



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

SEXISM IN BRANDING: INVESTIGATING THE PORTRAYAL OF GENDER IN FASHION ADVERTISING ACROSS VARIOUS MEDIA PLATFORMS

Dissertation to Universidade Católica Portuguesa to obtain a
Master's Degree in Communication, Marketing and Advertising

By

Michela Penna

Universidade Católica Portuguesa

September, 2024



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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate how Generation Z perceives sexism in fashion advertising and how these beliefs are influenced by gender roles, sexual objectification, unrealistic beauty standards, and media consumption patterns. The results of an extensive poll of a sample (n=213) show that sexual objectification, the representation of gender roles, and unattainable beauty goals are among the primary variables determining Gen Z's opinions regarding sexism in fashion promotion.

The vast majority of participants conveyed their frustration with the depiction of women in positions that are humble, submissive, or perpetuate conventional gender norms. They suggested that the way male and female roles are portrayed in fashion marketing is directly related to Gen Z's feelings of sexism, and they were particularly critical of ads that supported conventional sex biases. Numerous respondents emphasized how advertisements featuring women in stereotypically feminine, subservient, or passive roles reinforced gender-based stereotypes and added to a general sense of inequity. This discontent highlights the significant impact that fashion commercials' images of sex roles have on Generation Z's awareness and tolerance for sexism.

The research also clarifies how people's views of bias are shaped by sexual objectification in advertising. The degree of sexual objectification in fashion ads was found to have a direct and significant impact on participants' attitudes toward misogyny. Many respondents advocated for more respectful and empowered depictions of women that would better reflect modern values, calling for a dramatic reduction in the sexualization of women in fashion ad campaigns. These results imply that Gen Z is well conscious of how media sex discrimination affects public perceptions of gender and gender bias.

Furthermore, participants' top concern was the emergence of unachievable beauty standards. Advertisements that promoted unrealistic expectations of beauty were believed to be a part of the objectification of women as well as misogyny. Respondents often expressed dislike of fashion advertisements that advocated unattainable ideals of beauty, citing the detrimental effects on women's self-esteem and the way in which they contribute to the commodification of their bodies. The connection between sexism and impossible aesthetics was brought up in particular, with many people pointing out how negatively these depictions undermine one's sense of confidence and body image, furthering objectification and sexist presumptions.

In addition, it was discovered that Gen Z's judgments of sexism in fashion advertising were determined by their media consumption habits. Their exposure to a variety of social media information has made them more conscious of global concerns like sexism, while their media use further shapes individual belief systems and more general cultural trends to form judgments. According to the study, media consumption has a significant role in defining how the younger generation reacts to sexism in fashion ads, while it also interacts with other societal variables.

In conclusion, the study's findings confirm that the main elements impacting Generation Z's opinions of sexism in fashion advertising are sexual objectification, unrealistic beauty standards, and the representation of gender roles. These outcomes underscore the necessity of ethical and thoughtful depictions of women in the fashion business that upend antiquated gender stereotypes and respect women, better connecting with the progressive ideals of the next generation.

Keywords: Generation Z, sexism, fashion advertising, sexual objectification, beauty standards, media consumption

Resumo

Este estudo tem como principal objetivo analisar de que forma os papéis de gênero, a objetificação sexual, os padrões de beleza inalcançáveis e os hábitos de consumo de mídia influenciam as percepções da Geração Z sobre o sexismo na publicidade de moda. Através de um inquérito aprofundado realizado a uma amostra de 213 participantes, os resultados revelam que os principais fatores que moldam as opiniões da Geração Z acerca do sexismo na publicidade de moda são, sobretudo, os padrões de beleza inalcançáveis, a objetificação sexual e a representação dos papéis de gênero.

A maioria dos inquiridos manifestou descontentamento com a forma como as mulheres são retratadas em posições subservientes ou modestas, expressando particular desagrado com anúncios que perpetuam preconceitos sexuais tradicionais. Estes dados sugerem que as percepções da Geração Z sobre o sexismo estão fortemente associadas à forma como os papéis de gênero são apresentados nas campanhas de moda. Muitos dos participantes destacaram que a representação das mulheres em papéis passivos ou estereotipadamente

femininos contribui para a perpetuação de desigualdades de género, reforçando preconceitos e estereótipos associados.

Além disso, o estudo mostrou que a objetificação sexual na publicidade desempenha um papel crucial na forma como o sexismo é interpretado pelos indivíduos. Verificou-se que o grau de objetificação sexual presente nos anúncios tem um impacto imediato e significativo na maneira como os participantes percebem o sexismo. Muitos inquiridos defenderam a necessidade de reduzir a sexualização das mulheres nos anúncios de moda, apelando a representações mais respeitosas e empoderadoras que reflitam os valores contemporâneos.

Os padrões de beleza inalcançáveis também surgiram como uma preocupação central entre os participantes. Anúncios que promovem ideais irreais de beleza foram identificados como fatores que contribuem não só para a objetificação das mulheres, mas também para a perpetuação de estereótipos sexistas. Os participantes expressaram desagrado com os anúncios que promovem padrões de beleza impossíveis, observando que estas representações têm um impacto negativo na autoestima e na imagem corporal das mulheres, contribuindo para a sua desvalorização e para a sua mercantilização.

O estudo revelou ainda que os hábitos de consumo de media influenciam as percepções da Geração Z sobre o sexismo na publicidade de moda. Embora a exposição a uma maior diversidade de conteúdos nas redes sociais tenha aumentado a consciencialização sobre questões globais, como o sexismo, a interação entre o consumo de media, as tendências culturais e as crenças individuais desempenha um papel relevante na formação destas opiniões. Apesar do consumo de media ser um fator importante, não é o único elemento a moldar as percepções da Geração Z sobre o sexismo na publicidade.

Em suma, os resultados deste estudo confirmam que os padrões de beleza inalcançáveis, a objetificação sexual e a forma como os papéis de género são representados na publicidade de moda são os principais fatores que influenciam as percepções da Geração Z sobre o sexismo. Estes resultados reforçam a necessidade de uma maior responsabilidade na representação das mulheres na indústria da moda, promovendo imagens que respeitem e desafiem os estereótipos de género, de modo a estarem mais em sintonia com os valores progressistas das gerações mais jovens.

Palavras-chave: Geração Z, sexismo, publicidade de moda, objetificação sexual, padrões de beleza, consumo de mídia

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Introduction

Gender norms and sexism have long been ingrained in society, having developed throughout many historical and cultural eras. For more than fifty years, advertising has shaped society expectations of gender roles by serving as a major reinforcement of these norms (Grau and Zotos, 2016). The characterization of gender in ads and its impact on social perceptions of masculinity and femininity have been studied by academics (Hawkins and Coney, 1976). As businesses began to adapt to changing cultural expectations, the rise of feminist groups in the 1960s challenged these standards and had an impact on gender portrayal in advertising (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009). Advertising, which portrays men as strong and assertive and women as submissive and sexualized, yet upholds traditional gender conventions in spite of these shifts (Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann, 2011).

Through the "mirror" and "mold" perspectives, branding and advertising have been key factors to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes (Pollay, 1987). Advertising is perceived as reflecting society's values from the mirror context, but it is also seen as actively shaping and reinforcing these values from the mold position (Manstead and McCulloch, 1981). This argument is further supported by cultivation theory, which shows how recurrent media representations can affect public attitudes and actions, particularly with regard to gender roles (Gerbner, 1998). Furthermore, studies have demonstrated that, in line with congruity theory, responses to gender stereotypes in advertising are frequently positive when they reflect society norms (Ko, Seo, and Jung, 2015). The fashion business, which upholds rigorous gender distinctions and unachievable beauty standards, is not immune to stereotypical portrayals, especially those that reinforce traditional sex roles (Zotos and Tsihla, 2014; Eisend, 2010).

The demands placed on brands by Generation Z about authenticity and inclusivity have changed the way consumers interact with them. This generation, having grown up in the digital age, is more skeptical of companies that support gender stereotypes and sexism. Studies indicate that younger consumers want to witness more diverse and fair depictions of gender in commercials (Zawisza and Cinnirella, 2010; Grau and Zotos, 2016). Their media consumption habits, which are greatly impacted by social media, heighten their awareness of international social concerns such as inequality and misogyny (Kilbourne, 1999). Since Generation Z disapproves of the objectification and sexualization of women in fashion

marketing materials, it is crucial to comprehend how they view male and female representation in advertising in order to create marketing techniques that appeal to them.

This study's main research question is: "Which elements influence Gen Z's perceptions of sexism in the gender representation in ads for fashion across various media channels?" Through an examination of the effects of gender roles, sexual objectification, and unachievable beauty standards, this study seeks to shed light on the variables influencing Gen Z's attitudes toward sexism. This study is significant because it illustrates the change in consumer expectations for more inclusive advertising by looking at the evolving views of a mindful generation toward gender balance in fashion.

Three main chapters, each focusing on a different facet of branding, advertising, and gender representation in the fashion business, make up the literature review that served as the basis for this dissertation.

The first chapter, "The Essence of Branding," provides a thorough overview of branding, its development, and its increasing significance in the digital era. The importance of branding as a means of setting products apart in a crowded market and as a means of establishing a personal connection with customers is covered in the first section of this paper. The study delves into the strategic brand management approaches that guarantee sustained success, emphasizing branding as a fluid process that needs to adjust to evolving cultural norms and technological advancements. Subsections in this context focus on storytelling, where companies create engrossing narratives that speak to the ideals and ambitions of their target audience. The chapter goes on to discuss cultural branding, which is a strategy that is especially pertinent as more brands deal with social justice and gender equality. Cultural branding links corporate identities with larger social movements and social norms. The incorporation of sustainability into company planning is also investigated, showing a trend toward more ethical and environmentally responsible marketing activities. Lastly, experiential branding is considered as a potent technique for affecting consumer views through interactive and immersive events, proving that firms may forge enduring emotional bonds that go beyond conventional advertising.

The focus of the second chapter, "Evolving Perspectives in Advertising," is shifted to the advertising environment, where it traces the evolution of digital and social media platforms from traditional advertising approaches. This chapter examines the benefits and drawbacks

of social media advertising, emphasizing how it influences real-time consumer views and encourages interaction. Assessed as well is the growing significance of print media advertising, highlighting its ongoing importance despite the dominance of internet-based media. The present section critically analyzes the representation of men and women in various media outlets, with a particular focus on the role of gender in promotional materials. This part provides an overview of the wider debates surrounding sexism in branding and discusses how specific advertising techniques support societal biases and preconceptions regarding gender. By looking at gender representation in fashion publicity, the chapter lays the groundwork for a more in-depth investigation of the subject, especially considering Gen Z's demands for more progressive and welcoming portrayals.

In the third chapter, "Beyond the Surface: Uncovering Sexism in Fashion Branding," the specific difficulties with gender representation in the fashion business are thoroughly examined. The first portion of this chapter explores sexism in fashion branding from a theoretical and historical perspective, showing how limited and sometimes damaging representations of femininity and masculinity have long been a staple of fashion commercials. It looks at how gender is defined in the media on internet sites and in print ads, providing an unbiased comparison of how different outlets affect how the public views sex roles. This part also covers the difficulties and possibilities of presenting a broader spectrum in fashion promotion, with a spotlight on the techniques that companies might employ to meet the changing demands from clients who are socially conscious. The fashion industry, according to the chapter, is at a turning point in its history when it must strike an equilibrium between the needs of a market that is becoming more and more accepting of diversity and inclusivity and the heritage of objectifying and commodifying gender roles.

These chapters provide the theoretical groundwork required to comprehend the variables affecting people's views of sexism in fashion communication when taken as a whole. This study examines how Generation Z reacts to fashion ads using a mixed-methods approach. A sample of Generation Z participants will be questioned to acquire information about their impressions of sexism in fashion promotion. Participants will assess a collection of commercials from well-known fashion labels, some of which have drawn criticism for their sexist depictions and others which have received accolades for their diversity. The open-ended replies will be interpreted through thematic analysis, providing further insights into how Gen Z views the inclusion of women in fashion publicity, while statistical methods will

be utilized to evaluate the data and spot trends. By doing this, it aims to reveal the ways in which gender representation in fashion advertising shapes the perceptions of sexism held by this generation and offers suggestions for more socially conscious and inclusive marketing approaches within the world of fashion.

Chapter 1

The Essence of Branding

1.1 Essential Insights into Branding: Significance and Evolution

In today's commercial environments, branding is essential and has developed beyond its historical use as a simple ownership milestone. The first definition of a brand is an assortment of material and immaterial characteristics intended to create awareness, establish identification, and enhance the reputation of products, services, individuals, places or groups (Sammut-Bonnici, 2015). In order to set a single vendor or collection of sellers apart from competitors, a brand can consist of any number of components, as stated by the American Marketing Association (AMA): a name, phrase, sign, symbol, design or any combination of each of these (Mindrut et al., 2015).

Companies and businesses place a great deal of importance on brands because they have the potential to create significant value. According to Hrebicek (2015), brand attachment is the primary factor influencing customer decisions in today's interconnected global economy, where brands play a crucial role instead of products.

Without a brand, there is a lack of distinctiveness and profitability over the long run, demonstrating the power of brands in the marketplace as a whole. It is widely known that the worth of the brand outweighs that of the product (Hrebicek, 2015). Immensely more durable than individual goods, brands have the capacity to last forever. Furthermore, compared to products by themselves brands have the ability to uplift communities, support causes and spark social change. This idea effectively complements the insights offered by De Chernatony and Riley (1998), who illuminate the complex process of brand building. They contend that brands are about more than simply the items they endorse, they are additionally about the well-constructed image that businesses offer to customers. Essentially, brands are the promises, values, and beliefs of a corporation represented through more than simply logos and slogans.

The increasing prominence of brands themselves has led to a radical evolution in the role of branding in today's corporate environment. As key representations of an organization's fundamental principles and ideals, brands are no longer just emblems of ownership (Müller, 2017). As a result of this transformation, branding has become strategically necessary in

order to successfully communicate and reinforce these values to consumers. Integrated branding strategies have arisen as a result of brands' growing appeal. These plans move beyond conventional symbols and place a focus on holistic approaches to brand identity and communication.

Branding is the process of imbuing organizations, companies, products or services with meaning in the minds of customers (Andrivet, 2018). It is an intentional action that aims to help people quickly recognize and interact with a brand and persuade them to pick it over goods from rival companies by stressing the brand's uniqueness. Essentially, branding seeks to draw in and keep consumers and other interested parties by continuously manufacturing products that live up to the brand's promises (Andrivet, 2018). By encouraging confidence and devotion among clients and stakeholders, this dedication to alignment strengthens the business's status in its sector.

Buyers, employees, shareholders and third parties are just a few of those involved that branding impacts. In a vast array of similar items, a brand helps shoppers navigate their options by acting as an expedient for decision-making (Andrivet, 2018). In addition, a company's reputation is improved by effective branding approaches, which impact the opinions of many other players such as investors, suppliers and distributors.

The historical foundations of branding, which emphasize human needs for identity and quality control, can be traced to the growing significance of branding in current commercial settings. Roper and Parker (2006) point out that methods of branding have been prevalent for centuries and are a reflection of people's natural need to differentiate and assign values to products and services. Derived from the Old Norse word "brandr," the word "brand" itself conjures up memories of early customs in which animals were marked to indicate value and distinctiveness. Family names and seals were early examples of branding that were employed to guarantee goods quality, denote origin, and establish ownership (Sheth and Parvatiyar, 1995; Eckhardt and Bengtsson, 2010).

Evidence from civilizations in the Mediterranean, China and the Indus Valley indicates that branding was widespread and underlined the function of branding in identifying products and building consumer trust (Greenberg, 1951). This historical background emphasizes the fundamental connection between contemporary branding ideas and their earlier versions, presenting branding as an essential element woven into the fabric of civilization.

From a sociological perspective, brands are dynamic entities that are molded over the course of their existence by socioeconomic and cultural forces (O'Guinn et al., 2018). Perceiving brands as dynamic "containers" influenced by factors of society and culture extends beyond static interpretations, emphasizing the flexibility and adaptability that are intrinsic to branding. The socioeconomic and cultural processes that pervade human interactions across social systems and organizations are mirrored in sociological models, which foreground the continuous evolution and cyclical reinvention of brand meanings.

Fundamentally, the sociological dynamics and historical development of branding demonstrate its increasing value in modern business contexts. As timeless markers of quality and identity, brands are essential for influencing consumer attitudes, building trust and propelling company performance. As a result, the development of branding shows its critical position in contemporary economics and is a manifestation of wider shifts in society and culture.

Additionally, a number of additional aspects have helped to increase the value and significance of branding. One of them is hyper-consumption, which is defined by an abundance of items and amenities (Parvatiyar and Sheth, 2023). This phenomenon provides insightful information on how buyer attitudes and business rivalry dynamics have changed as a result of more products and services becoming available, which has shaped ways of branding.

In a comparable manner globalization has emerged as a crucial factor driving branding strategies. Businesses use branding to adapt to foreign markets and communicate with a worldwide audience (Bahl et al., 2016). Considering the effects of globalization makes it possible to look at how organizations handle cultural nuances and modify their methods for branding in order to interact with a diverse variety of purchasers around the world.

Further, the development and upkeep of brands are significantly impacted by the economic tenets of capitalism. Capitalism affects branding techniques, resulting in long-lasting impacts on society and the environment (Jackson, 1999). Within the framework of capitalism, economic issues play a vital role in determining how brands are formed, managed and have wider cultural and ecological implications. The aforementioned facts demonstrate the increasing worth and strength of branding processes in modern markets, as well as their remarkable repercussions for both the business and social domains.

This dynamic can be observed in the many approaches and tools enterprises adopt to create and refine their brand identities. Businesses begin by defining the essence and core nature of their brand, which includes its values, mission, vision and fundamental beliefs (Andrivet, 2018). The brand's market positioning is then ascertained, showcasing its unique selling point and measures to stand out from peers. Moreover, companies construct a brand promise that outlines all the benefits and guarantees provided to clients.

Andrivet (2018) states that in addition, the brand's visual identity is put together, combining components like its name, personality, communication style, tone of voice, logo design, color palette and typography. Along with setting up these characteristics, corporations must develop a thorough brand communication strategy that allows successful interaction and participation with a varied audience.

Additionally, preserving integrity and consistency of the brand requires alignment with every facet of the business to guarantee that the messaging and values of the brand are reflected in every phase of operations (Andrivet, 2018). To ensure the company's longevity and appeal in the industry, branding ultimately demands a holistic approach that includes strategic development and implementation, regularly interacting with marketing tactics (Andrivet, 2018).

This complete approach to branding is critical since it strengthens a company's identity and broadens its reach in the social sphere. In order to foster consumer relationships and conversations across several channels, brand communities have emerged as a crucial strategy (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001; Brogi, 2014). This double result illustrates how branding in dynamic marketplaces has a major impact on both customer attachment and business productivity.

On top of that, through building brand communities and meaningful customer relationships, organizations not only strengthen their sense of identity but also develop a favorable brand image that appeals to customer tastes. This offers the groundwork for enduring brand devotion and steady development (Samuel, 2021). Owners of businesses recognize the significance of a well-crafted identity, which not only draws in clients but also builds confidence and allegiance that contribute to longevity. As such, entrepreneurs invest a great deal of time and energy into communicating this principle (Samuel, 2021).

Further, branding highlights the advantages of a company's offerings. For example, buyers frequently choose Apple items due to their prestige, which denotes reliability, excellence and satisfaction (Samuel, 2021). A well-designed branding helps individuals comprehend the company better in addition to drawing their interest. Customers are more likely to repurchase what a business sells when they have faith in it. This cultivates brand loyalty, which is crucial for ongoing growth in sales. In order to build a great social media presence, positive online evaluations and consistent client satisfaction, brand marketers must make sure shoppers recognize that their organization offers exceptional service and quality (Samuel, 2021).

These calculated actions not only help to define a brand's current image but also provide a basis for future developments. According to Green (2022), the continuous evolution that is closely associated with evolving consumer habits and economic conditions underlines the significant influence of branding strategies. Perceptions of the public and sales patterns can be greatly affected by minor modifications in branding. As a result, companies need to continually enhance their branding strategies to maintain their edge in the face of changing markets and new industry trends (Green, 2022).

The evolution of brands has multiple benefits that go beyond simple adjustments. According to McDevitt (2021), enterprises can leverage attention-grabbing and distinctive marketing strategies to not only acquire new clients but also set themselves apart from competition. Additionally, brand development demonstrates to consumers that a company is trend- and detail-aware by keeping it current and relevant in the ever-evolving business climate. In light of societal shifts, this attention to specifics also includes representing the company's principles (McDevitt, 2021). Notably, brand evolution has a direct financial impact by enhancing customer appeal at every stage of the promotional lifecycle, emphasizing competence and resolving issues with clients, all of which contribute to higher investment and profitability (McDevitt, 2021).

As brands evolve, they set out on a continual path toward success, dependability and trust rather than one-off occurrences. This ongoing procedure ensures that the business stays true to its mission while also creating a solid and lasting relationship with buyers (Waheed, 2019). In this pursuit of fulfillment, a well-thought-out brand strategy is a vital instrument

which assists the organization navigate the complex obstacles of the contemporary business environment (Waheed, 2019).

1.2 Strategic Brand Management: Techniques and Tactics for Success

As previously stated, in today's fast-paced commerce, where brands have a mere seven seconds to leave an indelible mark, developing a successful brand strategy is a necessity (Lenkert, 2023). Brand identity is a key component of this approach, setting it apart from rivals and connecting with consumers through an engaging message that promotes recognition, fidelity and confidence (Lenkert, 2023). An effective brand strategy requires a thorough grasp of the target market, precise positioning of the business and excellent execution across multiple forms of communication. According to Houraghan (2019), a strong marketing plan revolves around it, as it helps to create a distinct and unified brand identity that builds durable interactions with customers.

Investigating the needs and preferences of the intended market in-depth is key to building a strong branding strategy. Buyers hold a great deal of control in the current consumer-driven marketplace, and they expect enterprises to provide them with appealing solutions and information so they can make a knowledgeable choice (Fisher, 2022). Thus, brand planning plays a greater part in propelling business achievement. It acts as a road map for accomplishing corporate goals as well as an avenue to revitalize the brand while creating strong emotional bonds with the audience it is targeting.

A well-designed brand strategy achieves a number of important outcomes. First, it distinguishes the brand from competition, guaranteeing awareness and exposure in a congested market. Second, by encouraging organic word-of-mouth marketing and portraying professionalism, it fosters reliability and allegiance (Lenkert, 2023). Furthermore, a strong brand strategy enhances pricing and competitive advantage by outlining the value proposition of the good or service. Also, it simplifies marketing initiatives, allowing for scalability and flexibility in response to changing market conditions and content marketing guidelines (Lenkert, 2023).

As a result, a strong brand strategy is essential to any successful business as it provides the foundation for all branding initiatives. It starts with a well-defined vision and goals that

specify the aim and journey of the company (Henderson, 2024). This initial stage entails posing basic queries concerning the purpose of the organization and the perks it seeks to provide shoppers, with an emphasis on addressing their issues or meeting their demands (Henderson, 2024). Developing a clear and succinct vision statement strengthens objectives for the future and offers direction for decision-making and brand building.

Determining the competition environment is also significant for crafting a profitable brand strategy (Roche, 2021). Evaluating the advantages, disadvantages and USPs of other companies allows to distinguish a brand and inspire branding messaging. Businesses can improve their reputation and communication to stand out in the market by researching rivals that provide comparable products or services, viable alternatives and other possibilities for client issue subjects (Roche, 2021).

Another essential component of a strong brand strategy is comprehending client insights (Roche, 2021). By creating thorough customer personas and profiles, organizations can gain an understanding of the psychographics, habits and demographics of the market they seek. Targeted advertisements are driven by data gathered on elements that influence buying decisions, brand preferences, loyalty and opinions about the company and competitors (Roche, 2021). A more tailored and efficient level of interaction is made possible by mapping the consumer purchasing experience, which detects touchpoints and predicts needs at every stage.

Creating a brand personality and using it to humanize the business is an additional vital aspect of brand strategy. Viewing the brand as a person with unique traits and actions facilitates building an affinity with the ideal customer base (Henderson, 2024). Enhancing visual awareness and fortifying the brand's personality are achieved by matching the tone, archetype, colors, imaging styles, logos and brand ambassadors to the brand identity (Henderson, 2024).

Developing an unforgettable tagline is the last step in capturing the essence of the brand, conveying important messages or arousing desirable feelings (Roche, 2021). A brief and memorable tagline that expresses the philosophy of the business is a successful vehicle for positioning and conveying the brand.

Through careful attention to these basics, organizations may create a complete brand plan that directs unified branding efforts, cultivates solid connections with clientele and subsequently promotes the prosperity and expansion of the enterprise (Roche, 2021).

The ability to properly connect and engage with a varied audience in the ever-changing market landscape of today depends on the careful coordination of online as well as offline brand presence. Brand promotion has long relied on traditional outdoor efforts, which use approaches like radio and TV advertising, brochures, billboards, direct mail and word-of-mouth (Lindley, 2019). But in order to survive in the new internet age, branding tactics must be reevaluated in light of the digital revolution (Neumeier, 2015).

