



Research Article

Femvertising and Brand Image: A Conceptual Review of Empowerment-Based Advertising

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Abstract

Femvertising has emerged as a significant strategic approach in contemporary marketing, reflecting a shift in consumer expectations toward brands that demonstrate social responsibility and gender sensitivity. As audiences increasingly critique stereotypical portrayals of women in advertising, femvertising positions itself as an alternative that emphasises empowerment, inclusivity, and authenticity. Despite the growing popularity of empowerment-based advertising campaigns, academic literature remains fragmented in explaining how femvertising functions as a strategic marketing tool for enhancing brand image. Addressing this gap, the present study aims to conceptually examine the influence of femvertising on brand image through a comprehensive review of secondary literature. Relying exclusively on existing scholarly articles, theoretical discussions, advertising case analyses, and industry reports, this paper adopts a qualitative and conceptual research design without involving any primary or empirical data. The review reveals that femvertising contributes positively to brand image by fostering perceptions of ethical conduct, emotional resonance, consumer trust, and social progressiveness. Drawing upon empowerment theory, feminist perspectives, and branding literature, the study proposes a conceptual framework illustrating a direct relationship between femvertising and brand image. The paper contributes to marketing scholarship by synthesising dispersed knowledge, clarifying conceptual linkages, and offering a structured foundation for future empirical validation. The findings also provide valuable insights for marketers seeking to align brand communication with evolving social values while maintaining authenticity.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, advertising has evolved beyond its traditional role of merely promoting products and services to become a powerful medium for shaping social norms, cultural values, and consumer identities. Modern consumers are no longer passive recipients of marketing messages; rather, they actively evaluate brands based on ethical considerations, social responsibility, and alignment with personal values. Among the various transformative trends in advertising, femvertising—advertising that portrays women in empowering, non-stereotypical roles—has gained considerable attention from both practitioners and scholars. Historically, advertising has often been criticised for reinforcing gender stereotypes, objectifying women, and perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards. Such portrayals not only influenced societal perceptions of gender roles but also contributed to negative self-concepts among female audiences. With growing awareness of gender equality, feminism, and social justice, consumers have become increasingly sensitive to how women are represented in media and marketing communications. This cultural shift has compelled brands to reconsider their advertising strategies, giving rise to femvertising as a more inclusive and progressive alternative.

Femvertising can be broadly defined as a form of advertising that deliberately challenges traditional gender stereotypes by depicting women as confident, capable, diverse, and autonomous individuals. Rather than focusing on physical appearance or submissive roles, femvertising emphasises strength, intelligence, independence, and empowerment. Well-known campaigns such as Dove's *Real Beauty*, Always' *Like a Girl*, and Nike's women-centric advertisements exemplify this shift toward empowerment-based messaging. These campaigns suggest that advertising can simultaneously achieve commercial objectives while promoting positive social change.

From a strategic marketing perspective, femvertising is not merely a social initiative but a deliberate branding tool. Brands adopting femvertising aim to establish deeper emotional connections with consumers, enhance brand credibility, and position themselves as socially responsible entities. Brand image, defined as the set of perceptions held by consumers about a brand, plays a crucial role in influencing purchase decisions, loyalty, and long-term brand equity. As brand image is largely shaped by communication strategies, advertising messages that resonate emotionally and ethically can significantly affect how a brand is perceived.

Despite the increasing use of femvertising in practice, academic research on this phenomenon remains relatively underdeveloped, particularly in conceptual terms. Existing studies often focus on consumer attitudes, purchase intention, or campaign effectiveness, but fewer studies comprehensively explain *how* and *why* femvertising contributes to brand image from a strategic standpoint. Moreover, much of the literature is empirical in nature, leaving a gap for integrative conceptual work that synthesises theories, prior findings, and strategic implications. Addressing this gap, the present paper adopts a purely conceptual approach based on secondary data to examine femvertising as a strategic marketing tool for strengthening

brand image. By systematically reviewing existing literature and grounding the discussion in relevant theoretical frameworks, the study seeks to clarify the mechanisms through which femvertising influences consumer perceptions of brands. The absence of a geographic focus allows the findings to remain broadly applicable across markets and cultural contexts. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic and managerial domains. Academically, it consolidates fragmented research on femvertising and brand image into a coherent conceptual framework, thereby advancing theoretical understanding. Managerially, it offers insights for marketers on how empowerment-based advertising can be used authentically to build positive brand perceptions while avoiding superficial or tokenistic representations.

