

Selling Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of Femvertising

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Selling Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of Femvertising

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Abstract

This thesis explores the impact of femvertising on representations of women, its relation to and conversation with third wave feminism as a growing social movement, and its extension of a brand's dedication to corporate social responsibility. Feminist critical discourse analysis from a third wave perspective was used to conduct qualitative visual and textual analysis of three different femvertising campaigns: Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty," Always' "Like a Girl" campaign, and Pantene's "Shine Strong" campaign. Although femvertising diversifies the representation of women and girls in the media by challenging restrictive beauty standards and damaging rhetoric, it fails to accurately represent or reference the third wave movement by shying away from the feminist label and omitting mentions of intersectionality, sexuality, and storytelling. In addition, in order for femvertising to seem genuine rather than manipulative, the campaign must reflect a sustained effort on behalf of the brand to empower women and girls through philanthropic efforts and organizational partnerships.

Terms: *Brand Identity, Brand Personality, Corporate Social Responsibility, Brand Loyalty, Gender Roles, Hegemonic Masculinity, Second Wave Feminism, Third Wave Feminism, Body Cropping, Male Gaze, Scopophilia, Incorporation, Commodity Feminism, Commodification, Neoliberalism, Capitalism, Femvertising*

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Introduction

In 2015, SheKnows Media, a digital lifestyle media company focused on women, introduced the first ever #Femvertising Awards to highlight brands who, through creative advertising campaigns, work to dismantle gender stereotypes and empower women and girls. The term femvertising has grown in significance over the past 10 to 20 years, appearing frequently in industry-focused publications such as *Adweek*, and broader publications like *Fortune*, *Forbes*, and *The Huffington Post*. SheKnows Media defines this new phenomenon as, “advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls,” and it has proven to be effective considering that women control 70-80% of household purchasing decisions and are prone to connect said decisions to social issues (Brennan, 2015).

This paper intends to examine the impact of femvertising on representations of women, its relation to and conversation with third wave feminism as a growing social movement, and its extension of a brand’s dedication to corporate social responsibility. Because this is a relatively new topic, the relevant research is sparse. My goal is ultimately to look at femvertising campaigns critically and to discern their value as part of a larger advertising trend. In order to address the research questions below, I will examine three femvertising campaigns in particular: Dove’s “Campaign for Real Beauty,” Always “Like a Girl” Campaign, and Pantene’s “Shine Strong” Campaign.

RQ1: How do these campaigns reflect a sustained effort to develop realistic, complex, and empowering representations of women and girls in the media?

RQ2: How does femvertising address core third wave ideas such as intersectionality, storytelling, and female agency?

RQ3: How do femvertising campaigns reflect a larger effort to empower women and girls outside of media and communications?

Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" was launched in 2004 in conjunction with Ogilvy & Mather, Edelman Public Relations, and Harbinger Communications. Dove and Ogilvy London began conducting research in 2001 regarding levels of self-esteem and body positivity among women. The results indicated that, at the time, only 2% of adult women would consider themselves beautiful (Our research, Dove.com), and Unilever and Dove decided to flip the traditional script: Instead of telling and showing women who they should be, they would celebrate who they already are. The campaign aimed to reconstruct beauty standards to include all skin colors, body types, heights, weights, wrinkles, rolls, and flaws. Considered one of the first advertising campaigns to go viral on social media (Bahadur, 2014), the "Campaign for Real Beauty" is still releasing relevant femvertising content today.

Always teamed up with Leo Burnett Chicago to release part of their "Like a Girl" campaign in 2014, with the full 60-second spot airing for the first time during the 2015 Super Bowl. Research had found that girls' self-esteem drops twice as much as boys' during puberty, and while boys' self-esteem can return to pre-pubescent heights, girls' cannot (Case Study, 2015). As a brand dedicated to women,

girls, and health education, Always chose to target the rhetoric that negatively affects girls' idea of self-worth during puberty, the core phrase being "Like a Girl." The original video advertisement, released on YouTube, has been viewed over 90 million times, and continues to inspire new "Like a Girl" campaign media in the form of partnerships, video, print, and social media content.

Pantene launched two campaigns under the umbrella slogan of "Shine Strong"—"Labels Against Women" launched by Pantene Philippines and BBDO Guerrero in 2013, and "Sorry Not Sorry" launched by Pantene USA and Grey Agency in 2014. Although "Labels Against Women" first aired in the Philippines, it quickly became globally viral and was widely relevant in the United States. Both of Pantene's femvertising attempts work to call into question harmful rhetoric that affects both how women are perceived by others and how they perceive themselves—whether it be demeaning labels or over-apologizing.

All three of these campaigns were widely recognized as manifestations of the new femvertising phenomenon, and although the campaigns were extremely popular and yielded profitable results, they still received criticism from those who saw the brand's empowering messaging as contrived and demeaning. Since its inception, third wave feminism has been closely linked to pop culture, and femvertising has now become the new example of the grassroots movement's ties to capitalism. Most research available on femvertising focuses on one aspect at a time rather than considering the phenomenon in its entirety. By considering its role in the representation of women, the third wave feminist movement and its ideals, and

corporate social responsibility and corporate philanthropy, I hope to capture the multifaceted femvertising trend in all of its ambiguities and ambivalence.

Literature Review

Brand Identity & Personality

In order to examine Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty", Always' "Like a Girl" campaign, and Dove's "Shine Strong" campaign accurately and objectively, it is necessary to consider what a brand identity entails, and how Dove, Always, and Pantene may utilize femvertising to shape their respective brands in particular ways.

Celia Lury discusses a brand as an object—a set of relations between products in time—and she captures both the static objectivity of a brand as well as its constant development and restructuring in the term "dynamic unity" (Lury, 2, 2011). Everything related to a brand represents a common brand identity, which marketing managers strive to keep consistent as they grow and consider feedback (Lury, 2011). A company's brand is reminiscent of the relationship between organization and audience, and because audience opinion and interpretation are so pivotal to a company's success, a discernable brand identity is crafted in an effort to shape and sway consumer perceptions. The process of building a brand identity forces an organization to answer two main questions: Who are we and what do we stand for? Visual representations of brand identity, such as logos, color schemes, and fonts are creative reminders of that company-to-consumer relationship.

These more basic visual representations act as the backbone to a company's brand identity; however, all forms of audience outreach are constantly constructing and rewriting a broader and more personal portrait of the brand. A brand identity

includes everything from the tone of voice a company utilizes both in their internal and external communications to the quality and reputation of their products and services. Brand advertising, whether it is through print, television, or social media, also plays a significant role in shaping consumer perceptions and thus demands an increased focus from brand managers. Research has shown that consumer opinions regarding executional elements, such as the use of colors or spokesperson choice, and brand messages greatly depend on the consumer's exposure to brand advertising (Biehal and Sheinin, 1998). Over time and depending on the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, consumers will become so familiar with a brand that the artifacts which make up their brand identity will be not only easily identifiable, but also will be ingrained in memory for ease of recall (Biehal & Sheinin, 1998).

In the 1980s, a brand became much more than a company or a product— a brand became a way for people to converse about companies and products in a more familiar way, and subsequently, it became a way for companies to infiltrate the everyday lives of their consumers (Arvidsson, 2006). In his book, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*, Arvidsson discusses the layered importance of brand creation: its contribution to and mediation of social life alongside its financial impact (Arvidsson, 2006, 5). According to Arvidsson, the source of a brand's value is what consumers think and do with the brand. What lies inside the minds of consumers dictates a brand's capacity for generating value, or, its brand equity (Arvidsson, 2006). A well-established and thoughtfully curated brand is vital to a

positive company-consumer relationship and has discernible economic incentives (Lury, 2011).

As marketing managers construct a brand identity, a brand personality is also being molded. Brand personality is a multifaceted construct that includes which human characteristics consumers project onto a brand (Grohmann, 2009). “Consumers associate human personality traits with brands because they relate to brands as they would to partners or friends, because they perceive brands as extensions of their selves, or because markets suggest that brands have certain characteristics” (Grohmann, 2009, 106). Jennifer Aaker conducted research in which she attempted to define the “Big Five” dimensions of brand personality and the meaning behind each dimension. She found that consumers perceive brands to have varying levels of five distinct personality traits: sincerity, excitement, competence, sophistication, and ruggedness, and each of these five has their own set of sub-traits. For example, competence would connote reliability and success, while ruggedness would imply being tough and outdoorsy (Aaker, 1997). Audiences map human traits onto every artifact that is introduced to them as representative of a particular brand. Eventually, a multidimensional, complex brand personality develops.

Though these five traits are dominant qualifiers, brand identity also includes characteristics such as gender (Grohmann, 2009). Research suggests that consumers want their self-concept reflected in their brand choices. Thus, they attribute gender characteristics to brands in order to reflect their own masculinity

and femininity (Grohmann, 2009). This process is especially relevant for brands that contribute specifically to the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity and traditional femininity—the qualifications of which will be discussed further in this review (Grohmann, 2009). For example, Old Spice products are crafted specifically for men, and consequently, their brand personality frequently is attributed with traditionally masculine characteristics such as being tough, adventurous, funny, and strong. At the same time, Olay, also a Procter & Gamble brand, creates products for women and is associated with being gentle, beautiful, soft—even a color association of pink maps Olay as a feminine brand. Though mapping self-characteristics onto brand representations is a natural process, Grohmann does not extend her findings to consider the implications of gendered advertising and how it perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Increasingly, consumers are evaluating a brand's social impact when they make purchasing decisions; thus, companies are striving to market themselves as ethically responsible (Joseph, 2009). Prior to the 1950s, it was customary for corporations to participate in philanthropic giving only if the cause directly related to their business practices (Cochran, 2007). In 1953, the New Jersey Supreme Court ruled in favor of A.P. Smith Manufacturing Company, allowing them to donate \$1500 to Princeton University without violating shareholder interest (Cochran, 2007). This donation paved the way for modern corporate philanthropy in the way of corporate

social responsibility. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) refers to a company's initiatives to take responsibility for their environmental and social impact, though these initiatives often go above and beyond what is required by government environmental regulations. This new wave of ethical consumerism has the potential to affect sales and profits, and so companies are encouraging corporate social responsibility out of necessity (though, hopefully moral concern plays a role as well). "A recent global ranking published by the Ethisphere Institute found that the most ethical companies perform better financially, even in time of economic crisis; making a point that investing in ethical practices has benefits for organizations" (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012, 542). Previously, price, durability, and convenience were the main factors with which consumers made their purchasing decisions; however, research has only recently measured the effect of brand ethics on brand loyalty. According to Singh, brand loyalty is an indicator of future re-purchase, customer retention, recommendation, and cross-selling opportunities.