Though successful in conventional media, the typical strategy of extensively investing in branded content has struggled to grab consumers' attention online, as the influence now lies in clients rather than firms (Neumeier, 2015; Kotler, 2017). It is currently fundamental for businesses to not only have an active presence online but also be involved with customers in meaningful ways, as social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube have become critical spaces where consumer perceptions become established (Kotler, 2017).

This paradigm shift highlights the significance of digital branding, which is an approach that uses a variety of online channels, such as websites, mobile apps, and social networks, in order to successfully express company values, cultivate relationships and set itself apart from competitors (Ress, 2022; Chaffey and Smith, 2017).

Navigating the modern corporate market requires careful consideration of branding tactics that are geared to accomplish particular goals while effectively communicating with the target group. Drawing from Costa (2019), Kuligowski (2023) and other authors' notions, this analysis highlights the importance of certain tactics in contemporary branding strategies, stressing the need of authentic portrayal and efficient communication in navigating the corporate market. There are a number of strategies that can greatly increase visibility and employment chances.

Brand storytelling ranks among the most successful branding techniques, based on Coller (2020). Brand storytelling shows itself to be an effective weapon that companies can use to weave a cohesive narrative that expresses not just the features and benefits of what they offer but also the key principles and aspirations that drive the business (Costa, 2019). Companies

may create stronger emotional ties with clients and set themselves apart in their field by frequently addressing the backstory behind their brand (Costa, 2019).

This also applies to the concept expressed by Unugboji (2024), which strengthens cultural branding as an invaluable instrument for brands. Cultural branding expands on the notion just mentioned by converting the brand's language and visuals to reflect the societal subtleties and daily habits of those it is intended for (Sy, 2022). Organizations may enhance brand affinity and loyalty by efficiently connecting with their audience's beliefs and standards by recognizing and accepting the cultural context in which they exist (Sy, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Osaretin (2023), sustainable branding is a necessity for any organization. In today's socially conscious world, sustainable branding becomes essential as buyers seek out enterprises that exhibit a dedication to ethical behavior and the environment (Blaess, 2023). Companies can exceed customer expectations, promote beneficial environmental and social changes through highlighting their green beliefs and efforts (Blaess, 2023).

Lastly, experiential branding is an essential approach that should be employed in the sense that experiences are the center of attention for every brand (Baranova, 2022). Experiential branding is an important shift for branding which entails encouraging people to take part in immersive brand interactions while personally engaging with firms (Kuligowski, 2023). Through consumer involvement in the brand's journey and providing them with an insight into the development and execution of marketing campaigns, businesses may foster greater connections and improve devotion to the brand (Kuligowski, 2023).

By relying on these unique branding methods, industries can make an impression, forge genuine relationships with their target demographic and open the door to longevity in the highly competitive current market scenario. This subchapter's mission is to give an overview of the most important subjects in branding today, stressing the value of different approaches like brand storytelling and personal branding in navigating the contemporary commercial environment. Keeping that in consideration, the next paragraphs will elaborate on these contributions.

1.2.1 Discovering Storytelling: Shaping Brand Identities in Evolution

Brand storytelling is a creative method of establishing a relationship between a company and its customers by using narrative instruments to form lasting connections based on common values (Brenner, 2023). Fundamentally, brand storytelling reveals an organization's deeper purpose or "why," going beyond just selling products or providing services. It captures the essence of what a brand stands for. The above format combines key storytelling components, such as character growth and thematic resonance, to create a captivating story arc that empathizes with audiences (Brenner, 2023).

Acknowledging that the audience is the story's protagonist rather than the brand is critical for establishing memorable storytelling (Grönroos, 1994; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). According to Mossberg (2008), marketers have the ability to create tales that resonate with consumers' concerns, hopes and wishes by casting them as the heroes. Additionally, values represent concrete expressions of the brand's culture and ethos rather than impersonal ideas, acting as the cornerstones of its existence.

The greatest asset of narrative resides in its capacity to pique interest and promote commitment at a neurological level (Holmes, 2022). Research has demonstrated that stories cause various areas of the brain to light up, creating emotional bonds and increasing degrees of interest (Woodside et al., 2008). Brand storytelling, like a first date conversation, allows customers to interact with the brand intimately by sharing real stories, which builds rapport and confidence (Holmes, 2022).

Most significantly, strong brand storytelling goes beyond simple marketing speak to create genuine relations based on compassion and understanding (Brenner, 2023). Through consistent alignment of brand identity, design and content, businesses may foster favorable brand associations that eventually connect with clientele. According to Brenner (2023), creating tales that resonate with the target audience directly necessitates a sophisticated awareness of their desires, goals and pain domains.

Brand storytelling is ultimately a strategic necessity for today's advertisers and a powerful weapon to foster long-lasting brand loyalty (Simmons, 2006). In an increasingly competitive market, organizations may establish enduring brand advocacy and devotion by crafting captivating storylines that embody the values and ambitions of their intended consumer base.

This allows enterprises to cultivate relationships that overcome transactional interactions (Brenner, 2023).

Being thoughtful and refined is required for applying brand storytelling in promotional efforts (Aimé, 2021). It is vital to set up unambiguous brand standards so that all storytellers are in line with the essence and spirit of the business.

First, it is imperative to put authenticity ahead of hype (Holmes, 2022). Sincere tales have a considerably deeper emotional hold on individuals than ostentatious advertising or hyperbolic promises.

Further, it is critical to involve clients in the storytelling process (Holmes, 2022). Including case studies, reviews and customer testimonials not only increases respect but also builds optimism with potential consumers. Presenting actual life situations can greatly affect perceptions in the brand's favor in an era where client perspectives heavily impact buying choices, especially in industries where considerable expenditures are made (Kemp et al., 2023).

Thirdly, it is crucial to make sure the brand story is delivered properly across all platforms (Holmes, 2022). Although brand guidelines offer a structure, it is of the utmost importance to apply them regularly to logos, content and images. Inconsistencies erode the credibility of the story by sowing the seeds of consumer mistrust (Holmes, 2022). Using digital asset management tools may assist to speed this process, ensuring that approved, on-brand materials are easily accessible for consistent storytelling.

Brands can produce immersive experiences that resonate with buyers on several levels and foster lasting involvement and commitment by smoothly merging offline and online storytelling (Deane, 2019). For company storytelling, offline channels continue to be significant regardless of the myriads of possibilities offered by digital mediums. For instance, trade exhibitions provide an excellent vehicle for brands to share their narrative (Deane, 2019). They offer a cost-effective way to connect with a pre-selected audience which is already enthusiastic about the sector or niche. Trade fairs also give marketers the chance to use other media, such as films and printed materials, which enriches the storytelling process through direct connection (Deane, 2019). Every one of the company's members can also add to the tale, offering a variety of viewpoints to make it more

compelling. Trade exhibitions are efficient at relating complex brand stories that include remarks from stakeholders such as pleased clients and employees (Deane, 2019).

By expanding to online platforms, organizations interact with a wider demographic through digital channels and broaden their narrative reach beyond physical confines. Utilizing multimedia and interactivity, online storytelling generates engrossing encounters that capture and establish an affinity with clients in the world of technology (Hong et al., 2021).

For audiences to be guided towards the desired results, an explicit call-to-action (CTA) must be implemented (Ching, 2023). A clear CTA functions as a compass inside the narrative structure, guiding shoppers toward behaviors such as making purchases, subscribing to newsletters or becoming part of the community. Reluctant viewers may become less engaged without an urgent appeal for involvement, which could result in reduced opportunities for conversions (Ching, 2023).

Making the right medium selection is equally fundamental when conveying a story. Even while a single format, like video, could be adequate, utilizing a variety of platforms, such as podcasts and blogs, can increase the narrative's impact and accessibility (Ching, 2023). Collaborating with influencers and SEO content writing services providers can boost storytelling efforts substantially, enhancing the output value and enlarging the intended group (Breen and Breen, 2015). Nevertheless, it is highly important to match chosen mediums with budgetary limits, resulting in a unified story approach geared to the brand's capabilities and aspirations (Ching, 2023).

Coca-Cola and Nike, through their seamless integration of offline and online brand storytelling tactics, demonstrate the wide appeal and influence of narrative marketing across several platforms (Szymoński, 2023). In addition to traditional advertising, Coca-Cola's century-long story of "Taste of Happiness" is told through interactive ads like "Share a Coke," wherein personalized bottles encourage emotional connections and atmospheric commercials like the most recent pasta party featuring Gigi Hadid, which evoke feelings of joy and community (Szymoński, 2023). In a similar vein, Nike's "Just Do It" philosophy uses digital platforms to motivate viewers by showcasing real athletes and inspirational tales of determination (Szymoński, 2023).

Both brands reinforce the idea that good brand storytelling has no bounds by illustrating how storytelling transcends physical and digital divides to leave an imprint and resonate with their clients.

1.2.2 Cultural Branding: Aligning with Trends and Values for Impact

By attempting to forge deep connections with a target audience's lifestyles, values and overall ethos, cultural branding is a multidimensional and strategic endeavor that transcends traditional marketing techniques (Waits, 2023). It aims to profoundly engage with people's fundamental identities, exceeding the transactional aspect of commerce. As outlined by Baumgarth et al. (2020), this intricate procedure highlights how important it is to interact deeply with clients and match brand messaging with common cultural ideas in order to develop lasting connections with them.

Unlike typical promotional tactics, which focus primarily on the positive attributes of a product or service, cultural branding explores the true nature of the company in question. Aaker (2015) and Baumgarth et al. (2020) both emphasize the crucial nature of this nuanced technique, which calls for a brand's core ideology and values to be expressed and boosted. Through such a strategy, it cultivates a sincere and persistent attachment to its intended customer base, frequently resulting in renewed confidence and allegiance (Waits, 2023).

The meta-principle of "Open," as defined by Baumgarth et al. (2020), thereby takes on a crucial function within the complex field of brand management. It promotes value creation through deep stakeholder engagements that are inextricably associated with shared key concepts. As businesses move toward ethical and socially conscious consumption, cultural branding becomes an increasingly powerful tool (He and Harris, 2020; Chiu and Safian-Demers, 2021).

Mastering the current environment showcases a daunting challenge, needing the cultivation of distinctiveness in a world forever interconnected by community, particularly in an era dominated by social media. Maheshwari (2023) accentuates how cultural values create moral standards and profoundly impact the buying habits of consumers. As such, good marketing strategies must take into account the unique needs of a wide range of recipients.

Cultural factors have an enormous effect on mental processes, symbols, rituals and language nuances (Maheshwari, 2023). Consequently, customized marketing campaigns have to be created to address all of these societal variables and guarantee that ads are taken in an honest manner. It takes integration into society, keeping up with the latest news and having a clear sense of societal shifts to produce an efficient cultural advertising plan. This procedure is reinforced by informal indicators such as language competency, customs investigation, taboo research, adherence to social norms and utilizing expertise from persons with firsthand comprehension of culture, as advocated by Hodgson (2023).

Although genuine "cultural brand" status is still uncommonly attained by a select group of entrepreneurs, leading brands like Apple, Starbucks and Ben & Jerry's provide purchasers with a brand identity that goes beyond material goods (Waits, 2023). According to Maheshwari (2023), their success can be due to their keen awareness of, or lucky discovery of, changes in cultural mindsets and their adeptness at selling their products as carefully crafted portrayals of changing social currents.

These well-known companies serve as examples of the fundamental ideas of cultural branding, showing how a keen awareness of societal norms and values can transform a brand from an ordinary commodity to a symbol of culture (Waits, 2023). These companies have positioned themselves at the forefront of cultural change by paying attention to major social shifts and skillfully adjusting their narratives to suit the changing concerns and aspirations of their intended demographic (O'Reilly, 2005).

Moreover, they have demonstrated exceptional proficiency in cultivating a deep-rooted sense of belonging among clients, surpassing economic associations to establish areas where people with similar beliefs and passions may assemble and establish relationships (Waits, 2023). These businesses have created lively communities that provide members with a feeling of empowerment, shared identity and inclusion through a variety of efforts, such as online forums, brand-sponsored events and cooperative projects (Victor, 2023).

Apart from their attempts to foster communities, cultural companies are adept at crafting deep experiences that surpass the simple act of consuming items or services (Alcantara, 2022). These organizations make sure that each touchpoint connects with their core beliefs and their intended audience by carefully selecting every element of the consumer journey, from shop settings to product design (Waits, 2023).

Still, the long-term viability of cultural branding depends as much on the intrinsic value and usefulness of the supplied products and amenities as it does on meaningful social engagement and full immersion (Waits, 2023). Although captivating experiences along with solid branding may draw in customers at first, preserving cultural importance calls for goods and services that continuously live up to expectations and fulfill evolving requirements (Waits, 2023).

An authentic and enduring brand infrastructure that extends beyond the simple logistics of product delivery and customer service is at the core of any significant cultural brand (Waits, 2023). This framework includes a more profound foundation that guarantees that all facets of the brand experience, ranging from messaging to community involvement, remain consistent with the character and principles of the company (Waits, 2023).

When it comes to offline cultural branding, this means that in addition to providing any product or service, cultural brands need to generate a unified story that, via concrete, in-person interactions, speaks to the ideals and goals of those they are aimed at (Gyrd-Jones and Kornum, 2013).

One of the most important tactics for integrating cultural brands into the fabric of community life is to participate in local events and activities. Marketers can strengthen their offline identity by taking part in volunteer projects, industry fairs, workshops and cultural festivals. These occasions allow them to demonstrate their support for specific projects and groups (Richards and King, 2022).

In addition, visual communication and printed materials continue to be important in delivering the company's narrative and values offline. Businesses may effectively convey their corporate message to their offline market by using billboards, brochures or advertising artwork that accurately portrays their features and character (Less, 2022).

Conversely, in the context of digital cultural branding, it appears that cultural brands have to create an overall narrative that, through online activities, speaks to the goals and desires of the people they are targeting (Schembri and Latimer, 2016).

Significant partnerships in the world of social media can be forged through collaborations with bloggers, digital communities and influencers who align with the principles of the business (Chou and Lin, 2023). Brands may greatly impact their internet consumers and

enhance their web significance by collaborating on digital advertising initiatives, promoting sponsored posts and participating in online forums.

Ultimately, integrating the brand with broader ethical principles and aims in the digital environment can be accomplished through funding or taking part in virtual cultural events or digital endeavors. Corporations may increase their internet visibility and effect while additionally strengthening their public image by displaying their dedication to inclusiveness and diversity (Lyu and Kim, 2020).

These approaches fit in with effective cultural branding, as demonstrated by organizations like Ben & Jerry's, which positioned itself as a champion of unity and peace and Apple, which is recognized for prioritizing simplicity and individuality in technology (Hodgson, 2023). Enterprises may enhance their reputations while connecting with the public by mimicking their mode of operation.

1.2.3 Sustainable Brand Integration

Due to rising environmental consciousness and the need for eco-friendly products, there has been a substantial global emphasis on sustainability in recent decades (Loučanová et al., 2022). Organizations are placing more emphasis on implementing sustainable techniques in reaction to this change, as well as ecological constraints and a dedication to green agendas. Companies are adopting eco-innovation techniques more frequently in order to uphold their moral authority and satisfy customers' changing demands for ecologically conscious products (Moslehpour et al., 2022a).

According to Gyrd-Jones and Kornum (2013), a sustainable brand prioritizes principles like ethical manufacturing processes and the planet in addition to financial success. Nowadays, buyers have difficulty with merely purchasing an item and moving on. People are prepared to penalize brands that fail to conform to their views as they are becoming increasingly aware of the conduct of the businesses they love (Saini, 2024).

For all these motives, sustainable branding is gaining traction due to its numerous benefits for consumers as well as companies. While the environmental and social benefits, such as decreased waste and lowered emissions, are considerable, a green marketing approach may also provide quick advantages to enterprises (Noel, 2023).

First off, in a crowded market, responsible branding adds value to an entity by providing a distinctive selling proposition (Noel, 2023). Businesses can set themselves apart by implementing green campaigns, which resonate especially strongly with environmentally sensitive shoppers. This will draw in additional business and guarantee continuous customer pleasure (Mclaughlin, 2023).

Second, a sustainable strategy is an effective means of communicating a brand's values in the face of intense rivalry (Noel, 2023). Reiterating the company's dedication to sustainability over time through the use of both conventional marketing channels and eco-initiatives boosts its visibility and reliability (Noel, 2023).

Thirdly, by creating enduring connections, sustainable marketing encourages client devotion (Crawford, 2023). It helps consumers to stick with the organization over time, accepting its ethical position and practices, when paired with outstanding client service and reward schemes (Crawford, 2023).

Further, incorporating environmental awareness into branding, communications, and the manufacturing process can increase the perceived worth of products and support higher costs. Studies reveal that a sizable segment of consumers, especially young people, are prepared to pay extra for environmentally friendly goods, hence augmenting the profitability of what is being sold (Kumar and Christodouloupoulou, 2013).

Lastly, exhibiting a dedication to sustainability can lead to relationships with other companies looking to improve their own environmental qualifications, which can lead to new sources of income (Noel, 2023). The brand's chances of expanding and being creative improve when it displays a visible commitment to the environment, which additionally renders it enticing to possible partners (Noel, 2023).

Consequently, it is clear that, in spite of any obstacles executives may encounter, combining operations and marketing is a successful company approach. By appealing to mindful customers through this engagement, businesses stand to benefit. Studies show that corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs have an impact on how people perceive brands and how items are evaluated (Brown and Dacin, 1997). In a similar vein, corporate identity is shaped by green efforts that create links between sustainability and principles like ethics,

civic duty, ecological stewardship and inclusiveness (Kumar and Christodouloupoulou, 2013).

Therefore, it takes deliberate promotional strategies to make sure that environmentally friendly behavior becomes a vital component of the identity of an organization. By communicating sustainability efforts and results through a variety of channels, such as product packaging, advertising and marketing collateral, firms may raise the public's consciousness of ecological problems. An illustration of how green businesses are recognized is seen in the Interbrand's Best Global Green Businesses report, which highlights the function of branding to foster environmental initiatives (Kumar and Christodouloupoulou, 2013).

According to Lein (2018), more than 90% of CEOs concur that environmental management is essential for business as green initiatives continue to gain traction. Ecologically conscious measures including creating sustainable goods and services, hiring Chief Sustainability Officers and releasing extensive sustainability reports highlight the strategic importance of environmentalism for contemporary organizations (Lein, 2018).

In response to this tactical necessity, both offline and online sustainable branding activities have become vital elements of an organization's sustainability plan of action.

To effectively convey a company's devotion to ecological concern outside of online mediums, offline sustainable branding is crucial. Sustainability activities can be effectively showcased through physical touchpoints such as retail establishments, packing supplies and events held in person (Sarkar et al., 2021). Eco-friendly packaging, for instance, not only minimizes its adverse impact on the ecosystem but also makes the brand's commitment clear to clientele.

In the real-world sphere, the organization's image for sustainable development further improves by organizing events with a green theme or by taking part in eco-friendly charitable initiatives. Firms can establish a measurable and powerful perception of themselves that appeals to conscious individuals by incorporating sustainable messaging and practices into traditional media (Sarkar et al., 2021).

In a similar vein, good online sustainable branding is essential in today's digital landscape to reach a larger audience and promote green initiatives (Williams, 2023). Digital advertising

campaigns, corporate websites and networking portals are effective means of communicating with eco-aware customers and exhibiting ethical business practices. For example, the brand's commitment to ethical duty can be strengthened by showcasing its environmental efforts through written material and social media posts or by providing sneak peeks at eco-friendly manufacturing techniques (Williams, 2023).

By utilizing online channels, firms may also inform consumers about the value of being sustainable and encourage them to make ecologic choices. According to Williams (2023), organizations can enhance their brand identity and draw in conscious customers in the age of technology via integrating green message and methods into their online identity.

According to Noel (2023a), prominent green companies such as Nike and Lush are noteworthy examples of brands that have a steadfast dedication to social and ecological responsibility. Nike has established high standards for itself in terms of lowering its environmental footprint by using eco-friendly production techniques and recyclable materials. Moreover, the company's innovative spirit reaches into sectors like leather, where it looks for substitutes, demonstrating a commitment to social responsibility that throughout its whole supply chain (Noel, 2023a).

In a comparable manner, Lush's commitment to producing ethical cosmetics extends beyond the design of their products to include creative packaging ideas and support for ecological and social issues (Noel, 2023a). The brand methodically formulates its products to achieve the best quality without compromising the ethics of green, living according to its objective of using natural and responsibly sourced components free of harmful substances (Noel, 2023a). Lush is a leader in coming up with innovative ways to save the planet, whether it is by using recycled packaging, materials or plastic-free solutions (Noel, 2023a).

On top of that, by encouraging clients to prioritize adopting eco-conscious actions, Nike and Lush both act as potent change agents (Noel, 2023a). These firms provide consumers with the information they need to make educated decisions by being open and honest about their environmental goals. Nike and Lush promote innovations in the industry and cultivate an attitude that goes much beyond their own operations by demonstrating the benefits of responsible consumption (Noel, 2023a).

1.2.4 Experiential Branding: Shaping Perception through Engaging Experiences

Experiential branding is a constantly changing and dynamic approach used by brands to engage with customers on a deep level through sensory encounters, which in turn shapes their preferences and improves their views of the business (Bhatia, 2021). This tactical strategy seeks to create unforgettable and significant moments that deeply connect to consumers rather than simply promoting products and services. Through the building of impactful brand experiences, corporations aim to strengthen attachments, enhance client loyalty and ultimately improve reputation to propel their business forward (Bhatia, 2021).

Effective brand leadership in today's corporate environment requires a diversified strategy that goes beyond conventional marketing assumptions. According to Swaminathan et al. (2020), organizations need to demonstrate their ability to analyze data, combine digital and physical environments with effortlessness and handle the challenges of overseeing multiple channels with competence. This transition emphasizes how crucial brand experience is, since it includes a combination of feelings, memories, thoughts and actions brought on by stimuli associated with the company (Balis, 2020; Westbrook and Angus, 2020). In the opinion of Baumgarth et al. (2020), firms that are adept at providing excellent services have the capacity to not just grab the interest of clientele but also establish long-lasting bonds based on genuineness, trust and common values.

Empirical studies reveal a noteworthy transition in buyer conduct, as a growing proportion of people prioritize experiences over tangible assets (Brakus et al., 2009). Research indicates that an astounding 65% of shoppers base their purchasing decisions significantly on positive experiences, underscoring the increasing importance for enterprises to place a premium on creating moments that will be cherished (eMarketer, 2020). As a result, creative companies are reinventing their marketing plans and giving experiential promotions more priority in an attempt to produce immersive, captivating and life-altering encounters (Brakus et al., 2009).

The four fundamental characteristics of brand experience are central to experiential branding: sensory, emotive, behavioral and intellectual (Wang, 2022). Based on these aspects, compelling communications may be created through grasping and leveraging audience cognitive and traits.

In the sensory sphere, marketers use a range of visual and auditory signals to grab clients' interest and cause intense feelings. According to Wang (2022), organizations aim to create sensory experiences which are unique and have an ongoing effect on the public by utilizing eye-catching designs, interesting sounds and enveloping setting.

In the affective dimension, emotions are crucial to the process of influencing market attitudes and actions (Wang, 2022). Industries that arouse favorable feelings like happiness, enthusiasm or affection have a greater chance of forging profound psychological connections with customers, which increases brand endorsement and devotion.

Through the use of distinct calls-to-action, smooth conversations and customized events, the behavioral dimension seeks to elicit intended buyer reactions. Brands may create moments that connect with their target audience and get the desired results by learning about their desires and tastes (Wang, 2022).

Lastly, safely and meaningfully conveying an organization's mission, values and vision is the intellectual dimension. This piques consumers' curiosity and promotes introspection about their own lives and interpersonal relationships (Wang, 2022). Advertisers may nurture audience credibility and allegiance by encouraging greater engagement and awareness.

As an outcome, by harnessing the four dimensions of brand experience, firms may transcend product-oriented methods of advertising. The process of purchasing, employing and consuming a product is all covered by immersive branding, which stresses delivering positive emotions at every point of contact (Ong et al., 2018).

Inside this framework, loyalty becomes an indispensable portion, outperforming conventional measures like cognizance, perceived worth, image or attachment (India, 2023). Brand allegiance strengthens as a result of experiential branding's potential to create emotional connections and constructive human encounters. When combined with other fundamental ideas, loyalty is not just a result of experience branding but also a necessary consequence. Shoppers establish favorable brand perceptions, feel more attached to the business and perceive better quality when they engage with intensive experiences with the brand (India, 2023). Nonetheless, loyalty stands out as the most significant variable in consumer-brand connection since it promotes advocacy, regular sales and ongoing involvement.

Moreover, exploring offline experiential branding exposes a changing environment in which companies form concrete interactions that reinforce ties to customers (Ryan, 2020). Brands generate lasting memories that linger long after the encounter is over, encouraging advocacy and dedication. Examples of these moments include immersive retail environments and interactive pop-up events. By utilizing technology and online platforms like Twitter, Instagram and TikTok, this offline enthusiasm flows smoothly into the digital sphere, maximizing business reach and influence (Alos, 2022). 98% of attendees at well-run live events produce a significant amount of digital content, demonstrating how the lines between offline and online experiences are becoming more and more muddled. Social networking tools facilitate immediate interaction and material creation, which amplifies consumer support and fidelity (Alos, 2022).

