

THESIS SUMMARY

To the doctoral dissertation

Anna Török

**THE PERCEIVED EMPOWERING AND BRAND-RELATED
EFFECTS OF FEMVERTISING**

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1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH RELEVANCE

Women empowerment and accurate portrayals of women have gained relevance in advertising (Varghese & Kumar, 2020a). These are fundamental components of feminist ideology, which aims to achieve gender equality (Skey, 2015). Although advertising portrayals of women have become less stereotyped in recent decades, and the avoidance of gender stereotypes in advertising has been adopted in the form of legislation, such as in the United Kingdom (Eisend, 2010; Åkestam, 2018), it remains a topic of frequent public debate. Advertising has a significant impact on the empowerment of women in society with both positive and negative effects (Banerjee et al., 2015; Jejeebhoy, 2002b). Femvertising, which promotes female empowerment, has become more popular in this context among academics and practitioners. The main goal of femvertising is to promote conscious thinking that avoids gender stereotypes (Kapoor & Munjal, 2017). Femvertising empowers women and is well received by customers (Elhajjar 2021; Teng et al., 2020). Besides, it may also have a positive influence on the brand's attitude (Åkestam et al., 2017) and increase purchase intent (Drake, 2017). Therefore, femvertising may trigger an overall growth in sales of the brand it presents - thus, using femvertising type of advertising can be beneficial for the companies as well (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). As a consequence, in recent years, numerous great femvertising campaigns have been realized, such as Lane Bryant # I'm No Angel, Nissan #SheDrives, and Always #Like a Girl (Champlin et al., 2019).

The current research found four identifiable research gaps, which are the following.

(1) Among the first studies, dimensions of femvertising, such as decision-making, control over income, and self-esteem, are examined along with femvertising in the current study's qualitative research. Most of the investigations surrounding women empowerment have emerged from the fields of social sciences, economics, finance, business and psychology (Grabe, 2012). The main factors that are related to women empowerment, such as decision making, control over income, have already been examined in several different countries, for instance in Spain (de Celis et al., 2015), United Kingdom (Raisborough & Bhatti, 2007), Bangladesh

(Kabeer, 2011; Mahmud et al., 2012), Pakistan (Aziz et al., 2011), Oman (Al-Lamky, 2007), Ethiopia (Tarozzi et al; Mabsout & Staveren, 2010), India (Banerjee et al., 2015) and Philippines (Ashraf et al., 2010). Besides, there have been a vast number of cross-cultural comparisons about women empowerment variables, some of them using qualitative methods (Metcalf, 2011 about Gulf countries), but the use of quantitative indexes was the most common (eg. Knudsen & Wærness, 2008 comparing 34 countries; Njoh & Akiwumi, 2012 researching in African countries, Alkire et al., 2013 investigating in Guatemala, Uganda and in Bangladesh). Nonetheless, these variables were not researched in marketing-related articles, and there has been no direct connection made to marketing attributes, such as femvertising.

(2) Besides, gender stereotypes and roles have been mainly been investigated by psychology (see for instance: García-Cueto et al., 2014 – gender role attitude; Diekmann & Eagly, 2000 - perceived role non-traditionalism, gender-stereotypic characteristics), but also in the marketing literature (see for instance: Åkestam et al., 2021; DeYoung & Crane, 1992), but the effect of gender role (equality) attitude related to femvertising haven't been researched yet. Thus, this variable is included in the quantitative research of the dissertation as a moderator variable.

(3) Femvertising is explored with an interview method, as proposed by Middleton et al. (2020), which has seldom been done before, for more in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon. Åkestam (2018) also suggests the usage of qualitative interviews for future research, which could include measurements of female empowerment or self-esteem following repeated exposure to stereotyped or non-stereotyped portrayals in advertising.

