing primarily on the socio-cultural impact it produces (Kotler in Ernest and Young 2017). At the same time, its implementation by various brands does not consequently mean that they use the practice appropriately and authentically, taking advantage of feminist discourse and approaching the criticized commodity feminism. The issue of empowerment can be approached in a superficial way, leading to a dilution of feminist discourse, reducing years of movements to superficial messages or the mistaken belief that gender equality has already been achieved. Many companies code-switch, that is, they assume an image that is more compatible with the environment in which they operate, more sympathetic and relatable, and therefore more likely to succeed (McCluney et al., 2019). This is even if they do not actually support feminist movements in any way, but only take advantage of the crescendo of support they manage to achieve. The fundamental problem, explored in detail in this chapter, is that in the capitalist nature of modern society, what represents morality and entitlement is often determined by what has economic value, often making feminism a means of brand enrichment (Cottom in Sobande, 2019).

2.1.1 The lack of authenticity in Femvertising use

Just as for the other types of brand activism campaigns, authenticity is one of the most important aspects of Femvertising. It must be implemented precisely, through the realistic and accurate representation of the female figure, in accordance with the idioms of feminist battles. In addition, consumers expect that, behind a

social campaign, companies also act transparently about their actions, thus showing themselves to be genuinely interested in the subject matter. Otherwise, the whole femvertising campaign would be inauthentic, exploiting a situation of gender discrimination for profit (Becker-Herby, 2016).

Around the topic of authenticity of brand activism campaigns, many studies have been involved. Of particular importance for the field of femvertising is that of the scholars Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot. They conducted research through which they succeeded in identifying six complementary points valid for a femvertising campaign to be considered authentic (Hainneville et al., 2022). These are:

- Respect: with this characteristic, the authors indicate the respect that brands implementing a femvertising campaign must have for women and their figures. To do so, they must necessarily reduce messages of the sexualization of the female figure, such as female nudity being an advertising medium not inherent to the product sold. Instead, they must emphasize empowerment messages, like those about self-acceptance.
- Fight against stereotypes: femvertising campaigns must oppose the representative stereotypes commonly identified and criticized by feminist movements. These are mainly role stereotypes, physical stereotypes, and those relating to women's interests and abilities. In the first case, the advertising imagery that sees women relegated to classical roles and subservient to their male counterparts is denounced. In the second, the unrealistic beauty standards used by companies, which hinder self-acceptance in the female population, are attacked. Finally, sincere femvertising can attempt to counter the misrepresentation of female capabilities, both physical and cognitive, perpetuated by advertisements.
- Identification: female advertising must be represented in a context that allows viewers to identify with what is being broadcast. To this end, it is important that there is projection, i.e., the representation of realistic models in which the viewer can mirror himself. Another important element for the viewer's identification with advertising is proximity, social, and/or geographical.
- Diversity: it refers to the representative inclusion of different types of women in terms of ethnicity, morphology, generation, personal style, and age. In line with the dictates of the fourth feminist wave, femvertising must try to move away from the representation of only one type of woman, despite relating to topics such as her empowerment and rights.
- Transparency: brands must be transparent with their customers. They must be real, meaning sincere with their customers, and simple, that is, spontaneous and without superstructures that could mislead consumers and their perception of advertising messages.
- Consistency: it indicates the need to match the identity of the brand with its communication and offers. A brand that does not believe in gender equality or has adopted behavior to undermine it cannot create a femvertising campaign without being inauthentic.



Figure n.19 Femvertising or Femwashing?, 2022 (retrieved from International Marketing Trends Conference)

The absence of one or more of the described elements contributes to the perception of a femvertising campaign as inauthentic and potentially damaging to feminist discourse. Advertisers are increasingly appropriating feminist elements. This is because the profession itself involves the observation and exploitation of sociocultural trends and tensions. Only a few instances of social advertising in their entirety are truly progressive and purely in favor of feminist movements (Becker-Herby, 2016). For this reason, several advertising behaviors have developed over the last decade that lack the elements identified by Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot and that make femvertising inauthentic.

Against the fourth-wave feminist movement, a common problem in social advertisements is that they depict many similar women with the same type of experience and include individuals, or a few individuals, with different ethnicities and experiences. These are often deprived of their own narrative but represented only because they are 'different'. What is described is part of the phenomenon called tokenism. This discriminatory practice originated in the context of personnel recruitment, to define the practice of including a small number of people from under-represented groups to give an appearance of inclusiveness and diversity, without doing anything concrete about the issue of representation. Minorities are not valued, and their unique contribution is often ignored, preventing them from advancing in the labor hierarchy. It can be

seen as a micro-aggression on the identity of the individual, whose skills are devalued (Kanter in Holgersson and Romani, 2020).

An example of a femvertising campaign perceived as inauthentic due to the use of tokenism practices was The Wing's 'She-E-O' campaign. The women-only co-working space company created a campaign that showed the image of successful female entrepreneurs and leaders in various sectors. The aim was to show how successful women could be in business. The problem with the advertisement, however, was that the women represented were white, cisgender, and physically normal according to stereotypical aesthetic standards. This prevented a fair representation of women in the workplace, showing how the few frames on black women were evidence of The Wing's false inclusivity. This undermined the authenticity of the message and affected the brand's work activities, labeled by public opinion as a 'white-majority capitalist co-working space' (Hess, 2020) and permanently closed in 2022 (Rosman, 2022).



Figure n.20 The Wing,2020 (retrieved from Google Images)

The practice of tokenism can be merged with that of stereotype representation. Many femvertising advertisements that lapse into inauthenticity often make use of exaggerated or stereotypical representations of women and their issues. This, instead of reinforcing the female image and supporting the various feminist struggles for achieving gender equality, falls into the opposite result, threatening the fight for equal rights. Stereotypes in femvertising are advertising representations of women made with conventional images which reinforce traditional gender expectations. The themes addressed by inauthentic campaigns are also often stereotypical, relegating, albeit in a different tone, the figure of women and their expectations of self-identification and fulfillment of societal expectations (Sobande, 2019).

Inauthentic femvertising campaigns are those in which the image of the woman is juxtaposed with that of the 'super mother' (Davis, 2021). Even if the representation is made to emphasize the strength that a woman has in her role as a mother, this type of representation reinforces the idea that the female role is that of a natural nurturer of her offspring, unintentionally bringing her back into the domestic sphere. Furthermore, the women portrayed, being 'modern women', are also hardworking and able to enjoy the private sphere, thus re-

proposing the idea, already present in the 1980s, of a multi-tasking superheroine who has to fulfill unrealistic social expectations (Davis, 2021).

An example of this advertising representation can be found in the series of 'Thank you, Mum' ads created by the Procter & Gamble brand. These advertisements, released ahead of the Olympic Games in London (2012) and Rio (2016), aim to celebrate the sacrifices and support of mothers in helping their children realize their dreams. They feature images of young athletes training hard and their mothers always supporting them. The women are portrayed engaging in actions such as making them breakfast, accompanying them to training sessions, supporting them during sports competitions, and protecting them in difficult situations. All this is to help their children achieve their sporting goals. Celebratory inscriptions and the campaign slogan 'It takes someone strong to make someone strong. Thanks, Mum'. The campaigns are meant to be a celebration of the dedication and sacrifices of mothers. However, the problem with them going against the feminist discourse of the fourth wave, and falling into the stereotype of the super-mom, is the fact that they are portrayed as fundamental pillars of support and strength for their children. They seem to put their offspring's dreams before their own. Moreover, the father figure is completely absent, making the entire parenting effort fall on the female counterpart (P&G in Cause Marketing, 2016).



Figure n.21 'Thank you, Mum' 2016 (retrieved from YouTube)

Another type of stereotype used in inauthentic portrayals of femvertising is that of the career woman, contrasted with the figure of the super mother and wrongly described as unemotional. It uses the idea that female emancipation can take place almost exclusively through their success in the workplace, emulating stereotypical male behavior. To do so, they often have to repress their emotional side, which is considered primarily feminine. Women with few feelings are thus portrayed, whose only goal is work fulfillment. This negates all the various spheres that represent the complexity of being a woman, to make them fit into predefined social categories and influence their behavior in the real world (Sobande, 2019). A fallacious advertising campaign that was aimed purely at a female audience for empowerment is the one carried out by the brand BIC. The campaign, named 'Think like a man', and shared during the 'National Women's Day' in 2015, depicted a career woman along with the slogan 'Look like a girl. Act like a lady. Think like a man.'

Work like a boss'. The message implied that women had to adopt masculine characteristics or behaviors to succeed, implying that their natural traits or ways of thinking were not appropriate for professional success. This campaign backfired on the brand, which had to publicly apologize for the stylistic choice and had to emphasize its commitment to the cause of achieving equal rights, but it was inauthentic (Garcia, 2015).



Figure n.22 '#HappyWomensDay', 2015 (retrieved from Vogue)

Added to this is the problem that female representations, however revolutionary in their themes, use standardized canons of beauty, reinforcing physical attractiveness as the primary female value. This can lead to the side effect of making the audience focus on the physical appearance of the people represented rather than on their value (Varghese and Kumar, 2022). This was the case in Dove's 'Real Beauty Bottles' campaign. In 2017, as part of its 'Real Beauty' women's empowerment initiative, Dove launched a line of body cleansers in the UK with bottles shaped like different female bodies. These bottles were of various shapes and sizes, originally intended to represent and honor the diversity of female bodies. The problem with this campaign was that it reduced the female image to the body alone, objectifying it. Moreover, the different shapes proposed created an additional ground for judgment on the female figure. Buying a body cleanser is not a status purchase, but the campaign wanted to create a moment to make the possible customer think about the diversity of female bodies, empowering them through the bottles. The containers, however, have a primarily practical role of protecting the product; seeing them used as a means of denouncing stereotypical representation detracts from the cause, achieving the opposite of the desired result. Furthermore, Dove wanted to represent the diversity of the female body with the wrong medium, as the bottles produced could not be representative of female diversity, unintentionally falling into stereotypes: thin, normal, fat (Mortimer, 2017).



Figure n 23 'Real Beauty Bottles', 2017 (Retrieved from Google Image)

Hence, even though female audiences have been shown to manifest positive buying attitudes toward brands that use femvertising (Varghese and Kumar, 2022), the inconsistency of the advertising message and the use of stereotypes creates the opposite phenomenon, making the brand come across as inconsistent and irrelevant to them (Oswald, 2012:46).

However, the situation is different when the femvertising brand is inconsistent in that its CSR and campaigns are misaligned. In many cases, this is done to exploit the empowerment phenomenon and feminist language for profit. This phenomenon is called Femwashing.

2.1.2 Femwashing: the main obstacle to authenticity

In the modern market, where there is an over-supply of products and services, brands can no longer stop at their own offer but must differentiate themselves through the way this offer is created and their commitment to social issues. In the period of the fourth wave of feminism, the market has seen a crescendo of the phenomenon of brand-cause fit, i.e. the mechanism whereby a social issue and a brand pair up conceptually (Champlin et al., 2019). The brand-cause pair is strongly fuelled by the brand's desire to survive in the modern market, where attention to social issues is increasingly important to consumers. Brand advocacy campaigns are positively received by audiences of various generations, but resonate differently among Millennials and Generation Z, whereby authenticity and sincere actions toward the advertised cause are necessary to avoid reputational crashes that could result in a brand boycott (Champlin et al., 2019). The problem with such a practice, however, is that it is difficult for an end consumer to know whether there is actually sincere activity consistent with what the brand advertises, and the latter may take advantage of this by engaging in 'woke-washing' campaigns. These are the campaigns in which brands market themselves as interested and active in reducing social injustice, but do not do concrete activities to support what they advertise (Sobande, 2019). The most common example of such dishonest conduct is greenwashing, whereby, as environmental problems worsened, some companies began to deceive their stakeholders by offering products marketed as sustainable when in fact they were not (Netto et al., 2020). Similarly, femwashing represents a negative spectrum of femvertising in which brands use deceptive marketing techniques to capitalize on feminist values without taking concrete action to support their struggles and achieve gender equality.

There are several ways in which a femvertising campaign can fall into femwashing. Firstly, one can exploit the narrative of women's empowerment only for profit, without actively contributing to such causes or having internal policies/practices that undermine these values (Sobande, 2019). This practice can be traced back to the broader 'pink washing', a term for 'woke-washing' marketing campaigns that exploit the sensitivity of the buying public to topics such as breast cancer, LGBTQ+, and women's empowerment battles (Blackmer, 2019).

An example can be found in the Swedish fast-fashion retailer H&M. This has based its marketing campaigns over the past decade on issues such as environmental sustainability and women's empowerment, without reflecting internally on what it advertised. In fact, the brand has published multiple femvertising campaigns, such as 2016 award-winning 'She's a Lady', in which the power of the female figure in all its diversity is glorified. This type of advertising might seem authentic to the public, as it reflects all the dictates of feminist movements (Vagianos, 2016). However, the problem arises when looking at the internal politics of H&M and its supply chain. The figure of the woman is not supported at the corporate level. Moreover, the labor exploitation situation in its factories and those of its suppliers is very severe. Workers, mainly women, do long hours shifts for paltry wages, all in precarious and dangerous working conditions. Exacerbating these situations are the events of sexual violence that these female workers often experience, so much so that in 2018, the Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum (GLJ-ILRF) report uncovered multiple cases of gender-based violence in H&M's supply chains. The report concluded that the mechanisms put in place by H&M did not protect garment workers from harassment (Kelly, 2021). Despite this, H&M's supply chain has not changed, demonstrating how the brand uses women's empowerment messages purely for the sake of low-cost end sales and not for true involvement and support of the cause (Zeisler in Champlin et al., 2019). Such practices had managerial implications mainly from a legal point of view. However, the more aware and sensitive public on the issue of women's emancipation boycotted the brand to go for others that approached the cause in a more sincere manner. In the future H&M will have to change its supply chain or advertising methodology to answer and drop the charges of 'illegal, unfair, deceptive and misleading business practices' (Adegeest, 2022).



Figure n.24 'She's a Lady', 2016 (retrieved from Youtube)



Figure n.25 H&M supplier factory,2021 (retrieved from Google Images)

Another way in which companies may fall into the use of femwashing practices is with the inclusion of empty slogans in their advertising campaigns. This term refers to the use of catchy, feminist-flavored phrases in advertisements and marketing campaigns without a real commitment to supporting gender equality. Such slogans are designed to give the impression to users that a brand is socially aware and is nurturing the 'myth of fairness' at an organizational level, while in practice, this remains a myth (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020). An example is the 2017 'Daughter' femvertising by the car manufacturer Audi. This was shown during that year's Super Bowl. The advertisement depicted a young girl intent on participating in a soapbox race, homemade cars, with her father's narration about gender inequality in wages. The commercial closed with the slogan "Audi of America is committed to equal pay for equal work"(Audi in VCU Brandcenter, 2020). Despite the well-crafted femvertising, this received a lot of criticism for the promoted slogan. In fact, although the campaign highlighted how Audi was committed to equal pay, this commitment was not observable in practice. Many criticized Audi's commitment to gender equality as questionable due to a lack of transparency about its internal gender pay practices and gender representation within corporate leadership. The slogan was thus hypocritical, highlighting the gap between the empowering message of the advertisement and concerns about the company's actual practices (Kauflin, 2017). This led in practice to reputational damage that forced the company to take practical steps to support the decrease of the gender gap and actively integrate such topics within its CSR.

Slogans may be part of a further femwashing practice, female empowerment advertisements made only for specific events and a very limited time. Lack of follow-up is a method by which insincere companies exploit the attention that a female-related event can bring to their brand without making lasting organizational changes or contributions to gender-related causes. The event that most catalyzes the realization of these dishonest practices, carried out only for a day or so, is International Women's Day. On this occasion, many companies give gadgets, share slogans, and create offers and advertising campaigns with the aim of honoring and celebrating women. The problem is that they are front actions and not a part of a broader social campaign or a mirror of a corporate structure that counteracts inequality. Many femvertising campaigns during this anniversary are merely manifestations of capitalism masquerading as sloganistic feminism (Evans, 2019). An example of this is the 2018 campaign, later repeated in 2019, by McDonald's in the United States. As part of the campaign, the company flipped the golden arches of the logo on digital platforms and in some physical locations, creating a stylized 'W' that stood for 'women' (Taylor, 2019). Even though the gesture was made to celebrate the figure and deeds of women, this was seen by the public as a superficial gesture, lacking meaningful action to support women. Moreover, at the time of the campaigns, McDonald's internal structure was still characterized by a large gender pay gap and an underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. The criticism suffered by the public because of these initiatives caused the company in later years to abandon this advertising practice on International Women's Day. In addition, to

make up for the reputational downfall it had experienced, it set an equal pay goal in 2021, with practical initiatives to close gender-based pay differences (McDonald's, 2022).

At the managerial level, the described femwashing practices lead to strong repercussions for organizations. First, they risk reputational damage, losing the trust of consumers and key stakeholders, and suffering a public backlash and economic repercussions. This causes a competitive disadvantage vis-à-vis competitors difficult to recover. Moreover, femwashing practices have a very high cost for the company in terms of employees. When they perceive the company in which they work as insincere and not congruent with external communication, they may become disengaged in their work, lose trust in the organization, and go on to protest activism, such as strikes (Fox-Kirk et al., 2020).

2.1.3 Undesired effect: dilution of feminist discourse

Inauthentic femvertising using femwashing tactics casts a negative shadow over the entire femvertising landscape and the feminist movement itself. The criticism that femvertising, in its entirety, often suffers from is its identification with commodity feminism, a.k.a. corporate feminism, which sees the appropriation of feminist discourse for mere profit. This distorted view is, however, erroneous as authentic femvertising is a form of brand activism that coincides with the social movements of the fourth wave, which recognized it as a valid means of feminist propaganda (Varghese and Kumar, 2022).

However, there are several problems that this type of advertising encounters and that end up affecting the movement in general. First, due to the continuous improvement in women's purchasing power and generations becoming more aware of the issue of equal rights, female representations in stronger roles have increased (Akestam et al., 2017). This has been shown to influence the propensity to buy or not to buy in the mentioned categories and thus makes such advertising representation more appealing to companies that do not strongly believe in the cause, expiring, as demonstrated, in inauthentic femvertising (Sobande, 2019).

Another feature that creates a cloud of confusion around the world of femvertising is the fact that the feminist discourse of the fourth wave is very complex and full of different battles. The various modern feminist movements are full of intersectionality, and this is good for the battle to achieve equal rights. Nevertheless, it can be confusing for users who receive different feminist stimuli and may no longer be able to distinguish the genuine ones from the non-authentic ones. They could end up believing that a non-authentic femvertising campaign can contribute to female empowerment by supporting the message (Varghese and Kumar, 2022). Instead, inauthentic femvertising is one of the main factors diluting feminist discourse in the fourth wave.

The term 'dilution of feminist discourse' refers to the process through which the core messages, goals, and ideologies of feminism are weakened and compromised over time. It is the result of social, political, and

economic mechanisms that aim to dilute the impact of feminist ideas, making them less effective in challenging social injustices and achieving meaningful social change (Krischer, 2017). An example of the effects of the phenomenon described can be observed in what happened in the early 2000s. The media, in contrast to the third wave, began to spread the idea of 'girl power', the inauthentic message of 'pop feminism' and 'commodity feminism', linked to capitalism. This led the society of the time to believe that the new stereotyped image of women was the new bulwark of feminism, causing the withdrawal of the wave exponents and the discourse of their battles carried on until then (Feliciano, 2013). Similarly, inauthentic femvertising could dilute the modern discourse of feminism, merging it with the capitalist 'commodity feminism' and making the end consumer believe that empowerment is only achievable by fitting into stereotypical canons of beauty and behavior or buying specific products (Varghese and Kumar, 2022). Such inauthentic advertisements appeal to symbolic consumption by filling their products with feminist meanings, absent in reality. These delude the end consumer into thinking they are doing something for the feminist movement through a purchase of status, leading them to believe they can identify themselves as active supporters of the movement, an entirely erroneous conception (Oswald, 2012:19). On the contrary, by advocating inauthentic dialectical behavior they may be supporting the messages of a system stereotypically considered feminine, reinforcing the binary structure of the male/female discourse, in which the male pole is considered the dominant one (Hall, 1997:235), distancing themselves from the goals of the movement and the true purpose of empowerment advertising. Another way in which such publicity activities risk diluting feminist discourse is through the simplification of the movements' theories and ideas, stripped of their depth and nuance to fit into mainstream narratives. The exaggeration of this practice sometimes results in the false message being communicated to the public that equal rights have been achieved, while hindering real progress (Varghese and Kumar, 2022).

It is important that companies do not lapse into using inauthentic femvertising that dilutes feminist discourse. Although it may seem a quick method to gain acceptance and increase sales in the short term, the risk of achieving the opposite effect is very high. Women drive about 80% of all purchasing decisions (Davis, 2019) and it has been shown how advertising choices made by brands influence their purchasing behavior, making them prefer brands with advertisements without the use of stereotypes or false messages (Champlin et al., 2019). In addition, they must consider the growing purchasing power of Generation Z, the main consumers of the future, for whom social concerns are very important and a positive differentiating factor when choosing brands to trust. Becoming aware that a brand has engaged in inauthentic practices that may have diluted feminist discourse represents a serious reputational incident for them that may lead them to boycott the brand in favor of competitors (McKinsey&Company, 2022).

2.2 Research Gap and Research Question

The analysis made on feminist discourse and the growing phenomenon of femvertising underlines the importance of the question of authenticity. Although the elements that make an empowerment advertisement authentic have already been identified by Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot (Hainneville et al., 2022), there is a lack of studies concerning the audience's reaction to them and the perceived authenticity according to the changing scope of the brand that implements them (Becker-Herby, 2016) (Sterbenk et al., 2021). Furthermore, the main target group of femvertising has been shown to be women, as they hold the majority of purchasing power. Studies to date have therefore mainly focused on female-dominated samples. A major shortcoming of femvertising research is the almost total lack of observations on the reactions of male audiences, with the managerial implications that can result from this (Sterbenk et al., 2019) (Drake, 2017) (Kapoor and Munjal, 2019) (Becker-Herby, 2016).

It is indeed necessary to include men as the target of femvertising since the feminist discourse of the fourth wave envisages their involvement in the battles for equal rights. Their exclusion from the advertising environment by not considering them a target audience deviates from the modern feminist discourse, diluting it and thus causing it to lose degrees of authenticity. Instead, this research aims to examine the effects of femvertising on a mixed audience, realigning this practice with pure feminist discourse. For this reason, the following study, described in the next chapter, answers the research question: 'How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?'.

It will provide insight into how brand equity campaigns can be improved regarding female empowerment. The aim is to identify the elements that can also engage a male audience, broadening the target group of the brand that will want to adopt femvertising, thereby increasing the credibility of its brand-cause fit. At a managerial level, this will enable brands to understand how they can reach a wider group of possible consumers and strengthen the credibility of their brand activism and CSR activities, thus positively differentiating themselves competitively.

Chapter 3: Semiotic and Sentiment Analysis on a Sample of Femvertising Campaigns

3.1 Semiotic analysis and its importance in the advertising landscape

The previous chapters emphasized the importance of advertising in strengthening and revolutionizing the structure of society. Not all brands manage to acquire enough importance to have an effective impact on it and survive its changes. This is because they often disregard cultural tensions and do not intercept important social issues in time, alienating themselves from the world and focusing only on their own market sector. Other brands, instead, succeed in becoming icons, highly appreciated by their customers and with a strong competitive power that survives even the generational changes of their target group. They manage to win competitive battles not only because of distinct advantages, reliable services, or innovative technologies but mainly because they establish a deep connection with the culture, integrating themselves into it (Holt, 2014). Their focus is on what the brand stands for and what values constitute it. They come to embody myths, often based on rebellion, that seek to resolve social tensions, fighting for battles they believe in and aligning themselves with the values of their consumers. Those brands follow an ideology whereby they have moral duties that they must fulfill to align themselves with the perspective to which their community aspires (Holt, 2014). To identify and align with social phenomena and cultural tensions, among the most valuable tools are those offered by semiotic analysis, thus obtaining a theoretical and methodological framework for analyzing and understanding the complexity of symbolic communication within a society and channeling it into one's own initiatives, as is the case, for example, of femvertising campaigns (Oswald, 2012: 86).

Semiotics is a discipline that applies linguistic theory to the study of signs, text, and non-verbal symbols. Sign analysis goes beyond simple verbal communication and focuses on the interpretation of visual signs, gestures, icons, and other symbolic elements present in the culture being analyzed, in the case of marketing mainly in consumer culture. This approach provides an understanding of how people attribute meanings to signs and how they influence their perceptions and decisions (Oswald, 2012:4).

