The Rise of Femvertising: Authentically Reaching Female Consumers

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Executive Summary

This Capstone examines the rising trend of "Femvertising"— advertising that seeks to empower women— and how it is changing the way that marketers and advertisers reach female consumers. The existing literature on gender stereotypes in advertising is explored in conjunction with feminist theory and current societal trends. The intersection of these theories lays the groundwork for the rise of Femvertising, addressing the cultural tensions that created the conditions for its birth. Primary research in the form of expert interviews provides insights and a professional viewpoint on the benefits of Femvertising for brands if conducted authentically. A content analysis examines the integrity of Femvertising brands by measuring the authenticity of their claims to support women, finding that Femvertising brands must make significant improvements in the areas of female leadership and employee benefits. A robust set of recommendations for future research is included in an effort to encourage additional studies on this critical topic. Finally, the report recommends changes for brands that wish to reach female consumers. Among these recommendations is a call to increase the prevalence of women in advertisements, along with ensuring companies provide adequate benefits for women and the need for additional female leaders at the corporate level. Finally, the report suggest that authenticity is paramount when utilizing Femvertising as a communications strategy.

About the Author

Elisa Becker-Herby is a member of Cohort 10 in the Professional M.A. in Strategic Communications program at the University of Minnesota- Twin Cities. She has held multiple positions in the world of marketing communications, including corporate, nonprofit and advertising agency roles. She specializes in brand strategy, communications planning and stakeholder engagement. As a self-proclaimed third wave feminist, Elisa is fascinated by the role of women in modern society and the evolution of gender equality. This Capstone project has been an incredible opportunity for her to explore this personal interest within the framework of her professional passion of strategic communication.

Elisa is currently in the market for a new professional opportunity where she can apply her keen sense of branding and intuition. She is also considering applying to Ph.D. programs with the hope of continuing her studies in the intersection of communication with feminism and gender equality.

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Introduction

The portrayal of women in advertising has long been studied by scholars with an interest in the use of gender stereotypes, the objectification of the female body and the disproportionate representation of women shown in advertisements (McArthur & Resko, 1975; Lynn, Harden & Walsdorf, 2004; Döring & Pöschl, 2006; Gill, 2008; Knoll, Eisend and Steinhagen, 2011). Despite the groundbreaking work on gender and sex role stereotypes in advertising published by McArthur and Resko in 1975— in which the authors deemed their findings of how women were depicted as highly "concerning"— there has been little overall progress made in the portrayal of women in advertising today. Shortly after McArthur and Resko's analysis, advertising latched on to the societal trend of postfeminism, thus paving the way for Goldman, Heath and Smith's (1991) theoretical framework on commodity feminism in which feminist ideals merge with female stereotypes to form an ironic partnership— co-opting core feminist principles in an effort to sell products to women. However, the recent momentum of modern feminism (commonly referred to as the "third wave feminism") and its integration into popular culture has created a disparity between the depictions of women in advertising and the way in which many women view themselves (Love & Helmbrecht, 2007; Gill, 2008).

From this cultural tension a new form of female-centric advertising has emerged— aptly termed "Femvertising". Femvertising is defined by SheKnows Media's iBlog Magazine (2014) as "advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls." The trend of Femvertising has received significant attention throughout the advertising community. Since the debut of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty in 1994— generally hailed as the inaugural Femvertising campaign— the strategy has been employed by dozens of brands and its popularity continues to increase each year (Bahadur, 2014a; Bahadur, 2014b). Although Femvertising has been a hot topic in editorials and industry publications such as AdWeek and

The Huffington Post, virtually no scholarly research has been done on this new advertising trend that seeks to reach women through messages of power, strength and authenticity.

However, there is no shortage of data to support the claim that portrayals of women in advertising is a critical topic with real societal impact. As demonstrated by cultivation theory, individuals tend to incorporate stereotypes presented in the media into their own concepts of reality— thus suggesting that people likely modify their personal behavior based on stereotypes to which they have been repeatedly exposed (Döring & Pöschl, 2006). Similarly, Knoll et al. (2011) found that gender stereotyping in advertisements may influence the beliefs of consumers who view them. These works found that representations of gender behaviors in advertising had real life impact on the way that consumers viewed gender and sex roles in their lives— and that they may even change their own behaviors to mirror what they see in the media. These startling findings showcase the importance of the portrayal of men and women in advertising as there may be a direct link between these portrayals and the behavior of members of society. The introduction of Femvertising challenges many of the gender stereotypes that consumers have grown accustomed to seeing in advertising and may harbor the ability to alter societal thoughts and behaviors— all while introducing a new way for brands to reach female consumers.

In the following pages, the creation of Femvertising is explored as well as its importance in the strategic communications field. Primary research that seeks to uncover the strategic thought behind the trend, while using the lens of authenticity to evaluate brands that utilize Femvertising while laying the groundwork for future research on the topic.

Literature Review

Gender Stereotypes in Advertising

According to the United States Department of Labor, women comprised 58% of the total American workforce in 2012 (compared to just 38% in 1963). The DOL estimates that 70% of mothers with children under the age of 18 are currently employed in the United States. Women are earning the majority higher education degrees in the United States, including M.A.s and Ph.Ds. (Perry, 2015). For the very first time in American history, unmarried women outnumber married women— signifying a cultural shift towards female independence and the desire to focus on nondomestic aspects of life (Mather & Lavery, 2010). The country also has a record number of women occupying Congressional seats, coming in at just under 20% (Center for American Women and Politics, 2016).

These facts and figures demonstrate a dramatic shift in cultural norms; the role of the American woman has greatly evolved since the stereotypical image of the 1950s housewife. It isn't surprising that the impact of women extends to the retail marketplace as well. In 2015, it was estimated that women influenced 70 percent of global household purchases and controlled $20 trillion of spending worldwide (Procter & Gamble, 2016c). Even with the extraordinary purchase power of women, they are depicted only one-third to one-fourth as often as their male counterparts in advertisements— a statistic that has held nearly steady since 1975 (McArthur & Resko, 1975; Eisend, 2010). When women do appear in advertisements, they are likely to be portrayed as an accessory to a male figure, as a passive observer, as a mother/caretaker or in the home. These depictions of women do not accurately mirror the facts and figures that represent women's role in society and can generally be explained through the use of gender and sex role stereotypes.

As defined by Fitts (2009), "Gender stereotypes are common beliefs formed in culture about how men and women behave" (p. 1). These common beliefs include attributes such as typical occupations or expected role behaviors that differentiate the sexes (Eisend, Plageman & Sollwedel, 2014). Although the term generally has a negative connotation, stereotypes can be a beneficial communication device, functioning to structure humanity's experience of the world by providing easily understandable categories for information processing (Döring & Pöschl, 2006). While stereotypes are a useful tool for creating context, they often misrepresent or oversimplify groups of people in ways that can be harmful— particularly for women (Eisend et al., 2014). Exposure to these oversimplifications have been shown to lead to psychological issues in women, such as anxiety and reduced self-esteem. There is also evidence that women are frequently passed over for jobs that are perceived to be "male" in nature due to stereotypical sex roles (Knoll et al., 2011).

As evidenced by the facts about American woman today, roles and behaviors deemed "acceptable" for men and women continue to evolve alongside society. At the heyday of the "Mad Men" advertising era of the 1950s and 1960s the role of women in the home and at the office looked dramatically different than it does today. Despite these changes in society, many advertisers depict women and men in tradition-bound roles to promote products (Knoll et al., 2011). Many of these traditional roles stem from eras of the past that required strict gender role adherence due to a now-defunct class system (Döring & Pöschl, 2006). This renders such stereotypes outdated, unnecessary and potentially offensive and damaging.

Leslie Zebrowitz McArthur and Beth Gabrielle Resko pioneered the study of sex differences in advertising in their 1975 work, "The Portrayal of Men and Women in Television Commercials". McArthur and Resko coded television commercials that aired on three major networks, finding significant differences in the ways that men and women were portrayed. Notably, McArthur and Resko found that when compared with men, women were generally

shown in an "unfavorable" manner, generally as unknowledgeable and dependent on a male

figure, such as a husband or father. In 1979, Erving Goffman built upon the work by McArthur

and Resko by developing categories of stereotypes that he found to differ between men and

women in print advertisements. Goffman concluded that men and women were portrayed

differently based on posture, looks/gaze and presumed gestures. Together, McArthur and

Resko and Goffman's findings and stereotype categories have served as the building blocks for

current gender stereotype work in the field of advertising and strategic communications (Döring

& Pöschl, 2006). Although the stereotype categories are modified and modernized by

researchers to fit the individual study, the majority of gender stereotype work in advertising

encompasses some or all of the categories in Table 1 below, inspired by McArthur and Resko

(1975) and Goffman (Döring & Pöschl, 2006).

Table 1: Common Gender Stereotype Categories

Stereotype Category	Description of Characteristics
Mode of presentation	The way in which the figure is depicted— visually, visually with voice, visually with music or non-visual voice over.
Credibility	The source of the figure's knowledge about the product— user, authority, both or neither.
Role	The role being played by the figure— office worker, caretaker/domestic, spouse, etc.
Age	Assumed age of the figure— young, middle-aged or old.
Product Type	Product category advertised— food/beverage, clothing, domestic, leisure, etc.
Setting	Environment of the advertisement—private residence, outside, etc.

According to scholars who have built upon McArthur and Resko's and Goffman's

findings, women today are most likely to be portrayed in the home or in a dependent role while

men are most likely to be portrayed in an autonomous role or out-of-home setting (Zawisza &

Cinnerella, 2010). Scholars have broken these gender stereotype portrayals into two categories: traditional and nontraditional stereotypes. Examples of traditional stereotypes may include a woman in a family setting and a man in a business setting. A nontraditional stereotype would reverse these roles, showcasing the woman at the office and the man at home with the family (Zawisza & Cinnerella, 2010; Knoll et al., 2011). Döring and Pöschl (2006) found that the level and frequency of traditional gender stereotyping in advertising has shown no clear decrease even though society has seen changes in the expectations and behaviors of individuals based on gender. Likewise, Eisend (2010) found that women were 1.5 to 4 times more likely to be stereotyped than men, depending on the product category. Knoll et al. (2011) also found support that traditional gender stereotypes are still prevalent in advertising, with the portrayal of professional opportunities for women limited while traditional masculine ideals were upheld. The stereotyping of women has become a topic of importance beyond scholarly research as well. Unilever recently conducted a study on its own advertisements and the use of gender stereotypes within them. The results were staggering; Unilever's advertisements featured intelligent and/or professional women only two percent of the time and funny women only in a dismal one percent of total advertisements (Blay, 2016).

One commonly used framework to explain gender stereotypes is social role theory. Borrowed from the field of sociology, social role theory suggests that both men and women are expected to showcase certain characteristics that equip them to handle their traditional gender roles (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). For example, women must act nurturing in order to perform their expected role as mothers in the home while men must act as leaders to perform their expected role as a professional in the office. This becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy; people take on the characteristics that are expected of them in order to fulfill roles that are traditional for their gender, thus perpetuating a cycle of traditional roles and behaviors. In partnership with biological and environmental factors, these gender characteristics are imposed via socialization

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which promotes the development and adoptions of specific traits for men and specific traits for women (Eagly & Wood, 2012). Many social role theorists, such as Eagly and Wood (2012), attribute socialization to the continual use of gender stereotypes in society, as well as the relatively slow progress of the gender equality movement. However, social role theory also hypothesizes that these expected roles will change over the course of time with society— albeit slowly. Diekman and Eagly (2000) demonstrated that stereotypes are dynamic constructs that change over time as society becomes increasingly progressive. Their findings predict that advertising stereotypes will evolve along with changes in society. In particular, as women continue to occupy more traditionally "masculine" roles, Diekman and Eagly hypothesize that gender stereotypes of women— in advertising and elsewhere— will become increasingly nontraditional. This prediction is congruent with social role theory and supports the idea of stereotypes as fluid constructs that adapt to changes in society— thus setting the theoretical framework for the introduction of Femvertising.

Commodity Feminism

In conjunction with gender stereotype theories, the feminist theory of commodity feminism holds critical ties to Femvertising. Commodity feminism was introduced by Robert Goldman, Deborah Heath and Sharon Smith in their 1991 work "Commodity Feminism". The authors argue that since the 1970s, advertisers have been attempting to tie the emancipation of women to the sale of corporate goods and services. Goldman et al. assert that commodity feminism is the redefining of feminism through consumerism and purchase behavior. The theoretical framework suggests that feminist ideals such as independence, freedom and sexual agency have been "rehabilitated" for advertising, with brands exploiting these ideals through products and ultimately returning them to male possessive individualism (Goldman et al., 1991). As explained by Crouse-Dick (2002), commodity feminism insinuates that if a woman wants to be powerful (a core feminist ideal) she must first make a purchase; she controls her worth by

making the correct consumer choices. Within in this framework, advertising suggests that the enlightened woman who is sexually independent is truly only sexually independent when she buys the "correct" underwear (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Commodity Feminism as Portrayed by a Hanes Advertisement

(Image source: LTC Online, n.d.)

The paradoxical nature of the term "commodity feminism" is no accident; Goldman et al. recognized the irony of hegemonic feminism and thus coined the term. After studying the work of Goffman as pertaining to gender stereotypes, Goldman et al. noted a shift in how advertisers were signaling femininity. Rather than employing tactics seen in the 1970s— such as women in delicate positioning, gazing off-camera and wearing modest attire— advertisements looked to connote independence, participation in the workforce, self-control, freedom and sexuality. Most notably, Goldman et al. determined that the "ideal woman" exuded a sense of freedom and

strength, but almost always in a way that is attractive and sexually pleasing to men. Crouse-Dick (2002) explains, "This portrayal of independent freedom of choice— a feminist ideal— has been fused with images of sexuality, thus teaching women to see themselves as sexual objects because it accommodates their liberal interests" (p. 22). Gill (2008) also notes that in the commodity feminism era women are no longer passive figures of the male gaze, however their sexuality is almost always portrayed in a way that is meant to be pleasing to men (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Commodity Feminism Sexuality as Portrayed by a Burberry Advertisement

(Image source: Daily Mail, 2015)

Commodity feminism is believed to have originated due to the societal adoption of a "postfeminist" culture. Postfeminism refers to a young generation of women who take for granted the victories secured by previous feminist activists who fought for policy change. Postfeminists shun the activism and political labels of the women who came before them while simultaneously expecting to reap the benefits—such as equality in the workforce and at home (Goldman et al., 1991; Love & Helmbrecht, 2007). Postfeminism hit a critical mass in the 1980s and 1990's, with young women trying to distance themselves from a political movement that had

been societally marked by stereotypes of masculinity, "bra burning" and women dubbed as "man haters" (Conger & Ervin, 2016). Postfeminist women believe that the struggle for gender equality was over and that women can "have it all" without needing to push for further policy or structural change (Lazar, 2006). At the core of postfeminism is lack of understanding regarding not only how far feminism has advanced, but also how far it has yet to go (Love & Helmbrecht, 2007). This rejection of the feminist label— yet hunger for the benefits of the movement— set the stage for advertisers to co-opt key feminist ideals and repackage them in a way that could benefit brands and corporations.

Feminism

noun *fem·i·nism \ˈfe-mə-ˌni-zəm*

The belief that men and women should have equal rights and opportunities

Organized activity in support of women's rights and interests

(Source: Merriam Webster)

Third Wave Feminism

There is a lack of general consensus regarding the state of feminism today. As noted by Love and Helmbrecht (2007), today's Millennial women are part of third-wave feminism which tends to be disjointed and decentralized in comparison to feminist movements of the past. Arguably, postfeminism has begun to fade, making way for the third wave in which identifying with the feminist label has become trendy and the mark of an "enlightened" woman. Most significantly, this new wave of feminism embraces individualism and intersectionality— two critical aspects that were not embraced in previous feminist movements.

