

AN EXPLORATION OF THE INFLUENCE OF FEMVERTISING ON BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF MEN

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1. Introduction to Femvertising

The Indian advertisement diaphragm has grown over the last 70 years, and has managed to represent the country's various social and economic changes during that period. Women's representation in Indian commercials is both tragic and delightful. From creating stereotypes then to attack the same stereotypes, the advertising agencies in India ace the art of manipulating the consumer. Much of the controversy stems from the way many companies use advertising as a selling tool and also in the manner they wash their hands off from its impact on society's tastes, values and lifestyles. Advertisers have taken a lot of heat over the years for exploiting the ubiquitous medium. The harm to modern Indian women's self-esteem was becoming intolerable. Female-oriented advertising has recently come to the aid of such advertisers, serving as the biggest leveller for all of the illogical ads that have plagued the Indian advertising scene for decades. Today, an increasing number of advertisers are creating pro-female advertisements to catch-up with the latest trend of feminism. The advertising industry, which previously relied heavily on the objectification of women to advertise its content, has now made a complete 180-degree turn to gain female consumers' attention and make them feel heard and valued. Femvertising is the term given to the practise of using feminism as a marketing tool.

Despite the fact that female emancipation has been used in marketing campaigns since the 1960s, when Virginia Slims used the slogan "you've come a long way, girl" to promote cigarettes, the word "femvertising" first emerged in 2014. Its creation is usually attributed to the lifestyle website SheKnows, which used "femvertising" as the label for advertising campaigns questioning traditional female gender stereotypes and employing pro-female messages and imagery to empower women and girls. In 2014, the word femvertising gained popularity as

a label for contemporary advertising campaigns that challenge conventional female gender norms widely seen in advertisements. (Akestam et al., 2017)².

Advertisers are similar to communicators, so it is their moral responsibility to produce ethical advertising that benefits society. Advertising will act as a catalyst for social change when the content of ads encourages an egalitarian view of society. Business activities to encourage, hinder, or guide social, political, economic, or environmental change with the aim of promoting societal changes are referred to as brand activism. It's distinct because it's motivated by a deep concern for society's most serious and pressing issues (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018)⁸. A wide range of ads show women as unique individuals who deserve to be valued and embraced. The fact that advertisers are interested in this subject is a good sign for women's empowerment in India.

Female empowerment has become a common advertisement theme, questioning traditional gender roles and encouraging body positivity. Although such advertisements have been widely debated and praised for sending positive messages to women, little research has been done to determine whether and why these promotions are beneficial, as well as the impact they have on female customers. These commercials are likely to have succeeded in generating optimistic brand expectations and buying intentions as a result of the emotions evoked by them. For years, the representation of women in ads has been a source of contention. Numerous authors have stated that women are usually offered in ways that do not symbolize their realities - usually confining them to traditional and domestic roles through stereotypical representations.

1.1 Buying Behaviour

Literature on consumer behavior is diverse and extensive as changes in society, economics, and technology affect the way consumers behave. Inevitably, these changes lead to changed consumer behavior studies by which, when, how, and why the topics are studied. Like any other discipline, systematic analysis of the knowledge development status of consumer behavior field is critical in ensuring its future growth (Williams & Plouffe, 2007)¹⁸.

The relevance of customer behaviour in various business disciplines indicates the need for an up-to-date review of the literature in this area. Beyond assisting researchers and professionals in the area of consumer behaviour in better interpreting the field's development and identifying differences, such studies will provide a guideline for them in positioning their future research and marketing efforts. The Cultivation Theory (Shrum,

1996)¹⁴ shows how gender portrayals in the media "cultivate" the social reality that a customer believes in. In the sense of this theory, "cultivation" describes how a consumer's actual experience morphs into the reality depicted in television commercials, which then influences their purchasing behaviour. The media industry, through the years, has used the cultivation theory to promote a certain standard that women need to uphold in the society. Vrender (2016)¹⁶ described a general model of purchasing behaviour that portrays the mechanisms used by consumers when making a purchase decision. Marketers value these prototypes because they can illustrate and forecast customer buying behaviour.