Beyond stimulating lasting bonds between individuals and a business, Forbes notes that experiential branding assists the collection of crucial customer data for the sake of strategic optimization (Olenski, 2018). Innovative campaigns like Lululemon's Pride Month initiative and the marketing plan for the Barbie movie are prime examples of this understanding of experiential marketing's dual purpose in building relationships and offering practical insights (Becker, 2023).

The Pride Month campaign from Lululemon is a great illustration of how interactive advertising can engage audiences in a meaningful way by combining the digital and physical worlds. Partnering with MKG, Lululemon planned a number of community-oriented activities, such as yoga classes and art exhibits, in addition to unique advertising on social media (Becker, 2023). This comprehensive strategy improved brand loyalty and made it easier to get insightful customer data. Lululemon acquired insights on consumer preferences, routines and attitude using participant feedback, social media interactions and other analytics. These findings allowed them to improve the way their offerings were tailored to satisfy the demands of their consumer base and to boost their marketing tactics (Becker, 2023).

Comparably, the Barbie movie's promotional effort shows how experiential marketing can use technologies to produce immersive, multimedia experiences that appeal to a wide range of people. The campaign created awareness about the movie and gave useful information on user demographics, hobbies and engagement rates by introducing an AI-powered website

where fans could design unique Barbie doll covers and share them on the web (Becker, 2023). The advertising department behind the Barbie movie was able to improve their marketing ROI and fine-tune their outreach strategies by gaining data on the tastes and activities of their target audience through the use of user-generated material, social networking interactions and website data analysis (Becker, 2023).

In order to sum up, effective techniques for experiential branding extend beyond the advertising of products and involve risk evaluations that have a beneficial effect on consumers. These initiatives improve the general perception of the brand by addressing more pressing issues, raising awareness and establishing trust. Brands create long-lasting connections by presenting themselves as reliable and customer-focused through fully realized experiences. In the highly competitive environment of today, significant participation and long-term brand loyalty will continue to be driven by innovative thinking, originality and insight from customers.

Chapter 2

Evolving Perspectives in Advertising

2.1 Navigating Advertising Techniques: From Tradition to Digital Integration

The word "advertising" is more than just a construction of language. It weaves together an intricate structure of strategic, historical, and cultural elements to form its multifaceted essence. Derived from the Latin term "advertise," which originally meant "turning to," its meaning gradually expanded to include the distribution of notices or announcements (Danesi, 2015). The dynamic nature of language is reflected in this linguistic evolution, which also highlights the significant influence of society communication processes.

More research into the historical roots of advertising reveals that it originated in Medieval Latin, with Danesi (2015) highlighting the verb "advertere," which denotes the purposeful act of drawing attention to an idea or product through spoken or written means indicated for consumption by the public. This background knowledge clarifies the fundamental ideas behind advertising as a calculated effort to grab society's awareness.

According to reputable academic organizations such as the American Association of Marketing (AMA), advertising is defined as any paid, non-personal presentation and promotion of goods and services by an identifiable sponsor. This official definition underlines the organized character of publicity, depicting it as a methodically planned endeavor, frequently supported by substantial financial outlays, to spread information and shape the public's thoughts (Alexander and Ralph, 1965).

Advertising, nonetheless, encompasses complex aspects of creativity and persuasion that go beyond its utilitarian premise. Advertising requires strategic insight, as Reeves (1961) memorably described it as the art of instilling a distinctive selling proposition at the lowest feasible cost into the collective unconscious of the masses.

Subtle viewpoints from notable figures like Stanton (1984) and Vestergaard and Schroder (1985) are revealed by further academic investigation into the theoretical foundations of advertising. Vestergaard and Schroder's study of the one-sided dynamics of advertising and Stanton's focus on the foundational components of the medium both offer insightful perspectives on the varied nature of advertisements. These intellectual viewpoints clarify that advertising is a powerful tool of seduction intended to affect customer behavior in addition to serving as an outlet for the distribution of data.

Advertising's durability and adaptation to the changing terrain of interpersonal interactions are revealed by following its historical trajectory, which begins with wall murals and oral traditions and ends with digital multimedia campaigns (Hollebeek et al., 2021). In this evolutionary process, advertising is an effective vehicle for information dissemination, shaping public opinion and motivating consumer behavior.

In summary, the conversation around advertising encompasses a complex web of linguistic, cultural, and strategic elements that come together to form its varied features. Advertising is a fascinating case study that illustrates the continuous connection between cultural norms, language, and commerce throughout the history of humankind, as researchers continue to investigate its complicated roots (Schwarzkopf, 2011).

Additionally, it is critical to discern between propaganda and advertisement. Though they both endeavor to shape behaviors and mindsets, propaganda frequently aims to forward a specific political or ideological goal, whereas advertising usually promotes commercial

services or products (Key Differences, 2019). It is imperative to comprehend this differentiation to conduct a critical analysis of the narratives propagated by media outlets (Key Differences, 2019).

Today's advertisers have an abundance of ways to reach prospective customers with their messaging, as new channels like the World Wide Web (WWW) and mainstream media evolve at the same time. In the words of Davis and Zerdin (1996), advertisers can benefit from a variety of features in new as well as conventional media, such as guaranteed delivery, accuracy, clarity, frequency, speed, timing, selectivity and reduced costs.

Despite worries about clutter and limited lifespans, newspapers allow businesses to quickly transmit precise messages to targeted audiences (Krugman, 1994). While they may struggle with timely delivery and greater expenses, magazines provide comparable benefits. In order to stay competitive, print media have generally adapted to technological changes (Davis and Zerdin, 1996).

As a medium, television presents marketers with an enticing opportunity for visually striking ads. Yet, because of how quickly viewers' attention wanes, it also poses challenges (Krugman, 1994). Radio, on the other hand, is a particularly economical means due to its abilities to appeal to a wide range of listeners. In the meanwhile, the size of the crowd presents a major constraint for movie theatre advertising. Even though it's fairly common, the information that outdoor advertising may transmit must be brief (Krugman, 1994).

The conventional media are facing substantial revenue declines owing to the increasing popularity of online platforms powered by the internet, even with continuous developments in advertising technology (Davis and Zerdin, 1996). Notwithstanding this change, traditional platforms continue to be critical parts of all-encompassing marketing initiatives. In-store advertising and direct mail remain vital resources for efficiently reaching the intended audience alongside these standard methods (Davis and Zerdin, 1996).

Thus, as was previously noted, it's critical to acknowledge the considerable influence of this evolution on the advertising landscape as conventional media struggle with losing income in the context of the technological revolution. As stated by Lee and Cho (2019), the concept of digital transformation has caused a blurring of the lines between various forms of advertising outlets. This can be explained due to the fact it involves employing modern

technology in response to ever-shifting business settings. The widespread adoption of mobile devices means that, in contrast to traditional media, online mediums transcend the limitations of time and location, assisting managers to connect with clients at any moment and anyplace (Taylor, 2009).

Digital advertising, often known as online or web-based advertising, is the practice of promoting products or services via online media channels (IBIS World, 2019). There are several approaches, techniques and procedures used in online promotion, just as in offline advertising, designed to reach individuals outside of the internet.

With the use of algorithms to evaluate enormous consumer data sets and optimize ad placements for effectiveness and return on investment (ROI), automation and programmatic advertising have entirely altered the nature of digital advertising. According to Morrison (2018), marketers can customize communications for client categories by utilizing sophisticated segmentation capabilities found in modern email marketing solutions.

Leveraging the growing popularity of smartphones and tablets, social media, and mobile advertising play principal functions in today's electronic advertising landscape. When it comes to drawing viewers in and encouraging interaction, geo-targeted advertisements and mobile-friendly video content excel (Morrison, 2018). The smooth integration of promotional content with well-known web platforms through native advertising improves user experience and lessens ad fatigue (Morrison, 2018).

Additionally, innovative technologies like chatbots, voice search, augmented reality (AR), voice search and progressive web apps (PWAs) give companies fresh ways for collaborating creatively with consumer bases (Gustavsen, 2023). PWAs provide browser-based experiences that resemble apps, guaranteeing a consistent user experience across devices. While AI provides campaign optimization tools and forecasting to marketers, AR makes it possible to integrate digital content into real-world settings. In line with Gustavsen (2023), voice search and chatbots deliver individualized conversations and instantaneous engagement, hence augmenting client happiness.

Further, the advertising industry has grown into other fields, such as gamevertising, which is the integration of advertisements into online video games (Parashar, 2022). This imaginative approach makes use of the engrossing qualities of gaming platforms to target

users with messages as they engage with the virtual world. Gamevertising is a cutting-edge form of marketing that makes use of the widespread popularity of digital games to connect with consumers in a novel and captivating sense (Parashar, 2022).

After exploring the significance of traditional and digital marketing methods, it is clear that both processes should not be considered independently due to their inherent variances. They have the ability to complement and balance one another, opening the door to a broader and successful advertisement strategy (Sinelnikov, 2023).

It is key that communications be uniform on conventional and digital channels. A consistent brand message strengthens the identity of the company and promotes consumer trust in all forms of publicity, including print, social media and television (Sinelnikov, 2023). This holistic methodology guarantees that clients receive an identical brand encounter across every form of interaction, thereby boosting brand loyalty and confidence.

Moreover, conventional and digital marketing initiatives may supplement one another to increase their respective effects (Bosetti, 2018). Through the integration of offline promotions with online campaigns, marketers are able to develop engaging and seamless client interactions that span the gap between digital and physical conversations. One example of this may be the incorporation of QR codes in print ads to drive visitors to digital platforms (Bosetti, 2018). This combinatorial concept increases ad operations' accessibility and efficacy while further enhancing customer retention.

Blending can also be achieved by relating to local communities through grassroots projects, offline gatherings and sponsorships (Sinelnikov, 2023). Marketing professionals can broaden their scope and encourage community involvement by using online tools to support these initiatives locally. This will raise their company's visibility on both the local and online realms.

Both traditional and digital marketing plans have special benefits in the ever-changing advertising climate of today (Sinelnikov, 2023). Conventional marketing techniques are preferable in creating brand awareness and emotional connections, even though digital marketing offers more sophisticated analytics and tailored capacities. Through the planned combination of various approaches, entrepreneurs can develop an all-encompassing message

that effectively reaches their intended demographic, optimizes impact, and propels business achievement (Smith, 2024).

2.1.1 Advantages and Limitations of Social Media Advertising

The use of social media platforms has increased dramatically, becoming essential to the everyday operations of numerous individuals and businesses (Mircea, 2019). The internet has been extensively utilized for commercial and communication purposes during the last thirty years, yet social media platforms have grown at an even faster pace. Social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat and Instagram have become the go-to channels for company client involvement, personal connection and occasionally political outreach (Mircea, 2019).

In the words of Keitzmann et al. (2011), the emergence of social media platforms has rendered sharing and interaction essential elements of online connection for people as well as companies in the twenty-first century. As a result, customers are depending progressively more on social networks for data gathering prior to making decisions (Casalo et al., 2018). Instant information, tweets, posts, videos, and photographs proliferate in the modern age, which is indicative of the wide-ranging effect of social media on the world at large.

Experts claim that the idea of online social media platforms dates to the late 20th century, despite the fact that their rise to prominence occurred in the early 2000s (Cachia et al., 2007; Garton et al., 1997). By utilizing the ease and extensive affordability of internet access, these tools enhance upon traditional social relationships. The basis for the development of modern social media sites is found within conventional social networks, which involve friends, family, coworkers and business acquaintances with similar institutional or personal interests (Cachia et al., 2007).

This rapid growth of digital media sites has forced firms to abandon conventional branding strategies in favor of social media advertising (SMA), which is a more fluid, interactive and customer-driven procedure (Shah, 2023). With the power to use the platforms' ability to reach millions of potential clients with a single post, this revolutionary change has entirely altered the way organizations interact with their intended market. 76% of purchasers,

according to research, decide what to buy after seeing product-related postings on social media (Shah, 2023).

Every person uses social media for more than two hours and twenty-nine minutes on average (Shah, 2023). This highlights how important it is for enterprises to have a presence on the internet in order to cultivate honest connections with clientele (Shah, 2023). Thus, the emphasis placed on social networking advertising in the present investigation reflects the portals' prominent worth in current digital advertising methodologies.

Social media advertising has several notable benefits, including cost-effectiveness due to its accurate targeting and customization features (Johnson, 2023). Employing insights into demographics, interests, habits and psychographics, social media targeting entails presenting highly relevant material and ads to particular groups of viewers (Johnson, 2023).

By ensuring that advertisements are seen by the appropriate audience, this customized procedure maximizes the chance of interaction and revenue while reducing the amount of money wasted on pointless impressions. Businesses are able to optimize their ad expenditure and obtain a higher return on investment (ROI) by contacting the most suitable individuals as opposed to running wide, integrated commercials (Winter et al., 2021).

Further, as stated by Tucker (2014), individualized advertisements have an increased likelihood of grabbing viewers' attention and prompting desired outcomes like clicks, conversions, and sales. As a consequence, companies can derive the return from their media expenditure and fulfil their marketing objectives more rapidly.

The necessity of engagement with the social media sphere is made apparent by the spotlight on designed ads. Social network sites are living, moving environments where people remain to have connections with brands and other consumers (Ji et al., 2021). They are not just electronic billboards. Starting out as a social media platform for friends, it has developed into a vibrant community where marketers can have meaningful conversations with users and turn these discussions into loyal followers (Eckstein, 2024).

Social media involvement has an especially major effect on small businesses, touching everything from client retention to brand perception. Involvement on the internet refers to a variety of user-brand exchanges. This covers a variety of actions on all social media sites, such as likes, comments, shares, saves, mentions and so on (Eckstein, 2024). Each encounter

helps to create a feeling of belonging and unity, which is vital to developing customer participation and loyalty to a brand.

On top of that, when it comes to advertising costs, social media platforms are typically more affordable than conventional channels of marketing. Corporations can select the most appropriate pricing model for their financial capacity and goals through using cost-per-click (CPC) and cost-per-1,000-impression (CPM) operations (Weaver, 2023). This suggests that companies may save a large amount of funds by engaging in social media advertising, income that might then be allocated to other crucial areas of the enterprise.

Despite the many benefits that social media advertising offers, it is critical to recognize the drawbacks as well (Liu and Yang, 2009). The saturation of the market is a major issue for social media promotion. This is the result of a market having peaked in terms of growth and revenues (Liu and Yang, 2009). It is analogous to a swimming pool that is full and cannot hold any more water. When compared to large, rapidly expanding industries, minor or slower emerging ones can fill up more quickly. There is fierce rivalry between companies vying for clients when a market is saturated. This might make it challenging for fresh or small firms to gain recognition and expand (Marušić and Vranešević, 2021).

Another noteworthy constraint is the increasing apprehension regarding the confidentiality of data. Corporations must negotiate the complicated terrain of privacy laws and customer expectations as they depend increasingly on client information to tailor their marketing campaigns (Enríquez et al., 2024). There are severe penalties and negative consequences associated with breaking these rules. Moreover, there is now more consumer understanding of data privacy, which has raised the bar for enterprises' collecting policies. Regarding the handling of their private details, people want transparency, responsibility and authority from companies. As a result, businesses must weigh the advantages of data-driven marketing against the need to protect individuals' right to security (Ragsdill, 2023).

As previously indicated, intense competition among brands is another barrier to the efficacy of social media advertising in extremely crowded sectors. It gets harder to stand out from others as additional companies seek the attention of a limited number of buyers (Clark, 2023). To pique consumer curiosity and win their loyalty, organizations need to set themselves apart from their rivals with distinctive value propositions, innovative marketing techniques and captivating brand stories (Clark, 2023). However, making a big commitment

in resources, strategic planning and inventiveness is necessary to stand out in a saturated marketplace. The difficulty of being timely and successful in the digital arena is further complicated by the quick speed at which innovation advances and by the shifting preferences of users (Cucu, 2021).

Lastly, shoppers may become weary of advertisements after repeatedly seeing them on social media sites. Ads that are bothersome or repetitious over time may cause clients to respond negatively, which lowers user engagement and decreases the effectiveness of advertising efforts (Lee and Hosanagar, 2018). In addition, marketers trying to establish credibility and trust with their intended audience have challenges due to the increasing scepticism of social media advertising material. Nowadays, people have become pickier and more cautious about the internet content they interact with due to a wealth of information and a greater comprehension of advertising tactics. The critique of advertising encompasses not just its impact on consumer behavior but also its wider societal implications (Olson, 1995). Critics claim that advertising fuels wasteful consumption, creates new needs, and encourages judgment based solely on material things, all of which contribute to the rise of materialism (Olson, 1995). Moreover, it has been charged with inciting irrational behaviour by downplaying perceptions of long-term repercussions and endorsing quick gratification. In addition, advertising frequently presents an idealized picture of the "good life," highlighting products as simple fixes for difficult issues and raising false expectations (Olson, 1995). Advertising, according to its detractors, puts individual greed ahead of society's welfare while ignoring civic duty and collaboration. Additionally, the use of false information and trickery in promotion has increased cynicism and undermined faith in authorities and social customs (Olson, 1995). So, in order to overcome user uncertainty and create lasting relationships with those they serve, organizations need to use genuine, open and value-driven methods of communication (Gharai, 2023).

In summary, social media advertising presents organizations with opportunities as well as hazards. Although technological advances present extraordinary opportunities for accessibility and involvement, it additionally brings serious obstacles like ad fatigue, consumer distrust and market saturation. In order to prosper in this environment, firms need to go beyond conventional thinking and embrace value-driven interactions, authenticity and openness in their storytelling (Alzaidi and Agag, 2022). Through the establishment of sincere relationships and building a foundation of trust amid the loud noise of digital

information, companies may successfully negotiate the intricacies of social media promotion and become pillars of value and impact in the constantly changing digital landscape.

A summary table outlining the benefits and drawbacks of social media advertising covered in this chapter can be found below:

Benefits of Advertising on Social Media	Social Media Advertising's Drawbacks
Reasonably priced because of precise targeting and personalization (Johnson, 2023)	Market saturation leading to increased competition (Liu and Yang, 2009).
Improved communication and interaction with the intended audience (Winter et al., 2021).	Worries about customer trust and data privacy (Ragsdill, 2023).
A higher chance of capturing the interest of the audience (Tucker, 2014).	Getting noticed in a crowded market can be challenging (Clark, 2023).
Possibility of reaching a large and varied audience (Shah, 2023).	Negative consumer reaction to repeated advertisements and ad fatigue (Lee and Hosanagar, 2018).
Economical pricing schemes for advertising expenditure (Weaver, 2023).	Consumer mistrust of advertising content is growing (Olson, 1995).
Chances for small enterprises to prosper (Eckstein, 2024).	To overcome obstacles, strategic preparation and inventiveness are required (Gharai, 2023).

Table I: “Advantages and Disadvantages of Advertising on Social Media” (Developed by the Author)

This table helps businesses make informed decisions about their marketing strategies by giving a summary of the main advantages and disadvantages of social media advertising.

2.1.2 Print Media Advertising: Relevance and Reach

Despite the rise of digital platforms, print advertising remains a mainstay in the constantly evolving marketing scene due to its ongoing importance and efficiency. This analysis aims

to explore the continuing value of print media marketing, clarifying its unique benefits as well as its essential function in contemporary advertising approaches (Jibril, 2017).

The term "print media marketing" refers to a wide range of formats, such as newspapers, magazines, brochures, flyers, billboards, and direct mail, which are printed on tangible materials (Jibril, 2017). Print ads, as opposed to their digital equivalents, provide a tactile experience that strengthens audience bonds and creates an indelible mark that transcends the fleeting existence of screens (Jibril, 2017).

Every one of the several print advertising forms offers a different chance for effective messaging and focused outreach. For example, newspaper ads still work well for reaching interested readers since they are affordable, reliable and have an opportunity to leave an effect that lasts (Lewis, 2019). Magazine spreads give firms a significant platform for visibility by attracting industries and demographics with the help of imaginative design and high-definition displays. A customized communication strategy is made possible by direct mail campaigns, which also allow for exact targeting of populations and quantifiable outcomes. Conversely, brochures act like extensive informational archives, building brand credibility and enabling broad distribution (Lin et al., 2021).

Print media continues to be effective in spite of the growing popularity of digital promotion since it offers advantages that appeal to both consumers and advertisers. Compared to their online counterparts, printed advertisements are more inclined to be recognized and considered as having higher worth, providing a unique connection with viewers (Ridge, 2023). Furthermore, print marketing generates greater interest from consumers and produces measurable company results due to its higher conversion rates. By portraying promoted brands as respectable and trustworthy information sources, print media's legitimacy and dependability additionally boosts its allure (Cherian, 2015).

Due to its distinct benefits over digital platforms, print advertising is still a crucial part of contemporary marketing tactics (Campbell, 2023). The tactile quality of fine paper, the action of turning pages, and the eye-catching visual appeal of expertly designed layouts all contribute to the physical presence of printed media, which stimulates a variety of senses and leaves readers with an indelible mark. According to Campbell (2023), a brand's message gains legitimacy and firmness through physical engagement, which in turn cultivates consumer trust and respect.

Additionally, materials with print permanence serve as enduring reminders of a brand's message, able to be preserved for years and strengthening its reputation with every contact (Clow et al., 2011). Because of its durability, print is especially useful for campaigns or messaging that want to influence brand perception over an extended period.

Moreover, print media is seen as more professional and credible than digital media, which reflects an organization's dedication to quality and meticulousness. In order to achieve this degree of professionalism, printing businesses' experience is essential. This assists in raising a brand's status and communicate competence and dependability (Campbell, 2023).

Further, print facilitates customized and targeted communication, enabling firms to explicitly craft messages for their intended audience to maximize effect and applicability (Oppong, 2023). In a time when people are constantly exposed to generic advertising, this delicate touch helps enterprises stand out from the competition and establish close ties with the demographic they are targeting (Oppong, 2023).

Building trust requires continuity in brand identity, and print media is an excellent means of accomplishing this. Consistent branding components used in printed materials assist shoppers recognize and recall the brand, solidifying it in their minds (Clow et al., 2011).

Added to that, by directly customizing marketing messages to each individual customer's tastes and interests, personalized print advertising enhances this effect (Usmani and Alam, 2016).

The capacity of tailored print advertising to connect with consumers more strongly than generic marketing messaging is a key benefit (Usmani and Alam, 2016). People are more likely to pay attention and respond when they see ads that are customized to their own requirements and interests. This personalized strategy boosts client engagement and fidelity while also raising the profile of the brand (Usmani and Alam, 2016).

Additionally, customized print advertising delivers an affordable way to connect with markets. Businesses can maximize their marketing expenditure and obtain a greater return on investment by using consumer data to target specific populations (Gillem, 2022). This focused strategy increases the effectiveness of advertising campaigns while reducing resource waste.

Determining the intended audience and consumer personas with precision is crucial for carrying out successful customized print promotions (Real, 2024). Organizations can craft messages that are relevant to consumers by knowing the traits and inclinations of those they seek out. Also, collecting and evaluating data on clients offers insightful knowledge of how customers act, helping firms to improve the way they advertise and give more pertinent content (Real, 2024).

Another crucial component of customized print advertising is the creation of attractive text and graphics. According to Jerde (2019), visually appealing designs alongside brief, straightforward speech that addresses customer pain points and shows the benefits of the product attract interest and promote audience engagement.

Calder and Malthouse (2015) suggest that firms ought to think about integrating different engagement tactics into their print ads in order to run successful tailored print marketing efforts. To attract the interest of the readership and persuade them to continue reading, a headline that commands attention is crucial. Offering an enticing deal or value proposition to clients boosts the possibility of interaction and conversion (Sciulli et al., 2012).

Print advertising conveys a consistent message to the target audience when it originates as part of a campaign that is compatible with the whole promotional plan (Wang, 2006). Credibility and trust are enhanced by clearly communicating the benefits of the good or service and by including testimonies from satisfied customers. In the words of Wang (2006), print advertisements can be produced easier to read and efficient by employing plain language, visual features and a simple layout.

In addition, monitoring the outcomes of print advertising initiatives is essential for boosting return on investment and optimizing future efforts. Shoppers are encouraged to take the next step, whether it is viewing a website or completing a purchase, by providing contact information and a call to action (Calder and Malthouse, 2015).

Print advertising has long been seen as a powerful technique for interacting with clients and driving involvement, as this section has noted. Nonetheless, combining print and digital advertising in the current digital era offers brands a further chance to optimize the way they advertise and get the greatest possible results (Mathai and Jeswani, 2021). Manufacturers

may boost their exposure, interact with a larger demographic and eventually improve their ROI by merging the strengths of both mediums (Mathai and Jeswani, 2021).

Increasing awareness of the brand is one major perk. When digital advertisements are combined with print materials, they establish a strong presence in a variety of settings and increase audience recall (Shevde, 2023).

Further, by appealing to both older as well as younger groups, marketers can reach a more diverse segment of the population thanks to this synergy. On top of that, it creates a smooth brand journey for customers by bridging the gap between online and offline conversations (Wakolbinger et al., 2009). Brands need to use creative tactics including cross-channel advertising, QR code practice and linked messaging to fully capitalize on these advantages (Wakolbinger et al., 2009).

Though there are many advantages, there are drawbacks to combining print and internet promotion. Among the challenges brands may face are preserving their cohesiveness across all media, handling data privacy issues, assessing the success of campaigns and striking a balance between finances and assets (Zhang et al., 2022).

In order to overcome these obstacles, organizations need to emphasize data privacy and security protocols, create specific requirements for uniform branding, integrate tracking systems and strategically deploy resources (Shevde, 2023).