Third wave feminism is considered individualistic in the sense that many Millennial feminists consider feminism to be highly personal. They believe that feminism is about the freedom of choice for women in all aspects of life—from health care access to career paths, to

marriage and personal taste in appearance. They are more likely to consider any decision or choice that a woman makes— if it's what she truly wants— to be a feminist choice (Zeisler, 2016). The Internet and social media have contributed to this shift by making feminist discussions and demonstration highly visible but also more separate and individualistic in nature (Sheinin, Thompson, McDonald & Clement, 2016). Today, the uniting force of feminism comes not from political rallies and women-only spaces, but rather from television shows such as *Girls* and *Orange is the New Black*. There is no pointed feminist leader like Gloria Steinem; instead there are celebrity mouthpieces such as Beyoncé and Emma Watson. Even so, 69% of Millennial women consider the feminist movement to be active in today's society, compared to 46% of women over age 65 (Sheinin et al., 2016). Intersectionality refers to the idea that gender, race and sexuality comes together to form the broad feminist identity (Sheinin et. al, 2016). In a sense, this is a more inclusionary type of feminism than previous waves which have been heavily criticized as only being concerned about the rights of straight, white women. Sheinin et. al suspect that this may be due to beliefs held by many Millennials that gender is fluid and not a strict binary, third wave feminism seeks to include all who wish to be a part of it regardless of gender identity.

Perhaps the most agreed upon aspect of third wave feminism is that it is complicated. A new generation of women are learning what it means to be feminist while simultaneously realizing that the feminism of their mother's and grandmother's generations is not congruent with their values and beliefs. Third wave feminists receive heavy criticism from predecessors for not doing feminism correctly, often accused of stripping the word of any meaning by focusing too heavily on individualism and personalization, and not enough on the political movement (Sheinin et. al, 2016). This tension is well-illustrated by author and Purdue associate professor Roxane Gay in her book of essays titled "Bad Feminist":

No matter what issues I have with feminism, I am a feminist. I cannot and will not deny the importance and absolute necessity of feminism. Like most people, I am full of contradictions, but I also don't want to be treated like shit for being a woman. I am a bad feminist. I would rather be a bad feminist than no feminist at all (p. 318).

However, pockets of postfeminism live on throughout the third wave. There is often confusion among Millennials regarding the meaning of feminism. Most Millennials came of age during an era of postfeminism, exposed to conflicting messages about the movement and the feminist label. Many female Millennial celebrities who are currently considered feminists have fallen victim to this misunderstanding at some point. This is most notably evidenced by Taylor Swift, who in a 2012 interview responded to the question of whether or not she is a feminist by stating, "I don't really think about things as guys versus girls. I never have" (Stewart, 2012). Swift has since changed her stance, remarking that she didn't understand feminism at the time— a clear remnant of postfeminism that perpetuates throughout pop culture as third wave feminism gains ground.

The Introduction of Femvertising

Taking into account the differences between third wave feminism and postfeminism, it can be argued that Femvertising is a direct response— or even a direct backlash— to the commodity feminism that dominated female-centric advertising from the 1970s-early 2000s. Crouse-Dick (2002), whether knowingly or not, predicted the shift from postfeminist advertising to Femvertising by calling for women to realize that advertising has the potential to be a form of female empowerment. Crouse-Dick suggested that by doing so women would realize that products do not determine who a woman should be or how they should look. Likewise, Femvertising is a confirmation of the social role theory hypothesis by Diekman and Eagly (2002), showing that gender stereotypes and depictions of women change with society as it evolves.

Although it had existed for years beforehand, the term "Femvertising" was officially coined during a 2014 AdWeek panel moderated by Samantha Skey, chief revenue and marketing officer of SheKnows Media. Defined as "advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls", advertisers had noticed that Femvertising had reached a critical mass. The AdWeek panel discussed the trend of Femvertising and how it has changed the way the industry speaks to female consumers— especially Millennials (Bahadur, 2014b). Experts noted the shift in the portrayal of women and the use of positive messages and imagery that showed women as multidimensional, with a heavy focus on the generation that is embracing third wave feminism.

Most notably, Femvertising casts aside the use of traditional gender stereotypes and ensures that women are the protagonists in the advertising and marketing narrative. Given that women are far less likely than men to be in advertisements even though the comprise more than half of the United States' population (United States Census Bureau, 2010), Femvertising is bringing women front and center and helping to even the representation score. In addition to ensuring women are represented, Femvertising seeks to celebrate women and showcase them in authentic scenarios— often going against traditional female gender stereotypes. Technically, an advertising campaign is considered Femvertising if it meets the definition of the term. However, after reviewing dozens of Femvertising campaigns it has been found that nearly all of them embrace the following five pillars:

1) *Utilization of diverse female talent.*

Femvertising, much like third wave feminism, is intersectional. Women and girls are much more likely to see themselves reflected in the advertisements by models of their same race, shape, body size and age. Femvertising campaigns rarely showcase a group of cookie-cutter, "ideal" supermodels, instead opting for a variety of female representation.

2) *Messaging that is inherently pro-female.*

Key messages from Femvertising campaigns are empowering, inspirational and inclusive. Messaging seeks to provide the consumer with feelings of affirmation, self-confidence and motivation, rather than inferring that she is not good enough and that the product at hand is the key to "fixing" her imperfections. Instead, the messaging reinforces and celebrates something positive.

3) *Pushing gender-norm boundaries/stereotypes; challenging perceptions of what a woman/girl "should" be.*

Femvertising campaigns portray women or girls in scenarios that are outside of the traditional stereotypes that are associated with the female gender. Campaigns rarely feature women doing housework or other duties associated with marriage or motherhood. In Femvertising, women are often portrayed in an athletic or competitive environment, performing a leisure activity, in a profession or in a neutral scenario (i.e. blank backdrop; no discernable location).

4) *Downplaying of sexuality; sexuality that does not cater to the male gaze.*

Although Femvertising is not always stripped of all sexuality, it is used ways much more nuanced than traditional advertising featuring women. Exposed skin or female bodily attributes are showcased in a way that feels relevant and authentic (i.e. female athletes working out in sports bras). Femvertising is very rarely over-the-top with cleavage, makeup or unrealistic sexual poses.

5) *Portraying women in an authentic manner.*

Authenticity refers to all aspects of the advertising— from the talent, the product, scenario and styling. Additionally, the campaign message has to feel real, and has to make

sense with the product advertised. The most important aspect of Femvertising, authenticity is notably weaved throughout the first four pillars as well. This drive for truth and transparency extends beyond the advertisement, with many consumers expecting the corporation itself to support women in its business practices (Davidson, 2015).

Very little research has been conducted on Femvertising and no scholarly works directly addressing Femvertising were found in the development of this capstone. In 2014, SheKnows Media released the results of a Femvertising survey in which 628 women were asked their opinions on advertising and how it impacts women and girls (SheKnows Living Editors, 2014). This study is the first— and only found by the author— that holistically addresses Femvertising as a trend rather than addressing a specific brand or campaign. A few highlights from the SheKnows Media survey results include:

- **94% of respondents believe that portraying women as sex symbols in advertisements is harmful.**
- **52% of respondents have bought a product because they liked how the brand and their advertising portrayed women.**
- **45% of respondents have shared a commercial or print ad with a pro-female message.**
- **71% of respondents believe that brands should be held responsible for using their ads to promote positive messages to women and girls.**

The study also collected qualitative data from participants. One respondent addressed the importance of representation, stating, "It's important to see someone like yourself represented— you can't be what you can't see". Other respondents commented on Femvertising and authenticity:

- "**Don't be diverse for brownie points, do it because all women deserve respect.**"

- **"We don't lose sleep over the effectiveness of plastic wrap or the longevity of mop heads."**

Preliminary, "pre-test" interviews on the state of advertising conducted by the author in preparation for this Capstone echoed the above sentiments. Three female Millennial advertisers were asked to comment on the depiction of women in advertising and their thoughts on gender stereotypes (see Appendix A for interview transcripts). Key findings from these interviews include:

- Participants disliked the use of traditional demographic stereotypes in advertising. Overwhelmingly, they favored brands and campaigns that go against traditional stereotypes, highlighting the changing lifestyles and roles of both men and women today.
- Participants noted that brands speak differently to men and women. They inferred that they would be interested in advertisers speaking towards people as a whole, rather than catering messages based on gender.
- Participants felt strongly that authentic storytelling is key to a likeable and memorable advertising campaign— especially when speaking directly to women.

While these two sources alone are not enough to draw definitive conclusions about opinions on Femvertising, it does lend credibility to the idea that women are noticing— and responding favorably to— Femvertising as a shift in how advertisers are speaking to women. As explained by Procter and Gamble's Fama Franscico, "Femvertising works because these types of ads champion girls and women — they speak directly to them, and the people who love them, and celebrate them during various aspects of their life" (Wallace, 2015). Femvertising is changing

the way that women receive messages and taking a stand against the harmful traditional portrayals of women.

Authentic

adjective / au·then·tic

Real or genuine, not copied or false

True and accurate

True to one's own personality, spirit, or character

(Source: Merriam Webster)

Authenticity in Advertising

Arguably the most important aspect of Femvertising is authenticity. Consumers are increasingly expecting corporations to act openly and transparently when it comes to company practices, values and actions (Molleda, 2010). Molleda asserts that authenticity in the field of communications is fluid— what might have been considered authentic years ago could be seen as inauthentic today. Historically, references to authenticity in marketing and advertising have related to authenticity of the product itself; whether or not it is a genuine item made of quality materials or from the origin claimed (Beverland, Lindgreen & Vink, 2008). However, today's consumer is not only concerned with the authenticity of the product itself, but also with the motives and intentions of company that created it (Molleda, 2010). This type of authenticity is most closely related to what Beverland et al. (2008) refer to as moral authenticity, explained as "Providing the consumer with a feeling that this brand will help achieve self-authentication through connecting with personal moral values" (p. 8). Essentially, moral authenticity comes from understanding why a company would make— and subsequently advertise— a product. In the topic of Femvertising, it is this type of authenticity that is critical to understanding both how companies are backing up their claims of supporting female consumers. Moral authenticity is displayed by brands via visual cues that communicate the values (Beverland et al., 2008). In the case of Femvertising, moral authenticity is communicated by the ways in which women are

shown in the advertising, and whether these visual cues spark feels of truth, realism and accuracy.

Femvertising Criticism

It's important to note that regardless of authenticity, Femvertising is not an idealistic, utopian form of advertising. Lazar (2006) finds it "unsurprising" that advertisers have appropriated feminist elements as the profession entails noticing societal trends, cultural tensions and the opportunities that lie within. She asserts that "social advertising of this kind is rarely genuinely progressive" (p. 505). Brands, corporations and advertisers alike admit that Femvertising itself is not intended to be a philanthropic social movement. SheKnows Media's Samantha Skey said of the 2015 Femvertising Awards, "These are not NGOs...these are ads meant to drive product sales. We want to make sure that we're delivering on the Femvertising principles of empowerment and also delivering on the bottom-line objectives for each of the clients we work with." (Monllos, 2015).

It is this capitalistic drive of Femvertising that had led a cohort of prominent feminist scholars and experts to view the trend as simply a new iteration of commodity feminism that perpetuates the issues raised by Goldman et al. (1991). Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty has undergone many forms of criticism since its debut, with some questioning the motives of Dove and parent company, Unilever. Andi Zeisler, founder of Bitch Media and prominent expert on modern feminism, reiterates this issue in novel "We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrrl to Cover Girl, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement". According to Zeisler, "We are letting a glossy, feel-good feminism pull focus away from deeply entrenched forms of inequality" (loc. 151). Zeisler uses the phrase "marketplace feminism" rather than commodity feminism, but the premise remains the same. Rather than celebrating the new wave of modern feminism and young women's eagerness to adopt the label, Zeisler worries about the depoliticizing of feminism as celebrities become mouthpieces for messages that feminists have been saying for

decades. Zeisler is critical of Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, declaring that the campaign

"perpetuate[s] female insecurity" while reaping the financial gains of "empowertising"—even if

Unilever has genuinely good intentions. Zeisler takes issue with the majority of modern

feminism, citing the financial gains of nearly every tenet. In essence, Zeisler maintains that any

use of feminist ideals for capitalistic or financial gains is marketplace feminism and is

undermining feminism as political and social movement. The risk to Zeisler—and many other

feminists— is that current individually-driven feminism strips power from it as social movement,

which should seek to combating structural inequalities. In this school of thought, Femvertising is

perpetuating a watered-down sense of feminism and turning a profit in the process.

Primary Research

This study seeks to better understand two important elements of Femvertising: the strategic "why" behind Femvertising and the critical component of authenticity.

Research Question One

How is Femvertising viewed in the professional field of marketing and advertising?

- **Prediction:** Experts will be in favor of Femvertising as an advertising strategy for reaching female consumers.

Research Question Two

Do the ideals and attributes of Femvertising align to the corporate values of the brands that employ it?

- **Prediction One:** Femvertising brands will have more women in leadership roles than stereotypical brands.
- **Prediction Two:** Femvertising brands will offer more inclusive, female-friendly benefits to employees than stereotypical brands.
- **Prediction Three:** Femvertising brands will be more likely to support female-driven causes as part of the corporation's CSR efforts than stereotypical brands.

Expert Interviews

Research Question: How is Femvertising viewed in the professional field of marketing and advertising?

To address research question one expert interviews were conducted with professionals with extensive experience in the field of marketing and advertising. The purpose of these interviews was to gain insights into why a brand might choose to Femvertise, the benefits or drawbacks of the strategy, as well as the participants' professional opinions of advertising to women in today's environment.

Method

Three experts were interviewed for this study, all of whom were either previous acquaintances of the author or were recommended by friends and colleagues. Participants were interviewed in person over a one-week timeframe spanning from June 24 to June 30, 2016. Each interview was approximately 30-45 minutes in length and notes were taken by hand. One interview was also recorded to aid in notetaking. Participants were asked questions from a consistent interview guide, which can be found along with detailed participant responses in Appendix B. Participants provided verbal consent of the use of their names, titles and responses to be included in this study.

Interview Participants

Lizzie Breyer, Senior Marketing Manager - Pillsbury Sweet Dough at General Mills

Lizzie Breyer began her career as a journalist before joining the General Mills rotational marketing program. Breyer has seven years of experience at General Mills working on a variety of brands including Honey Nut Cheerios, Totino's Pizza Rolls, Hamburger Helper and Pillsbury. Breyer holds a B.A. in Journalism and Public Policy from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill as well as an MBA from the University of Virginia's Darden School of Business.

Breyer is technically a Millennial, but states that she best identifies with older Millennials and occasionally Generation X.

Ann Aronson, Chief Marketing Officer at the University of Minnesota

Ann Aronson has held a number of roles in the field of marketing and advertising. Aronson has corporate experience with Jostens and Target, has held multiple agency positions and has been with the University of Minnesota for more than 10 years. Aronson holds a B.A. in Communications from Macalester College as well as an M.A. in Public Affairs from the University of Minnesota's Humphrey School of Public Affairs. Generationally, she identifies as a Baby Boomer.

Emily Rinde, Social Media and Community Manager at The Nerdery

Emily Rinde has obtained diverse agency and corporate experience through her roles at GdB, Starkey Hearing Technologies and The Nerdery. She has worked on consumer brands such as Crystal Farms and Summit Brewing Company, as well as a number of B2B and nonprofit clients. Rinde holds a B.A. in Public Relations from University of Northwestern- St. Paul. Rinde is a member of the Millennial generation.

Key Findings and Insights

While participants' opinions of Femvertising and advertising to women varied based on their professional experience, there were some common themes that emerged.

Stereotypes and outdated portrayals of women persist.