Traditionally, advertising campaigns would not be considered corporate social responsibility because the defining call to action is to purchase the product advertised, negating the portrayal that social initiatives come from the "heart" (Cochran, 2007). In 2004, Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" blurred the lines between advertising and corporate social responsibility by showcasing a direct goal—female empowerment—and by urging its audience to continue the critique of beauty standards after the advertisement ended. Femvertising thus becomes a way for Dove to incorporate social outreach into their selling practices. Amita Joseph

(2009) discusses the importance of integrating business practices and products into outreach programs and corporate social responsibility strategies. It was common in the latter half of the 20th century to consider social responsibilities independent from a company's financial interests; however, in 2002, an article by Michael Porter and Mark Kramer published in the *Harvard Business Review* argued that, "in the long run...social and economic goals are not inherently conflicting but integrally connected" (Porter & Kramer, 2002, 5). Their advice to companies was to emphasize corporate social responsibility projects that have significant financial returns as well as social benefits (Cochran, 2007).

Not only did Singh, Iglesias, and Batista-Foguet discover that corporate social responsibility is a good return on investment, but also that corporate ethics must extend beyond marketing tactics. "[The brands] need to promote a real corporate ethical behavior that is transmitted to customers and all other external stakeholders in every single interaction with the corporate brand or any of the product brands of the corporation" (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012, 547). This includes, but is not limited to, employee recruitment, ethical hiring practices, effective internal communications, homogenous company culture, and expansive philanthropic programs. If a product is branded as ethical, the company's everyday business practices must also reflect the same ethical principles or else consumers brand trust and overall loyalty will be in jeopardy due to conflicting brand characteristics (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012). If femvertising is to be considered an effective path towards achieving social responsibility and improving brand loyalty,

the company's marketed investment in the empowerment of women and girls must be adequately and strategically reflected in their business practices.

Gender Roles

Cognitive frameworks surrounding sex and gender begin to form at a young age and are established and reinforced through representation (Devor, 1993), whether that be through interactions with your parents, friends and family, or media outlets such as advertisements and television. In the United States, the gender schema allows for two genders—male or female—determined by biological sex and placed opposite from each other (Devor, 1993). As outlined by Sandra Lipsitz Bem in her book titled, *The Lenses of Gender*, adults in a social community treat boys and girls differently according to their own preconceived notions of what girls and boys are supposed to be like, often heavily laden with gendered stereotypes. Eventually, the difference in treatment causes girls and boys to become different from one another, and soon, their own self-identity closely mirrors the opinions put forth by the adults who raised them (Bem, 1993). To fully understand the impact femvertising has on the feminist movement and viewers at home, one must first have a grasp of the ideological constructs that dictate what it means to be masculine and what it means to be feminine.

In North America's patriarchal society, these two "clusters of social definitions" used to identify male from female are not equal, because masculinity is afforded the culture's most highly valued attributes (Devor, 1993, 6). Males tend to

identify with privilege and power not because of their anatomical difference, but because of what the phallus signifies in our patriarchal society. From a Freudian perspective, the hegemonic male knows on some level the significant weight that the phallus carries and is constantly afraid of having that power stripped of him—castration anxiety (Bem, 1993).

Hegemonic masculinity is a concept that refers to the promotion of male dominance in a society. In a way, it is a masculine ideal, and the standard can—and does—change over time (Tragos, 2009). Masculinity is not a possession; rather, it is a set of practices and a social conduct that is performed by engaging in culturally defined masculine practices (Schippers, 2007). The collective performance of these practices over space and time reinforce the masculine ideal that becomes hegemonic. As R.W. Connell outlines, hegemonic masculinity is defined against femininity, and because of this embedded emphasis on the subordination of women, there can be no such thing as hegemonic femininity (Connell, 2005). It is also important to note that although hegemonic masculinity is primarily focused on power over the feminine, it is also defined against subordinate or fringe forms of masculinity (Schippers, 2007). This is specifically obvious when looking at intersectional groups such as racial minorities and their relationship to and movement through masculine identities (Schippers, 2007). However, all males, regardless of whether they align more closely with hegemonic masculinity or a subordinate form, benefit from the power and dominance that the existence of hegemonic masculinity affords (Schippers, 2007).

Consequently, femininity is defined first and foremost by its position in the peripheral and its subordinate position to the masculine (Bem, 1993). Because patriarchal society has reserved modes of practice for men which involve action, strength, and power, this leaves women to portray a femininity which involves “modes of dress, movement, speech, and action which communicate weakness, dependency, ineffectualness, availability for sexual or emotional service, and sensitivity to the needs of others” (Devor, 1993, 486). Often, femininity is seen through actions, or more accurately, a lack thereof. Women by societal standards are meant to take up less space both physically and figuratively, keeping their arms and legs closer to their bodies and using small, child-like gestures. Similarly, speech patterns interpreted as feminine tend to be of higher frequency and include niceties such as questions and preemptive apologies (Devor, 1993).

Femininity is also largely restricted by what men find attractive. In western society today, there is a feminine standard of physical and emotional features that is reflected fairly consistently in media representations and is seen as the pinnacle of attractiveness—women’s worth becomes defined by how well they fit into the arbitrary mold created by the patriarchy (Jenkins, 2013). The separation of the sexes into both opposing and complementary domains pushes women and girls to view their own success as confined to the private sphere while men are able to revel unapologetically in the successes of the public sphere (Jenkins, 2013). Femvertising, in its quest to empower women and girls, works to deconstruct and call into question these very social constructs that define femininity against masculinity.

These advertisements utilize the common feminine trope with the sole purpose of challenging it and giving depth and complexity to the female existence.

Feminisms

Contemporary feminist historians discern periods of feminist action as waves. The first wave of feminism refers to the period of activity in the nineteenth century into the early twentieth century and is characterized most notably by the suffrage movement. Believed to be the catalyst of this first wave, Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women," written in 1742, outlined society's failures with regard to women: its failure to recognize women as individuals separate from men; its failure to educate women and girls adequately and fairly; and its failure to respect women's value outside of the domestic sphere (Paglia, 2008). At this point in time, women were legally barred from owning property, divorcing their husbands, voting, attending university, or even having legal custody of their children (Paglia, 2008). In the United States, activists such as Susan B. Anthony, Lucy Stone, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton united as women to fight for the abolition of slavery first, and then went on to lead the women's suffrage movement (Paglia, 2008). The first wave of feminism did not necessarily mark the beginning of the fight for gender equality; rather, the first wave marked the first multi-national, organized movement aimed at sparking political shifts towards sustainable equal opportunity and treatment for women. This first wave is largely

considered to have ended in 1919 with the ratification of the 19th amendment to the United States Constitution granting women the right to vote.

The second wave of the feminist movement picked up again in the 1960s, with the period in between marking not the absence of the fight for gender equality, but a lack of organization and clear directive within the movement. The first wave built a strong foundation of fighting for political equality, and the second wave was able to extend that fight beyond the suffrage movement. Betty Friedan in 1962 published *The Feminine Mystique*, within which she reveals the otherwise hidden frustration of housewives across America who had felt unfulfilled and trapped in the domestic sphere (Paglia, 2008). The second wave movement emphasized gender equality in education, in the workplace, and also at home where women tried to separate themselves from the restrictive stereotype of the submissive American housewife that became even more engrained in western culture throughout the 1940s and 1950s (Paglia, 2008). Leaders of the second wave encouraged women to reflect upon their lives and recognize the influence of America's patriarchal gender-biased society. This idea that the "personal is political," a phrase coined by Carol Hanish, inspired women to seek equal treatment not just politically, but also socially and culturally, and the effect was a well-organized and well-publicized collective fight for equality that culminated in legislature such as *Roe v. Wade*, the legalization of abortion, and Title IX, which opened the door for women's sports across America (Paglia, 2008).

Retrospectively, the second wave of the feminist movement is criticized by feminist theorists for preaching a unified female experience while speaking primarily to white, upper-middle class women, many of whom were college educated as well (Beail & Goren, 2009). This rhetorical divide left many women—women of color, especially, but also women who chose to remain in the domestic sphere, women who reveled in their sexuality, or women who ascribed to traditional feminine standards—feeling disillusioned and left behind by the so-called women’s liberation movement (Beail & Goren, 2009). The call for intersectionality and inclusivity in the early 1990s shaped what first was called lipstick feminism, and what later developed into the third wave (Snyder-Hall, 2010).