(4) Instead of focusing on well-researched, English-speaking nations with high gender equality, such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Global Gender Gap Report, 2022), femvertising is explored in new contexts, such as Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other Nordic countries other than Sweden. Besides, among the first studies, a qualitative cross-cultural assessment of the effects of femvertising is also carried out by this study (as proposed by Champlin et al., 2019; Teng et al., 2021). Although the effect of femvertising type of advertisements on attitude towards the advertising and the brand (Åkestam et al. 2017; Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019; Greenwell et al., 2017) and the purchase intention (Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019) have been already

researched, they were rarely investigated (Varghese & Kumar, 2020a) in cross-cultural settings (see for instance: Zawisza et al., 2018). Recent articles (Champlin et al. 2019; Teng et al., 2021; Varghese & Kumar, 2020a) confirm that research should be done in a cross-cultural setting. The majority of the current studies regarding femvertising and female stereotypes are related to the USA, the UK, and countries such as Germany, South Korea, and New Zealand (e.g., Abitbol & Sternadori, 2020; Klorman-Eraqi, 2017; Fedorenko, 2015; Benton-Greig & Gavey, 2018). Interestingly, among the recent and the most cited articles, there are very few articles related to these topics in Latin America (Brazil –Middleton, Turnbull & de Oliveira, 2020) and Central-Eastern Europe (Ukraine –Kitsa & Mudra, 2020) and Nordic countries (only Sweden, Åkestam et al. 2017; Åkestam 2018; Åkestam et al. 2021).

In Hungary, too, there is little research in the literature on the relationship between feminism and female stereotypes in advertising, or femvertising. The first survey mapping the attitudes of the Hungarian population towards the roles of men and women in advertisements was made by Hofmeister and Töröcsik (1996). The primary research was conducted among economics students in Pécs and Budapest. The survey had been repeated a few years later by Hofmeister-Tóth and Malota (1999), and various female roles were identified in the commercials, such as average housewife, grandmother, and the careerist - masculine woman. The study of Kegyesné (2006) looks at how gender roles are represented in media texts and how role representation can be interpreted as part of role construction – as media's construction of roles influences the role sets of ordinary people. One of the study's key findings is that the media portrays gender roles through oppositions, depicts gender in a hierarchical relationship, and uses language that reflects the journalist's position and, where appropriate, prejudice against women. The recent article of Kovács et al. (2020) investigated the portrayal of the gender of older people in television series and advertisements in Hungary. Based on their findings, older men are shown as prosperous, elegant, intelligent, powerful, and actively working far more frequently than women. Women, on the other hand, are frequently shown as kind, family-oriented, in everyday duties, and engaged in less-productive pursuits such as shopping. These articles only highlight two types of advertising related to the portrayal of gender stereotypes: the traditional and the non-traditional, and make no connection to feminism, women empowerment, or femvertising.

1.1. Research aim

The main goal of the dissertation is to expand the existing literature related to femvertising and its effects by providing an extent literature review and by exploring and confirming new theoretical connections related to diverse disciplines, such as marketing, sociology, and psychology in a cross-cultural context. Besides, the current study also aims to offer new future research directions. The research is done with a mixed methodology and addresses the four research gaps described in the previous chapter.

Information released through advertising can make a behavior change either directly or through a change in attitude (Bauer, Berács & Kenesei, 2007), as the positive attitude towards a specific message or an advertisement can influence the forwarding behavior of the consumer (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). Thus, in the current research, the perception of women empowerment, the attitude towards the advertising and the brand, and the consequent intention to purchase are also investigated in a cross-cultural setting. The dissertation provides a transparent, synthesized summary based on the relevant literature, containing the most cited articles from the Scopus database. Relying on the literature review, unique primary research has been built. The primary research was conducted on two levels. First, in the context of an exploratory study, to investigate the meaning of the most important concepts among women through interviews. The evidence has been provided from diverse cultures: Hungary, representing Central-Eastern Europe, Mexico representing Latin America, and Iceland as a Nordic country. The three countries, Hungary, Mexico, and Iceland were chosen based on the lack of research data regarding the three regions to which they belong Central-Eastern Europe, Latin America, and Nordic countries. Besides, to present a meaningful comparison, cultural differences, economic outlook, and development and the countries' rankings in the Global Gender Gap Report (2022) were also considered while selecting the countries. Secondly, as part of the second step, quantifiable data is collected on a larger Hungarian sample by an experiment including femvertising and traditional advertising as a stimulus, the results of which are analyzed with structural equation modeling and compared to the international literature.

2. APPLIED METHODS

2.1. Research questions and hypothesis

Based on the literature review, the following key research questions were established to understand the empowering and brand-related effects of femvertising:

What are the perceived empowering effects of femvertising?

What are the brand-related (attitude towards the advertising, brand and purchase intention) effects of femvertising?