When asked their opinions of how women are portrayed in advertising today, all three participants noted their disappointment and noting that women are generally shown as mom or in another domestic setting. They cited supermoms with perfectly cleaned kitchens and immaculately decorated houses as well as the expectation that the woman is the one who does

the grocery shopping and cooking in the family. All three participants agreed that women are expected to "have it together" and are generally portrayed in advertising in a manner that suggests she is the primary caretaker. Rinde also noted the persistence of typical gender stereotypes for both men and women, with mothers portrayed as competent and fathers often shown as clueless and inexperienced— usually as a source of humor.

Participants noted the deficiency of women overall, as well as inadequate diversity when women are present. Aronson brought to light the scarcity of the Baby Boomer women in advertising. As a generation, Boomers have a great deal of spending power and Aronson questioned the motives for advertisers to ignore this seemingly lucrative audience segment. She noted feelings of sexism towards women as older men appear in advertisements frequently. Similarly, Breyer noted that current advertising rarely portrays women as multidimensional, complex humans. They are often reduced to one aspect of their personality— mom, most commonly— rather than as individuals with personal wants and needs.

Personal opinions of Femvertising were mixed, but participants agree that it likely helps advance a brand's reputation.

When asked to give their opinions on Femvertising in general, both Aronson and Breyer were complementary of the trend and the brands that utilize it. Breyer specifically noted that Femvertising campaigns are about women choosing for themselves; the campaigns speak to the consumer as an individual and reflect how she sees herself. Aronson praised Femvertising for diversity, approving of the use of plus-sized women and for reducing retouching. Rinde was slightly more skeptical of Femvertising overall, pointing out that brands are still capitalizing on gender and perpetuating socially constructed views of femininity to sell products.

All three participants agreed that Femvertising is likely good for a brand's reputation, as it helps them differentiate from brands that rely on sexism and stereotypes. Rinde mentioned that while there are issues with Femvertising, that Dove and Nike are likely more highly

regarded than competitors because they portray women as strong and confident rather than helpless or solely as a mother. Breyer believes that the majority of Femvertising brands are doing it for the right reasons, stating that "these brands genuinely have a passion for and interest in women's lives. They want to reach them on an emotional level and that's great, that's what I think advertising should do." She notes that Femvertising helps develop brand communities that people want to be associated with.

Brands must earn the right to Femvertise.

Aronson believes that Femvertising only works if it is congruent with the brand's identity, citing that a brand can't "do a 180" and claim to support women if it has been stereotyping or objectifying women for years. Breyer agreed that not every brand has the right to play in the Femvertising space, noting that food brands haven't yet made the leap. Breyer suggested that this may be because such brands still need to appeal to mom as the primary gatekeeper of what products make it into the cart and ultimately, the home and the kids. Overall, participants felt that Femvertising isn't for every brand— the brand must be able to support its claims or risk losing credibility with consumers.

Age and generational expectations may play a role the popularity of Femvertising.

There was a consensus among participants that Millennials and younger women have different expectations than older generations when it comes to gender equality and the portrayal of women. All three observed that Femvertising is generally targeted towards the Millennial female consumer, speaking to how society is evolving. Rinde mentioned that she doesn't believe women of her grandmother's generation would be as sensitive to images and portrayals that Millennials find offensive. Aronson noted that teenagers and young women today are much more aware of gender equality and sexism. Her daughters routinely point out media that they find troublesome or offensive. Breyer suspects that advertising targeting mothers will

dramatically change in the coming years as Millennials become parents, as they have different expectations than women of Generation X.

Above all, authenticity is critical when speaking to women.

Perhaps the key insight from the interviews was the call for authenticity in advertising. For Rinde, all advertising needs to be more authentic— including Femvertising. She described a desire— but ultimate inability— to relate to Femvertising due to the contrived nature of the campaigns. Aronson emphasized the critical need for research in order to ensure authenticity. She believes that the only way to understand how to talk to women in advertising is by talking to them firsthand during all phases to gauge their reactions and invite input. Breyer agreed, noting that meaningful insights are critical to understanding the consumer and for creating effective and authentic advertising. Breyer also stressed that today's consumers have little tolerance for advertising that feels too much like advertising; if it feels inauthentic, they will take to social media to voice their opinions and demand change.

Aronson pointed to the lack of women in leadership roles as a source of inauthentic messaging, stating that men and women aren't the same; a room of men can't truly understand or authentically communicate how a woman thinks, acts or wants to be addressed. Rinde finds that working with female executives— both as clients and within her organization— helps bring balance to marketing and communication messaging.

Discussion

Based on insights from the expert interviews, the prediction was partially supported as two of the three experts were fully in favor of Femvertising as long as it was congruent with the brand's identity and values. The third expert was not in favor of Femvertising, but did agree that it likely helps advance a brand's reputation if executed well.

The split of opinions within the group on Femvertising was notable, as the split echoes findings from the literature review. Two experts— Aronson and Breyer— agreed with the literature that supported Femvertising as a positive trend that authentically and meaningfully depicts women. However, Rinde found the profitability of femininity and gender troublesome, aligning with scholars who criticize Femvertising as an iteration of commodity feminism.

One of the key takeaways from these interviews is the topic of authenticity, which was a common thread throughout nearly every response to questions asked throughout the interviews. Authenticity was addressed in many forms— from the desire for women to be portrayed in genuine situations to a call for realistic messaging. The fact that opinions on Femvertising between the two Millennials interviewed were split, knowing that they are the target audience for most Femvertising brands. This divergence of opinion echoes the need for messaging that doesn't just attempt to be seen as relatable, but for messaging that truly strikes an authentic cord. Beyond messaging, Aronson and Breyer stressed the need for brands to authentically support women at the corporate level as well. The consumer desire for truth, transparency and relatability creates a ripple effect that extends beyond the Femvertising campaign itself, holding the brand responsible at the corporate level for "walking the talk" that is portrayed in its advertising.

Content Analysis

To further examine the critical relationship between Femvertising and authenticity, five brands that utilize Femvertising and their parent companies were researched. For comparison, five brands that utilize stereotypes and their parent companies were evaluated against the same criteria. All ten brands were chosen based on historical records of portraying women in advertising: either for a strong dedication to Femvertising or for the continual use of gender stereotypes. An overview of each brand, its most recent advertising campaign and the rationale for its inclusion in this study follows.

Brands That Femvertise

The Femvertising brands chosen for evaluation meet the five pillars of Femvertising campaigns as outlined in the literature review. These brands studied have showcased their commitment to Femvertising by extending their campaigns —or debuting new iterations— for multiple years. These brands have also received some form of public recognition for being a Femvertising leader—either by the SheKnows Media Femvertising Awards, industry publications such as AdAge, or women's advocacy groups.

Dove (Unilever)

Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty is generally considered the paramount Femvertising campaign. Although it has gone through many iterations, the Campaign for Real Beauty (CFRB) remains the cornerstone of the Dove brand even 12 years after its initial debut in 2004 (Bahadur, 2014a). The campaign continues to draw on its founding insight that "the definition of beauty has become limiting and unattainable" with the campaign seeking to "challenge beauty stereotypes and invite women to join a discussion about beauty" (Dove, n.d.). The CFRB's international presence features women of a variety of ages, races/ethnicities and sizes/shapes and with a spectrum of atypical model features such as curly hair or freckles (see Figures 3-1

and 3-2). While each version the CFRB varies, it continues to challenge the consumer to think differently about the concept of beauty. The CFRB has been the subject of both praise and heavy scrutiny among scholars and professionals throughout its lifecycle, however it is still widely considered a best in class Femvertising example (for more details on the history, praise and criticism of the CFRB, see Murray, 2013). For its dedication to female empowerment, Dove was the Social Impact winner of the 2015 Femvertising Awards held by SheKnows Media (Femvertising Awards, n.d.; Monllos, 2015). In addition, the CFRB has won hundreds of additional awards since its genesis, including top honors at Cannes Lions, the Effies, and named Ad Age's top No. 1 Ad Campaign of the 21st Century (Neff, 2014).

Figures 3-1 & 3-2: Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty
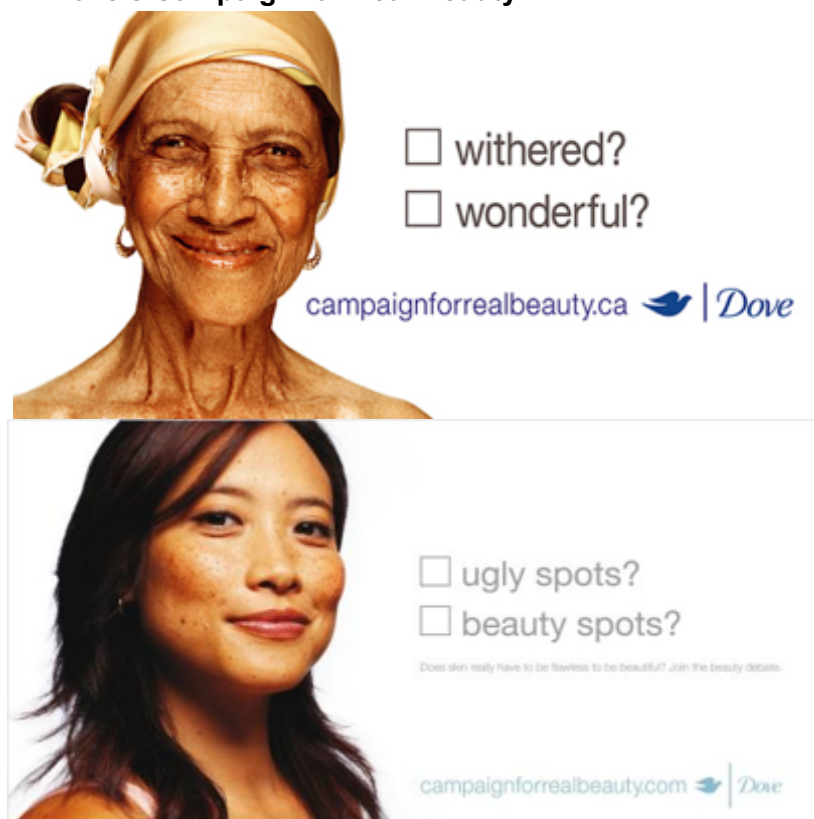
(Image source: Bahadur, 2014a)

Always (Procter & Gamble)

When menstrual pad brand Always introduced the Like a Girl campaign during the 2015 Super Bowl social media exploded with praise, calling the spot "groundbreaking". The video was a social media and viral phenomenon, shining a bright light on Femvertising for a broad audience (Berman, 2015). Like a Girl debuted with a video that asked adults and young girls "what does it mean to do something like a girl?" The video utilized the stark difference between how adults and young girls viewed the phrase "like a girl" to highlight the turbulent time of puberty during which many girls lose the natural self-esteem they had when they were younger, as showcased in Figure 4 (Always, 2014). The video was a social media and viral phenomenon, partially due to the choice to air during the traditionally male product-dominated Super Bowl. Like a Girl is dedicated to breaking gender stereotypes and the campaign continues today by focusing on new ways to support girls (most recently, the brand was lobbying for the introduction of female-friendly Emojis). The campaign's purpose is to "...make sure that girls everywhere keep their confidence throughout puberty and beyond, and make a start by showing them that doing things Like a Girl is downright amazing" (Always, n.d.). Like Dove, Always was a 2015 Femvertising awards honoree— taking home the award in the "Next Generation" category (Femvertising Awards, n.d.) along with a 2015 Emmy for "Outstanding Commercial".

Figure 4: Always #LIKEAGIRL Campaign

(Image source: The Girl Spot, 2015)

Nike

Nike has a long history of incorporating Femvertising into its advertising campaigns, self-reporting as "serving and innovating for female athletes" for over 40 years (Nike, 2015). Nike's hallmark female-driven campaign debuted in 1995, known as the If You Let Me Play Sports campaign which highlighted the benefits of encouraging girls to participate in athletics (Harakas, 1995). Nike's current campaign, Better for It, focuses on the trials and tribulations that female athletes of all levels encounter every day. Dubbing Better for It a "rallying cry", Nike encourages women to push themselves further and seeks to provide inspiration and support for all athletes. The campaign's dynamic composite spot features women in a variety of fitness scenarios with the voiceover running through the women's inner monologue. "Okay yoga, change my life" thinks a woman during a crowded class, as "no shame in running half a half marathon" runs through the mind of a woman mid-race (see Figures 5-1 and 5-2). The women are cynical at first, but each one pushes through their various challenges and ends victorious— showcasing the benefits of hard work and encapsulating the campaign theme, "If you're brave enough to try,

you're strong enough to finish" (Nike, 2015). Nike asserts that Better for It is the brands' "largest

initiative to support and motivate a women's athletic journey" (Nike, 2015).

Figures 5-1 & 5-2: Nike Better for It Campaign

(Image source: Nike, 2015)

Under Armour

In its first Femvertising campaign, I Will What I Want, Under Armour taps into a wide

variety of female celebrities and athletes (dubbed "Women of Will") to personify determination,

drive and persistence. The heroine of I Will What I Want is American Ballet Theater principal

dancer Misty Copeland, whose story of success against the odds launched the campaign. In

Copeland's commercial, a young girl's voice reads aloud a series of criticisms that Copeland

endured as she trained to become a ballet dancer. Simultaneously, Copeland performs an

incredibly physical and impressive ballet routine with grace and ease (see Figure 6-1). "She

didn't fit the ballerina mold. So, she broke it and cast a new one," states Under Armour's

website (Under Armour, n.d.-b). The campaign's uniting voice is the statement, "It doesn't

matter what others think. It's what you believe. We're UA Women. And we WILL what we want"

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(Under Armour, n.d.-b). Under Armour has since expanded the Women of Will to include model

Gisele Bünchen, downhill skier Lindsey Vonn and tennis star Sloane Stephens (among others),

with each showcasing their personal story of triumph in the face of adversity (see Figure 6-2).

The campaign won Under Armour the 2014 "Marketer of the Year" award from Ad Age (Schultz,

2014) and has garnered significant media coverage for the brand. Today, I Will What I Want

comprises eight Women of Will, each showcasing their determination to reach the top of their

fields— no matter what others think.

Figures 6-1 & 6-2: Under Armour I Will What I Want Campaign
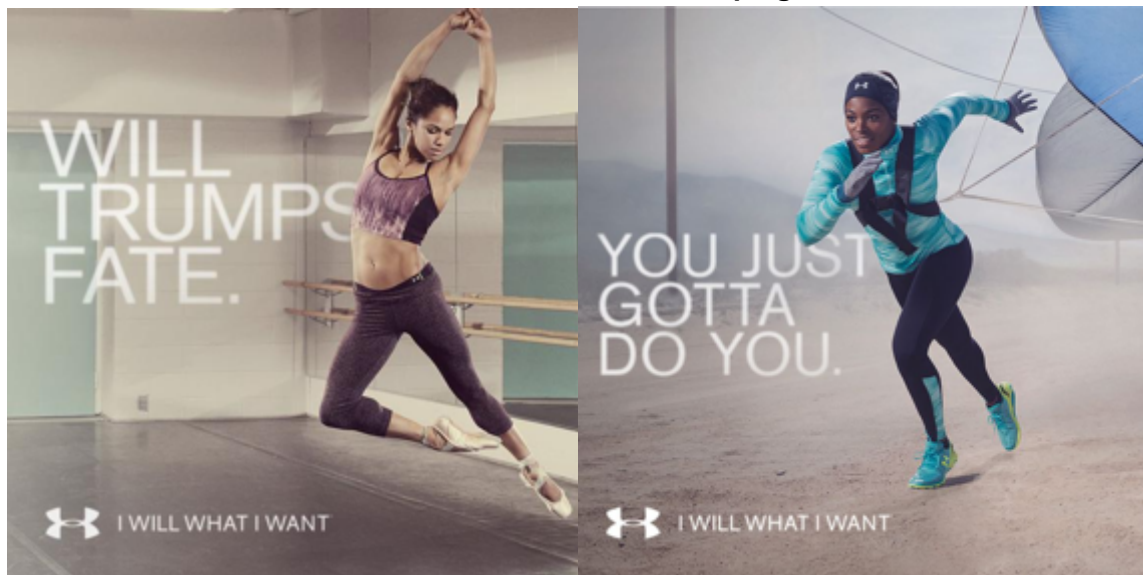
(Image source: McNew, 2015)

Aerie (American Eagle)

Aerie is an intimates, sleepwear and swimwear brand for women 15-24 and owned by

retailer American Eagle. Aerie's current campaign, dubbed Aerie Real, first debuted in 2014 and

has since made waves in the media and marketing industry alike for denouncing the retouching

of models in advertising. Aerie has pledged to use real, authentic, untouched models in its

marketing, stating on its website, "#aerieREAL— that means no retouching, and thanks to your

stories and support, it's also about body positivity and loving your REAL self. Inside and out.