In summary, even if print advertising is still relevant in the digital era, the combination of print and digital techniques represents an important shift in the structure of advertising. The combined effect underscores the value of innovation and adaptability in current promotional paradigms while also increasing awareness of and interest in brands (Zhang et al., 2022). Through adoption of this integration, firms can go beyond conventional limits and establish dynamic relationships with customers through a variety of touchpoints. Essentially, the coming together of digital and print advertising symbolizes the beginning of a new age in strategic advertising, a time in which consumer-centricity, innovation and harmony are key factors driving businesses to new heights of growth and resonance in a constantly changing marketplace (Zhang et al., 2022).

2.2 Gender Representation in Advertising: An Introductory Examination

As indicated in the preceding subchapter, advertising is extremely significant in forming society norms and views, especially regarding gender roles, a topic that is extremely prevalent nowadays (Grau and Zotos, 2016). Scholars have been studying how gender is portrayed in ads for a period of over fifty years. They have looked at the stereotypes used as well as the historical and social impacts of these depictions (Hawkins and Coney, 1976). This section of the research reviews the literature in this area in order to provide an understanding of how gender is currently portrayed in advertising and to direct additional research in a media environment that is shifting constantly.

Since they resulted from important political and chronological alterations, gender stereotypes in advertisements have frequently been the focus of academic study. The 1960s saw the emergence of feminism, which sparked a reevaluation of gender norms and altered familial and professional opportunities (Plakoyiannaki and Zotos, 2009). The way sexes were depicted in commercials was impacted by the modifications in cultural conventions, which reflected developing expectations and viewpoints.

As to the social role theory proposed by Eagly, Wood, and Diekman (2011), gender stereotypes originate from the historical allocation of work between men and women. Women are more frequently linked with lower-status roles as homemakers, whereas men typically occupy high-status ones as breadwinners. Because of this separation, women are related with community features like tenderness and caring, while men are linked to traits like tenacity and control (Eagly and Steffen, 1984). These gender stereotypes, which specify the qualities or actions that are appropriate for each gender, are regarded as normative. While opinions on these stereotypes vary, breaking from them might lead to unfavorable responses.

When analyzing how advertising contributes to the perpetuation of gender stereotypes, academics have distinguished between two opposing viewpoints: the "mirror" and the "mold" (Pollay, 1987). According to the "mirror" perspective, advertising just amplifies established standards and reflects the ideals of the community at large (Pollay, 1987). On the other hand, the "mold" perspective contends that through promoting stereotypes, advertising deliberately affects society values (Manstead and McCulloch, 1981). This concept is supported by cultivation theory, which shows how media portrayals affect people's ideas of reality and, in turn, alter their interactions and conduct (Gerbner, 1998).

Congruity theory holds that people prefer information that fits with the frameworks they already have, such as gender norm expectations (Ko, Seo, and Jung, 2015). Stereotypical gender portrayals in advertising frequently result in positive opinions toward the commercial and the brand because consumers respond more favorably to traditional gender role depictions than to unconventional ones (Orth and Holancova, 2003).

The representation of gender in publicity eventually falls on a continuum between these two viewpoints, influenced by the products that are advertised and society standards (Zotos and Tsichla, 2014). The relationship between masculinity, which favors gender role distinctions, and gender role stereotyping has been the subject of numerous studies. According to a theory put forth by Eisend (2010), men are more likely to respond favorably to stereotypes. In a similar vein, power distance is associated with conservatism and opposition to gender equality, suggesting acceptance of unequal power distribution and possibly leading to positive responses to prejudices (Kim et al., 2013).

Studies have demonstrated that cultural norms significantly impact how consumers react to depictions of gender roles (Zawisza and Cinnirella, 2010). Researchers have examined how cultural values impact people's responses to gender role stereotyping in advertising, using frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions and GLOBE's cultural features (House et al., 2004). According to Grau and Zotos (2016), advertising is a system of visual representation that both reflects and shapes society norms.

Kilbourne (1999) asserts that advertising permeates our surroundings, underscoring the widespread effect of marketing on human attitudes and behaviors. Gender stereotypes are complicated stories that have been weaved throughout the history of humanity. They highlight the intricate relationships between social norms, past events, and civic institutions (Merez, 2023). The study demonstrates how cultural values that influence responses to gender role stereotyping in advertisements include masculinity, power distance, authority, and feminine role orientation. It underlines how crucial it is to evaluate these assumptions on an individual basis to get precise forecasts (Taylor, 2005). Investigating the origins of these presumptions reveals a centuries-old tale in which deeply rooted beliefs and customs have formed the roles and attitudes associated with men and women (Merez, 2023)

Gender roles have historically been defined by biological distinctions dating back to ancient civilizations. Women were generally responsible for childbearing and nurturing, while men

were assigned tasks of provision and protection (Ward and Grower, 2020). These early divisions served as both actual labor allotments and figurative manifestations of society customs and ideals. In the view of Shakhmeyster (2020), the ancient Greek mythological character Athena represented the antithesis of intelligence and femininity, which established persistent preconceptions that depicted women as less intellectually capable.

During the Middle Ages, religious establishments reinforced gendered norms that dictated men should hold positions of leadership and women ought to assume subservient roles, so solidifying patriarchal structures (Tehseem et al., 2018). Significant changes in labor dynamics were brought about by the Industrial Revolution, when women were confined to domestic responsibilities and males performed most industrial work (Merez, 2023). These shifts reinforced gendered work inequalities and biases that governed what was traditionally demanded of men and women.

Gender equality made noteworthy progress in the 20th century as more women joined the workforce and obtained the right to vote. But enduring prejudices continued, showing up as uneven wages and a lack of women in positions of authority (Wesloh, 2023). Notwithstanding developments, social institutions persisted in upholding gendered norms, affecting individual possibilities and initiatives according to their sex (Tehseem et al., 2018). For example, historically, women's employment possibilities were limited because they were not allowed to pursue careers in fields like law and medicine (Hedreen, 2019). Men also experienced pressure from society to uphold stereotypical ideas of what it meant to be a man, which discouraged them from pursuing hobbies or professions thought to be more associated with women, such teaching primary school or nursing (Hedreen, 2019). These instances show how deeply ingrained gender standards have impacted people's opportunities and decisions.

Education became a battlefield for overcoming prejudices based on gender, yet traditional teaching techniques frequently reinforced rather than questioned preexisting standards (Shakhmeyster, 2020). Images related to gender in the media and popular culture reinforced long-standing biases and regulations, which in turn had a major effect on how society perceived these ideas (Hall, 1980). People have been exposed to stories and visuals that support gender norms since they were young, which helps to perpetuate ideas about what it means to be a male or a woman (Contois, 2023). The way that gender was and is represented

in media outlets has contributed to the sexualization of women and the spread of toxic masculinity by reinforcing preconceptions (Merez, 2023). These images altered gender-based relationships and organizational structures in addition to influencing individual views and customs (Merez, 2023).

Recognizing the historical foundations of sex stereotypes stresses how critical it is to confront and eradicate these deeply embedded notions. Society may work toward a more equitable future where gender is no longer a barrier to people reaching their fullest potential through knowledge, instruction, and activism (Ward and Grower, 2020). With the goal to promote inclusivity and empowerment for people of all genders, it is crucial to make coordinated efforts to modify communal standards and structures as part of the continuous path towards gender parity (Wesloh, 2023).

This urge for action is especially relevant in the context of advertising, since depictions of gender frequently both reflect and reinforce existing biases (Borgerson and Schroeder, 2002). This discourse is made more difficult by the way that gender and race overlap, as shown by current research (Preece and Kerrigan, 2015). The absence of scholarly works on marketing that tackle the intersection of gender and race highlights the pressing need to close this gap and investigate the ways in which marketed concepts connect to wider progressive movements (Preece and Kerrigan, 2015).

Researchers and activists seek to comprehend how companies handle gender and racial concerns in their marketing narratives (Jackson, 2014). They aim to expose problematic images and promote inclusive and genuine portrayals by critically examining the media's coverage and advertisements. This entails actively trying to make room for disadvantaged voices and viewpoints in addition to carefully evaluating the tales that are currently in place (Sobande, 2019b).

In line with this effort, two key notions emerge: "wokeness" and "femvertising" (Murray, 2020). The term "wokeness", which has its roots in African American Vernacular English (AAVE), refers to increased attention to political and social problems, including awareness of prejudice, sexism, and other systematic oppressions (Gray, 2018). It represents a proactive approach to subverting long-standing power systems. This theoretical structure is consistent with the larger effort to remove discriminatory narratives and foster fairer illustrations (Gray, 2018).

The increase in "wokeness" in advertising is a reflection of a larger movement in culture toward activism and social consciousness (Jackson, 2014). It is becoming more required of brands to speak out on social issues and support causes that appeal to their target market. Still, doubts regarding sincerity and authenticity are raised by the monetization of social justice. Certain brands, according to some critics, could use social justice rhetoric as a marketing gimmick without actually solving underlying problems or contributing significantly to the community (Jackson, 2014).

In other words, the commercialization of "wokeness" can give rise to charges of performative activism, in which companies put appearances of social consciousness ahead of real, meaningful change (Jerald et al., 2017). This practice has the potential to weaken the legitimacy of real social justice movements by simplifying complicated issues into simple marketing slogans and diluting their message. According to Jerald et al. (2017), companies that participate in "wokeness" without exhibiting a sincere dedication to social change may face a decline in trust from clients.

Comparably, "femvertising" is a burgeoning advertising movement that seeks to dispel conventional gender stereotypes and advance inclusivity and empowerment (Sobande, 2019a). Companies are realizing how important it is to show real women in their ads, and as a result, they are putting more themes of female empowerment, body positivity, and gender equality into their messaging (Sobande, 2019a). Femvertising aims to empower women and encourage constructive social change by showcasing the variety of experiences and accomplishments that women have to offer (Sobande, 2019a). Nonetheless, others have criticized the commercialization of feminist principles in advertising (Keller, 2017). Some who oppose femvertising contend that it is a tactic used by companies to profit from feminist movements without promoting gender equality (Keller, 2017). Some firms are suspected of "femwashing," a tactic in which they target female consumers with feminist rhetoric without tackling systemic gender inequality or making significant changes to their business operations (Alfaro-Ibáñez and Gallardo-Echenique, 2023). Because of this, femvertising may come across as opportunistic or false, which would undermine its ability to genuinely affect societal shifts (Keller, 2017).

One prominent instance of a commercial campaign that has been accused of capitalizing on feminist ideals without making significant changes is the Kendall Jenner-starrer Pepsi ad

from 2017 (Victor, 2017). Jenner is shown in the advertisement taking part in a protest and then calming things down by giving a police officer a can of Pepsi, ostensibly implying that the drink has the ability to unite people and heal divisions (Victor, 2017).

The negative response to the Pepsi video should serve as a lesson for companies looking to use social justice and feminist themes in their advertising. The statement emphasizes the significance of truthfulness, responsibility, and purposeful endeavors in coordinating advertising strategies with progressive principles (Victor, 2017). Giving lip service to feminist ideals without making significant changes is unlikely to connect with customers and could ultimately backfire, harming the trustworthiness and standing of the organization in question (Victor, 2017).

In conclusion, investigating the antecedents of gender stereotypes in history illuminates the complexities of contemporary phenomena such as "wokeness" and "femvertising" in the branding and media industries. While there is undoubtedly more to say, analyzing these contributions allowed for the observation that these insights also assist in a better understanding of their persistence (Murray, 2020). In actuality, the primary finding is that studies have demonstrated the significant influence advertising tactics have on societal habits, particularly the way women are viewed and how they contribute to either advancement or regression (Borgerson and Schroeder, 2002). Through this viewpoint, scholars and activists can gain a deeper understanding of the convergence of cultural developments, commercial priorities, and societal standards. By placing these discussions within a larger historical and societal context, they want to foster critical discourse that goes beyond superficial narratives (Borgerson and Schroeder, 2002). Ultimately, they want to bring about a major change by presenting accurate and inclusive depictions that confront ongoing prejudice and pave the way for a society with greater justice and compassion.

2.3 Addressing Sexism in Advertising: Confronting Bias and Promoting Equality

As discussed throughout this chapter, advertising acts as a mirror reflecting standards of society, frequently fostering negative preconceptions and detrimental gender prejudices (Uray and Burnaz, 2003). Sexism, which is defined as prejudice, exclusion or categorizing based on a person's gender, is pervasive in cultural beliefs and shapes expectations of what

it means to be a man or a woman (Ashmore and Longo, 2004). Women are usually presented as loving nurses whose value is frequently based solely on outward beauty, whereas men are typically shown as decisive leaders (Reichert and Carpenter, 2004; Uray and Burnaz, 2003). "Femvertising" is one well-known instance of how sexism and issue advocacy advertising collide in the world of advertising. This approach blends traditional and non-traditional female gender roles in an attempt to meet gender equality concerns (Paszek, 2018). To counteract gender preconceptions, it can be difficult to strike a balance between social messaging and marketing strategy (Champlin et al., 2019). Even though advocacy-focused advertising may have great benefits, it can sometimes be mistaken for sexism in the media. The academic community has not done much research on this connection (Bettany et al., 2010). While some companies use issue advocacy activities to successfully tackle social challenges and gender preconceptions (Jouët, 2018), a company's reputation can be negatively impacted by mishandling gender-related issues (Garrett, 2009).

In addition to perpetuating cultural stereotypes, these biased depictions have practical repercussions, especially in the workplace. Systemic barriers impede women's progress because of assumptions about their capacity for leadership and proficiency (Kay, Matuszek & Munson, 2015). Furthermore, by promoting ideas of female weakness and submissiveness, these biases exacerbate psychological problems and support harassment against women (Swami et al., 2010).

Because sexual imagery is frequently utilized to market products across numerous communication channels, the sexualization of advertising serves to further reinforce such prejudices. According to Pratto and Pitpitan (2008), although such imagery is meant to engage audiences and improve brand appeal, it perpetuates unfavorable perceptions and attitudes. These messages can have a particularly negative impact on young adults, normalizing sexual aggressiveness and distorting their impressions of their bodies (Kahle and Homer, 1985; MacKay and Covell, 1997).

The advertising field regularly promotes contradictory messages, pushing unrealistic standards of beauty while purporting to encourage diversity (Gill, 2008). This is in spite of certain attempts by corporations to address issues related to body image. This contradiction demonstrates how urgently the sector needs to be held to higher standards of responsibility and oversight.

Regulatory agencies have updated their recommendations to encourage more inclusive and equitable presentations in promotion in light of the public uproar against discrimination based on gender (ASA and CAP, 2016). Moreover, initiatives like visual artist Eli Rezkallah's "In A Parallel Universe" have drawn notice for their overt criticism of sexist advertising (Brand, 2018). In order to reveal and address the underlying prejudice in older commercial efforts, Rezkallah's project swaps the roles played by women in these advertisements and presents them side by side (Brand, 2018).



Figure I: "In a Parallel Universe," Brand (2018) [Source:

https://www.globalcitizen.org/es/content/artist-sexist-advertising-dv-violence-ads/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw2PSvBhDjARIsAKc2cgMXVXi7OmUK3mmAp9YxzvFkZSRXFFEo_O-6cnTl6tgxZlZ-aqZ1kQaAtPGEALw_wcB]

Consumer awareness of the effects of sexist advertising on society is constantly expanding. In the words of Kay et al. (2015), social media channels have developed into effective tools that allow individuals and groups to express their worries and make companies responsible for their approaches to marketing. The increasing popularity of initiatives and petitions opposing sexism in ads has forced some businesses to reconsider their tactics and embrace more equitable solutions (Bristol, 2020).

In spite of these initiatives, sexist advertising continues to exist in a variety of shapes, from overt objectification and sexualization to implicit gender stereotypes (Bristol, 2020).

Reichert (2003) cites advertisements that utilize sexual imagery to promote products unconnected to intimacy or personal care, as well as those that promote women as passive objects or uphold conventional gender norms.

Gaining a deeper comprehension of the underlying biases and cultural narratives that sustain gender inequality can be achieved through the analysis and critique of particular instances of sexist advertising (Brand, 2018). On top of that, boosting consumer knowledge of the aforementioned issues can enable them to request adjustment from both regulatory agencies and advertisers, giving them an opportunity to make well-informed choices.

The severe examples of sexist advertising, like the spring 2017 commercial for Saint Laurent and the 2012 campaign for Belvedere Vodka, serve as unpleasant reminders of the negative effects of promoting objectification and gender stereotypes (Dray, 2019). Global indignation and rapid action led to the withdrawal of Belvedere Vodka's ad, which included a graphic depiction of sexual assault. Nonetheless, the event highlights how urgently brands must accept accountability for the messages they send and the possible repercussions of their marketing tactics (Dray, 2019).

Similar criticism was levelled at Saint Laurent for using its promotional efforts to reinforce misogynistic and humiliating stereotypes, which brought attention to the larger problem of objectification and sexualization of women in the fashion sector (Dray, 2019). These occurrences demonstrate how ubiquitous gender discrimination is in advertising and how essential it is for marketers to aggressively confront and demolish hurtful characterizations (Dray, 2019).

Important progress toward meaningful change is being made by people like Bec Brideson, founder of an advertising business and gender expert, who passionately supports drastic steps to counter misogynistic advertising (Ore, 2022). Brideson highlights how gender biases are ingrained in society by pointing out how her own daughters have grown more aware of the prevailing masculine default in textbooks and media representations. According to Gurrieri et al. (2016), despite endeavors to increase diversity in the advertising sector, deeply ingrained preconceptions continue to perpetuate disparity and may even be the cause of gender-based abuse.

Women's Health Victoria (WHV) established shEqual, a demonstration program that actively challenges these preconceptions, with the specific purpose of minimizing sexism in ads (Rosewarne, 2007). This initiative diligently uncovered seven common stereotypes of women that are persistent in modern advertising campaigns, with help from a variety of partners in the promotional and inclusiveness domains (Dray, 2019). These clichés, which range from the "Model mother" image to the "Sexualized woman" cliché, reinforce limited and negative views of women (Dray, 2019).

The detrimental impacts of these preconceptions are made apparent by WHV's research findings, which also show how exposure to minimizing pictures can increase sensitivity for sexual violence and intimidation (Mulcahy, 2019). As noted in The Guardian's discourse in April 2019, this emphasizes how critical it is that advertising discourse reflect progressive principles, particularly in light of the intersection with movements like #MeToo (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020).

Deeply ingrained in cultural frameworks, sexism appears in advertising in a variety of ways, impeding the advancement of gender equality (Reyes-Menendez et al., 2020). As a means of communication and identity formation, language plays a vital role in forming opinions and feeding preconceptions (Editorial, 2023). According to studies, ads with sexist overtones have a strong persuasive effect. This points out the value of campaigns like the Unstereotype Alliance and corporate-sponsored networks that promote inclusivity (Editorial, 2023).

Holistic interventions are necessary for efforts to effectively promote equality between men and women in advertisement (Fisher, 2022). This involves advocating workplaces that are gender-balanced, interacting genuine with female consumers and presenting women in a variety of dominant and influential situations (Fisher, 2022). Caution must be deployed when using terminology to prevent negative preconceptions from being reinforced and to strengthen stories of power and independence (Editorial, 2023).

In addition, Cooke (2019) argues that giving women leadership roles in the advertising industry not only raises campaign efficacy but also serves as a catalyst for wider societal transformation. Given their authority, brands have a moral duty to support beneficial messages and stand up for underrepresented communities (Cooke, 2019).

Ultimately, a thorough and broad perspective is needed to address gender disparities and challenge discriminatory tropes in advertising (Drury and Kaiser, 2014). The advertising business can work as an agent for positive social change through emphasizing acceptance, celebrating diversity and critically questioning conventions. This will ultimately help to develop a future that is marked by fairness, decency and balance (Frith, 2001).

Chapter 3

Beyond the Surface: Uncovering Sexism in Fashion Branding

3.1 Sexism in Fashion Branding: Understanding the Landscape

The fashion business, which is frequently glorified for its innovation and sparkle, has a darker side that can be illustrated by sexism (Donovan, 1977). The objective of this chapter is to present a theoretical investigation of the complex relationship between sexism and the fashion sector, with particular attention to critical issues including the propagation of unattainable ideals of beauty, the "glass ceiling" phenomena and sexual objectification (Brown, 2019). The choice to concentrate on this field came from how prevalent it is in people's daily lives (Kiron, 2022). The beliefs and attitudes of society regarding gender, beauty and power are reflected in fashion, which acts as a kind of mirror (Kiron, 2022). It affects not just what individuals wear but also how they consume media in many ways (Giarnieri, 2021). As such, studying sexism in the fashion business offers a prism through which one can examine deeper issues about gender balance and inequality in society.

Within the field of fashion branding, sexism has a long and ingrained background that dates thousands of years in terms of cultural values and customs (Olsson, 2018). The persistence of unachievable beauty requirements, which have their origins in ancient societies where aesthetics was frequently connected to wealth, prestige and strength, is one important factor. Fashion has been utilized historically to impose these norms, ranging from the Renaissance to the Victorian era. Frequently, this has been done through extravagant clothing that accentuates certain physical characteristics while hiding others (Perelberg, 2022). This custom persisted into modern times with the emergence of mass media and marketing, further distorting ideas of beauty and setting up unattainable criteria for women to meet through retouched and digitally changed pictures (Ford, 2017).

Even though the fashion sector presents an elegant and sophisticated image, it is afflicted by long-standing gender inequality that prevents women from rising to positions of leadership. The infamous "glass ceiling", a term coined in the late 20th century, still stands as a strong obstacle that prevents women from moving up the corporate ladder in the world of fashion (Potts, 2020). Studies show that only 14% of large fashion firms have female executives at the helm, which is vastly different from the 70% of women who want to work in such roles (Giarnieri, 2021). The absence of mentorship opportunities, discriminatory promotion policies and the unequal weight of childcare responsibilities assigned to women are some of the factors leading to this gender discrepancy (Giarnieri, 2021).

The conversation on gender representation in fashion leadership sheds light on a complex narrative rooted in structural biases, historical legacies, and the industry's rapid progress. Meryl Streep's insightful remarks, made at a panel that The Washington Post organized, offer an intricate viewpoint on women's lives in a field that is dominated by males (Guber, 2024). Even if women are skilled at managing a world influenced by male standards, there is still a noticeable lack of females rising to top positions in luxury fashion enterprises. The high concentration of male creative directors leading high-end brands such as Gucci, Balenciaga and Louis Vuitton beg prominent issues regarding the causes of this gender imbalance and its far-reaching effects on the world of fashion (Guber, 2024).

Women remain marginalized in key positions of authority in the fashion industry, as Sarah Burton's departure from Alexander McQueen makes clear. Her leaving, along with the male preponderance in fashion managing, leads to a closer look at the structural barriers preventing women from advancing in this sector (Guber, 2024). According to Lamartine and Ribeiro (2022), notwithstanding the considerable historical contributions made by women, especially in the fields of craftsmanship and tailoring, their power and presence at the executive level remain restricted, reflecting broader gender differences in leadership roles across a range of businesses.

On the other hand, fashion journalist Mosha Lundström Halbert draws attention on the varied representation of women in the field of fashion (Halbert, 2024). She underlines the financial achievements and cultural significance of female-driven fashion houses such as Dior, Chanel, Prada, and Hermès. These illustrations showcase the deep comprehension of women's needs and preferences that pioneering female designers have demonstrated

throughout the course of time (Halbert, 2024). By honoring women's accomplishments, Lundström Halbert dispels tales about men's control in the clothing sector and exposes the diverse abilities and viewpoints of fashion professionals.

Conversely, sophisticated fashion critic Timothy Chernyaev investigates the complex factors impacting the corporate and creative structures of premium fashion houses (Chernyaev, 2024). Though he acknowledges the existence of outstanding women designers and creatives, he reveals ingrained biases and cliquish networks that sustain discrimination. Chernyaev stresses the closed-off structure of the fashion industry, where homogeneity and well-established networks sometimes prevent various viewpoints from assuming positions of authority. His analysis indicates how structural reform is necessary to remove the fundamental obstacles limiting women from achieving roles of prestige and power in the sector (Chernyaev, 2024).

Though challenges remain, recent hires such as Chemena Kamali as creative director at Chloé offer hope for an increase in diversity in the field of fashion (Guber, 2024). Chernyaev's observation that Kamali's design aesthetic is in line with a decidedly feminine viewpoint highlights the ability of female designers to infuse their works with a distinct authenticity and resonance that interacts more strongly with female customers. These promotions represent a change towards greater recognition and empowerment of women in fashion management, suggesting a growing realization of the value of varied perspectives in driving the industry's destiny (Guber, 2024).

In addition to symbolizing advancement, these decisions illustrate a larger theme: the confluence of fashion and womanhood throughout history as a force for emancipation (Cartner-Morley, 2023). Fashion has been a tool for women's expression and liberation, from the revolutionary shifts brought about by timeless designs like Chanel pants and Quant's miniskirt to more recent expressions like Dior's partnership with Chimamanda Adichie's feminist slogan (Nast, 2016).

Beyond just style, feminism has a significant impact on branding and how gender roles are portrayed in the world of fashion (Kiron, 2023c). As Kiron (2023c) states, the treatment of men and women in society and the fashion business is still unequal, despite the feminist movement's major strides in questioning conventional ideas of femininity and promoting justice. Even though feminism is inclusive, there are still misconceptions about it. For

example, many individuals only associate it with women, not realizing that males may benefit from it as well (Kiron, 2023c).