2. Review Of Literature

Abitbol and Sternadori (2019)¹ stated that femvertising is a type of advertising that targets supporters of women's rights. Feminist advertisements are supported by consumers who support women's roles and rights. Aside from women's rights, feminist self-identification is seen as a strong predictor of femvertising actions. Akestam, Rosengren & Dahlen (2017)² also explained that the word femvertising became popular in 2014 and is now used as a label for contemporary advertising campaigns that challenge conventional female gender roles in advertisements. One of the main distinctions when it comes to femvertising is that it embraces rather than questions social norms, as previous research has shown. Drake (2017)⁵ further explained that the methods of femvertising are derived from the feminist discourse, which emphasises women's empowerment. Drake brought up the topic of how feminist rhetoric found its way into marketing and industry. Feminism's goal is to encourage all sexes to achieve gender equality, and empowerment is a critical component of that goal. Female empowerment, as a result, challenges gender stereotypes. Kotler & Sarkar(2017)⁸ explained that however, it's no longer enough to be in the right place. Millennials, who are now one of the most important consumer groups, have higher standards of brands and place a higher emphasis on businesses that care more about the community than profits. Under the term of brand activism Kotler and Sarkar identify six subcategories: social, legal, business, economic, environmental and political activism. The six areas of brand activism can furthermore be combined to create a brand activism scorecard to measure the extent of a firm's commitment to the issues based on how progressive they are. Monllos (2016)¹⁰ confirmed that for a greater impact or to assess differences between demographic segments such as age, income, or employment status, potential researchers will want to run this study on a larger sample. It's also worth looking at how men respond to these kinds of advertising, as well as evaluating various

forms of inspiring ads aimed at men. Strandberg & Quinn (2015)¹⁵ in their study published that one way for brands to contribute to social change is to develop communications and advertising that avoids stereotyping women and instead portrays them in ways that are empowering to their female customers. Consumers are becoming more aware of underlying trends and visual cues in ads and are publicly criticising brands' messages, therefore it is important for brands to become aware of how certain messages affect consumer perceptions and ultimately the relationship consumers have with brands.

Becker-Herby (2016)³ stated while the majority of femvertising ads adopted the same five principles: “the use of diverse female talent; advertising that is inherently pro-female; pushing gender-norm boundaries/stereotypes and questioning expectations of what a woman/girl ‘should’ be; downplaying of sexuality; and representing women in an accurate manner,” according to the report. Femvertising has been proven to be effective in driving sales. As brands continue to recognize the societal shift towards empowering women, femvertising becomes an essential tool for marketers to wield, in order to form an authentic bond with their consumers. Wallace (2014)¹⁷ suggested that female empowerment advertisements have been praised for questioning gender roles in the media and increasing consciousness about problems that affect women of all ages while also inspiring women and young girls.

Wood (2012)¹⁹ on further research found that emotional advertisements are not only effective at creating brand relationships, but that the emotions evoked by an advertising are also a predictor of effectiveness. McMahan, et al.(2005)⁹ stated that with the rise of female-targeted advertising with empowerment themes, it's clear that many advertisers have shifted their marketing strategies to capitalise on this emotional approach, which is a smart move considering that females need more affect when judging advertisements. Sheehan (2004)¹³ explained that however, femvertising has put a twist on this, making it so brands are acting as activists for the empowerment of women. Keller (2001)⁷ stated that brands strive to create a desirable mental positioning and connections in the minds of customers through deliberate marketing. The importance of time is also stressed in the formulation of brand building and brand imagery. Biehal and Sheinin (1998)⁴ explained that 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. Consumer views on executional elements such as colour choice or spokesperson choice, as well as brand advertisements, are highly dependent on the consumer's exposure to

brand ads, according to research.. According to Grathwohl (1967)⁶, a person's self-concept is a symbolic image of themselves that they identify with, and their behaviour aims to preserve and strengthen that image. To both the customer and his world, the consumers' purchasing behaviour is a fitting symbolism of a pre-emptive picture of self.

3. Statement of the Research Problem

The previous decade has brought to the forefront women empowerment as an overwhelming topic in publicizing in India. While femvertising celebrates womanhood and energize a reformist mindset in the Indian culture, there is a shortage of authentic examination for the showcasing ramifications of these promotions, rather than ordinary ads. In addition, it will likewise attempt to reveal insight into how men view such advertisements and whether femvertising is adding to adjust the customary Indian outlooks.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To explore the influence of femvertising on high purchase intention in men.
2. To understand the influence of femvertising in persuading men in purchasing brands.