2. Conceptual Background and Review of Literature

2.1 Evolution of Advertising and Gender Representation

Advertising has long been recognised as a reflection of societal norms as well as a force that shapes them. Early advertising practices often mirrored patriarchal values, portraying women primarily as homemakers, caregivers, or objects of attraction. Such representations reinforced rigid gender roles and limited perceptions of women's capabilities. Feminist scholars have extensively critiqued these portrayals, arguing that advertising contributes to the social construction of gender by repeatedly normalising unequal power relations. As feminist movements gained momentum globally, particularly during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, criticism of gender stereotyping in advertising intensified. Consumers, advocacy groups, and regulatory bodies increasingly questioned the ethical implications of sexist and objectifying advertisements. In response, brands began experimenting with more inclusive narratives, leading to the gradual emergence of femvertising as a distinct advertising approach.

2.2 Concept of Femvertising

The term "femvertising" combines feminism and advertising and refers to promotional messages that seek to empower women by portraying them positively and authentically. Unlike traditional advertising that often relies on idealised beauty standards, femvertising celebrates diversity in body types, ages, ethnicities, and life roles. Scholars suggest that femvertising is characterised by themes such as self-confidence, independence, resilience, and self-expression. Femvertising does not merely target women as consumers but positions them as individuals with agency and influence. This shift aligns with contemporary feminist ideals that emphasise equality, representation, and empowerment. Importantly, femvertising is not limited to female audiences; it also signals to broader consumer segments that a brand supports progressive social values.

2.3 Brand Image in Marketing Literature

Brand image is a central construct in marketing and branding literature. It refers to the totality of perceptions, beliefs, and associations that consumers hold regarding a brand. A positive brand image enhances consumer trust, differentiates a brand from competitors, and contributes to long-term brand equity. Advertising plays a critical role in shaping brand image by

communicating brand values, personality, and promises. Previous research suggests that emotionally engaging and value-driven advertising messages are more effective in building favourable brand images than purely informational messages. When consumers perceive a brand as ethical, socially responsible, and aligned with their personal values, they are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward the brand.

2.4 Femvertising and Feminist Perspectives in Advertising

Feminist perspectives have played a central role in shaping critical discourse around advertising and gender representation. Feminist scholars argue that traditional advertising has historically reinforced patriarchal ideologies by positioning women as passive, dependent, and primarily valued for their physical appearance. Such representations not only reflect societal inequalities but also actively contribute to their reproduction. Against this backdrop, femvertising has emerged as a counter-narrative that aligns more closely with feminist ideals of equality, agency, and self-determination. Femvertising draws inspiration from liberal and postmodern feminist thought, which emphasises individual empowerment, choice, and diversity of female experiences. Rather than promoting a single ideal of womanhood, femvertising acknowledges the multiplicity of women's identities and life roles. Literature suggests that this pluralistic representation resonates strongly with contemporary audiences who value inclusivity and authenticity. By integrating feminist values into brand communication, femvertising enables brands to participate in broader social conversations surrounding gender equality. However, scholars also caution against the commercialisation of feminism through advertising. Some studies critique femvertising for potentially commodifying feminist ideals to achieve commercial objectives without committing to genuine social change. This tension between empowerment and commercialisation highlights the importance of authenticity in femvertising practices. From a brand image perspective, consumers are increasingly capable of distinguishing between sincere empowerment messages and superficial attempts to capitalise on feminist discourse.