Rather than defining itself against the feminized domestic sphere, the third wave attempts to champion the female right to agency and celebrate the many choices that women make (though many times it seems that the third wave is pitted against the previous wave rather than being considered a natural extension of it). Meredith Love and Brenda Helmbrecht (2007) use the writings of Lisa Jervis to describe this tension: “It’s just so much easier to hit on the playful cultural elements of the third wave and contrast them with the brass-tacks agenda—and impressive gains—of the second wave: It’s become the master narrative of feminism’s progression (or regression, as some see it)” (43). Many more traditional feminist theorists with ties to the second wave see flippancy in the third wave—inclusivity without any real agenda or unison, and although the third wave does exist largely without a distinct definition, it remains easily identifiable, especially among

millennials. The third wave includes such narratives as “the notion that identity is multiple, intersecting, and shifting rather than conceptualized as a unified self; autobiography and personal experience as the foundation for feminist theorizing; reclamation of some aspects of traditional femininity” (Beail & Goren, 1998, 2).

At the heart of the third wave is the belief that hearing other women’s stories can both enlighten and ground the movement for gender equality, and pop culture works hand-in-hand with self-proclaimed proponents of third wave feminism. Celebrities such as Beyonce and Miley Cyrus have paved the way for women to claim two identities—sexual and feminist—that were previously at odds with each other. The question remains, however—how can a movement be united and focused if it highlights differences and champions every choice that every woman makes? Lori Marso (2010) discusses the importance of first emphasizing a collective political consciousness among women, which the third wave aims to do. Only after this is achieved and the scope of the fight for gender equality and the diversity of the female experience is understood can women come together to fight for direct political goals and broader social justice. Marso’s analysis does not consider the implications of advertising and representation on forging this collective political consciousness and whether or not the third wave’s close relationship to pop culture is detrimental or essential to its progression as a viable and successful social movement.

Gender in Advertising

It is largely accepted that gender identity is, for the most part, socially constructed, and the cycle of ideology manifesting itself in action is reinforced and sustained by representations. Media images and advertisements have the power to change perspectives—both how the audience views themselves and how they view society at large (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). The images that are so often circulated by advertisers represent what marketing managers view as perfect or, at the very least, profitable, but they do not represent the reality that they claim to be mirroring (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). Advertising has proven to be an influential medium that uses language, images, and representation constructs to persuasively reflect the audience's aspirations and carefully shape their perceived reality in an attempt to sway purchasing decisions (Schlachmijlder, 2000). The most minute details—whether to use the word “physique” or the word “figure” to describe a human body—is gendered and is chosen critically to reach a very particular target audience (Motschenbacher, 2009, 10). This profit-motivated process often leads to the misrepresentation of women, the perpetuation of harmful stereotypes, and the creation of unrealistic standards.

One way by which advertisers contribute to the maintenance of harmful female stereotypes is to portray women as objects by way of body cropping. Often, women in advertisements are valued for their physical appearance and are portrayed without personalities or multi-faceted identities. “Visually, women are frequently represented in parts. They are fragments, not whole beings...The whole

person is lost” (Andersen, 2002, 232). Women’s value becomes a measure of what they can offer the men surrounding them, negating their intrinsic worth and placing the female subordinate to the male. Jean Kilbourne (1999) discusses the ways in which advertisers dismember and objectify women’s bodies. Many campaigns will feature a women’s hands as she serves food or puts on makeup, or just “a derriere, a headless torso,” or even just her breasts (258). Not only does this body cropping process strip away the humanity of the female within the advertising campaign, but the objectification spills over into reality as male audiences become accustomed to viewing a woman as an amalgamation of parts and develops a callousness towards violence against women (Shields & Heineken, 2002). The fragmentation of women contributes to the hyper-sexualization of objectified body parts (Andersen, 2002). Many ads—for shoes, for instance—often show slow, fetishized shots of women’s legs—parts of the body associated with male desire and almost always shown from the perspective of the male gaze (Andersen, 2002).

The male gaze concept, developed by Laura Mulvey (1989) describes the process by which the camera puts the audience members—both male and female—in the role of the hegemonic, heterosexual male (Mulvey, 1989). The male gaze is practiced on three different levels: the male gaze as practiced by the characters within a film; the male gaze as practiced by the camera (i.e. the director’s gaze); and the male gaze as practiced by the members of the audience (Mulvey, 1989). Simultaneously, women, as the receivers of the gaze, are displayed as sexualized objects both for the characters within the film and for the audience members

watching from behind the safety of the camera (Mulvey, 1989). This act of scopophilia, the pleasure derived from watching, extends to advertisements as well, as the camera often takes up the role of the hegemonic, heterosexual male.

Female audiences, over time and through the ritualization of gendered language, have adopted the male gaze as well, viewing their own bodies and their worth through a critical lens (Shields & Heineken, 2002). From an economic perspective, it makes practical sense to portray exaggerated and unrealistic female bodies in advertisements—especially in the beauty and fashion industries, but in others as well—because these representations mean that most women will never be satisfied by their appearance. Women with low self-esteem, or women determined to look more “perfect” (as defined by media) will consistently be the most loyal, predictable consumers as they strive tirelessly for an unattainable standard. “The glamorous women of consumer culture with the perfect faces and skinny bodies who wear the clothes and makeup promise results. After all, they use the commodities, and because of them they have been personally transformed into objects of beauty, the cultural ideal able to attract the gaze” (Andersen, 2002, 228). Advertising campaigns portray a very homogenous definition of an attractive woman: tall, waif thin, tanned, and with flawless skin. Through repetition, both male and female audiences internalize these expectations without realizing that most advertising images are the result of extreme photo shopping (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). Men come to expect perfectly toned and bronzed bodies while women, in an attempt to navigate societal standards for beauty (which advertisements have

shown to be their only source of value), aim to lose weight, eliminate stretch marks, brighten their complexions, and hide imperfections.

The confinement of women to stereotypes is a more obvious expression of the power relations between the men and women within advertisements (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014). Men are often portrayed as active, while women assume more passive roles. It is not uncommon to see men in advertisements working, playing a sport, making a phone call, driving—some sort of act which denotes a goal and a purpose. Meanwhile, women in the same advertisement might be positioned as the object of such purpose or as the prize—the gazer and the gazed (Shields & Heinecken, 2002).

A more obvious visual representation of this power relationship is expressed as men look directly into the camera in advertisements while the women around them shift their gaze away, which allows the scopophilia to continue unchecked and unchallenged (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). When women are involved in some sort of action, it is often confined to housewife or motherly duties such as cleaning, cooking, or caring for children, or it is confined to garnering the attention of men either as a beauty or a sex symbol (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). Seemingly progressive advertisements might feature a professional woman in power, but this process of incorporation does not necessarily translate into actual progress for female representations because the working woman still conforms to all of the traditional beauty standards—thin, tall, flawless, and so on (Shields & Heinecken, 2002).

Because advertising permeates society at several levels and demographics, it has the unique ability to shift the values of the collective majority. It has been known for some time that “sex sells,” but at what point does objectifying women to sell a product become an ethical dilemma? John Alan Cohan (2001) discusses three pertinent ethical issues involved in stereotyping and commodifying the female body for profit. The first issue is the portrayal of women as submissive, needy, childish, vulnerable, and in need of guidance from a male counterpart. The second is the creation of an unattainable, unrealistic beauty standard with which women in America have to contend. Women in advertisements have become increasingly thin, young, flawless, pore-less, waxed, plucked, and made up—all qualities which are perfected beyond nature with the help of photo retouching (Cohan, 2001). A third ethical concern is the manner in which women’s sexuality is put on display. Women’s passivity in the act of sex is compounded by the dismemberment and objectification of their bodies. From a young age, women grow accustomed to, or at least numb to, the idea that the sum of their sexualized parts is worth more than their identity (Cohan, 2001). Cohan suggests that ethically, advertisers have a responsibility to portray women in ways that recognize their intrinsic value, which can be accomplished without sacrificing profit margins or sex appeal. One of his practical suggestions is for advertisers to cast models that better represent society at large—of various ages, races, weights, and sizes (Cohan, 2001).

Throughout the history of advertising, women have been objectified, sexualized, simplified, and stripped of their humanity. The very existence of

femvertising challenges this by incorporating more natural, diverse groups of women in their entirety—not just legs or a torso—speaking, being active, and rebelling against the heterosexual male gaze by confronting the camera directly. It is crucial to understand how women have been represented throughout the history of advertising in order to consider the remarkable shift that femvertising marks.

Commodity Feminism

The organized progress of the second wave feminist movement in the 1960s and 1970s led to the recognition by advertisers that women were not only financially independent, but that they had more influence on purchasing decisions than their husbands. Advertisers began rethinking how they engage with female audiences when it became clear that objectifying women might not be the best way to attract women as consumers (Gill, 2008). One of the results was an effort on behalf of advertisers to appeal to women as consumers and not just as a way to attract men. Feminist ideas began informing advertising campaigns as a way to tap into a growing market—the modern working woman (Gill, 2008). Commodity feminism, a term coined by Robert Goldman in his 1992 book, *Reading Ads Socially*, refers to the various ways in which advertisers attempt to “incorporate the cultural power and energy of feminism whilst simultaneously neutralizing or domesticating the force of its social/political critique” (Gill, 2008, 41). Though Rosalind Gill discusses this phenomenon as it relates to advertising, the commodification of feminism as a social movement extends to every corner of capitalism, from movies

and television and clothing and beauty products to political campaigns and women's business conferences.

