

## **Philosophy of Feminism: The Root, Evolution and the Impact Towards Current Business from Communication Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

This research intricately explores the evolving landscape of feminism and its profound impact on the realms of business and advertising. Central to the discussion is the concept of advertising, a strategic integration of feminist messages in advertising, and its potential to catalyze significant social change. Emphasizing the pivotal importance of authentic representations of women in advertising, the narrative underscores the imperative for companies to demonstrate a steadfast commitment to fostering inclusivity and diversity. This discourse contains diverse themes such as feminism, gender roles, advertising, and the critical issue of violence against women, offering a comprehensive synthesis of academic research, theoretical perspectives, and practical implications. Through this interdisciplinary lens, the paper contributes valuable insights to both marketing practices and broader societal transformations, cultivating a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between feminism and the advertising landscape.

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**Keywords: Feminism, Advertising, Business Impact, Marketing, Femvertising.**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Despite the numerous amounts of literature discussing the history and progression of feminism, there is a notable absence of explanations detailing the transformation of the Females' Movement in terms of social issue. This paper emphasises a standpoint that interprets the evolution of feminism as a substantial shift in the trajectory of social evolution, and the philosophy behind the feminism itself. Humans have a special skill for learning in various ways, and this has given them the ability to make and share culture (Dunkel et al., 2024). Emmerson (2024), in his study "Homeostasis and comparison of systems" suggests that it's not only the genes in human beings that influence evolution but also the way they practice their culture.

Human societies exist within complicated social contexts characterized by various external factors such as constraints, needs, and limitations (Laub et al., 2024). In response to these complexities, societies undergo adaptation, necessitating inevitable restructuring process over time in response to change in societies. The examination of societies and their evolution highlights that the communal order of civilization experiences transformations and restructuring, presenting itself - in a way - distinctive from its previous manifestation. Scholars

posit that the evolution of society involves incremental steps contributing to heightened societal complexity.

Early study done by Spencer (1887) make an effort to expand upon Darwin's principle of the survival of the fittest, applying it to human civilizations and asserting that society has been progressively advancing toward a better-quality state (Butler, 2024). Further study by Julian Stewart, in 1975, formulated the multi-linear theory of evolution through additional research, suggesting that societal changes occur as a consequence of their adjustment to constantly changing surroundings.

In short, feminism directs efforts toward societal revolution by centering on women's concerns and devising strategies for empowering them and enhancing their life quality and ability to choose upon what they want, in which, we can say, feminism has a transformative function in society. In the context of a patriarchal society, the feminist movement has risen as an alteration in the path of evolution (Schiele et al., 2020). Evolution, in this context, can be conceived as the progression of a societal trait from its primitive form to its developed state. Transformation occurs through resource competition and the dissemination of valuable innovations in both thought-process and action (Falcón & Nash, 2015). Kuhn (1996) in his study "The structure of scientific resolution" introduced a contemporary view on change through the hypothesis of paradigms. According to this concept, a paradigm maintains its fame and impact as long as it satisfactorily supports most evident occurrences and resolves prevalent issues (Imamov & Semenikhina, 2021). However, it eventually succumbs to newer concepts that emerge and pose challenges. Consequently, extended periods of "normalcy" are succeeded by brief intervals of "revolutions," marked by significant shifts in fundamental speculative assumptions (Kordrostami & Laczniak, 2022). A good illustration is the androcentric ideas that are deeply ingrained in both the natural and social sciences, which are now being challenged with the emergence of a feminist concept that introduces alternative ideologies (Prudence, 2017). Capra (1997) further emphasizes that while an individual may possess a worldview, a concept is a communal understanding (Rottenberg, 2017). The impact of concepts underscores their role in influencing social change by serving as pivotal moments in individual perspectives. Historical evidence supports the notion that societal transformations arise not solely from wars or authoritative regimes but, significantly, from a substantial number of individuals beginning to alter their perspectives (Sterbenk et al., 2022).

Throughout history, women have faced various tormenting destinies, including rape, female infanticide, mutilation of genitalia, murder, burns, and enslavement, among others. Data reveals that a staggering 60 million to over 100 million women and girls are deemed missing from various populations, they are potentially surviving if gender-biased practices were absent (Houge, 2015; Weitlauf et al., 2023). WHO, alongside researchers from diverse organizations, has conducted extensive studies authenticating the widespread difficulty faced by women globally. This includes the harmful impact on the dignity of womanhood due to exploitations that happens such as sexual assault, murder, violence in homes, and the spread of HIV ((Bellizzi et al., 2020; Dam et al., 2022; Festin, 2020; Lindberg et al., 2021; Mann & Bertotti, 2024; McCool-Myers et al., 2022; Suranga et al., 2024). Given the alarming statistics and descriptions from these studies, it is expected that feminist movement has occurred as a platform for social action and act as voices to combat the cruelty of women. The noteworthy aspect is the collective global attention to these issues, facilitated by the political power that women have attained,

allowing for the inclusion of the matter of accountability for gender-based brutality on the international agenda.