2.5 Authenticity in Femvertising

Authenticity is widely recognised as a critical determinant of advertising effectiveness, particularly in value-driven campaigns such as femvertising. Authentic femvertising is characterised by consistency between a brand's messaging, actions, and corporate values. Literature indicates that when empowerment-based messages align with a brand's broader practices—such as inclusive workplace policies or ethical sourcing—consumers perceive the brand as credible and trustworthy. Conversely, inauthentic or tokenistic femvertising can lead to scepticism and backlash, negatively affecting brand image. Scholars describe this phenomenon as “femwashing,” where brands adopt feminist imagery without meaningful commitment to gender equality. Such practices may initially attract attention but often result in long-term reputational damage when consumers perceive a disconnect between message and reality. From a conceptual standpoint, authenticity serves as a foundational element through which femvertising

influences brand image. Authentic empowerment messages strengthen emotional bonds with consumers, reinforce ethical brand associations, and enhance perceived brand integrity. The literature consistently emphasises that authenticity transforms femvertising from a short-term promotional tactic into a sustainable strategic marketing tool.

2.6 Femvertising and Emotional Engagement

Emotional engagement is a key mechanism through which advertising shapes consumer perceptions and attitudes. Femvertising frequently employs storytelling techniques that highlight the real-life challenges, aspirations, and achievements of women. Such narratives evoke emotions such as empathy, inspiration, and pride, fostering deeper connections between consumers and brands. Studies in advertising psychology suggest that emotionally engaging content is more memorable and persuasive than purely informational messages. Femvertising leverages this insight by creating narratives that reflect consumers' lived experiences, thereby enhancing message relevance. Emotional engagement generated through femvertising contributes to favourable brand associations, as consumers tend to transfer positive emotions elicited by advertisements to the brand itself.

In the context of brand image, emotional engagement serves as an intangible yet powerful driver of perception. Brands that successfully evoke positive emotions through empowerment-based advertising are more likely to be perceived as caring, progressive, and socially aware. This emotional dimension differentiates femvertising from conventional promotional strategies and reinforces its strategic value.

2.7 Femvertising as a Driver of Ethical and Socially Responsible Branding

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) has become an integral component of contemporary branding strategies. Consumers increasingly expect brands to address social issues and contribute positively to society. Femvertising aligns closely with CSR objectives by addressing gender equality and challenging discriminatory norms. Literature suggests that advertising messages reflecting social responsibility enhance brand legitimacy and moral credibility. When femvertising is perceived as part of a broader ethical commitment, it strengthens brand image by signalling that the brand stands for more than profit. This ethical positioning is particularly relevant in competitive markets where functional differentiation among products is minimal. Importantly, femvertising enables brands to integrate social responsibility directly into their communication strategies rather than treating it as a peripheral activity. By embedding empowerment narratives into advertising, brands can reinforce their ethical identity and cultivate long-term consumer goodwill.

3. Conceptual Framework Development

3.1 Rationale for a Conceptual Framework

Conceptual frameworks play a vital role in organising existing knowledge, identifying relationships among key constructs, and guiding future research. In areas where empirical findings are fragmented or emerging, conceptual models offer clarity by

integrating theories and prior insights into a coherent structure. Given the relatively nascent and dispersed nature of femvertising research, a conceptual framework is particularly valuable for understanding its strategic implications for brand image. The present study proposes a conceptual framework grounded entirely in secondary literature, aiming to explain how femvertising functions as a strategic marketing tool. Rather than testing hypotheses, the framework synthesises theoretical arguments and prior findings to illustrate logical linkages between empowerment-based advertising and brand image formation.

3.2 Core Constructs of the Framework

The conceptual framework consists of two primary constructs: **Femvertising and Brand Image.**

Femvertising is conceptualised as an advertising approach characterised by:

- Empowering and non-stereotypical portrayals of women
- Authentic representation aligned with feminist values
- Inclusive narratives reflecting diverse identities
- Emotionally engaging storytelling

Brand Image refers to consumers' overall perception of a brand, encompassing:

- Ethical and moral evaluations
- Emotional associations
- Perceived credibility and trustworthiness
- Social progressiveness

The literature suggests that these dimensions of brand image are particularly sensitive to value-driven communication strategies such as femvertising.