The real you is sexy" (Aerie, n.d.). Beyond unretouched photos (see Figure 7), Aerie Real

employs a diverse array of models in its in-store signage and online store— showcasing

products on models of all shapes and sizes. As noted by Aerie's senior director of marketing,

Dana Senguin, "Nothing is covered up—tattoos, stretch marks, scars, freckles—what you see is

what you get. We're not altering their bodies in any way. The product fits them as shown" (Beer,

2014). Senguin noted that this is not a one-time campaign for the brand, but a new overall brand

strategy that will continue into Aerie's future. The most current version of the campaign

highlights the brand's swimwear light, promoting body positivity and the idea that every body is

a "bikini body".

Figure 7: Aerie Real Campaign

(Image source: Krupnik, 2014)

Brands that Stereotype

To contrast with the five Femvertising campaigns, five stereotypical brands were chosen.

These brands have repeatedly employed female gender stereotypes and/or objectification of

women in advertising campaigns. However, unlike Femvertising brands, it should be noted that the stereotypical brands vary in the degree self-awareness and motives for utilizing stereotypes. Some brands have taken a purposeful stance to perpetuate female gender stereotypes (i.e. Carl's Jr., Calvin Klein) while others did not necessarily intend to offend or stereotype— likely falling victim to tradition and habit rather than a desire for shock value (i.e. DirecTV).

Carl's Jr. (CKE Restaurants)

Carl's Jr. has a longtime tradition of "sexy" advertising that has been known to offend consumers and hail criticism from women. The brand debuted its "model-centric" strategy in 2005 with a spot featuring socialite Paris Hilton sensually eating a burger. Since then, Carl's Jr.'s campaigns have generally followed the same trope, featuring impossibly beautiful, thin and voluptuous models scantily clad while eating or holding a Carl's Jr. sandwich (see Figure 8). The brand is not blind to criticisms of the campaigns— rather, this is the company's preference. Andrew Puzder, CEO of Carl's Jr. and CKE Restaurants, stated, "If you don't complain [about our ads], I go to the head of marketing and say, 'What's wrong with our ads?'" (Taylor, 2015). The brand's sexualized shock strategy has held steady for nearly 16 years, rarely straying from the supermodel "hot girl" stereotype. The brand occasionally rotates in male athletes or celebrities, such as the recently-debuted commercial featuring rapper Lil Dicky, however it is not the brand's core strategy. "One thing about us: everybody knows who we are," stated Puzder about the campaigns (Taylor, 2015).

Figure 8: Carl's Jr. Supermodel Campaign

(Image source: Nudd, 2013)

Doritos (PepsiCo)

Doritos has been repeatedly disparaged for its tone deaf portrayal of women in its advertising in efforts to be humorous. Such stereotypical jokes have ranged from women wearing Dorito chip bikinis to the most recent pregnancy-related advertisements aired during the 2016 Super Bowl. Also of note is Doritos 2010 2010 Super Bowl spot, in which a woman covers her naked body in Doritos (see Figure 9) in order to get her husband to pay attention to her during a football game (Doritos Grab Bag, 2013). Doritos continuously uses women as props, sexual objects or as the butt of slapstick, male-oriented jokes. Doritos came under heavy fire from women's health groups this past February for the aforementioned Super Bowl advertisement, best described in an article by US News, "a fetus propels itself out of its mother's womb to get its hands on some of the nacho-flavored corn chips" (Dicker, 2016). The commercial sparked pro-life and pro-choice debates that put Doritos in the center of the conversation.

Figure 9: Doritos 2010 Super Bowl Ad

(Image source: Doritos Grab Bag, 2013)

DirecTV (AT&T)

Over the past three years, DirecTV has been in the spotlight for advertisements regarded as sexist, stereotypical or offensive. Sparking the most heated debate was the "Am I Pretty?" commercial, part of the No Visible Strings campaign DirecTV ran in 2014. Dubbed by critics as the "Marionette Wives" campaign, the spot features a female puppet/marionette in a red negligée asking her husband whether he still finds her attractive. Insecure about her wires (a tie-in to the "no unsightly wires" promotion), the marionette wife tries a number of ways to seduce her husband and reaffirm her self-worth through validation of her sexiness (Commercials, 2014). Extensions of the campaign portray the Marionette Wives performing other stereotypical housewife tasks such as pouring refreshments for her husband and his friends (see Figure 10). Past campaigns have also received criticism for showcasing female models in purposely unflattering and stereotypically female roles, such as a single "crazy cat lady", a smoking lunch lady and a mom jeans-wearing stay at home mom. DirecTV has

responded to critiques by defending the campaigns, citing humor as the intention (ABC News, 2015).

Figure 10: DirecTV No Wires Campaign

(Image source: iSpot.tv)

Calvin Klein (PVH Corporation)

Sexualization and objectification is nothing new for Calvin Klein advertisements. Famous for its black-and-white images of models in its signature underwear, the brand has utilized the "sex sells" mantra since the early 1990s. This spring' campaign— dubbed In My Calvins— utilized fill-in-the-blank style text in which models and celebrities share what they do in their Calvin Klein clothing. The campaign has sparked controversy on multiple fronts. Most distinctly, it was criticized for an up skirt photograph of a seemingly very young female model (see Figure 11-1) with the phrase, "I flash in my Calvins" (Chapin, 2016). Online discussion swirled, with consumers taking to social media to share their concerns over the image that many dubbed "porn-like" and "predatory". Around the same time, another campaign image was condemned for the stark difference in the way men and women were portrayed (see Figure 11-

2). Two ads were run side-by-side on a billboard, the copy on the women's ad reading "I seduce in my Calvins" while the men's ad copy read "I make money in my Calvins" (Chapin, 2016). Outrage over the campaign ultimately caused Calvin Klein to pull the up skirt image and suspend portions of the campaign.

Figure 11-1 & 11-2: Calvin Klein Erotica Campaign
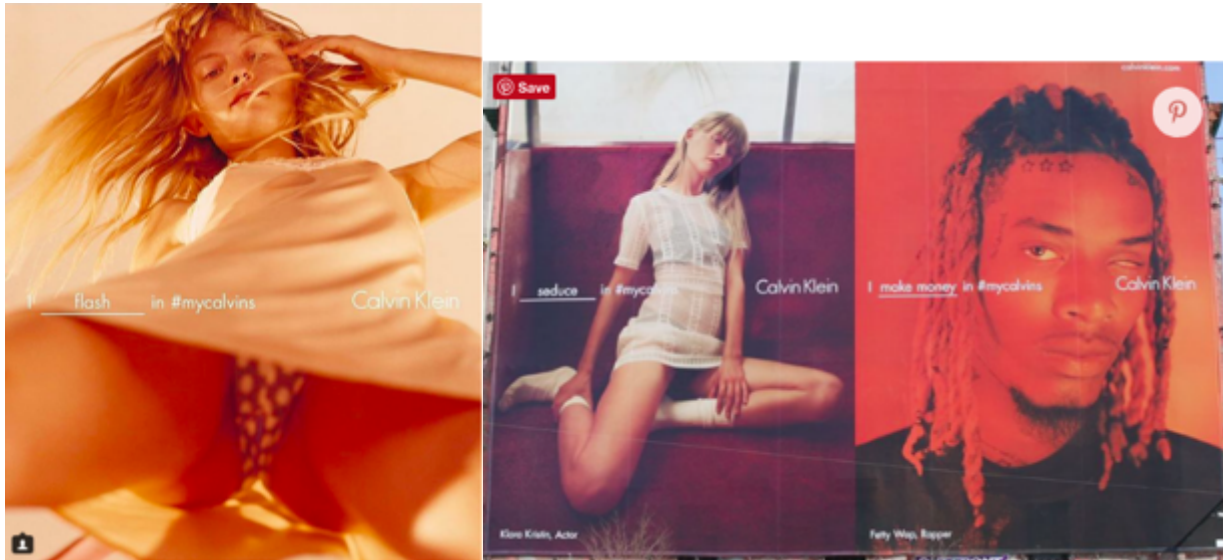
(Image source: Chapin, 2016)

Victoria's Secret (L Brands)

Victoria's Secret has become famous for being "the sexiest brand in the world" with its advertisements showcasing lingerie-clad supermodels. The cornerstone of the brand's campaign is the infamous Victoria's Secret Angels— an exclusive designation given to supermodels who are asked to pose for the brand. The Angels are always tall, thin, young and large-chested. While the Angels have become slightly more ethnically diverse throughout the years, the prototype of the Angel— and their picture perfect bodies— has stayed relatively the same, failing to embrace diversity of age or size. Victoria's Secret has long been attacked for objectifying women and promoting body dysmorphia due to the Angel's unattainable bodies. The brand's most recent controversial advertisement was showcased on its website, with the Angels posing next to the caption "The Perfect 'Body'" (see Figure 12). Public outcry and social

media buzz eventually caused Victoria's Secret to remove the image and issue an apology (Lutz, 2015).

Figure 12: Victoria's Secret Perfect Body Advertisement

(Image source: Lutz, 2015)

Measuring Authenticity

For this study, authenticity is operationalized as the degree to which a brand reinforced its claims of empowering women based on the practices of the corporation. Specifically, these practices comprise attributes that are supportive or inclusive of women. To develop a framework for the attributes that make a corporation female-friendly, a variety of sources were consulted, including: Fortune's 100 Best Workplaces for Women, Working Mother's 100 Best Companies, National Association for Female Executives and Diversityinc. Additional attributes were chosen based on the literature review and divided into three sections for coding, each of which directly ties to one of the research predictions.

- **Prediction One:** Femvertising brands will have more women in leadership roles than stereotypical brands.
  - Coding Category: Female Leadership
- **Prediction Two:** Femvertising brands will offer more inclusive, female-friendly benefits to employees than stereotypical brands.
  - Coding Category: Employee Benefits & Awards/Recognition
- **Prediction Three:** Femvertising brands will be more likely to support female-driven causes as part of the corporation's CSR efforts than stereotypical brands.
  - Coding Category: Support of Women's Development and Issues

Method

Each of the ten brands' corporate parent company was analyzed based on the attributes. If the brand is a stand-alone corporation (i.e. Nike and Under Armour), it was analyzed as such. If the brand is a wholly-owned subsidiary or part of an umbrella organization, the parent company was analyzed (i.e. Dove is a Unilever brand). Each brand/company was coded as either "Femvertising" or "Stereotypical". Table 2 details breakout of brands, parent companies and designations. Nine of the ten companies are publicly held, with CKE Restaurants (Carl's Jr.) having privatized in 2008. Nine of the ten companies are U.S. based, with Unilever based in the U.K.

Table 2: Brands, Parent Companies and Designations

Brand	Company Analyzed	Designation
Dove	Unilever	Femvertising
Always	Procter & Gamble	Femvertising
Nike	Nike	Femvertising
Under Armour	Under Armour	Femvertising
Aerie	American Eagle	Femvertising
Carl's Jr.	CKE Restaurants	Stereotypical
Doritos (a Frito Lay brand)	PepsiCo	Stereotypical
DirecTV	AT&T	Stereotypical
Calvin Klein	PVH Corporation	Stereotypical
Victoria's Secret	L Brands	Stereotypical

Data was gathered from the company itself whenever possible. Company-owned resources that were analyzed include: the most recent available annual report, corporate social responsibility reports, diversity reports, corporate websites, careers websites and other miscellaneous materials as applicable. If an attribute could not be determined by company owned sources, secondary sources were consulted such as published articles, former studies on the company or websites such as PayScale and GlassDoor. If the information could not be obtained from either the company itself or a second party, the attribute was coded as "unknown" or "zero" as applicable. Data was collected over the ten-day time period of June 10th through June 23rd. Sources are included in the references section.

Each company was evaluated on the coding categories articulated in the measurement section. Multiple attributes were examined in each category. Table 3 displays the categories and

attributes measured during the analysis. For the complete coding sheet, please reference

Appendix C.

Table 3: Content Analysis Categories and Attributes

Attribute	Coding Category
Gender of CEO (or President if applicable) Gender of CMO All Employees- Percent Female Senior Management- Percent Female All Management- Percent Female Executive Team - Percent Female Board of Directors- Percent Female	**Female Leadership**
Flexible Scheduling Maternity/Paternity Leave Adoption Assistance Child Care Assistance Female-Friendly Workplace Awards	**Employee Benefits & Awards/Recognition**
Addresses Women in Company Mission, Vision or Values Statements Development or Leadership Programs for Women Support of NGOs, Charities or Causes that Benefit Women	**Support of Women's Development and Issues**

Results

Highlights and critical findings from the content analysis follow. For complete results and

raw data, please reference Appendix D.

Category One: Female Leadership

The first category analyzed was the makeup of each company's employees with a

special emphasis on leadership. Of the 10 corporations analyzed, only one currently has a

female chief executive officer at the helm: PepsiCo, the parent company of the Stereotypical brand Doritos. Four companies currently have female chief marketing officers (or the equivalent)— three of which head marketing for the companies of stereotypical brands (AT&T, PepsiCo and PVH), and only leads marketing efforts for a Femvertising company (American Eagle). When the composition of the companies' executive teams was analyzed, the average percentage of female executives was 17% for Femvertising companies and 14% for Stereotypical companies. All five Femvertising companies have at least one woman on the executive team, while two Stereotypical companies do not have any female representation on the executive team (CKE Restaurants and L Brands). Femvertising companies also outperformed Stereotypical companies when it came to female representation on the board of directors, with Femvertising brands averaging 25% female members and Stereotypical brands averaging 20% (*note: CKE Restaurants does not have a board of directors*).

When the gender breakout of the total company's workforce was examined, Femvertising brands averaged 47% female employees while Stereotypical companies averaged 50%. However, the company with the highest percentage of female employees was the Femvertising company American Eagle, with female employees comprising 71% of its total workforce. The company with the lowest total percentage of female employees was PepsiCo at 29%. Although the gender breakout of senior management was not available for all companies, of the companies that did report, Femvertising companies averaged 32% female senior managers and Stereotypical companies averaged 41% female senior managers. Similarly, the gender breakout for women holding any type of management role was an average of 50% for the Stereotypical companies and 43% for Femvertising companies. It should also be noted that Femvertising brands had a smaller range of percentages of women in management roles, ranging from 41%-45% while Stereotypical brands ranged from 33%-66%. Chart 1 showcases the results of employee and leadership breakout by brand type.

