Mapping Femvertising Research: A PRISMA Driven Systematic Review of Literature

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Abstract
The study seeks to carry out an extensive literature review centered around the concept of femvertising, which advocates for advertising that empowers women. The study aims to gather and integrate insights on femvertised advertising through comprehensive analysis of a wide range of studies, following PRISMA guidelines. This study investigates into significant factors that have been extensively examined in academic literature and brings attention to the areas that have been neglected, potentially enhancing our overall understanding of femvertising. In total, the study incorporated 28 studies following a thorough examination of the literature. The study found that the majority of previous research has primarily focused on the concept of authenticity in relation to femvertising and the agentic empowerment of women. Nevertheless, it is important to note certain crucial factors that warrant further investigation. Later, practical implications of the study are discussed.
Keywords: Femvertising, Advertising, PRISMA guidelines, Systematic literature review

1. Introduction

Advertising is not just communication-related to the brand; it is the communication that supports the brand (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016; Eisend, 2019). Thus, businesses can achieve social and commercial success by considering ethical values and respecting communities, individuals, and their environment (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). A good market reputation and brand image fosters a competitive edge over other businesses (Vlastelica et al., 2018; Porter & Kramer, 2006). It has become a moral obligation and an economic matter of life and death for corporations to invest in social issues (Du et al., 2010). Marketers have come to a point where they need innovative ideas and activism to engage the consumer with the brand for a longer period (Aaker, 1997). As a form of corporate social responsibility, cause-related marketing has been a rising trend used by marketers to increase the overall brand image, purchase intention, and perceived value of the brand (Beise-Zee, 2013).

This means marketers communicate the shared values between consumers and the brand through different means (Eisend, 2010). As reciprocity, consumers gain prosocial intentions by being responsive toward the advertisements that come up with hope and messages that resonate with internal beliefs (Chen & Huang, 2016). Brands indulge in diverse facets to improve their reputation and build goodwill amongst the target Market (Chernev & Blair, 2015). The brands consider corporate involvement in social uplift as an investment (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988).

The contemporary consumers expect corporate brand activism (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020). Until recently, brands have taken a position to support different social causes like environmental concerns, gender issues, education, etc. Female empowerment is one of the most prevalent themes on which companies are capitalizing, for they are communicating by challenging the stereotypical role definition of women and bringing up matters that are influential and subjected to societal change (Drake, 2017).

Promoting pro-female themes through advertising, giving equal and justified gender representation to females (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Cambrello, 2014), femvertising is the term initially formulated in 2014 by *SheKnows* media. It is a fusion of two terms, feminism, and advertising; further definition of femvertising by Akestam et al. (2017) posited it as "an advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes". As a special case for marketing products through bringing awareness in society by promoting pro-female imageries, marketers convey a picture more representative of diverse types of women. With the emergence of social awareness campaigns like #Metoo and #Timesup, marketers are now mirroring social movements in their communication with target customers through different mediums like TVCs, social media, or print advertising (Dans, 2018). This change is because modern women are more proactive in terms of economic authority and social position, which is why advertisements depict women as more powerful, independent, aware, and thus authorized or empowered (Drake, 2017).

Feminist have been criticizing the media and advertising industry for quite a long time now. The views of feminist have been that women are targeted, and their status and dignity are affected by symbolizing them as objects; this has taken a toll on women on several fronts. The first and unabashed example of feminism in advertising was when a US-based ad campaign by Virginia Slims (Tobacco selling brand) used feminist politics to sell products (Antunovic et al., 2018). In one of the recent versions of the Cambridge documentary film "Still killing us softly," the advertising practices have been blamed for promoting sexual violence towards women, putting them into subordinating roles to men and unrealistic bodily achievements through product acquirement (Báez et al., 2017; Kray et al., 2017).

The previous research also indicated that 91% of women believe that the way women are represented in ads has a direct impact on the self-esteem of women. Moreover, 71% of respondents reported that brands should be responsible for promoting pro-women themes (Dans, 2016). According to Teng et al. (2021), empirical evidence suggests that advertising campaigns that espouse female empowerment can positively influence customers' perception of a company's social responsibility, consequently resulting in a more favorable attitude towards the advertisement. The recent surge in research on femvertising can be attributed to the growing scholarly interest in social marketing, which is observed in the incorporation of progressive social concerns in contemporary capitalist communication culture (Carter & Steiner, 2004; Taylor, 2014).