3.3 Theoretical Foundations Supporting the Framework

The proposed framework is supported by multiple theoretical perspectives. Empowerment theory suggests that messages promoting autonomy and self-efficacy positively influence self-concept and attitudes. When brands associate themselves with empowerment narratives, consumers are likely to perceive them favourably. Social identity theory further explains that individuals derive part of their identity from social groups and values they identify with. Brands that support gender equality through femvertising allow consumers to express their social identity, thereby strengthening brand associations. Additionally, schema theory suggests that repeated exposure to empowering portrayals reshapes consumers' mental frameworks regarding brands and gender roles.

Together, these theories provide a strong conceptual foundation for linking femvertising to enhanced brand image.

3.4 Description of the Conceptual Model

There is a direct relationship between femvertising and brand image.

- Femvertising acts as the independent construct, representing empowerment-based advertising practices.
- Brand image serves as the dependent construct, reflecting consumer perceptions shaped by advertising messages.

The model proposes that authentic and inclusive femvertising positively influences brand image by:

1. Enhancing ethical and moral brand perceptions
2. Strengthening emotional engagement
3. Building consumer trust and credibility
4. Positioning the brand as socially progressive

As this is a purely conceptual study, the framework does not include mediators, moderators, or hypothesis testing. Instead, it offers a simplified yet theoretically grounded representation of the relationship between femvertising and brand image.

4. DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Discussion of Key Conceptual Insights

The purpose of this conceptual study was to examine femvertising as a strategic marketing tool and to understand its influence on brand image through a comprehensive synthesis of secondary literature. The discussion integrates insights from feminist theory, empowerment theory, branding literature, and prior advertising studies to explain how empowerment-based advertising contributes to favourable brand perceptions. The proposed conceptual framework offers a structured explanation of this relationship and addresses the existing gap in conceptual clarity within femvertising research.

The literature reviewed consistently indicates that femvertising represents a departure from traditional gender portrayals in advertising. By challenging stereotypical representations of women, femvertising aligns brand communication with contemporary social values, emphasising equality, inclusivity, and self-expression. This alignment plays a critical role in shaping brand image, as consumers increasingly evaluate brands not only on functional benefits but also on ethical and symbolic dimensions. The discussion suggests that femvertising strengthens brand image by signalling that a brand is socially aware, progressive, and responsive to cultural change.

One of the central insights emerging from this review is the importance of authenticity in femvertising. While empowerment-based messages have the potential to enhance brand image, their effectiveness depends heavily on perceived sincerity. The literature highlights that consumers are highly sensitive to inconsistencies between advertising narratives and a brand's actual practices. When femvertising is perceived as authentic, it reinforces trust and credibility, thereby strengthening brand image. Conversely, superficial or opportunistic use of feminist themes may undermine consumer confidence and damage brand reputation.

Another key theme discussed in the literature is emotional engagement. Femvertising frequently employs storytelling techniques that evoke empathy, inspiration, and identification. These emotional responses contribute to stronger brand associations by allowing consumers to connect personal values with brand identity. Emotional engagement serves as a bridge between empowerment narratives and brand image formation, reinforcing the notion that advertising effectiveness extends beyond rational persuasion.

The conceptual framework developed in this study highlights a direct relationship between femvertising and brand image.

Unlike empirical models that focus on mediators or moderators, the simplicity of the proposed framework underscores the foundational role of empowerment-based advertising in shaping consumer perceptions. By synthesising existing knowledge, the framework demonstrates that femvertising functions not merely as a promotional tactic but as a strategic branding mechanism with long-term implications.