The first hypothesis is related to the first research question (What are the perceived empowering effects of femvertising?). Based on Mahmud et al. (2012), exposure to media can help to empower women in several different dimensions. Social movements for diversity, equity, and inclusion, such as #Metoo and #Blacklivesmatters, are a matter of feminism, which inspired advertising and the development of femvertising (Varghese & Kumar, 2020a). Femvertising has the potential to increase women's empowerment (Champlin et al., 2019). Previous literature proved in many cases that femvertising types of advertisements are considered more empowering than traditional advertisements (Åkestam et al., 2017; Drake, 2017; Kordostami & Kordostami, 2020; Teng et al., 2020; Varghese & Kumar, 2020a; Vadakkepatt et al., 2022).

In the light of the above factors, the following hypothesis has been formulated:

H1: Femvertising has a more positive effect on perceived women empowerment than traditional advertisement.

The second, third, and fourth hypothesis is made in connection to the second research question (What are the brand-related effects of femvertising?), focusing on the attitude towards the advertisement, the brand, and purchase intention.

The information delivered through advertising can influence consumer behavior directly or indirectly (Bauer, Berács, & Kenesei, 2007). In line with the previously discussed potential empowering effects of femvertising, it is not surprising that consumers perceive messages on women's empowerment positively (Elhajjar 2021; Teng et al., 2020). This is might be owing to the positive emotions evoked by femvertising (Drake, 2017), and it may develop a favorable attitude towards advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017). Besides, a

positive attitude about a specific message or commercial can influence the consumer's forwarding behavior, for instance, purchase intention (Eckler & Bolls, 2011). A vast number of articles (see for instance: Spears & Singh, 2004; Mitchell & Olson, 1981) found that the attitude towards the advertising has a significant effect on the attitude towards the brand and purchase intention. Regarding advertising and brand attitudes, as discussed previously, femvertising messages induce a more favorable perception towards these attitudes than those using traditional stereotypes (Åkestam et al. 2017; Åkestam, 2018; Drake, 2017; Elhajjar, 2021; Teng et al., 2020). Åkestam et al. (2017) also argue, that compared to traditional advertising, femvertising generates lower levels of advertising reactance, therefore it leads to better advertising attitudes among the female target audience, which can lead to a positive impact on the brand as well, building an emotional connection to the brands (Drake, 2017). Behavioral intention, including purchase intention, rather than being regarded as a part of the attitude, according to Fishbein (1966), should be considered an independent phenomenon. It's also worth noting that determining whether or not an attitude and a specific sort of behavioral aim are associated is difficult, but the current study aims to investigate these relationships. Regarding purchase intention, Kapoor and Munjal (2017) have concluded that femvertising does not lead to a higher purchase intention. Abitbol and Sternadori (2016) came to the same result: femvertising messages did not make any self-reported purchase intent among women interviewed. In contrast, Drake (2017) found that women empowerment in advertisements has a positive impact on purchase intention in the women target group due to the emotions evoked from these advertisements. Based on the above, the following hypotheses were made:

H2: Perceived women empowerment has a positive effect on the attitude towards the advertisement.

H3: Positive attitude towards the advertisement has a positive effect on the attitude towards the brand.

H4: Positive attitude towards the brand has a positive effect on purchase intent.

The fifth hypothesis is also related to the second research question (What are the brand-related effects of femvertising?), as it focuses on the relationship between perceived women empowerment and the attitude towards the advertisement by investigating the moderating role of gender role equality attitude on this relationship, whether it strengthens or weakens this relationship. A body of research (e.g. Zawisza et al. 2006) has shown that gender role identity and attitudes

have a significant effect on consumer responses, with persons with stronger non-traditional gender attitudes being more receptive towards non-traditional gender depictions in advertisements. Teng et al. (2020) also stated that people's reactions to femvertising will differ depending on their gender-related attitudes. Gender stereotypes, as seen in the literature review, are mainly defined by role behaviors, occupations (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Eagly & Steffen, 1984), and role-bound activities (Diekmann & Eagly, 2000). On one hand, based on other authors, stereotypes also include sex-related traits, including different types of characteristics (Deaux & Lewis, 1984; Browne, 1998). On the other hand, according to Biernat (2003), a comparison of men's and women's occupational positions might provide light on societal preconceptions. Men are often represented as breadwinners, while women are typically shown as a housewife. Men, who typically hold higher-status positions, are disproportionately represented in roles that call for agentic traits like self-assurance and assertiveness, while women, who typically hold lower-status positions, are disproportionately represented in roles that call for communal traits like kindness and concern for others. Therefore, these various representations are linked to the characteristics of the social roles and the individuals who fill them, leading people to get the conclusion that women are kind and caring while males are self-reliant and in control (Kite, Deaux & Haines, 2007). Thus, in the current study, the attitude towards gender stereotypes is solely represented by the attitude towards gender role equality.