The term 'semiotics' has etymological roots in the Greek word 'semios', meaning 'sign', initially used in medical contexts to denote 'symptoms'. Through cultural and media developments, the term came to denote the social science discipline that focuses on the analysis of signs from a cultural perspective. The term 'semiotics' in fact describes the set of operations through which meanings are attributed in a sign system, such as a brand, a retail environment, or an advertisement. A practical example of how semiotics can be applied is the analysis of a physical shop. Here, this approach considers all the sign elements present within that environment, such as the layout of the shop, the location of objects, and sales strategies. It focuses on the interpretation of visual signs and sensory information that a customer can detect when entering the shop. These signs contribute to brand-specific perceptions and influence customers' purchasing decisions (Oswald, 2012: 8).

The concept of 'semiosis' in a broad sense, refers to the dynamics of meaning production. In the commercial sphere, this process is dialectical in nature and involves the cognitive processes of the spectator (possible consumer) in the construction of meanings within culture. Semiosis describes how people actively contribute to the creation of meanings based on their experiences and interpretations (Oswald, 2012: 8) (Solík, 2014). Quoting Gilbert Cohen-Séat, reality is a vast universe of signs, a kind of 'icon-sphere', in which the individual is constantly surrounded by a variety of symbols from different systems (Cohen-Séat in Solík, 2014). This complexity is reflected in advertising, which makes extensive use of sign systems. To immediately understand the meaning of each sign is not an easy task. However, both the recipient and the advertiser share the need to interpret and communicate signs effectively, even though their motivations may vary considerably. Semiotics analyses the mechanisms and functions of textual and visual messages, offering a key to a better understanding of the social processes involved in communication (Solík, 2014). Contemporary semiotics goes beyond the simplistic idea that media texts are closed and static entities, isolated from the social environment in which they are created. It is recognized that media texts are closely intertwined with their social environment, influenced by it, and influencing it in turn (Peverini, 2012:12).

Brands are complex systems of signs that go beyond their practical function and become vehicles of meaning that influence consumers' perceptions and decisions. Symbolic consumption theory emphasizes how goods and brands can communicate social and emotional benefits that satisfy consumers' deepest needs (Oswald, 2012:44). Through good use of signs in the media landscape, brands can also strengthen their brand equity by showing support for a social cause and thus reinforcing their value system.

The main form of communication of brands takes place through advertising. The communication process in advertising follows the broadcasting model, where a sender (the creator of the ad) sends an encoded message through one or more channels to a receiver (the potential consumer). The commercial message seeks to influence the recipient to achieve an advertising objective. The reaction of the recipient, also called 'feedback', is important in this process and varies according to their interpretation of the signs (Solík, 2014). Interpretation can change as advertising uses a form of 'parasitic discourse' (Cook in Solík, 2014), blending elements of various discourses and environments. Modern advertising becomes an illustration of a sign that represents the object but is not the object itself. The viewer may come to forget this distinction, completely identifying the sign with the object. It is as if in the painting 'This is not a pipe' by René Magritte, in which a drawing of a pipe is represented, the viewer becomes convinced that what is represented is in fact a real pipe. This creates a complete identification that is more likely to make the consumer remember the brand and turn into a positive purchasing decision (Solík, 2014).

This study has already shown how cultural movements influence and are influenced by advertising. A valid example is the evolution of the representation of women in publicity according to developments in the feminist movement and its acceptance in modern culture. Cultural studies offer an intriguing perspective on advertising, viewing it as a window through which to peer into consumer culture. Content analysis by means of semiotics allows the development of hypotheses about society and the tracking of trends over time. Such a method places a focus on the attitudes, values, and political tensions that are embedded within a culture. In practice, patterns in advertising content are examined to gather evidence that can support more general statements about culture, social behavior, or specific product categories (Oswald, 2012:6). The way consumers interpret advertising messages and perceive the world can be traced back to semantic categories. Advertising becomes a 'conduit' through which meanings pass from the cultural world to the world of consumer goods. This approach considers advertising not only as a sales tool but also as a mirror of the surrounding culture (McCracken and Sherry in Oswald, 2012: 6). In this context, semiotics presents itself as a necessary discipline to identify recurring signs in society, transform them into codes and gain a greater understanding of the complex relationship between advertising, culture and meaning by revealing how consumers interpret, value, and relate to advertising messages in a broader cultural context (Oswald, 2012: 79). If brand communication is ambiguous, it can cause consumers to lose trust and damage the long-term value of the brand. To resolve this ambiguity, management needs to understand the signs and symbols used in brand communication, such as the poses of characters in advertisements or the direction of gazes. With this understanding, management can adapt the message so that it is in tune with consumer culture and obtain favorable responses from them (Oswald, 2012: 106) (Solík, 2014). Creating consistent storytelling is very useful for communicating effectively with consumers and advancing competitively in the market. It means using stories to create a brand identity, convey values, and connect emotionally with the public. Storytelling is important because it allows the brand to be perceived as a character in different stories, both those created by the brand itself and those told by consumers about their relationship with the brand (Semprini in Codeluppi, 2000) (Oswald, 2012: 117).

The semiotic value of products goes beyond their cost and becomes important in building brand value. It is essential to create bonds with customers and share meanings with them. Brand loyalty is highly influenced by symbolic relationships. Brand semiotics is an important medium for the company (Oswald, 2012: 125), especially considering that consumers invest in meanings, not material objects (Oswald, 2012: 1).

3.2 Research Methodology

To answer the research question: 'How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?', a qualitative analysis divided into two studies has been structured.

Study 1: The first study used a semiotic analysis of four authentic femvertising campaigns made by brands with different target groups, 2 predominantly male and 2 predominantly female. Considering that media texts are objects organized around a structure (Peveerini, 2012: 13), the aim of this analysis was to identify similarities in the proposed codes and narrative typology used to carry out these types of brand activism campaigns. In this way, it can be analyzed whether similar types of responses are associated with similar narrative structures using recurring semiotic codes. The semiotic approach used is based on an analytical view that considers the media text as a phenomenon that can be broken down into its elements and logic that determines its effectiveness (Peveerini, 2012: 16). The framework of advertising analysis proposed by Peveerini (2012) was followed, which involves the usage of Greimas' actantial model and canonical narrative scheme. The result obtained is a deconstruction of femvertising campaigns organized mainly by text segmentation, narrative, and promotional strategy, along the lines of Semprini's Brand Identity System. Semprini proposes a model of brand identity construction based on three different levels, differing in depth. These are the surface level, the narrative level, and the axiological level.

Study 2: The second study applied a sentiment analysis done on the YouTube comments of the femvertising campaigns in question. The choice of YouTube as a social media was dictated by the number of comments present and the possibility of identifying the gender of the users. The sentiment analysis was divided according to the gender of the commentators and the femvertising analyzed. This made it possible to investigate whether there were differences in the reactions of the two genders and if these were influenced by the nature of the brand and the type of advertising created. The comments were extracted, cleaned, and subdivided according to the gender of the commentators. A manual sentiment analysis was then carried out, dividing the comments into classes of positive, negative, or neutral sentiment. Finally, a coding of the terms most frequently used to express a positive or negative sentiment was performed. This part was realized through the 'word frequency' function of the NVivo software and the creation of word clouds.

Together, these studies made it possible to observe how consumers of different genders react to femvertising and whether the characteristics of the brands' target audience and the narrative type used can influence these reactions.

3.3. Semiotic analysis of the femvertising sample

The first part of the study consists of a semiotic deconstruction and analysis of four authentic femvertising campaigns. These brand activism elements belong to the typology of commercials and constitute a nonhomogeneous macro genre of audio-visual textuality, where different communicative elements characterized by a strong dynamism meet (Peveerini, 2012:35).

This part of the analysis was necessary for the identification of symbols, narratives, and stylistic elements recurring or not in the chosen campaigns. It made it possible to observe how brands with a predominantly female or male target group approached femvertising and whether they differed significantly. The semiotic analysis was also fundamental for subsequently investigating the male and female sentiment around the campaigns, trying to understand whether there are elements that are more likely to trigger positive or negative reactions.

To carry out a complete semiotic segmentation of advertising commercials, the model proposed by Peverini in the text "The Media: Tools for Semiotic Analysis" was used, also employing the tools of Greimasian semiotics (Peverini, 2012: 112). Different levels of brand signification were identified, namely the superficial/discursive level, the narrative level, and the basic/axiological level.

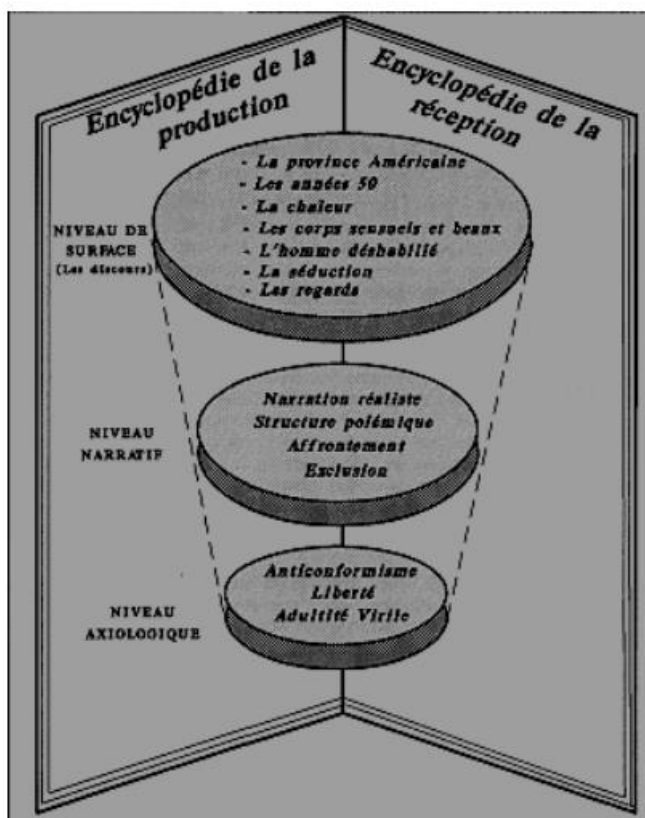


Figure n.26 'Semprini's brand identity system model', 1992 (retrieved from The Public Journal of Semiotics)

Of relevance for the segmentation of the commercials is the fact that all the Brand Activism campaigns analyzed feature a promotional strategy of a narrative type, presented in the form of a story, concluded or incomplete (Peverini, 2012: 57). For this reason, the narrative description part was supplemented with Greimas' actantial model, in which the relationships linking the various narrative roles, called actants, are adequately described.

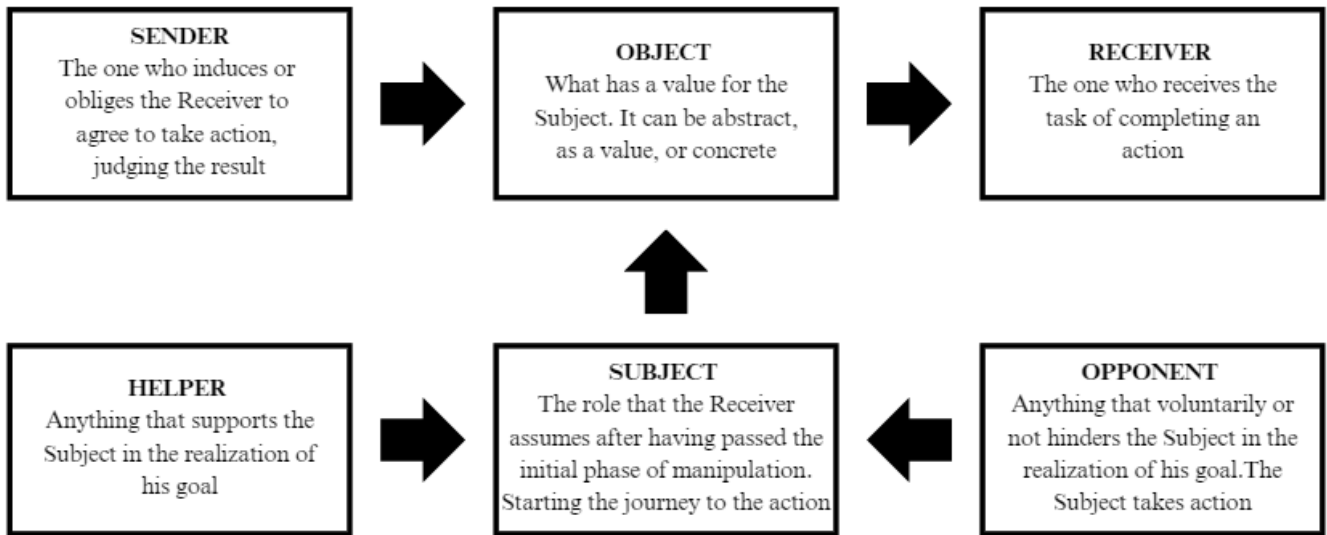


Figure n.27 'Graimas's actantial model', 2001 (retrieved from South African Journal of African Languages)

All the femvertisings analyzed have a social purpose. For this reason, along with the promotional strategy, comments on the values the brand wanted to share with the end user were added (Peaverini, 2012:58).

The semiotic analysis was carried out according to the following structure:

- The organized synthesis of materials: Segmentation of the text, genre, points of view and listening, placing of the product/brand, rhythm, and audiovisual texture (Semprini's surface/discursive level)
- The narration: The position of the narrator, enunciation, and the actantial model (Semprini's narrative level)
- The strategies: Promotional strategies, values, and rhetoric (Semprini's basic/axiological level) (Peaverini, 2012:112).

In the first part, regarding the organized synthesis of the materials, the following framing description was used as a reference to create a clearer segmentation of the text, particularly in the section on points of view (Mirabile, 2017).



Figure n.28 'The shots', 2017 (retrieved from CA Video Production)

The selected femvertising campaigns were chosen primarily because they reflect the authenticity parameters proposed by Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot (2022), presented in Chapter 2. The genre of all the campaigns analyzed is social, as they aim to raise awareness of gender discrimination and have female empowerment as their goal. Another metric used to choose the objects of the analysis was the demographic data of the audience that usually surfs the web pages of the selected brands. This provided an indication of the extent to which the brands had a primarily female or male audience.

The femvertising campaigns analyzed are:

- 'Dream Crazier' by Nike
- '#MakeWhatsNext' by Microsoft
- 'Label Against Women' by Pantene
- 'MyBeautyMySay' by Dove

3.3.1 'Dream Crazier' by Nike

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfX5jeF6k4>

Audience demographics from nike.com: the audience of nike.com consists of 56.91% male and 43.09% female. The largest group of visitors is 25-34 years old (SimilarWeb, 2023c).

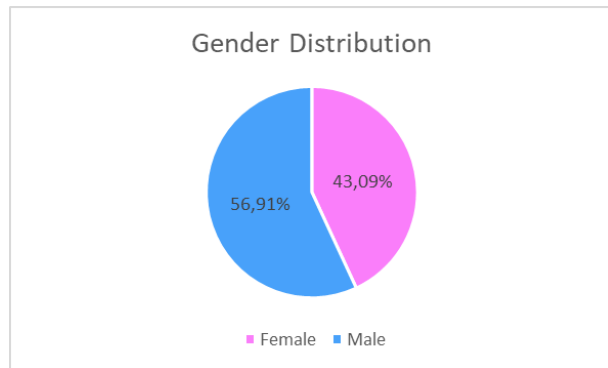


Figure n.29 'Nike's Gender Distribution'

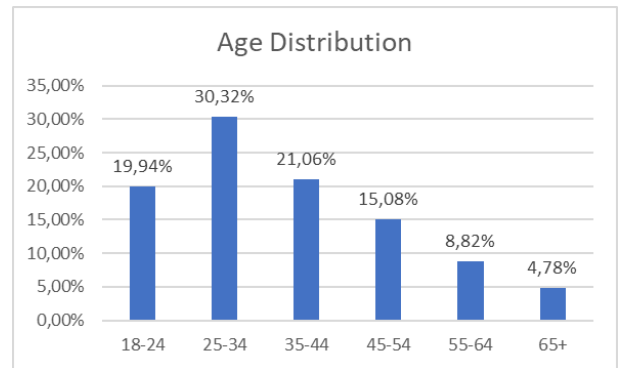


Figure n.30 'Nike's Age Distribution'

Nike's Dream Crazier ad was first released at the Academy Awards ceremony, in Los Angeles, on 24 February 2019. It has a duration of 90 seconds. The spot represents a powerful example of femvertising that inspires the viewer to female empowerment and the pursuit of their dreams. The commercial is narrated by Serena Williams and features alternating stills of female athletes, including gymnast Simone Biles, fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad, marathon runner Kathrine Switzer, snowboarder Chloe Kim, the US football team, and Williams herself (Binlot, 2019).

Organized synthesis of materials:

Frame number	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00-0.05	Archival footage with a fixed horizontal camera that frames the face of a cyclist crying as she takes off her helmet. She looks sweaty and tired as if she wants to make it clear that she is at the end of a race. The camera angle is frontal with a big close-up on the protagonist's face. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	The start of the soundtrack (S.T.) coincides with the start of the commercial. Voice-over by Serena Williams narrating <If we show emotions, we are called...>.	Both sounds are of the 'off' type, emanating from a point not visible in the video nor placeable by the viewer in it. They are extradiegetic sounds. They perform an accompanying function to the viewing (Peverini, 2012: 45). The videos used are not original Nike videos but archive clips depicting sports moments with female protagonists.
2	0.06-0.09	Sharp transition to another shot from an archive clip depicting a woman in sportswear wiping away tears while at a press conference. Fixed framing with a big close-up. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and	S.T. + voice-over <...dramatic...>	The process of syncretism is used: the visual sphere and the sound sphere are aligned to reinforce the same message (Chion in Peverini, 2012: 54)

		uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.		
3	0.09-0.11	<p>Sharp transition to a video showing a girl intent on playing an American football game. The shot shows her from behind, intent on walking. It is a static mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <If we want to play against men...>	Use of the synchresis.
4	0.11-0.13	<p>Clear passage to a video of the same girl from the previous clip intent on playing against a male opponent. Both tapes represent and were shot during the same game.</p> <p>There is a mid-shot following the girl.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <... we're nuts>	In the voice-over plan, there is a small pause (4 seconds) between the first and second sentences. This creates an emphasis on the voiceover (always of the off type). This is the first time in the femvertising that a sound belonging to the represented scene appears. In this case, there is an off-screen applause sound belonging to the diegesis, i.e. the universe represented in the video, here an American football game.
5	0.14-0.16	<p>Sharp transition to a video of the U.S. Women's National Soccer Team singing the national anthem, accompanied by girls. There is a medium-long shot framing a scrolling shot of the athletes.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ voice-over <And if we dream of equal opportunity...>	The Nike logo appears on the shirts of the athletes represented.
6	0.17-0.19	<p>Clear passage on a large close-up of the captain of the US women's national football team, Megan Rapinoe, who appears tense and focused. It is a continuation of the previous video with a change in the angle and subject matter portrayed.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ voice-over <...delusional>	A different focus on the same situation portrayed in the previous frame is shown.

7	0.19-0.21	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage of tennis player Li Na making her point, waving her racket as she speaks. The framing style is a frontal mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ voice-over <When we stand for something...>	<p>The speech of the protagonist of the video does not correspond with that of the voice-over. The spectator does not hear the words of the tennis player intent on complaining but Serena Williams' off-key narration. The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>
8	0.22-0.24	<p>Sharp transition to an archive video of a basketball team with a player arguing with the referee and nervously taking off her goggles while talking. The shot starts with a medium-long shot. The camera moves from the wide game situation, with the other players depicted, to focus on the player arguing with the referee, turning the framing into a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ voice-over <...we're unhinged.>	Use of the syncretism.
9	0.24-0.26	<p>Clear passage to the continuation of the video from earlier with the representation of the basketball player pictured before nervously protesting the referee and other characters in the game. The camera follows the protagonist's movement offering a great close-up in action.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + off-screen sound belonging to the scene depicted of a commentator saying <It's superb, it's gonna be the countdown>.	<p>There is an off-screen sound belonging to the diegesis, here a basketball game. The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p>
10	0.26-0.28	<p>Sharp transition to archive video footage of runner Caster Semenya intent on reaching the finish line first. The shot is frontal and offers a medium-long shot, in which the runner is followed and only the legs of her opponents are visible, indicating a big advantage for Semenya.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ voice-over <When we're too good...>	<p>The sound of applause belonging to the scene depicted appears. It is an off-screen sound belonging to the diegesis, in this case, the stadium.</p> <p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>

11	0.28-0.30	<p>A clear passage from the previous video with a focus on the runner Caster Semenya intent on rejoicing for the first place achieved. The shot follows the movement of the runner, and the framing is of the medium-close type.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ voice-over <...there's something wrong with us> + off-screen sound of applause from the stadium represented</p>	<p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p>
12	0.30-0.32	<p>Sharp transition to archival footage of a female basketball player fighting with her arbiter. Framing is frontal and offers a medium, static shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ voice-over <And if we get angry...> + barely audible sound of the protagonist arguing with the referee.</p>	<p>The barely audible sound that joins the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl talking). It is a synchronous sound (Peverini, 2012: 44).</p> <p>Use of the synchresis.</p>
13	0.32-0.34	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting basketball coach Cheryl Reeve nervously removing her jacket and shouting on the sidelines. The camera follows her in a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ voice-over<...we're hysterical, irrational...>+ barely audible sound of the protagonist arguing.</p>	<p>The barely audible sound that joins the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound in. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the coach screaming). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synchresis.</p>
14	0.34-0.37	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting an angry tennis player intent on breaking her racket by slamming it against the ground. The shot is static and uses a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <...or just being crazy> +barely audible sound of the racket hitting the floor.</p>	<p>The barely audible sound that joins the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound in. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the racket banging against the floor). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p> <p>Use of the synchresis.</p>
15	0.37-0.39	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting a marathon, with only male runners portrayed. The shot is static and uses an angled long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ voice-over <But...> + off-screen sounds of the audience watching the marathon</p>	<p>Only males are portrayed as it is an archive footage of the 1975 Morat-Fribourg marathon, where women were banned.</p> <p>The sound of the crowd belongs to the scene depicted. It is an off-screen sound belonging to the diegesis, in this case, the marathon.</p>

16	0.39-0.41	<p>Clear passage to archive footage depicting a smiling marathon runner removing her sweatshirt to reveal a T-shirt with the words 'Et les Femmes?'. The shot focuses on the girl and the T-shirt inscription and from a mid-shot becomes a big close-up. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over<... a woman running a marathon was crazy.> + off-screen sounds of the audience watching the marathon</p>	<p>The video represents a gesture of protest the rule that prevented female participation in the 1975 Morat-Fribourg marathon. The sound of the crowd belongs to the scene depicted. It is an off-screen sound belonging to diegesis, in this case, the marathon. Use of the synecrisis.</p>
17	0.41-0.45	<p>Clear passage to archive footage depicting the same marathon runner, who had previously shown the 'Et les Femmes?' T-shirt, rebelling against the men trying to hold her back. She manages to escape and starts running on the road adapted for the marathon. The shot is static, focuses on the girl, and has a mid-shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + off-screen sound of the audience watching the marathon and the commentators exclaiming <...officials tried to pull her off>.</p>	<p>The sound of the crowd and the comments made belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds belonging to the diegesis, in this case, made by the marathon commentators.</p>
18	0.45	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting a female boxer intent on sending shots into the camera. The shot is static, focuses on the boxer's vaults and hands, and has a close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <A woman boxing...> + barely audible sound of the wind being moved by the athlete's fists and breath.</p>	<p>The barely audible sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the boxer). It is a synchronous sound. Use of the synecrisis.</p>
19	0.46-0.47	<p>Clear passage to archive footage of two female boxers fighting in the ring. The frame focuses on the female athletes, switching from a mid-shot to a medium close-up. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <...was crazy>+ barely hinted sound of the blows inflicted in the ring by the athletes.</p>	<p>The barely audible sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the boxers). It is a synchronous sound.</p>

20	0.48-0.50	<p>Sharp transition to archival footage depicting a WNBA player intent on making a dunk at the basket and exulting immediately afterward. The shot is dynamic and follows the athlete throughout the action, often changing camera angles to better represent her. The framing is a medium close-up.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <A woman dunking, crazy.> + off-screen sound of the audience cheering</p>	<p>The soundtrack (S.T.) starts to be louder in volume and more engaging.</p> <p>The sounds of the crowd belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds that belong to the diegesis, in this case of the spectators on the basketball court.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
21	0.51-0.54	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting NBA coach Becky Hammon's intent on motivating her men's team. The shot is dynamic and focuses on the coach as she is intent on kneeling in front of the bench and passing a message to the players. The shot starts as a mid-shot and becomes a medium close-up.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <Coaching an NBA team, crazy> + sound of coach Becky Hammon encouraging her team <stay serious...></p>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the coach). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
22	0.54-0.56	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad exulting in joy after winning a match, wearing the hijab. The footage is static and uses a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <A woman competing in a hijab>+ sound of the victory shout of the fencer Ibtihaj Muhammad</p>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the fencer). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
23	0.56-0.58	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting swimmer Simone Manuel swimming and then, laughing at the result of the race. The shot is dynamic and uses a sharp transition from a medium-long shot depicting the swimmer and her opponents swimming to a close-up of the swimmer's happy face.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + voice-over <Changing her sport.>+ off-screen sound of the audience watching and cheering for the swimming competition.</p>	<p>The sounds of the crowd belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds that belong to the diegesis, in this case of the spectators of the swimming competition.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>