Fashion has always been a vehicle for social and political engagement that supports women's rights struggles and feminist ideas (Donovan, 1977). Clothing has been a symbolic vehicle for demanding gender parity, from the suffragette movement's embrace of white dress to modern political movements like #wearwhitetovote (Kiron, 2023c). Yet, the commercialization of social movements is brought to light by the fast fashion companies' monetization of feminist principles, casting doubt on their authenticity in supporting the cause of social justice (Kiron, 2023c).

Cartner Morley (2023) indicates that Maria Grazia Chiuri's time at Dior is a perfect example of how feminism and fashion can coexist when she emphasizes the crucial role of expression and creativity in empowering women. Chiuri has worked to subvert gender stereotypes and advance inclusivity in the fashion business by bringing feminist themes into Dior's designs and partnering with female artists and activists. Nevertheless, critiques about the lack of diversity in Dior's runway shows persist despite these initiatives, showing the continuous fight for true equality and fairness in the fashion field (Cartner-Morley, 2023).

In fact, the clothing sector continues to draw controversy for the way it presents women, even though it has served also as a forum for female empowerment and freedom (Lamartine and Ribeiro, 2022).

Indeed, it is important to specify that one of the largest industries that receives constant criticism is the fashion one, due to the objectification of women in a variety of mediums (Potts, 2020). These accusations that fashion upholds standards of appearance and denigrates women is particularly noticeable in commercials and fashion campaigns from Renaissance paintings to contemporary advertisements (Kiron, 2023b). The constant focus on youth, thinness and excessive aesthetics leads to the objectification and commodification of female bodies, a trend that has gotten worse in the 20th and 21st centuries with the rise of mass media and marketing (Brown, 2019).

Research conducted during fashion events such as New York Fashion Week reveals a high prevalence of sexual misconduct and violations of privacy (Brown, 2019). Companies that endorse adverse perceptions and hyper-sexualization, especially regarding black women,

such as Vogue and Dolce & Gabbana, have come under fire (Kiron, 2023a). This denigration hinders the growth of feminist movements in addition to reinforcing harmful gender and racial prejudices.

Moreover, the propagation of impossible standards for beauty aggravates problems with poor body perception, particularly for young women who internalize these expectations (Rodgers et al., 2020). Constant bombardment with images of flawless, Photoshop-edited models generates self-doubt as well as sensations of inadequacy, which can result in disordered eating patterns and low self-esteem. As shown in documentaries like Vogue's "The Models", extreme measures like strict diets and rigorous fitness regimens are commonly used to exacerbate these problems, furthering the cycle of self-destructive behavior and having a detrimental effect on the mental and physical health of models (Danziger, 2019).

Indeed, as all the themes discussed in this chapter make clear, this analysis highlights the intricate connection between sexism and fashion, illuminating the complex dynamics between ongoing advancement and persistent difficulties in the industry (Giarnieri, 2021). Fashion's revolutionary potential is shadowed by enduring challenges of inequality and limitation, despite the industry's potential as an incubator for feminist agendas and women's empowerment. Going forward, maintaining fashion's position as a vehicle for social change and gender equality will require united efforts to promote broad acceptance and authentic depiction (Giarnieri, 2021).

Potts (2020) highlights that the fashion business must manage this changing landscape as cultural norms continue to develop, evolving to reflect people's different experiences and identities. Fashion has the power to usher in a more equitable and welcoming future for all parties involved by breaking away from conventional gender standards and adopting inclusiveness as a guiding philosophy (Potts, 2020).

3.2 Fashioning Gender: Exploring Media Representations Across Social Platforms and Print Advertising

Within the broad domain of fashion advertising, where storylines and images wield profound influence, gender representation is crucial in molding public opinion and customs (Im,

2019). With an emphasis on the areas of social networks as well as print advertising, this study delves into the complicated dynamics of gender portrayal in fashion media (Sark, 2021). Comprehending these representations becomes crucial when tackling and analyzing the firmly established problem of sexism that permeates the fashion industry's advertising environment (Hu, 2024).

Fashion promotion is an effective means for the dissemination and maintenance of gender norms and values in community (Crane, 2002). These commercials' well-constructed narratives and images frequently represent and uphold established gender norms, which greatly contributes to the normalization of misogynistic beliefs and actions (Frevert and Walker, 2014). As a result, a thorough analysis of how gender is portrayed in fashion media becomes imperative in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the larger context of gender disparity in society (Frevert and Walker, 2014).

Particularly in the printed word, gender preconceptions in the fashion sector have been significantly shaped. Fashion companies have always perpetuated binary ideas of masculinity and femininity through carefully chosen images and messages (Kahn, 2020). Whereas female models are typically portrayed as submissive objects of desire, male models are frequently shown to be imposing and commanding (Saad, 2020). People whose identities defy these traditional categories feel excluded by these constrictive depictions, which also serve to uphold sexism (Roberts, 2019).

People (2017) states that the recent Saint Laurent campaign serves as an excellent example of this inconsistency, as it features slender models in precarious poses wearing little clothing, which has caused a great deal of public outrage. Examining the conversation surrounding that advertisement, the present analysis clarifies the intricacies of gender representation and objectification in fashion advertising (Peoples, 2017).

The campaign, which was introduced as a part of brand-new designer Anthony Vaccarello's collection, provoked an immediate and intense reaction on social media with the hashtag #YSLRetireTaPubDegradante (YSL, Take Down Your Degrading Ad) (Peoples, 2017). The way that women were portrayed in the ads alarmed critics, who pointed out that the models' poses and outfits were indicative of objectification and dehumanization of people (Peoples, 2017).

It is essential to look at Saint Laurent's past promotional strategies and the larger cultural environment in which they function in order to put the debate in perspective (Peoples, 2017). Some claim that the campaign is in line with Europe's lax views on sexuality in art, while others make comparisons to the company's famous ads from Yves Saint Laurent's Golden Age. A 1967 YSL advertisement and the current campaign are compared to show how drastically women's depiction has changed, raising questions about how society has evolved its ideas about womanhood and empowerment (Peoples, 2017).



Figure II: "Comparison of YSL Ads," Peoples (2017) [Source:

<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2017/03/143964/saint-laurent-accused-sexist-ad-tweets-reactions>]

The discussion around gender representation and objectification in fashion advertising is complex, as the aforementioned example demonstrates. As shown by analogies with the 1967 commercial, despite societal modernization and more access to information, the real world frequently deviates from the perceived progress (Sark, 2021).

Among these difficulties, efforts to question conventional gender standards in the fashion business have evolved, such as #DeGenderFashion (Sark, 2023). These initiatives aim to establish a more inclusive and welcoming place for all genders within the fashion media by supporting gender-neutral design and elevating the voices of transgender and non-binary

people (Sark, 2023). Additionally, fashion magazines like Vogue have made use of their influence to question gender expectations and encourage a wider recognition of different sexes in popular culture (Tamburro, 2020).

The choice of Vogue magazine to include musician Harry Styles on its cover in November 2020, dressed in a Gucci dress, was a crucial turning point in the movement for gender inclusion in fashion journalism (Bowles, 2020a). Many praised Styles for his rejection of conventional gender standards and acceptance of flexible definitions of masculinity, which sparked intense discussion and controversy following the release of the cover (Connor, 2002). Styles' presentation in this way by Vogue marked a break from traditional gender presentation norms and helped mainstream culture accept gender-fluid style (Nast, 2021).



Figure III: "Harry Styles on the Cover of Vogue 2020," Bowles (2020) [Source: <https://www.vogue.com/article/harry-styles-cover-december-2020>]

Moreover, the advent of advertisements showcasing "women in suits" represents a substantial shift from the conventional biased portrayals in fashion ads. By presenting women in traditionally masculine clothing, these marketing materials strive to challenge misconceptions and advance diversity while giving women back control over their depiction (Campuzano, 2022). These commercials support a broader and more inclusive understanding

of gender in the clothing industry by opposing sex stereotypes and celebrating a variety of feminine expressions.

The investigation of gender representation in print advertising, in conclusion, underlines the continuing difficulties of negotiating the expectations and social norms that are specific to the fashion market (Wirtz et al., 2017). Despite ongoing endeavors to promote tolerance and inclusion, as seen by campaigns such as #DeGenderFashion, episodes such as the recent heated Saint Laurent campaign highlight the ongoing practice of degradation and the retention of conventional gender norms (Sark, 2023).

Moving into the social media advertising space adds another level of struggle. Social media sites like Instagram, TikTok and Pinterest present unmatched opportunities for companies to interact with a wide range of consumers and have the ability to subvert long-standing gender stereotypes (Mensa and Deng, 2021). Still, they also carry with them particular issues such as the quick spread of harmful prejudices and the amplification of limited ideals of beauty (Frevert and Walker, 2014). Stakeholders should be on the lookout for approaches to celebrate the diversity of sex identities and support gender inclusivity in order to negotiate the ever-evolving terrain of fashion advertising on digital platforms (Crane, 2002).

Because of its widespread effect, especially in the fashion sector, Instagram has become a focal focus of scholarly research when it comes to gender portrayal on social media (Mensa and Deng, 2021). Due to its wide audience reach, emphasis on pictures and interaction with a largely younger audience, Instagram is a popular choice for fashion firms looking to advertise and promote their product lines (Mensa and Deng, 2021). Instagram's visual focus helps marketers communicate their messages through visually striking images and engaging narratives, which makes it a perfect platform for product showcases and building brand identification (Mensa and Deng, 2021).

Fashion brands on Instagram represent gender and femininity in a variety of ways inside the online ecosystem, which reflects larger cultural conventions and societal frameworks. Notably, high-end fashion labels hold a unique place in this environment, using Instagram to foster an air of exclusivity, style and aspirational appeal (Adomaitis and Saiki, 2019). The strategic necessity for luxury fashion manufacturers to create nuanced representations of womanhood and gender is made apparent by this purposeful emphasis on uniqueness and attractiveness (Adomaitis and Saiki, 2019).

Evaluating the depiction of women by luxury fashion businesses on Instagram reveals observable trends, which are divided into numerous thematic areas (Mensa and Deng, 2021). These include representations of women as objects of dependence, caretakers performing customary home duties, decorative elements prioritizing physical beauty above intellectual capacity, and sexual objects turned into commodities based only on their attractiveness (Mensa and Deng, 2021).

The categorizations are thoroughly examined in this chapter to offer a detailed understanding to facilitate methodical analysis and comparative evaluation. This investigation clarifies the complex nature of gender representation in the online apparel marketing industry by providing subtle insights into how luxury fashion brands portray women on Instagram.

Women are portrayed in the first category, "Dependency," as being subservient, reliant, and passive toward men. Men are shown in these representations as being in command, guarding, and dominating over women (Mensa and Deng, 2021). The second group, "Caretaker," presents women as mothers and other guardians who handle cooking, cleaning, and taking care of family members. Women who look after their family or loved ones fall under this classification (Mensa and Deng, 2021). In the third category, "Decorative Object," women are seen more as ornamental pieces to be combined with other products than as distinct humans. Their intelligence is downplayed, and their bodies are accentuated for aesthetic reasons (Mensa and Deng, 2021). Lastly, the "Sexual Object" category uses women only as objects of desire to advertise goods. Their bodies are sometimes dismembered in ads to emphasize specific features rather than their entire persona, emphasizing their physical desirability (Mensa and Deng, 2021).

In summary, the complex field of gender representation in fashion advertising, both online and off, is a mirror of larger cultural conventions and socioeconomic structures (Wirtz et al., 2017). Even though luxury fashion labels, in particular, have a significant impact on how people view femininity and gender, their representations frequently uphold conventional standards and prejudices (Hu, 2024). According to Wirtz et al. (2017) still, there are chances as well as obstacles in the digital landscape for these depictions to change, with Instagram and other platforms at the forefront. Salehzadeh and Pool (2016) affirm that companies must strike a careful balance between traditions and innovation, conformity and progressivism, as

buyers grow more vocal and selective about problems of diversity and gender equality (Salehzadeh and Pool, 2016).

The internet offers a forum for criticism, discussion, and accountability even while it may also increase the possibility of sexism. Social media's instantaneous nature and openness provide users the ability to question incorrect portrayals and call for more genuine and inclusive ones (Mensa and Deng, 2021). Thus, in the last section of the chapter, the topic of how fashion firms might avoid these problems will be further discussed as they continue to grapple with the challenges of gender representation in the digital age. Brands need to pay attention and work to tell stories that are more equal and uplifting. Eventually, fashion advertising has the power to ignite advances in society and gender parity by encouraging conversation, appreciating diversity and questioning conventional standards (Cwynar-Horta, 2016).

3.3 Challenges and Opportunities in Representation: Strategies for Inclusive Fashion Branding

It is clear from the discussion in this chapter that the following important recognition is required: fashion is not a woman's identity per se, more so, it is a woman's disguise (Nemcova, 2020). This mask hides the endemic problem of gender disparity in the field. A startling disparity in perception was revealed by a groundbreaking report (Huhmann and Limbu, 2016). Although all female respondents acknowledged the gender gap as an issue of concern, fewer than fifty percent of men in the survey agreed, frequently equating fashion with ideas of variety, integrity and fairness. In spite of these alleged objectives, an astounding majority (more than 80%) could not name any specific company programs that targeted to reduce prejudice based on gender (Huhmann and Limbu, 2016).

This contradiction between abstract thoughts and concrete behaviors highlights the complex issues and unrealized potential that arise from representation in fashion advertising. It represents an industry-wide systemic issue: the unwillingness to recognize and confront gender inequality (GRIT, Global Retail Installations & Technology, 2024).

This chapter explored the complex relationships between gender, representation, and advertising in the fashion industry through an analysis of these topics. By presenting the

various facets of this challenge, the objective at this point is to outline viable solutions that promote diversity and result in significant advancements in fashion branding.

Before getting into prospective tactics, it is critical to distinguish between premium and mass market brands. This division is essential to understanding the many strategies that each category may employ when developing inclusive fashion approaches to branding (Nemcova, 2020).

The operating paradigms of luxury and mass market brands are different, with respect to design, pricing, exclusivity and accessibility (Murray, 2016; Kim and Phua, 2020). These variances influence brand identification as well as the techniques used in fashion advertising. Because luxury businesses place a strong focus on uniqueness and status, they frequently use marketing strategies that create a noticeable barrier between the brand and consumers in order to preserve an air of desirability and ambition (Jiang et al., 2014). On the other hand, mass market enterprises place a higher value on affordability and accessibility in an attempt to build a closer and faster relationship with customers (Jiang et al., 2014).

Acknowledging these basic differences makes it apparent that each segment has distinct advantages and drawbacks when it comes to building inclusive fashion branding. Because luxury companies are inherently associated with aspiration and status, they can use their power to support inclusivity and diversity, which will help them connect their brand image with modern principles (Jiang et al., 2014). On the other hand, mass market organizations have the chance to promote equality and democratize fashion on a larger level because of their wider reach and availability (Jiang et al., 2014).

After addressing the key concepts behind unachievable beauty standards, the "glass ceiling" phenomenon and sexual objectification in the earlier sections of this chapter, the next objective is to outline procedures intended to address all these issues in the contexts of luxury and mass market fashion houses. When addressing the widespread problem of unattainable beauty criteria in the field of fashion advertising, a thorough and diverse approach is necessary (GRIT, Global Retail Installations & Technology, 2024).

In fashion publicity, body positivity and inclusion promotion are key strategies for subverting unrealistic ideals of beauty (Eisend, 2010). Luxury businesses have a special chance to set the standard by showing a variety of body types, ethnicities, and identities in

their advertising campaigns (Pounders and Mabry-Flynn, 2019). These brands are well-known for their aspirational charm and worldwide popularity. High-end clothing manufacturers such as Versace and Gucci, for example, have been using models of varied sizes and backgrounds in their marketing materials and runway shows, which is breaking stereotypes and appealing to a wider range of customers (Hammond, 2020). Similar to this, mass market brands can significantly contribute to the globalization of beauty standards by showcasing relatable people in their commercials due to their simplicity and general acceptance (ENGENDER BLOG, 2016).

The foundation of creating profound bonds in the fashion industry is genuineness (Leesh, 2024). Credibility may be fostered by luxury and mass market firms equally by avoiding the use of excessively Photoshopped imagery and by employing authentic characters in their marketing materials (Leesh, 2024). For example, mass-market enterprises like H&M have embraced genuineness by displaying a varied range of models and actual customers in their marketing collateral, thereby building sincere feelings with their target audience (H&M, 2023).

Managing the complexity of fashion advertising requires careful study and putting cultural sensitivity first. Due to their extensive global reach and varied clientele, luxury businesses need to make sure that their advertising campaigns speak to cultural quirks and sensitivities all over the world (Pounders and Mabry-Flynn, 2019). For example, premium fashion label Burberry received criticism for a 2019 promotion depicting a model wearing a sweatshirt with a noose-like drawstring, triggering charges of lack of awareness and imitation of culture (Ma, 2019). On the other hand, in order to promote a more equitable depiction of various cultures, mass market firms need to be watchful in preventing unintentional errors and appropriations and proactive in resolving any potential tensions (Ma, 2019).

Louis Vuitton's "Celebrating Fashion's Diversity" ad and Nike's "Dream Crazier" commercial illustrate how premium and mass market businesses can both attack unrealistic beauty expectations while also matching their principles with customer values (Gualandris, 2020; Dhonchak, 2019).

Louis Vuitton's "Celebrating Fashion's Diversity" advertisement showcases a wide spectrum of people from different gender identities and nations, going beyond conventional aesthetics (Gualandris, 2020). In addition to challenging the fashion industry's restrictive definitions of

attractiveness, Louis Vuitton's embrace of openness and variety reflects consumer beliefs of tolerance and fairness (Gualandris, 2020).

In a similar vein, Nike's "Dream Crazier" commercial honors female empowerment in sports while opposing misogyny (Dhonchak, 2019). Nike's advertising rejects impossible beauty ideals and supports compassion and sincerity by displaying strong, varied women (Dhonchak, 2019). Both Louis Vuitton and Nike are able to strengthen their relationships with clients that value self-determination, equity and diversification through these initiatives.

Finally, it should be noted that a complex and varied strategy is needed to confront excessive beauty standards in fashion advertising (Eisend, 2010). Fashion brands may cultivate openness and integrity, hence aiding in a more fair and empowered market scenery, by endorsing body positivity and plurality, prioritizing authenticity, undertaking comprehensive research and aligning with both buyer and brand values (Åkestam et al., 2017).

Like numerous other sectors, the fashion business struggles with the prevalent issue of the so-called "glass ceiling" phenomenon, which places obstacles in the way of women's advancement into managerial positions. Even if there has been some achievement, overcoming the glass ceiling would need coordinated attempts to tackle multiple root causes of gender discrepancy (Brown et al., 2018).

Increasing public understanding of the business case for gender equality is a critical first step in addressing the glass ceiling dilemma. It has been demonstrated that gender-diverse corporations perform 22% better than their counterparts (Brown et al., 2018). It is therefore vital that organizations in the fashion sector clarify this connection between performance and guarantee that both male and female staff members comprehend it. Organizations should also make a commitment to monitoring and disclosing gender-related KPIs so that they may hold one other and themselves responsible for advancements (Lai, 2021). Burberry, for instance, actively promotes gender diversity throughout the company. The brand has given priority to efforts aimed at increasing the number of women in positions of power, acknowledging the substantial influence that diversity has on corporate performance (Zwieglinska, 2024).

A diverse staff boosts decision-making up to 87% of the time, directly affecting the bottom line, according to study partner McKinsey (Zwieglinska, 2024). When it came to the

percentage of women on executive teams, businesses in the top quartile in 2015 were 15% more likely to succeed favorably than those in the worst quartile (Brown et al., 2018). This difference has grown by 2023, with top-quartile businesses having a 39% higher chance of outperforming expectations (Brown et al., 2018).

In light of these conclusions, Burberry has established clear goals for raising the proportion of women in positions of authority (Zwieglinska, 2024). In order to create an atmosphere that is supportive of gender inclusiveness and diversity, the firm has put in place recruitment and training initiatives that are specifically designed to find and nurture female talent (Zwieglinska, 2024).

Furthermore, it is imperative to provide mentorship programs for women in order to provide them the chance to develop deep professional relationships and get ready for levels of upper management. Leaders in the industry pair women with mentors early on to provide ongoing guidance and assistance for the duration of their careers. Formal social gatherings additionally serve to help women develop expert abilities that are required for job advancement, such as negotiation (Bula, 2022).

In summary, overcoming the glass ceiling problem in the fashion business necessitates a holistic approach that encompasses raising awareness, outlining success criteria and expanding possibilities for sponsorship and mentorship (Bula, 2022). Given its ability to stimulate inventiveness, execution and originality in the sector, gender equality should be a top priority for both mass market and luxury firms. The fashion industry can break through the glass ceiling and open the door to a more equal and welcoming future with a united front (Bula, 2022).

Lastly, the issue of sexual objectification in advertising has been a problem for the fashion business, both in the mass market and premium segments (Lai, 2021). Fashion designers frequently have to balance expressing sexuality with promoting negative stereotypes while continuing to encourage sex positivity and personal empowerment (Lai, 2021).

Fashion advertising has been alternating between sex positivity and hyper-sexualization in recent years. Some advertisements have welcomed sexuality and nudity as signs of control, while others have pushed the limits of objectification (Lai, 2021). High-end companies like Gucci and Dolce & Gabbana have come under fire for their almost objectifying

advertisements (The Fashion Law, 2017). One such example is Gucci's contentious emblem featuring pubic hair. On the other hand, sex positivity campaigns, such as Sport England's "This Girl Can" campaign, have won accolades for honoring women of several types, shapes and skills (Sport England, 2015).

A significant break from traditional gender conventions in fashion is provided by unisex fashion, which provides a means of combating gender objectification (Pickering, 2017). Brands may promote diversity and question traditional gender roles by adopting unisex styling. Comprehending the unisex fashion industry dynamics is vital in developing marketing strategies that effectively appeal to a wide range of target audiences (Pickering, 2017).

Authenticity in marketing is also crucial to the fight against gender objectification (Grau and Zotos, 2016). Both mass-market and luxury firms need to make sure that the variety of people who use unisex styles is accurately reflected in their marketing collateral. Marketers can challenge gender objectification and highlight the global appeal of their clothing lines by showcasing genuine individuals from diverse origins (Grau and Zotos, 2016).

Additionally, companies need to choose their words and images carefully when creating commercials and marketing efforts to avoid objectifying women (Zalis, 2019). Promoting an inclusive advertising environment that celebrates diversity requires avoiding language that reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and using imagery that reflects a range of identities and physical characteristics (Zalis, 2019).

Ultimately, the company's message may be amplified and reach a wider audience through strategic collaborations in the advertising sector with influencers and brand ambassadors who share the values of inclusive approach (Zalis, 2019). Genuine endorsements from influential people contradict negative perceptions that are reinforced by the denigration of women in advertising and serve as social proof of a brand's dedication to plurality (Pittaway, 2020).

Finally, premium and mass market firms must work together to overcome sexual objectification in the fashion industry, the glass ceiling phenomena and impossible beauty standards. Beyond merely making sales, the goals are to question established beliefs, promote variance, and encourage people to value their distinctiveness (Carufel, 2023).

Brands may become change agents by putting into practice the main tactics covered, such as encouraging authentic representation, supporting diversity and positive body image (Sweeney et al., 2021). They possess the ability to transform beauty norms, dismantle barriers based on gender and motivate a fresh cohort of buyers who place an elevated value on genuineness and diversity (Pittaway, 2020).

Organizations need to be prepared to speak up against the existing quo, face their own prejudices and hear the many perspectives of their clientele (Sweeney et al., 2021).

Overall, luxury and large-scale businesses may promote inclusivity and diversity in their advertising efforts and build an equal and pluralistic community in addition to driving revenues (Åkestam et al., 2017). They may achieve this by matching their beliefs with those of the consumers they serve. It is the responsibility of enterprises to make use of this potential and pave the way for a more promising and accessible future in the field of fashion (Åkestam et al., 2017).

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Significance of the Study

This chapter offers a comprehensive description of the research techniques applied to investigate the complex relationship between sexism and the fashion industry. As noted by Donovan (1977), the fashion business has a darker side characterized by misogyny, despite its awards for originality and elegance. The purpose of this study is to investigate important topics like the propagation of unachievable beauty standards, the "glass ceiling" problem, and sexual objectification (Brown, 2019).

The importance of fashion in everyday life warrants the attention given to this sector (Kiron, 2022). In addition to dictating what individuals wear, fashion has a big influence on media consumption and societal views of sex, attractiveness, and prestige (Kiron, 2022). Analyzing sexism in this industry can shed light on more general problems with gender disparities and fairness in society. Fashion serves as a cultural mirror, reflecting the beliefs and values of society and providing a unique angle for studying the connection between power and gender.

The decision to concentrate on this topic was made because there aren't many scholarly studies contrasting sexist advertising across different media outlets. By looking at this, the study aims to fill an important vacuum in the literature by offering a thorough investigation of the perception and prevalence of sexism in fashion advertising.

This chapter will provide a detailed discussion of the methodological choices made in order to achieve these study targets. It will give a justification for the decisions made about specific sampling plans, data gathering techniques, and analytical procedures. This section's precise and concise summary of the methodology ensures the legitimacy and reliability of the investigation's findings.