Consumers are aware of the negative effects of using gender stereotypes in advertising and consider this when evaluating advertisements (Åkestam, 2018). Advertisements with gender stereotypes are seen less favorably by female consumers than advertisements without stereotypes (Åkestam et al., 2017; Eisend et al., 2014). As femvertising tries to avoid gender stereotypes, it creates a more favorable perception of the advertisement than those that use traditional stereotypes (Åkestam et al. 2017; Åkestam 2018; Drake 2017; Elhajjar 2021) as it conveys empowering ideas and encourage women to take charge of their lives with confidence (Teng et al., 2020).

Taking into account the above, the attitude towards gender role equality will most likely influence the relationship between perceived gender stereotypes and the attitude towards the advertisement:

H5: Gender role equality positively moderates the relationship between perceived women empowerment and the attitude towards the advertisement.

In other words, the positive attitude towards gender role equality positively moderates the relationship between perceived women empowerment and the attitude towards the advertisement, such as the positive attitude towards gender role equality strengthens the positive influence of perceived women empowerment on the attitude towards the advertisement.

2.2. Research design

In the current study, the mixed-research method is applied, thus mixed-method research-elements of qualitative and quantitative research are combined to deeply understand the phenomenon and affirm the findings (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007).

The research is carried out in two stages. First, to deeply explore the problem, in the framework of an exploratory study, qualitative interviews were done in two Studies (1,2). As a second phase, based on the results of the literature review and the interviews, a quantitative study was done to get generalizable data.

2.3. Research methods

The qualitative research was done by qualitative interviews based on the recommendation of Middleton et al. (2020), which has been rarely used for the research related to femvertising. As part of the qualitative exploratory research, two studies are conducted, in which Hungary is compared to two other countries. In Study 1, the comparison is made between Hungary and Mexico, and in Study 2, Hungary and Iceland are compared.

In Study 1 and Study 2, the semi-structured interview consisted of the same topics and questions. After the introduction, in the first part of the interview, the interviewees had to define what women empowerment meant to them and then the expectation from society was asked from them. Then the variables of women empowerment (decision making, control over income, time management, leadership in community, and freedom of mobility) described in the literature review section, were discussed with them. In the second part of the interview, female portrayal, femvertising, and women empowerment (including the empowering effects of femvertising) have been discussed with the interviewees. The third part investigated the brand-related effects of femvertising, where projective technique was utilized to assess the attitude towards traditional advertising and

femvertising, the attitude towards the featuring brands, and the purchase intention of the featuring brands. It is a useful technique, as researchers can use projective approaches to learn what individuals think and feel about a certain topic (Steinman, 2009) and to better comprehend the respondents' attitudes, emotions, and motives (Malhotra & Simon, 2009).

For both qualitative Study 1 and 2 the combination of purposive and snowball sampling has been applied. Concerning Study1, subjects were selected by applying several different selection criteria (Patton, 2002). Interviewing a narrow group of adult women who were thought to have more social role empowerment was the purpose of the sample demographics selection. Based on the research of Mahmud et al. (2012), women in the workforce, in committed relationships, and having at least one child were interviewed. This was done in light of the assumption that women are the most empowered because they can have all the things that many people desire (family, work, and me-time) (Aziz et al., 2011, Jejeebhoy, 2002b, Mahmud et al., 2012). The age was limited between 30 and 50, to have a more accurate picture of this narrow target group. Additionally, the me-time that can be found through regular physical exercise was also a criterion (Steltenpohl et al., 2019), which assumes a more determined, goal-oriented personality. In total, following the recommendation of Constantinou et al. (2017), 10-10 interviews were done in Hungary and in Mexico as well. For Study2, the requirements for participating were not as narrow as in Study1, as it resulted to be a research limitation in interviewing women with too many expectations, as well as they were hard to reach. The entry criteria for the interviews of Study 2 were gender (women), age (25-41), and nationality (Hungarian or Icelandic). The age was chosen based on the criteria of belonging to the Y generation (Millennials) since the literature frequently emphasizes the Millennial generation's sensitivity and reactivity to femvertising and societal concerns in general (Drake, 2017; Sterbenk et al, 2021). In total 16-16 interviews were made in Hungary and Iceland as well.