24	0.58-1.01	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting a snowboarder performing a stunt called a 'double cork 1080' and then smiling at what she has done. The footage is dynamic and uses a sharp transition from a medium-long shot depicting the snowboarder doing the stunt and then changing sharply to a close-up of her face.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <Landing a double cork 1080...>+ off-screen sound of the audience watching and cheering for the snowboarder.	<p>The sounds of the crowd belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds that belong to the diegesis, in this case of the spectators of the snowboard competition.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
25	1.01-1.06	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting tennis player Serena Williams intent on playing a match. This femvertising part consists of several frameworks alternating with different shots of the same scene. It alternates between mid-shots in which Williams is intent on hitting the ball, with close-up shots of the ball, Williams' face, and racket.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...or winning 23 grand slams, having a baby, and then coming back for more...> + sound of tennis ball hitting the racket	<p>In this case, the one doing the voice-over, Serena Williams, is also the one depicted. The only sounds that are added to the soundtrack belong to the sound type 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the ball hitting the racket). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The choice of juxtaposing Williams with her voice-over and the sound of the racket reinforces in the viewer the placement of the athlete in the tennis environment.</p> <p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p> <p>Longer duration compared to the footage of other female athletes.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
26	1.07	<p>Sharp transition to an archive film depicting a female footballer doing a somersault for jubilation. The shot is static and uses a medium-long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...crazy...> + sound of the crowd cheering	<p>The sounds of the crowd belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds that belong to the diegesis, in this case of the spectators of the match cheering.</p>
27	1.07-1.08	<p>Sharp transition to a film of a young girl practicing with two basketballs. The shot is dynamic, revolves around the protagonist, and uses a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...crazy...> + sound of the basketball bouncing on the floor	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the basketball hitting the ground). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p>
28	1.08-1.09	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage of Paralympic athlete Tatyana McFadden competing. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...crazy...>	<p>The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p>

		are no artificial ones added in post-production.		
29	1.09	<p>Sharp transition to a film of a young athlete intent on lifting a weight.</p> <p>The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...crazy...>	
30	1.09-1.10	<p>Sharp transition to a film of a young athlete intent on a skateboard jump.</p> <p>The shot is static and uses a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural. The sun behind the subject is the visible lighting point, making the filmed elements dark as they are backlit.</p> <p>Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <...and crazy>	
31	1.10-1.13	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage of gymnast Simone Biles, intent on performing a competition exercise. The shot is dynamic and captures the execution of the exercise by alternating different shots and frameworks, switching from close-ups to a long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ off-screen sound of the audience watching and cheering for the gymnast Simone Biles	<p>The sounds of the crowd belong to the scene depicted. These are off-screen sounds that belong to the diegesis, in this case of the race spectators cheering.</p> <p>In this part of the femvertising, the voiceover is absent, but the soundtrack is more intense.</p>
32	1.14-1.15	<p>Sharp transition to a film of a young girl on a football field holding a ball. The shot is dynamic and revolves around the face of the girl depicted, using a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <So if they...>	The Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.
33	1.15-1.16	<p>Sharp transition to a film of a young girl in a swimming pool.</p> <p>The shot is static and uses a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <want to call you crazy...>	

34	1.16-1.17	<p>Sharp transition to a clip of a young girl wearing a boxing helmet in the ring. The shot is dynamic, revolves around the girl's face, and uses a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	
35	1.18-1.19	<p>Sharp transition to archive footage depicting Serena Williams engaged in the competition previously shown in shot 25. The shot is static and uses a big close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <... fine...>	The femvertising came almost to an end and decided to show the athlete who did the voiceover again, to metaphorically reconcile image and voice.
36	1.20-1.21	<p>Clear passage to archive footage representing first the tennis ball being thrown into the air and then Serena Williams hitting it with great force. The shot is dynamic and follows the movement of the ball until the athlete enters the frame, hitting it. A medium close-up shot was used.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + voice-over <Show them what crazy can do>	<p>The voice-over ends with Williams hitting the ball, metaphorically representing the intention of wanting to get the message across as far as possible.</p> <p>Again, the Nike logo appears on the shirt of the athlete represented.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>
37	1.21-1.24	<p>Sharp transition to a black screen on which the words 'It's only crazy until you do it' appear in white.</p>	S.T.	The voice-over part is replaced by the written message of the brand, which takes the place of the tennis player entering the visual scene of the femvertising
38	1.24-1.26	<p>Cross-fade message change, Nike's slogan 'Just Do It' appears on the screen.</p> <p>The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.</p>	S.T.	The transition from the first text to the slogan plays on words to create a call-to-action inevitably linked to the brand, as Nike's historical slogan becomes the final part of the empowerment message it wants to launch.
39	1.27-1.30	<p>Cross-fade message change, the Nike logo appears on the screen.</p> <p>The colors are those of the background and the logo, black and white.</p>	S.T.	The succession of messages and logo is made according to the rhythm of the soundtrack, using a high level of syncretism. The final entry of the brand makes the message seem almost 'authorized' by the brand itself, making it easier for the user to associate the message of female empowerment with the Nike dimension.

Nike's femvertising is presented at a fast pace, characterized by a crescendo of visual and sound intensity. There is a strong degree of syncretism between what is represented and what is said. The commercial is

defined by the red thread of examples of female athletes who have defied stereotypes. This creates the line of semantic coherence in the commercial, called 'isotopy', in which the repetition of certain elements favors the identification of the content and helps to guide the interpretation of the advertisement (Peverini, 2012:45). The brand's logo appears in some frames on the shirts of the athletes but does not play a primary role. The logo is only officially presented at the end of the video to make it clear who is behind the campaign.

The narration:

The narrator of the story is Serena Williams, who gives a motivational speech dedicated to female empowerment. She addresses the audience, urging them to go against stereotypes and those who call someone 'crazy' just because they try to pursue their dreams. Her speech comes to the audience in the form of a voiceover that merges with alternating images depicting remarkable feats of female sportswomen. The strong delegation present is between the narrator and the brand. Indeed, Williams became Nike's delegate to deliver its message of empowerment to the audience. This delegation takes place mainly at an aural level and only at the end at a visual level. In the first frames in which Serena Williams appears visually, she narrates her personal exploits, representing herself. Only in the final moment of the video, when she says: 'Show them what crazy can do', she becomes a visual delegate of the brand, launching the call to action to the viewers on behalf of Nike.

Actantial model of the femvertising:

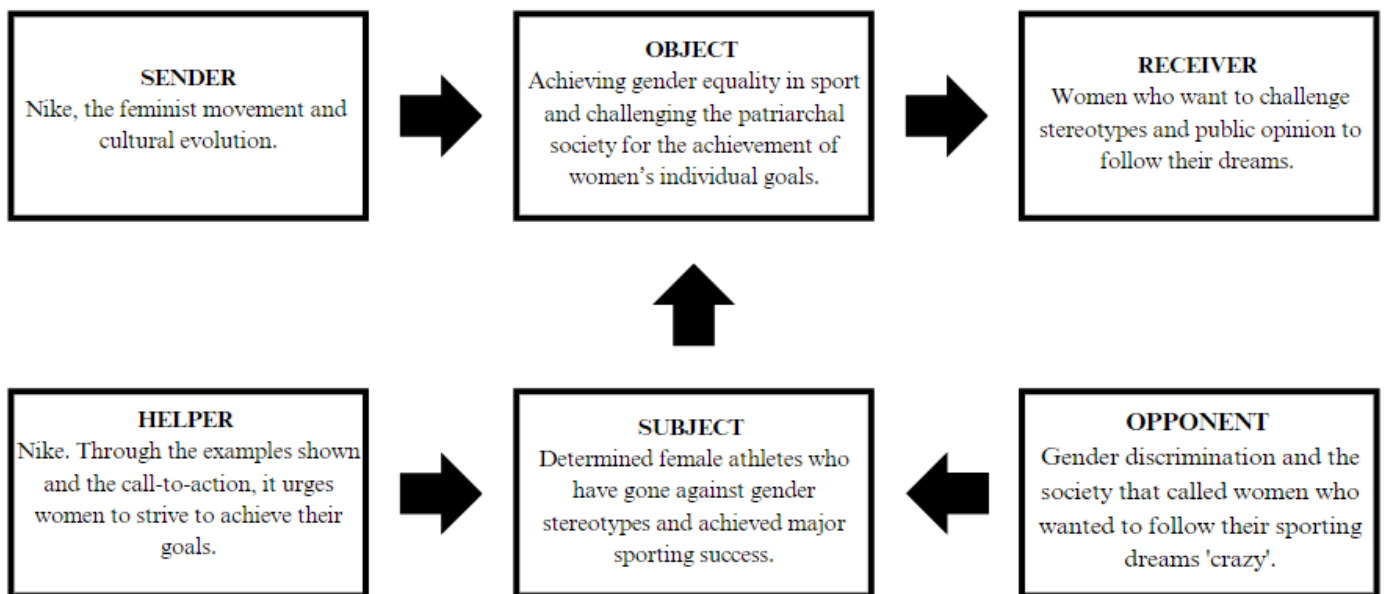


Figure n.31 'Nike's femvertising Actantial Model'

The strategies:

The strategy used in femvertising by Nike is a narrative one, through an incomplete telling of the exploits of sportswomen who have challenged society and the stereotypes of their sports and times. The tale is

incomplete in that it ends with a call to action inviting the viewer, particularly women, to have the strength to pursue their goals, even if they seem crazy in the eyes of society, and thus create a story worthy of those told.

The pace of the story is brisk and crescendoing, using emotion and inspiration to engage the audience. The word 'crazy' is repeated numerous times, representing an anaphora and, simultaneously, an oxymoron in relation to the images shown. Although on an aural level the word 'crazy' is repeated, on a visual level, images are shown of women who are not 'crazy' but determined to achieve sporting goals, believing in themselves, and working to go against that label. This contrast is indeed denounced in the final statement 'It's only crazy until you do it'.

The sporting environment is a metaphor for society and the female athletes depicted are a metaphor for the strength of women as they go against gender stereotypes. The chosen representations are aligned with the intersectionality of the feminist movement of the fourth wave, showing successful examples of women of different ages, ethnicities, sexual orientations, and motor skills. With this successful and authentic female empowerment campaign, Nike has joined the battle against gender discrimination, strengthening its brand equity in the eyes of consumers.

3.3.2 '#MakeWhatsNext' by Microsoft

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNqSzUdYazw>

Audience demographics from microsoft.com: the microsoft.com audience consists of 61.87% male and 38.13% female. The largest group of visitors is 25-34 years old (SimilarWeb, 2023b).

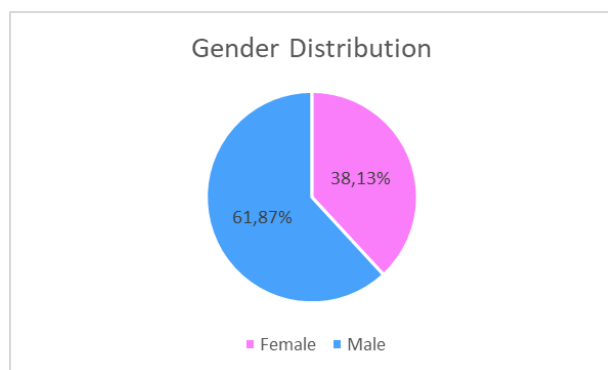


Figure n.32 'Microsoft's Gender Distribution'

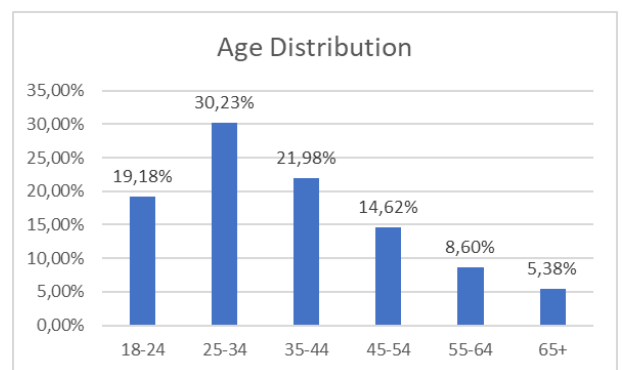


Figure n.33 'Microsoft's Age Distribution'

Microsoft's #MakeWhatsNext ad was first released on 8 March 2016, in conjunction with Women's Day. Nevertheless, there was no superficial use of the occasion as different initiatives with global coverage were launched along with the campaign to promote and bring girls and women closer to the STEM (science, tech,

engineering, math) fields. These initiatives have evolved over the years and are still ongoing in the Microsoft world. The femvertising was launched in 90 countries and in 30 different languages. It has been disseminated on the main social media, in particular Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and on the Microsoft website itself. It was also shared at various Microsoft events and at various science festivals (Microsoft News Center, 2016). The protagonists of the commercial are groups of little girls who are challenged to remember inventors but cannot name any women. It has a duration of 100 seconds.

Organized synthesis of materials:

Frame number	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00-0.09	<p>Original footage shows a little girl in the middle of a classroom with a bookcase behind her. The camera is static in the movement around the subject with dynamism in the framing. It opens with a fixed horizontal camera and a medium-long take. The shot then turns into a close-up which then becomes a medium close-up shot on the same subject.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>The start of the soundtrack (S.T.) coincides with the start of the commercial.</p> <p>There is no external narrative voice, but it is the subject of the video who speaks, carrying on the narrative of the commercial.</p> <p>The little girl starts talking about her interests by saying <My favorite subject at school is science because you can invent all kinds of cool stuff and there's like no limit to what you can do>.</p>	<p>The soundtrack is of the 'off' type, emanating from a point not visible in the video nor placeable by the viewer in it. It is an extradiegetic sound. The sounds of the soundtrack belong to the world of technology, indirectly bringing the viewer into the Microsoft world.</p> <p>The initial part of the advertising takes the form of an interview with young girls. It is filmed in a school environment. The type of camerawork focuses on the girls and makes the background blurred.</p> <p>The story narrated by the little girl represents belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the little girl talking). These are synchronous sounds in the form of a dialogue between the little girl and an interlocutor.</p>
2	0.09-0.11	<p>Sharp transition to a still image of a black screen with white written text 'Can you name any inventors?'. The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.</p>	S.T.	<p>Using written text and no narrator, Microsoft presents itself as the interlocutor of the girls, asking them questions. By using this descriptive technique, it manages to enter the conversation without depriving itself of its technological nature.</p>
3	0.11-0.13	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a girl talking about an inventor she knows. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention by the girl filmed <One inventor is Benjamin Franklin>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>

4	0.13-0.15	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a girl (same depicted in frame number 1) talking about an inventor she knows. The shot is static and uses a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention by the girl filmed <Leonardo da Vinci>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Continuation of answers to the question asked in frame number 2 without the question being asked again. It serves as a red thread for this part of the video (isotopy).</p>
5	0.15-0.20	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a group of 3 girls talking about inventors they know. The shot is static, presenting only a change in framing. It uses a mid-shot which then becomes a medium-close-up on two of the girls.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + spoken intervention of the 3 girls filmed:</p> <p>Girl A <Thomas..></p> <p>Girl B <Edison></p> <p>Girl A <I was going to say that...></p> <p>Girl B <Albert Einstein></p> <p>Girl C <mm... Nikola Tesla></p>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the three girls speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
6	0.21-0.23	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a girl talking about an inventor she knows. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <...Alexander Bell Graham>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
7	0.24	<p>Sharp transition to a still image of a black screen with white written text 'Can you name any inventors?'</p> <p>The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.</p>	S.T.	Return to frame number 2
8	0.25-0.26	<p>Scrolling addition of the word 'women' to the previous freeze frame, frame number 7. Freeze frame of a black screen with the text written in white 'Can you name any women inventors?'</p> <p>The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.</p>	S.T.	
9	0.26-0.30	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a young girl, already shown in frame number 1, who answers the new question proposed in the previous frame, i.e., whether she can name a female inventor. The shot is static and uses a medium-long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <mm... no>	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>

10	0.30-0.34	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a young girl, already shown in frame number 6, answering the newly proposed question of whether she can name a female inventor. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <...that's kind of a tough one>	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.
11	0.34-0.38	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a young girl answering the newly proposed question of whether she can name a female inventor. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <mm...uhmm>.	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.
12	0.38-0.41	<p>Sharp transition to the clip of a young girl answering the newly proposed question of whether she can name a female inventor. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <ah...uhmm>.	<p>Strong physical gestures of the girl filmed in expressing doubt.</p> <p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
13	0.41-0.46	<p>Sharp transition to the video of a young girl answering the newly proposed question of whether she can name a female inventor. First time in the video where the protagonist of the clip is filmed in an outdoor environment and not inside an enclosed school space. The shot is static in its movement around the subject but uses two different shots. It starts with a medium close-up, alternates with a big close-up shot, and then returns to the initial shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + spoken intervention of the girl filmed <...in school it was always a male inventor. I just realized that (laughing)>.	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.

14	0.46-0.48	<p>Sharp transition to a still image of a black screen with the white written text 'Not everything is 'man' made'.</p> <p>The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.</p>	Change of rhythm and type of soundtrack (S.T.2)	<p>The sounds of the soundtrack change drastically, becoming more rhythmic and engaging.</p> <p>The technological sound, reminiscent of computer programming, is abandoned and a more human sphere characterized by harmonizing voices and clearly distinguishable instruments enters.</p> <p>Use of synecrisis between the soundtrack and the video change.</p>
15	0.48-0.49	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a circular saw in action, filmed with a static camera and medium close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'TABITHA BABBITT- Made the Circular Saw'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, it creates a focus on the depicted subject. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production. A strong contrast between the dark background and illuminated subject.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of the circular saw in action	<p>S.T.2 rhythm and type of video are faster and more intense than the first part of the footage with the questions to the girls.</p> <p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the circular saw). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of synecrisis between the soundtrack and the video change, in which an invention made by a woman is described.</p>
16	0.49-0.51	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a person waving a signal flare in the air. The dynamic camera follows the subject with medium close-up shots, first from behind and then full-length while skateboarding. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'MARTHA COSTON- Made Signal Flares'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, it is emitted by the subjects depicted. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production. A strong contrast between the dark background and the illuminated subject.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of signal flares in action	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the signal flares). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
17	0.51-0.53	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting a car driving in the rain, wiping the windscreen with the wipers. Fixed camera with a big close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'MARY ANDERSON- Made Windshield Wipers'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2 + sound of windscreen wipers in action	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the working windshield wipers). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>

18	0.53-0.54	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing life rafts. The dynamic camera follows a static subject with a medium close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'MARIA BEASLEY- Made the Life Raft'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2	Use of the syncretism.
19	0.54-0.55	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing an eye reflecting lights and changing focus. A static camera represents the subject with an extreme close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'PATRICIA BATH- Made Laser Cataract Surgery'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of the activation of the light for the eye operation	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the light being activated). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>
20	0.55-0.56	<p>Sharp transition to an underwater clip representing a coral reef with its fauna. Dynamic camera rotating around the fauna depicted with close-up shots. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'SARAH MATHER- Made the Underwater Telescope'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ + sound of sea bubbles	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the sea bubbles). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>
21	0.57-0.58	<p>Sharp transition clip reproducing the anatomical image of a beating heart and lungs. Static camera with close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'MARIA PEREIRA- Made Heart Surgery Adhesive'.</p> <p>Light belongs to the created digital image, therefore, it is artificial. Mixed colors, mainly red, black, and white belong to the animations chosen in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of sound of heartbeat	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the heartbeat). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>
22	0.58-0.59	<p>Sharp transition to a clip reproducing the image of vials in a factory machine. Static camera with a progressive close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'GERTRUDE BELL ELION- Made Leukemia, HIV, & Malaria Drugs'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2 + sound of the vials knocking against each other in the industrial machine	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the vials knocking against each other). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the syncretism.</p>

23	0.59-1.00	<p>Sharp transition to a clip that reproduces the image of a code band that is created on the computer. Static camera with a medium close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'ADA LOVELACE- Made the First Computer Algorithm'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of codes being programmed on the computer	The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the computer codes being programmed). It is a synchronous sound. Use of the syncretism.
24	1.01-1.02	<p>Sharp transition to a clip reproducing the wheel of a sports car skidding on the asphalt. Static camera with a big close-up shot of the car wheel. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'BERTHA BENZ- Made Brake Pads'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of the tyre against asphalt	The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the tyre against the asphalt). It is a synchronous sound. Use of the syncretism.
25	1.02-1.03	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting officers on duty wearing bulletproof vests. Static camera with a medium close-up shot of the officers' shoulders. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'STEPHANIE KWOLEK- Made Bullet Proof Material'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2	Use of the syncretism.
26	1.03-1.04	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the hands of a worker holding a welder in action. Static camera with a medium close-up shot. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'PATRICIA BILLING Made Fire Safe GeoBond'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.2+ sound of a welder in action	The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the welder). It is a synchronous sound. Use of the syncretism.
27	1.04-1.06	<p>Sharp transition to a clip reproducing the departure and progress towards the atmosphere of a space ray. Static camera with different shots of the ray. Long shot at the take-off of the ray, a medium close-up shot between take-off and flight, angled mid shot in the flight phase. Above the video appears the caption, written in white: 'YVONNE BRILL- Made Satellite Propulsion'.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are</p>	S.T.2+ sound of a space rocket's propulsion	The sound that is added to the soundtrack, belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the propulsion of the rocket). It is a synchronous sound. Use of the syncretism.

		no artificial ones added in post-production.		
28	1.07-1.09	Sharp transition to a still image of a black screen with white written text 'Let's celebrate all things WOMAN MADE'. The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.	S.T.2	Use of the synecrisis.
29	1.09-1.12	Sharp transition to a clip of a young girl expressing her astonishment at the inventions just shown. The camera is static and uses a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.2 + spoken intervention by the girl filmed <Oh my God! There's so much and I never knew they ever know about that stuff>	Return of the video to the interlocution with the girls. The background is again the school environment. The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.
30	1.12-1.21	Sharp transition to a clip of another young girl expressing her amazement at the inventions made by women. The shot is static and first uses a mid-shot which then becomes a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.2+ spoken intervention by the girl filmed <You're surprised because they only talk about Einstein and Benjamin, but you never hear a girl in a conversation>	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound. The great expressiveness of the girl shown matches the soundtrack crescendo. Use of the synecrisis.
31	1.21-1.23	Sharp transition to a black screen with text written in white. The text changes, leaving the word 'so' fixed and quickly alternating the names of the girls interviewed. This creates a unique movement on the names <So...Rebecca, Courtney, Rose, Sarah, Sofia, Jenny, Kalia, Giana, Misha, Alyssa, Salima>. The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.	S.T.2	
32	1.24-1.26	Crossfade on the black screen, after which the blank text 'what are you going to make?' appears in the center of the shot. The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.	S.T.2	Microsoft metaphorically addresses the girls as representatives of all its users, the question is in fact directed at the viewer. Use of the synecrisis.

33	1.26-1.28	Sharp transition to a clip of a young girl, already shown in frame number 12, expressing her opinion on what has been displayed. The shot is static and uses a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.2 + spoken intervention by the girl filmed <To know there where women before me...>	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.
34	1.28-1.35	Sharp transition to a clip of a young girl, already shown in frame number 13, expressing her opinion on what has been displayed. The camera is static and uses a medium close-up shot, which changes to an angled big close-up and then back to the previous medium close-up. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.2+ spoken intervention by the girl filmed <...it gives me, like, the motivation that I can invent something and make, maybe, like a change in the world and that would be really cool>	The sound that is added to the soundtrack and creates the dialogue of the advertising belongs to the type of sound 'in'. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the girl speaking). It is a synchronous sound.
35	1.35-1.36	Sharp transition to a black screen with text written in white. The text is formed word by word, ending up making up the title and call to action of the advertisement: #makeswhatnext'. The colors are those of the background and the lettering, black and white.	S.T.2	Use of the synecrisis.
36	1.37-1.40	Fade transition to the Microsoft logo on a black background. The logo is in the center of the frame. The mixed colors are those of the background and the logo.	S.T.2	First and only time the Microsoft logo appears. Use of the synecrisis.