Claiming a feminist identity has become for many something to be purchased or obtained—a word on a t-shirt or an Instagram bio—rather than the courageous act of solidarity and expression of grit that it once was (Jaffe, 2016). As the second wave progressed as a subculture that supported the LGBTQ community and rejected gender roles, the movement gained a reputation for being subversive and dangerous to the traditional American family structure that relied on the father being the breadwinner and the mother staying at home. As explained by Dick Hebdige (1979) capitalist societies work to incorporate threatening subcultures by way of commodification, softening the hard edges, packaging and selling the identity as an incorporation of the mainstream. By making the movement digestible to the masses, the subculture—in this case, feminism—grows in numbers but becomes less collectively driven. Commodity feminism leads to a “feminist fallacy”: that the mass consumption of feminist language and the increasing representation of feminist ideas in pop culture translates to feminist action in the real world (McRobbie, 2008, 533). More women might identify as feminist now than in 1985, but as many theorists have pointed out, the third wave seems to be characterized more by sharing and discussion than by discernible action (Jaffe, 2016).

The 21st century has marked the emergence of a financially independent, sexually active, competent working woman who, against all odds, can “have it all.” However, women are still being sold a false construction of beauty standards, and

are still led to believe that their lives should be oriented around finding love. “Seemingly esteem-boosting ‘grrl power’ rhetoric makes this message seem fresh, and provides marketers an appealing way to sell even independent-minded girls old-fashioned deference and subordination as ‘empowerment’” (Gengler, 2011, 69). Under the spell of neoliberalism, women are succumbing to the cheapening of their own liberation movement—confusing consumption for power and in the process putting the success of capitalism ahead of their own. As Sarah Jaffe (2016) concludes, “Feminism, Inc. is big business” (5).

Femvertising

Femvertising, defined as “advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls,” is the culmination of advertising’s attempt to appeal to female consumers (SheKnows Media, 2014). The term had been used sparingly for several years before it was officially coined by Samantha Skey, who is the chief revenue and marketing officer of SheKnows Media, the industry leader for all things related to the new phenomenon (Becker-Herby, 2016). Its champions argue that femvertising is the manifestation of the third wave feminist’s consciousness regarding their own purchasing power and rejection of their own objectification. In other words, women began demanding more from the brands that they brought into their lives and into their homes.

Femvertising messages promote gender equality both visually and rhetorically, and thus make third wave feminist language more accessible to the

masses; however, its use to explicitly encourage consumption creates tension between its two foundations: capitalism and third wave feminism (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). Many media and cultural studies theorists believe that capitalism and feminism are at odds with each other, and that femvertising is a perfect example of how commodity feminism can water down a movement and manipulate those within it (Johnston & Taylor, 2008).

Women literally buy into feminist rhetoric, and feel empowered by consumption and well-crafted advertising campaigns rather than view consumerist culture as a distraction from the fight for tangible political change. Others argue that capitalism is our current mode of existence and cannot be avoided or separated from the feminist fight for gender equality. The two worlds are inextricably linked, whether the relationship is positive or negative depends on the specifics. In this case, femvertising is seen as a way for the third wave feminist movement to be represented in the media and to positively influence the messages shaping society's values (Weusten, 2008). The selling of a product is a small price to pay for diversified representations of women in advertising and the growth of a collective female consciousness (Marcus Reker, 2016). This argument also posits the benefit of the cultivation of social spaces, outside of but related to the femvertising sphere, meant both to spark meaningful conversation among women and to encourage action on behalf of relevant non-profit organizations dedicated to women and girls (Marcus Reker, 2016). Femvertising with supplementary spaces for public participation allows target consumers to contribute their own ideas and encourages

a type of activism that moves freely between the private brand and the public (Marcus Recker, 2016).

Brands that employ femvertising are smart for several reasons. First, they paint their brand identity as politically and culturally conscious and committed to gender equality. Second, the brand is able to reach a so-called corporate social responsibility quota while publicly becoming an advocate for women. Third, femvertising is proven to be effective in driving sales. According to a SheKnows Media survey conducted in 2014, 71% of women think brands should be responsible for using advertising to promote positive messages to women and girls, and, perhaps more tangible for marketing managers, 52% of the women surveyed reported purchasing a product because they liked how a brand portrayed women in their advertisements (SheKnows Media, 2014).

Simply put, a campaign can be considered femvertising if it actively seeks to empower women and girls; however, a closer examination shows that the large majority of femvertising campaigns adhere to the following five pillars: (1) the utilization of diverse female talent; (2) messaging that is inherently pro-female; (3) pushing gender-norm boundaries/stereotypes and challenging perceptions of what a woman/girl 'should' be; (4) downplaying of sexuality (particularly sexuality that does not cater to the male gaze); and (5) portraying women in an authentic manner (Becker-Herby, 2016, 19). Authenticity is an important theme as female audiences expect the truth and transparency found in the campaigns to be reflected also in the brand's business practices. For example, if a brand relies heavily on femvertising

and boasts as a champion of gender equality but fails to pay its female executives as much as their male counterparts, brand loyalty decreases among women and, as far as brand identity is concerned, “hypocritical” is added in place of the coveted feminist stamp of approval. Femvertising is a relatively new phenomena occurring largely between 2004 (the year Dove unveiled their “Campaign for Real Beauty”) and the present moment, and though research has been published regarding the female response to and engagement with femvertising, relevant research has yet to be completed on its complex relationship with the third wave feminist movement (Jalakas, 2016).

Method

This thesis utilizes feminist critical discourse analysis from a third wave perspective to conduct a qualitative analysis of three different femvertising campaigns: Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty," Always' "Like a Girl" campaign, and Pantene's "Shine Strong" campaign. All three campaigns are comprehensive, meaning they stretch over various mediums, and my analysis will include a close examination of television commercial content and print advertisements.

Feminist critique is grounded by the feminist focus on gender equality and media scholars use feminist critique to reveal the underlying messages within media texts that reinforce dominant social understandings of a gender binary (Ott & Mack, 2009). Throughout history, media representations have been used, both deliberately and subconsciously, to characterize men and women as opposites, linking masculinity to power, aggression, and rationality and associating femininity with passivity, emotion, and beauty (Ott & Mack, 2009). It is the goal of feminist critique to tease out the ways in which cultural products, such as advertising campaigns, film, television, and literature, reinforce or address the oppressive relationship between the patriarchal structure and women through language and imagery. Beverly Skeggs (1994) defined feminist research as distinct from non-feminist research because it "begins from the premise that the nature of reality in western society is unequal and hierarchical" (77).

Feminist critique was chosen as the research framework because it is both flexible and informed. By flexible, I mean that feminist critique as a method of

research is not confined to one particular type of media text and is applicable to various media—making it ideal for advertising research, which encompasses the examination of both text and images (Doucet & Mauthner, 2005). The method is informed in the sense that its very use assumes the influence of power structures and dominant ideologies on media texts, allowing for research to be placed in conversation within the historical context of feminism (Doucet & Mauthner, 2005). Because of feminist critique's flexibility, it can be adapted and used in conjunction with different waves of feminism as a lens through which to read media texts. For the particular purpose of this thesis, I utilized this research method from a third wave perspective, taking into account the multiplicity of female experiences and the value of individual story-telling, recognizing the tensions that exist specifically with regard to representations of women and the commodification of feminism as a social movement.

When determining which femvertising campaigns to analyze, I considered the following criteria. First, the advertising campaigns needed to be expansive, comprehensive, and widely viewed in the United States across multiple platforms including web, television, print and social media content. Second, because of my focus on corporate social responsibility and its manifestation in corporate business structure, I wanted to focus on femvertising campaigns presented by independently large brands or large brands that are part of an even larger conglomerate. Smaller companies have presented notable femvertising campaigns in recent years (HelloFlo's 'First Moon Party' is a great example), but larger, more diversified

companies have a bigger financial incentive to utilize femvertising, thus complicating the campaign's relationship to third wave feminism as a social movement. I also recognized that in order to draw a conclusion about the relationship between femvertising as a cultural phenomenon and third wave feminism as a social movement, it would be best to analyze more than two campaigns. Ultimately, Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty," launched in 2004 by Unilever, Always' "Like a Girl" campaign and Pantene's "Shine Strong" campaign, launched in 2014 by Proctor & Gamble, all well-received and widely circulated, were most effective when examining the relationship between femvertising and the third wave feminist movement.

When examining the television and print content of these three advertising campaigns, I looked specifically at the ways in which women were represented visually. Because many of the print advertisements are stills from the television commercials, the criteria by which I analyzed the two media are largely the same. I noted the presence of natural female bodies, the deviation from traditional beauty standards (in this case defined as in the literature review: tall, white, thin, flawless), as well as the presence of racial diversity among the women shown (Andersen, 2002). It was essential to consider intersectionality when examining the visual media content of these three campaigns, because in many ways, intersectionality is the crux of the third wave and is what separates it—along with the celebration of sexual agency and personal choice—from the previous two waves (Snyder-Hall, 2010). Despite the critique that the second wave was largely a movement for the

white, the rich, and the educated, media representations still largely consist of white females (Beail & Goren, 2009). I also took note of the visual presentation of the female body and whether it was presented in its entirety, or as sexualized parts. The weight given to the female identity as conveyed by facial expressions was also significant, as it deviates from the traditional advertising structure where females, without personality, fail to confront the camera, and therefore accept the heterosexual male gaze without challenge. I also examined how women's sexuality was portrayed in the visual content—whether sexuality was a narrative at all, and if it was, if it sought male approval as a goal or if it existed as a byproduct of female empowerment. Specifically when considering the television commercial content, I examined the activity levels of the men and women in the advertisement (if there were men present at all). As outlined in the literature review, men traditionally assume all active positions in television advertising, while women are assigned more passive roles, which is a trope femvertising works to reverse or challenge.