Chart 1: Female Representation in Femvertising and Stereotypical Companies

Average Percentage of Female Leaders & Employees
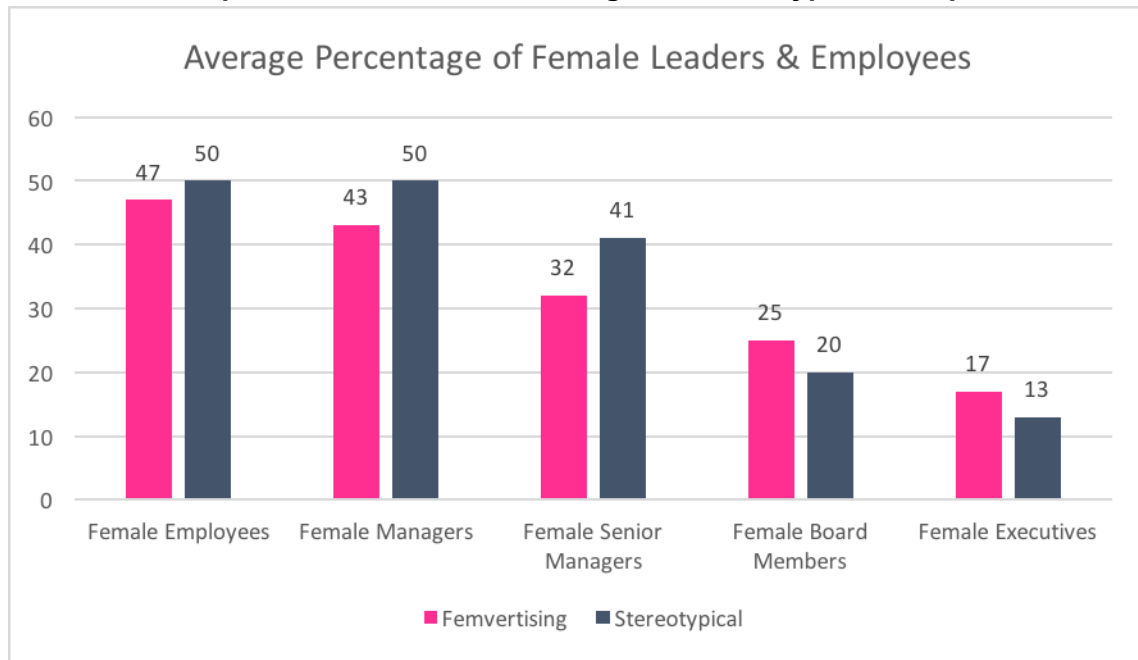
Based on these findings, Prediction One was only partially supported. Femvertising companies did not significantly outperform Stereotypical companies when female representation in leadership is examined, with Femvertising only outperforming Stereotypical brands in the areas of executive leadership and board of director leadership. Stereotypical brands outperformed Femvertising brands in the categories of total female employees, female managers and female senior managers.

Category Two: Employee Benefits

When looking specifically at benefits for new parents/families, it was found that with the exception of one Stereotypical company (CKE Restaurants), all companies offered benefits for new parents, including maternity/paternity leave and adoption benefits. However, the offering of child care services as well as flexible scheduling was more sporadic with many companies not disclosing its offerings in those areas. Six companies total offer flexible scheduling and four offer some sort of childcare assistance. Femvertising and Stereotypical companies were evenly split for these attributes. Chart 2 showcases the benefit split between company types.

Chart 2: Benefits Offered by Company Type

Benefits Offered by Company Type

(Horizontal bar chart showing values for Stereotypical and Femvertising company types across benefit categories)

- Flexible Scheduling: Stereotypical = 3, Femvertising = 3
- Child Care Assistance: Stereotypical = 2, Femvertising = 2
- Adoption Assistance: Stereotypical = 3, Femvertising = 5
- Paternity Leave: Stereotypical = 4, Femvertising = 3
- Maternity Leave: Stereotypical = 4, Femvertising = 5

■ Stereotypical   ■ Femvertising

Also studied was whether or not companies have won awards for being female-friendly workplaces. Overall, Femvertising companies have won more of these awards (n=6) than Stereotypical companies (n=4), however the number of companies receiving awards was equal between company types. Two Femvertising companies, Procter & Gamble and Unilever have been recognized, and two Stereotypical companies, PepsiCo and AT&T. Procter & Gamble leads with the most awards (n=4). Importantly, the only companies that have received the Working Mother award are Femvertising companies— Procter & Gamble and Unilever. Chart 3 showcases the breakout of awards by company.

Chart 3: Awards Received by Company
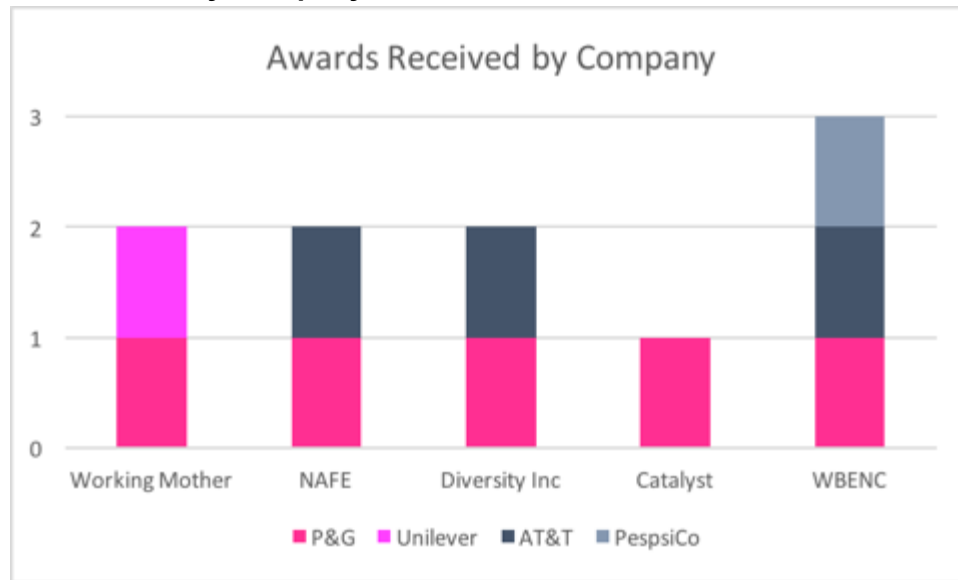
There were a few other distinct relationships as pertaining to employee benefits. Companies with the highest percentages of female board members were also the most transparent regarding information about the company's benefit offerings. This was particularly notable for Femvertising company Unilever, which leads both in percentage of female board members (46%) and in availability of benefits for women, disclosing its offerings in each measured category. This was also true with the two companies with the second highest percentage female board members (33%)—Femvertising company Procter & Gamble and Stereotypical company AT&T.

Based on the employee benefit findings, Prediction 2 received partial support. The benefits offered by Femvertising companies were not significantly better than those offered by Stereotypical companies. However, Femvertising companies have received more awards and recognition for being female-friendly workplaces.

Category Three: Support of Women's Development and Issues

Of all ten companies, only Femvertising company Unilever explicitly addresses its commitment to women in the company's mission, vision and value statements. However, all five

Femvertising companies explicitly support efforts that provide opportunities for women,

compared to three of the Stereotypical companies. This support includes partnerships with

NGOs, task forces, committees or organizations that support female-driven causes that directly

benefit women. In some cases, the Femvertising companies have in-house foundations or funds

that directly support women— something not offered by any Stereotypical companies.

Regarding development programs for women, four of five Femvertising companies offer unique

development programs for women, generally in the form of employee networks/councils or

leadership programs and education. Three of the five Stereotypical companies offer similar

programs. Chart 4 demonstrates these findings.

Chart 4: Company Support of Women by Category
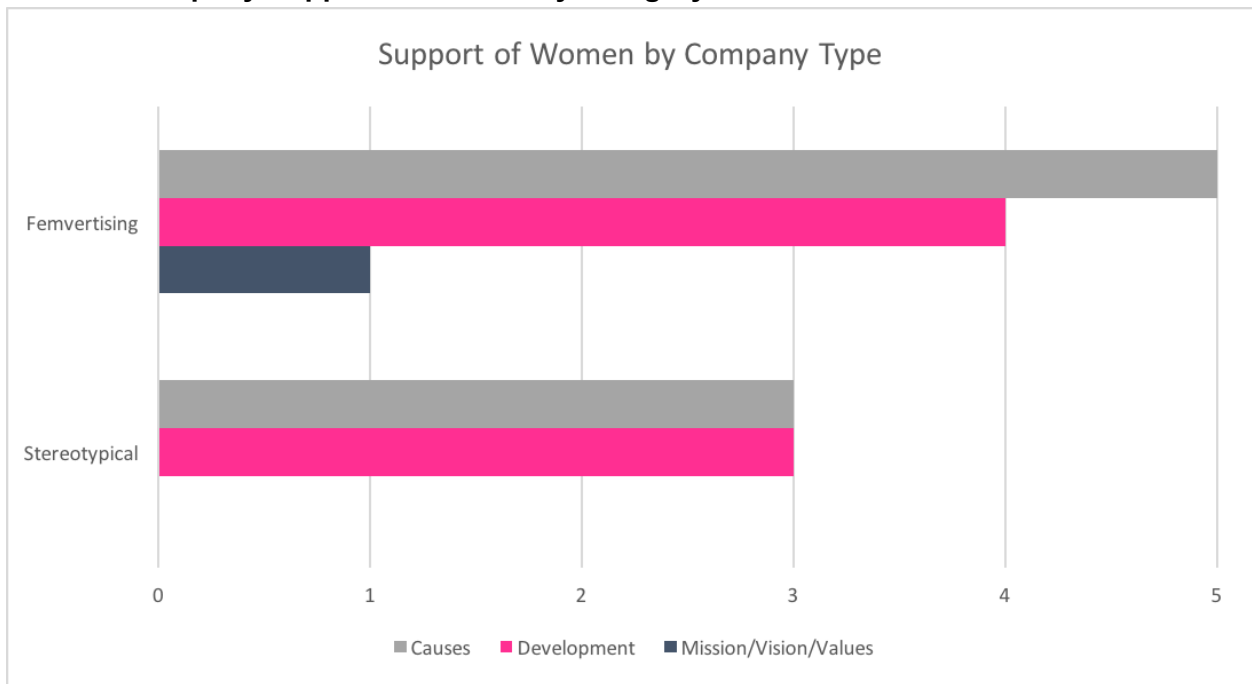
Prediction 3 was supported, with Femvertising companies offering more support for

women's causes and development than the Stereotypical companies.

Discussion

In essence, this content analysis measures the integrity of the companies that claim to support women in their external messaging by examining the company's support of women in its corporate policies. Overall, it can be concluded that Femvertising companies advertising messaging and congruence with corporate policies is strong in some areas, but leaves more to be desired in others.

The results were perhaps the most surprising and disappointing in the area of female employees and female leaders. Femvertising companies failed to outperform Stereotypical companies in nearly all attributes of employee gender representation, with a startling lack of female representation in both the role of CEO and CMO— likely two of the most critical corporate positions determining the corporation's overall marketing strategy. Likewise, Femvertising companies underperformed in the area of female managers. The research prediction was that companies that outwardly valued management traits in women in advertising—such as leadership, intelligence, confidence— would value these traits in women in the company's workplace. It was surprising to find that Femvertising companies did not outperform Stereotypical companies in this area.

However, Femvertising companies seemingly take greater care than Stereotypical companies to ensure gender diversity both on the board of directors as well as the executive suite as a whole. Boards and executives are the outward face of the company, which may mean that Femvertising brands are aware that projecting the image of a gender diverse company is important. However, even Femvertising brands have not succeeded at providing equal representation in these area, with the highest percentage of female executives for the Femvertising brands coming in at under a quarter (Unilever and Procter & Gamble at 23%). If Femvertising companies and brands want girls and women to believe that they can be anything

and do anything, they have a responsibility to showcase this belief with female representation at the corporate level.

In the area of employee benefits, it was surprising that Femvertising companies did not offer markedly different benefits from Stereotypical companies. In general, Femvertising companies were nearly equal with stereotypical companies when evaluating overall offerings of female-friendly benefits. Although this may shine a slightly negative light on Femvertising companies, it should be noted that overall corporate performance in the area of benefits was higher than anticipated with nearly all companies offering parental leave and adoption benefits, and nearly half offering flexible work arrangements and child care assistance. Although Femvertising brands did not outperform Stereotypical companies, it is promising to see that corporations are offering assistance in areas that are vital for the success of female employees. That being said, if Femvertising companies are to truly act authentically, they need to provide best-in-class benefits for women— which could potentially remove personal roadblocks that could be preventing women them from reaching management and leadership roles. Interestingly, the representation of women on the board and executive team appears to have an effect on company policies, as organizations that offered the widest breadth of benefits were also the ones with high female board representation (Unilever- 46%, Procter & Gamble- 33%, AT&T- 33% and PepsiCo- 29%).

Awards are a good indicator of a corporation's policies as they serve as a third party endorsement. However, it should be noted that many corporate awards require companies to self-select into the application process. Because of this aspect, awards could potentially indicate that a corporation is self-aware that it needs to appear strong in this category, causing them to apply. Companies that are not concerned about being perceived as female-friendly may not have entered into the process at all. Femvertising and Stereotypical companies did not greatly vary in volume of awards, however only Femvertising companies Procter & Gamble and

Unilever received the Working Mother award. This award is particularly significant as it doesn't only measure female-friendly benefits, but focuses on women as mothers and caretakers. As women are still disproportionately responsible for domestic and caretaking tasks (Almendrala, 2016), corporate support of a women's home lives in addition to professional lives is particularly relevant. As explained by Almendrala, long work hours in conjunction with a high volume of at-home responsibilities is leading to health issues for women— making it imperative that corporations address work life balance for female employees. Awards like Working Mother showcase that these Femvertising companies are making authentic efforts to support women.

Femvertising companies were the strongest in the area of supporting women's causes and development. All five Femvertising companies support causes that specifically benefit women either domestically or internationally, with most companies citing upwards of three specific initiatives. The most striking was the commitment of Unilever— the company's vision statement includes "creating opportunities for women" as a primary goal for the corporation. Unilever partners with 8+ NGOs that directly support the livelihood of women, and is one of ten corporate IMPACT partners of the UN's HeForShe Impact project. Of the companies evaluated, Unilever is a best-in-class example of how a Femvertising company can authentically and meaningfully support the claims it makes in its Femvertising campaigns.

Overall, results suggest that while some Femvertising brands mirror the claims of their advertisements with corporate policies and practices, there is still room for improvement. When compared to Stereotypical companies, Femvertising companies were often comparable in the benefits and support offered to women. Femvertising brands must consider the importance of authenticity and align its corporate values and practices with its messaging.

Limitations

A primarily limitations of this study is the small sample size of both the expert interviews and the content analysis. The experts interviewed each had a unique background and perspective on the topic, but none have direct experience working on a Femvertising campaign. Additionally, all three experts were female and two were Millennials— the demographic targeted in most Femvertising campaigns. A larger and more diverse sample would lend additional credibility to the findings and provide a wider array of insights.

For the content analysis, many brands fit the criteria of either Femvertising or Stereotypical companies. As such, the 10 brands and companies examined for this study are not representative of the industry as a whole. In addition to sample size, the sources of information used per brand varied. Annual reports and financials are mandated for publicly traded companies, there is no standard or regulated process for companies reporting corporate and social responsibility efforts, gender breakouts of the workforce or offerings for employee benefits. There are likely inconsistencies in reporting methods between companies and timeframes for fiscal years vary. The lack of publically available information meant that some data was obtained from secondary sources, rendering it less reliable than data provided directly from the original source.

As acknowledged in the literature review section, stereotypes are harmful to many groups, not just women. The use of male stereotypes in advertising are also problematic and potentially damaging. However, due to the focus on the topic of Femvertising, this paper has not addressed the important issue of male gender stereotypes.

Data from the content analysis was quantitative in nature, lacking the depth and context yielded by qualitative measures. To truly gauge the quality of employee benefits and a corporation's support of women, it would have been beneficial to interview or survey company

employees. Additionally, diversity as pertaining to race, ethnicity and sexuality were not specifically measured in this study but are critical pieces of intersectionality that impact women and the Femvertising landscape.

Finally, as the author is a Millennial woman, the potential for personal bias must be acknowledged.