This phenomenon has been explored by various scholars, including Campbell and Kirmani (2000), Champlin et al. (2019), and Taylor et al. (2016). Implementing gender progressive advertising initiatives is based on the dependence on prevalent consumer attitudes and the ethical principles of advertisers (Eisend, 2017). As a result, novel marketing strategies are generated to promote the triumph of these avant-garde promotional initiatives (Middleton & Turnbull, 2021). Nevertheless, research related to femvertising has been mainly conducted in Western countries like Portugal (Lima & Casais, 2021), Spain (Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017), Sweden (Åkestam et al., 2017; Åkestam, 2018; Åkestam et al., 2021) USA (Champlin et al. 2019, Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019; Sterbenk et al., 2022), etc.; and only recently in China, India (Duan, 2020; Kapoor & Munjal, 2017; Qiao & Wang, 2019; Teng et al., 2021; Varghese & Kumar, 2022), Pakistan (Amir et al., 2024) and middle eastern context (Elhajjar, 2022; Negm, 2024). This research examines and consolidates the extant literature on female empowering advertising. The primary objective

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is to comprehensively understand this advertising trend's principal dimensions and constituent elements. Furthermore, the study intends to identify prominent research gaps that can inform and guide future scholarly inquiries in this domain.

2. Methods

The methods used for this systematic review were based on Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) guidelines. PRISMA statement provides a thorough framework for conducting a systematic literature review, which ensures replicability, transparency, and methodological consistency in synthesizing evidence across several research domains. A literature search was conducted through various databases, including Google Scholar, Sage, Taylor & Francis, Emerald Insights, Wiley Online, and Springer, from November 2023 to Jan 2024 with the following terms: femvertising, female-empowering advertising, Pro-women advertising. The search was refined using the "AND" operator to combine the terms and the "OR" operator for a broader search. In addition, we applied filters such as custom range and relevance to scan the search results and managed to obtain a total of 85 research articles published since 2016.

2.1. Study selection and eligibility criteria

The articles were chosen based on their popularity and significance, which were deemed appropriate for our study. The article's popularity is contingent upon its number of citations (Beaulieu, 2015). Articles with at least 10 citations are classified within the top 24% of highly cited articles, while those with 100 citations are ranked in the top 1.8% globally. The initial database search resulted in 65 published articles that included the keywords. Once 13 duplicate articles were removed, 52 articles were moved to the next stage. In the subsequent stage, the title and abstract screening of the remaining articles was done to confirm the potential suitability of the relevant articles for this study, resulting in 47 articles. In the next stage, the full text of the articles was retrieved and extensively read for detailed screening, excluding 15 articles that did not match the inclusion criteria below. In the last stage, 4 more articles were excluded due to their study design. The remaining 28 articles were included in the review. The small number indicates that femvertising is an emerging niche in the current advertising research. This makes the study even more concrete and in time to explore new avenues of research in femvertising research.

2.2. Inclusion Criteria

- The study included research papers published between 2016 and 2023. The reason to focus on this time frame was that the first article solely related to femvertising was published in 2016 after she knew about the media's emergence of the term femvertising.
- Only empirical and review articles were included in the current study.
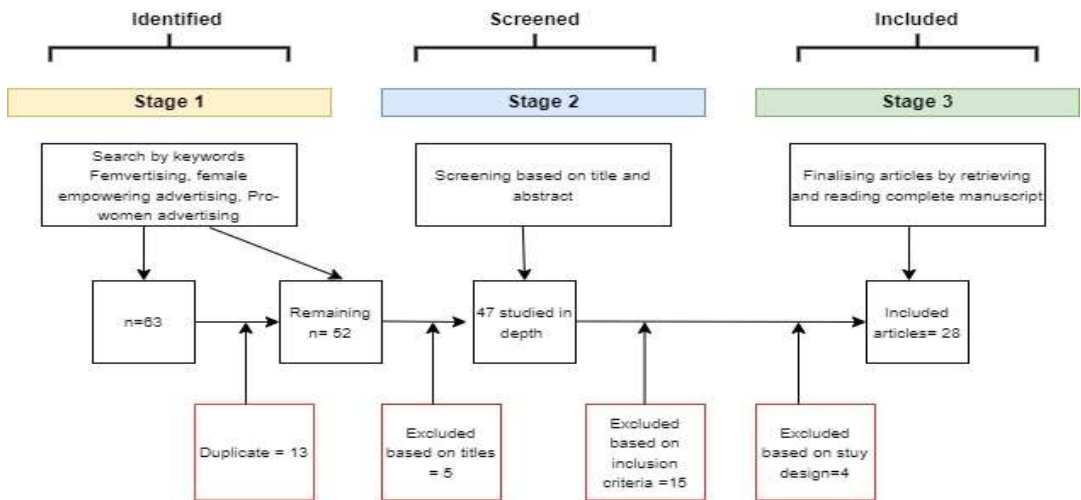- Only articles written in English were included in the systematic literature review.