In this same television and print content, I conducted textual analysis to discern both the straightforward messages presented as well as the subliminal messages implied by the text and scripts. I first took note of how the women were addressed as consumers and how much agency the text assumed of them considering the traditional advertisement recognizes the men as deciders and consumers and women as objects to be gained (Andersen, 2002). Second, I examined how the text describes or addresses the female body and whether or not it implies that the perfection of the female body is the only acceptable path to

success. Subsequently, I queried whether these campaigns specifically mentioned feminist issues and vouched to challenge ideological perceptions regarding femininity or if they broached the topic indirectly. It was important to remember that these campaigns still have, at their core, an intent to sell and promote a product, and so I also examined how the text mentioned or promoted their respective products while also empowering women. Essentially, I wanted to know whether the text focused primarily on the proliferation of a product or if its overwhelming purpose was to recognize and celebrate the female experience.

In addition to examining the campaign content itself, I also considered trade press coverage from online publications such as *Adweek* and *Advertising Age*, as well as broader coverage from publications like *The Huffington Post*, *The Guardian*, and *Forbes*. This external content is essential in understanding the scope and impact of these femvertising campaigns both within the advertising industry and beyond. In order for femvertising to be considered an effective resource for the third wave movement, it needs to be considered valid not only by consumers and target audiences, but also by industry professionals who are responsible for its proliferation. Conversely, if the coverage of femvertising in the news media is generally dismissive and suspicious of its motives, the popularity of femvertising could be negatively impacting the movement by linking feminism to capitalism. In order to discern whether the press coverage was generally negative or positive, I analyzed specific semantic choices and made note of whether the commentary was campaign-specific or could be applied to femvertising as a cultural phenomenon.

Although the collection of material is diversified and extensive enough to inform an investigation of the research goals, there still remain shortcomings to the research method. Primarily, each of these campaigns is complemented by widely popular social media campaigns, which aim to create external spaces for conversation and storytelling among women regarding their individual experiences. Potentially, these social media spaces alone could be the focus of further research into how consumers relate to these campaigns and use social media as a domain for mobilization.

Analysis & Interpretation

The Representation of Women

Femvertising aims to empower women and girls in part by portraying them in natural, healthy, and complex ways. Throughout the 20th century, advertisers crafted a set of beauty standards that was, at best, narrow and, at worst, dangerous and unrealistic, and marketing managers who utilize femvertising work to complicate these standards with honest representations of women that capture their multifaceted female experience. Advertisers can do this visually by utilizing natural bodies, actresses or women who signal a deviation from beauty standards; presenting the female body in its entirety; and featuring racial diversity in their casting. In addition, women should be shown in active positions rather than passive ones and should not be objectified or over-sexualized. Although it is important to remember that, as with all advertising and marketing efforts, the core motivation of femvertising is to sell a product, visual and rhetorical analysis suggests that these campaigns reflect a sustained effort on behalf of Dove, Always, and Pantene, to develop realistic, complex, and empowering representations of women and girls in the media.

It seems counterintuitive that one stipulation of effective femvertising is that the advertisement feature real women—what were advertisers using before? Models and actresses, yes, but high levels of editing rendered a visual product that was not only inauthentic, but quite literally, unrealistic. (Throughout this analysis, I will be using the term real women to mean any representation of a woman in

advertising that more realistically represents the broad female population of the United States which varies in age, height, weight, sexuality, body type, race, class, and so on.) The Photoshop retouching phenomenon was chosen by the creative team at Dove and Ogilvy & Mather as the subject of their 2006 video spot, “Evolution,” where a young woman—pretty, even by narrow traditional standards—is made-up for a photo-shoot, only to be completely edited and altered in post-production. Small touch-ups seem reasonable until the structure of her face begins to change—the editor lengthens and trims her neck, plumps her lips, even doubles the size of her eyes. Because the nature of this advertisement is to reveal the flaws in media’s standard creative practices, the advertisement still relies heavily on classic representations. The model—tall and thin, white, with blonde hair and blue eyes—is not pushing the limits of what is beautiful and is not a profound casting choice in an effort to increase minority representations in the media and yet, Dove claims to be critiquing the very standards they are perpetuating.



Figure 1. Model, before and after Photoshop retouching, from Dove’s “Evolution” advertisement, (2006).

The text that appears at the end of the video spot reads, “No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted.” The use of a collective pronoun aligns the brand with the viewer in the fight against restrictive female representations, placing blame on other advertisers while championing Dove as a brand for real women. Essentially, “Evolution” separates Dove from their contemporaries and acts as a pledge of transparency to their customers.

Dove’s later advertisements allow them to execute the agenda set forth by “Evolution” by diversifying their casting and highlighting women’s natural beauty rather than relying on post-production retouching. Their marketing team released “Real Beauty Sketches” in 2013, with the aim of showing female audiences that they are more beautiful than they think. A forensic sketch artist drew portraits of several women—of varying ages, races, ethnicities, and body types—first based on their description of themselves, and then based on descriptions given to them by others. Overwhelmingly, the portraits drawn from another person’s perspective were brighter, more accurate, and less critical. The women shown were not models or actresses, but instead were real, average women, which allows the women in the audience to relate directly to them rather than view the women on screen as their ego ideal. The women in the video speak as well—when they are giving descriptions, reacting to the final reveal, and reflecting during individual interviews. This alone is unconventional, as the women on screen are shown as whole, complex beings—elevated from object to subject. Arguably and despite the strength of this advertisement, this video spot does stray briefly from female empowerment with

the inclusion of one questionable clip. Towards the end, the narrator reads, “We spend a lot of time as women analyzing and trying to fix the things that aren’t right, and should spend more time appreciating the things we do like.” This is an authentic and empowering quote, though the clip it is paired with—a woman in the arms of her boyfriend or husband—seems wildly out of place, and in that moment seems to imply that romantic relationships deserve more focus than self-love. Overall, the message, “You are more beautiful than you think,” is preserved, but the inclusion of this clip is reflective of the tendency of advertisers to revert back to these classic representations of male-female relationships.

This effort is further reflected by Dove’s print advertisements, which feature diverse casts of women who in various ways represent deviations from traditional beauty standards whether it be through height, weight, age, race, or otherwise. The print advertisement in figure 2 represents Dove’s transparent effort to connect with their diverse consumer base while defining what real beauty is to their brand—diversity, confidence, community, and firm, smooth skin.



Figure 2. Dove “Real Beauty” print advertisement featuring an ensemble cast.

A close-knit ensemble cast allows for apparent racial diversity, as well as a visual representation of female companionship and support. All of the women are shown in white undergarments, again highlighting differences in skin tone, but also redefining what it means for a woman to be sexy in an advertisement. These women are nearly nude, showing off their curves, and yet their direct confrontation with the male gaze—all six women are staring, smiling into the camera—shifts the intended purpose of their own sexuality. Their bodies, their confidence, and their sexuality are for themselves primarily, reinforced only by the solidarity shown through other women. Their existence is not validated by the pleasure experience of the male viewer. Conversely, this close-knit presentation of scantily clad women allows Dove to stay in the confines of the age old trope—sex sells—while also presenting themselves as a champion of women and female agency as it relates to body confidence and sexuality. The irony lies in Dove’s assertion that every woman is beautiful in their own right while also continuing to assign women’s worth based on superficial beauty and nearly nude bodies.

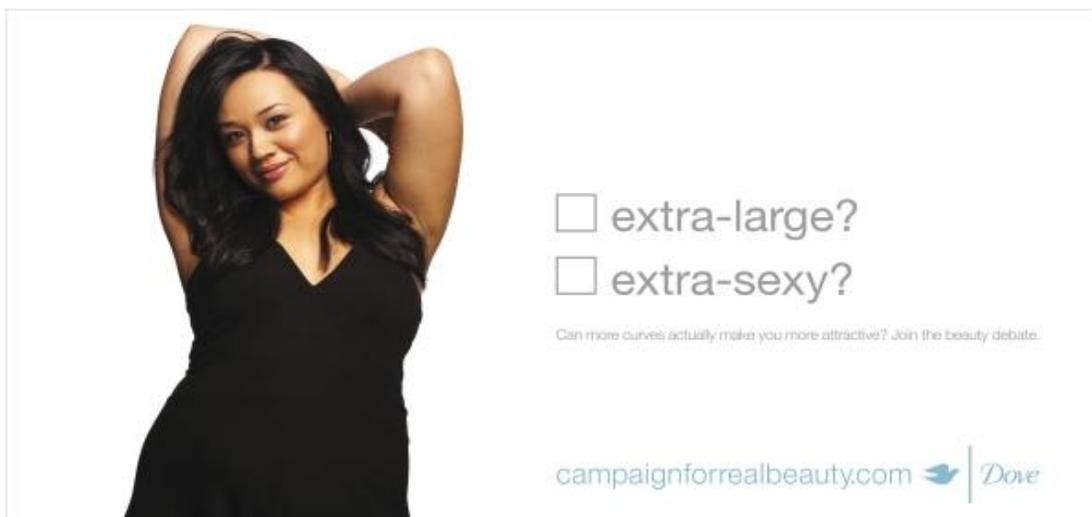


Figure 3. Dove “Real Beauty” print advertisement urging checkboxes and audience participation.

Dove's other print advertisements flip the script and urge the audience to examine their own prejudices towards female beauty standards. One advertisement features a curvier woman posing confidently with her hands behind her head. Two checkboxes ask, "extra-large?" and "extra-sexy?" Dove would hope that the process of mentally checking "extra-large?" would cause the viewer to recognize the impact that pervasive western ideology surrounding beauty standards has on the harsh judgment they place on themselves and on their harsh judgment of other women. Urging the audience to confront their internalization of unfounded beauty standards is doubly effective. Not only does this quick mental process have the ability to improve how the viewer labels herself when she looks in the mirror, but it also encourages the celebration of positive female relationships and support amongst women.