4.2 Research Question and Research Goals

The study aims to advance the current discussion around gender depiction in media and its consequences on society by looking at the aforementioned themes. The aim of the empirical approach is to provide an in-depth knowledge of how sexism is perceived in the context of fashion advertising with the assistance of historical and contemporary insights from the literature.

Given the variety of concerns, the primary research question for the present research is:

RQ1: Which elements influence Gen Z's perceptions of sexism in the gender representation in ads for fashion across various media channels?

In order to address this question, this study will assess the qualities of the content, audience perceptions, and the cultural and societal factors that shape these opinions. The examination targets a significant research gap by concentrating on Generation Z. Although research on consumer perceptions of advertising and gender stereotypes has been undertaken in the past, no specific study has looked at how Generation Z perceives and reacts to sexism in fashion ads. This generation offers a distinctive and captivating context for analyzing these concerns as they grew up in a digital age characterized by fast communication and rapid societal change.

In light of this, the main research objectives of this work are:

- To determine the essential components of fashion ads that impact sexism perceptions.

- To evaluate how sexism is perceived in fashion ads.
- To comprehend the ways in which the media consumption habits of Generation Z impact their views of sexism in fashion advertising.

The following hypotheses can be identified by taking into account the research question and primary research objectives, as well as the academic data that has been examined in the preceding sections.

In line with Brown (2019) and supported by Frevert and Walker (2014) as well as Zawisza and Cinnirella (2010), who pointed out that gender roles play a major impact on sexism views, H1 is presented:

- H1: The way that gender roles are presented in fashion ads has a big impact on how people perceive sexism.

Backed by Donovan (1977), who emphasized that a major problem in fashion advertising is the objectification of women, and further supported by Lai (2021) and Kilbourne (1999), H2 is presented:

- H2: Perceptions of sexism are directly affected by the level of sexual objectification in fashion advertisements.

Donovan (1977) and Kiron (2022) discussed the negative effects of unrealistic beauty norms, with additional support from Eisend (2010) and Åkestam et al. (2017), thus presenting the foundation for H3:

- H3: The idea of sexism is reinforced by unachievable beauty standards in fashion commercials.

Supported by Mahapatra et al. (2022), who highlighted the unique characteristics of Generation Z in relation to media and technology use, along with insights from Giarnieri (2021) and Hu (2024), H4 is presented:

- H4: The distinct media consumption habits of Generation Z alter their perspectives on sexism in fashion promotion.

In the long run, this study strives to offer actionable suggestions to the fashion industry on how to enhance gender representation in branding. Through identification and exploration

of the factors impacting viewpoints on sexism, the research is intended to steer future marketing strategies toward less discriminatory and thoughtful pictures of genders. This can lessen the negative misconceptions that are still being perpetuated in the media and move the business community closer to greater gender parity.

4.3 Research Design

As stated earlier, the main goal of this research is to examine how consumers interpret sexism in fashion company ads. The purpose of this study is to identify the factors that influence people's perceptions of whether fashion advertisements are sexist.

In order to reach a wide audience and maximize the chances of obtaining reliable results, this research uses a quantitative approach to collect data (Bryman et al., 2018). Even though both qualitative and quantitative approaches can provide light on the subject, greater opinions are needed for this study than a small number of thorough responses. Consequently, since this study mostly uses numerical analysis, quantitative data is more appropriate (Jacobsen and Sandin, 2002).

With the quantitative technique, consumer perception data is gathered through a standardized survey. "The collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions" is the definition of survey research (Check and Schutt, 2012, p. 160). This kind of study permits the use of many approaches for participant recruitment, data collection, and instrumentation. In social and psychological research, surveys are widely used due to the fact they may be used to clarify as well as examine human behavior (Singleton and Straits, 2009).

The survey for the present investigation will include both open and closed questions. While the first portion will allow for open-ended responses to obtain a deeper understanding of participant perspectives, the latter will consist of structured inquiries with predetermined response alternatives.

4.4 Population and Sample

As already mentioned, the study focuses on Generation Z, which is currently the youngest generation to enter the workforce and is defined as those born between 1995 and 2010 (Mahapatra et al., 2022). This group is well-known for using social media extensively and for having a high degree of technological skill (Mahapatra et al., 2022). Because of their distinct traits and life experiences, Generation Z is especially pertinent when analyzing how sexism is perceived in fashion advertising across various media platforms.

To guarantee a thorough comprehension of these viewpoints, a stratified sampling method will be utilized. With this strategy, the study attempts to gather a variety of perspectives and experiences about sexism in fashion advertising by selecting a sample from each stratum according to their contribution within Generation Z.

According to this study, there is a research gap in the literature, which led to the choice to concentrate only on Generation Z. While consumer perceptions of advertising and gender stereotypes have been the subject of prior studies, no particular research has been done on how Generation Z views and responds to sexism in fashion advertisements. This generation offers a compelling backdrop for examining these challenges because of their distinct viewpoint, which has been influenced by growing up in a digital age marked by fast communication and societal change.

The research intends to enlist 200 people as its goal sample size in terms of technique. According to Jones (2023), this sample size is thought to be sufficient for quantitative research in order to produce a statistically significant analysis and a trustworthy confidence interval. The study seeks to provide significant insights into how Generation Z perceives and reacts to gender portrayals in fashion advertising by collecting data from a sufficiently big and diverse sample within the age group.

4.5 Data Collection

The purpose of the questionnaire is to assess customer perceptions and attitudes about sexism in fashion advertising. It is based on Zimmerman and Dahlberg's (2008) work, "The Sexual Objectification of Women in Advertising: A Contemporary Cultural Perspective". It is divided into sections on behavioral intention, attitude assessments, perception of

objectification, and demographic data. Their research provides a solid framework for evaluating customer opinions and obtains a comprehensive grasp of the consequences of sexist advertising in the fashion industry through the use of both quantitative ratings and qualitative responses. This survey uses comparable components and scales to ensure that the responses are measurable, which facilitates the identification of patterns and the extraction of insightful conclusions from the provided data.

The themes noted by Zimmerman and Dahlberg (2008) are listed in this table along with how they relate to the associated questions in the survey that was utilized to compile the present paper. Every theme discovered in Zimmerman and Dahlberg's research is in line with specific concepts meant to assess respondents' sentiments from Generation Z regarding sexism in fashion ads.

Zimmerman and Dahlberg's Themes (2008)	Survey Questions
Women as they really are	<p>"Do you prefer fashion advertisements that promote"</p> <p>"What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?" (Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, H&M)</p>
Women treated as sex objects	<p>"The use of sexual imagery in advertisements is generally acceptable."</p> <p>"Using sexual imagery in fashion advertisements is appropriate."</p> <p>"Look at the following picture of this [advertisement] and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: 'This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.'"</p>
Women shown in their daily activities	<p>"Do you prefer fashion advertisements that promote"</p>

	"What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?"
Find portrayal of women offensive	"I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light." "What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?" (Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, H&M) "What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements?"
Companies more likely to discriminate	"What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?" (Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, H&M) "Look at the following picture of this [advertisement] and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: 'This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.'" "What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements?" "Sexist advertisements negatively affect my perception of the brand."
Might still buy new product	"I would purchase products from a fashion brand after seeing a sexist commercial." "Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions?"
Would discontinue using product	"Sexist advertisements negatively affect my perception of the brand." "Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions?"

Would continue buying other products	"Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions?"
General attitudes towards the portrayal of women in ads	"I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light." "What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?" (Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, H&M)
Problematic aspects in sexist fashion advertisements	"What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements?"

Table II: "Thematic Connections Between Zimmerman and Dahlberg's (2008) Study and Survey Concepts" (Developed by the Author)

There will be multiple components to the survey (Sweeney, Attaran and Kim, 2021):

1. Demographic Information: Details regarding the participant's specific age, gender and level of education. Questions include:
 - Age (GenZ)
 - Gender
 - Education level
 - Current occupation
2. Media Consumption Habits: Participants are asked about their average daily media consumption across various platforms. This portion poses concerns like:
 - How many hours do you spend on social media per day?
 - How many hours do you watch television per day?
 - How many hours do you spend reading magazines per day?
 - How many hours do you spend on other media (e.g., radio, books, blogs, online gaming, podcasts) per day?
3. Attitudinal Measures: This section assesses participants' general attitudes toward the portrayal of women in advertisements. Questions include:

- "I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light."
 - "The use of sexual imagery in advertisements is generally acceptable."
 - "Using sexual imagery in fashion advertisements is appropriate."
 - "Fashion advertisements should focus more on the product than on the models."
4. Exposure to Advertisements: Participants will be shown a selection of ads from ten distinct fashion labels. To guarantee diversity in the advertisements examined, each company will represent several fashion industry segments. The brands will be chosen impartially, including commercials that were formerly deemed sexist for a variety of reasons, ads featuring topics that have provoked discussion but split the public's viewpoint, and advertisements that don't fit the stereotype of being sexist.

This wide range of choices attempts to investigate the various opinions and views people have regarding different sorts of fashion ads. This section involves participants' opinions of whether specific adverts portray women in an objectifying manner. Questions include:

- "Look at the following picture of this [advertisement] and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: 'This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.'"

The photographs of the advertisements will be presented in Chapter 5 of Data Analysis and included in the Appendix at the end of the thesis.

The following brands have been selected:

- The advertisement for Dolce & Gabbana's 2007 campaign features a picture of a woman who is trapped on the ground by a male (Duncan, 2015). It's an offline advertisement. Due to its depiction of female servitude and gender-based violence, this advertising drew harsh criticism.
- The 2007 campaign by Tom Ford included sexualized pictures of naked women to advertise a fragrance for men. The advertisement is of the offline variety. Known for its provocative nature, Yoakum (2014) criticized the advertising for sexualizing the female body and using it to promote a masculine product.

- Models in provocative stances in American Apparel advertisements, frequently wearing minimal clothes (Stampler, 2014). The kind is available online and offline. American Apparel has often faced backlash for its hypersexualized and misogynistic promotion.
- The #MyCalvins ad by Calvin Klein features models wearing underwear, including the disputed image of Kendall Jenner. This advertisement is available online and offline. Certain individuals perceive these commercials as sexist, but others see them as a celebration of sexuality and self-confidence (Kennedy and CNN, 2024).
- Gucci's 2019 advertisement with models wearing daring clothing and androgynous attitudes. Billboards and print media both display this promotion. While Gucci has received recognition for its diversity and for defying gender norms, several of its commercials have drawn controversy for their overt sexual provocations (Commins, 2019).
- The lingerie brand Victoria's Secret uses "Angels" in their yearly fashion show and promotional materials. TV, print, and social media are all utilized to market the show. Some have applauded it for embracing femininity despite accusations for the one-dimensional depiction of feminine attractiveness and the sexualization of models (Maheshwari and Friedman, 2021).
- The "Aerie Real" advertisement by Aerie showcases unedited photographs of many models advocating for inclusivity and body positivity (Ell, 2018). This is advertised online as well as offline. Recognized for encouraging diversity and a positive image of oneself while avoiding sexualization in their ads.
- Stella McCartney's environmentally conscious advertising campaigns, which showcase models in organic positions and non-sexualized attire. The majority of these adverts are seen offline. Acknowledged for its dedication to sustainability and empowering women (BAJEKAL, 2023).
- H&M's fashion campaigns include a diverse assortment of models from various origins and ethnicities, without going overboard with sexualization (Modder,

2022). H&M runs promotions both online and off. Representations are generally upright, and with an emphasis on inclusion and variety.

- Models in commonplace stances star in Uniqlo's simplistic advertising campaigns, which emphasize apparel and comfort. Digital and non-digital media are used to market promotional materials. Known for keeping messages uncomplicated and realistic while reducing gender stereotyping (McLaughlin, 2023).

Based on effect, relevance, and diversity, three fashion labels will be chosen from the original set of ten advertisements for in-depth examination. This selection will guarantee representation from a range of fashion industry sectors, featuring advertisements that provoked different interpretations of sexism and those that generated substantial debate or curiosity.

The three brands chosen for in-depth examination are:

- Dolce & Gabbana (Disrespectful)
- Calvin Klein (Disputed)
- H&M (Non-sexist)

The final seven advertisements will be displayed as pictures only, with no brand or release date details. To get unbiased responses, participants will only be asked how they feel about the commercials.

5. Behavioral Intentions: This section assesses the participants' post-advertisement behavioral intentions, including their propensity to buy goods from companies linked to sexist advertising. Queries consist of:
 - "I would purchase products from a fashion brand after seeing a sexist commercial."
 - "Sexist advertisements negatively affect my perception of the brand."
6. Final Reflections on Advertising Influence: Participants consider the general influence of fashion ads on their opinions and purchase choices in this subsection. Included in the questions are:

- "What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements?"
- "Do you prefer fashion advertisements that promote (various attributes like authenticity, diversity, luxury, etc.)?"
- "Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions?"

Based on their perceptions of sexism, attraction, and gender role representation, participants will score each advertisement on a Likert scale. The standard Likert scale, created in 1932 by Rensis Likert to gauge opinions, is a 5- or 7-point ordinal scale that respondents use to indicate how much they agree or disagree with a statement (Sullivan and Artino, 2013).

This study will employ a 5-point rating system: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree.

The closed-ended questions mentioned earlier will be evaluated using this 5-point Likert scale, allowing for the measurement of nuanced responses and facilitating the analysis of trends and the derivation of significant conclusions from the data.

Additionally, participants' ideas and feelings can be expressed in greater detail through open-ended questions, which will provide deeper insights into their ratings.

There will be four open-ended questions in total:

- Three in the Exposure to Advertisements section, specifically "What are your thoughts on this [brand] advertisement regarding gender representation?" (Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, H&M)
- One in the Final Reflections on Advertising Influence section, specifically "Do you have any suggestions for fashion brands regarding gender representation in their advertisements?"

The complete version of the survey will be included in the Appendix at the end of the thesis.

4.6 Approach to Data Analysis

Several systematic techniques will be used in closed response evaluation to guarantee accurate and enlightening results. For organizing and analysis, the survey data will be imported into a spreadsheet program like Excel or SPSS.

- **Cross-Tabulation:** This method creates tables that display the frequency distribution of variables across several categories in order to find patterns and relationships between different variables (Marx, 2019).
- **Visual Representation:** The data will be visually represented using charts and graphs (histograms, bar charts, and pie charts) to facilitate analysis and comprehension (Marx, 2019).

A theme analysis will be performed on the open responses:

- **First coding:** Open-ended answers will be examined for reoccurring themes or patterns, and pertinent text portions will be marked or annotated.
- **Code grouping:** Codes that are comparable will be arranged into more general topics or groups.
- **Theme Refinement:** In order to guarantee that the themes appropriately represent the data and remove redundancies and duplications, they will be assessed and adjusted.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis

5.1 Empirical Data on Sexism in Fashion Ads: A Presentation

This chapter examines the empirical evidence gathered from the thorough study designed to investigate how people perceive sexism in fashion ads. With 28 closed questions and 4 open-ended questions, the survey had 213 responses and provided a good balance of data from both perspectives. Using Google Forms, the survey was conducted from July 25, 2024, to August 12, 2024. Ethical guidelines were followed, such as making sure that doing the survey was completely voluntary and permitting respondents to discontinue participation at

any moment without giving a reason. Participants were fully informed about the goal, methods, risks, and benefits of the research before the survey was launched, and they were asked for their agreement before beginning. All answers were kept private, anonymous, and only utilized for scholarly research. There were no risks associated with taking part in this questionnaire, and the results will contribute to the advancement of knowledge in this area.

The information that follows will reveal trends, connections, and important conclusions from the data using cross-tabulation and visual representation techniques. To help with a deeper understanding of the responses and the wider ramifications for the fashion business, charts, graphs, and tables will be provided.

5.1.1 Demographic Information

Comprehending the respondents' demographic profile is crucial to placing the survey results in context and appreciating the range of perspectives that were stated. The four closed-ended questions in this category, which gathered information on respondents' age, gender, education level, and employment status, are examined in detail in this section. Analyzing these social variables provides information about how different demographic factors may affect people's views of sexism in fashion ads. A more sophisticated view of the data is provided by this analysis, which enables the investigation of potential correlations between demographic traits and the responses given. It also aids in the identification of any patterns or trends that might be unique to specific populations.

The first query centered on the respondents' age range within the Gen Z demographic. The largest group consisted of young adults aged 23–26, making up 43.1% of the sample (N=91). This was followed by 26.1% of individuals in the 19–22 age group (N=55) and 21.8% of participants in the 27–29 age group (N=46). The youngest respondents, aged 14 to 18, comprised 9% of the sample (N=19). The age range of 23 to 26 years old is both the mean and the mode, indicating that this is the most frequently represented age category among those surveyed.

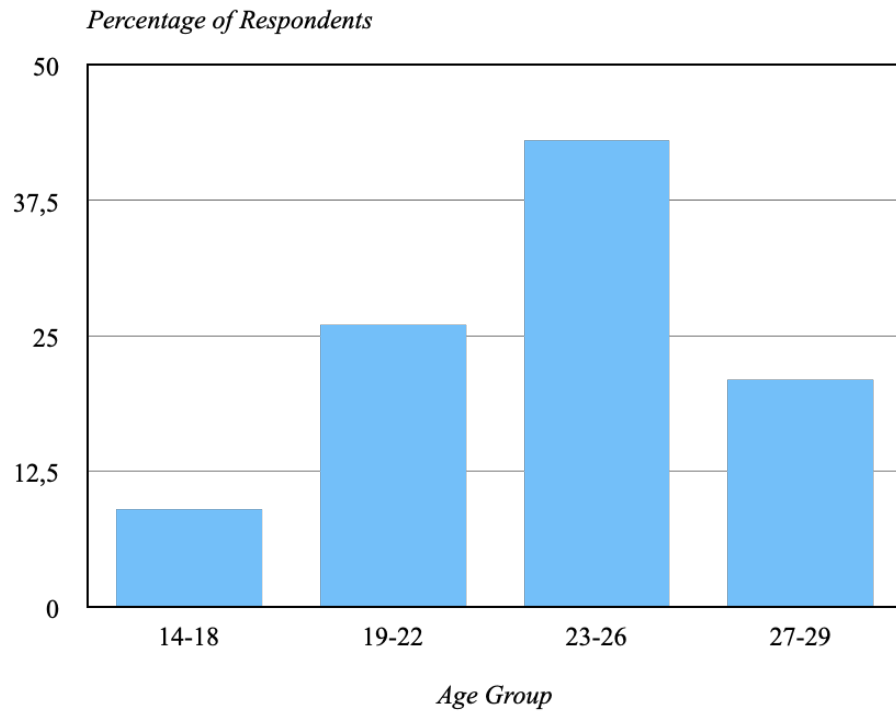


Figure IV: "Age Distribution of Respondents" (Developed by the Author)

The second question focused on gender representation. 52.6% of the sample (N = 111) were female, and 46.9% (N = 99) were male. Just 0.5% of the total were classified as "Other" (N = 1). The gender mode is female since women comprise a marginally higher percentage of the population being studied.

Gender	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Female	111	52.6
Male	99	46.9
Other	1	0.5

Table III: "Gender Representation" (Developed by the Author)

Next, the respondents' level of education was examined. The largest group, those with a bachelor's degree, represented 45.5% of the respondents (N=96). This was followed by 26.1% who had a high school diploma (N=55), and 22.7% who had a master's degree or higher (N=48). The smallest group, with less than a high school education, constituted 5.2% of the sample (N=11).

Education Level	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
------------------------	------------------------------	-----------------------

Less than high school	11	5.2
High school graduate	55	26.1
Bachelor's degree	96	45.5
Master's degree or higher	48	22.7
Other	1	0.5

Table IV: “Educational Attainment” (Developed by the Author)

Lastly, the poll delved into the respondents' professional standing. The largest category was students, who made up 38.4% of the respondents (N=81). The next largest group consisted of working individuals, comprising 31.8% of the sample (N=67), followed by 17.1% working students (N=36). Self-employed individuals accounted for 10.4% (N=22), and the smallest group, categorized as "Other," made up 2.4% of the population surveyed (N=5).

Occupation	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Student	81	38.4
Employed	67	31.8
Self-employed	22	10.4
Working Student	36	17.1
Other	5	2.4

Table V: “Occupational Status” (Developed by the Author)

5.1.2 Media Consumption Habits

It is essential to properly understand the respondents' media consumption patterns since it offers important context for the quantity and variety of fashion advertisement exposure they receive. The answers to four closed-ended questions about media consumption are shown in this section. With alternatives ranging from less than an hour to more than six hours, every person was asked to estimate the amount of time they spent each day on different social platforms. A variety of media were covered by the investigation, including radio, books, blogs, podcasts, television, magazines, and social media. The present study contributes to the development of a framework for grasping participant exposure to fashion commercial frequency and channel.

The first inquiry focused on respondents' use of social media. With 59.7% of participants (N=126) saying that they spend 1-2 hours each day on online platforms, social media emerged as the most widely utilized medium. A large part of 21.3% of respondents (N=45) spent three to four hours on social networking sites, compared to 15.2% (N=32) who utilized social networking sites for less than an hour.

Time Spent Per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	32	15.2
1-2 hours	126	59.7
3-4 hours	45	21.3
5-6 hours	4	1.9
More than 6 hours	4	1.9

Table VI: “Social Media Usage” (Developed by the Author)

The subject of the second question was viewing habits on television. 62.6% of the participants (N=132) said they watched less than an hour of television per day. A smaller subset of 34.6% of respondents (N=73) spent one to two hours watching television, and very few spent more than two hours in front of the screen.

Time Spent Per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	132	62.6
1-2 hours	73	34.6
3-4 hours	4	1.9
5-6 hours	0	0
More than 6 hours	2	0.9

Table VII: “Watching Television” (Developed by the Author)

The third examination evaluated people's consumption of magazines. With 84.4% of participants (N=178) reporting that they read magazines for less than an hour a day,

magazines were the least popular media. Only a small percentage of the subjects said they read magazines more frequently.

Time Spent Per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	178	84.4
1-2 hours	28	13.3
3-4 hours	2	0.9
5-6 hours	1	0.5
More than 6 hours	2	0.9

Table VIII: “Readership of Magazines” (Developed by the Author)

The final question looked at how much other media, such as radio, books, blogs, and podcasts, are absorbed. The amount of time spent interacting with different media outlets varied considerably; 44.1% of respondents (N=93) spent 1-2 hours per day doing so, while 42.2% (N=89) spent less than an hour.

Time Spent Per Day	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Less than 1 hour	89	42.2
1-2 hours	93	44.1
3-4 hours	26	12.3
5-6 hours	1	0.5
More than 6 hours	2	0.9

Table IX: “Consumption of Other Media” (Developed by the Author)

5.1.3 Attitudinal Measures Towards Sexism in Fashion Ads

This subsection's analysis focusses on the attitudinal measures that were investigated in the survey's four closed-ended enquiries. The intent of these questions was to seek the way customers felt about sexism and how women are presented in fashion commercials. Participants were requested to select how much they shared or disagreed with each statement in the survey, with the options ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree."

Subjects were prompted to evaluate their agreement with the following statement in the first question: "I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light." This remark was agreed with by 57.3% of individuals (N=121) overall and strongly agreed with by 15.6% of respondents (N=33). 22.7% of respondents (N=48) adopted a neutral position, while just a tiny percentage disagreed, with 3.3% of respondents (N=7) and 0.9% (N=2) strongly disagreeing. The mean response falls between "Agree" and "Neutral," with the mode being "Agree," suggesting that a majority of people recognize and are worried about the negative portrayal of women in advertisements.

"The use of sexual imagery in advertisements is generally acceptable." was the statement employed in the following question to gauge the respondents' acceptability of such imagery. Significant disapproval of this notion was shown by the answers, with 49.8% of those surveyed (N=105) disagreeing and 17.1% (N=36) strongly disagreeing. A smaller number of respondents were neutral (18.5%, N=39), while only a minority agreed (11.8%, N=25) or strongly agreed (2.8%, N=6). The mode and mean responses both lean "Disagree," reflecting a widespread aversion of sexual images in ad campaigns.

"Using sexual imagery in fashion advertisements is appropriate." was the third query. With 47.9% of respondents (N=101) disagreeing and 24.2% (N=51) strongly opposing, a large proportion of those questioned had negative opinions about this idea. Neutral responses came from 19% of participants (N=40), and very few agreed (6.2%, N=13) or strongly agreed (2.8%, N=6). The mode of "Disagree" and the mean response, which again swings in the direction of "Disagree," support the unfavorable attitude of sexual depictions in fashion-focused promotional materials.

The last question considered the primary objective of fashion marketing by posing the issue, "Fashion advertisements should focus more on the product than on the models." With 47.9% of respondents (N=101) agreeing and 34.6% (N=73) strongly agreeing, an important lead in this case supported a product-centered strategy. A more limited number (15.6%, N=33) remained neutral, while only an isolated minority disagreed (1.9%, N=4). The audience's fondness for publicity that showcases the product instead of the models can be determined from the fact that both the mean and the mode fall into the "Agree" group.