Figure 1: Literature Review Process (PRISMA Flowchart)

2.3. Characteristics of the review articles

Table 1 presents the taxonomy of the research articles included in the literature review. The table classifies articles based on research type, key insights from each article, and variables. The research type demonstrates the methods utilized for the articles. Maximum studies were quantitative (13), followed by qualitative studies (10); only 3 studies utilized mixed methods and 1 review article. The results indicate that femvertising research is in the initial stages and requires substantial consideration from the scholarly community. The need for more qualitative research can help extend the current literature, as it can help identify various factors that have been overlooked until now. It can also guide in informing conceptual frameworks that could become a base for further quantitative research to generalize the findings.

Table 1: Review articles included

	Sources	Key concepts	Key Findings
1.	Teng et al. (2021).	Ad attitude, purchase intent, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism	The study examines individuals' responses to "femvertising," highlighting that such messaging can enhance corporate social responsibility (CSR) perceptions, leading to positive ad attitudes and increased levels of purchase intentions. The research also emphasized the negative link between hostile sexism and consumer responses to femvertising, whereas benevolent sexism does not significantly expect such responses.

No.	Author	Variables	Findings
2.	Lucka, et al. (2021)	Issue advocacy, attitude toward the ad	The study revealed that gender stereotyping decreases positive sentiment towards the ad and the brand. The study hypothesizes that issue advocacy can cancel the negative effect of traditional female stereotyping and that demographics are not a reason for favoring or condemning stereotyping and advertising. Conversely, any reaction is far more linked to personal disposition.
3.	Sternadori and Abitbol (2019).	Attitude towards femvertising, support towards women's rights	The study revealed that individuals who support women's rights and self-identify as feminists exhibit a positive attitude toward femvertising. This positivity also influences their response to specific femvertised messages and the individual's perceptions of the brands or companies involved.
4.	Abitbol and Sternadori (2020).	Ad preference, attitude towards femvertising	The study highlighted that consumers' rurality and ad preferences are associated with their attitude toward femvertising. Urban respondents, despite being more educated and supportive of gender equality, did not necessarily have a more positive attitude toward femvertising. However, liking "humorous," "with a message," and "emotional" ads were linked with a more positive attitude. Femvertising appeals were effective in rural and urban areas, indicating gender equality acceptance across social divisions.
5.	Åkestam, et al. (2017).	Ad reactance, ad attitude, brand attitude	This study found that femvertising, which focuses on female empowerment in advertising, can reduce ad reactance among a female target audience, leading to improved ad and brand attitudes.
6.	Hainneville, et al. (2023).	Femwashing, authenticity	The study highlights that the concepts of femvertising and femwashing coexist in consumers' minds; however, this strategy is recognized as authentic when used with transparency, consistency, identification, diversity, respect, and challenging stereotypes.
7.	Sterbenk et al. (2022).	Companies commitment to gender equality, company's public image	This study observes the commitment of companies to gender equality through femvertising. The findings revealed that award-winning companies will likely have more internal efforts supporting women than non-award-winning companies. The study further recommends that companies set specific, measurable goals for gender equality and measure the impact of their actions to provide a better image of their commitment.
8.	Elhajjar (2022)	Attitude towards femvertising, trust in ads, feminist self-identification	Key findings indicate that gender, trust in the advertisement, feminist self-identification all affect consumer behavior toward femvertised advertising. However, educational level and age don't have any impact.
9.	Champlin et al. (2019).	Low brand-cause fit, high brand-cause fit	The study explored the concept of brand-cause fit and its impact on advertising strategies, predominantly in the context of gender equality and female empowerment. This study found that ads with high brand-cause fit depicted highly feminine women and focused on women's struggles. In contrast, those with low brand-cause fit depicted more active and adventurous women and focused on an empowered future for women.

