

THE TREND OF FEMINIST ADVERTISING SHAPING MODERN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

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Abstrak

Projek akhir ini mengeksplorasi pengaruh femvertising iklan yang menggabungkan nilai-nilai feminis terhadap perilaku konsumen dan identitas merek, dengan menggunakan studi kasus dari The Body Shop dan L'Oreal. Kampanye femvertising seperti "Self Love" dari The Body Shop dan L'Oreal seperti "Because You're Worth It" memberdayakan perempuan dan menantang standar kecantikan tradisional. Kampanye-kampanye ini telah memperkuat loyalitas merek dan meningkatkan persepsi konsumen terhadap kedua merek sebagai perusahaan yang bertanggung jawab secara sosial dan progresif. Dengan mempromosikan inklusivitas dan kesetaraan gender, femvertising tidak hanya mendorong kesuksesan komersial tetapi juga berkontribusi pada perubahan sosial yang lebih luas. Tujuan utama dari projek akhir ini adalah untuk membahas bagaimana femvertising mempengaruhi perilaku konsumen dan persepsi merek, khususnya melalui lensa kampanye dari The Body Shop dan L'Oreal. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami sejauh mana femvertising berkontribusi terhadap loyalitas merek, diferensiasi pasar, dan dampak sosial positif. Penelitian ini menyoroti manfaat ganda dari femvertising: memperdalam hubungan dengan konsumen dan memajukan tujuan sosial, asalkan kampanye-kampanye tersebut dijalankan dengan keaslian dan komitmen yang tulus.

Kata Kunci: Perilaku Konsumen, Pengambilan Keputusan, Strategi Pemasaran, Femvertising

Abstract

This final project explores the affect of femvertising—advertising that incorporates feminist values—on consumer behavior and brand identity, using case studies of The Body Shop and L'Oreal. Femvertising campaigns like The Body Shop's "Self Love" and L'Oreal "Because You're Worth It" empower women and challenge traditional beauty standards. These campaigns have strengthened brand loyalty and enhanced consumer perceptions of these brands as socially responsible and progressive. By promoting inclusivity and gender equality, femvertising not only drives commercial success but also contributes to broader societal change. The primary purpose of this final project is to explore how femvertising influences consumer behavior and brand perception, particularly through the lens of The Body Shop's and L'Oreal's campaigns. Also to understand the extent to which femvertising contributes to brand loyalty, market differentiation, and positive social impact. This final project highlights the dual benefits of femvertising: fostering deeper consumer connections and advancing social causes, provided the campaigns are executed with authenticity and genuine commitment.

Keyword: Consumer Behavior, Decision Making, Marketing Strategies, Femvertising

1. INTRODUCTION

Femvertising, a term used to describe the fusion of 'feminism' and 'marketing', is a concept that stands out as a unique intersection between gender discourses and marketing strategies (Åkestam et al., 2017). Throughout history, this concept has evolved from being just a trend to becoming a powerful proposition within the modern marketing arena, reshaping how brands communicate with their consumers, especially when it comes to empowering women and

challenging entrenched gender stereotypes. It is noteworthy that femvertising corresponds to a broader cultural shift towards gender equality and sensitivity, which is reflected in consumer expectations and brand communications.

In different contexts and markets, femvertising takes on different forms. Based on Abitbol & Sternadori (2019), argue that Dove's 'Campaign for Real Beauty', which features real people with diverse beauty standards in contrast to traditional beauty ads. In addition to championing a broader definition of beauty, the campaign also encourages consumer discussions on platforms like YouTube, demonstrating its ability to engage audiences beyond conventional advertising. The promotion of inclusive and diverse representations through femvertising is likely to significantly impact consumer perceptions.

In addition, several scholarly insights have demonstrated the effectiveness of femvertising through a number of research studies. Femvertising not only tackles social issues but also promotes female empowerment in media, thus aligning businesses with socially conscious consumers through brand activism (Beharay & Tilak, 2021). In addition to combating stereotypes, this form of advertising can attract customers and enhance the image of a brand. Accordingly, Salem et al. (2020) research has shown that advertisements exploiting female imagery are met with negative consumer reactions, which shows the influence of cultural norms and perceptions of female exploitation on purchase decisions. Taking this into account, it is clear that there is a complex dynamic between consumer perceptions and advertising content.