Microsoft's femvertising, belonging to the social genre, presents an increasing rhythm, starting with an averagely slow and static soundtrack and video typology and then making a radical change. In frame number 14, the video type and the soundtrack change to become faster and more engaging. Throughout all the advertising, there is a strong degree of synchronicity between what is shown and what is said. The division of the commercial's rhythm is reflected in its argumentative structure. Before frame 14 there is an introductory part in which the girls' prior knowledge of the inventors is investigated. From frame 14 onwards, the red thread of the commercial (isotopy) becomes providing some examples of inventions made by women and making the young girls aware of the fact that one can be an inventor regardless of gender. Finally, the call to action #MakeWhatsNext and the previously unseen Microsoft logo are presented. Throughout the commercial, neither products nor services are presented.

The narration:

There is no external narrative voice in the commercial that describes what is happening in the video or reinforces the message. The narration in this case is entrusted to the written text that appears in the various

frames and to the answers and reflections of the girls depicted. Microsoft is presented in the video as an external subject, not visible but perceptible by the audience, that asks the girls questions, makes them aware of new information in the field of inventory, and proposes new challenges for the future. The young girls, on the other hand, are presented as 'delegates' of the audience, who have often stereotyped prior knowledge and learn about inventions made by women. The entire narrative discourse is represented in the manner of a school lesson, with Microsoft portraying the teacher and the girls representing the pupils and intervening during the 'lesson', i.e. the entire femvertising.

Actantial model of the femvertising:

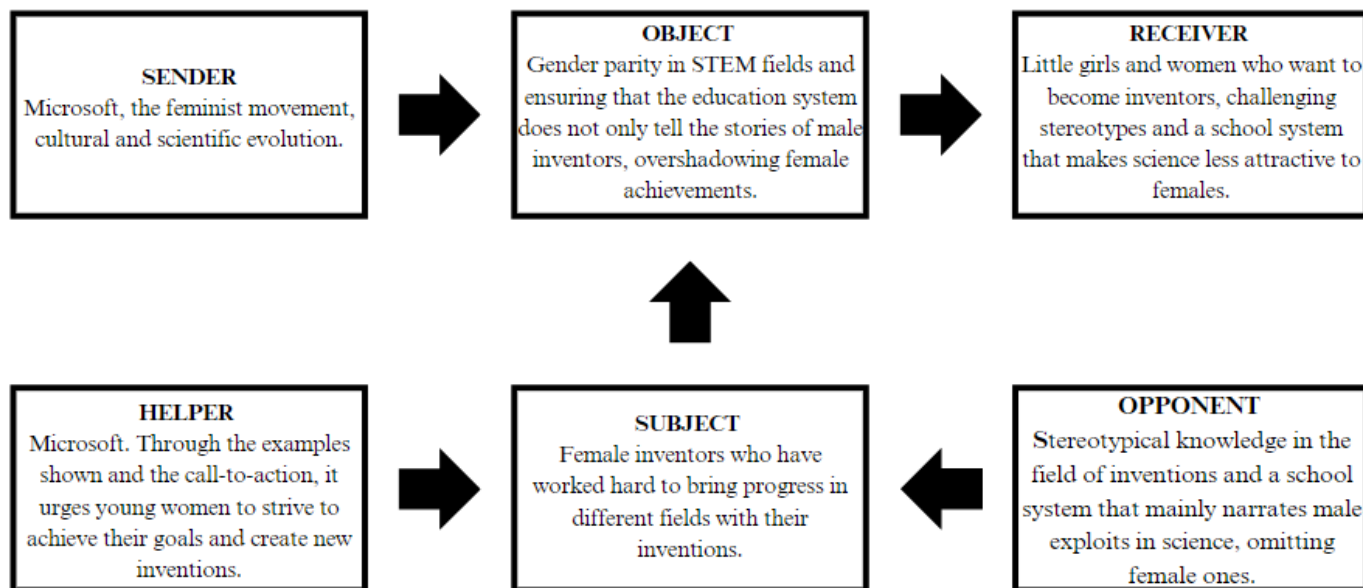


Figure n.34 'Microsoft's femvertising Actantial Model'

The strategies:

The strategy used by Microsoft in femvertising is a narrative one, through the incomplete telling of the exploits of women inventors in the field of STEM inventions. The narrative is incomplete in that it concludes with a call to action that invites the viewer and the girls depicted to create the inventions of the future, (#MakeWhatsNext), following the example of the female inventors mentioned.

The pace of the story is fast and crescendoing, using emotion and inspiration to engage the audience. There is an antithesis between the two parts of femvertising, divided by frame 14. In the first part, only male inventors are mentioned, and it seems that there are no female ones. The young girls depicted have a more scholastic approach aimed at remembering what they learned. In the second part, however, multiple inventions made by women are presented. The young girls' interventions become reactions to the examples seen and statements that express great inspiration.

The whole femvertising presents a visual and sound climax that leads to greater involvement of the audience. Furthermore, the representational structure makes the commercial a metaphor for the school environment. The girls

are represented at school and the structure of the video is like the one of a lesson. Microsoft assumes the thematic role of the teacher and the girls represent themselves and the viewer unaware of the inventions mentioned. In this way, concealed criticism is made of the school system and its failure to tell the story of female inventors.

The girls portrayed are very different from each other, making the campaign in line with the concept of intersectionality of the fourth feminist wave. With this campaign and its subsequent initiatives over the years, Microsoft has explicit its interest in ending gender discrimination and bringing young minds closer to the STEM disciplines.

3.3.3 'Label Against Women' by Pantene

YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luLkfxixBpM>

Audience demographics from pantene.com: the pantene.com audience consists of 40.07% male and 59.93% female. The largest group of visitors is 25-34 years old (SimilarWeb, 2023d).

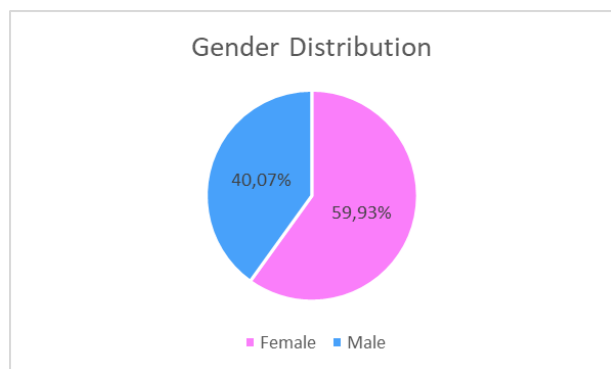


Figure n.35 'Pantene's Gender Distribution'

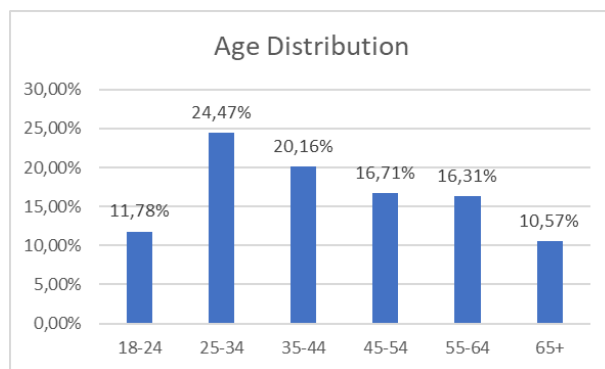


Figure n.36 'Pantene's Age Distribution'

Pantene's 'Labels Against Women' ad was first released on 13 November 2013, in the Philippines. It is part of Pantene's 'Shine Strong' campaign and was shared on the brand's various social media (Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram) and web pages, reaching a global audience (Organ,2013). It has a duration of 60 seconds.

Organized synthesis of materials:

Frame number	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00-0.01	The commercial opens with a clip that frames a woman's red-soled shoes as she walks down a corridor. The camera follows the subject in a dynamic close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	The beginning of the soundtrack (S.T.) coincides with the beginning of the commercial. The song representing the soundtrack is a cover of the Tears for Fears song 'Mad World' by Filipino singer Cyril Cabornay, rearranged especially for the commercial.	The soundtrack is of the 'off' type, emitted from a point not visible in the video nor placeable by the viewer in it. It is an extradiegetic sound. The lyrics of the chosen song are an indicator of the type of campaign that will follow, dedicated to denouncing a 'mad world'.

2	0.01-0.02	<p>Sharp transition to a clip of an adult woman in elegant office attire, taken from the torso up. She is the owner of the shoes shown in the previous frame and walks in the same corridor. The camera follows the subject, with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	
3	0.03-0.04	<p>Sharp transition to a clip of a grown man in elegant office attire, shot from the torso up. The camera follows the subject, with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	<p>Same shot as the previous frame.</p> <p>The subject presents the same characteristics of clothing and attitude as the previous one, only the sex changes. It represents the male alter ego of the figure shown earlier.</p>
4	0.04-0.07	<p>Sharp transition to a clip of the same adult man entering an office' room. The room features a large window overlooking a skyscraper with a billboard reading 'BOSS' in front of it. The camera is static, there is a change in framing.</p> <p>Initially, there is a mid-shot depicting the man and the surrounding space. Then there is a transition to a close-up of the man's face with the reflection of the 'BOSS' sign above it. Beginning of a cross-fade.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, predominance of greys.</p>	S.T.	
5	0.07-0.11	<p>Gradual post-fade transition to a clip showing the woman, who had already appeared in Frame 2, looking out of the window, and then turning around and returning to talk to her colleagues in the office room.</p> <p>In addition to the subject, the writing on the skyscraper has also changed to 'BOSSY'. The camera is static, there is a change in framing.</p> <p>Initially, there is a close-up depicting the woman's face with the reflection of the writing 'BOSSY' above it. Then there is a transition to a mid-shot framing the woman and the office around her.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, predominance of greys.</p>	S.T.	<p>The setting and shots of the previous frame are repeated backward. Only the subject, now a woman, and the building sign, now 'BOSSY', have changed. The modification of this last element completely changes the message communicated. Despite the similarity of the scenes, the one with the man has a positive connotation and the one with the woman has a negative connotation.</p>

6	0.12-0.15	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a man speaking on a stage in front of an audience. The word 'PERSUASIVE' appears above the lectern. The camera is first static with a mid-shot taking a frontal view of the scene, then becomes dynamic and rotates around the subject's shoulders with a medium close-up shot. Start of a cross-fade.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and focuses on illuminating the central subject. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
7	0.15-0.20	<p>Gradual post-fade transition to the clip showing a woman intent on speaking on a stage in front of an audience. The scene is similar to the one shown in the previous frame. In addition to the change of the subject, also the writing on the lectern has mutated to 'PUSHY'. The camera is first dynamic and rotates around the shoulders of the subject with a medium close-up shot, then it becomes static with a mid-shot and takes a frontal shot of the scene.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and focuses on illuminating the central subject. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	<p>The setting and shots of the previous frame are repeated backward. Only the subject, now a woman, and the sign, now 'PUSHY' have changed. The modification of this last element completely changes the message communicated.</p> <p>Despite the similarity of the scenes, the one with the man has a positive connotation and the one with the woman has a negative connotation.</p>
8	0.20-0.22	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a man intent on working on a computer. The man is tired and yawns. The viewer can guess that the scene is set at night from the fact that the room is dark and illuminated only by a light facing the wall. On this wall appears the shadow of a decoration hanging from the ceiling showing the word 'DEDICATED'. The camera is static with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and focuses on illuminating the central subject and the wall behind him, where a play of shadows is created.</p> <p>Mixed colours.</p>	S.T.	
9	0.22-0.23	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the decoration hanging from the ceiling, the shadow of which, in the previous frame, created the writing 'DEDICATED'. The camera is static with a big close-up shot.</p> <p>Light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial. It first illuminates the subject of the scene against the light and then disappears, making the scene dark. Mixed colours.</p>	S.T.	

10	0.24-0.28	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a woman intent on working on a computer at night. The scene is similar to the one depicted in Frame 8. In addition to the subject, the shadow reflected on the wall has also changed, showing the word 'SELFISH'. The camera is static but there is a change in framing. First, the subject is shown with a close-up of the face, then there is a change to a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and focuses on illuminating the central subject and the wall behind him, where a play of shadows is created. Mixed colours.</p>	S.T.	<p>The setting and shots of frame 8 are repeated. Only the subject, now a woman, and the sign, now 'SELFISH' have changed. The modification of this last element completely changes the message communicated.</p> <p>Despite the similarity of the scenes, the one with the man has a positive connotation and the one with the woman has a negative connotation.</p>
11	0.28-0.32	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a woman and a man washing their faces in a bathroom. Initially the two smile at each other. Then, as they lower themselves onto two sinks adjacent, steam creates the inscription 'NEAT' on the mirror in front of the man, while the inscription 'VAIN' is created on the woman's mirror. The camera shot is first dynamic, following the woman as she turns towards the sink while exchanging a smile with the man. There is a medium close-up shot. Then the camera becomes static, taking the subjects from behind in a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	<p>Even though the two subjects do the same action in the same scenario, they get different descriptions. The figure of the man has a positive connotation, while the figure of the woman has a negative connotation.</p>
12	0.33-0.36	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a man adjusting his jacket and crossing a zebra crossing, with 'SMOOTH' written on it. The camera is dynamic and follows the man as he walks with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
13	0.36-0.37	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a close-up of the man from the previous frame while he smiles. The camera is dynamic.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
14	0.37-0.39	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing the man from the previous frame intent on entering a building. As he exits from the scene, a well-dressed woman emerges from the same building, representing his female alter ego. The camera is fixed and there is a medium-long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	

15	0.39-0.40	<p>Clip sharp transition representing the woman from the previous frame from behind, as she takes off her jacket. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
16	0.40-0.45	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing the woman from the previous frame. She is proudly walking over the zebra crossing, already depicted in Frame 12. Here there is the writing 'SHOW-OFF' on it, but as the protagonist steps over it, it vanishes. Dynamic camera with medium-long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	<p>The setting and shots from frame 12 are repeated. Only the subject and the writing mutate, first 'SMOOTH' and then 'SHOW-OFF'. The modification of this last element completely changes the message communicated. However, the actions of the woman depicted, who decides to walk over the writing, make the scene lose its purely negative connotation.</p>
17	0.45-0.47	<p>Sharp transition to a clip representing a close-up of the woman from the previous frame as she smiles. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject.</p> <p>A cross-fade begins.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
18	0.47-0.51	<p>Gradual post-fade transition whereby the words 'DON'T LET LABEL HOLD YOU BACK.' appear on a yellowish background.</p> <p>A cross-fade begins.</p> <p>The lighting, which is digital, is concentrated in the center of the screen. The colors are those of the background and lettering, mainly yellow and black.</p>	S.T.	<p>Use of synecdoche, the melodic progression of the song preludes a conclusion, concomitant with that of the commercial. The singing voice is no longer there and only an instrumental melody can be heard. A string sound is added when the writing appears on the screen, to emphasize its importance.</p>
19	0.52-0.54	<p>Gradual post-fade transition to a clip representing the woman of the last frames intent on smiling and finishing a turn on herself, before walking along a tree-lined avenue again. The shot is dynamic and switches from a medium close-up to a long shot.</p> <p>A cross-fade begins.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors.</p>	S.T.	
20	0.54-0.58	<p>Gradual post-fade transition to a clip in which the words 'BE STRONG AND SHINE.' appear against a yellowish background.</p> <p>A cross-fade begins.</p> <p>The lighting, which is digital, is concentrated in the center of the screen. The colors are those of the background and lettering, mainly yellow and black.</p>	S.T.	<p>Final soundtracks note. Use of the synecdoche.</p>

21	0.58-1.00	<p>Gradual post-fade to a clip in which the words 'WHIPIT- PANTENE' appear on a yellowish background. The logo is in the center of the frame.</p> <p>The lighting, which is digital, is concentrated in the center of the screen. The colors are those of the background and lettering, mainly yellow, gold, and black.</p>		<p>First and only time the Pantene logo appears. Use of the synecrisis.</p>
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Pantene's femvertising, which belongs to the social genre, presents a sustained and regular rhythm, with no particular changes in photography or soundtrack. The red thread of the commercial (isotopy) is the contrast to the labels given to males and females while performing the same tasks. The male ones have positive and flattering connotations, while the female ones are critical and negative. A call to action is presented urging users not to be held back by the negative labels they may be given. This is reinforced by the hashtag '#WhipIt', a term used to refer to the action of shaking something off, in this case, labels. The Pantene logo is shown only at the end of the commercial. This femvertising has no commercial purpose and no products or services are advertised.

The narration:

In the commercial, there is no external narrator describing what is happening in the video or reinforcing the message. The narration in this case is left to the written text that appears in the various frames and the final call to action. The soundtrack, which plays 'Mad World', also provides a narrative to the entire commercial, emphasizing the absurdity of the situations presented.

The actors in the scenes presented up to frame 14, are 'delegates' of a society that is stereotypical and discriminatory towards women. The girl who appears from frame 14 onwards, and who tramples on the label imposed on her, represents the 'delegate' of the woman who grasps Pantene's message and wants to face her life free of judgment. The whole narrative discourse is presented as a contrast between masculine and feminine, with a change of structure in the finale, where the story focuses on the last girl and the brand's message.

Actantial model of the femvertising:

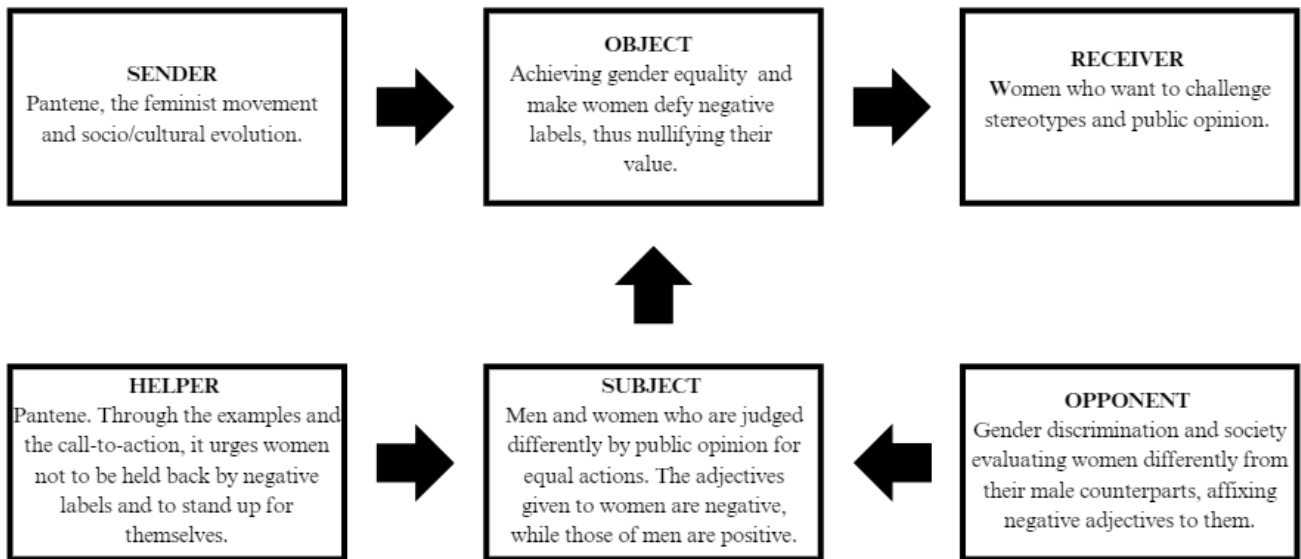


Figure n.37 'Pantene's femvertising Actantial Model'

The strategies:

The strategy used by Pantene in femvertising is a narrative one, through the incomplete narrative focused on the different labels that society gives to men and women for the same action. The narrative is incomplete in that it ends with the brand inviting the audience to follow in the footsteps of the last woman represented, trampling on stereotypical labels, and continuing the story in a positive way (Be Strong and Shine, #WhipIt). The brand's strategy to get the message across is to play on the contrasts of the images. It uses the male/female pair in equal contexts to emphasize the injustices women suffer and how the male pole is a priori dominant and positive compared to its female counterpart (Hall, 1997:235).

The rhetorical figure on which the whole commercial is built is the antithesis, with the juxtaposition of opposing concepts, one with a positive meaning and one with a negative meaning, belonging to the same semiotic field. This contrast allows the commercial to denounce the fact that most of society thinks that women must minimize their personalities to be accepted, especially in the working sphere, an action not required of men (Gonzales in Organ, 2013).

The commercial was a precursor for other Pantene campaigns aimed at supporting the feminist movement, making it an integral part of its Brand Activism. Many initiatives for women's empowerment, especially in the workplace, have been done by the brand under the hashtag #WhipIt. This spot managed to build strong brand equity, which was also reflected in sales, increasing Pantene's value shares (Organ, 2013).

3.3.4 'MyBeautyMySay' by Dove

YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_XOa7zVqxA4

Audience demographics from dove.com: the audience of dove.com consists of 43.27% male and 56.73% female. The largest group of visitors is 25-34 years old (SimilarWeb, 2023a).

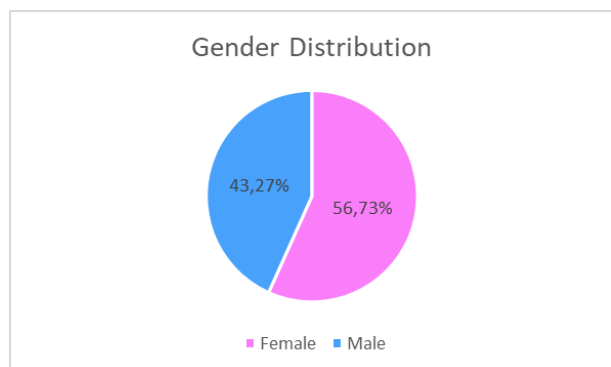


Figure n.38 'Dove's Gender Distribution'

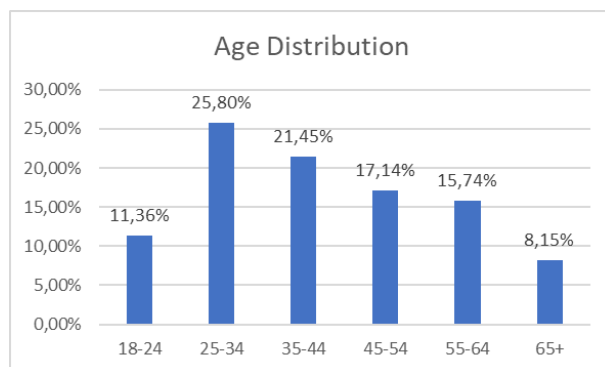


Figure n.39 'Dove's Age Distribution'

Dove's 'My Beauty My Say' commercial was first released on Dove.com's social platforms and webpage on 28 June 2016, in the US. It has a running time of 90 seconds. It is a good example of femvertising, celebrating women's achievements and individuality. The spot is narrated by its' protagonists themselves, who tell of their journey toward personal acceptance and the battle against the negative judgments they have encountered throughout their lives (Dove, 2016).

Organized synthesis of materials:

Frame number	Duration	Visual Column	Soundtrack	Notes
1	0.00-0.02	The footage shows a woman intent on boxing training, sending shots with her gloves at a boxing pin. The camera is dynamic and changes frame, focusing first on a close-up of the gloves and then to mid shots of the athlete from her back. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	The beginning of the soundtrack (S.T.) coincides with the beginning of the commercial. The narrator's voice is external but matches that of the subject portrayed. In fact, it is the athlete depicted in the video who narrates about her life <They say I was too pretty to fight...> + sound of punches hitting the boxing pin.	The soundtrack is of the 'off' type, emanating from a point that is neither visible in the video nor placeable by the viewer in it. It is an extradiegetic sound. The story narrated by the athlete belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit. The athlete is not filmed while speaking, but it is easily inserted by the viewer within the visual plane. It is a sound belonging to the diegesis. The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the fists hitting the boxing peg). It is a synchronous sound.