10.		Presumed influence on others, brand evaluation, ad evaluation	The study revealed that advertising featuring stereotypes generates a higher presumed influence on others (harmful for others) than non-stereotype ads. When consumers feel a certain advertising stereotype can harm others, they tend to have a negative brand evaluation in terms of brand and ad attitude. Furthermore, presumed influence on others mediates the relationship between stereotyping and ad evaluation.
	Åkestam (2018)		
11.		Activism, commodification of feminism, conscious capitalism	The study explains the reasons of the increase in femvertising. Five major factors were identified that approve the increase in femvertising messages. It includes brand 1) activism and conscious capitalism, 2) growing activism in the representation of women's status, 3) criticism on the commodification of feminism, 4) increase in gender stereotype awareness, and 5) increase in governing authorities review of stereotypes in ads.
	Varghese and Kumar (2020)		
12.		Attitude towards femvertising, forwarding intention, purchase intent	The study found that positive attitudes towards femvertising influence the forwarding intention of ads but do not necessarily lead to purchase intention. Additionally, women in diverse age groups displayed significant variances in both purchase intention and intention to forward femvertised ads.
	Kapoor and Munjal (2017)		
13.		Authenticity, rejection of sexism in ads	The findings include the effectiveness of sentiment analysis in assessing public opinion on social media, demonstrated through Desigual's controversial ad backlash on Twitter and YouTube. The analysis further highlighted the audience's rejection of sexist advertising and the significance of authentic representations of women in marketing campaigns.
	Pérez and Gutiérrez (2017)		
14.		Consumer attitudes, emotional connection,	The study focused on consumer reactions towards femvertising, specifically analyzing online comments of selected femvertising campaigns. The research found that femvertising is seen as a useful tactic to empower women and creates a positive impact. The campaigns effectively conveyed feminist values and received positive feedback and emotional connection with the brands. However, there were instances where the message was misunderstood or had the opposite effect. Overall, the study highlighted the importance of femvertising in addressing gender equality issues and influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors.
	Lima and Casais (2021)		
15.		Purchase intent, CSR perceptions, company-cause fit, brand loyalty, CSR association	Findings suggested that in femvertising context, purchase intention is positive with positive CSR perception and company cause fit. In comparison, loyalty toward a brand acts as a mediator between CSR association and purchase intent.
	Abitbol and Sternadori (2019)		
16.		The perceived fit between the company and cause, consumer attitude, purchase intent, insincerity on behalf of the company	The study highlighted how femvertising influences consumer behavior based on cause and company fit. Additionally, despite the company's efforts toward female empowerment, some participants were skeptical about their motives.
	Abitbol and Sternadori (2016)		
17.	Qiao and Wang (2019)	Authenticity	This study found out that femvertising serves brands strategic purposes. Brands are reinforcing gender stereotypes under the authority of female-empowering messages. The study also determined that an absence of authentic portrayal of women is subjected to consistent, conservative, and stereotypical roles of women.

18.		Positive consumer attitude increases user-generated content	Through content analysis, the study examined the content of the videos which included features like call to action, the charactertistics of actors etc. and engagement reponse between the comments and the viewers. The findings also highlighte the positive side of femvertising which connects consumers positively and provides a platform for user generated content which supports the cause. .
	Yoon and Lee (2023)		
19.	Michaelidou et al. (2022).	Femvertising, social media, luxury and non-luxury brands	The study demonstrated that non-luxury brands use femvertising more than luxury brands. Specifically, the study shows that luxury brands use more stereotypical and sexist reflections of women as compared to non luxury brands.
20.	Um (2022).	Attitudes towards feminism, attitudes, brand perception, purchase intent, perceived congruence between brand and ad	The study examined the impact of gender, attitudes toward feminism, and the congruence between brand and ad messages on femvertising. It found that women have more positive attitudes, brand perceptions, and purchase intentions than men. Additionally, feminists, irrespective of gender, have more positive attitudes toward femvertising and the brand and higher purchase intention than non-feminists. Additionally, high perceived congruence between the brand and femvertising messages leads to more positive attitudes toward femvertising and the brand and higher purchase intention.
21.	Kordrostami and Laczniak (2022)	Dimensions of female power, gender-balanced power	The study's findings include the identification of different dimensions of female power in advertising, such as sexual power, expert power, family power, and empowerment. The study highlighted the importance of reflecting gender-balanced power distribution in advertising.
22.	Windels, et al. (2020)	Consumerism, genuine social change, commodity feminism, self-surveillance	This article explores how female empowerment campaigns employ postfeminist discourses to sell feminism. The study examined several advertising campaigns and discusses that these campaigns often focus on individual empowerment and consumerism while neglecting structural inequalities and bigger feminist goals. It further highlighted the tension between using feminist language and imagery for marketing purposes and the need for genuine social change.
23.	Tsai et al. (2021)	Female empowerment, agentic power	Female empowerment in advertising is primarily based on agentic power
24.	Török et al. (2023)	Femvertising, sisterhood, self-care	Femvertising is culturally bound, based on different contexts. Mexicans relate femvertising with sisterhood, while Hungarians associate it with self as the center.
25.	Park et al. (2023)	Authenticity, brand attitude, issue involvement,	The study highlights that the authenticity of the femvertised message and the consumer's involvement with the issue are key elements influencing how consumers respond to such messages.
26.	Vibhute et al. (2023)	Female empowerment, shift from collectivism to individualism	The study found that empowerment has shifted from collectivistic social transformation to individualistic self-transformation. Generation X accepts more femvertising than Generation Y.
27.	Feng et al. (2019)	Femvertising, consumer engagement	Consumers respond positively to the femvertised campaign (Dove Real Beauty). The positive engagement of consumers is categorized into four types: inquiry, laudation, debate, and flame, showcasing the various ways consumers interact with the femvertised campaigns.