5. Research Hypothesis

Based on the literature review the next section will discuss the hypothesis of the study. Pars & Gulsel (2011)¹¹ elaborated that marketing experts have emphasized the importance of recognizing how consumers shape their perceptions. A brand image is shaped by a variety of factors, including brand popularity, buying experience, and various types of advertising. Rossiter & Bellman (2012)¹² stated that while there are a variety of marketing strategies that have proven to produce effective advertisements, emotional messaging is commonly used in hopes of strengthening the relationship between the brand and consumer. As a result, it's important for advertisers to use ads to try to build positive brand impressions, which can lead to an improvement in positive attitudes and buying intentions. Furthermore, customers who have an emotional connection to a brand are more likely to not only buy the product, but to keep buying it regardless of price or promotions.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between femvertising leading to high purchase intention in men.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between femvertising persuading men in purchasing brands.

6. *Research Methodology*

6.1 Area of study

The research has been led in five cities of Punjab i.e Patiala, Jalandar, Bathinda, Amritsar, Ludhiana. Urban areas have been recognized based on convenience. Non-Probability sampling technique, such as convenience sampling technique is used due to non-availability of appropriate and official data of femvertising. Cost and time imperatives are significant factors for deciding the size of sample. At the same time accuracy of results is very important.

6.2 Data Collection

The present study is primary data based. The data was collected through investigator administered structured questionnaire. The method of data collection was direct personal interview.

6.3 Sampling Technique and Sample Size

The study employed multi stage sampling technique. The state of Punjab was divided into five cities – Patiala, Jalandar, Bathinda, Amritsar, Ludhiana . From each city, sample to be interviewed were selected using non-probability sampling technique that is convenience and judgement sampling. Further selection of the customers was carried out by using convenience and judgement sampling. A sample of 500 participants was selected based on the criteria of gender (males older than 18) and brand awareness in Punjab. 50 samples were rejected. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 450 were considered.

6.4 Statistical tools used in the Research

The statistical techniques used to test the Hypothesis were Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) , Multiple Regression Analysis, Correlation Analysis, Factor Analysis.

7. *Scope of the study*

The scope of the study is restricted to men residing in Punjab and may not be representative of the entire men population in India. In particular, it is possible that the members of the control group have seen the femvertising ad before the experiment and may have formed their perceptions and attitudes accordingly. Due to the smaller scale of this study findings will not be generalised. This study was greatly dependant on primary the Indian context.

8. Data Analysis And Results

The data collection was done for about 500 samples out of which about 50 were rejected because of some errors. So the researcher was left with about 450 samples. It was found that maximum numbers of respondents of the survey were of the age of 18-40. These covered more than 80 percent of the male respondents. Education of the respondents is also an important factor of the study. This is one of the most significant factors as it may also shed light on the impact of femvertising vis-à-vis education of men. Maximum of the respondents i.e. 62% were found to be graduate and about 38 % were post graduate. Next observation about the respondents is the monthly income of the respondents .When asked about the average monthly expenses of the respondents, maximum respondent's monthly income lies between 10000 to 50000 rupees per month. Only 23 percent of the respondent has monthly salary between 50000 to 100000. The research on femvertising and its impact on men leads to a very interesting observation. This was related to the marital status and femvertising behavior pattern. It was seen that out of a sample of 450 respondents only 26.78 % were single and 73.22% were married. This gives a behavioral aspect of married buyers who are sensitive to the social issues raised by femvertising. The femvertising campaigns should be designed accordingly.

8.1 Factor Analysis

Though the factor analysis justifies the Hypotheses, accepting the Hypotheses will depend upon the statistical significance of the outcome of the factor Analysis and reliability of the factors derived. The reliability of the factors is determined by Cronbach's Alpha. The value of Cronbach's Alpha indicated the total variance explained by the grouped attributes in a factor compared to the total variance. Value of Cronbach's Alpha which is 0.872 is more than 0.7 is considered as strong enough to justify the association between the attributes in a factor. The following section discusses the various constructs/ parameters of the study i.e. find out the impact of femvertising on men's buying behavior that employ femvertising. On the basis of literature review the following two constructs have been finalized for the study.