2	0.03-0.05	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing the woman of the previous frame as she walks around the gym and adjusts her boxing gloves. The camera is dynamic and changes frame, first taking a mid-shot of the athlete walking and then a close-up of the gloves being adjusted.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ narrator's voice of the athlete in frame 1 <You gonna mess up that beautiful face> + sound of the laces tightening around the glove.</p>	<p>The story narrated by the athlete belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit. The athlete is not filmed while speaking, but it is easily inserted by the viewer within the visual plane. It is a sound belonging to the diegesis.</p> <p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the laces being tightened around the glove). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
3	0.05-0.08	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a well-dressed woman walking her dog through the city streets. The camera is dynamic and changes frame, first taking a medium close-up shot of the walking subject's back and then a close-up of her face.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the girl filmed <They said I was too fat, only skinny girls can dress well></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
4	0.08-0.11	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman walking in a room towards a window. The camera is static, with a mid-shot of the subject's back.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. The subject is counter light. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the girl filmed (in French) <They look at me head to toe. How can she be a lawyer?></p>	<p>The narration is in French with English subtitles.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
5	0.12-0.13	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman, dressed in a peculiar way, intent on looking out of a room window. The camera is dynamic and moves toward the subject, with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They said I didn't dress for my age></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
6	0.13-0.15	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman, dressed as a showgirl, standing in front of a stage curtain. There is a golden light that characterizes the whole clip.</p> <p>The camera is dynamic, approaching and moving over the subject's body with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, it is artificial and golden. The subject is counter light. Mixed colors, no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They said my nose was too prominent></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>

7	0.16-0.17	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman, with short hair, walking along a street. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject's shoulders with a mid-shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They said I was too masculine></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
8	0.17-0.19	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing the torso of a woman, with a camera attached to a shoulder strap, walking down a street. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a close-up shot of the bust. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They thought the catcalling was a compliment> + traffic noise</p>	<p>The story narrated by the portrayed woman and the traffic noise belong to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact the woman is not filmed speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. Traffic noise is also associated with the scene, although it is not depicted. These are sounds that belong to the diegesis.</p>
9	0.19-0.21	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman intent on blowing against a flower and smiling. Very blurred shot. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a big close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <He said, you can fix those teeth quite easily></p>	<p>Blurred shot.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
10	0.21-0.25	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in Frame 7, intent on telling her story. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with first a frontal close-up and then a medium close-up shot of her face. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Boysh and ugly?...ahaha.. When they were talking about females, they weren't talking about me></p>	<p>The first part of the narration is made explicitly by the protagonist of the clip, who pronounces the words 'Boysh and ugly' in the video and laughs immediately afterward. It belongs to the sound type 'in' and is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The second part of the speech, 'when they were talking about females, they weren't talking about me' belongs instead to the 'off-screen' type. The woman is not filmed while speaking anymore but it is easily placed by the viewer within the visual plane. It is a sound belonging to the diegesis.</p>

11	0.25-0.26	<p>Sharp transition to a clip showing a woman leaning against a tree, looking down. Thick curly hair covers her face. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <This was not pretty>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
12	0.26-0.28	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 8, with her face covered by the camera as she is intent on taking a photograph. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They would holler from across the street> + camera click noise	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the camera clicking). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
13	0.28-0.29	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 11, walking down the street. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Look sophisticated>	<p>Beginning of a Climax.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
14	0.29-0.30	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 6, smiling in profile. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, it is artificial and golden. Mixed colors, no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Embarassing nose>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>

15	0.30-0.31	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, standing on the side of a road. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Too chubby> + traffic noise	<p>The sound that is added to the soundtrack belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the traffic noise). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
16	0.31-0.32	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 5, talking. The camera is static with a big close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Too skinny>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
17	0.32-0.33	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the hands of the woman, already shown in frame 7, holding sunglasses. The camera is static with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Man-like>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
18	0.33	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 11, walking near a tree. The camera is static with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Crazy hair>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
19	0.33-0.34	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, walking down the street. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Never look good>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>

20	0.34	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 11, looking around. The camera is dynamic and follows the subject with a big close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Too wild>	The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.
21	0.34-0.35	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 4, walking out of the door of a building. The camera is static with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Too cute, too beautiful>	The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.
22	0.35	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, walking down the street with the dog. The camera is static with a mid-long shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <Too fat>	The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.
23	0.36	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 9, looking into the camera. Blurred shot.</p> <p>The camera is dynamic with a big close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <He said...>	<p>Blurred shot.</p> <p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
24	0.36-0.37	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, walking down the street with a dog. The camera is dynamic with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <They said...> + new narrative voice of unrepresented subject <...she said>.	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p> <p>The part narrated by the voice of a woman unrepresented in the clip is a sound of the 'off' type, emanating from a point that is neither visible in the video nor placeable by the viewer in it. It is an extradiegetic sound.</p>

25	0.37-0.38	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 4, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. slightly lowered in volume + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <I said, no way!></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis. There, the soundtrack, and the speech mark a change in the rhythm and the way the theme is addressed in the commercial.</p>
26	0.38-0.41	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 7, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. with change of volume and use of more pronounced bass tones + new narration voice of the woman filmed <You aren't me. I am me></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>Use of the synecrisis.</p>
27	0.41-0.44	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 6, as she poses smiling on a stage. She is dressed in stage clothes, with a large headdress made of stars. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <I am not gonna be defined by anyone's expectations></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
28	0.44-0.48	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 5, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <I don't dress my age, I dress myself></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
29	0.48-0.51	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the athlete, already shown in frame 1, standing in a boxing ring and expressing his thoughts. The camera is static with a mid-shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <cause my face has nothing to do with my boxing...></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
30	0.51-0.53	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the athlete, already shown in the previous frame, smiling, and playing with a thumbnail of himself throwing punches. The camera is dynamic with a big close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + continuation of the narrative voice of the woman filmed <I am ranked number 1 in the country, and number 2 in the world ></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>

31	0.53-0.57	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, sitting on a sofa and petting her dog. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <As a fashion blogger, my style is 100% unapologetic></p>	<p>The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
32	0.57-0.58	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 9, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The clip, related to this subject, is no longer blurred. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <I don't wanna change my teeth></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
33	0.58-1.01	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 4, looking into the camera and moving her hair. The camera is dynamic with a close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T.+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed (in French) <My looks have nothing to do with my capabilities></p>	<p>The narration is in French with English subtitles. The story narrated by the depicted woman belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, in fact, the woman is not filmed while speaking, but the viewer can easily trace the narration back to her. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
34	1.01-1.04	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 11, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <This is me, this is my hair></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
35	1.04-1.05	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 6, situated on a sofa, looking into the camera, and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <My beauty></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>
36	1.05	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the athlete, already shown in frame 1, standing in a boxing ring and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a mid-shot. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	<p>S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <My beauty></p>	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p>

37	1.06	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 8, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. + new narrative voice of the woman filmed <My beauty> + traffic noise	<p>The story narrated by the woman belongs to the 'in' type. The source is clearly visible in the frame (the woman talking). It is a synchronous sound.</p> <p>The traffic noise belongs to the 'off-screen' type. The sound source is not officially made explicit, but the viewer can easily relate it to the ambiance of the clip. It is a sound that belongs to the diegesis.</p>
38	1.07-1.08	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 7, looking into the camera and expressing her thoughts. The camera is static with a close-up shot.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T. with vocal sounds added+ new narrative voice of the woman filmed <My say>	<p>Use of syntheses. Vocal elements are added to the soundtrack. This gives importance to the words spoken by the subject of the clip, which end the Dove slogan and mark a change in the commercial.</p>
39	1.08-1.09	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 8, sitting on an outside staircase and holding the camera. She looks straight at the lens that is filming her. The camera is static with a mid-shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Hannah- Photographer.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	<p>Use of synecrisis.</p> <p>From this point on, there is no longer a sound narrative, but it is the lyrics that describe the protagonist of the clip.</p>
40	1.09-1.10	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 9, smiling and looking towards the lens. The camera is dynamic with a close-up shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Elaine- Administrator.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	
41	1.10-1.11	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 6, smiling and looking towards the lens. She is in stage clothes and wrapped in a golden light. The camera is static with a close-up shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Grace- Burlesque Dancer.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, it is artificial and golden. The subject is counter light. Mixed colors, no artificial ones added in post-production.</p>	S.T.	
42	1.11-1.13	<p>Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 3, sitting on a sofa and petting her dog. The camera is static with a medium close-up shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Jessica- Fashion Blogger.</p> <p>The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors,</p>	S.T.	

		there are no artificial ones added in post-production.		
43	1.13-1.14	Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 11, smiling in a street. The camera is static with a mid-shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Elizabeth- Poet. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.	
44	1.14-1.16	Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 4, smiling and looking towards the lens. The camera is static with a big close-up shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Marcia- Partner, Law Firm. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.	
45	1.16-1.17	Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 5, laughing. The camera is static with a close-up shot framing her from below. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Judit- Clinical Psychologist. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.	
46	1.17-1.19	Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 4, smiling and looking towards the lens. The camera is dynamic with a close-up shot. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Rain-Model. The light belongs to the environment, so it is natural and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.	
47	1.19-1.123	Sharp transition to a clip depicting the woman, already shown in frame 1, as she is intent on throwing punches at the camera and laughing. The camera is dynamic with a big close-up. At the bottom, to her right, there are the words, written in white: Heather-Boxer. Here the writing fades out in the last second of the clip. The light belongs to the environment, so it is artificial and uniform. Mixed colors, there are no artificial ones added in post-production.	S.T.	The entire commercial opens and closes with images of the athlete intent on training.
48	1.23-1.26	Sharp transition to a clip shot showing a still image of the words, written in blue, #MyBeautyMySay on a white background.	S.T.	Brand call to action. High use of syncretis.

		The colors are those of the background and lettering, mainly white and blue.		
49	1.26-1.30	Sharp transition to a clip shot showing the 'Dove' logo written in blue, with the golden dove. A moving reflection is created on the symbol. The colors are those of the background and lettering, mainly white, gold, and blue. Artificial light flowing over the dove in the logo, added in post-production	S.T.	First and only time the Dove logo appears. High level of synecrisis. The bass of the soundtrack is accentuated when the brand logo appears and is in time with the reflection running across the golden dove. The music ends with the end of the commercial.

Dove's femvertising belongs to the social genre. It is characterized by a fast pace, with a crescendo accentuated by the soundtrack. There is a strong degree of synchrony between what is represented and what is said. The red thread of the commercial (isotopy) is the testimony of the women filmed, who tell of their journey towards self-acceptance. The commercial can be divided into three parts, linked by the narrative structure and the soundtrack that sets the rhythm. The first is marked by the account of the criticism and discriminatory comments the protagonists have suffered throughout their lives. From frame 25, the way in which the issue is addressed changes, and the protagonists describe how they responded to the criticism they received, accepting themselves. Finally, from frame 39 onwards, there is an official presentation of the women represented, with names and professions. It is only in the last frames that the call to action #MyBeautyMySay and the 'Dove' logo appear in closing. Throughout the commercial, neither products nor services are presented.

The narration:

The narration of the femvertising is mainly entrusted to the protagonists represented. They take turns narrating, with 'in' and 'off-screen' voices, the story of the sexist and judgmental comments they have suffered and how they have slipped through them to accept themselves. From frame 39, at the conclusion of the commercial, there is a final change of narrative. This is in fact entrusted to the written text that mentions the name and profession of the protagonists and finally announces the call to action.

The brand and the viewer have no delegates in the commercial. The women speak for themselves and for their own experiences. Likewise, the Dove brand enters the commercial in written form, representing itself and communicating its message to the audience.

Actantial model of the femvertising:

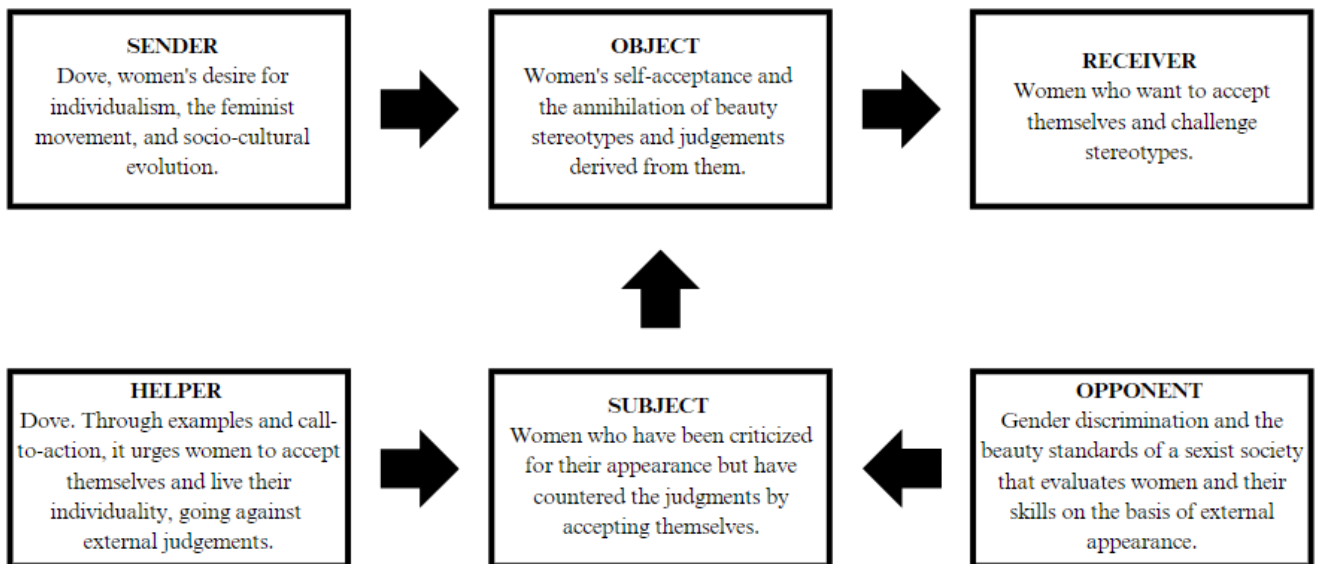


Figure n.40 'Dove's femvertising Actantial Model'

The strategies:

The strategy used by Dove in the femvertising is a complete narrative. The stories recounted start with the description of the denigrating and sexist comments the women in the video have suffered during their lives and go on to the description of how they have managed to accept themselves. The video ends with the viewer being informed of the protagonists' names and professions. Explicitly stating their names ensures that the stories are embedded within their individual spheres, marking their importance, and closing the narrative. After this part comes the brand's call-to-action #MyBeautyMySay, which reinforces the message launched. Femvertising is characterized by a narrative antithesis, which finds its point of change in frame 25. Before this scene there is an explication of all the negative comments the protagonists have heard. From frame 25 onwards there is instead the narration of how they responded to such criticism, accepting themselves. The strong individuality of the subjects is also underlined by the words spoken. In the first part of the commercial, the use of the personal pronoun 'I' does not appear. Many of the spoken sentences begin with <they said...>, <he said...> or <she said...>. Only from the point of change is the term 'I' introduced, precisely with the phrase <I said, no way!>. From then on, there are reflective descriptions of what the subjects think of themselves.

The anaphora is the main rhetorical figure used. At the textual level, there is the anaphora of the pronoun 'I' and the possessive pronoun 'my', which is also used in the call to action. Moreover, the entire femvertising presents a circular anaphora of images. The commercial opens and closes, excluding the call to action and the brand logo, with images of the boxer. This creates a narrative frame for the commercial and offers a metaphor for the fact that self-acceptance can be achieved by fighting against misogynistic and stereotypical judgments.

The campaign aligns with the feminist principles of the fourth wave, emphasizing the importance of individuality and how all different stories have the same right to be told. Furthermore, the people represented are all diverse, presenting a great degree of intersectionality. The femvertising is part of Dove's Brand Discourse on female empowerment, which had already started with the series within the 'Real Beauty Effort' project. Various initiatives were made around the hashtag #MyBeautyMySay. In addition, Dove decided to deepen the stories of the protagonists by dedicating individual interviews to them on its webpage (Dove, 2023). All this strengthened its brand equity, making Dove a globally recognized ally for feminist battles against gender discrimination.

3.4 Sentiment Analysis of the femvertising sample

The second part of the study consists of a sentiment analysis, based on the YouTube comments of selected femvertisings. The choice of using the social media YouTube as the object of investigation was mainly dictated by two reasons. The first was the possibility of having access to the complete video of the femvertising, and not just a few frames. In the Instagram case, for instance, the same campaigns had been cut to shorter frames, making their visualization more suitable for the social media environment and its audience. On YouTube, instead, comments could be associated with the entirety of the video and not just a part of its message, maintaining a line of consistency between semiotic and sentiment analysis. The second motivation was that, except for Microsoft's femvertising, all the videos had a high number of comments. This made it possible to have a representative analysis sample of reality and to identify useful trends for future implications.

Sentiment Analysis is a computational field of study that focuses on analyzing and interpreting people's opinions, attitudes, and emotions in relation to a specific entity. This 'entity' can be anything, such as a product, a service, an organization, or, in the case of this research, an advertising (Medhat et al., 2014). The main objective of Sentiment Analysis is to determine whether the opinion expressed in a text is positive, negative, or neutral, and can sometimes also try to quantify the intensity of these emotions. In the analysis carried out in this study, the use of sentiment analysis served to observe the reactions of the audience, first male and then female, to the same commercial and to see if there were any relevant differences. In this way, the effects of the various femvertisings on the audience could be investigated.

The functioning of a sentiment analysis can be summarized as follows:

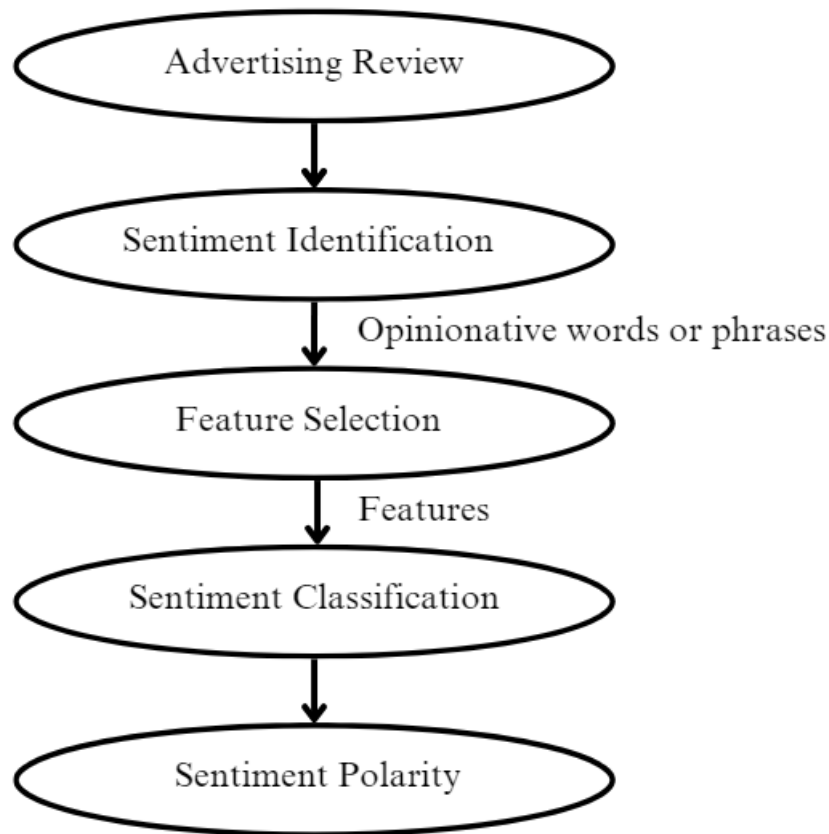


Fig.n.41 'Adapted version of Sentiment Analysis process on product reviews', 2014 (from Engineering journal)

This process is often performed using natural language processing and machine learning algorithms. In the case of this study, the coding of sentiment was done manually following the degrees of positivity and negativity identified by NVivo, software ultimately used to do the analysis of the most frequently mentioned terms in the positive and negative comments of male and female users.

The initial phase of the study consisted in exporting the comments present under the four chosen femvertising. For this operation, the ExportComments software was used, in particular its function 'YouTube Export Comments' (<https://exportcomments.com/download-youtube-comments>). The software enabled the extraction of almost all comments into an Excel file. Some comments could not be extracted due to specific user privacy settings.

The Excel file obtained had 7 columns containing:

The number of comments	Name of the user	Date and time of the comment	Likes	isHearted	isPinned	Comment
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Fig.n.42 'First export' Excel Columns, 2023 (from ExportComments)

The grand total of comments exported, before their cleaning and division according to gender for analysis purposes, was:

	Number of total comments exported
Dream Crazier Nike YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfX5jeF6k4	309
MakeWhatsNext Microsoft YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tNqSzUdYazw	42
Label Against Women Pantene YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luLkfXixBpM	132
MyBeautyMySay Dove YouTube link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XOa7zVqxA4	471

Fig.n.43 'Total comments exported', 2023 (from Excel)

The first operation done on the Excel extraction sheet was to remove comments that were not useful for the purpose of the analysis. Comments not inherent to the femvertisings, such as: 'Who else here got this for an assignment', were eliminated to make the file cleaner and allow easier sentiment analysis and more precise reading of the terms used on NVivo.

This resulted in four Excel files containing:

	Number of total comments after clean-up
Dream Crazier Nike	234
MakeWhatsNext Microsoft	17
Label Against Women Pantene	116
MyBeautyMySay Dove	444

Fig.n.44 'Cleaned-up total comments exported', 2023 (from Excel)

After the initial operation of the cleaning of the comments, it was manually added an eighth Excel column to the seven created by the export software, to create a division between:

- Male user (indicated with M)
- Female user (indicated with F)
- Not available information (indicated with NA)

NA users were then discarded from the total number of comments as not relevant to the study conducted.

The results of this operation were:

	Male Comments	Female Comments	NA
Dream Crazier Nike	125	74	35
MakeWhatsNext Microsoft	14	3	-
Label Against Women Pantene	72	27	17
MyBeautyMySay Dove	159	219	66

Fig.n.45 'Male and Female Comments', 2023 (from Excel)

After this first phase of cleaning and dividing the comments by the gender of the users, the sentiment analysis was done manually in Excel. The decision to not use NVivo software in this first part of the sentiment analysis was dictated by its limitations in recognizing irony or categorizing peculiar terms (such as 'crazy') within the proper sphere of sentiment. There was an initial attempt to make changes to the software itself, but they were not saved, resulting in an incorrect final sentiment analysis.

The manual sentiment analysis was done respecting the divisions proposed by the NVivo software.

Therefore, all comments made by male and female users were categorized within macro-categories:

- Neutral (N): comments with mixed emotions or no emotion at all.
- Very Positive (VP): comments with a very positive meaning, with terms such as: love, inspiration, best.
- Moderately Positive (MP): comments with a positive meaning, but without terms containing great enthusiasm, such as: thank you, nice, approve.
- Very Negative (VN): comments with a very negative meaning, with terms such as: hate, boycott, cringe.
- Moderately Negative (MN): comments with a slightly negative meaning, with terms such as: disappointed, dislike, disagree.

The next step was to create further Excel worksheets, onto which only the columns with the comments and their sentiment category were copied, all divided by male and female users. This resulted in a total of 8 Excel worksheets, 2 for each femvertising. From this analysis a graph was created, observable in chapter four, in which all sentiments except 'neutral' were summarized. This led to the identification of the general sentiment of the users of a specific gender regarding the observed femvertising.

After the sentiment analysis, the research focused on the individualization of the terms most frequently used by male and female users to express a positive or negative opinion of the viewed femvertising. The aim of this part of the analysis was to find out whether there were any themes in particular that could provoke a

positive or negative feeling in the viewer, reflected in the comment made. To do this, NVivo software and its Word Frequency function were used, finally creating a Word Cloud for each element analyzed.

Preparation for this analysis consisted of creating 4 Word work files for each femvertising, 2 for male users and 2 for female users, containing only Moderately Positive (MP) and Very Positive (VP) comments and then only Moderately Negative (MN) and Very Negative (VN) comments. It resulted in a total of 16 Word worksheets, divided into:

- 'Name Brand'- Positive Male
- 'Name Brand'- Negative Male
- 'Name Brand'- Positive Female
- 'Name Brand'- Negative Female

These were uploaded and analyzed individually on the NVivo software to obtain a final Word Cloud. The option 'With minimum length: 4' was selected, so that elements such as articles, which were not important for the investigation, were removed from the most frequently repeated words. The 'Grouping' option was set up so that the software could consider the synonyms of the most repeated words in the comments.

However, there are exceptions to this final methodology of analysis. The Word Cloud of the sentiment analysis of Microsoft's female users was not carried out at last as these finally turned out to be 3 (2 VP and 1 MN) making an analysis of the most frequently used words superfluous and not indicative. In the analysis of the words used in Dove's female advertisements, the option 'With minimum length' was set to 3, since during the first phase of the sentiment analysis a repetition of the word 'fat' was noticed, and it was decided to observe how much the term was repeated.

Chapter 4: Results, General Discussion, Managerial Implications and Limitations

4.1 Analysis Results

To answer the proposed research question semiotics and sentiment analysis were combined to understand how a femvertising, characterized by symbolic, narrative elements and very specific strategies, affects its target group, differentiated in this research between males and females.