4.2 Theoretical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to marketing and advertising literature in several meaningful ways. First, it advances the conceptual understanding of femvertising by positioning it explicitly as a strategic marketing tool rather than a peripheral or trend-driven phenomenon. While previous studies have often examined femvertising in isolation or within narrow empirical contexts, this paper integrates multiple theoretical perspectives to explain its broader strategic relevance.

Second, the study extends empowerment theory into the domain of brand communication. Empowerment theory has traditionally been applied to social psychology and gender studies; however, this conceptual analysis demonstrates its applicability in understanding consumer responses to advertising. By associating empowerment narratives with brand identity, the study illustrates how psychological constructs can influence market-based outcomes such as brand image.

Third, the integration of feminist theory into branding research enriches existing advertising scholarship. Feminist theory provides a critical lens for evaluating the ethical and social implications of advertising messages. By incorporating feminist perspectives, the study highlights the role of advertising in shaping cultural discourse and challenges the notion that marketing communication is value-neutral.

Additionally, the proposed conceptual framework contributes to theory-building by offering a simplified yet comprehensive model that can serve as a foundation for future empirical research. The framework organises fragmented insights into a coherent structure, enabling researchers to systematically examine the mechanisms linking femvertising and brand image. As such, the study addresses call in the literature for more integrative and theory-driven approaches to femvertising research.

4.3 Managerial and Practical Implications

The findings of this conceptual review offer several important implications for marketing practitioners, brand managers, and advertising professionals. First, the study underscores that femvertising should be approached as a long-term strategic investment rather than a short-term promotional tactic. Brands that adopt empowerment-based advertising must ensure consistency between their messaging and their organisational values, practices, and policies. Authenticity is not optional; it is a prerequisite for positive brand image outcomes.

Second, marketers should recognise that femvertising is most effective when it reflects genuine inclusivity and diversity. This includes representing women from different backgrounds, age groups, body types, and life roles. Inclusive representation enhances emotional resonance and broadens the appeal of

advertising messages, contributing to a more favourable brand image among diverse consumer segments.

Third, the discussion highlights the importance of emotional storytelling in femvertising campaigns. Brands should focus on narratives that resonate with real-life experiences rather than relying on abstract slogans or symbolic gestures. Storytelling that emphasises resilience, self-worth, and empowerment can foster deeper consumer engagement and strengthen emotional bonds with the brand.

Fourth, the study cautions practitioners against tokenistic or superficial use of feminist themes. Consumers are increasingly informed and critical, and they expect brands to demonstrate social responsibility beyond advertising claims. Failure to align empowerment messages with concrete actions, such as equitable workplace practices or community initiatives, may result in consumer scepticism and reputational risks.

Finally, the conceptual insights suggest that femvertising can serve as a differentiation strategy in competitive markets. In product categories where functional attributes are similar across brands, empowerment-based advertising offers a way to create distinctive brand identities grounded in values and purpose. By leveraging femvertising strategically, brands can enhance their image and build long-term consumer loyalty.

4.4 Implications for Policy and Industry Standards

Beyond managerial implications, this study also has relevance for policymakers and industry regulators concerned with ethical advertising practices. The discussion reinforces the idea that advertising standards should encourage responsible and non-stereotypical representation of gender. Regulatory bodies and industry associations can play a role in promoting best practices by recognising and rewarding authentic empowerment-based campaigns.

Furthermore, the study suggests that femvertising can contribute positively to broader societal goals by normalising empowering portrayals of women. When brands adopt responsible communication strategies, they not only enhance their own image but also participate in shaping more inclusive cultural narratives. This dual impact underscores the social significance of femvertising as both a marketing and cultural phenomenon.

5. CONCLUSION

The growing prominence of femvertising reflects a broader transformation in contemporary marketing, where brands are increasingly expected to engage with social values and ethical concerns alongside commercial objectives. This conceptual study set out to examine femvertising as a strategic marketing tool and to understand its role in shaping brand image through an extensive review of secondary literature. By synthesising insights from advertising research, feminist theory, empowerment theory, and branding literature, the study offers a coherent and integrative understanding of how empowerment-based advertising influences consumer perceptions of brands.