Further expanding on this concept, studies conducted that the use of female advertising can result in a lower ad reactance rate as well as a more positive feeling towards the brands they advertise and the advertisements they represent (Åkestam et al., 2017). As a result of this study, it can be concluded that consumers are more likely to react positively when ads are perceived as empowering rather than exploitative, which is critical to building brand loyalty and engaging consumers. Moreover, In South Africa shows that femvertising plays a significant role in shaping the perception of beauty brands by young women consumers, particularly those who identify with feminist values (Pillay, 2020). The findings of Feng et al. (2023), show that femvertising not only creates strong emotional connections between brands and consumers, but it also significantly impacts consumers' willingness to purchase a product, despite the fact that it does not significantly alter perceptions of the gender representation of brands.

Femvertising strategies also have to take into account geographic and demographic factors in order to be as effective as possible. When consumers are assessed based on their education levels and geographical locations, their attitudes and behavioral intentions vary

significantly, suggesting that femvertising may have broader impacts across different groups of consumers (ÖZATA et al., 2023). Consumers with higher education levels tend to have more progressive attitudes towards femvertising and are more likely to respond positively to advertisements that promote gender equality and empowerment. On the other hand, consumers with lower education levels may have more traditional views and may be less receptive to femvertising strategies (Hainneville et al., 2023). Therefore, brands should tailor their advertising messages to resonate with the specific attitudes and values of different consumer groups based on their education levels.

Based on Hainneville et al. (2023) has drawn attention to the concept of 'femwashing' which involves using feminist values superficially in order to promote products in a way that perpetuates stereotypes rather than breaking them down, despite the positive aspects of this practice. As a result, it's clear that femvertising campaigns should be authentic in order to ensure that they contribute genuinely to the discourse on gender equality, which indicates the importance of authenticity. To ensure this, companies should create campaigns that are meaningful and reflective of their brand identity, rather than simply using trendy phrases and imagery. Additionally, companies should take into account the perspectives of female customers to ensure that the message resonates with them.

It is imperative that we identify gaps where further research could contribute significantly to our understanding of the impact of femvertising on consumer behavior, given the extensive influence it has on consumer behavior. In spite of the fact that existing studies have provided valuable insights into consumer attitudes as well as behavioral outcomes, there remains a need to explore deeper into how femvertising influences long-term consumer loyalty and brand trust across a variety of cultural contexts.

Thus, the purpose of this final project is to look at how the use of femvertising influences the decision-making process of consumer behavior in the market, with a particular focus on description case, as well as consumer behavior in general. Also to understand the extent which femvertising contributes to brand loyalty, market differentiation, and positive social impact.

The primary purpose of this final project is to explore how femvertising influences consumer behavior and brand perception, particularly through the lens of The Body Shop's and L'Oreal's campaigns. Also to understand the extent to which femvertising contributes to brand loyalty, market differentiation, and positive social impact. By analyzing these case descriptions, this final project seeks to provide insights into how brands can effectively align their marketing strategies with feminist values to foster deeper consumer connections and drive societal change. Additionally, the final project examines the challenges brands face in maintaining authenticity

and avoiding accusations of 'femwashing' while executing femvertising campaigns.

2. METHOD

For this chapter, it examines notable examples of femvertising from The Body Shop based on their campaign and analysis by Mulrow (2021). The selection of these cases is based on their significant impact and prominent use of femvertising strategies obtained using secondary data methods.

The Body Shop is renowned for its commitment to ethical practices and social activism. Its campaigns often center around themes of natural beauty and female empowerment. For instance, the "Self Love" campaign encourages consumers to embrace their unique beauty and promotes inclusivity by featuring diverse models (Mulrow, 2021). This campaign aligns with The Body Shop's core values of self-empowerment and ethical consumption.

For this chapter, it examines another examples of femvertising from L'Oréal based on their campaigns and analysis from various sources. The selection of these cases is based on their significant impact and prominent use of femvertising strategies.