In the semiotic analysis, it was shown how the elements of each video, their narrative, and the strategies used by the brands changed considerably. Nevertheless, similar elements were found in the four analyzed femvertisings. First, the aim of the advertisements was united by the desire to achieve female empowerment. The various brands not only supported it but also tried to encourage active change using calls to action. Another common element was the lack of product placement for commercial purposes. The scope of these advertisements was in fact to communicate an idea, a battle for which the brands stand, and not to give information about any particular product. The genre of all commercials was social, and the strategy used was narrative. The narrative varies considerably in all four commercials, however, the actantial patterns presented were very similar, except for the subject, which was often related to the brand sector or to a particular feminist struggle. It was thus possible to summarize the role of:

- Opponent: gender discrimination and sexist society.
- Helper: the Brand, which supports the subjects of the video by telling their stories and urges the viewer/recipient to fight for their rights and the achievement of their goals.
- Object: gender equality and the end of sexist discrimination.
- Sender: the Brand, the feminist movement, and socio-cultural development.
- Receiver: anyone who wants to achieve gender equality, in particular women.

Especially relevant was the fact that the subjects of the videos were highly inherent to the sector in which the brand operates when the femvertisings were made by brands with a mainly male target audience. Nike represented female sportswomen and Microsoft female inventors who have led to great advances in STEM disciplines. In the case of brands with a predominantly female target group, the subjects represented do not operate in the brand's field of expertise. Struggles against stereotyped judgment were represented, but the message was not strictly related to the cosmetics field, and not shown explicitly.

Analysis of sentiment and the terms used to express it characterized the second part of the research, allowing the observation of the effects of femvertisings. It was analyzed how these elicited positive or negative responses, through an analysis of YouTube comments, and whether there were any sentiment trends relating to the gender of the commentators and to the terms used to express their opinions.

- **‘Dream Crazier’ by Nike**

The sentiment analysis, created using the methodology described in Chapter 3, resulted in two graphs demonstrating the sentiment distribution of comments made by male and female users. The graphs show the positive and negative sentiment classes. Mixed comments were not considered as they were not influential for the purposes of the study.

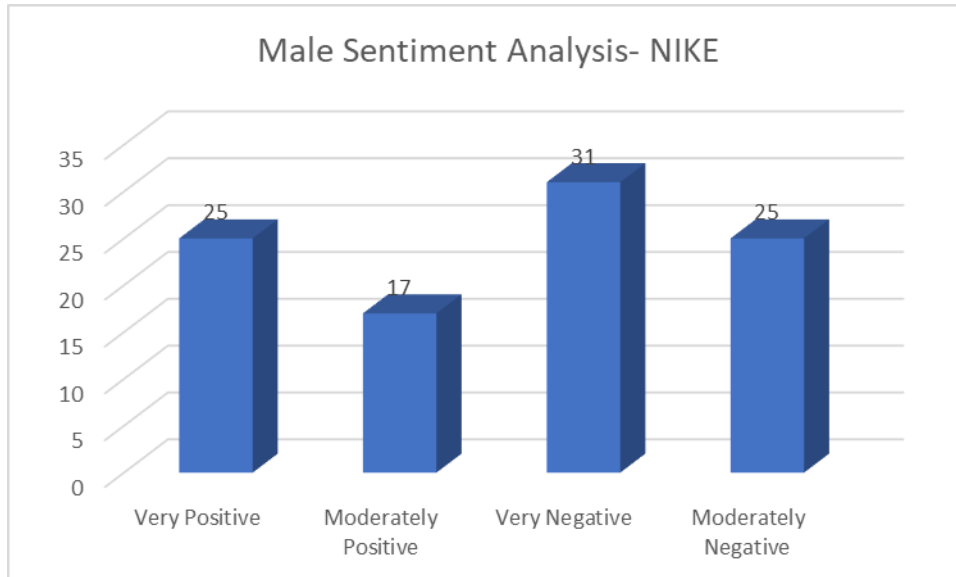


Fig.n.46 ‘Male Sentiment Analysis- Nike, 2023 (from Excel)

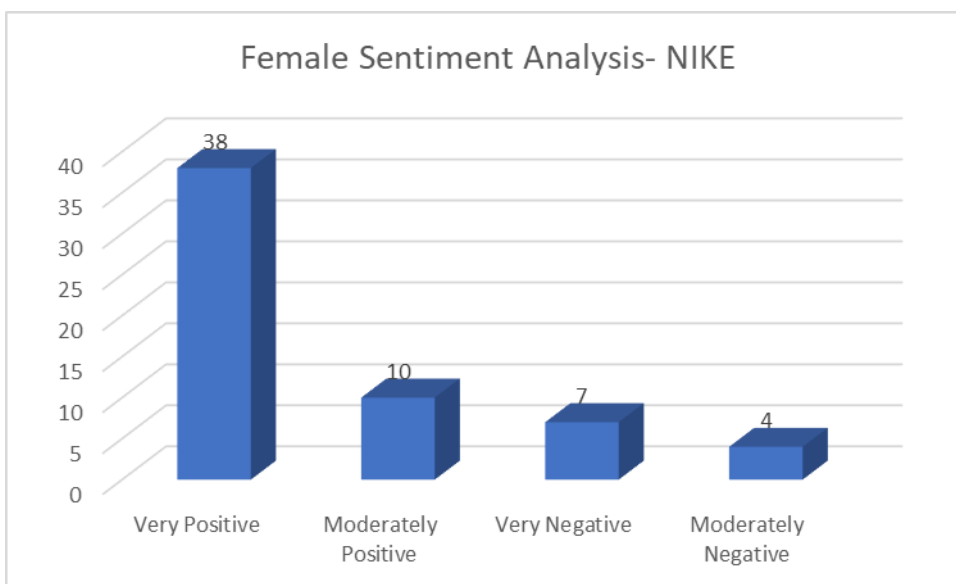


Fig.n.47 ‘Female Sentiment Analysis- Nike, 2023 (from Excel)

	Very Positive	Moderately Positive	Very Negative	Moderately Negative
Male Sentiment	25	17	31	25
Female Sentiment	38	10	7	4

Fig.n.48 ‘Comparison of male/female sentiments- Nike’, 2023

The table shows how the sentiment resulting from Nike's femvertising was highly influenced by the gender of the observer.

Out of a sample of 125 male comments, 31 of them turned out to be 'Very Negative', while 25 were 'Moderately Negative' so 44.8% of all male comments were characterized by negative sentiment, while the percentage of the positive sentiment was only 33.6%.

The situation was the opposite in the sentiment of female users. Out of a sample of 74 female comments, 38 were 'Very Positive' and 10 'Moderative Positive', resulting in 64.9% of all female comments being characterized by positive sentiment, while the percentage of the negative ones was only 14.9%.

The overall sentiment, considering both genders, was positive.

After this part, the research focused on identifying the terms most frequently used by users to express their opinions. This part of the analysis was conducted on the Nvivo software. A total of 4 Word Clouds were created, dividing the comments by gender and positive/negative sentiment.

- Word Cloud: Nike - Positive Male



Fig.n.49 'Nike- Positive Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Nike - Negative Male

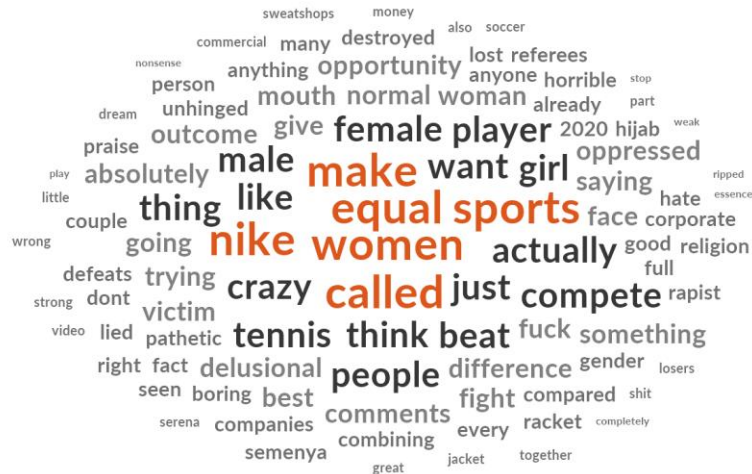


Fig.n.50 'Nike- 'Negative Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Nike - Positive Female

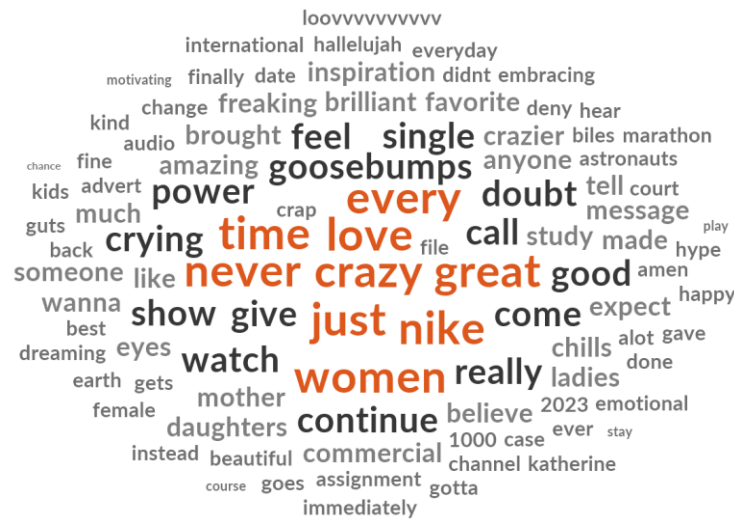


Fig.n.51 'Nike- 'Positive Female Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Nike - Negative Female



Fig.n.52 'Nike- 'Negative Female Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

Regarding the two positive Word Clouds, it was important to note that the terms 'woman/women' were among the most frequently used in both male and female comments, underlining how the focus of the advertisement was on the female figure and how this was positively conveyed to users. The repeated use of words such as 'best', 'crazy', 'nike', 'great', 'like', and 'motivated' suggested that the message of empowerment was transmitted positively. It was appreciated the play on the word 'crazy', which in context took on a positive connotation, and the strong connection with the 'nike' brand. This is confirmed by the repetition of comments such as 'this made me cry... so beautiful. show them what crazy can do. nike believes in you. I believe in you. just do it'. The repeated use of 'masculine' in the male comments was peculiar, as it was associated with the feeling of being represented by the ad even though one has, indeed, masculine characteristics.

In the two negative Word Clouds, the term 'women' was used to discredit the message. Particularly in the male one, words such as 'equal', 'nike', and 'sport' could be read alongside women, used to negatively refute the entire femvertising and to criticize the brand for conveying the message. Mainly in the case of the female Word Cloud the term 'crazy' became a negative term, juxtaposed with words such as 'inappropriate' and 'biological', terms that conveyed the message that women's place was not in the sports sphere. Examples can be traced back to the comments 'it is crazy to play against men in the same sport though' or 'Good God nike has gone full wokedarded. Crazy is thinking any of this is relevant. Women are not oppressed in America'.

- **'#MakeWhatsNext' by Microsoft**

The sentiment analysis resulted in two graphs showing the sentiment distribution of male and female users' comments. Mixed comments were not considered as they were not influential for the purposes of the study. In the case of this femvertising, the sample of comments was not as large as that of the others. This was due to the fact that, once exported, many of the comments were either unsuitable for the purposes of the analysis or empty, due to certain characteristics of the users' privacy settings. For this reason, the analysis of female sentiment could not lead to a Word Cloud due to too few comments being exported.

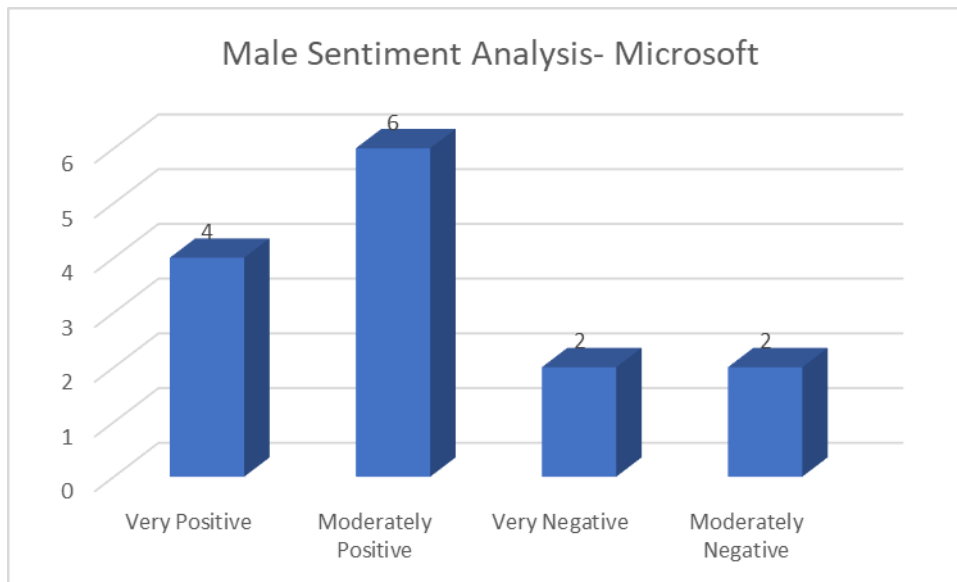


Fig.n.53 'Male Sentiment Analysis- Microsoft, 2023 (from Excel)

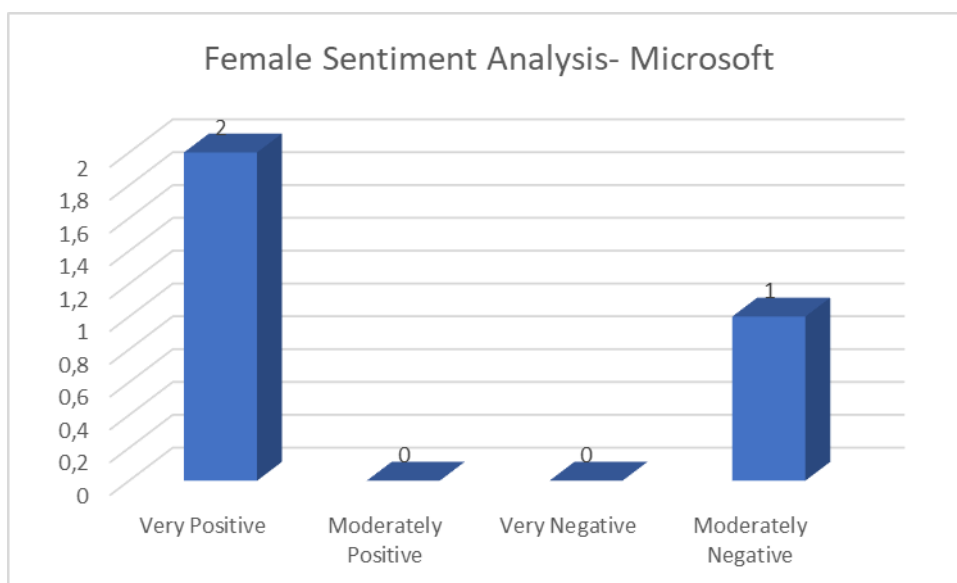


Fig.n.53 'Female Sentiment Analysis- Microsoft, 2023 (from Excel)

	Very Positive	Moderately Positive	Very Negative	Moderately Negative
Male Sentiment	4	6	2	2
Female Sentiment	2	-	-	1

Fig.n.54 'Comparison of male/female sentiments- Microsoft', 2023

Out of a sample of 14 male comments, 6 were 'Moderately Positive', while 4 were 'Very Positive'. 71.43% of all male comments were characterized by positive sentiment, while the percentage of negative sentiment was only 28.6%.

The female sample was characterized by 2 'Very Positive' comments and 1 'Moderately Negative' comment.

The overall sentiment, considering both genders, was positive.

After this part, the research focused on identifying the terms most frequently used by users to express their opinions. This part of the analysis was conducted with the Nvivo software. Two Word Clouds were created, dividing the male comments by positive/negative sentiment.

- Word Cloud: Microsoft - Positive Male

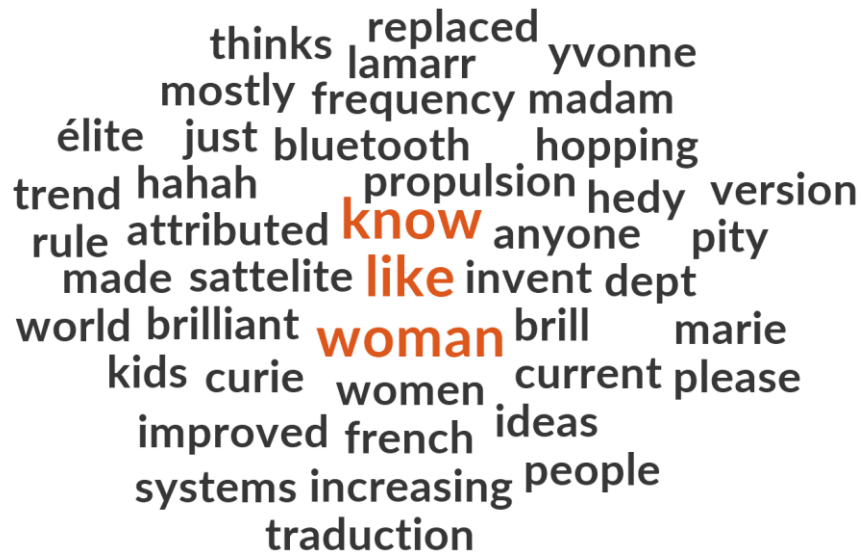


Fig.n.55 'Microsoft- Positive Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Microsoft - Negative Male

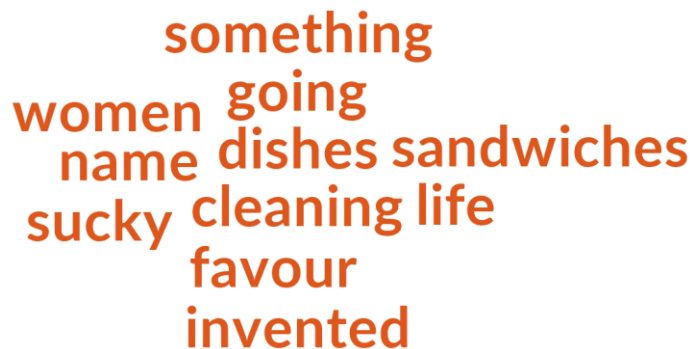


Fig.n.56 'Microsoft- Positive Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

In the two Word Clouds, it should be noted that the terms 'woman/women' were among the most frequently used in both positive and negative comments, underlining how the conversations both in support and against the advertisement saw their focus on the female figure. In the positive comments, the use of terms such as 'bluetooth', 'satellite', 'propulsion', and 'ideas' suggested that there were reflections on the inventions made, aligning with Microsoft's intentions to bring the discourse into the realm of inventions. On the other hand, the terms used for negative comments were mainly related to the domestic sphere. The contrast suggests that commentators with negative sentiments responded to the femvertising with words about the stereotypical place women should be, recalling a contested female situation from the second wave of feminism.

- **‘Label Against Women’ by Pantene**

After analyzing the two femvertising of brands with predominantly male target groups, the research focused on the femvertisings of those with predominantly female target groups. The sentiment analysis was carried out manually and then passed onto the NVivo software to create Word Clouds. The graphs show the positive and negative sentiment classes, divided by the gender of the users. Mixed comments were not considered as they were not influential for the purposes of the study.

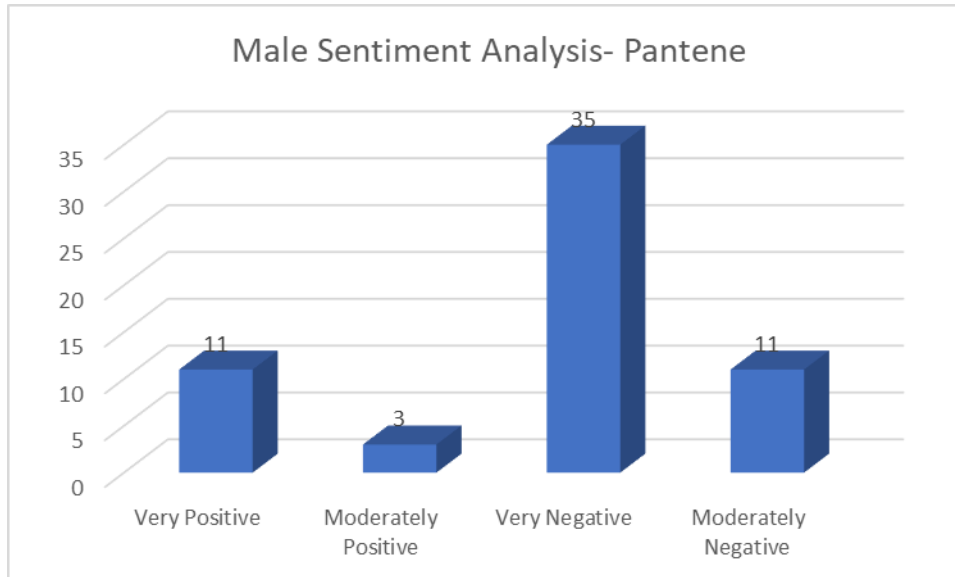


Fig.n.57 ‘Male Sentiment Analysis- Pantene, 2023 (from Excel)

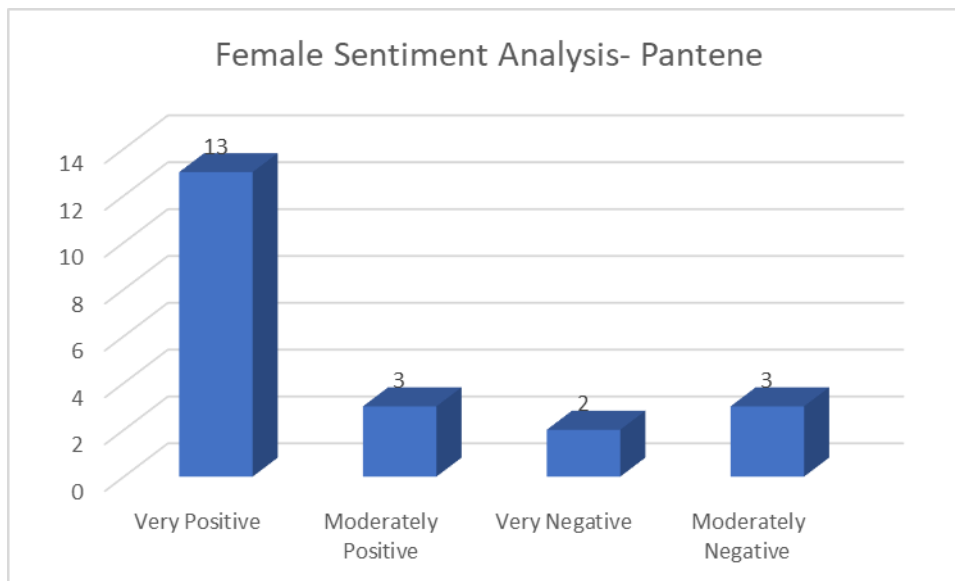


Fig.n.58 ‘Female Sentiment Analysis- Pantene, 2023 (from Excel)

	Very Positive	Moderately Positive	Very Negative	Moderately Negative
Male Sentiment	11	3	35	11
Female Sentiment	13	3	2	3

Fig.n.59 ‘Comparison of male/female sentiments- Pantene’, 2023

The table shows how the sentiment resulting from Pantene's femvertising was strongly influenced by the gender of the observer.

Out of a sample of 72 male comments, 35 were 'Very negative', while 11 were 'Moderately negative'. 63.8% of all male comments were characterized by negative sentiment, while the percentage of positive sentiment was only 19.4%.

The situation was the opposite regarding the sentiment of female users, although the sample was much less participative in commenting on the video. Out of a sample of 27 female comments, 13 were 'Very Positive' and 3 were 'Moderately Positive', which means that 55.5% of all female comments had a positive sentiment, while the percentage of negative ones was only 18.5%.

The overall sentiment, considering both genders, was negative.

A study was then conducted to identify the terms most frequently used by users to express their opinions. 4 Word Clouds were created on NVivo, dividing the comments by gender and by positive/negative sentiment.

- Word Cloud: Pantene- Positive Male



Fig.n.60 'Pantene- Positive Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Pantene- Negative Male



Fig.n.61 'Pantene- Negative Male Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Pantene- Positive Female



Fig.n.62 'Pantene- Positive Female Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

- Word Cloud: Pantene- Negative Female



Fig.n.63 'Pantene- Negative Female Word Cloud', 2023 (from NVivo)

Regarding the two positive Word Clouds, the first observable element was how 'women' represented the most-used term by both male and female users. In the context of this femvertising, it was a clear indication that, although there were also men represented, the fact that the message was predominantly aimed at female empowerment was clear. The repetition of words such as 'leader', 'work', 'thinking', and 'norms' indicated that the positive considerations were focused on the work sphere, highlighting how the topic of labels is strongly linked to it and the discrimination women may find there. The term 'pantene' also appeared in both Word Clouds, repeated more by women than by men. This translates into the fact that the conversation created clearly saw the brand as the transmitter of the message and supporter of it.