Future Research

Femvertising is still a relatively new strategic communication trend and very little research has been completed on the topic. This study is intended to serve as a springboard for future research on Femvertising, authentic communication with women and the reduction of gender stereotypes in advertising. Recommendations for future research are as follows:

Femvertising Principles and Theoretical Foundation

While this Capstone serves as a starting point for understanding Femvertising and the societal environment that paved the way for it, this is not a complete work on the theoretical framework of the trend. Additional scholarly work should be completed on the theoretical aspects of Femvertising, taking into account the areas of both feminist and communication theory and research. The proposed pillars of Femvertising should be further evaluated in order to create a framework for identifying and evaluating Femvertising campaigns. This work should further address the topic of intersectionality as discussed in the Limitations section.

Public Opinion Study on Femvertising Campaigns

Although the SheKnows Media Femvertising survey helped set a baseline for female opinions on Femvertising, the sample was relatively small and segmented. As part of advertising strategy is to speak to a target (generally without aiming to alienate non-target consumers), a public opinion study would shed light on the attitudes and receptivity of the general public to a shift in the portrayal of women in advertising.

Qualitative Research with Brands and Advertisers

To better understand the Femvertising landscape, history and thought process, research should be conducted into the opinions of the marketers and advertisers that have created Femvertising campaigns. This research would provide key insights into how and why Femvertising is used and how brands/companies define success.

Analysis of Femvertising and Corporate Success

It is recommended that a comprehensive, large-scale analysis of Femvertising as it related to corporate success should be completed. This would likely involve looking at a large subset of corporations (i.e. the S&P 500) and analyzing the company's style of advertising (i.e. Femvertising, stereotypical or neutral) in relation to corporate performance. This would require evaluation of company advertisements, collection of corporate performance data (accounting, financial and corporate social responsibility) and performing a regression analysis to control for company size and other variables. This study could provide a tangible evidence for whether or not Femvertising truly benefits the brands and companies that utilize it.

Implications & Recommendations

Femvertising offers brands a new way to reach female consumers while simultaneously reducing traditional gender stereotypes and increasing the visibility of diverse women. To quote Murray (2013), "Some feminists might welcome [Campaign for Real Beauty's] representations as a positive change in a mediascape that is otherwise saturated with the dominant ideology of beauty" (p. 97). Although Murray intended for this to be a tongue-in-cheek remark about third wave feminism, the quote rings true. The rising popularity of Femvertising— both from brands and consumers— represents significant social progress. Brands and companies have the opportunity— and the responsibility— to incorporate gender equality into messaging

Given what scholars have shown about the effect of advertising and gender portrayals, if the momentum continues Femvertising may truly affect social structures and gender expectations (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Döring & Pöschl, 2006; Knoll et al., 2011). As Femvertising has gained steam, many brands have come to the realization that stereotyping women in advertising is harmful. Three notorious offenders of female stereotypes and sexual objectification— American Apparel, Go Daddy and Skyy Vodka— have made pledges to discontinue sexist portrayals of women in their advertisements. As of June 2016, Unilever has committed to taking this even further, announcing that it will cease the use of all gender stereotypes in advertising across the company's 400+ brands. As the second largest corporate advertiser in the world (Sweney, 2016), Unilever's commitment to accurately represent women in advertising will undoubtedly turn heads.

As brands continue to recognize the societal shift towards valuing the female consumer, it can be expected that Femvertising will become more popular and more relevant. This may cause an increase in brands considering Femvertising as a key strategy. The following

implications of this study and recommendations should be considered by marketers and advertisers considering the best way to engage female consumers.

Femvertising is a partial solution to the issue of female representation in advertisements.

Although McArthur and Resko called for a change in the ratio of men to women in advertisements in 1975, we have made little overall progress in the past four decades. Men are still considered the central figure in the majority of advertisements, even though women hold significantly more spending power. This lack of progress is concerning, as it points to the societal issue of corporations valuing men over women— an injustice that must change. Femvertising has the unique ability to change this situation; as the number of brands that employ Femvertising increases, as will the volume of women working in advertising, providing diversity in the form of female representation. In addition to increasing the number of women shown in advertising, Femvertising asserts a woman's value as a multidimensional member of society. Not every brand can (or should) employ Femvertising as its primary brand strategy. Regardless, Femvertising should serve as inspiration for marketers and advertisers of all brands, compelling them to consider gender representations utilized in creative pitches and when making casting decisions. Although some brands will inevitably necessitate male representation due to the specifics of the product, brands as a whole should consciously write women into the work whenever possible and appropriate.

Femvertising helps reduce the number of harmful female gender stereotypes in advertisements.

By nature, Femvertising disparages typical female gender stereotypes by opting instead for messages of empowerment, strength, individuality and confidence. In this manner, Femvertising removes gender stereotypes from the advertising arena and provides a compelling alternative for brands. This is a critical shift, given that gender stereotypes have the ability to

impact the way individuals think or behave, potentially having the power to "function in the service of social change" (Diekman & Eagly, 2000, p. 1186).

Whether or not a brand chooses to Femvertise, all marketers and advertisers must critically examine the creative nature of their work to ensure that depictions are authentic, honest and representative of women as individual people. Leaders must hold themselves accountable for not perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes by ensuring that they are representing the true diversity of roles, settings and ages of individuals in society. As an industry, we must remove outdated and offensive tropes — from the bored housewife to the dizzy blonde and shoe-crazy shopper— in an effort to provide a fairer and representative society for future generations.

Women must hold leadership positions and have the authority to provide input on the creative process— especially when brands target female consumers.

As demonstrated by the content analysis, female leadership has direct ties to how a brand treats and portrays women in many areas. If brands attempting to reach female consumers— especially with messages of empowerment— it must substantiate these claims by employing women leadership positions at the corporate level. Not only is this the right thing to do from a societal and gender equality standpoint, but it will benefit the brand as well. As described by Ann Aronson during the expert interview process, the only way to speak to women is by having women at the table making decisions. By ensuring that more women have a seat at the table proving feedback and suggestions, the work will ultimately be more relevant to the consumer. This is a key way for brands to ensure authenticity, which is critical to success.

Femvertising may pay off big for brands— if approached authentically and with integrity.

The results of this study show that experts believe Femvertising can help a brand's reputation when done correctly. Additionally, the literature and preliminary studies suggest that

female consumers are drawn to Femvertising campaigns. The societal shift from postfeminism to third wave feminism and the changing role of women in modern society have set the cultural landscape for Femvertising to take off. However, brands and companies that wish to tap into this cultural tension should only do so if it can deliver on Femvertising messages with integrity.

Results of the expert interviews insinuated that Femvertising is beneficial for a brand's reputation, but only if the brand can do it correctly. Brands must earn the right to play in the Femvertising space, which can only happen if the company truly understands, respects and supports women. If brands claim via advertising to empower women and girls, it is critical that the company models this behavior in its policies and actions. As showcased in the content analysis, brands that wish to Femvertise must mindfully create female-friendly workplaces and offer best in class benefits that set women up for personal and professional success. Additionally, it's imperative that they heavily invest in philanthropic efforts benefitting women and girls. Most importantly, these brands must lead by example by hiring, promoting and retaining diverse female talent. As explained by Laura Bates, the founder of Everyday Sexism Project,

> *"There's a big difference between simply pushing out a feminist ad campaign in the hope that it will go viral and actually designing a product with the principle of equality at its heart, say, or embodying that message by acting internally on issues from equal pay to parental leave" (Davidson, 2015).*

Brands wishing to enter into the world of Femvertising must have a solid, female-friendly foundation, or be prepared to instate significant corporate changes over time to position itself as a female ally before taking up Femvertising. For these brands, it may be wise to start by removing gender stereotypes and increasing female representation in advertising.

Brands must ensure that Femvertising stays true to its roots by prioritizing the empowerment of women and girls.

Femvertising will likely continue to grow in popularity as companies realize the spending potential of Millennial women and the success of brands that have learned how to reach them. While this is a positive step, there is the potential for brands to abuse the strategy. Femvertising comes with the responsibility not to prey on women's insecurities or flaws under the guise of empowerment. Femvertising must seek to truly empower in a way that is meaningful and authentic. Brands must tread cautiously, conduct extensive research and take pains to ensure they are not confusing Femvertising with its close cousin—commodity feminism. To ensure authenticity, brands should check campaign strategies and creative work against the pillars of Femvertising to guide them into the space.

Conclusion

Corporations have a responsibility to the public and society to fairly, accurately and authentically represent women in advertising. As Unilever chief marketing officer Keith Weed explained during the company's recent announcement to drop stereotypes from its advertisements, "The time is right for us as an industry to challenge and change how we portray gender in our advertising. Our industry spends billions of dollars annually shaping perceptions and we have a responsibility to use this power in a positive manner" (Sweeney, 2016). Brands simply cannot continue to use damaging stereotypes and degrading tropes to depict the lives of women who hold the majority of the country's purchasing power.

Femvertising may be the beginning of a large-scale societal change in the appreciation of women as consumers, and also as complex, multidimensional and critical members of society. Although progress still needs to be made, it is clear that an inevitable cultural shift has begun. Femvertising also offers an alternative to damaging female gender stereotypes and the lack of overall female representation in the field. Most importantly, Femvertising may offer a solution for brands wishing to authentically connect with female consumers if they are able to authentically communicate and support its messaging.

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Appendix A: Transcripts from Preliminary Interviews on Advertising

Question 1: What are some of your favorite advertising campaigns? These could be recent or old, for any product, and for any category. What about these advertisements or campaigns stands out?

Participant One:

I really love the Coke Zero drinkable ad campaign. Coupons are boring for my generation because we do try to do everything on mobile and using apps. I'm not going to print or cut coupons, so this idea of using TV that then goes to your phone is super interesting. It's just a really cool use of media. It was exciting- I got to play with my phone, and it's a new way to do trial for products that isn't just sampling at a store, which feels outdated.

Participant Two:

To me it's all about storytelling for brands— and they have to be authentic. Work resonates when it has both human and brand truths that connect people to things that enhance their lives. Let's not be sleazy cars salesmen, instead it's about creating art for the masses, in a naive sense. We should give people touch points to either connect with the brand or to decide it's not for them and another brand is— and that's okay. I think you get more loyal customers if you can authentically connect with them. For example, Volkswagon's campaigns hit on the truths of human life and how its products can complement that or reflect that back to people in a real way. Now that we all know they were lying will hurt the brand, but they did have that going for them before this news came out. Target also does this by democratizing style for people in a way that is also inspirational. They were giving the people what the wanted. Authentic storytelling is what I respect because it's what works and as a professional is what you want to do.

Participant Three:

My favorite by far are the Guinness beer spots because they are so heartfelt. There's one where a group of men are in wheelchairs playing basketball and you don't know who is handicapped and at the end they all stand up out of the chairs except one. And they all go get a beer like a normal group of friends. It's about bringing people together and at the same time it is heartfelt, serious and makes you feel good. I also like the AT&T spots with the kids- they're funny and simple and I always think, "why didn't anyone do that sooner?" It was all actually those kids' honest answers which is brilliant and hilarious.

Question 2: Can you recall any advertisements that you really dislike? Again, these could be recent or old, for any product, and for any category. What about these advertisements or campaigns stands out?

Participant One:

I tend to hate anything that's played on Hulu. I don't know if that's the fault of the ad itself, or the fact that Hulu only shows two ads the whole time on repeat, so whatever ad it is gets annoying by the time you see it the fifth time. I also really hate all medication commercials. They often use animation to represent a disease and awkwardly makes light of a serious condition. There's this one about a

bladder condition where this woman is bowling and the animated bladder is tugging on her dress. It just makes me angry. Too many of these feel so fake. And why are they always at some point walking through a park?

Participant Two:

I dislike anything that feels like you're being sold to or uses unnecessary consumerization that's obviously disingenuous. I hate when brands aren't willing to go the extra mile to engage and inspire people. Anything with a jingle is a turnoff- like those earworm songs that just create frequency and awareness through irritation. Those are the worst. I also hate playing on stereotypes in a no- tongue-in-cheek way, or reinforcing negative stereotypes. I always think of Axe Body Spray for some reason. Or Carl's Jr. But then again, sometimes there's a wit when it happens, a way of making fun of yourself. However, I can't decide whether that makes a brand self-aware or just disingenuous. I wonder that a lot about Victoria's Secret. They've always had an over-sexualized stereotype about their ads, but they might be turning it around to make it empowering.

Participant Three:

Nothing specific comes to mind, and the participant chose to skip this question.

Question 3: Are there any brands for which you have a particular affinity? If so, please name the brand(s). Why do you feel a connection with this brand(s)?

Participant One:

Target immediately comes to mind. I love their commercials and how they approach social media. Their Instagram is so clever and fun. I think the color blocking they use throughout their channels is cool. They were also one of the first companies I saw use a gay couple in their wedding ads. I think media often reflects society, or can push society in the way it should go and make that the norm. I know that Target got some backlash for those ads, but it was important for them to be the leaders in that space and I thought that was great.

Participant Two:

I really love altruistic brands, because we all want something that we can believe in and feel good about. Like Toms or even Apple- they are designing solutions that make life more interesting. Those are two overly-referenced brands for a reason. Even better is the Goldiblocks toolbox toy. Goldiblocks have spots with little girls skateboarding. They are even sustainable products that at the same time are empowering smart girls. That company was founded inherently with some greater good in mind, in both practice and delivery. Along those lines is Planned Parenthood, too. I also like authentic and self-aware brands that know who they are. M&M's went from King Size to Sharing Size large packs because they knew it had become irresponsible to promote overeating in today's world. Brands are trying to course-correct and I respect that. However, I do I wonder whether this approach is clever or tricky. I'm not sure. Doritos and Taco Bell – those are two brands that know who they are, and they go with it. We are in this "Wild West" of new business— a "Golden Age of Innovation". There's a mindset and shift happening to create businesses founded in good, and that's exciting. But I do wonder if that bubble will eventually burst.

Participant Three:

Caribou has always been a favorite brand of mine because they make you feel a certain way when you drink one. To me it's more at-home feeling than Starbucks. The store layout is homey and welcoming. Starbucks is clean and fresh but kind of snobby. I really like how Caribou positions themselves and I like that it's Minnesotan.

Question 3: Have you noticed the use of what you would consider traditional family/gender roles or stereotypes in advertisements? Please describe. What did you think of these advertisements?

Participant One:

There's a Tide commercial with dad doing the laundry with his daughter that I really like. I like the idea of the dad doing the "women's chores"— he cleans the daughter's princess dress and doesn't make a big deal of it. I don't remember the brand, but there's a cheese commercial where the mom is teaching the daughter how to make a snack of crackers, apple, cheese in the microwave. During the spot you do notice that the mom is at the daughter's height the whole time but you don't really know why. It turns out that the mom was in a wheelchair in the end. But it was still just a normal mom and daughter ad— they didn't scream that she was in the wheelchair— but you rarely see people with disabilities in advertisements. Target's back to school commercial has a boy in a wheelchair as well. I like commercials that don't make it a huge deal. You don't have to scream that you can be a woman and a mom and have a job all at once. You don't have to champion it; it's nice when it's subtle and realistic, like the Tide commercial. It just happened, it wasn't a big thing.

Participant Two:

I have a soft spot for the elderly so I really hate anything relating to ageism. I remember sitting at Target when I was six or seven and an old lady was rude to me and I was so offended because I was thinking to myself "But I'm an advocate for old people!" I'm happy to be seeing a bunch of spots now that have old people in a better light. Aging in America is changing, and the older population is now so active and young-seeming. I dislike playing on stereotypes of pitying or not respecting old people, or making fun of them or assuming they don't understand what's going on. Race and gender stereotypes are also hard. You can always tell when racial diversity was thrown in because it "has" to be there. It's so apparent. Stereotypes exist, but people are different and the stereotypes just don't represent real people in the end. I see this a lot with Millennials and college students. Some brands get it right and some don't when they over-generalize.

Participant Three:

JC Penny used a same-sex couple a few years ago, and that was interesting and I think opened a window to a lot of brands to do the same thing. In a negative way I think of Target's ads- I don't see a lot of diversity in them. I would like to see more diversity in their brand in all areas. Jif is currently targeting dads. All of these CPG products are usually all about moms, but there are so many single dads now and we need to break out of mom being the main shopper. It isn't so one-way or one-sided anymore.