From their inception, Dove's advertisements have sought to call into question the beauty standards that their own brand had helped to preserve; thus, the use of diverse casts was essential. However, femvertising can also focus on female behavior rather than appearance. Pantene, for example, released two video spots, "Shine Strong, Labels Against Women," and "Shine Strong, Not Sorry," in 2013 and 2014, respectively, that took aim at the double standards affecting women—specifically, women in leadership positions—and the propensity of women to apologize frequently for insufficient reasons. "Shine Strong, Labels Against Women" was originally broadcast in the Philippines and quickly became popular on the global stage. The fact that the actresses featured are Southeast Asian women marks

the only attempt on behalf of the creative team to visually diversify or flesh out female representation, and considering the spot was created in Southeast Asia, I would argue that this reflects minimal effort to challenge beauty standards. The women were attractive—tall, thin, and flawless, and their perfect hair allows Dove to simultaneously promote their product line. Their second advertisement, which was produced in the United States, did make an effort to diversify the cast racially, though largely the actresses upheld and maintained traditional beauty standards attaining to weight, height, and age. Regardless of their standard casting practices, Pantene was able to successfully create a dialogue (the video garnered over 30 million views once uploaded to YouTube, and was the recipient of the Bronze Cyber Lion award at the Cannes Lions Festival in 2014) surrounding two important issues: double standards and over-apologizing (Adobo Magazine, 2014).



Figure 4. Pantene “Labels Against Women” commercial highlighting double standards, but failing to address unrealistic representations of women.

The first commercial depicts men and women doing the same acts, only to be labeled differently—a man in charge is labeled “boss,” while a woman in charge is

labeled “bossy.” Not only are the women shown being active, rather than passive—they’re shown walking down a street, giving a presentation in a boardroom, and giving a speech—but they’re shown as equal to their male counterparts. Success becomes defined by strength and dedication, rather than by sexuality or submission.

This is reinforced by Pantene’s second advertisement, which shows women apologizing for simple, everyday actions such as a wife handing their toddler over to her husband, having an arm on an armrest, or jumping into a conversation. These same scenarios are then reenacted with the women not apologizing, sometimes replacing an apology with “excuse me,” but many times saying nothing at all. Pantene’s message to women was reminiscent of Sheryl Sandberg’s *Lean In* thesis—you shouldn’t have to apologize for existing. One could argue that the creative team’s choice to adhere to traditionally strict beauty standards when casting for the advertisement was beneficial. By utilizing traditionally beautiful women, they allow the content and behavior to remain front and center. However, Pantene will always fail to empower its female audiences to the greatest extent if they continue to utilize unrealistic representations of women. Yes, they equate success with strength and dedication, but also with a slim figure and perfect hair. Their failure to question these standards cheapens the brand’s attempt at femvertising, but their campaign does remain successful in calling into question societal expectations for female behavior—a substantial accomplishment in and of itself.

Although Pantene fails to do so, it is possible to confront less aesthetic issues while also recognizing the value of challenging beauty standards. Always was able to

campaign for a shift in female attitude and behavior as well, but used realistically average women and girls to do so rather than models, actresses, or some software altered mix of the two. Their first attempt at femvertising came in 2013 with the release of their “Like a Girl” campaign, which aimed to re-appropriate the phrase. The phrase “like a girl” has been used in conjunction with any subpar performance to connote incapability, weakness, a non-competitive nature, and a preoccupation with things like hair and nails. This low-budget, simply produced advertisement asks a variety of people—mostly women of different ages, but one man and one boy as well—to act out what it means to run like a girl, fight like a girl, and throw like a girl. In order to highlight the drop in self-esteem that occurs right around puberty, they asked young girls to act out the same prompts, to which they ran as fast as they could, fought as hard as they could, and threw as far as they could. When a little girl was asked, “What does it mean to run like a girl?” she replied, “It means run as fast as you can.”

Not only is this sequence meant to provoke consideration from the audience regarding the drop in confidence that girls experience during puberty and prompt a shift in behavior from girls and women alike, but it also works to evolve the representation of women in the media. (As previously mentioned, a man and a young boy were also featured in the advertisement, but for the purposes of this research only the representation of women and girls was considered.) This commercial, along with their follow-up video advertisement “Unstoppable,” features women and girls who represent, in various ways, the average American viewer

rather than an unrealistic, retouched standard of beauty. They are not models or actresses; they are of diverse backgrounds and body types, and they are shown as whole, complex human beings with strengths, thoughts, and insecurities. Visually, their whole bodies are shown, and not one woman in the advertisement is sexualized in any way. The women and girls are shown in active positions—running, throwing, punching, swinging a golf club—and are given the opportunity to look directly into the camera and speak. Not only does the advertisement promote community among women by drawing upon a collective narrative, but it also provides them agency. The older women and girls are given the power to provide a healthier environment for the next generation of girls through support, encouragement, and strength.

There is no doubting the shift in female representation that the phenomenon of femvertising introduces to mainstream media. Women and girls are shown in all body types, ages, and races; they are shown playing sports, giving speeches, and directing commercials. These brands are attempting either to (1) broaden the representations of women in the media because they recognize how damaging narrow beauty standards and harmful gendered rhetoric can be for women's self-confidence and mental health, or (2) broaden the representations of women in the media in an effort to increase brand loyalty among conscientious consumers and to commodify the popularity of the third wave feminist movement. A viewer would hope for the prior, though the ambiguity of the brand's motive for utilizing

femvertising does not necessarily detract from the campaigns' contribution to the diversification of female representation.

Femvertising and the Third Wave

If femvertising is meant to be utilized as a tool for the third wave feminist movement to grow and to spark conversation in the average American household, then the advertisements should effectively address, or at least draw upon, third wave feminist ideals such as intersectionality, storytelling, sexuality, and female agency. Third wave feminists have worked since the early 1990s to develop the term intersectionality as it relates to the female experience. Because the second wave was so heavily criticized retroactively for being a movement directed at a small subset of women—white, educated, upper middle class women—the third wave intends to value and celebrate the varying experiences of women of color, women who identify as LGBTQ, and any other women who are otherwise not represented by the mainstream media. The third wave recognizes some shared experiences pertaining strictly to the female gender, but also recognizes profound differences in individual experiences that cannot be overlooked or generalized.

For example, the third wave would consider gender wage gap a universal fight, but also clarifies that for women of color, the wage gap is even greater and requires unique attention. Storytelling has been the most common method of sharing, proliferating, and validating the unique stories of individual women across the United States (Snyder-Hall, 2010). The third wave also focuses on female agency

and the importance of choice, whether it be regarding reproductive rights, career choices, sexuality or otherwise. I discussed how female agency and sexuality can be represented visually in advertisements, even as simply as showing a woman carrying out the same tasks as a man, but the explicit discussion surrounding female agency is vital if femvertising is to effectively draw audiences into the third wave movement.

With the exception of Pantene's "Labels Against Women" created in the Philippines, every advertisement analyzed features a diverse cast; however, racial diversity and even diversity with age and sexuality do not equate to intersectionality. For representation purposes, having a diverse cast is not only beneficial for both the audience and the advertiser (the audience sees itself mirrored in the casting while the advertiser is able to reach a broader audience), but it is expected in the 21st century. And while intersectionality does depend on diversity, it requires further recognition that layers of identity create a nuanced daily experience, which is lacking from both the Dove and Always attempts at femvertising. The closest these advertisements come to addressing intersectionality is in Dove's "Real Beauty Sketches," when the women are able to speak freely about their experiences with self-esteem; however, these scenes still fall short of recognizing that women of color would be subjected to an entirely different set of restrictive beauty standards. This scene, along with Always' "Like a Girl - Unstoppable," also mark the closest femvertising comes to storytelling. In the Always' advertisement, women and girls are asked if they had ever been told that

they couldn't do something because of their gender and then they were allowed to explain their experiences in their own words. Again, this attempt at storytelling falls short because the format only allowed for brief, moderated responses that formed a neat and calculated narrative. If one of the subjects had chosen to discuss societal limitations on black women, or on low-income women, for example, suddenly the narrative would have been complicated, and perhaps too difficult to tackle in a 30- or 60- second spot. Ideally, a femvertising campaign would utilize storytelling spread across multiple commercials or platforms in order to showcase the intersectionality of the female experience.

The discussion surrounding female agency and the proliferation of choice is also one that is largely absent or watered down in femvertising. In both of Pantene's advertisements, women are shown in the workplace working alongside or outperforming their male counterparts. But just as racial diversity in casting does not equal a discussion on intersectionality, the image of women in the workplace does not equal a discussion on agency. The third wave has been characterized by its fervent support of the woman's right to choose, and if femvertising aims to depict women in healthy and realistic ways, advertisers need to depict women exercising choice and being celebrated for whatever decision they have deemed fit. The second wave found empowerment as women dared to distance themselves from the domestic sphere, whereas the third wave revels in the ability to choose between the public and private spheres—or both or neither. Simply depicting a woman in a boardroom is no longer adequate in capturing the ability and success of women.

Women and girls need to be represented in their complex and multiple roles. Specifically in behavior-centered advertisements such as Pantene's, this plurality could be expressed by featuring women not only in the corporate workplace, but as mothers, professors, artists, and so on.