1. Purchase Intentions (PI)
2. Persuasiveness (PV)

Using these constructs a structured questionnaire was filled from Five major cities (Patiala, Jalandar, Bathinda, Amritsar, Ludhiana) in Punjab will be surveyed. Convenience sampling method is used, which is a non-

probability sampling method where the most relevant and accessible respondents fulfilling the criteria will be selected. Cost and time constraints are important factors for deciding the size of sample. At the same accuracy of results is very important. To meet the requirements of objectives, a sample of 500 participants will be based on the criteria of gender (males older than 18).

The structured questionnaire were filled and the data collected was filled in the excel sheet. After proper cleaning of data, reduction technique which is commonly known as factor analysis was applied. It resulted into grouping of the factors into four factors.

Factor 1 Persuasiveness

Persuasiveness is found to be the most important characteristic which explains the maximum variance in purchasing brands. Various respondents, on being asked about retention of the message and brand claimed that they do remember the brand in fem-vertising.

These respondents also very clearly mentioned that fem-vertising did provoke them but not enough to purchase the product. Some of the respondents also expressed that they eagerly wait for such fem-vertising but they do have certain principles/opinions which are unchangeable. It is evident from the research that the respondents do get persuaded by the emotional appeal in fem-vertising. So more or less it's clear from the whole discussion that fem-vertising persuades men in purchasing brands. Thus, this research empirically tests a theoretical model of fem-vertising by examining the associations between fem-vertising and persuasion.

Factor 2 Purchase Intentions

The next significant factor explaining the impact of fem-vertising is purchase intentions in men. Various respondents claimed that by purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, they too promote a rich culture that is giving equal opportunities to women. They also disclosed that they feel that by purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, I too contribute to the upliftment of women. The respondents also showed a lot of attraction towards Fem-vertising as they feel that it has a positive influence on the society and buying a fem-vertising brand makes them feel like a better person. Respondents also highlighted that they have more trust on brands that promote women empowerment. Thus, this research empirically tests a theoretical model of fem-vertising by examining the associations between fem-vertising and purchase intentions.

8.2 Regression Analysis of Factor obtained

Table 1 Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	FV ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.089 ^a	.048	.043	.74222

a. Predictors: (Constant), FV1

ANOVA^a Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.879	1	.879	1.595	.000 ^b
	Residual	109.076	198	.551		
	Total	109.955	199			

a. Dependent Variable: PI

b. Predictors: (Constant), FV

Table 2 Variables Entered/Removed

Model	Variables Entered	Variables Removed	Method
1	FV ^b	.	Enter

a. Dependent Variable: PV

b. All requested variables entered.

Model Summary of Regression Analysis

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.003 ^a	.062	.055	.98964

a. Predictors: (Constant), FV

ANOVA^a Analysis

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.002	1	.002	.002	.000 ^b
	Residual	193.918	198	.979		
	Total	193.920	199			

a. Dependent Variable: PV

b. Predictors: (Constant), FV

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.043 as shown in the table 1 is its maximum value. This validates that the data fits very well to the model. The variable purchase intention though not strong but it is positively contributing towards fem-vertising but it is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance (P-value = 0.012 < α = 0.05, 0.10). The above values are calculated at 5 degree of freedom and at an Fvalue of 1.598.

The adjusted R-square (coefficient of determination) value is 0.055 as shown as shown in the table 2 is its maximum value. This validates that the data fits very well to the model. The variable persuasiveness though not strong but it is positively contributing femvertising but it is significant at 5% and 10% level of significance (P-value = 0.030 < = 0.05, 0.10). The above values are calculated at 5 degree of freedom and at an Fvalue of 0.002.

9. Hypothesis Testing

The results of the hypothesis are derived by doing the factor analysis and regression analysis. The factor analysis was done to find out the significant factors which affect the dependent variable. Multiple Regression analysis was further done to establish relationship between dependent and independent variables.

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between femvertising leading to high purchase intention in men.