L'Oréal is renowned for its commitment to promoting self-worth, diversity, and social issues. Its campaigns often center around themes of self-empowerment, inclusivity, and advocacy against societal issues. For instance, the "Because You're Worth It" campaign encourages consumers to recognize their inherent worth and promotes self-care by featuring diverse models and advocating for women's empowerment (Paris, 2024). This campaign aligns with L'Oréal's core values of self-expression and individual beauty.

Additionally, the program honors women making significant contributions to their communities, providing financial support and a platform to amplify their causes. This initiative showcases L'Oréal's dedication to empowering women beyond beauty products (LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013).

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Ethical Campaign

The Body Shop, renowned for its ethical stance and commitment to social activism, launched a femvertising campaign that uniquely intersects feminist values with its brand ethos. This campaign, distinguished by its focus on natural beauty and the empowerment of women across the globe, seeks to challenge conventional beauty standards and promote an inclusive image of beauty (Mulrow, 2021).

The "Self Love" campaign, introduced by The Body Shop, aims to inspire women to

embrace their natural beauty and to cultivate a positive self-image (Mulrow, 2021). By featuring women of various ages, ethnicities, and body types, the campaign challenges the narrow and often unrealistic beauty standards perpetuated by traditional advertising. It encourages consumers to recognize and celebrate their uniqueness, promoting a message of self-acceptance and confidence Kotler et al. (2021).

The campaign leverages various platforms, including social media, in-store promotions, and digital content, to reach a broad audience. Through powerful imagery and personal stories, The Body Shop connects with consumers on an emotional level, reinforcing the brand's commitment to empowering women and supporting diversity.



Figure 1. The Body Shop "Self Love" Campaign

L'Oréal's iconic campaign "Because You're Worth It" has been a cornerstone of the brand's identity since its inception in 1971. This campaign emphasizes self-worth and self-care, encouraging women to recognize their inherent value and invest in themselves. It has evolved over the decades to incorporate diverse representations of beauty, challenging traditional beauty norms and advocating for women's empowerment (LaWare & Moutsatsos, 2013)..

The campaign's longevity and consistency have significantly contributed to L'Oréal's strong brand identity and consumer trust. By maintaining a consistent message that celebrates individuality and self-expression, L'Oréal has influenced the beauty industry's approach to inclusivity and representation (Šírová, 2015).



Figure 2. L'Oréal's "Because You're Worth It" Campaign

3.2 Segmentation Targeting and Positioning Analysis

As companies succeed in identifying segments in the market they face, their products have a greater chance of success because they match what consumers expect (Huda Maulana & Soepatini, 2021). Based on Body Shop and L'Oreal campaigns, here's a detailed segmentation analysis:

- 1) Generations: Primarily Millennials and Gen Z, who are more engaged with social media and progressive social causes.
- 2) Economic Class: Middle and Upper Middle, as these consumers are more likely to have disposable income for beauty and personal care products that are marketed as ethical or empowering.
- 3) Domicile: Urban areas, where there is a higher concentration of progressive social values and a stronger presence of brand outlets.
- 4) Technology Use: Smartphone users only for chat/YouTube/Facebook: Engaged in social media, likely to encounter the campaign online. Smartphone users for online transactions: Likely to shop online and be receptive to e-commerce marketing. Tech Enthusiast: Engaged with the latest tech and potentially more receptive to innovative marketing techniques.

3.3 Targeting

At the time when comprehensive analysis is conducted before deciding which market segments to serve and how many, this will provide a greater and more sustainable chance of success (Huda Maulana & Soepatini, 2021). The campaign is specifically designed to appeal to women who are not only conscious of the beauty products they use but also value the ethos behind them, promoting self-love and inclusivity.

- 1) Generation: Focused on Millennials and Gen Z for their receptivity to digital campaigns and values alignment on social issues.
- 2) Economic Class: Middle and Upper Middle, capable of affording premium products positioned as ethical and empowering.
- 3) Domicile: Primarily city dwellers who are likely in touch with trends and community movements surrounding body positivity.
- 4) Technology Absorption: Smartphone users for online transactions: Targeted through online ads and social media platforms where they're likely to shop or engage with content. Tech Enthusiast: Likely to appreciate innovative digital marketing tactics such as AR filters, online quizzes, or interactive ads.