In the negative Word Clouds, a big difference emerged in the terms used by the commentators of the two genders. The male comments were marked by terms such as 'women', 'work', 'etiquette', and 'feminist', suggesting that the conversation they had was related to the issues shown in femvertising. The situation for negative female comments was different. In this case, terms such as 'delete', 'woke', 'negotiation', and 'boycott' were repeated, implying criticism aimed at offending the brand rather than judging what was represented.

- **‘MyBeautyMySay’ by Dove**

The last sentiment analysis done was on Dove's 2016 femvertising. Two charts displaying the sentiment distribution of male and female users' comments are shown below. Mixed comments were not considered as they were not influential for the purposes of the study.

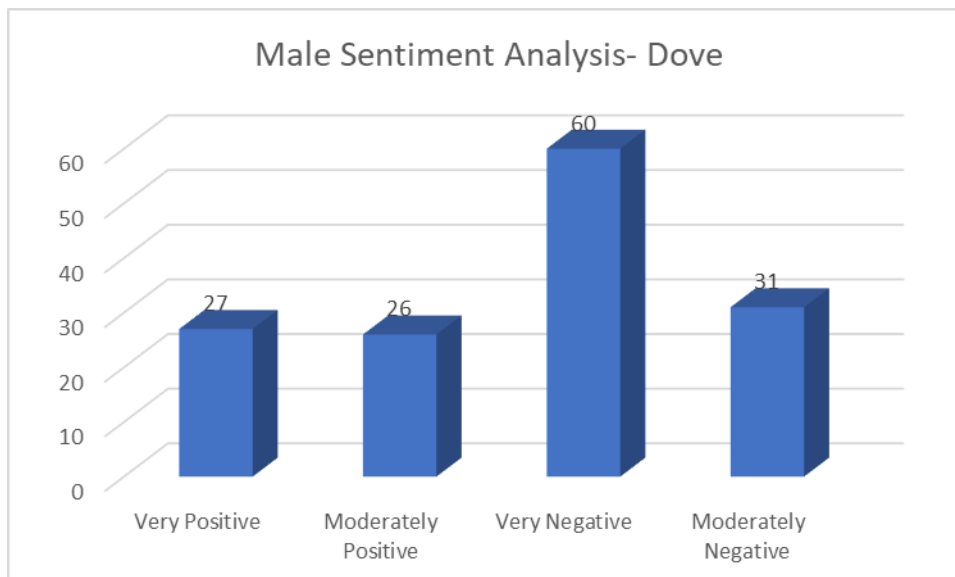


Fig.n.64 ‘Male Sentiment Analysis- Dove, 2023 (from Excel)

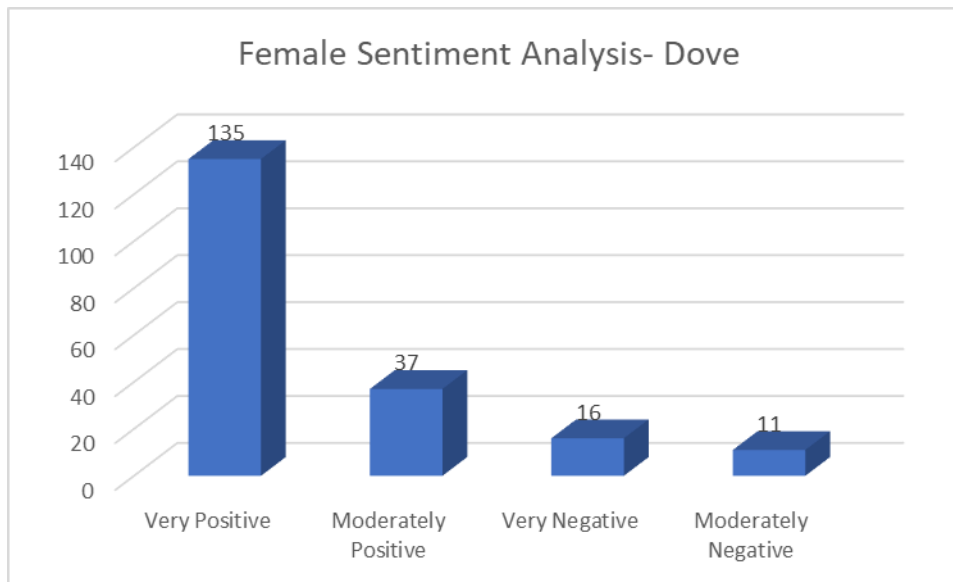


Fig.n.65 'Female Sentiment Analysis- Dove, 2023 (from Excel)

	Very Positive	Moderately Positive	Very Negative	Moderately Negative
Male Sentiment	27	26	60	31
Female Sentiment	135	37	16	11

Fig.n.66 'Comparison of male/female sentiments- Dove', 2023

The table shows how the sentiment resulting from Dove's femvertising is highly influenced by the gender of the observer.

Out of a sample of 159 male comments, 60 were 'Very negative', while 31 were 'Moderately negative'. 57.2% of all male comments were characterized by negative sentiment, while the percentage of positive sentiment was only 33.3%.

The situation was the opposite regarding the sentiment of female users. Out of a sample of 219 female comments, 135 were 'Very Positive' and 37 'Moderately Positive', which means that 78.5% of all female comments were marked by positive sentiment, while the percentage of negative comments was only 12.3%. The overall sentiment, considering both genders, was positive.

The research then focused on Word Clouds creation to investigate which terms were most frequently used by users. This part of the analysis was conducted with the Nvivo software. In contrast to the other femvertising, the analysis of the words used was done by setting the minimum word limit to 3 instead of 4 to observe whether there was a repetition of the term 'fat', noted during the first part of the sentiment analysis. Four Word Clouds were created, dividing the comments by gender and positive/negative sentiment.

on consumers. In the case of brands with a male target group, the main feelings shown by male users are more moderate than the responses to femvertising by brands with an exclusively female target group. In the case of Nike, the negative sentiment of male users was divided almost symmetrically between 'moderately negative' (25 comments) and 'very negative' (31 comments). The case of Microsoft, on the other hand, shows that male sentiment was positive, but also very moderate, with 'very positive' comments (6 comments) and 'moderately positive' (4 comments) bordering on parity. The effect that the femvertising of a brand with a purely female target group created on the feelings of male users was different. In this case, the feelings aroused belong largely to the 'very negative' category, with 60 VN comments out of a total of 144 in the case of Dove and 35 very negative comments out of a total of 60 in the case of Pantene. This was 41.7% and 58.3% respectively, compared to 31.6% for Nike and 14.28% for Microsoft. It was a clear indicator of how brands with a male target audience could produce a change in the acceptance of the inclusion of feminist values in an advertisement by getting the average consumer used to this type of message.

Concerning the analysis of the most frequently used terms, in the negative comments of brands with a predominantly female target audience, the terms 'advertisement', 'campaign', 'message', and 'media' were repeatedly written by both males and females, which had led to the intuition that the criticism often made was due to a lack of understanding of the message that the brand wanted to send, not clearly identifying it as advertising and creating confusion and bewilderment in the observers.

The term 'Crazy', usually characterized by a negative meaning, appeared in all of Nike's word clouds. It could be assumed, being the protagonist of the femvertising slogan, that the pun on its meaning reached the users who were predisposed to accept the message and were positively influenced by it. However, its large presence in the negative comments offered a clear indication of how its meaning and its negative connotation were one of the main means of attack to challenge the brand and the message launched, making the term a double-edged sword.

4.2 General Discussion

This work sought to investigate the field of female empowerment and advertising, which have found their point of union in the practice of femvertising for about ten years.

The aim of the study conducted was to understand how consumers of different genders could react to femvertising by brands with purely male and female targets. In this way, an attempt was made to fill in the research gaps, highlighted in Chapter 2, that were necessary to understand the correct use of female empowerment advertising.

The use of a semiotic and sentiment analysis of the four chosen femvertisings was essential to better answer the research question: 'How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?'.

The observations made during the semiotic analysis made it possible to understand how each brand creates different femvertising campaigns with completely unique narrative types, actors, and audiovisual textures. However, repeated elements could be observed. First, the totality of the analyzed campaigns used a promotional strategy of the narrative type, with very specific actors/attains. In all cases, the brand presented itself as the 'helper' of the subject and the 'sender' of the mission of female empowerment. The 'opponent' was always linked to the discrimination of women and stereotypical comments about them. The 'objects', the values the subjects are fighting for, were equal rights and the end to gender discrimination. The 'receiver' was the public wanting gender equality, particularly women.

The recurring symbols and themes in the advertisements were female empowerment, the fight against stereotypes, and the representation of the strong, determined woman motivated to change society, following her passions.

A difference noted, related to the target group of the brands, was the context in which the narrative takes place. In brands with a purely male target group, the setting was closely linked to the semiotic sphere to which the brand belongs. In the case of Nike, sportswomen and their noteworthy achievements were depicted. This was accompanied by the narration voice of Serena Williams, a well-known tennis player, which once again accentuated the high degree of adherence between the commercial and the sporting sphere. In the case of Microsoft, the theme of femvertising was inventions made by female inventors in the science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields. The discourse with the young girls was mainly filmed in the school environment, with representations of books and microscopes in the background, strong science symbols. These narrative strategies allowed an easy association of the commercial with Microsoft's main semiotic field, that of technology and innovations. These stratagems made both femvertisings more relatable to the brands that created them, making less plausible the possibility of confusing the user who is confronted with this type of message for the first time. This aspect is strongly linked to the target group, since it is more plausible that women, as the direct target of the issue, are more aware of the discrimination their gender is subject to. A male target group might be very confused by this type of message and campaign. To convey the message of female empowerment and make it understood by many mixed-gender users, it is therefore important for brands to maintain symbols that can be easily traced back to their sector by their audience.

The second part of the study, the sentiment analysis, provided a concrete understanding of the reactions of heterogeneous audiences elicited by femvertising of brands with different target groups. In all cases, apart from Microsoft, it was observed that the male audience reacted on average with a negative sentiment to femvertising. Female audiences, on the other hand, reacted with a positive sentiment to the commercials observed.

A difference attributable to the brand's target group was found in the levels of severity of the effects with which femvertising influences user sentiment. In the case of brands with a male target group, the main sentiments shown by male users were more moderate than the responses to femvertisings of brands with a predominantly female target group. This was a clear indicator that brands with a male target group could accustom their male consumers to this type of message more easily than a brand with a purely female target group. The combination of semiotic and sentiment analysis led to a further indication of how brands with a purely female target group could in turn educate their male audience and accustom them to this type of message. They can create campaigns that present symbols, images, and sounds that can be traced back to their sector, so as not to create too much confusion in the consumer.

This theory was confirmed by the observations made on the most frequently used words. In the negative comments, both male and female, there is an iteration of terms that can be traced back to the advertising field. This suggests that the criticism made was about the advertising context of the commercial and its difference from what consumers were expecting. The strong negative reaction may be an indicator of a state of bewilderment, due to the lack of understanding of the message launched and its type of narrative.

The sentiment of female users was in all cases 'very positive', with terms such as 'motivation' and 'inspiration' supporting it. It underlined the importance of this type of campaign in supporting and disseminating feminist discourse, thus collaborating in the battle to achieve gender equity.

4.3 Managerial Implications

The interest in the feminist cause must be genuine, otherwise, a brand might incur a possible reputational incident resulting in a brand boycott in favor of competitors (McKinsey&Company, 2022). Under this assumption, the research offers important managerial insights to create authentic femvertising campaigns that can evoke a positive feeling in customers.

It was shown that sentiment reactions are more mitigated for brands with a predominantly male target group. This gives them a more flexible possibility to experiment with this brand activism technique, running less risk of resorting to boycotts or very negative responses from the audience. Furthermore, independently of the

target group, it has been shown how developing the femvertising campaign by keeping within its elements that can easily be traced back to the sector in which the brand operates allows a mixed audience an easier understanding of the message launched. This makes it possible to create a campaign that is more comprehensible to the public and easier to enjoy for users encountering this type of message for the first time. Recognizing features traceable to the brand's semiotic field is an element of reassurance for them, thus decreasing the possibility of a truly negative response to the brand. At the same time, this can enable the brand to educate a wider audience to accept this manifestation of brand activism. The implementation of these practices may lead brands to be more supportive of fourth-wave feminist discourse and bring in consumers, now more than a third of the total, who make purchasing decisions influenced by brands' social initiatives (Amed et al. in Mirzaei et al., 2022).

Another useful observation for brands wishing to diminish the possible negative effects and comments of a femvertising campaign is to avoid the use of terms in their slogans that may contain a negative connotation. An example is the term 'Crazy'. Although Nike used it to support its message of empowerment and challenge the stereotypes inherent in the meaning of the term, wanting to bring about a sense of revenge, its use was mainly diffused in the negative comments on the commercial. This caused the term to lose its importance and positive meaning. Using controversial terms within empowerment campaigns risks creating an additional level of confusion among users who encounter this type of campaign for the first time. Furthermore, they threaten to shift attention away from the message of female empowerment and make it focus on the word itself and how positive it may or may not really be. The use of terms with a high degree of positive connotation in slogans and call-to-actions in femvertising reduces the risk that these can be used to counteract the empowerment message, making it lose its value.

Female sentiment towards femvertising proved to be 'very positive' in all cases. That is a further incentive for brands close to the feminist movement to carry out such a campaign. Considering that women are increasingly attentive to brand messages and drive 80 per cent of purchasing decisions, it could be a winning move from a reputation perspective, strengthening Brand Equity (Davis, 2019) (Champlin et al., 2019).

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

The presented research contributes to enriching studies on the topic of femvertising, with observations on male reactions and characteristics related to the main target group of brands. Nevertheless, it presents different limitations and numerous elements to be further investigated in future research.

The main limitation of this study is the amount of femvertising and comments analyzed. First, due to problems with privacy settings, Microsoft's femvertising comments were few and not perfectly

representative of reality, especially in relation to the female audience. Therefore, future research could better investigate how the topic of female empowerment is addressed by brands in STEM fields. Additionally, research on the semiotic characteristics of femvertising by brands with a purely male or female target group could be extended to a broader object of study.

The research question was investigated with qualitative methods, specifically with a semiotic analysis and a sentiment analysis. These were mostly carried out manually. Only in the last part, there has been a use of the NVivo software. For this reason, the study may be subject to limitations related to personality and degree of attention. The level of comprehension of the irony of certain comments or the attention to particular semiotic elements rather than others are influenced by the human component of the analyzer. Further studies could be conducted to observe the reactions of a mixed audience to femvertising, using a quantitative methodology. Future analyses can investigate how much the sentiment of the campaign is influenced by the type of brand making it and the type of audience receiving it.

This study focused on a binary division based on the male and female gender of the users. However, this division does not consider people who identify as non-binary. Future research could analyze the reaction of non-binary people to femvertising, thus enriching both studies on the phenomenon and the literature on the intersectionality of the modern feminist movement.

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Thesis Summary

Introduction

This research undertakes an investigation into the phenomenon of ‘femvertising’, which entails the incorporation of feminist ideals into brand advertising campaigns. The inquiry begins with an acknowledgment of advertising's proclivity for presenting a curated portrayal of reality, one that selectively accentuates certain aspects while obscuring others. Over time, advertising has played a significant role in perpetuating detrimental stereotypes concerning women, reinforcing a more extensive culture of misogyny that is deeply rooted in gender disparities. In response to these issues, feminist movements have been at the forefront of advocating for transformative changes within the advertising domain.

The study is structured into four comprehensive chapters.

Chapter 1 serves as an introduction, elucidating the concept of femvertising, exploring brand activism, and tracing the historical evolution of feminism. Additionally, this chapter underscores the pivotal role of media in shaping the landscape of advertising and campaigns aimed at empowering women.

Chapter 2 is dedicated to examining the multifarious challenges brands encounter when endeavoring to engage in femvertising. It highlights the paramount importance of authenticity and delineates potential risks associated with insincere attempts, colloquially referred to as ‘woke-washing.’ Furthermore, this chapter identifies existing gaps in research and presents the central research question: ‘How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?’

Chapter 3 offers a comprehensive exposition of the research methodologies employed to address the research question. It elucidates the utilization of both semiotic and sentiment analyses. The study sample consists of four authentic femvertising campaigns, categorized based on the brands' primary target demographics. The semiotic analysis dissects the textual components of each campaign, while the sentiment analysis scrutinizes user comments on the YouTube platform, discerning positive or negative sentiments. An NVivo frequency analysis of terminology usage also seeks to reveal the underlying themes driving user reactions.

Lastly, Chapter 4 presents the research findings and offers an extensive response to the central research question. The chapter engages in a profound discussion of the implications of the findings, acknowledges recognized limitations, and provides recommendations for future studies within the domain of femvertising.

This research endeavors to contribute to a deeper comprehension of how brands can genuinely and efficaciously align with feminist principles in their advertising initiatives, with the potential to reshape societal perceptions and address prevailing gender dynamics.

Chapter 1: Brand Activism, the feminist movement, and the use of femvertising to support it

1.1 Brand activism: the mirror of a changing society

The evolution of media, notably the transition towards online platforms and the prevalence of social media, has assumed a central role in the configuration of contemporary culture. Presently, social, and political causes are afforded heightened opportunities to garner support and exert influence over society. Social media platforms have engendered a democratization of information dissemination and have established arenas conducive to open discourse and the unfettered articulation of viewpoints, thereby nurturing expansive global dialogues. This transformation has instilled in consumers an inclination toward formulating purchase decisions predicated upon their individual beliefs and value systems. The described evolution aligns harmoniously with the framework delineated as Marketing 3.0, wherein brands cultivate profound connections with the public by means of social responsibility and transparency.

The rise of brand activism has been driven by increased consumer awareness and changes in regulations. Movements advocating for social and environmental causes have led to more government oversight, blurring the lines between public and private activities. As a result, more companies are getting involved in social initiatives, motivated by both moral considerations and public pressure to contribute positively to society. Consumers have increasingly manifested their awareness of social issues through their consumption patterns, favoring brands that reflect their ethical compass and shunning those perceived as non-aligned. Symbolic consumption has emerged as a powerful tool for harmonizing one's ethical convictions with economic choices, thus exerting a profound influence on the contours of contemporary culture and its trajectory. Brand activism involves brands communicating their values and addressing social issues, creating a connection with consumers. Authenticity is crucial in these efforts because end-users can tell the difference between genuine actions and insincere 'woke-washing' campaigns. Six factors guide perceptions of authenticity: consistency in actions, inclusivity, alignment with brand identity, genuine motivations, independence from social trends, and willingness to make sacrifices.

Moreover, brand activism finds expression through varied typologies, including but not limited to absence, silence, inauthenticity, and authenticity, each illustrating the extent to which brands harmonize their values, messaging, and actions with their avowed activism. Authenticity stands out as the most desired form, as it fosters a strong emotional bond with consumers, leading to increased brand loyalty and market success.

1.2 Evolution and social battles of the Feminist Movement

The term 'feminism' encompasses a wide array of political and social movements unified by their shared objective of combatting discrimination and achieving gender parity. Throughout history, these feminist movements have tirelessly endeavored to uplift women who have been oppressed and marginalized, challenging deeply ingrained societal stereotypes. Nonetheless, the very fabric of society serves as a complex and sometimes resistant battleground for these movements, offering both opportunities and challenges. One of the complexities lies in how feminist successes can inadvertently hinder progress. When feminist values gain traction in institutions like education, law, and medicine, major achievements in these areas are sometimes misinterpreted as the ultimate victory for gender equality. This misperception can lead people to believe that feminism is no longer necessary, contributing to what is known as 'Modern Sexism'. Modern Sexism coexists with 'Traditional Sexism', which perpetuates stereotypical gender roles and has subjugated women throughout history. Women's identities have often been defined in relation to male ideals, perpetuating a patriarchal system and sexualizing and shaming women. Additionally, 'Neo-Sexism', a more recent form of gender discrimination, implies that certain job roles, particularly leadership positions, are better suited for men, reinforcing vertical segregation, and maintaining power imbalances.

The feminist movement has evolved through four distinct waves:

- The First Feminist Wave: Emerging in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focused on securing political rights, particularly women's suffrage. Prominent events included the 1848 Women's Rights Convention in the United States and the suffragette movement in the UK and the US. However, this wave was criticized for primarily representing white, middle-class women.

-The Second Feminist Wave: Occurring during the 1960s to 1980s, expanded its objectives to reproductive rights, economic independence, and the fight against domestic violence and harassment. Key figures like Betty Friedan and Simone de Beauvoir played pivotal roles in reshaping societal perceptions of women.

-The Third Feminist Wave: Beginning in the 1990s and extending into the early 2010s, embraced intersectionality and inclusivity, addressing various forms of discrimination. The Riot Grrrl movement in music and digital activism played significant roles in raising awareness of gender issues.

-The Fourth Feminist Wave: Emerging around 2010, is characterized by digital activism and inclusivity. It includes movements like #MeToo and TIME'S UP, which have brought global attention to issues of sexual harassment and assault. The fourth wave promotes intersectionality and welcomes participation from men, recognizing that feminism benefits everyone by dismantling patriarchal structures.

Feminism represents a diverse and evolving movement dedicated to challenging gender discrimination and promoting equality. It has adapted to societal changes and continues to address new challenges while striving for a more inclusive and equitable world.

1.3 Main communication media used by the waves of the Feminist Movement

Since its emergence, feminist movements have recognized the importance of using media not just as a platform for their campaigns but as a vital tool to challenge and combat the stereotypes and discrimination deeply ingrained in society.

During the first wave of feminism, when the media landscape was limited and predominantly controlled by men, suffragettes and activists resorted to means like newspapers ('The Suffragette' in the UK) and 'The Woman's Journal' in the United States. They also used songs, plays, pamphlets, posters, and satirical cartoons to promote their cause. However, these efforts were met with resistance and backlash.

The second wave of feminism coincided with significant advancements in media technology, including television. Despite the rise of new media, they continued to perpetuate stereotypes and discriminatory portrayals of women. Feminists leveraged print media and books like 'The Feminine Mystique' by Betty Friedan, and 'The Subjection of Women' by Juliet Mitchell to address issues of inequality in both work and sexual spheres. Feminist magazines like 'Spare Rib' and 'Ms.' challenged mainstream publications by highlighting women's rights issues. 'Cosmopolitan,' under the editorial direction of Helen Gurley Brown, encouraged young women to assert their autonomy and discuss taboo topics. In television, 'The Mary Tyler Moore Show' broke away from the traditional housewife image, featuring a single, working woman in a leading role. Female artists like Lesley Gore, Helen Reddy, Nancy Sinatra, and Aretha Franklin used music to convey feminist messages, with songs like 'You Don't Own Me' and 'Respect'.

The third wave of feminism embraced popular culture, especially music, and effectively utilized the internet for communication and activism. The feminist group 'Guerrilla Girls' used guerrilla marketing techniques to criticize the lack of representation of women artists in museums. Riot grrrls emerged in the music scene, using zines and alternative publications to address issues like sexual harassment and abortion clinics. Notable artists like Queen Latifah, Mary J. Blige, and Missy Elliott in the hip-hop and R&B genres became feminist icons, tackling misogyny.

In the fourth wave, technology, and social media have become central to feminist activism. Hashtag activism, exemplified by #MeToo, has united survivors of harassment and sexism worldwide. Print

publications like 'We Should All Be Feminists' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie have influenced online and offline dialogues. TV series, such as 'The Handmaid's Tale' and 'Orange is the New Black' gained popularity through social media discussions, while artists like Kesha used their online presence to advocate for survivors of sexual violence. Younger generations have embraced feminism through social media, making it more alluring. As a consequence of these transformative developments, numerous brands have recognized the imperatives of championing feminism in their marketing endeavors, giving rise to the femvertising.

1.4 Femvertising as a mean of strengthening feminist discourse and countering stereotypical advertising

The advertising sphere has been a prominent subject of feminist critique and discussion, marked by its extensive examination across different feminist waves. This focus has arisen due to the industry's heavy reliance on gender ideology in shaping its content. Advertising has, for years, perpetuated societal values, intensifying certain social constructs, and reinforcing gender subordination. Since the 1960s, feminist research has actively sought to transform damaging representations that hinder equality, resulting in protest movements and boycott campaigns aimed at companies that used degrading and offensive representations of women.

Gender stereotyping has emerged as a predominant strategy within advertising. Eisend identified four main categories through which advertising has created stereotypical images of women: physical characteristics, personality traits, role behavior, and employment status. Historically, it has portrayed women as small, unintelligent, confined to domestic roles, subordinate to men, treated as decorative objects, and highly sexualized. Laura Mulvey's analysis in the 1970s highlighted how women were depicted as merely objects of the male gaze, reinforcing social norms.