28. Duan (2020)	Femvertising, Psuedo-feminism, consumer behavior,	The study revealed that female consumers feel interconnected with the Vloggers who speak about female empowerment, and their perception of brands also improves.

Table 2: Characteristics of the included articles

Qualitative	Quantitative	Mixed method	Review
Török et al. (2023); Vibhute et al. (2023); Tsai et al. (2021); Yoon and Lee (2023); Qiao & Wang (2019); Abitbol & Sternadori (2016); Pérez and Gutiérrez (2017); Lima & Casais (2021); Champlin et al. (2019); Hainneville, et al. (2023); Duan (2020)	Teng et al. (2021); Park et al., (2023); Um (2022);Michaelidoue et al. (2022); Abitbol& Sternadori (2019); Kapoor & Munjal (2017); Åkestam (2018); Elhajjar (2022); Hainneville, et al. (2023); Sterbenk et al. (2022); Lucka,et al. (2021); Abitbol and Sternadori (2020); Sternadori & Abitbol (2019)	Windels, et al. (2020); Kordrostami and Laczniak (2022); Feng et al. (2019)	Varghese and Kumar (2020)
Total 11	13	3	1

3. Findings and Discussion

The review of the 28 articles provides critical findings from the advertising literature.

3.1. Femvertising-related key concepts

The study highlighted the importance of considering authenticity and feminism as crucial factors. A considerable body of literature explores how consumers perceive the authenticity of brands' femvertising efforts, leading to skepticism. In addition, there is a growing concern about fem-washing, which refers to brands superficially aligning themselves with feminist discourse without making any real efforts. The contentious aspect of including women in advertising may elicit scepticism towards brands, as they may be perceived as capitalizing on feminist discourse. This form of brand activism may be viewed as a disingenuous and superficial attempt at "woke washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Chadwick & Zipp, 2018; Sobande, 2019). Hence, brands must align their words with their actual conduct to address the incongruity between the organization's message and perceived actions (Sterbenk et al., 2022). This issue requires further exploration, not only from consumers' perspective but also from how advertising creatives perceive it.

In addition, the field of femvertising, which centers on empowering portrayals of women in advertising, has primarily emphasized narratives of individual empowerment and assertiveness, neglecting the communal aspect of femvertising (Tsai et al., 2021). How brands depict individual empowerment may unknowingly isolate consumers in collectivistic cultures, failing to recognize the opportunity for brands to foster meaningful conversations. This emphasizes the lack of knowledge in the field, as the aspects of the community, such as sisterhood, shared experiences, and women's struggles, are all essential in promoting a comprehensive understanding of how advertising connects with consumers (Török et al., 2023). By examining the collective empowerment aspect, brands can foster consumer engagement that enhances their reciprocating behavior. Further investigation is warranted into the relational dynamics, particularly in the context of social media, where brand communities and collective actions are becoming increasingly popular.

3.2. Limitations and Future Research Directions

The present study has several limitations that need careful consideration and acknowledgment, as identifying these constraints is crucial for thoroughly evaluating the findings and examining the comprehensive research implications. The present study considered 28 articles in compliance with the set criteria. Future scholarly work should consider more articles that are not just in English but in other languages as well. The present work highlights the dimensions related to femvertising that are associated with brand-related and non-brand-related outcomes; however, further studies can contribute by giving attention to more personal factors (like psychographics, culture, religious beliefs, etc.) that influence consumer behavior towards femvertising, to provide a more holistic approach.

3.3. Practical implications

To develop a comprehensive understanding of the existing literature on femvertising, the current study employs the PRISMA technique to conduct a thorough review. The study seeks to collect and combine insights on femvertised advertising via a comprehensive analysis of various studies. This study explores substantial factors that have been extensively explored in academic literature and sheds light on the areas that have been overlooked, which could contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of femvertising. The findings of this literature review highlight the practical implications of using femvertising as a strategy to promote positive attitudes towards brands and related issues. The study also emphasizes the importance of authenticity, an extensively explored topic in academic research. It explores how authenticity can create a stronger bond between consumers and brands.

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