The review demonstrates that femvertising contributes positively to brand image by promoting non-stereotypical and empowering portrayals of women that resonate with modern

audiences. Such portrayals enable brands to position themselves as ethical, progressive, and socially responsible, thereby strengthening emotional connections with consumers. Unlike traditional advertising approaches that prioritise functional attributes or aesthetic appeal, femvertising emphasises values, identity, and authenticity—elements that are increasingly central to brand evaluation in contemporary markets.

A key conclusion emerging from this study is that the effectiveness of femvertising is contingent upon authenticity. Empowerment-based messages yield favourable brand image outcomes only when they are perceived as sincere and consistent with a brand's broader values and practices. The literature consistently highlights that consumers are adept at recognising superficial or opportunistic uses of feminist themes, which may undermine trust and credibility. Therefore, femvertising must be embedded within a holistic branding strategy rather than employed as an isolated communication tactic. The conceptual framework proposed in this paper offers a simplified yet theoretically grounded representation of the relationship between femvertising and brand image. By illustrating a direct linkage between empowerment-based advertising and enhanced brand perceptions, the framework contributes to theory-building in an area where empirical findings are still evolving. The absence of geographic specificity further enhances the relevance of the framework across diverse cultural and market contexts.

Overall, this study contributes to marketing scholarship by consolidating fragmented research on femvertising and by emphasising its strategic significance in brand image formation. It also provides valuable insights for practitioners seeking to align brand communication with evolving social expectations while maintaining credibility and ethical integrity.

6. Limitations of the Study

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research adopts a purely conceptual and secondary-data-based approach. While this design is appropriate for theory development and synthesis, it limits the ability to empirically validate the proposed conceptual framework. The absence of primary data means that the relationships discussed remain theoretically inferred rather than statistically tested.

Second, the study relies on existing literature, which may reflect publication biases or dominant theoretical perspectives. As femvertising is a relatively recent phenomenon, the available body of literature is still developing and may not capture all emerging dimensions of empowerment-based advertising. Additionally, variations in how femvertising is defined and operationalised across studies may affect the consistency of interpretations.

Third, although the study deliberately avoids geographic focus to enhance generalizability, this also limits the exploration of cultural nuances in consumer responses to femvertising. Gender norms and perceptions of empowerment can vary significantly across societies, and a conceptual approach may not fully account for these contextual differences.

Finally, the proposed framework focuses exclusively on brand image as the outcome variable. While brand image is a critical construct, femvertising may also influence other outcomes such as brand loyalty, consumer advocacy, and long-term brand equity, which are beyond the scope of the present study.

7. Future Research Directions

Building on the insights and limitations of this conceptual study, several avenues for future research are suggested. First, empirical validation of the proposed conceptual framework represents a natural progression of this work. Future studies may employ quantitative methods to test the relationship between femvertising and brand image using validated measurement scales. Such research would provide statistical support for the conceptual linkages identified in this paper.

Second, future research could examine potential mediating and moderating variables that influence the effectiveness of femvertising. Constructs such as perceived authenticity, consumer scepticism, emotional engagement, and brand trust may offer deeper insights into the mechanisms through which empowerment-based advertising shapes brand perceptions.

Third, cross-cultural and comparative studies would enhance understanding of how femvertising operates in different social and cultural contexts. Given that interpretations of empowerment and gender roles vary across societies, comparative research could reveal important contextual differences and refine the generalizability of existing theories.

Fourth, longitudinal research designs could explore the long-term impact of femvertising on brand image and brand equity. Such studies would help determine whether empowerment-based advertising leads to sustained brand benefits or whether its effects diminish over time.

Finally, future conceptual and empirical studies may extend the scope of analysis to include additional outcomes such as purchase intention, brand loyalty, and consumer-brand identification. Integrating these constructs would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of femvertising as a strategic marketing tool within the broader branding ecosystem.

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