Question 4: Has the use of gender role portrayal in advertisements ever made you feel differently about that brand? Please describe.

Participant One:

Yes- as long as they aren't yelling it in my face that they're hip and socially or politically correct. Deep down we all know that brands are selling a product, so how much is this their beliefs what they think people care about now? I always keep this in mind. However, I respect companies more that are willing to take a nontraditional stance than the ones that turn a blind eye to changes happening in our society.

Participant Two:

It's more about demographics for me. I feel strange when you see a blue collar brand and the ad features a Latino family, for example. Or a spot talking about layaway and it's an African-American mom shopping. As a Midwestern white girl in the industry, I think I'm over-sensitive to this and notice it all the time, so I might not be sure how it actually resonates with the target audience. I notice ambiguous race uses a lot. But I find that I'm really more concerned with a company's practices more than their communication or ads. Do they treat their employees well? Are they good corporate citizens? That gets to me more than their campaigns.

Participant Three:

It appeals to me when brands break out of the norm. I like brands that change with the way of the world and adapt rather than staying with the traditional ways. It's taking a chance, and that means more to me than brands that don't. Like Target is stuck in their ways- they're beautiful ads, but nothing there is new there. Lately I've liked Marshall's. There are new commercials where they feel like a fancy department store and then you find out it's Marshall's. It made me want to go there like I haven't wanted to before. They know that not everyone can afford to spend that money and they are being smart and giving people what they want.

Question 5: Have you noticed a difference in how products or brands are marketed differently based on gender? Please describe.

 Participant One:

Advertising makes men out to be really dumb (use of loud noises, quick jokes) like with Old Spice. I laugh at it, but I feel like we don't treat men as intelligent enough to handle anything above that. Men's commercials are few far between in frequency, too. Women seem to have so much more buying power than men. It seems as though we rarely consider men as a demographic to go after. Do we think they are a waste of time? In ads for women it's a lot of emotional pulls— try to make them cry or feel something. Then there's the argument and the industry stereotype that we should try to make women feel insecure so they'll buy something (thinking of Dove), but overall I think we're getting better with this. It's more about an emotion than a lack of self-worth. What's that P&G Olympics commercials with the mom. She takes her kids to first skating lesson and it's very emotional. By the end of that one my mom was bawling.

Participant Two:

In my career it seems like women have usually been the spenders, the decision makers. Women are treated on a pedestal in a way and women trump men in every scenario because they are the decision maker in the home. It's with everything, even healthcare. They are the influencer making their boyfriend or husband go in and get a checkup. They are making the decisions that are

ultimately impacting brands and we regard them much more highly than men in the business. Maybe more for brands like Old Spice and Lowes are men-focused but those are more psychographic. If it's not women first, then it's psychographics and then it's men.

Participant Three:

One of my favorite campaigns is the Dove Real Beauty, but I think they should do one for men, too. The tone would be different, but I think that men deal with insecurities and body issues and need that positive reinforcement. I would like to see the tables turned on the male point of view. I used to think that technology (specifically Apple and Samsung) were very male-targeted, but I think they've made a switch recently. Same with car companies (Ford, Mazda) were male driven and now are more family-focused. It's nice to see a woman drive a car in those spots. These previously male categories are coming out of their shell. There's one with a woman driving to "Fight Song" through the city and I thought to myself "Yes! Go you!"

Question 6: If you could change anything about the way brands target men and women, what would it be? How would you like to see the industry evolve and why?

Participant One:

I like where some brands are already going, like Cheerios with the mixed race family. Our country is still at a place where that's offensive but if more brands do this maybe people will feel different about it. When a brand does something new they will always get stuck with the crazies out there. I want more brands to do this type of work. Let's see more ads that don't treat dads as dumb. I'm also really tired of ads showing mom how to juggle everything, and talking about how busy she is. We know moms are busy, but what if life wasn't like that? So many ads glorify moms doing everything. It would be better if we just showed the dad helping out with some of those things. I'm going to be a mom someday, and that's not what I want my life to look like. I'd love to see this portrayed differently.

Participant Two:

I think it depends on how well you know the brand and the brand's audience. What might resonate with them? I really value insights and planning. Testing results make me more skeptical rather than qualitative results. The true qualitative research lends better insights to inform how to speak to people. And we have to give audiences more credit- they are smarter than you think. There's something about having the guts to go for it and be authentic and not so safe. Safety can be inauthentic. You need to differentiate and make sure you stand out. You need to know who your brand is and who it can be before you can do anything. Always trying to fight for the right message no matter what and that will lead to change.

Participant Three:

This might be stereotypical of me to say, but I do think that women should be treated equally with men. We are just as empowering as a male audience. I don't think brand should limit the stereotypically male actions in life to only men, like how car companies are starting to show women. It would be cool to have Menard's or Home Depot show a female sales person, for example. Let's use women in these opportunities to showcase diversity and show that women are just as important.

Appendix B: Transcripts from Expert Interviews

Interview One: Lizzie Breyer

Senior Marketing Manager - Pillsbury Sweet Dough at General Mills

Note: Interview transcript has been minimally edited and condensed for clarity and relevancy.

Would you mind telling me a little bit about your background, current position and the brands and/or project you've worked on?

I started my career as a journalist, I worked in newspapers for about 5 years and went to Journalism school as my undergrad at UNC Chapel Hill. When the industry started to collapse I went to school in Virginia and came directly to General Mills from there. I've been here 7 years this July. I came here for the job— General Mill's marketing program is rotational in nature. We move approximately every year; it slows down at the manager level to every couple of years. I started on Hamburger Helper, then I worked in corporate health and wellness, which was more of an internal consulting role where I did things like gluten free as well as interesting work targeting Boomers for nutrition. Then I went to Totino's Pizza Rolls, then a year on Honey Nut Cheerios, then when I became a manager I spent about two years on shopper marketing in the cereal division, and I've been in my current role for about a year managing all of the sweet products for Pillsbury.

Some of the brands have been heavily focused on advertising, and then other brands have been more focused on the business model and operations. I get a nice, well-rounded experience and many components of brand management. Pillsbury is more focused on the consumer, with advertising, as the brands are mature and have been around for a while. It's more about positioning and marketing with the world moving away from carbs and processed foods. We're at a very interesting crossroads with our heritage and we've been around for years and people have strong opinions about us— nostalgia is one of our key attributes— and then you have these new food values that are emerging as Millennials are becoming parents and they are looking at things in a very different way. Find that intersection between heritage and relevance is a bit of challenge.

It's interesting because that's what General Mills has been built on— grains essentially, flour and carbs, but now the parts of our business that are growing are smaller upstart brands that are newer like Larabar and Annie's.

During your time in the advertising and marketing industry, have you worked on any campaigns targeted towards women?

Totino's is actually the most interesting one, as we have made a shift. The target used to be mom, and we pivoted to the college kid Millennial consumer. That was the first big consumer shift that went all in after a male consumer. Honey Nut Cheerios was a bit more agnostic— I say it's the vanilla ice cream of cereals— everyone loves it but it's no one's favorite. Pillsbury's primary target would be a mom with kids in her 30's. What I find fascinating about the target and that I've had internal debates about is that it's not about her as a woman, but her as a mom. And that happens in advertising a lot— we aren't looking at this huge range of her life, we are looking at her in this transactional way as how she related to her family as head of household. I think is where I run into some personal friction— I'm a baker, I'm not married and I don't have kids— it's not something I view in quite the same way as the job that we're doing. But our sweet spot is the woman who is using it that way, to make her kids or family happy in her role as mom to

help her. The jobs that we articulate that she is doing with the products are mom-like: for cinnamon rolls, it's essentially give mom the ability to deliver a surprise and delight moment to her kids on the weekend. It's that tool in her arsenal; it's all about her kids eating and satisfaction. It's not about her as a woman, it's about her as mom. We aren't talking about her so much, it's more about her family structure.

What did you notice about the way women are portrayed in advertising or how female consumers are targeted? Have you seen any recurring themes in your advertising or at large?

There has been a lot of emphasis on reflecting back what does the modern family look like. The best example for that for us at General Mills was the Cheerio work. I was tangentially involved in that as I was on the Cheerios team at the time. It really wasn't intended to be this big political statement— we found this adorable little girl, she was clearly multiracial and we cast people who could realistically be her parents and it became this huge thing. The campaign I worked for Honey Nut was similar. We wanted to make it fresh and modern, so we partnered with the rapper Nelly and did "Must be the honey" and it was great and the most fun you could possibly imagine having at work. So I think we do take into account that many of the people we're talking to and are making purchasing decisions are Millennials who have different food values, families are multiracial, or maybe dad's the one doing meal prep and cooking now or maybe even grandma is living at home. We're seeing a lot more generational households, we are seeing a lot of things that are different and an early way to create relevance for the brand is reflecting back people's lives. So when they see on TV a family that looks like theirs they are more likely to think it's a product for them. It's so simple, but a lot of times the cookie cutter casting model was designed to be inoffensive but then doesn't reflect what people are really like. There's something more powerful about reflecting reality and we've gotten a lot better at it— and that #momfail culture.

You used to look at a set and everything would be perfectly in place, just like a set, nothing would be messy or imperfect. Now we shoot in real homes and want some artful mess around it— that was really important for Totino's when we had a mom target because the mom that's serving Totino's Pizza Rolls is not a mom who keeps her house immaculate or that cares about appearances. It's the cool, fun mom who just wants to get her kids fed after school. When I worked on Helper's that mom is also down to earth and realistic. She's working multiple jobs, stretching her paycheck, but she has a value around home cooking. For her it doesn't have to be 100% from scratch to be cooking. She would tell you that Totino's isn't cooking, but Helper is. Knowing those food values are impactful for our audience and who we are talking to. We have a whole spectrum of people. It's important to find the right message for her.

There has been a recent rise in advertisements targeted to women (Millennials in particular) that use the female empowerment angle— often referred to as Femvertising. Dove, Nike, Under Armour, Always. What is your first reaction to hearing about those campaigns, or your overall impression of them?

It's interesting, because beauty products like Dove are such a personal experience for a woman. It's about how she presents herself to the world, but when you think about food products and talking to the woman as a mom, there is a difference. I think the first food brands that you'll see tap into the Femvertising space will be ones that are for her individually to consume like Godiva or Starbucks. Things she isn't buying for the whole family and it's her moment. Those are the food brands that I think have the right to play in the space. I don't know if we as General Mills have the right to play in that space right now. What I love about Femvertising is that it acknowledges the whole woman— not just who she is as a mom. If any of my friend who are moms were told that they are a mom and that's their whole identity, they would totally reject that. It isn't how anyone sees themselves, so making sure that you appeal to women who have different interests is really important. We are lucky [for Pillsbury] because that bond between a woman and her kids is so powerful and emotional and such an important relationship with emotion. But

that's not the only way you reach her— how she shows up as a woman, her courage, insecurities and flaws are all very interesting factors. It's just that the food world goes after her in a different way.

The one that bridges the gap is the way you ask her to think about her daughters in strong ways— Always #LikeaGirl does that. I think every mom wants her daughter to be strong and powerful and self-sufficient. Maybe there's a way we could do it in that sense.

Femvertising is currently about the woman choosing for herself. Also the brands skew a little younger, like the beautiful Nike ad running cross country to see her boyfriend. I loved that ad because it was tween and cheesy but it was so "yeah that would be a girl I was friends with". It's back to reflecting who your consumer really is. If more brands said choicefully that our consumer was a single woman or someone that we are talking about her as a person, that's where we would see that more. It's still the gatekeeper mom. We don't advertise directly to children so we really do need to focus heavily on mom to get those products into the household. But you're only sort of talking to her because these aren't products that she will ever eat. So it isn't a rich emotional connection like some of these other brands, it's more transactionally her since she decides what makes it into the home.

To make these ads feel relevant to her, it has to be reflective of the way that she parents. That's the dimension that we try to capture. I want them to have a tone that feels real to who that mom is— a mom who is giving her kids Toaster Strudel is not a perfect, home-baker, organic everything person. That's the nuance we are looking at with her parenting philosophy and style.

Follow up: It sounds as though authenticity is really important?

Yes, hugely. I think part of the reason is that we have people calling our bluff on it. People will go on social and will say that this is not how people are or how they behavior, or that it doesn't feel realistic. Now that there is such an expectation of transparency because of the conversations that happen in social media, it's more important to be an authentic and real brand. We are lucky that our brands have such a heritage that it carries credibility for us. People believe in General Mills as a company and its trusted. A lot of big companies are very mistrusted. And that happens to us sometimes too.

I was on Cheerios when we started getting criticized for GMO usage. It's amazing how poorly understood that issue is but how strongly people feel that way. And the reason that consumers felt so betrayed by Cheerios specifically is because it's one of the first finger foods they give their baby. The standards for what you give your baby is a totally different set of food values than what you might give older kids. She will freak out if there is anything wrong with what she might give her baby. People use Cheerios as a benchmark for how they view us as a company; if they trust Cheerios they will probably trust the rest of our brands too as their kids get older and graduate. But if they don't trust Cheerios, then we've lost them forever probably. It's a very different dynamic when you're speaking to mom— she feels differently when her kids are different ages. We wouldn't have known about that insight a few years ago before social media. Now we really see what they care about. You have to understand what the consumer wants, whether or not you agree with it. Having spent so much time in this company, I wholeheartedly believe in our food scientists and their level of diligence and safety. They are really careful about food safety and I genuinely believe we all care about kids and want them to be safe, but you still have to make the change for the consumer. You're here to serve the consumer and the stockholders.

As a company, we've also recently changed our corporate mission and values from "Nourishing Lives" to "We serve the world by making food that people love." It's fundamentally the same but so much richer emotionally. I think this is a direct reflection of people articulating their food values in terms of wanting a company that cares about their family, a company with transparency and that puts care and quality into the products. It goes back to the beginning of our conversation about balancing food values and trends

with our heritage. We don't want to lose who we are, but we have to make sure we are providing our consumers what they want. And that is usually mom for our products.

How do you think the choice to Femvertise— or not— affects a brand's reputation? Do you think that Femvertising is doing it right?

The right way is authentically, it really is. It's about providing a message and product that is relevant to her, not just advertising for our business. The fit needs to be there on both sides. I would love to see more companies acknowledge the power of the single female consumer as head of household, just because I'm single without kids doesn't mean I'm just buying beauty products and athletic wear. There is an evolution of really understanding what that modern consumer looks like.

I think most of the brands that are Femvertising are doing it for the right reasons. They are doing it because they genuinely have a passion and interest about women's lives. They want to reach them on an emotional level and that's great, that's what I think advertising should do. Advertising that tries to trick you is such a thing of the past, people see right through it and will call you out on it on your Facebook page. People also see their friends as an important source of information, and if their friends send it to them they will listen. You reach networks of people with the choices you make in advertising, and you have to do that in a way that forms some sort of community that you want to be a part of with your brand.

In your professional opinion, what is the best way for marketers and advertisers to reach female consumers?

I think what I like about Femvertising is that it's dimensionalizing women, it's fundamental shift in how we see them. It's not looking at women as these objects for men about having hubby's dinner ready when you get home. We've moved past that and the more we can get to that place of authenticity. You have to keep getting those insights about women, whether it's about her as a mom or whatever it is. The deeper you understand your consumer the better the advertising will be, always.

Would you like to share any additional thoughts on the topic of Femvertising or advertising to female consumers?

We give a lot to this generational change, which I'm really excited to see. Mom is now moving from Gen X to Millennials and they have very different values. It's hard to pick apart whether that's truly because of their generation or their gender, their ethnicity, I don't know. There so many factors and it's interesting to see how things are changing. Soon Millennials will be our core audience and that will be a huge shift for us. And that hasn't happened since we transitioned from Boomers 20 years ago, and that was still a focus on TV. It will be so different with Millennials. And most of these companies that are Femvertising are targeting Millennials, and we're see the rise in the mission driven company because of them as well. It will be really interesting to see how this continues to evolve.