The results of the interviews were analyzed by qualitative content analysis, based on Zhang & Wildemuth (2009).

For the quantitative research, the current study uses a between-subjects (between-groups) experiment, in which every participant experiences only one condition (advertisement), and group differences between participants were measured (Charness, Gneezy

& Kuhn, 2012). The effects of two stimuli were measured: an actual femvertising for a real brand (Activia) with the same brand's traditional advertisement, serving as a control ad. Subjects of the experiment have been randomly exposed to one of the advertisements. The experiment has been done in an online survey form in Qualtrics.

The independent variable in the experiment, whose value is altered and whose effects are assessed and compared, is perceived women empowerment in the current research. While the dependent variables, which measure the effect of independent variables on test subjects (Malhotra & Simon, 2009) are attitude towards the advertisement, attitude towards the brand, and purchase intention.

One moderating variable is also included in the research. Based on the hypothesized relationship, attitude towards gender role equality positively influences the relationship between the independent variable (perceived women empowerment) and one of the dependent variables, attitude towards advertising.

Product consumption frequency of the product featured in the advertisement, namely yogurt is also measured in the experiment. As dairy products, and therefore yogurt is a specific category, whose consumption might be related to lactose intolerance and other issues, controlling this variable is essential in the current experiment. The measurement of the control variable has been done based on Kaplan et al. (2007) by asking the subject to "Please indicate, how often do you eat a yogurt! Daily/almost daily/sometimes/rarely/never".

The survey of the experiment in Qualtrics starts with asking for basic demographic information, functioning also as a screening questionnaire, then subjects are randomly exposed to one of the advertisements (femvertising vs traditional advertising). After watching the dedicated advertisement, they are asked to indicate their yogurt consumption frequency and evaluate the advertisement based on different aspects. To start with, they are asked to rate the advertisement's perceived women empowering power, then indicate their attitude towards the advertisement, and brand, rate their purchase intention, and finally, their gender role equality attitude is measured.

For the experiment, the combination of purposive and snowball sampling has been applied as well, including the same requirements which were set in Study 2: gender (women), age (25-41), and nationality (Hungarian).

The results were analyzed by the covariance-based Structural equation modeling method (CB-SEM).

3. SCIENTIFIC RESULTS OF THE DISSERTATION

Among the results of the dissertation, the extensive literature review and the empirical research including qualitative and quantitative studies should be emphasized. The results of the empirical research are presented by the main research questions.

3.1. Extent literature review

The dissertation provides a profound literature review based on the most cited publications from the Scopus database in different disciplines, related to women empowerment, gender equality, and stereotypes with special attention to femvertising and its perceived empowering and brand-related effects. The most important concepts are synthetically collected, interpreted, and linked in the dissertation, which is facilitated by the presentation of various summary tables.

The current study starts with an overview of the development of femvertising, discussing its “route” to its popularity. To understand the phenomenon of femvertising, women empowerment is discussed in detail. The connection between women's empowerment and femvertising literature is deepened in the dissertation, which offers new insights into the notion of femvertising. Besides, the existence of gender stereotypes in general and in advertising as well are highlighted, and a comparison is made of the different periods of feminism and gender stereotypes in advertising. This comparison is made with a specific focus on femvertising, shedding light on its evolution. The numerous definitions that have appeared since the emergence of femvertising are also described, as well as a synthesized analysis of the varied effects of femvertising. These effects are classified into two groups: (1) the perceived women empowering effects of femvertising, and (2) the brand-related effects of femvertising, including the attitude towards the advertisement, the brand, and purchase intention.

3.2. The perceived empowering effects of femvertising

Research question 1: What are the perceived empowering effects of femvertising?

To understand the empowering effects of femvertising, the qualitative studies first shed light on gender equality through social

expectations from women and the definition of women empowerment in Hungary, Mexico, and Iceland.

In Hungary, women are expected in the first place to form a family and be at home and dedicate most of their time to the family, which is supported by the current Hungarian government's policy (Fodor, 2022). In the second place, women are expected to work as well. Women empowerment was defined by them from an individualistic perspective (Fülöp & Berkics, 2015), focusing on feminine values. The gender inequalities also seen in the interviews might affect economic aspects as well, such as wage differences between the sexes or women's possibilities to occupy high positions (Global Gender Gap Report, 2022).