One way this agency is discussed among the third wave is in reference to sexuality. Traditionally, feminists battled objectification with the disavowal of all things feminine and sexual, but the third wave celebrates sexuality as another projection of female agency. In Dove's print advertisements featuring the ensemble casts, the women are shown in undergarments, confident and smiling; however, even this representation is a watered down version of female sexuality. Female sexuality can exist without the glorification of the male gaze and the dissection of the female body, and yet advertisers shy away from it for fear of crossing the line between empowerment and objectification.

The result is that strong women are shown as non-sexual beings; at best, their personalities are put on display, but at worst, they are once again being placed on one end of the Madonna-Whore dichotomy without much space to exist in between. Ideally, advertising campaigns aimed at empowering women should work to create spaces in between polarizing identities and stereotypes imposed on women—space to exist in between a corporate CEO and a stay-at-home mother, between the tom-boy and the girly-girl, between excessive aggression and silencing timidity, and between the virgin Madonna and the sexually deviant Whore. As with

intersectionality and storytelling, femvertising alludes to the ideas of female agency and sexuality without showcasing them in a meaningful or productive way.

Both Dove and Always work to create a unifying female experience, rallying against restrictive beauty standards or damaging rhetoric through the use of ensemble casts, collective pronouns, and drawing from shared experiences. The first Dove advertisement, “Evolution,” ends with the text “No wonder our perception of beauty is distorted,” which, through interpellation, implies an understood universal experience with skewed beauty standards among women. This unifying rhetoric is positive in the sense that it promotes solidarity among women, and brings female audience members together in a way that feminist movements have struggled to do. All three waves of feminist movements have grappled with the broader, often negative or at least misguided, connotations of the word feminist, with many women believing in gender equality, but distancing themselves from the feminist label for fear of being perceived as hating men (Vagianos, 2016).

Femvertising makes this identity more palatable for these hesitant audiences and allows them to unify around some of the third wave’s more attractive causes. For instance, fighting against Photoshop retouching on advertisements could be a simpler, more accessible fight than attempting to tackle the federal to state shift in Planned Parenthood funding. Negatively, the use of collective pronouns and the fostering of a shared consciousness through similar insecurities seems to neglect the value of intersectionality—while intersectionality forms community through difference, femvertising forms community through similarity.

Although this tempered hybrid of feminism and advertising might lead to female empowerment and a more socially conscious audience, it fails to educate the public about the multiplicity of the female experience and the real issues that third wave feminism continues to fight for. In all instances, femvertising also fails to use the terms “feminist” or “feminism,” which is understandable only insofar as not wanting to alienate those who do not already identify with those terms. How are the negative connotations surrounding these terms going to change if they are not used in their most accurate forms?

Social movements are rarely neat, tidy, and consumable, and so, in their attempts at femvertising, advertisers pick and choose the parts of the third wave that are simple and catchy. They use diverse casts, working women, and women without photo retouching but leave out any mention of policy goals (such as equal pay, access to healthcare, and the fight against rape culture). It seems unreasonable to assume that brands such as Pantene, Dove, and Always would create marketing campaigns focused on influencing policy changes—the very attempt to do so might seem like a more fervent effort to commodify a social movement—and so the very nature of femvertising requires a diluted form of activism. Femvertising does empower women to support one another and to celebrate their natural and unique beauty; however, it is not a viable conduit for the third wave movement to reach new audiences because the content chosen for the advertisements does not accurately represent the history, foundation, or the goals of the movement.

The Commodification of Feminism

At first glance, femvertising resembles an altruistic effort to bring women and girls into the brand-consumer relationship in a healthy way, by recognizing them as the subject of marketing efforts rather than the objects manipulated to reach male audiences (Toonen, 2016). This perception is not incorrect. Femvertising does make a conscious effort to shift the way women are represented in media advertisements by showing their whole, unedited bodies; asking them to act and speak; and allowing their personalities to define them rather than their appearance. The women in these advertisements are authentic, strong, and they are challenging the audience to reconsider things like beauty norms and damaging rhetoric that begins to affect girls' self-esteem around puberty and continues to do so throughout adulthood. Female audiences are not always so naïve, however, and women often react hesitantly toward overt attempts at female empowerment by brands, especially when a product is explicitly mentioned (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016).

There is a basic recognition among audiences that the advertisement's purpose is to sell a product, and with femvertising attempts such as Pantene's, this motive is hard to ignore. (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). As I mentioned earlier, the women in Pantene's advertisements sport glossy, bouncy, flawless hair, and their tagline "Shine Strong" conveniently utilizes rhetoric that can be used to describe physical attributes in addition to personality traits. Companies like Dove work to mask their motives and do so successfully in video advertisements such as "Real Beauty Sketches," where their product line is absent from the script and women's

skin is not put on display. Still, however, their products become the focus of their print advertisements, when text begins to read “New Dove Firming. As tested on real curves,” along with a sizable image of the new firming range in the bottom right hand corner. This is also the case in the print advertisement for Dove’s pro-age skin care line, where the text reads, “This isn’t an anti-aging ad. This is pro-age. A new line of skin care from Dove. Beauty has no age limit.”

In both of these cases, Dove recognizes the trope used in beauty advertising—showing young, thin, beautiful (most likely retouched) women hoping that female audiences will either identify with the representation as an ego ideal or that they will feel so inferior to the representation that they buy the product as a means of belonging. Then, Dove separates itself from this traditional tactic, and situates itself as a brand that not only understands real women, but one that creates products specifically to celebrate them. This argument grows thin when the consumer realizes that Dove is claiming to love real bodies in all of their imperfections while at the same time selling creams and lotions dedicated to firming cellulite and filling in wrinkles. Always is the most discrete about their use of female empowerment as a marketing tool, never mentioning their products in any of their video or print advertisements and instead letting their message of empowerment stand alone. All attempts at femvertising constitute an underlying effort to increase brand loyalty—associating brand names with positive messaging and a dedication to social causes works to bolster and flesh out a socially conscientious brand identity. For Always, branding theory sits at the core of their femvertising campaign

as they garner support around their brand identity rather than the quality or appeal of their product lines. The deliberate omission of product mentions makes Always' attempt to empower women and girls appear more genuine than that of Dove and Pantene.

The connection between the Always brand and the messages of empowerment they proliferate are linked in a way that gives them an advantage over other brands such as Dove and Pantene. Pantene's femvertising campaigns bring up issues that are important—gendered labeling and women's tendency to apologize unnecessarily—but not issues that are in any way consistent with their product lines or previously tailored brand identity. Pantene's entire brand identity had previously revolved around healthy, shiny hair, with phrases like "Pro-V" designed to create an association with technology and science aimed at increasing hair vitality and strength.

The empowerment of women and the fostering of self-confidence had never before been the cornerstone of their brand identity. Dove works to question beauty standards, and yet, as a leading member of the beauty industry, they fail to recognize their complacency in the system they are critiquing. Their femvertising campaigns are positive in the sense that they urge all women to feel beautiful, but are negative in that they perpetuate the pressure women constantly feel to be confident, strong, and beautiful. The result is not an elimination of societal expectations imposed on women, but simply a shift in content. Where previously a viewer might have felt pressured to look like the woman on screen—thin and

flawless—they might now feel compelled to act like the women on screen—confident and comfortable.

It is also important to note here when discussing brand-message continuity that Dove's parent company, Unilever, continues to sell brands such as Fair & Lovely, which is a skin-lightening cosmetic brand marketed specifically to people of color in developing nations, Slimfast, and Axe, which has built an identity around a string of sexist and objectifying advertisements (Iqbal, 2015). Always' femvertising campaigns hone in on self-esteem and societal limitations, specifically around the age of puberty but continuing into adulthood. Just as Dove's marketing team has completed extensive research on beauty standards (Johnston & Taylor, 2008), Always' team traced self-confidence deficiencies among women back to their pre-teen years, and as a brand committed to making a women's menstrual cycle as comfortable and non-restrictive as possible, they saw an opportunity to reach young women and girls in a more direct and positive way.

Research conducted on audience receptions of femvertising, as well as relevant trade press coverage show that women often feel both inspired by femvertising and patronized by the brands using it (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, Vagianos, 2016). Company-cause fit—how well a company's philanthropic actions align with their mission, vision, and values—seems to be the factor that sways audiences to view femvertising as a positive phenomenon rather than the alternative—an advertising trend that commodifies the third wave feminist

movement under the guise of female empowerment in an effort to sell more beauty products.

All brands, reminiscent of human personalities, should have moral codes and a series of beliefs and values that dictate how the company is run and how the company will interact with their audience. A brand that chooses to use their reach to empower women and girls rather than objectify them most likely values gender equality and the issues associated with it—women’s education, equal opportunity, accessible healthcare, and so on. In order to be perceived as an authentic extension of a brand’s mission, femvertising needs to be complemented by extensive outreach, philanthropy, and noteworthy company culture.

Dove and Always have been diligent in their effort to bolster their femvertising campaigns with real world, money-backed efforts to make a difference in the lives of their employees, their consumers, and women around the world (Bahadur, 2014). In 2004, when Dove launched their “Campaign for Real Beauty,” they also launched initiatives to partner with organizations such as Girls Inc., Girl Scouts, and the Boys & Girls Clubs of America to bring the dialogue of solidarity among women and the empowerment of young girls to fruition where it mattered most—outside of television screens and inside the schools, homes, and workplaces of viewers across the United States. In a similar manner, Always has partnered with the International Olympic Committee and United Nations Women to support women in sports, specifically during the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. In addition, they have partnered with TED, to continue educating people about topics such as women

in sports and the effects of gendered language on girls' self-confidence. Internationally, they have partnered with organizations such as Girlology and Save the Children to create safe and free puberty education programs for girls, currently active in 65 countries, and with UNESCO and UNICEF to ensure that girls in underprivileged areas of the world are not kept from school because of misconceptions surrounding menstruation.