3.4 Positioning

The Body Shop as an ethical brand that supports women's empowerment through its business practices and marketing strategies. Companies must realize that in the current era there are many competitors who will serve consumers who are their target market. Thus, there needs to be a strategy to differentiate the company's offerings compared to competitors (Huda Maulana & Soepatini, 2021).

People are looking forward to maintaining a healthy lifestyle and using organic products on their skin. The Body Shop has been positioned strategically to meet these requirements.

They meet the customer's need for a healthy lifestyle by using all natural and organic ingredients like seaweed, sugarcane, aloe vera, honey, tea tree, etc. The brand puts forward the environmental concern and also campaigns against animal testing of the products. It is one of the very few cosmetic companies that promote health more than glamour and this is a very unique positioning strategy.

L'Oréal differentiates itself from competitors by not only focusing on beauty but also on the broader impact of its campaigns. The brand's strategic emphasis on self-worth, diversity, and social activism positions it uniquely in the market, appealing to a demographic that values authenticity and ethical responsibility. Through its well-rounded approach, L'Oréal successfully fosters a strong, positive brand image and deepens its connection with socially conscious consumers.

3.5 Marketing Mix (4Ps)

The Body Shop:

- 1) Product: The Body Shop's product line includes ethically sourced and environmentally friendly beauty products. With the campaign, natural beauty products are highlighted,

aligning with the campaign's message. A few examples are Body Care, Hair Care, Perfume, and Makeup.

- 2) Price: Pricing strategies are designed to be affordable yet reflect the premium quality of ethically sourced ingredients. At The Body Shop they have special offers every month such as discounts and cashback and they also have special gifts for their offline/online customers.
- 3) Place: The campaign is prominently featured online and in stores, ensuring that the ethical message is visible wherever the products are sold.
- 4) Promotion: Promotion through femvertising, emphasizing the empowerment of women and challenging beauty stereotypes.

L'Oreal:

- 1) Product: L'Oréal offers a wide range of beauty products, including cosmetics, skincare, haircare, and fragrances, designed to cater to diverse beauty needs and promote self-expression.
- 2) Price: L'Oréal employs a tiered pricing strategy, offering both premium and competitively priced products, with regular promotions and special offers to enhance customer engagement.
- 3) Place: L'Oréal's products are widely available through online platforms, retail stores, exclusive boutiques, and social media, ensuring broad accessibility and visibility.
- 4) Promotion: L'Oréal's promotional strategies focus on femvertising campaigns like "Because You're Worth It" and "Stand Up," leveraging influencer collaborations, digital marketing, and CSR initiatives to emphasize empowerment, inclusivity, and social responsibility.

3.6 Psychological Impact

- 1) Perception and Learning: The campaign teaches consumers about the impact of ethical consumption and positions as a brand that cares deeply about societal issues, altering consumer perception towards the brand as not just a business, but a movement.
- 2) Memory: Through striking visuals and emotional storytelling, the campaign aims to leave a lasting impression on consumers' minds, associating with positive change and empowerment.
- 3) Attitude and Motivation: By aligning with consumers' values on gender equality and ethical consumption, the campaign positively influences attitudes towards the brand. This alignment motivates consumers to choose The Body Shop and L'Oréal over competitors as a means of expressing support for these values.
- 4) Personality: The campaign effectively integrates the concept of personality in its branding strategy by aligning the brands personality with traits valued by its target audience,

particularly those who prioritize ethical consumption and self-empowerment. By projecting attributes such as empathy, responsibility, and inclusivity, the campaign cultivates a brand personality that resonates deeply with consumers who themselves identify with or aspire to these traits.