Mexican women emphasized the dominance of traditional gender roles, the importance of the physical outlook of women, and the problem of gender inequality (Mensa & Bittner, 2020). The importance of sorority was also emphasized by the interviewees (Rodríguez, 2019).

For Icelandic women, work itself resulted to have equal importance as having a family (Lacy, 2000), and gender equality is realized in a large percentage (Bjarnason–Hjalmsdóttir, 2008). The concept of women empowerment is defined by gender-neutral aspects by them (Bjarnason–Hjalmsdóttir, 2008).

Femvertising's empowering and positive effects, including non-traditional gender role portrayal, diversity, gender equality, and inclusivity, were declared by all three countries, emphasizing its ability to evoke positive feelings (Drake 2017; Kapoor & Munjal 2019). However, culture might influence how women perceive femvertising. Hungarian women mostly reacted passively to its empowering effects, claiming that femvertising has a greater impact on others than on themselves (Dahlén et al. 2013; Gunther & Storey 2003). Women in Mexico concentrated completely on the positive impacts of femvertising on them, most likely as a kind of resistance to the traditional Mexican gender system (Ortiz-Hernández & Granados-Cosme 2006). Icelandic women particularly emphasized the necessity of depicting women in prominent positions in femvertising, in keeping with their gender equality objectives and achievements (Global Gender Gap Report, 2022).

The quantitative study proved that femvertising has an empowering effect: it resulted to evoke significantly higher perceived women empowerment than traditional advertising, which finding is in line with femvertising's core attribution to empower women (Åkestam et al., 2017; Champlin et al., 2019; Drake, 2017; Kordostami &

Kordostami; 2020; Teng et al., 2020; Varghese & Kumar, 2020a; Vadakkepatt et al., 2022).

3.3. The brand-related effects of femvertising

Research question 2: What are the brand-related (attitude towards the advertising, brand, and purchase intention) effects of femvertising?

The qualitative studies indicated that the attitude regarding local traditional and femvertising commercials was varied. Additionally, by comparing the earlier and later femvertising types of advertisement, the earlier one was liked less by the interviewees than the newer one as of a lack of inclusivity and diversity in the portrayal of women (Maclaran, 2012; Bruce, 2016). Thus, traditional and other stereotypes in advertisements may be perceived differently in different cultures, especially as women become more aware of the absence of gender equality. Although femvertising in general aims to eliminate stereotypes (Åkestam et al. 2017; Kapoor & Munjal 2019), it may not always employ suitable gender representation and stereotypes to empower women (as evidenced in Nike's femvertising).

In addition to other factors, people's attitudes toward the brand featured in the local advertisement reflected their attitudes toward gender equality: on the one hand, those who valued the advertising and were more accepting of traditional gender norms spoke more favorably about the brand; on the other hand, those who had a negative attitude toward traditional gender roles did not favor the brand as much (Orth & Holancova, 2004). Attitude toward feminist advertising was closely related to brand knowledge and prior brand experience (Percy & Rossiter, 1992).

According to earlier research, the findings on purchase intention differed similarly for both local and femvertisings (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). In addition, purchase intent was linked to the product, attitude towards the advertisement and brand, and previous interactions with the brand (Lin & Lu, 2010). Because of this, it has been challenging to separate the influence on purchasing intention from other factors, which merit additional research.

In line with previous literature, the quantitative study provided evidence that there is a significant positive relationship between the measured constructs, as perceived women empowerment proved to have a positive effect on the attitude towards the advertisement (Åkestam et al., 2017), as well as the positive attitude towards the

advertisement had a positive effect on the attitude towards the brand (Spears & Singh, 2004; Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Drake, 2017). Besides, the positive attitude towards the brand had a positive effect on purchase intent (Eckler & Bolls, 2011; Spears & Singh, 2004); Mitchell & Olson, 1981; Drake, 2017).

Gender role identification and attitudes have a substantial impact on consumer responses, with those who hold more non-traditional gender views being more open to non-traditional gender portrayals in commercials (Zawisza et al., 2006). As femvertising intends to avoid gender stereotypes, investigating the attitude towards gender role equality portrayal is important. The current study proved that indeed, gender role equality positively moderates the relationship between perceived women empowerment and the attitude towards the advertisement.

3.4. Summary of the results

The dissertation provides a profound literature review based on the most cited publications from the Scopus database in different disciplines, related to women empowerment, gender equality, and stereotypes with special attention to femvertising and its perceived empowering and brand-related effects.