In this hypothesis a relationship between femvertising and purchase intention in men is established. Purchase intention is one of the most significant factors that get influenced by femvertising. Total Variance Explained by the model Extraction Method: Principal Component

Analysis delineating the total variance explained by the independent variables show a contribution of 17.18 percent in explaining the variance in the dependent variable i.e. femvertising. The research offers a robust model and analytical results that significantly advances the way men get influenced by femvertising. Thus it can be said that there is significant relationship between femvertising and high purchase intention in men. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

H₀₂: There is no significant relationship between femvertising persuading men in purchasing brands.

In this hypothesis a relationship between femvertising and persuasion is established. Total Variance Explained by the model Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis delineating the total variance explained by the independent variables show a contribution of 31.09 percent in explaining the variance in the dependent variable i.e. femvertising. It further discusses that persuasion is critical to marketing efforts. It has undergone sweeping changes with the evolution of femvertising, followed by realistic and heart touching human stories. Hence it can be said that there is significant relationship between persuading men and purchasing brands. Hence, the null hypothesis is rejected.

10. Findings and Conclusion

This research was conducted to inspect the factors that are affected by femvertising. To investigate the relation further the learning attempted to explicate the affiliation among the fem-vertising and purchase intention and persuasion with respect to men . The key discovery of this learning was that fem-vertising positively contributes to altering the purchase intentions and persuasion.

The results proved that the men were significantly persuaded by the fem-vertising. This study denotes that fem-vertising has a strong relationship with purchase intention of men because the study claimed that by purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, men feel that they too promote a rich culture that is giving equal opportunities to women. They also disclosed that they feel that by purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, they too contribute to the upliftment of women

All this data effectively suggest that by addressing and highlighting various gender inequalities and by pointing out stereotypical gender roles, companies that endorse fem-vertising are paving a road for more brands to follow on their footsteps as their efforts are proving to be fruitful to the company as well as for the society. As a result, female empowerment has and can become even more present in companies' advertisements, challenging the more traditional ways of advertising.

Femvertising leads to high purchase intention in men

It was found from the study that femvertising acts as a motivator for purchase that show inclination towards women empowerment. Femvertising has the ability to evoke positive emotions and feelings are more likely to generate positive image and subsequently increase the purchase intention. By purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, I too contribute to the up-liftment of women. By purchasing a brand advocating women empowerment, I too promote a rich culture that is giving equal opportunities to women. Femvertising has a positive influence on the society. I have more trust on brands that promote women empowerment. Buying a femvertising brand feels like a personal contribution to something better. Positive attitude towards femvertising influence their forwarding intention of ad but does to lead to purchase intent. Consumers resonate more with brands that make use of social messaging, and femvertising is one aspect of a Variety of social messaging tactics. Managers should therefore continue to invest in improving store layouts, as it would allow shoppers to spend more time in stores and browse the merchandise, which may trigger impulsive urges. The self image of women today has changed over time and is no more that of a woman who is meant to do household chores, but that of one who is empowered and can take independent decisions. Given this revamped self image, the products whose marketing communications showcase empowering women and gender equality are congruent to the self-image of today's modern woman and hence they are likely to have a higher motivation to purchase such products.

Femvertising persuades men in purchasing brands.

It was found that femvertising and persuasion had a positive association with each other. Brands should extend their use of social messaging in general as it creates an in depth understanding, where a message can truly relate to a consumer, taking into account the identity of the brand and the various social causes it can be related to, shows that it builds a better connection with consumers who can relate to brands on an emotional level. Hence, femvertising can be utilized as an important tool in creating emotional appeal and creating brand retention.

Femvertising, supported by authentic actions and facts, is seen as positive and progressive, but also awaited by male consumers nowadays. According to our research, men believe that brands should take a stance in regard to equality between men and women through advertising because they have the financial capabilities and the power to affect a bigger audience.

11. Limitations of the Study

The study suffered from the following limitations. Sample was geographically limited as the data was collected from Punjab only. Data collected in other areas may produce different results. The survey asked participants to answer the questions based on their recent impulse buying experiences as long as they were aware of their behaviour and influences. However, the qualitative research methods may bring different results.

12. Recommendations

Based on the findings from the study, I recommend that companies can use femvertising as an effective communication tool since it leads to higher persuasiveness, better brand equity and higher purchase intention as compared with non-femvertising ads. The results of this study support the use of femvertising ads act as an effective communication vehicle and brands should consider using them as a part of their integrated marketing communications strategy.

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