This research aims to analyze the transformation of the feminist movement from a historical perspective to the present day, as well as the role of feminism in social evolution. The study will examine the philosophy behind feminism and its impact on social change, particularly in challenging androcentric perspectives in the natural and social sciences. Additionally, the research will explore the interaction between cultural practices and feminist ideologies, and how feminist movements have adapted to and influenced cultural contexts. It will also highlight the global dimension of feminist activism, emphasizing collective efforts to address gender-based violence and discrimination worldwide. By documenting the historical and contemporary challenges faced by women, this research seeks to understand the impact of feminist movements in combating gender-based cruelty and promoting women's rights.

### RESEARCH METHODS

The research method demonstrates strengths in its systematic approach to searching and selecting literature from various academic databases such as EBSCO—Business Source Complete, Semantic Scholar, JSTOR, and Google Scholar. The focused strategy using specific search terms like "feminist", "stereotyping", and "feminism", coupled with refined selection criteria, resulted in a curated collection of 27 scholarly articles exclusively addressing feminism within the realms of marketing, advertising, and consumer research. However, to enhance the diversity of perspectives, the study could broaden its sources to include industry reports, practitioner insights, and primary data from stakeholders in relevant industries.

Furthermore, clearer transparency in justifying exclusion criteria, such as non-open-source articles or those lacking specificity to feminism, would ensure that relevant literature is not overlooked. There is also room to expand the search keywords to encompass newer viewpoints within feminist discourse that may not yet be well-represented in existing literature. By doing so, this research could offer a more comprehensive and informed contribution to understanding the role of feminism in contemporary marketing, advertising, and consumer behavior dynamics.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

#### **The increasing movement of females: the narrative and progression**

Throughout history, it has been established that media serves as the primary force moulding the landscape of feminism (Jackson, 2018). The philosophy of feminist movements during the 1800s represented a pivotal moment for women striving to challenge their marginalized position in society. These movements employed a variety of marketing strategies to advocate for their cause. The suffragist movement, particularly influential in the early twentieth century, aimed to remove legal barriers and champion women's rights (Pace et al., 2024). Moreover, the continuous effort for full social and economic equality with men is an indication of the advancement of feminism (Yasmin, 2021; Yu et al., 2023). Feminism continued to evolve, with the subsequent wave focusing on empowering women and acknowledging various gender expressions. It promoted women's rights to make independent choices about their sexuality. The post-feminist era introduced a transformative period characterized by anti-feminist sentiments (Schiele et al., 2020). During this period, there was a

mistaken belief that gender equality had been fully attained, alongside scattered resistance to stifling the rights of women (Dahlbeck Jalakas, 2016).

### **Connecting the dots: the influence of culture in winning consumers heart and mind**

According to Pineda et al. (2022) in their study, established brands often adopt a considerate stance regarding the cultural identity of their consumers. Professionals acknowledge the significance of understanding the cultural context, enabling them to construct a brand narrative that supports cultural activism. Moreover, they can recognize and capitalize on emerging cultural opportunities. A successful marketing strategy is "movement marketing," where the brand's target audience is mobilized around a shared interest or experience, aiming to achieve objectives that benefit not only the brand but also society and consumers.

### **Philosophy of Feminism: Feminism by product of adaptation**

The evolutionary process results in three outcomes: adaptations, by-products arising from adaptations, and residual noise. Theoretically, the elements of a kind can be examined, and empirical analysis can determine whether they are adaptations, noise, or by-products. There is disagreement among evolutionary scientists regarding the prevalence of these three categories, where some of them claim that significant human traits, like verbal language ability, are simply consequential of having large brains – thus, supposed to be categorized as by product only (Demirhan, 2020). Alternatively, some contend that attributes like language suggest the presence of a distinct design, making it highly improbable that they are anything other than a clever adaptation for communication and manipulation (Clement, 2023).

### **Empowering Messages: Feminist Approaches in Advertising for Social Impact and Consumer Connection**

The surge in femvertising can be linked to marketers recognizing the stronger inclination of millennials toward social causes compared to preceding generations. Consequently, they are more receptive to marketing strategies that endorse brand activism (A. S. Shetty et al., 2019). As consumers, women are increasingly using their buying influence to choose brands that resonate with their beliefs, especially in the digital era where they are more aware of their capacity to instigate change. Advertisements that advocate for female empowerment elicit positive sentiments towards both the ads and the endorsed brands, resulting in a greater likelihood of making purchases (Drake, 2017).