3.7 Analysis of Effects

- 1) Attitude Towards Ads: Preliminary feedback from social media suggests that the campaign resonated well with the target audience, viewed as genuine and empowering. Consumers expressed a strong connection with the brand's message, reflecting a positive attitude toward the advertisements.
- 2) Brand Attitude: The ethical campaign significantly enhanced consumer perception of The Body Shop and L'Oreal as a brand committed to real issues. The authentic approach in promoting feminism and ethical beauty standards likely bolstered the brand's image among consumers who prioritize authenticity and social responsibility.
- 3) Purchase Intentions: An increase in conversations around the campaign correlates with heightened interest in purchasing from the brands. The femvertising strategy, coupled with the brand's longstanding ethical image, likely boosts consumer loyalty and purchase intentions, particularly among those who value brand ethics in their purchasing decisions.
- 4) Effectiveness: The campaign's integration of femvertising with the brand's ethical principles appears to be effective in strengthening brand loyalty and attracting a consumer base that supports gender equality. However, ongoing analysis is necessary to measure long-term impacts.
- 5) Ethical Considerations: While the campaign is positively received, it is crucial that the brands maintain their commitment to ethical practices to avoid accusations of "femwashing." Consistency between the brand's message and actions ensures credibility and sustains consumer trust.

4. CLOSING

The intersection of feminism and marketing, known as femvertising, has emerged as a significant cultural force in the modern marketing arena. This final project aimed to explore the impact of femvertising on consumer behavior, with a focus on how such advertising practices influence decision-making and contribute to the broader discourse of gender equality.

The Body Shop's ethical campaign is a compelling example of how femvertising can extend beyond mere advertising to embed deeper social values into a brand's fabric. By focusing on empowering women and promoting ethical behavior, the campaign not only drives

commercial success but also contributes to societal change. This approach not only resonates with the target audience but also sets a standard for future advertising practices. Further research should explore the long-term effects of such campaigns on brand loyalty and consumer behavior, particularly across different cultural contexts.

L'Oréal's marketing mix strategically aligns with its brand identity of promoting self-worth, diversity, and social responsibility. Through diverse product offerings, strategic pricing, widespread availability, and impactful promotions, L'Oréal successfully positions itself as a leader in the beauty industry, resonating with a broad and diverse consumer base.

Through the examination of this case studies, this essay has shown that femvertising extends the influence of advertising into the domain of social responsibility. Each campaign contributed to altering the narrative around women, their bodies, their capabilities, and their roles in society. The success of these campaigns in changing perceptions and influencing consumer behavior underscores the power of aligning marketing strategies with social values.

This study also provided valuable insights into the interdisciplinary nature of consumer behavior and the importance of the cognitive model of psychology in understanding how consumers process and react to femvertising. It shed light on the psychological, sociological, economic, and cultural factors that influence consumer responses to feminist advertising.

In conclusion, femvertising has the potential to be a win-win strategy for businesses and society. When executed with authenticity and respect for the values it purports to promote, femvertising can help brands build trust and loyalty among consumers, particularly those who identify with or support gender equality. This research has shown that femvertising can be a potent tool for positive social change while also contributing to commercial success.

However, there are challenges and considerations to bear in mind. The concept of 'femwashing', where brands superficially adopt feminist values for profit, has been identified as a potential pitfall. Therefore, brands must ensure that their femvertising efforts are genuine and reflective of their overall business practices and brand identity.

The implications of this study for future research are substantial. There remains a vast landscape to explore regarding the long-term effects of femvertising on brand loyalty and consumer behavior, particularly in diverse cultural contexts. Further research could also examine the impacts of femvertising on the internal culture of organizations and its influence on corporate social responsibility policies.

In a constantly changing market where consumers are increasingly aware and vocal about their values, femvertising stands as a beacon of how businesses can harmonize profit-making with progressive and ethical marketing practices. The brands that will thrive are those that not

only understand the commercial benefits of femvertising but also embrace its potential to contribute to a more egalitarian and conscious society.

The future of femvertising is promising, provided that it continues to be approached with the sincerity and integrity that true social progress demands. It can redefine the relationship between commerce and community, paving the way for a new era of socially conscious marketing that empowers consumers and drives inclusive growth.

Through these case studies and the analysis of consumer behavior theories, this manuscript has endeavored to capture the essence and impact of femvertising. It contributes to academic discourse and serves as a guide for practitioners seeking to understand the nuances of gender-based marketing strategies. The compelling evidence presented supports the assertion that when companies engage with social issues thoughtfully and authentically, the rewards transcend financial gains, fostering societal advancement and stronger, more meaningful connections with consumers.

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