Attitudinal Measures	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light	33 (15.6%)	121 (57.3%)	48 (22.7%)	7 (3.3%)	2 (0.9%)
The use of sexual imagery in advertisements is generally acceptable	6 (2.8%)	25 (11.8%)	39 (18.5%)	105 (49.8%)	36 (17.1%)
Using sexual imagery in fashion advertisements is appropriate	6 (2.8%)	13 (6.2%)	40 (19%)	101 (47.9%)	51 (24.2%)
Fashion advertisements should focus more on the product than on the models	73 (34.6%)	101 (47.9%)	33 (15.6%)	4 (1.9%)	0 (0%)

Table X: "Attitudinal Measures" (Developed by the Author)

5.1.4 Perception of Objectification in Fashion Ads

This subsection strives to determine the respondents' perceptions regarding the objectification of women in ten distinct fashion advertising on various mediums. "This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner." was the statement with those who

participated were asked to assess their agreement. Respondents might select from the following options: "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," and "Strongly Disagree." The answers offer insightful information on the objectification ideas surrounding the visual content of these campaigns.

A substantial perception of objectification was observed for the first promotion, with 60.2% of respondents (N=127) choosing "Strongly Agree" and 32.7% (N=69) choosing "Agree." A smaller portion, 3.3% (N=7), stayed indifferent, while 3.3% (N=7) disagreed, and just a single person (0.5%, N=1) strongly disagreed. The mode and mean responses to this advertising were both "Strongly Agree," meaning that there was widespread consensus that women were being denigrated in this.



Figure V: "Ad 1 Featured in the Survey", Duncan (2015) [Source:

<https://metro.co.uk/2015/03/18/dolce-gabbana-in-hot-water-again-after-gang-rape-ad-campaign-resurfaces-just-days-after-ivf-furore-5108624/>]

The second advert showed an analogous tendency, with 67.3% of respondents (N=142) strongly agreeing and 28.9% (N=61) agreeing that the message objectified women. Only 1.4% (N=3) were neutral or disagreed with the assertion in question, while just 0.9% (N=2) strongly disagreed. This advertisement's mean and mode were both "Strongly Agree," demonstrating that objectification is a common viewpoint.



Figure VI: “Ad 2 Featured in the Survey”, Yoakum (2014) [Source: <https://www.marketsmiths.com/2014/badvertising-scent-of-a-woman-tom-fords-va-jay-jay-fragrance-ad/>]

Regarding the third publicity, 59.2% of individuals (N=125) strongly agreed, and 33.6% (N=71) agreed, indicating that the perception of objectification remained high. Meanwhile, 3.3% (N=7) were neutral, 2.4% (N=5) disagreed, and 1.4% (N=3) strongly disagreed. The average and mean replies were "Strongly Agree," indicating that the spot was seen as dehumanizing by the overwhelming majority.



Figure VII: “Ad 3 Featured in the Survey”, Stampler (2014) [Source: Stampler, L. (2014, June 19). <https://time.com/2901435/charney-american-apparel-ads/>]

Reactions to the fourth advertisement were more diverse. While 32.2% of respondents (N=68) agreed that the commercial was objectifying, a sizable proportion disagreed.

Specifically, 29.9% (N=63) stayed neutral, 27% (N=57) disagreed, 8.1% (N=17) strongly agreed, and 2.8% (N=6) strongly disagreed. The mean and mode replies were "Agree," reflecting that while an important proportion of those polled believed that the campaign was objectifying, there was also an important number that felt neutral or disapproved.

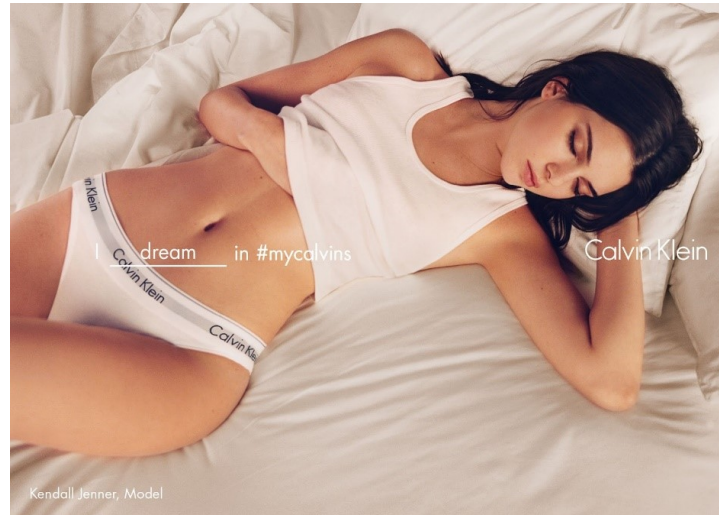


Figure VIII: "Ad 4 Featured in the Survey", Kennedy and CNN (2024) [Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/18/style/why-calvin-klein-ads-still-get-people-talking-bof/index.html>]

There was an apparent reduction in the sense of objectification in the fifth promotion. Of the replies received, 45% of respondents (N=95) disagreed, 27% (N=57) were neutral, and 14.2% (N=32) strongly disagreed. A smaller portion, 10% (N=21) agreed, and just 3.8% (N=8) strongly agreed. According to the mean and mode states, which were "Disagree," many individuals were unaware that that the message denigrated women.



Figure IX: “Ad 5 Featured in the Survey”, Commins (2019) [Source: <https://fashionista.com/2019/04/gucci-pre-fall-2019-campaign>]

Emotions to the sixth advertisement were also divided: 36.5% of respondents (N=77) agreed that the ad was objectifying, while 30.3% (N=64) were impartial. On the other hand, 22.7% (N=48) disagreed, 7.6% (N=16) strongly agreed, and 2.8% (N=6) strongly disagreed. The mean and mode of states were "Agree," showing that while there was a good deal of neutrality or disagreement, a substantial amount of those polled believed the ad was degrading.



Figure X: “Ad 6 Featured in the Survey”, Maheshwari and Friedman (2021) [Source: <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/16/business/victorias-secret-collective-megan-rapinoe.html>]

There was only a slight feeling of objectification in the seventh publicity. A majority of the group, 52.6% (N=111), disagreed, and 34.1% (N=72) strongly disagreed. Only 10% (N=21) were neutral. A smaller part, 1.4% (N=3) agreed, and 0.9% (N=2) strongly agreed. The replies' mean and mode were "Disagree," reflecting that many individuals did not perceive the campaign as demeaning women.



Figure XI: “Ad 7 Featured in the Survey”, Ell (2018) [Source:

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/22/aerie-is-a-standout-with-body-positive-ads-and-real-models.html>]

A comparable low degree of objectification was noted for the eighth ad. 58.3% of respondents (N=123) strongly disagreed, 37.4% (N=79) disagreed, and only 1.9% (N=4) were impartial. A very tiny number, 1.4% (N=3), agreed, and 0.9% (N=2) strongly agreed. It is evident from the mean and mode responds, which were "Strongly Disagree," that many respondents did not think the ad was objectifying.



Figure XII: “Ad 8 Featured in the Survey”, BAJEKAL (2023) [Source: <https://time.com/6302562/stella-mccartney-sustainability-interview-lvmh/>]

For the ninth advertisement, 58.3% of respondents (N=123) strongly disagreed, and 37.9% (N=80) disagreed. A smaller number, 1.9% (N=4), agreed, while 0.9% (N=2) were neutral, and another 0.9% (N=2) strongly agreed. This constitutes an extensive majority. The average and median replies were "Strongly Disagree," showing the public generally agreed that the promotion did not dehumanize women.



Figure XIII: “Ad 9 Featured in the Survey”, Modder (2022) [Source: <https://medium.com/marketing-in-the-age-of-digital/making-consumers-feel-seen-the-success-of-h-ms-she-s-a-lady-campaign-commercial-4c070ca2039d>]

At last, there was a slight sensation of objectification in the tenth commercial. 63.5% of participants (N=134) strongly disagreed, and 32.7% (N=69) disagreed, making up the largest percentage of respondents. Only 1.4% (N=3) were neutral, 1.4% (N=3) agreed, and 0.9% (N=2) strongly agreed. Mean and mode responses were "Strongly Disagree," illustrating that there was a lack of widespread awareness that this advert objectified women.



Figure XIV: “Ad 10 Featured in the Survey”, McLaughlin (2023) [Source: <https://www.brandcredential.com/post/uniqlos-winning-marketing-strategy>]

5.1.5 Behavioral Intentions

The questionnaire additionally looked at how people's views of businesses and propensity to buy were affected by witnessing discriminatory adverts. These behavioral intention indicators are essential for assessing the potential influence of advertising tactics on consumer choice. Two closed-ended questions were designed to gauge how sexist ads affected consumers' perceptions of brands and likelihood of making a purchase.

Participants' answers to the first question, "Sexist advertisements negatively affect my perception of the brand," revealed how the ads harm their views of the organization. This remark was agreed upon by 50.2% of respondents (N=106) in total, with 28.4% (N=60)

strongly agreeing. Meanwhile, 16.1% of participants (N=34) stayed neutral, 5.2% (N=11) disagreed, and not a single reply expressed a strong dissent. The mode was "Agree," and the mean response tended towards agreement, revealing that the majority of those asked did, in fact, believe that gender biased commercials negatively impact their impression of the brand.

The second inquiry concerned the possibility of making a purchase following exposure to sexist promos, posing the following statement: "I would purchase products from a fashion brand after seeing a sexist commercial." With 50.7% of respondents (N=107) disapproving and 23.2% (N=49) strongly disagreeing, many participants showed hesitation. A lesser proportion of attendees, 22.3% (N=47), were neutral, while a small minority, 2.4% (N=5), agreed, and 1.4% (N=3) strongly agreed that they would still consider acquiring. A considerable section of the consumer base could be adversely affected by sexist marketing practices, as indicated by the mode of "Disagree," which had a mean response that leaned towards disagreement.

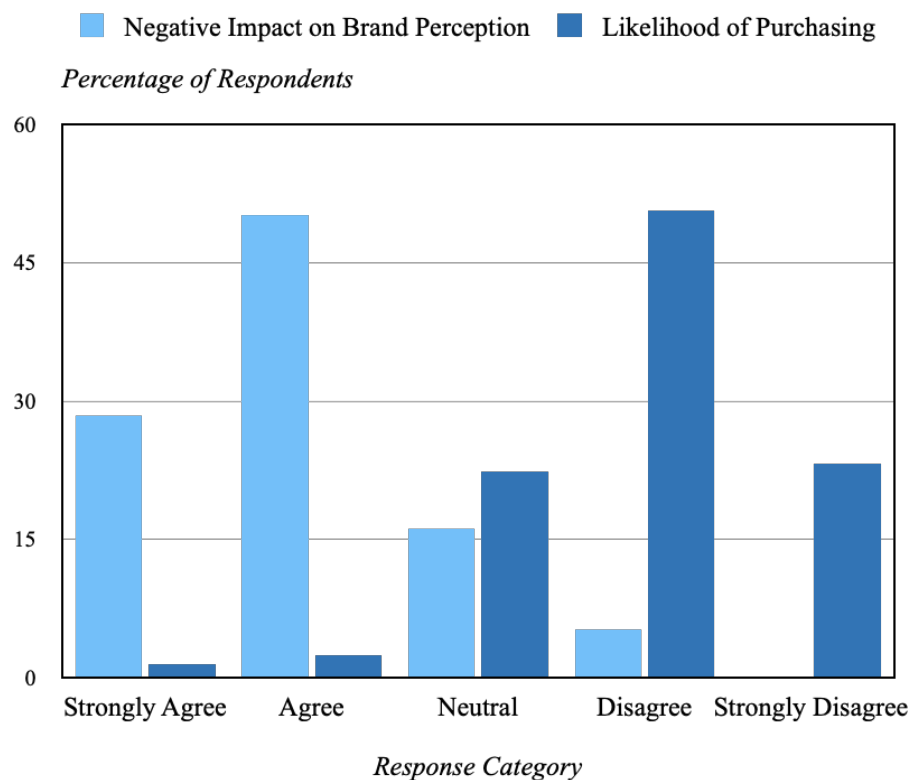


Figure XV: "Behavioral Intentions" (Developed by the Author)

5.1.6 Final Reflections on Advertising Influence

The ultimate segment of the questionnaire centered on comprehending the ways in which fashion commercials impact consumers' buying choices, their inclinations toward fashion advertising themes, and their opinions regarding the most detrimental elements of sexism marketing. Important information on consumer behavior and views about fashion advertising can be gleaned from these three closed-ended questions.

The first question, "Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions?" inquired about the effects of fashion advertisements on the purchases made by the participants. Fashion advertisements do affect consumers' purchase decisions, according to a huge majority of respondents, 86.7% (N=183) who said "Yes," compared to 13.3% (N=28) who answered "No," indicating a general agreement that fashion communication has a major impact on how shoppers react.

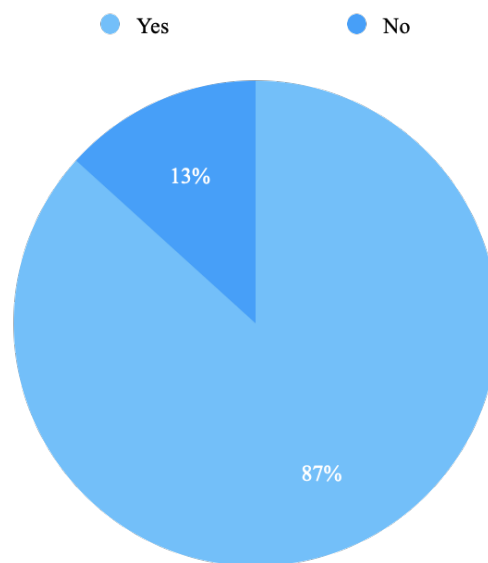


Figure XVI: "Influence on Purchasing Decisions" (Developed by the Author)

Participants were asked to indicate the most appealing themes in fashion marketing in response to the second query, "Do you prefer fashion advertisements that promote...". The following options were presented to the respondents: "Luxury and Glamour," "Authenticity and Naturalness," "Diversity and Inclusivity," and "Sexuality and Provocation." 71.8% of respondents (N=150) stated they appreciated patterns that emphasized "Authenticity and Naturalness," whereas 66.5% (N=139) claimed they preferred elements that focused on

"Diversity and Inclusivity." Conversely, 22% of respondents (N=46) chose "Luxury and Glamour," while just 1.9% (N=4) picked "Sexuality and Provocation."

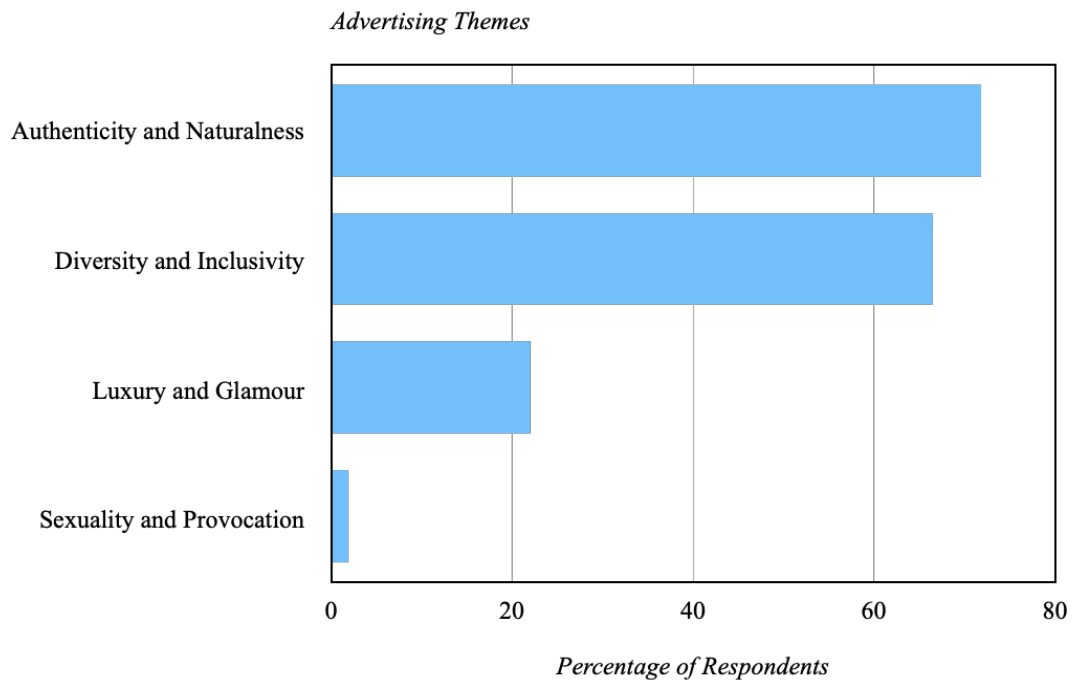


Figure XVII: "Preference for Advertising Themes" (Developed by the Author)

The third question, "What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements?" encouraged participants to choose the problems they considered most upsetting in sexist ads. The options offered were: "Objectification of the Female Body," "Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes," "Negative Effect on Self-Perception," "Encouragement of Gender Violence," as well as "Other." According to the data, the most problematic element was named by 61.7% of respondents (N=129) as "Objectification of the Female Body," closely followed by 60.3% (N=126) who named "Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes." Furthermore, 57.4% of respondents (N=120) expressed concern about the "Negative Effect on Self-Perception," whereas 35.4% (N=74) emphasized the seriousness of "Encouragement of Gender Violence." A small minority, 0.5% of respondents (N=1), either had no complaints about sexist commercials or chose "Other," showing worries over sexualization of the body (0.5%).

5.2 Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses on Gender Representation in Fashion Ads

An extensive examination of the survey's open-ended replies is provided in this section. Recurring themes were found, similar responses were grouped into larger categories, and these patterns were then improved to make sure they appropriately represented the data as part of a systematic evaluation process. The open-ended responses were given in response to four primary inquiries: three focused on specific advertisements from Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and H&M, requesting participants to share their thoughts on gender representation in these ads, and one asked for broad suggestions for fashion companies to enhance gender depiction in their promotional materials. The purpose of this investigation is to develop a profound understanding of the respondents' views and proposals about how women are presented in fashion ads.

5.2.1 First Coding: Identifying Recurring Themes

The first phase was a thorough evaluation and examination of participant comments in order to find any reoccurring themes or patterns in the responses to the four open-ended questions. This involved going over each response very carefully, identifying recurring trends and concepts, and grouping them into more general categories. The survey asked individuals to discuss the portrayal of gender in ads from Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and H&M, and to offer advice for fashion companies on how to do better in terms of both genders image. These specific questions formed the framework of the analysis. It was feasible to identify key patterns and recurring matters that symbolize the audience's overall views and issues by methodically arranging their answers.

The following queries were the primary objective of the assessment:

1. "What are your thoughts on this Dolce & Gabbana advertisement regarding gender representation?"



Figure XVIII: "Picture 1 Featured in the Survey", Duncan (2015) [Source: <https://metro.co.uk/2015/03/18/dolce-gabbana-in-hot-water-again-after-gang-rape-ad-campaign-resurfaces-just-days-after-ivf-furore-5108624/>]

Several attendees shared their opinions about the Dolce & Gabbana commercial, which provided important new information about how gender is portrayed in the commercial. A participant mentioned, "The ad portrays women as if they are under the control of men, which is really regressive and disappointing." Another respondent stated, "It feels like something out of the 1950s where women are shown as weak and passive, completely at the mercy of the male figures around them." "There's this clear message that women are not on equal footing with men; they're depicted as being secondary and submissive," expressed another participant's sentiments. "It's frustrating to see women still being shown in such a subordinate role; it's like we haven't moved forward," a different responder added.

These responses clearly highlight a recurring theme of Support of Conventional Gender Roles. The support for traditional gender roles is a recurrent topic that is seen in many comments. The advertisement is seen as upholding archaic and conventional sex stereotypes, which portray women as inferior to or dependent on men. This subject effectively conveys the worry that these representations perpetuate an antiquated and detrimental understanding of gender dynamics.

2. "What are your thoughts on this Calvin Klein advertisement regarding gender representation?"



Figure XIX: "Picture 2 Featured in the Survey", Kennedy and CNN (2024) [Source: <https://edition.cnn.com/2024/01/18/style/why-calvin-klein-ads-still-get-people-talking-bof/index.html>]

A variety of perspectives were offered by those who took part concerning gender representation in the Calvin Klein campaign. A participant said, "It's a sexual advertisement, but not in a demeaning way, which feels more respectful than other ads I've seen." Someone else replied, "While it's clear that the ad is meant to be provocative, it doesn't cross the line into something that feels exploitative." Similarly, "The sexualization is there, but it's more subtle and not as offensive as it could be" was mentioned by one respondent. A viewer, however, disagreed, saying, "Even though it's toned down compared to other ads, it feels like the woman is still being used as a sexual object."

The topic of Moderate Sexualization is given prominence by the above remarks. The stress placed on the female model's sexualized presentation was nevertheless very much apparent in the ad, despite some respondents' acknowledgment that it was less intense than prior promotions. The feedback indicates that although the sexualization was less overt, it was still an essential component of the commercial, eliciting conflicting emotions in the audience.

In addition, several of those surveyed discussed how the advertisement represented confidence and power. A viewer commented, "I see a confident and strong woman, which is empowering and different from other ads that just focus on sexuality." Someone else said, "The model's expression and posture convey a sense of self-reliance, which I appreciate." One participant, however, expressed an alternative viewpoint, saying, "It's difficult to take empowerment seriously because the attempt to show power is overshadowed by the lingering sexualization." In a similar vein, a different participant said, "The sexual overtones that still dominate this commercial undermine the effort to show strength."

The subject of Mixed Representation is highlighted in these statements. While a few people thought the advertisement did an adequate job of using the model's body language and facial expressions to communicate power and independence, others believed the underlying sexualization eclipsed those concepts. This dichotomy of reactions suggests that not all viewers fully understood the empowering theme of the promotion, which contributed to its mixed reception.

Moreover, multiple individuals contemplated how the campaign conforms to Calvin Klein's well-established brand identity. A participant said, "This is typical Calvin Klein—provocative but tasteful, which is what the brand is known for." Another stated, "The ad fits the brand's identity, which has always pushed boundaries with its provocative content." A viewer pointed out, "Calvin Klein has always been about pushing the envelope, and this ad continues that tradition in a way that feels true to the brand." "It's consistent with what I expect from Calvin Klein—sexy, edgy, but still stylish," indicated an observer.

These answers deliver examples of the Brand Consistency motif. The promotional material was largely acknowledged to be in line with Calvin Klein's solid persona, which typically includes overtly provocative elements related to eroticism. Even though the inclusion of sexual images is controversial, participants felt the ad's approach corresponded with the brand's identity and that it is part of the company's consistent messaging strategy.

3. "What are your thoughts on this H&M advertisement regarding gender representation?"



Figure XX: “Picture 3 Featured in the Survey”, Modder (2022) [Source: <https://medium.com/marketing-in-the-age-of-digital/making-consumers-feel-seen-the-success-of-h-ms-she-s-a-lady-campaign-commercial-4c070ca2039d>]

A lot of attendees voiced sentiments about the H&M commercial, bringing to light an assortment of helpful insights about the brand's treatment of gender representation. In accordance with one participant, "This advertisement feels contemporary and inclusive, showcasing a variety of individuals that reflect today's society." Someone more said, "It's refreshing to see an advertisement that represents a diverse group of people without relying on outdated stereotypes." Another participant declared, "The ad is a breath of fresh air because it shows inclusivity in a way that feels natural and unforced." A different person stated, "This is the kind of representation we need more of—diverse, inclusive, and respectful of all genders."

Positive and Diverse Representation is the overall concept that these words stress. The majority of those surveyed appreciated how the message welcomed diversity without falling back on prejudices, and they commended it for its open and varied depiction of gender. The aforementioned subject underlines the favorable reception given to advertisements that embody modern principles of inclusiveness and dignity for all individuals.

In addition to its varied representation, many respondents felt the H&M campaign was honest and relatable. Someone said, "This ad feels genuine and reflects real life better than the others, which makes it much more impactful." "The models look like real people, not airbrushed or idealized, which makes the ad more relatable to everyday consumers," added a second participant, echoing this sentiment. Another person expressed a comparable opinion, saying, "This advertisement feels genuine and authentic; it doesn't feel forced or staged." Another viewer noted, "Seeing models that look like people I might actually know makes this ad feel more connected to reality."

The replies provided reinforce the principle of Relatability and Authenticity. In contrast to other ads, viewers found the H&M commercial to be more approachable and genuine, and they connected it with its accurate depiction of people. The value of authenticity in advertising is made clear by this theme, especially when it comes to building an audience.

Further, a handful of consumers valued the advertisement's gender-neutral technique. "I like that this ad doesn't push any gender stereotypes; it just shows people as they are," said one participant. "It's great to see an ad that focuses on the individuals rather than forcing them into specific gender roles," wrote another commenter. A different respondent declared, "It's refreshing that this advertisement doesn't try to classify anyone into a particular role because it's gender neutral." Someone more remarked, "This ad does a great job of just showing people without any unnecessary gendered messaging, which feels very modern and progressive."

These observations highlight the Gender Neutrality idea. Many of the users appreciated the campaign's non-stereotypical and impartial description of people, pointing out that it did not adhere to standard gender expectations. This subject promotes the favorable reactions to adverts that let people appear for who they are rather than reinforcing sexist assumptions about gender.

4. "Do you have any suggestions for fashion brands regarding gender representation in their advertisements?"