Furthermore, the idea of femvertising has surfaced as a tactic to engage with consumers who are socially conscious, with the goal of contributing positively to society (Negm, 2023). Marketing specialists predict that forthcoming businesses will be directed by forward-thinking leaders who prioritize not only financial success but also environmental accountability (Kotler, 2017). Incorporating the tenets of conscious capitalism enables a company to foster heightened customer loyalty, enjoy the benefits of more efficient and engaged employees, and fulfill the requirements of suppliers and stakeholders (V. Shetty et al., 2020).

In the age of conscious capitalism, it is crucial for businesses to embody genuine purpose and assess cultural dynamics to connect with consumers seeking a profound relationship beyond superficial brand identity. By incorporating cultural marketing into their approach, well-known brands have effectively transformed their image and harmonized with the principles of conscious capitalism (Kotler, 2017). In this context, femvertising is anticipated to flourish as a manifestation of brand activism and a potent instrument in cultural marketing.

## **Feminism Unveiled: The Underlying Impact of Damaging Depictions and Objectification of Women in Advertising**

Advertising frequently reinforces gender stereotypes by depicting women in constrained and objectified roles. Numerous studies have delved into this issue, underscoring the adverse impact of these narrow portrayals on individuals' self-perception (Confente et al., 2020). Critics contend that advertising falls short in accurately representing the diverse experiences of women, perpetuating detrimental stereotypes instead (Guo et al., 2024; Zhang & Wang, 2024). Research consistently reveals that advertisements often present women as sexual objects or in stereotypical roles, making consumers acutely aware of these depictions (Matthes, Prieler, & Adam, 2016).

Building on this narrative, there is a discernible demand from pro-women advocates and the media for a novel advertising trend that emphasizes promoting female empowerment to bolster brand recognition. Studies conducted by the Advertising Standards Bureau of Australia have unveiled differing attitudes towards female portrayals in advertisements between women with low and high scores on the female autonomy inventory (Berger et al., 2022; Confente et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2024).

### **Current Landscape: Femvertising's Ascendance and its role in influencing consumer**

The integration of the empowerment of women into advertising strategies has occurred for diverse political and cultural motives. According to (Hernández Rodríguez & Sepúlveda Ríos, 2022), the primary objective of empowerment is to assist women in cultivating self-esteem and assertiveness, enabling them to lead independent lives. Many advertisements, particularly within the realm of femvertising, illustrate women taking charge of their thoughts and actions, empowering themselves. For instance, a Lane Bryant commercial titled '#ThisBody is Made to Shine' features women confidently responding to negative comments about their bodies on social media. However, this empowerment process should extend beyond individual development to address the broader social context, ensuring that women's interactions with society contribute to their empowerment. Recognizing the diverse roles and environments of contemporary women is crucial. Consequently, advertising has had to adjust its traditional approach by promoting messages that empower women. The change in viewpoint has led to the emergence of femvertising, an advertising approach seeking to substitute derogatory and sexist stereotypes with empowering messages tailored for women (Kordrostami & Laczniak, 2022).

### **How it influences the overall movement of feminism?**

Critics contend that the transition from post-feminism back to feminism lacks substantial discussions or confrontations (Jackson, 2018). Martinez et al. (2021) notes a growing weariness with femvertising as a marketing strategy, suggesting that brands should concentrate on affirming women's courage, authenticity, intelligence, and resilience instead of attempting to define womanhood. In response, Bir (2021) cautions against the emergence of "faux-feminism," wherein brands employ feminism as a marketing tool. These brands incorporate feminist ideals into their taglines without taking meaningful actions to advance gender equality and diversity. Despite this, they neglect adequate representation of women in leadership roles and permit misogynistic messaging in their advertisements (Azzahra et al., 2024). Martell argues that this exploitation can foster false optimism about closing the gender gap and impede genuine progress.

### **CONCLUSION**

Our study reveals the overall landscape around femvertising, which is viewed either as a strategic marketing tool or a manifestation of truthful corporate support that aims for social change. We have observed the common integration of feminism in advertising and corporate marketing, representing an emerging trend. The primary objective has been to align the overall emotion with social movements, signifying that this is actually not an unforeseen evolution but rather a gradual process. This article's value lies in synthesizing potential explanations for femvertising and clarifying the distinctive value between authentic feminism and superficial feminism in advertising. It provides a foundational understanding for scholars and marketers to further explore studies on feminism and its relationship with marketing research.

The statement that said that femvertising destabilizes the broader feminist movement is not entirely true. Instead, it is ingrained in the well-known phenomenon where consumers are actually asking for more genuine representation of women, and this coupled with the cultural movement and increased awareness of gender stereotypes. Additionally, the brand's necessity to connect with socially aware consumers further amplifies this trend, accentuated by growing criticisms of marketers using this movement as a marketing tactic.

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