In the 21st century, companies feel pressured to adhere to some standards regarding corporate social responsibility, and femvertising and the philanthropy and partnerships that follow seem to offer the perfect solution. These initiatives increase brand loyalty among the more conscientious consumer, boost sales and profits, and spell out a comprehensive agenda for future marketing campaigns, corporate spending, and corporate partnerships, all while painting the brand as socially conscious, forward-thinking, and supportive of women. Ideally, a femvertising campaign would be an extension of a well-established brand identity and come from a place not of profit-incentive but of genuine concern for social issues. This seems naïve considering that the very premise of capitalism requires industry controlled by private owners for profit. The result is a moral ambiguity surrounding femvertising, its motivation, and its growing popularity that causes the viewers to oscillate between feeling empowered and feeling taken advantage of.

Conclusion

Femvertising has proven to be a complex trend both championed for shifting the way women are represented in the media and criticized for packaging and simplifying the third wave feminist movement and selling it back to the women who created it. Dove, Always, and Pantene are just three of many brands who have chosen to utilize femvertising since the early 2000s, and though I chose traditionally feminine brands to analyze, non-gendered brands such as Under Armor, Verizon, and Ram have also taken a shot at the new phenomenon. In an attempt to parse out the sometimes contradictory layers that make up femvertising, or the very idea of advertising used to empower women and girls, I analyzed the campaigns' representation and characterization of women and girls, their relationship to the third wave feminist movement, and the extent to which the campaigns reflected a broader initiative to inspire and support women.

Overwhelmingly, and despite ambiguous motives on behalf of brands, femvertising works to positively shift the way women are presented in the media. Stereotypical gender constructions and the objectification of women characterized female representation in American media throughout the 20th century, with women either hyper-sexualized, confined to a submissive domestic role, or visually shown in parts rather than as a whole person. Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" challenged this by shedding light on the normalcy of Photoshop retouching and the unrealistic beauty standards that follow. They recognized the unspoken rule advertisers followed when they cast tall, thin, fair, flawless women in their

advertisements, and, by contrast, promised to feature and celebrate real women—meaning women who, in one way or another, deviate from traditional beauty standards.

However, in their mission to celebrate “real” women, Dove is also painting a portrait of what a “real” woman looks like, and though their depiction could be liberating for many, it also could be exclusionary for those who naturally fit the more traditional standard of beauty. Their video advertisements addressed how critical women can be of their own appearance, and how the media industry has cultivated this self-surveillance with regard to beauty and consumerism that keeps women buying into the latest products in a fruitless attempt to reach a completely unrealistic goal. Their print advertisements featured racially diverse, ensemble casts of women shown to be strong and confident in their varying heights, weights, coloring, and body types. Pantene called damaging rhetoric and underlying sexism into question in their video advertisements, which is useful and dialogue-provoking; however, even as they promised to empower women they subscribed to these constructed beauty standards that equated happiness and success with thin bodies, flawless skin, and long, shiny hair. Always was able to both attack harmful rhetoric and challenge beauty standards in their video spots and print advertisements by casting diverse and relatable women and girls—those who deviate from traditional beauty standards and are not distorted by photo retouching—and allowing them to answer questions on camera, asking them to confront their own insecurities and biases and then encouraging them to overcome the limitations that society has

placed on them. More often than not, femvertising campaigns represent women as whole beings, showing them speaking and in action, with personalities, not overtly sexualized and not objectified in the slightest, which marks an incredible shift in the relationship between women and advertising.

Femvertising draws upon much of the rhetoric shaped and popularized by the third wave movement, and superficially, it seems that the large viewership of femvertising campaigns could draw attention to the social movement and encourage discussions surrounding key political, cultural, and social issues. In order to examine the relationship between this media trend and the movement it draws material from, I determined how accurately and how fully femvertising campaigns reflect upon or address intersectionality, storytelling, female agency, and sexuality, which have characterized the third wave since the early 1990s. While previous waves of feminist activism centered on unifying experiences, the third wave largely depends on the beauty of diverse female experiences, a notion that is perpetuated through extensive storytelling and the veneration of intersectionality in grassroots movements, but that is largely unmarketable on behalf of brands.

Dove and Always barely scratch the surface of these topics, instead using watered down versions or visuals lacking depth and critique. For example, femvertising will often tout the brand's dedication to racial diversity without giving voice to the varying experiences intersectionality creates for women of color, women in poverty, and women in the LGBTQ community. Or the commercials will feature women responding freely to a question, but the question is so pointed in an

effort to protect and ensure a concise narrative that the exchange falls far short of storytelling. My analysis showed that femvertising, by shying away from terms such as intersectionality and by refusing to embrace the feminist label, fail to invoke extended support for the third wave movement. Instead, femvertising hones in on catchphrases and buzzwords reminiscent of a more palatable, simple brand of feminism—one that equates exercising female agency with making purchasing decisions.

Previous research and conflicting trade press coverage reveals that female consumers feel both inspired by and patronized by femvertising attempts. The storylines are moving, but at the core of their viewing experience sits the understanding that they are being sold a product, and that a brand's sudden interest in a particular social movement seems calculated rather than passionate. Two aspects of femvertising helped push consumers to view the campaigns as positive rather than duplicitous: the visual presentation of the product within the advertisement and the company's extended dedication to the empowerment of women outside of their marketing efforts. Pantene was perhaps the worst at hiding their profit-driven motivations for utilizing femvertising, failing to push limits in representations and choosing a tagline that also can apply to hair, "Shine Strong." Dove's video advertisements did not highlight new product lines, but these new products remained front and center in their print advertisements. Always arguably seemed the most effective in their efforts to authentically empower women and girls because of their lack of product mentions. Here, by featuring their brand name and

logo without any mention of product offerings, Always relies on the power of concise brand identity, recognition, and brand loyalty to draw consumers to their products.

How well a company's activism relates to their mission, vision, and values also proved to be extremely important for consumers, and in order for femvertising to be perceived as valid, the brand needs to have a pre-existing relationship with women and girls. Always and Dove expanded their femvertising campaigns to include extensive outreach and philanthropic efforts to organizations with a proven track record of empowering and supporting women's causes. At its core, femvertising is a marketing effort designed to sell a product, and these campaigns must be viewed as such. However, their groundbreaking storylines, positive representations of women, and monetary support of dedicated non-profit organizations complicate femvertising's popularity, continue to provoke ambiguous or conflicting responses from consumers and trade press.

Femvertising is a relatively recent phenomenon, and continued research on its motives, effects, and successes are essential to sketching out the legacy this trend will leave behind. Limitations of my own research include the small scope of content analyzed and geographical location; I only analyzed three advertising campaigns all originating in the United States (with the exception of Pantene's "Labels Against Women" advertisement which quickly went viral internationally). My research has shown that femvertising campaigns perpetuate positive representations of women, and further research might be able to parse out the influence this shift in

representation has on campaigns that are not considered to be femvertising campaigns. Are more advertisements refusing to use excessive retouching? Are they opting for a more realistic and relatable casting of women? Further research regarding femvertising's dependence on social media and the proliferation of hashtag feminism would also be valuable. Dove, Pantene, and Always all conducted extensive social media campaigns that were wildly successful in terms of traffic generation and it would be interesting to consider social media's effect on inspiring audience reflection and conversation in a public space.

Where previous research focused entirely on the valiant effort on behalf of advertisers to celebrate women instead of objectify them, or, conversely, on the capitalistic scheming on behalf of advertisers to commodify the momentum of the feminist movement, this research integrated these arguments to negate the notion that they are mutually exclusive and to expand the discussion to include femvertising's complicated relationship with the third wave, its role in corporate social responsibility, and its use of brand theory. It is my hope that the continued critical analysis of femvertising campaigns will prompt brands to empower women and girls both because it is the right thing to do and because it becomes required of them by their consumers—both male and female.

Women and girls should be represented in their entirety, allowed to speak and act in a variety of roles, and if the popularity and profitability of femvertising is what normalizes this healthy representation of women for other media makers, than so be it; however, brands such as Pantene, Dove, and Always should not be

celebrated or rewarded for presenting women, their primary consumer demographic, in a manner that is not derogatory or objectifying—this should be expected of them. Similarly, large-scale, capitalistic advertising campaigns are not the chosen format for grassroots activists trying to gain political and cultural respect for the feminist movement. It is not expected of Dove, Pantene, and Always to proliferate third wave messaging in an attempt to influence policy; however, the manipulation of feminist ideas to sell products undermines the power of the movement and weakens its efforts by tying feminism to capitalism.

Advertisers do not have to be champions of the third wave movement's political agenda, but they should be wary of how their campaigns affect such movement's ability to enact the change these brands claim to be fighting for. Finally, extensive effort on behalf of these brands to support women and girls in the United States and elsewhere with philanthropic efforts and organizational partnerships should also be expected of all brands, but especially of female-gendered brands (such as Pantene, Dove, and Always) that praise themselves for empowering women through femvertising campaigns. Always has sponsored puberty education for girls around the world for three decades, and this sustained dedication to women's issues is what elevates their femvertising attempt above Dove's and Pantene's, the latter of which makes little to no effort to empower women outside of their viral, profitable television commercial.

Femvertising began, largely, in 2004 with the launch of Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty" and is still gaining momentum. As long as femvertising continues to be

profitable, it will continue to be utilized by large brands striving to appeal to their female consumers. Ideally, women will view femvertising campaigns in all of their complexities—valued for shifting female representation, critiqued for commodifying and simplifying the third wave feminist movement, and held accountable for supporting women and girls beyond the confines of marketing schemes and 30-second television spots.

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