The representation of women in advertising evolved in tandem with the progress of feminist movements. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, advertisements depicted women as homemakers. World War II marked a notable shift, as women joined the workforce, symbolized by the iconic image of 'Rosie the Riveter'. Nonetheless, this advancement regressed in the 1950s and 1960s when women were portrayed as incapable decision-makers, emphasizing their roles as housewives. The 1970s witnessed an increase in the sexualization and objectification of women's bodies in advertisements, contributing to the development of harmful female identity constructs. The 1980s introduced the image of the 'superwoman' balancing various roles but still hyperfeminized. The subsequent decades, spanning the 1990s and 2000s, witnessed a surge in sexualization, resulting in the propagation of unrealistic and detrimental ideals of female beauty. Violent and erotic imagery became prevalent. The practice of 'cropping' further objectified women, stripping them of

identity. Such representations faced resistance from third-wave feminists, ultimately driving the transformation of advertising with the fourth-wave feminist movement.

Femvertising has emerged as a response to societal changes and feminist struggles. Defined as advertising that promotes pro-women messages, talents, and images, it seeks to challenge gender stereotypes and female objectification, promoting inclusivity and empowerment. Authenticity is a crucial element of it and aligns with a brand's corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Examples of successful femvertising campaigns include Bumble's 'The Ball is in Her Court,' Barbie's 'Imagine The Possibilities,' and Guinness's 'Liberty Fields.' These campaigns promote empowerment, challenge stereotypes, and align with the brands' values and CSR initiatives. They demonstrate the power of advertising to influence societal perceptions and promote gender equality.

Chapter 2: Authenticity in Femvertising and the dilution of feminist discourse

2.1 The importance of authentic Femvertising

In the first chapter, it was pointed out how femvertising acts as a counterforce to traditional, sexist advertising. This development is also the result of increased social activism and a form of brand-conscious capitalism, which aims to improve female representation in the media. Through femvertising, companies align themselves with feminist and gender equality movements, using their marketing activities to differentiate and attract consumers, particularly millennials and Generation Z, who prioritize socio-cultural impact over product attributes.

Nevertheless, the proliferation of femvertising has concurrently given rise to substantial concerns regarding authenticity. Authenticity in femvertising hinges on several key factors identified by scholars like Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot, including respect for women, opposition to stereotypes, viewer identification, diversity, transparency, and consistency. Inauthentic femvertising can be harmful, diluting feminist discourse and reinforcing stereotypes. Superficial representations and the use of standardized beauty norms divert attention from the core message and lead to skepticism among audiences.

Practices such as tokenism, in which underrepresented people are included in a superficial way, and the representation of stereotypes, such as the 'super mother' or the emotionless career woman, are common manifestations of inauthentic femvertising. These campaigns not only undermine feminist messages but also perpetuate detrimental societal ideals.

A noteworthy issue, denoted as 'femwashing' ensues when brands opportunistically leverage feminist values for profit, bereft of genuine commitment or substantive action. Companies may resort to empty slogans or short-lived campaigns without concrete measures to substantively support gender equality. For example, H&M's femvertising campaigns contrasted with reports of labor exploitation and violence within its supply chain, exposing the brand's lack of internal support for women's rights. Audi's commitment to equal pay, as depicted in an advertisement, faced criticism due to a lack of transparency and concrete measures to address gender pay disparities.

Inauthentic femvertising and femwashing have adverse consequences for organizations, including reputational damage, loss of consumer trust, and potential employee disengagement. These practices also dilute feminist discourse by oversimplifying complex issues and reinforcing stereotypes. They may mislead consumers into thinking that equality has been achieved while impeding actual progress.

It is crucial for companies to avoid inauthentic practices, as they can backfire, driving consumers away in favor of more authentic brands. Given the pivotal role women play in purchasing decisions and the escalating influence wielded by socially conscientious younger generations, authenticity within the domain of femvertising assumes a position of essential significance, redounding not only to brand success but also to the advancement of feminist causes.

2.2 Research Gap and Research Question

The analysis of femvertising within the context of feminist discourse has brought to the forefront the critical issue of authenticity. Scholars in this field have delineated key elements that define authentic empowerment advertising. Nevertheless, limited research has explored audience reactions to evolving brand strategies.

Existing studies have primarily centered their focus on women, who constitute the primary target demographic. This emphasis has resulted in a lacuna in the understanding of how men engage with and respond to femvertising, leading to neglected managerial implications. To align with the inclusive goals of the fourth-wave feminist movement, it is crucial to consider men as part of the femvertising audience, otherwise, it would dilute modern feminist discourse, making campaigns inauthentic. This research aims to address this gap by investigating the research question: 'How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?'

The study seeks to uncover how such campaigns affect mixed audiences, offering insights into enhancing brand equity initiatives related to female empowerment. Ultimately, this research can guide brands in expanding their target demographics, boosting the credibility of their brand activism, and gaining a competitive edge.

Chapter 3: Semiotic and Sentiment Analysis on a Sample of Femvertising Campaigns

3.1 Semiotic analysis and its importance in the advertising landscape

Semiotics is a discipline that applies linguistic theory to the study of signs, text, and non-verbal symbols. It deciphers how people attribute meaning to visual and symbolic elements, impacting perceptions and decisions.

Semiosis, the process of meaning creation, involves individuals actively shaping interpretations based on their experiences. This complexity is evident in advertising, which uses various sign systems. Successful advertising leads to viewer identification with the sign, reinforcing brand memory and driving positive purchasing decisions. To achieve this, brands must recognize and employ precise cultural codes to build a coherent system of distinctive meanings and relationships.

Consumers' interpretation of advertising messages and their perception of the world is tied to semantic categories. Advertising serves as a conduit for cultural meanings to flow into the world of consumer goods, making semiotics precious in understanding this relationship. Consistent storytelling is a powerful tool for brand communication, enabling the conveyance of values and emotional connections. It allows brands to become characters in stories, fostering a meaningful relationship with consumers.

The semiotic value of products transcends cost, shaping brand value through symbolic relationships. Brand loyalty is heavily influenced by these symbolic connections, making brand semiotics a critical aspect of a company's strategy, given that consumers invest in meanings, not just physical goods.

3.2 Research Methodology

To address the research question two distinct studies were designed.

Study 1: This initial study employed semiotic analysis, examining four authentic femvertising campaigns created by brands with varying target audiences, two predominantly male-focused and two predominantly female-focused. By deconstructing these campaigns into their constituent elements, this analysis aimed to identify commonalities in the employed codes and narrative structures used in brand activism initiatives. The investigation sought to determine if similar narrative structures and recurring symbols and signs were associated with similar audience responses. The analytical approach followed the framework proposed by Peverini (2012) for advertising analysis, also employing the tools of Greimasian semiotics. The outcome was a breakdown of femvertising campaigns, emphasizing text segmentation, narrative elements, and promotional strategies.

Study 2: The second study conducted sentiment analysis on YouTube comments related to the examined femvertising campaigns. YouTube was chosen due to its high comment volume and the ability to determine users' genders. The sentiment analysis was divided based on the gender of the commenters and the specific femvertising campaigns analyzed. This approach enabled an investigation into potential gender-based differences in reactions, influenced by both brand and advertising characteristics. The comments were extracted, cleaned, and categorized by the gender of the commenters. Manual sentiment analysis was then conducted, classifying comments as positive, negative, or neutral. Additionally, frequently used terms expressing positive or negative sentiments were coded, employing the 'word frequency' function of NVivo software, and generating word clouds.

These two studies collectively shed light on how individuals of different genders respond to femvertising, considering the brand's target audience characteristics and narrative styles employed, providing valuable insights into this field of research.

3.3 Semiotic analysis of the femvertising sample

The study's first part involved a semiotic analysis of four genuine femvertising campaigns within the commercial genre. These campaigns are part of a diverse audio-visual textuality, characterized by dynamic communicative elements.

This analysis served to identify recurring symbols, narratives, and stylistic elements in the selected campaigns, assessing how brands targeting primarily male or female audiences approach femvertising, underlying any notable differences. It also paved the way for investigating male and female reactions to the campaigns, determining elements that evoke positive or negative responses.

The semiotic analysis followed Peverini's model from 'The Media: Tools for Semiotic Analysis', using a structured approach that comprises:

- The organized synthesis of materials: Included the segmentation of text, genre, points of view, product/brand placement, rhythm, and audiovisual texture (Semprini's surface/discursive level).
- The narration: Focused on the narrator's position, enunciation, and the actantial model (Semprini's narrative level).
- The strategies: Examined promotional strategies, values, and rhetoric (Semprini's basic/axiological level).

The selection of femvertising campaigns was primarily based on their alignment with authenticity parameters proposed by Hainneville, Guèvremont, and Robinot (2022). They all belong to the social genre, aimed at addressing gender discrimination and promoting female empowerment. Demographic data of the

brands' web page visitors was also considered, providing insights into the gender composition of their audience.

The analyzed femvertising campaigns were:

- 'Dream Crazier' by Nike

Nike's 'Dream Crazier' ad, released in 2019, is a powerful example of femvertising. Narrated by Serena Williams, it shows female athletes such as Simone Biles, Ibtihaj Muhammad, and others challenging stereotypes. The commercial has a fast pace and an intense narrative with the recurring theme of challenging the limits imposed by society. It uses a combination of images and voice-over to inspire female empowerment. The femvertising employs a narrative strategy, with incomplete stories of strong-willed sportswomen challenging social norms. The repeated use of the word 'crazy' contrasts with the women's determined actions, emphasizing that things are only considered crazy until you achieve them. Serena Williams serves as both narrator and visual representative of Nike's message. The commercial encourages viewers, especially women, to pursue their goals, even when they seem unconventional.

The visual and auditory elements align perfectly, creating a cohesive and emotionally engaging message. The commercial ends with Nike's slogan, 'Just Do It', reinforcing the call to action and brand association. This campaign effectively promotes female empowerment, resonating with diverse audiences and reinforcing Nike's brand image as an advocate for gender equality in sports and society.

- '#MakeWhatsNext' by Microsoft

Microsoft's #MakeWhatsNext ad, released on International Women's Day in 2016, is a femvertising campaign aimed at promoting STEM (science, tech, engineering, math) fields to girls and women. The ad features young girls being asked to name inventors and struggling to name any women. It runs for 100 seconds and is available on various platforms, including social media and the Microsoft website. The ad starts with a little girl expressing her love for science, setting the tone for the campaign. It then transitions to a series of girls being asked to name inventors, initially mentioning male inventors like Benjamin Franklin and Leonardo da Vinci. This sets up the central question: 'Can you name any women inventors?'. The girls struggle to answer, highlighting the lack of recognition for female inventors. The video then takes a dramatic turn with a dynamic soundtrack as it showcases inventions made by women, such as Tabitha Babbitt's circular saw and Martha Coston's signal flares. Each inventor's name is displayed on the screen alongside their invention. This section of the ad is designed to inspire and educate the audience about these remarkable women. Throughout the ad, there's a strong connection between what's shown on screen and the soundtrack, creating a sense of engagement. The girls' reactions to the female inventors' achievements are heartfelt and genuine, emphasizing the impact of representation and inspiring young girls to pursue STEM fields. The ad concludes with a call to action, #MakeWhatsNext, encouraging viewers to follow in the footsteps of these

pioneering women. The Microsoft logo appears, reinforcing the company's commitment to promoting diversity and gender equality in STEM. Overall, Microsoft's femvertising campaign uses a narrative strategy to address gender stereotypes and encourage girls to pursue careers in STEM by showcasing the accomplishments of female inventors. It effectively leverages emotional storytelling and inspirational messaging to engage its audience and challenge societal norms.

- 'Label Against Women' by Pantene

Pantene's 'Labels Against Women' ad, part of the 'Shine Strong' campaign, was released in 2013 and shared on various social media platforms, reaching a global audience. The commercial runs for 60 seconds and effectively employs an antithesis-based narrative strategy. It contrasts male and female stereotypes in various scenarios, highlighting the unjust gender disparities and stereotypes present in society. The message encourages viewers to reject these labels and embrace empowerment, symbolized by the hashtag #WhipIt. The ad maintains a consistent and regular rhythm with no significant changes in photography or soundtrack. The narrative follows a sequence of contrasting scenes, showing how society often assigns negative labels to women while portraying men positively in similar situations. The powerful soundtrack, a cover of 'Mad World', reinforces the message of challenging these stereotypes. The commercial concludes with a call to action, urging viewers not to be held back by labels, followed by the Pantene logo and the hashtag #WhipIt. The campaign has no commercial intent and aims to support the feminist movement and women's empowerment. Pantene's 'Labels Against Women' femvertising effectively utilizes narrative and antithesis-based strategies to highlight gender disparities, encourage empowerment, and challenge stereotypes. It has contributed to building strong brand equity and supporting the brand's initiatives for women's empowerment.

- 'MyBeautyMySay' by Dove

Dove's 'My Beauty My Say' commercial, released on June 28, 2016, in the US, is a 90-second example of femvertising, celebrating women's achievements and individuality. The commercial features multiple women who narrate their journeys towards self-acceptance, addressing the negative judgments they've faced throughout their lives. The commercial structure can be divided into three parts. The first part showcases the protagonists sharing the sexist and judgmental comments they've received, emphasizing the criticism they've endured. The second part marks a shift in narrative, as the women describe how they responded to the criticism and learned to accept themselves. In the final part, the women are officially introduced with their names and professions, followed by the call to action #MyBeautyMySay and the Dove logo. The narration primarily comes from the women themselves, with both 'in' and 'off-screen' voices, highlighting their personal experiences. The use of the personal pronoun 'I' is introduced in the second part, emphasizing the subjects' individuality and self-acceptance. The commercial follows a circular anaphora of images, opening and closing with the boxer, symbolizing the fight against misogynistic judgments and the

journey toward self-acceptance. Dove's femvertising aligns with the feminist principles of the fourth wave, promoting individuality and intersectionality. It's part of Dove's broader efforts in female empowerment campaigns and has been accompanied by additional initiatives and individual interviews with the protagonists, strengthening the brand's association with feminist causes.

3.4 Sentiment Analysis of the femvertising sample

The second part of the study focused on conducting sentiment analysis using YouTube comments from selected femvertising videos. YouTube was chosen as the primary platform for investigation due to two key factors. Firstly, it allowed access to the complete femvertising videos, ensuring a comprehensive analysis. Unlike platforms like Instagram, where campaigns are often condensed, YouTube comments could be linked to the entire video content, maintaining consistency between semiotic and sentiment analysis. Secondly, except for Microsoft's femvertising, all selected videos had a high volume of comments, providing a representative sample for analysis and trend identification.

Sentiment analysis is a computational field that examines people's opinions, attitudes, and emotions regarding a specific subject, such as advertising. Sentiment analysis aims to determine whether opinions in a text are positive, negative, or neutral, sometimes quantifying emotion intensity. This study employed manual sentiment coding, aligning with the degrees of positivity and negativity identified by NVivo software, used for analyzing frequently mentioned terms in comments by male and female users.

The investigation's initial phase involved extracting comments from the selected femvertising videos using ExportComments software. After cleaning the data to remove irrelevant comments, four Excel files were created, each corresponding to a femvertising video. An Excel column was added to categorize comments by user gender (Male, Female, Not Available).

Results showed comment counts by gender for each video:

- 'Dream Crazy' by Nike: 125 Male, 74 Female, 35 NA
- 'MakeWhatsNext' by Microsoft: 14 Male, 3 Female, 0 NA
- 'Label Against Women' by Pantene: 72 Male, 27 Female, 17 NA
- 'MyBeautyMySay' by Dove: 159 Male, 219 Female, 66 NA

Manual sentiment analysis categorized comments into five groups: Neutral (N), Very Positive (VP), Moderately Positive (MP), Very Negative (VN), and Moderately Negative (MN). The Neutral was then discarded as not relevant for research purposes.

The study then examined frequently used terms by male and female users to express positive or negative opinions of the femvertising videos. NVivo software and the Word Frequency function were used to

generate Word Clouds. Four sets of Word worksheets were created: Positive Male, Negative Male, Positive Female, and Negative Female.

This study employed a thorough approach to sentiment analysis, including data collection, cleaning, gender-based categorization, manual sentiment analysis, and term frequency analysis. The findings provide valuable insights into audience reactions to femvertising campaigns.

Chapter 4: Results, General Discussion, Managerial Implications and Limitations

4.1 Analysis Results

The study aimed to investigate how authentic femvertising campaigns, created by brands with predominantly male or female target audiences, affect viewers' sentiments. This research combined semiotic and sentiment analyses to gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of femvertising on both male and female audiences.

In the semiotic analysis, the study found that although the specific elements, narratives, and strategies used in each femvertising campaign differed, there were common themes. All analyzed advertisements shared the goal of promoting female empowerment and did not present a product positioning. These campaigns fell into the social genre and employed narrative strategies. The actantial patterns, representing different roles within the narrative, were consistent across all four campaigns:

- Opponent: Gender discrimination and a sexist society.
- Helper: The brand, advocating for the subjects of the video and encouraging viewers to support their rights.
- Object: Gender equality and the elimination of sexist discrimination.
- Sender: The brand, the feminist movement, and socio-cultural development.
- Receiver: Anyone striving for gender equality, especially women.

Remarkably, when brands with predominantly male target audiences created femvertisings, the featured subjects were often linked to the brand's field of expertise. For example, Nike showcased female athletes, and Microsoft highlighted female inventors in STEM fields. In contrast, when brands with predominantly female target audiences produced femvertisings, the subjects represented issues related to stereotyped judgments, which were not explicitly linked to the cosmetics field.

The sentiment analysis, conducted through YouTube comments, explored how these femvertisings elicited positive or negative responses, with a focus on gender and the language used. Analyzing the sentiment distribution, the study found that responses were heavily influenced by the gender of the commentator:

- ‘Dream Crazy’ by Nike: Male comments tended to be more negative (44.8% negative vs. 33.6% positive), while female comments were overwhelmingly positive (64.9% positive vs. 14.9% negative). Overall, the sentiment was positive.
- ‘#MakeWhatsNext’ by Microsoft: Both male and female comments were predominantly positive, with males at 71.43% positive and limited female participation. Overall, the sentiment was positive.
- ‘Label Against Women’ by Pantene: Male comments were notably negative (63.8% negative vs. 19.4% positive), while female comments leaned positive (55.5% positive vs. 18.5% negative). Overall, the sentiment was negative.
- ‘MyBeautyMySay’ by Dove: Male comments were primarily negative (57.2% negative vs. 33.3% positive), while female comments were highly positive (78.5% positive vs. 12.3% negative). Overall, the sentiment was positive.

Word Clouds were created to identify the most frequently used terms by users to express their opinions, further revealing audience perceptions:

- Positive comments across all femvertisings included terms like 'women', 'love', and 'empowerment', indicating support and appreciation.
- Negative comments often criticized the femvertising campaigns' clarity and intent, mentioning terms such as 'advertisement', 'campaign', and 'message'.

In Nike’s femvertising terms like 'crazy' had a dual interpretation, with both positive and negative connotations.

In summary, the study found that sentiment responses to femvertising were significantly influenced by the gender of the viewers. On average, male audiences responded more negatively, while female audiences responded more positively. Additionally, the type of brand and its target audience played a crucial role in shaping the impact of femvertising. Brands with predominantly male target audiences often produced milder negative sentiments, while brands with predominantly female target audiences faced more pronounced negative reactions, suggesting the need for more gradual exposure to feminist values in advertising. Criticism of femvertising campaigns often stemmed from a lack of understanding of the intended message. Overall, the research shed light on how gender, brand identity, and messaging strategies contribute to the diverse responses generated by femvertising campaigns.

4.2 General Discussion

This study delved into the realm of female empowerment in advertising, particularly focusing on the emerging practice of femvertising, which has gained prominence over the last decade. The primary goal was to explore how consumers of different genders respond to femvertising campaigns from brands with

predominantly male or female target audiences. Addressing gaps in existing research, this study employed both semiotic and sentiment analyses to answer the central research question: 'How does the effect of authentic femvertising change when the campaign is made by brands with predominantly male or female target groups?'.

The semiotic analysis unveiled that each brand crafted unique femvertising campaigns characterized by distinct narrative styles, actors, and audiovisual elements. Nevertheless, common elements surfaced across all campaigns. Notably, all campaigns adopted a narrative promotional strategy featuring specific actors/actants. Themes of female empowerment, challenging stereotypes, and showcasing strong, determined women motivated to effect societal change were recurrent in these advertisements. However, an important distinction was noted in the contextual backdrop in which the narratives unfolded. Brands with predominantly male target audiences anchored their narratives within the semiotic sphere closely aligned with their brand identity. For instance, Nike depicted female athletes and their remarkable accomplishments, with the narration voiced by Serena Williams, a renowned tennis player, reinforcing the connection between the commercial and the sports realm. In Microsoft's case, the femvertising campaign revolved around inventions by female innovators in STEM fields, primarily set within school environments featuring science symbols. These narrative strategies facilitated an immediate association of the campaigns with the brands' core semiotic domains, such as technology and innovation. This alignment can reduce the potential confusion of viewers encountering the message for the first time. The degree of understanding on the part of the users depended largely on their gender. Women resulted in being more familiar with the issues surrounding gender discrimination. In contrast, male viewers might find such messages perplexing. Therefore, to effectively convey the message of female empowerment to a mixed-gender audience, brands must incorporate symbols that align with their sector, aiding consumer comprehension and decreasing the chances of leaving them confused.

The second part of the study, involving sentiment analysis, shed light on the diverse reactions elicited by femvertising campaigns among heterogeneous audiences, particularly regarding brands with different target groups. In all cases except Microsoft, male audiences responded with an overall negative sentiment to femvertising, while female audiences reacted positively. Moreover, the study identified variances in the intensity of sentiment effects based on the brand's target group. For brands mainly targeting a male audience, male viewers exhibited moderate sentiments compared to those viewing femvertising from brands with predominantly female target audiences. This is an indication that brands with a predominantly male target group had a greater facility to make this type of message more familiar and less hostile to their male users than brands with a predominantly female target group. The combination of semiotic and sentiment analyses provided further evidence that brands targeting a female audience could also educate their male viewers and

acclimatize them to this type of message by incorporating symbols, imagery, and sounds congruent with their sector, minimizing consumer confusion.

The study's findings were reinforced by an analysis of frequently used words in negative comments, both from male and female users, which indicated criticism related to the advertising context rather than the campaign's message itself. Strongly negative reactions may reflect viewers' bewilderment due to a lack of understanding of the narrative. Female users consistently expressed 'very positive' sentiments, using terms like 'motivation' and 'inspiration'. This emphasized the vital role of femvertising campaigns in supporting and disseminating feminist discourse, contributing to the ongoing battle for gender equity.

4.3 Managerial Implications

This research offers valuable managerial insights for crafting genuine femvertising campaigns that resonate positively with customers.

The study reveals that sentiment reactions are more nuanced for brands targeting predominantly male audiences. This flexibility allows them to experiment with brand activism techniques with a lower risk of backlash. Moreover, regardless of the target audience, incorporating elements aligning with the brand's sector enhances message comprehension for diverse audiences encountering femvertising for the first time. Recognizable semiotic features provide reassurance and reduce the likelihood of negative responses. This approach can also help educate a broader audience on accepting brand activism.

To mitigate potential negative effects, brands should avoid using terms in slogans that carry negative connotations. For instance, the term 'Crazy', initially employed by Nike to support empowerment, lost its positive meaning when used in negative comments. Employing positively connotated terms in femvertising slogans reduces the risk of such terms creating confusion and being used against the empowerment message.

Female sentiment toward femvertising consistently leans 'very positive'. Brands aligned with feminist values can leverage this sentiment to strengthen Brand Equity and appeal to a growing consumer base with significant purchasing influence.

4.4 Limitations and Future Research

This research enhances the understanding of femvertising, shedding light on male reactions and brand target group characteristics. However, it has certain limitations and areas for future exploration.

The study's primary limitation is the relatively small dataset of femvertising and comments analyzed, particularly for Microsoft due to privacy settings. Future research should delve deeper into how brands in STEM fields address female empowerment. Expanding the semiotic analysis of femvertising by brands targeting exclusively male or female audiences to a wider scope could provide valuable insights.

Qualitative methods, including manual semiotic and sentiment analyses, were employed in this study, which may introduce subjectivity and attention-related biases. Future research could employ quantitative methodologies to observe mixed audience reactions to femvertising, examining how brand type and audience impact campaign sentiment.

The research focused on a binary division based on the users' male and female genders, omitting non-binary individuals. Future investigations should consider non-binary individuals' responses to femvertising, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon and its intersectionality with the modern feminist movement.