Interview Two: Ann Aronson

CMO- University of Minnesota

Note: This interview was not recorded, resulting in bullets/notes rather than a full transcript.

Would you mind telling me a little bit about your background, current position and the brands and/or project you've worked on?

- Began career at Carmichael Lynch, later moved on to Jostens
- Worked for Target (Dayton's) for approximately 10 years in the Community Relations marketing department
- Spent 3 years with Ruder Finn in Minneapolis
- Has been at the University of Minnesota for about 10 years

During your time in the advertising and marketing industry, have you worked on any campaigns targeted towards women?

- Target was probably the best example of marketing directly to women, as women were the primary guest.
- We would do a lot of research on the guest, and she felt that education was the most important thing to her as she was likely a mom
- This is where we concentrated the majority of our CR marketing efforts
- Women have around 80% of the purchasing power in families, so it makes sense that we would be speaking to her.
- This is also true in non-typical categories, like cars

What do you notice about the way women are portrayed in advertising or how female consumers are targeted? Have you seen any recurring themes?

- The University doesn't really target based on gender, so it is rarely a topic that is discussed
- Instead looking at audiences like donors, alumni, influencers regardless of gender
- Has to be representative of the University and the students being recruited, so women are definitely present in marketing
- Overall, it's shocking the amount of stereotypes of women that still exist today and the way that advertising talks to women
- Seems like we would have made more progress by now

There has been a recent rise in advertisements targeted to women (Millennials in particular) that use the female empowerment angle— often referred to as Femvertising. Dove, Nike, Under Armour, Always. What is your first reaction to hearing about those campaigns, or your overall impression of them?

- They are great-- the way that advertisements are embracing real women, like the plus size models and Dove's campaign, or even what Amy Poehler is doing with her Smart Girls initiative.
- For the most part, most brands that I've seen do it are doing it right
- Has yet to see a Femvertising campaign fall flat or seem out of touch
- This movement builds off of what is happening in Hollywood, with the efforts to get more women involved in film and to ensure that there is equal representation
- Brands do have to be careful, because if the wrong brand tried to play in this space it would come off as unauthentic and women will see through it right away

How do you think the choice to Femvertise— or not— affects a brand's reputation?

- If a brand does it right, it could benefit them but the key is to be authentic
- The advertising must be congruent with the company's brand and what they do as a corporation
- If a brand like Playboy tries to play in this space, no one will buy it. You can't go from objectifying women to all of a sudden pretending to be Feminist, it just won't work.
- This reminds me of when Lululemon's CEO made those horrible comments about thigh gaps that really turned everyone off. He clearly did not understand women and how to speak to them, even though that is their key market.

In your professional opinion, what is the best way for marketers and advertisers to reach female consumers?

- Authenticity is absolutely key— if you want to understand women you need to talk to them! Before your campaign, during and after.
- Big fan of using research and data to inform your work, both quantitative and qualitative
- One woman can't represent all women, so you have to do your research, do it will and do it continuously
- You need women working on the campaigns as well- men aren't women, and at the end of the day they can't pretend to understand how a woman thinks, acts or wants to be spoken to
- There is a problem with having too many male and not enough female decision makers in the field, especially in advertising
- We really need to see women of different ages in advertisements. Why does it feel like every woman in an ad is 25? Boomers still have the greatest purchasing power, but we rarely show up in commercials that aren't about retirement or travel or medication.
- It's offensive to all of the women of this age group that aren't being represented. We still like fashion and we like to spend money. It's surprising that brands aren't capitalizing on this age group.
- The lack of representation is ageist and sexist— you see older men in commercials all the time, but not older women.
- This also calls into play what women like Amy Schumer and Jamie Lee Curtis have done— posed nude (or nearly) to prove a point about bodies and body acceptance. On the one hand, you want to celebrate it, but it's also really sad that anyone feels like they need to do so.
- In other countries, women of all ages and shapes are celebrated. It would be interested to compare our advertising to countries like France where they seem more accepting.

Would you like to share any additional thoughts on the topic of Femvertising or advertising to female consumers?

- I think that in general we as a society are evolving and that things are getting better, slowly but surely. If something big happens— like having a female president— the changes will happen a little bit faster.
- It also seems like women today are much more vocal about inequality and calling out injustices when we see them. Past generations didn't do that to the same degree. I talk to my friends about things we see or hear that we don't agree with. It doesn't just get swept under the rug anymore.
- Younger generations are extremely astute to gender equality-- my teenagers are very aware of what's happening and they will comment on scenarios or things they see. They are much more mature than future generations were at the same age.
- It also seems like women today want to pass on values and messages of equality to our daughters. We want them to grow up knowing that they are equal and just as good and that they can do anything.
- We're also leading by example, as it feels as though there are so many fewer single income families than there used to me. Women are working, and they are showing up in places that used to be considered stereotypically male.

Interview Three: Emily Rinde

Social and Community Manager at The Nerdery

Note: This interview was not recorded, resulting in notes rather than a full transcript.

Would you mind telling me a little bit about your background, current position and the brands and/or project you've worked on?

- At GDB, worked on Crystal Farms, Summit Brewing Company, Samsung (B2B) and a few other smaller brands
- Worked at Starkey, marketing all brands of hearing aids
- At The Nerdery, marketing is B2B for new customers, primarily targeting CTOs, CMOs or the IT/Marketing decision-maker at a company who has development needs.

During your time in the advertising and marketing industry, have you worked on any campaigns targeted towards women?

- At The Nerdery, it's more about targeting personas that we've created based on research rather than by gender. We tend to speak to both men and women, depending on who is in the role. It tends to be a mix.
    - We have a female VP, so she makes sure that we're speaking to women and men
- Summit was also a more neutral brand, and was more about targeting the lifestyle of people rather than their gender.
    - They also had a female head of marketing which I think makes a difference
- Crystal Farms was almost 100% targeting towards women, and more specifically moms. We were trying to showcase convenience, the value of the product (i.e. coupons) and how we could make her life easier.
    - We did a lot of mommy blogger outreach, recipe contests, etc.
- The only completely male-focused brand I've worked on was Barber Foods (stuffed meats) where we did a dad blogger outreach with coupons and a media grilling kit.

What do you notice about the way women are portrayed in advertising or how female consumers are targeted? Have you seen any recurring themes?

- Since I'm about to be a new parent, I'm hyper-aware of advertising to parents-to-be and new moms. A major theme that I'm seeing is that mom is knowledgeable hero, and dad is completely incompetent— can't dress the kids, put on a diaper or feed them.
- It seems as though moms are expected to have it together and dad is expected not to be able to handle being a parent
- It feels sexist to me, but more sexist towards men. There's that stereotype that he just can't handle anything that has to do with home life.
- This reminds me of Crystal Farms, where mom was expected to be the one doing the grocery shopping and doing the cooking. It was all about making mom's life easier, not dad's.

There has been a recent rise in advertisements targeted to women (Millennials in particular) that use the female empowerment angle— often referred to as Femvertising. Dove, Nike, Under Armour, Always. What is your first reaction to hearing about those campaigns, or your overall impression of them?

- The first thing I think of is when Bic came out with that disaster of Bic pens for ladies-- like our delicate hands can't hold a real pen. It's such a turnoff to have a special product just because we're women. But at the same time, I know that it's such a competitive market and brands are trying to do whatever they can to get a piece of their category.

- o To a degree I feel for those poor ad agencies and copywriters that had to come up with the campaign for it.
- When it comes to Dove and those brands, I think it's negative but for different reasons. These brands are still targeting women with products that are for women. It's a little different and less offensive because they aren't being so sexist and degrading, bit it feels like the same thing.
  - o These brands are still relying on gender and what it means to be feminine in order to make a profit, regardless of how they're doing it.
- I don't necessarily think that everything has to be 100% gender neutral, because that's just not how the world is, but I don't think it has to be so separate and distinct.

How do you think the choice to Femvertise— or not— affects a brand's reputation?

- It's super interesting for the brands that do it poorly- like when that beer brand got a lot of heat for putting "Take no out of your vocabulary". They got a ton of attention for a few days, and some free publicity for doing something stupid, but I'm sure it had zero effect on their business.
  - o It feels as though sexist brands that make mistakes are easily forgiven when they do something risqué and it fails. There's no negative consequence.
- For Dove and Nike, I'm assuming it helps their reputation. They are seen as though they are doing something and portraying women as strong and confident, rather than the helpless mom who need to save time by buying pre-peeled potatoes.

In your professional opinion, what is the best way for marketers and advertisers to reach female consumers?

- It's a really difficult call- on the one hand, women do have different experiences than men and so they probably do think about advertising differently than men. To a degree I'm turned off by a lot of this because I know too much about how it works. I know about the conversations behind the scenes, the approvals, the deadlines and the business goals.
  - o I tend to have a crisis of conscious about needing to do the job, or about doing with how I really feel about the issues.
- I also think that different generations expect different things. Our grandmothers probably didn't care as much about sexist advertising, but Millennials expect something completely different.
- All advertising twists the truth or exaggerates the truth in some way, which I think is where it gets difficult and frustrating. There is a lack of authenticity in it all.

Would you like to share any additional thoughts on the topic of Femvertising or advertising to female consumers?

- Generally speaking, brands will do what works and what drives sales regardless of how it portrays people. They are always testing and learning from the metrics and then adjusting based on that data.
- It also matters who is in the room making the decisions-- is this work that is meaningful for you? Some people can "shut off" their opinions and just go with what drives sales, but that isn't something I can do quite so easily.

Appendix C: Content Analysis Coding Sheet

SECTION ONE: COMPANY DETAILS

1. Brand Name: _____

2. Corporation/Company Name: _____

3. Type of Brand/Company:

    a. Femvertising

    b. Stereotypical

SECTION TWO: FEMALE-FRIENDLY CRITERIA

4. Sex of the highest ranking officer (President or CEO)

    a) Female

    b) Male

5. Percentage of male and female employees

    a) Percent female ____

    b) Percent male ____

    c) Unknown (100%)

6. Percentage of female leaders in senior management roles

    a) Percent female ____

    b) Percent male ___

    c) Unknown (100%)

7. Percentage of female leaders in any management role

    a) Percent female ____

    b) Percent male ____

    c) Unknown (100%)

8. Number of female executives/C-suite

    a) Number of women _____

    b) Number of total executives ____

9. Number of female board members

   a) Number of women _____

   b) Number of total board members _____

10. What is the gender of the company's CMO (or highest ranking marketing officer)?

    a) Male

    b) Female

    c) Unknown

11. Does the company offer flexible scheduling, job sharing or another form of flexible work

    arrangement?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

12. Does the company offer paid parental leave?

    a) Yes- Maternity leave

    b) Yes- Paternity leave

    c) No- Does not offer

    d) Unknown

13. Does the company provide any incentives for adoptive parents?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

14. Does the company offer child care assistance?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

15. Has the company won any awards for being a female-friendly workplace in the past three years?

    a) Yes

    b) No

c) Unknown

16. If Yes- which of the awards has it won?

    a) Working Mother

    b) Fortune 100 Best Workplaces for Women

    c) NAFE Top Companies for Women

    d) Diversityinc Top Workplaces for Diversity

    e) Catalyst Award

17. Does the company's mission, vision or values statement explicitly address women or gender

    equality?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

18. Does the company have any development or leadership programs specifically for women?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

19. Does the organization support any female-driven causes?

    a) Yes

    b) No

    c) Unknown

Appendix D: Content Analysis Full Results

Name of Brand	Name of Parent Company	Type of Brand	Type of Company	Gender of CEO	Gender of CMO	Total Employees- Percent Female	Total Employees- Percent Male	Senior Managers- Percent Female	Senior Managers- Percent Male
Aerie	American Eagle	Femvertising	Public	Male	Female	71%	29%	37%	63%
Nike	Nike	Femvertising	Public	Male	Male	48%	52%	36%	64%
Always	Procter & Gamble	Femvertising	Public	Male	Male	35%	65%	30%	70%
Under Armour	Under Armour	Femvertising	Public	Male	Male	49%	51%	0%	0%
Dove	Unilever	Femvertising	Public	Male	Male	32%	68%	23%	77%
DirecTV	AT&T	Stereotypical	Public	Male	Female	33%	67%	0%	0%
Carl's Jr.	CKE Restaurants	Stereotypical	Private	Male	Male	62%	38%	0%	0%
Doritos	Pepsi	Stereotypical	Public	Female	Female	29%	71%	32%	68%
Victoria's Secret	L Brands	Stereotypical	Public	Male	Unavailable	66%	34%	0%	0%
Calvin Klein	PVH Corporation	Stereotypical	Public	Male	Female	62%	38%	49%	51%

Name of Brand	Name of Parent Company	Type of Brand	Senior Managers- Percent Male	Senior Managers- Percentage Unavailable	Total Managers- Percent Female	Total Managers- Percent Male	Total Managers- Percent Unavailable	Number of Female Executives	Total Number of Executives
Aerie	American Eagle	Femvertising	63%	0%	0%	0%	10%	1	6
Nike	Nike	Femvertising	64%	0%	41%	59%	0%	2	19
Always	Procter & Gamble	Femvertising	70%	0%	44%	56%	0%	8	35
Under Armour	Under Armour	Femvertising	0%	100%	0%	0%	10%	1	9
Dove	Unilever	Femvertising	77%	0%	45%	55%	0%	3	13
DirecTV	AT&T	Stereotypical	0%	100%	36%	64%	0%	1	10
Carl's Jr.	CKE Restaurants	Stereotypical	0%	100%	66%	34%	0%	0	9
Doritos	Pepsi	Stereotypical	68%	0%	33%	67%	0%	4	17
Victoria's Secret	L Brands	Stereotypical	0%	100%	0%	0%	10%	0	4
Calvin Klein	PVH Corporation	Stereotypical	51%	0%	64%	36%	0%	15	50

Name of Brand	Name of Parent Company	Type of Brand	Number of Female Board Members	Total Number of Board Members	Flexible Scheduling	Maternity Leave	Paternity Leave	Adoption Incentives	Child Care Assistance
Aerie	American Eagle	Femvertising	1	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Unknown
Nike	Nike	Femvertising	3	14	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Always	Procter & Gamble	Femvertising	4	12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Under Armour	Under Armour	Femvertising	1	10	Unknown	Yes	No	Yes	No
Dove	Unilever	Femvertising	6	13	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
DirecTV	AT&T	Stereotypical	4	12	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown
Carl's Jr.	CKE Restaurants	Stereotypical	0	0	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Doritos	Pepsi	Stereotypical	4	14	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Victoria's Secret	L Brands	Stereotypical	2	12	Unknown	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Calvin Klein	PVH Corporation	Stereotypical	2	10	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unknown	Unknown

Name of Brand	Name of Parent Company	Type of Brand	Awards Won	Working Mother	NAFE Top Companies for Women	Diversity Inc Top Company for Diversity	Catalyst Award	Women Business Enterprise National Council (WBENC)	Women in Mission/Vision/Values	Development Programs for Women	Support Women's Causes
Aerie	American Eagle	Femvertising	No						No	Yes	Yes
Nike	Nike	Femvertising	No						No	Yes	Yes
Always	Procter & Gamble	Femvertising	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Under Armour	Under Armour	Femvertising	No						No	Unknown	Yes
Dove	Unilever	Femvertising	Yes	Yes					yes	Yes	Yes
DirecTV	AT&T	Stereotypical	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	No	Yes	No
Carl's Jr.	CKE Restaurants	Stereotypical	No						No	Unknown	No
Doritos	Pepsi	Stereotypical	Yes					Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Victoria's Secret	L Brands	Stereotypical	No						No	No	Yes
Calvin Klein	PVH Corporation	Stereotypical	No						No	Yes	Yes