The goal of the qualitative and quantitative studies was to give a clear picture of the differing effects of femvertising on women. Furthermore, it aimed to make the relationship between the various concepts more understandable. This way the effects of femvertising on perceived women empowerment, as well as on brand-related goals such as attitudes towards advertising, brand, purchase intention, and gender role equality are investigated, to contribute to the expansion of international and Hungarian literature. The research was made not only in Hungary by the investigation of femvertising type of advertisements, but a comparison with traditional advertisements, different types of femvertising are also included, in a cross-cultural setting, comparing Hungary with Mexico and Iceland in the qualitative studies. These comparisons helped to make the obtained data comparable and also facilitated the interpretation of the results while offering a unique cross-cultural comparison.

3.5. Theoretical and practical contributions

The dissertation expanded the current theoretical framework by the following contributions, related to theory, methodology, context, and future research directions.

(1) An extensive literature review has been provided, which is based on the most cited publications from the Scopus database in different disciplines, related to women empowerment, gender equality, and gender stereotypes, with special attention to femvertising and its perceived empowering and brand-related effects.

(2) New connections between concepts were identified and new variables were tested by structural equation modeling. This is one of the first studies of femvertising to link various constructs in a single theoretical framework, providing a comprehensive understanding of femvertising and its perceived empowering and brand-related effects. The innovative findings consisted of the dimensions of women empowerment, such as decision-making, control over income, and self-esteem, which were discussed along femvertising in qualitative research, among the first studies to discuss this complex phenomenon in a marketing setting. Additionally, another variable has been investigated in the setting of femvertising, which has not been at the center of previous research related to this topic: by including gender role equality attitude in this research related to femvertising, both in the qualitative and quantitative studies, several useful insights were gained, proving its moderating role on the relationship between perceived women empowerment and the attitude towards the advertisement.

(3) A rarely used methodology related to the literature on femvertising, interviewing has been applied for the exploration of this concept (as recommended by Middleton et al., 2020), providing further insights on its empowering and brand-related effects.

(4) In addition to the theoretical framework's new findings, the dissertation tested the following scales in the context of femvertising: perceived women empowerment (Teng et al., 2020), attitude towards the advertising (Wells, 1964; modified by Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019; Kapoor & Munjal, 2017), attitude towards the brand (Mitchell & Olson, 1981; modified by Dahlén et al., 2008), purchase intent (Teng et al., 2020) and gender role equality attitude (Gender Role Attitudes Scale of García-Cueto et al., 2015; modified by Jinah, 2022). The results provided additional insights into the applicability of these scales.

(5) The phenomenon of femvertising has been investigated in a new context in the current research, realizing cross-cultural qualitative studies with interviewing techniques in Hungary, Mexico, and Iceland and a quantitative study in Hungary. Among the first

studies, the dissertation explored femvertising in Eastern Europe, Latin America, and other Nordic countries other than Sweden, instead of investigating it in well-researched, English-speaking nations with high gender equality, such as the United States and the United Kingdom (Global Gender Gap Report, 2022).

(6) New future research directions have been also provided to further investigate the phenomenon of femvertising.

The current study has several different practical contributions, which may serve as guidelines for marketing managers. These recommendations include insights on the appropriate portrayal of women in advertisements, the potential negative brand-related effects caused by the use of traditional or not adequate portrayal of gender roles, the significant impacts of femvertising on brand-related goals, and insights on the Y generation as a target group.

Based on the qualitative studies of the current research, one of the most important findings is that although the values represented by femvertising, such as the pursuit of diversity, are a good direction and can increase revenues (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016), it is also necessary to strive so that ordinary women, looking at the women presented in advertisements, see themselves as such as they are, rather than encouraging them to act almost like men to be successful. In addition to the varied representation, the different ages, shapes, sexual orientations and the different roles played by women should be emphasized even more, and the local cultural differences should be also taken into account. All these factors affect the attitude towards advertising. In addition, it is important to note that although it is difficult to measure the attitude towards the brand (separately from previous experience with the brand) and the possible purchase intention, an inappropriately chosen advertisement that uses stereotypes that do not correspond to the given culture can influence immediately the brand attitude and might have an influence on future purchase intentions.

The quantitative study proved how important impacts can femvertising have on brand-related goals through its perceived empowering power. Not only femvertising's perceived women empowerment has a positive influence on the attitude towards the advertisement, but may also affect brand attitude and purchase intention as well. Besides, as the Y generation serves as an important target group for many companies (Champlin et al., 2019), it is important to note that this generation is sensitive to gender equality

and other social causes (Drake, 2017; Sterbenk et al, 2021), thus the appropriate usage of femvertising is highly recommended. Finally, it should be mentioned that in addition to expanding the literature and providing practitioners with relevant results to improve their advertising strategy, the current study aims to assist participants in the interviews and surveys, and women in general in gaining new knowledge about women empowerment and femvertising, as well as better understanding their current situation, encountering new ideas and ways of thinking and making small changes in their own lives and those around them.

3.6. Limitations and future research

In this section, research limitations and future research directions are discussed related to qualitative and quantitative research.

Among the limitations and possible future research directions of qualitative research, it is important to note that the results are based on small samples (10 to 16 interviews in each country). It would be worthwhile to conduct the research on a larger sample in the future, not only in Budapest, Hungary, Monterrey, Mexico, Reykjavík, Iceland, and its surroundings. As another research limitation, the very narrow sample of Study 1 with too many expectations can be also mentioned, which group was hard to reach. The expanded size of the target group of the sample, including the Millennial women generation group in Study 2, and the quantitative analysis is intended to compensate this problem. However, another limitation of the sample can be also highlighted that women with higher education were overrepresented in the samples. In the future, it may be more worthwhile to examine an even wider target group, and also to address the opinions of men, or even compare different generations. Despite the previously stated advantages of the methods, convenience and snowball sampling can also be mentioned as limitations, as there are many potential sources of bias in their usage, and they do not represent any definable population (Malhotra & Simon, 2009).

The selection of specific advertisements can also be considered as a limitation since the present research only presented advertisements of a specific brand of one industry in each category (traditional or femvertising). Besides, the possible problems of understanding the language of the advertisements could have occurred, as the Nike advertisement was shown in the English language in all countries.

Limitations and potential directions for further research can be also discussed related to quantitative research.

Even though the experiment provided evidence for the presence of all of the constructs and their interrelationships, the sample size (286 valid cases) does not represent the complete population of women in Hungary from the Y generation, thus the results cannot be generalized. Thus, as a limitation of the quantitative research the small size (286 cases), the overrepresentation of women from higher education, and the usage of convenience and snowball sampling can be highlighted. To make the sample more diverse, the service provider Prolific was also used, which is also recommended for further research. The research is recommended to be done in a larger sample, also by combining different generations, and nations, and also including men.

The choice of the two Activia advertisements (femvertising and traditional advertising) based on the manipulation check should be mentioned as a limitation. Both the two Activia advertisements were made 6-7 years ago, which is a significant amount of time since femvertising was created in 2014, therefore it is more worthwhile to use more recent advertisements in the future. Besides, the content and length of the advertisement of the femvertising and the traditional one differed from each other, which made it more difficult to accurately measure the impact of advertising. Besides, the femvertising advertisement did not show the product itself (yogurt), and the logo and brand were not emphasized, while the traditional advertisement displayed yogurt, highlighted the importance of yogurt consumption, and even presented a shopping scene. In general, it is a typical aspect of femvertising that the product and the brand do not appear in a prominent place, however, it might make it difficult in the current research to measure the effect of the advertising on the attitude towards the brand and the willingness to buy. Besides, men did not appear in the advertisements, which might also influence the responses towards perceived women empowerment and gender role equality attitude. It is highly advised for future research to choose two advertisements from the same brand which are femvertising and traditional advertising, but they do not differ very much in content and length.

In the case of the measurement scales, most of them performed very well. However, the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS) scale of Jinah (2022), which was adapted and reduced for her Japanese study from the original scale of García-Cueto et al. (2015), did perform less well in the Hungarian context. The original scale included reverse statements as well and had 20 items, thus the usage of this original scale or other scales is recommended for future

research to gain more insights regarding this construct. It is also recommended to develop a scale measuring whether an advertisement is femvertising or not, which might help the realization of even more accurate future research related to this phenomenon. Currently, the only available scale is intended to measure perceived women empowerment (Teng et al. 2020), also used in the current research. Besides, in future research other constructs can be included as well in the models to further expand the theoretical framework. It would be interesting to measure along with perceived women empowerment additional constructs appearing in other articles, such as perceived gender stereotypes in the advertisement (Åkestam et al., 2017; Åkestam et al., 2021), support for women's rights, and feminist self-identification (Sternadori & Abitbol, 2019).

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