A variety of recommendations were made by those polled regarding how fashion businesses could enhance gender representation in their marketing campaigns. "Fashion

ads should showcase all types of people, not just the stereotypical model look," stressed one participant. Another respondent echoed a similar belief, saying, "Brands need to be more inclusive and show the real diversity of society, not just one narrow idea of beauty." One participant said, "We need to see more representation of different races, genders, and body types—everyone should be able to see themselves in fashion ads." Someone else mentioned, "Inclusivity should be at the heart of every campaign; it's time to move away from the outdated, exclusive image of fashion."

Proposals for Increased Diversity and Inclusivity in Fashion Advertising is a concept that is furthered by the above statements. The need for organizations to incorporate an expanded spectrum of gender identities, nationalities, and body types in their ads was a common request. Participants repeatedly criticized the restrictive standards typically seen in fashion advertising and demanded a more comprehensive depiction that captures the genuine diversity of society.

The proposal to lessen the sexualization of models in fashion advertisements was another important one. According to a participant, "Less sexualization would make the ads more respectful and effective—it's about the clothes, not the bodies wearing them." "Focus on the clothes, not on turning the models into sex symbols; fashion should be about style, not sexuality," said a different reply. "It would be great to see ads that don't rely on sexual imagery to sell products—it's outdated and unnecessary," added a participant in a similar spirit. Another attendee stated, "Fashion brands should focus more on the product and less on sexualizing the people who wear it; it would make the ads more appealing and respectful."

The concept of Reduction of Sexualization is reflected in these discoveries. Several people reported they would like to see less sexualization of both men and women in fashion company promotional activities. A clear preference existed for advertisements that tended to be product-oriented, accentuating the fashion rather than resorting to sexual imagery to make a point.

Another common comment made by participants was that fashion firms had to support gender equality by steering clear of clichéd representations of masculinity and femininity. Based to a participant, "Ads should empower all genders equally, not

reinforce outdated stereotypes that only serve to divide us." Another respondent said, "Fashion brands have the power to change societal norms—use that power to promote equality and challenge traditional gender roles." The possible influence of advertising was also brought up in a comment stating, "Brands can set an example by promoting equality and showing that fashion is for everyone, regardless of gender." "It's time for fashion to stop pushing gender norms and start promoting a more equal and inclusive world," another person added.

These answers provide examples of the Encouragement of Gender Equality subject. Companies should shift from stereotypical portrayals of gender to messages that support and advance gender equality, according to replies. There was a strong belief that fashion businesses should support fairness by using their platforms to positively impact society standards.

Finally, there was a strong desire for fashion ads to feature more lifelike imagery. "Show real people with real lives, not just idealized versions of what the world looks like," remarked one participant. This opinion was shared by a different respondent who said, "Ads should reflect the world as it truly is, with all its diversity and complexity—not just a polished, unrealistic image." Another respondent made a similar observation, claiming, "We need to see more authenticity in fashion advertising; people want to relate to what they see, not feel alienated by it." A different participant pointed out, "Fashion ads should capture real emotions and everyday situations, making the products and the brand more relatable and trustworthy."

These observations underline the idea of Realistic Portrayal. Ad campaigns that presented people and circumstances in a more sympathetic and genuine way were highly demanded. In contrast to unrealistic or inaccessible pictures, participants recommended the worth of authenticity in fashion advertising and confirmed a wish to interact with genuine individuals, true feelings, and real-life scenarios shown in the ads.

5.2.2 Theme Development and Refinement: Organizing and Ensuring Accurate Representation of Data

Two crucial steps were engaged in the evaluation of the open-ended survey responses: organizing similar codes into more general themes and polishing these themes to make sure they appropriately represented the input from the participants. During the coding process, the first stage was to find distinguishing themes. These were then organized into bigger, more thorough groups. The purpose of this approach was to guarantee that the topics were appropriate for in-depth research while also capturing an array of the responses received.

Following the first round of coding, linked subjects were combined into more general categories that contained the recurrent themes seen in the replies. In order to create more inclusive themes that could properly represent the data for extensive study, this technique was required. For instance, comments about the Dolce & Gabbana commercial's reinforcement of gender stereotypes and roles were grouped together because they often discussed how the promo reinforced biases about women, especially the notion that they should be subservient to men. Analogously, this category also had criticisms of the Calvin Klein ad that emphasized conventional gender characteristics. This classification was set up in light of remarks that were made on frequently regarding the upholding sex norms, which led to the establishment of this grouping.

Comments against the use of sexual images in the Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana advertisements were combined to create a new category called Sexualization and Objectification. Concerns were raised by respondents over how these marketing campaigns diminished women, seeing them as nothing more than objects of desire, which could have detrimental consequences by promoting unfavorable social norms. This category was established as a result of numerous answers bringing up these topics, which led to the conclusion that objectification and sexualization were prevalent themes in all of the adverts.

The H&M campaign, which received recognition for its inclusive portrayal of gender and foregoing the sexualization seen in other advertising, served as the main source of inspiration for the Positive and Inclusive Representation category. The second group was created as a result of respondents' appreciation for the advertisement's illustration of a variety of body types and non-stereotypical identities. This theme additionally contained recommendations

for more positive and inclusive marketing approaches that fashion firms should use. The constant affirmation of the value of equality and inclusion in branding played an integral part in the creation of this classification.

Advocacy for Diversity and Equality, the last category, was created based on the respondents' broader proposals. Several attendees demanded that fashion businesses include more varied and egalitarian imagery in their promotional materials. This group shows how much people wish ads to stop using clichés and instead display a wide variety of human experiences. The widespread need for more progressive and welcoming portrayals in fashion advertising served as the impetus for the development of this theme.

Refinement of the discovered themes to guarantee they appropriately mirrored the data gathered was the last stage of the research. This required going over the main ideas again to make sure every topic was unique, well defined, and devoid of repetition or overlap. In order to guarantee that the final themes accurately and comprehensively summarized the respondents' views on gender representation in the chosen fashion advertising, the procedure for refinement was essential.

The topic Reinforcement of Gender misconceptions and Roles was updated to better represent the negative consumer reaction to advertisements that perpetuate harmful and antiquated preconceptions. To make sure the theme appropriately conveyed the respondents' worries about the maintenance of traditional gender roles, the comments on the Calvin Klein and D&G ads were scrutinized.

In a similar vein, the concept of Objectification and Sexualization was developed further to highlight the considerable discontent with the incorrect imagery used in fashion advertising. In the Calvin Klein and D&G advertisements, those surveyed expressed worries about women being treated more like objects than like unique people. This subject was very pertinent to them. The process of refining the concept made sure that it accurately conveyed the general unhappiness with the dehumanization and sexualization of women in these commercials.

In order to accurately convey the respondents' preference for advertisements that incorporate various and equitable gender images, the Positive and Inclusive Representation theme was

revised. The H&M commercial was praised for receiving a favorable response from respondents, who valued the ad's emphasis on diversity and steer clear of biases. This iteration was required to make sure the topic sufficiently captured the affirmative responses from those polled and the wider need for broader material in fashion promotional materials.

In conclusion, with the goal to incorporate the respondents' more comprehensive tips for enhancing gender representation in fashion advertising, the Advocacy for Diversity and Equality theme was expanded. Strong demands for greater range, less sexualization, and more respectful and accurate portrayals of all genders have been built into this topic. The process of refining the subject ensured that it rightly expressed the respondents' wish for fashion businesses to set an example in advancing tolerance and gender parity.

Theme	Developments/Topics
Reinforcement of Gender Stereotypes and Roles	<p>Remarks pointing out how the Calvin Klein and Dolce & Gabbana ads reinforce archaic and traditional gender stereotypes.</p> <p>A focus on how these advertisements perpetuated the notion that women are inferior to males.</p> <p>Refinement to capture the unfavorable customer response to damaging gender stereotypes.</p>
Sexualization and Objectification	<p>Worries over the use of sexualized images in the Dolce & Gabbana and Calvin Klein ads.</p> <p>Respondents emphasized how women are objectified and treated like simply objects of desire.</p> <p>Refinement to make sure the topic appropriately conveyed the outrage about the sexualization and dehumanization of these advertisements.</p>

Positive and Inclusive Representation	<p>Positive comments on the H&M commercial's inclusive and diverse gender representation.</p> <p>Gratitude for the representation of diverse body forms and non-stereotypical identities as well as the avoidance of stereotypes.</p> <p>Refinement to highlight respondents' desire for gender representations in fashion commercials that are more inclusive and diverse.</p>
Advocacy for Diversity and Equality	<p>Responses were more general, urging more equitable and diversified imagery in fashion advertising.</p> <p>Strong appeals for less sexualization and more respectful and truthful portrayals of all genders.</p> <p>Refinement to consider the respondents' wish for fashion labels to take the lead in advancing gender equality and tolerance.</p>

Table XI: “Development and Refinement of Themes from Open-Ended Survey Responses”
(Developed by the Author)

5.2.3 Detailed Analysis of Open-Ended Responses by Advertisement

This analysis's primary objective was to offer a thorough analysis of the survey's open-ended responses, with a special focus on the participants' views about how gender is portrayed in fashion ads and their more general recommendations to strengthen gender representation in this medium. These replies were methodically categorized and assessed, and the outcomes provide important insights into participants' perceptions of various Dolce & Gabbana, Calvin Klein, and H&M commercials as well as what adjustments they think the industry needs to make. The advertisements referenced are illustrated in subparagraph 5.2.1, providing visual

context to the analysis. The conclusions are shown below along with instances taken from the survey data, making sure that the main ideas appropriately represent the views and worries of those who took part.

Considerable criticism was voiced in reaction to the Dolce & Gabbana campaign concerning how gender roles were portrayed. Several people voiced their disagreement, stating things like "I think this doesn't represent the female gender in a positive way" and "The woman is submissive to the man." These comments illustrate how strongly people disagree with the advertisement's reinforcement of archaic and outdated assumptions about gender, which present women as subservient and docile. One participant said, "It's disappointing to see such a backward portrayal of women in a modern ad," while another declared, "This ad just reinforces the stereotype that women should be controlled by men." In addition, a few individuals expressed disapproval of the advertisement's sexualization, calling it "Kind of rapey," indicating a profound discomfort with the underlying power relations and subservience that are portrayed. One person pointed out, "It sends a dangerous message about power and gender," while another answered, "The ad feels like it's trying to normalize something that should never be normalized." This issue underlines broader fears about how such portrayals in fashion ads may promote damaging social standards and unfavorable sex prejudices.

Numerous responses were generated by the Calvin Klein ad, especially in relation to its sexualization. Although some respondents were aware of the brand's history of utilizing sensual imagery, their opinions regarding its continuous use were divided. "She is a little bit sexualized, not too much," was one commenter's observation, hinting that although the brand's style was appreciated, less emphasis was desired on sexualization. "It's typical Calvin Klein, but it feels outdated in today's context," noted one person, while "I know it's part of their brand, but they could evolve beyond just using sex appeal," mentioned a second. Some people like the advertisement's attractive aspects, such its portrayal of strength and independence, despite these objections. The statement "I like that she looks powerful, but I wish the ad didn't rely on sexiness to convey that" was made by one person, while another remarked "It is a good gender representation in some ways, showing a strong, confident woman." Despite the sexual overtones, it appears that the advertisement's message of confidence and autonomy was warmly received.

The positive and inclusive image of the H&M advertising received a lot of praise. Survey participants acknowledged the campaign for being "An excellent representation" and "Inclusive," revealing an intense feeling of gratitude for its dedication to diversity and refusal to sexualize. "This is how ads should be—showing real people, not stereotypes," remarked one participant, and "I love that this ad doesn't rely on the usual clichés about gender," observed another. As perceived by feedback like "Authentic" and "Relatable," which showed that respondents thought that the message depicted real-life variety rather than unrealistic or stereotyped gender pictures, the advertisement was also commended for its appeal and integrity. According to one participant, "It's refreshing to see an ad where the models look like people you might actually know," whereas another stated, "This ad feels more connected to reality, not some fantasy version of it." This encouraging comment illustrates the effective job the marketing piece did in providing a more comprehensive and precise version of gender.

Respondents offered broader suggestions for how fashion businesses should enhance gender representation in their marketing efforts in addition to their opinions on individual ads. People who answered the survey expressed an urgent need for greater equality in advertising, asking firms to "Create more equal gender representation" and "Represent a wider range of body types and ethnicities." "Fashion brands should reflect the real world, which means more diversity in their ads," one person proposed. "I want to see people of all shapes, sizes, and backgrounds represented," another participant remarked. This points to a growing need for fashion advertisements that appeal to an expanded spectrum of audiences and represent a wider range of human emotions. Furthermore, a large number of respondents supported a decrease in sexualization, recommending that companies "Try to sexualize the idea of women less and focus more on the products." A commenter stated, "It's time to stop sexualizing models and start respecting them more in ads," while another declared, "Less sex, more substance—focus on what you're selling, not on using bodies to sell it." This indicates a predilection for commercials that put the product above sexual content. In addition, there was a request for more genuine human portrayals, with recommendations to "Show real people" with an array of racial backgrounds, gender identities, and physical characteristics. Someone explained, "Ads should feature real people with real stories, not just idealized versions," while another pointed out, "I want to see diversity not just in appearance, but in the stories and experiences ads reflect." The advocacy of gender parity

was also highly ranked, with respondents suggesting that brands "Move away from gender stereotypes" and "Promote gender equality." According to one participant, "Fashion brands should lead the way in showing what gender equality looks like," and another said, "It's time for ads to stop reinforcing outdated gender roles and start promoting a more equal and fair representation." The suggestions given address the significance of fairer and proactive approaches to advertising.

Chapter 6

Discussion of Findings: Perceived Sexism in Fashion Advertising

6.1 Key Theoretical Insights

This chapter offers an in-depth evaluation of the survey results that were gathered to look at people's perceptions of sexism in fashion advertising. With 32 questions (28 closed-ended and 4 open-ended), the study received 213 responses and provided a complete understanding of how people, especially those from Generation Z, perceive and react to gender depictions in the media. The research task that follows will incorporate the theoretical frameworks covered in earlier chapters with the empirical data. After reviewing the results of the survey's closed-ended questions, the next phase moves on to address the poll's open-ended queries.

The present study's methodological approach was meticulously designed to investigate the many aspects of sexism in the fashion business, as delineated in Chapter 4. The questionnaire was based on important theories, including the criticisms of unattainable beauty standards (Brown, 2019; Kiron, 2022) and the impact of advertising on public opinion (Kilbourne, 1999), which made it possible to connect the data gathered to well-established scholarly debate.

6.1.1 Demographic Factors and Perceptions of Sexism

The results of the survey's closed-ended questions are covered in this section, with particular attention paid to how respondents' opinions of sexism in fashion advertising are influenced

by demographic traits including age, gender, occupation, and educational attainment. In order to deliver a valid interpretation of the survey data, each demographic element is examined considering the conceptual structures established in the literature study.

Participants in the survey were all members of Generation Z, with the largest age group being 23 to 26 years old, accounting for 43.1% of respondents, followed by those aged 19 to 22, who made up 26.1% of the participants. This age distribution is crucial, as Mahapatra et al. (2022) argue that Generation Z, having grown up in digital surroundings, is especially sensitive to social issues, including the portrayal of women in the media. A significant proportion of respondents who are between the ages of 23 and 26 suggests that they are heavily engaged with media content, particularly on digital platforms. The survey's findings support Kilbourne's (2000) hypothesis that younger people are more likely to identify and take issue with preconceptions and unrealistic images of women, particularly if they have had a lot of exposure to digital media. These findings imply that individuals in these age categories are more susceptible to sexist content, which is probably due to their increased digital nativeness.

Gender representation in the survey showed that 52.6% of respondents were female, while 46.9% were male. This gender distribution provides insights into how different sexes perceive sexism in advertisements. The literature suggests that women are more likely to perceive and comment on sexist content due to their societal and personal experiences with discrimination based on gender, especially the works of Brown (2019) and Kiron (2022). This is corroborated by survey data, which reveals that female respondents were more likely to classify adverts as sexist, especially when they showed women in roles that diminished or subjugated them sexually. This result is in line with Kilbourne's (2000) criticism of advertising, which contends that women are more likely to respond negatively to depictions of themselves since they are the main targets of objectification and unachievable beauty standards. The survey's gender-based discrepancies show the necessity of taking gender into account when assessing perceptions of sexism, as women's real-life experiences determine how they understand media content.

Regarding educational background, most respondents had at least a bachelor's degree (45.5%), with 22.7% holding a master's degree. Education is a major factor in determining how people engage with and understand media information. In the words of Kiron (2022),

people who have completed more schooling are more likely to be media literate, which gives them the ability to assess and challenge how gender is portrayed in the media. According to the questionnaire outcomes, respondents with higher educational degrees were more distrustful of commercials pushing unattainable beauty standards, seeing them as contributing to damaging and unrealistic ideals of female attractiveness as well as systemic sexism. This link between education and critical media involvement implies that more education promotes a better grasp of the larger social implications of media portrayals, resulting in stronger opposition to sexist content.

Finally, the survey also explored respondents' occupational backgrounds, with 38.4% identifying as students, 31.8% as employed individuals, and 17.1% as working students. The large number of students is interesting since academic institutions frequently stimulate critical discussions about societal issues, such as the representation of women in the media. Based on Kiron (2022), students, particularly those in higher education, are more likely to be exposed to current academic discussions about gender and media, which shapes how they perceive and evaluate discriminatory content. The poll results back up this claim, showing that students were more likely to criticize unsuitable commercials, particularly those that objectified or stereotyped women. This study stresses the impact of education and academic exposure in developing critical media literacy, which sets how people perceive and respond to media information.

6.1.2 Media Consumption Habits: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

The respondents' media consumption patterns have a significant impact on how they perceive sexism in fashion branding. This part examines the relationship between respondents' opinions on gender representation and the amount of time they spend on different media platforms, connecting these findings to the suitable concepts and writers covered in the literature study.

A substantial portion of participants (59.7%) reported spending 1-2 hours daily on social media, while 21.3% spend 3-4 hours each day. This high level of social media interaction is critical in shaping perceptions of sexism. Grau and Zotos (2016) emphasize the importance

of social media in exposing users to current discourses about gender equality, body positivity, and feminist critiques. This regular exposure increases sensitivity to sexist content, particularly among Generation Z, who are avid users of social sites. Social media's interactive nature enables users to actively connect with material and share their perspectives on gender portrayal, encouraging a culture of critical engagement and challenging traditional gender roles. This approach is consistent with the work of Hollebeek et al. (2021), who examine how digital media allows people to actively affect public discourse. The poll results reflect this, demonstrating that frequent social media users are more likely to detect and remark on misogynistic features in fashion advertising, owing to constant exposure to these critical discourses. Taylor (2019) discusses the idea of "cultural branding," which is also pertinent in this context. Social media platforms provide important opportunities for brands to identify with contemporary societal values such as gender equality. However, brands that fail to authentically embrace these ideals are swiftly chastised, boosting awareness of sexism. This is obvious from the poll results, which show that more active social media users have greater judgments of businesses as a result of their interactions in those online spaces.

Although a significant number of respondents (62.6%) watch less than an hour of television daily, television remains an influential medium, with 34.6% watching one to two hours each day. This lower interaction with television compared to social media shows a shift in media consumption patterns, particularly among Generation Z, which values the immediacy and interactivity of digital platforms. Taylor (2005) and Jackson (2014) propose theories that underline the merging of traditional and digital media, especially as more television material is accessed via digital platforms such as streaming services. This change indicates that, while television continues to dominate, internet channels are increasingly shaping attitudes of gender and sexism. The poll results suggest that respondents who watch less traditional television may have broader viewpoints on gender representation, potentially due to the fact they are less exposed to the standard, sometimes conservative, images of gender roles that television may reinforce. Furthermore, the rising popularity of digital media as a key source of information and entertainment may explain the decline in reliance on television. As Hollebeek et al. (2021) point out, digital media provides more instantaneous and participatory content, resulting in more different opinions on issues such as prejudice in advertising. This is consistent with survey data, which show that respondents who spend more time on digital platforms rather than television are less tolerant of sexist advertising.

In contrast, the survey data reveals that a vast majority (84.4%) of respondents spend less than an hour a day reading magazines, with very few exceeding two hours. Generation Z's poor interaction with print media indicates both a move toward digital content consumption and the decline of traditional print marketing. Campbell (2023) compares the tangibility and permanence of print media to the ephemeral, fast-paced nature of digital content. Despite this, the low level of magazine engagement indicates that their influence on gender perspectives is fading, particularly among younger readers who favor the portability and availability of digital content. This shift away from print media suggests that Generation Z is more likely to be affected by the dynamic, multimedia information available online than by the traditional gender roles shown in magazines. Moreover, Bula (2022) accentuates the trend toward more interactive and experiential online content as digital media progresses. Respondents' lack of involvement with magazines implies an appreciation for more engaging experiences, which allow marketers to connect more directly and meaningfully with customers on issues such as gender parity.

Lastly, a wider variety of interaction with other media channels, such as podcasts, online gaming, books, blogs, and radio, is suggested by the survey results. While 44.1% of respondents spend one to two hours daily on these media, 42.2% spend less than an hour each day. This diversity in media consumption reflects the increasing popularity of modern formats such as blogs, online gaming, and podcasts, as well as the continued influence of classic media such as radio and books. Parashar (2022) discusses the rise of digital content, such as blogs and podcasts, as outlets for more concentrated and in-depth discussions about gender portrayal. These channels enable a more in-depth examination of subjects that the mainstream media may only quickly address. As stated by Wang (2022), because of their ability to produce targeted, interest-specific material, these media channels have the potential to dramatically influence their readers' perceptions, particularly of social concerns. For example, interactive, community-driven experiences in online gaming might influence players' perceptions of gender norms and stereotypes. Wang's (2022) theories on experiential branding argue that these interactive encounters can have a significant impact on people's attitudes toward gender and other societal issues. According to the poll results, persons who interact with different media types may develop more nuanced and informed viewpoints on sexism as they receive access to content that challenges traditional gender standards in ways that other media may not.

6.1.3 Attitudinal Measures: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

This section looks at the survey's attitudinal responses, with a particular emphasis on how individuals feel about how women are portrayed in ads and how sexual imagery is used in fashion branding. A fuller understanding of the people's views regarding gender representation in media is provided by the evaluation, which links these findings to ideas and authors covered in the literature investigation.

According to the poll results, a large majority of respondents felt that advertisements frequently represent women in an adverse manner, with 57.3% agreeing and 15.6% strongly agreeing. This finding is consistent with complaints raised in studies on gender representation in media, which state that advertising frequently depicts women in stereotyped roles that emphasize beauty and domesticity, reinforcing traditional gender roles and contributing to gender inequity. Such portrayals restrict women to basic images that reinforce detrimental societal standards and contribute to an unequal environment. The high level of agreement among participants suggests widespread acceptance of these unflattering images, which accords to Waits' (2023) characterization of cultural branding. Cultural branding focuses on integrating corporate ideals with current cultural concerns, such as gender equality. When corporations fail to address these challenges and instead propagate unfavorable stereotypes of women, they face backlash from socially conscious audiences, particularly younger generations who are more sensitive to these issues.

In contrast, the minority of respondents who disagreed or stayed neutral regarding the negative depictions illustrate the ongoing debate within communities. In line with theories regarding the influence of cultural backgrounds on consumer conclusions, these differences may originate from various cultural and social settings, in which perceptions of gender representation in media are affected by unique norms and values.

The survey also found widespread opposition to the use of sexual images in advertising, with 49.8% disagreeing and 17.1% strongly disagreeing with its appropriateness. These reactions demonstrate a widespread dislike for sexualized portrayals in advertising, particularly in the fashion industry, reflecting arguments that these depictions promote harmful and unachievable beauty ideals. Bhatia (2021) points out experiential branding, which aims to create memorable and meaningful brand experiences that resonate with consumers on a

deeper level. Considering that many respondents to the poll disapprove of sexual images, it is likely that these images are seen as detracting rather than adding to the overall brand experience.

Some respondents who supported the use of sexual imagery may represent a demographic that is consistent with traditional advertising methods, which have historically employed such pictures to entice consumers and elicit desire. Nonetheless, there is increasing pressure on corporations to embrace more realistic and balanced gender representations, as Gill (2008) noted in discussions on gender portrayal in advertising. This shift reflects a greater cultural demand for ads that promote inclusivity and authenticity in brand identification, as opposed to propagating obsolete prejudices.

The study results also show that most respondents (47.9% disagreeing and 24.2% strongly disagreeing) believe that utilizing sexual imagery in advertising for fashion is inappropriate. This finding validates feminist theorists' criticisms against the fashion industry for its emphasis on sexualized descriptions that reinforce negative gender stereotypes. The omission of sexual images in fashion advertising can also be viewed through the lens of Lai's (2021) argument, which notes how fashion advertising has oscillated between sex positivity and hyper sexualization. While certain marketing campaigns have celebrated sexuality and nudity as forms of empowerment, others have crossed the line into objectification. According to those polled, the usage of sexual images frequently swings toward objectification, making it incompatible with ethical responsibility and dependability, particularly in a fashion business that significantly shapes public opinions of sexuality and beauty.

Further, the neutral responses may indicate that a section of the audience is unsure or indifferent, which could be attributable to the gradual normalization of such imagery in fashion advertising. According to beliefs about the evolution of digital branding, greater exposure to specific forms of information can cause consumers to grow desensitized to them, resulting in less strong or neutral opinions.

In conclusion, a significant proportion of respondents (47.9% agreeing and 34.6% strongly agreeing) agree that the product should be the focus of fashion advertisements rather than the models. This overwhelming support points to an alteration in customer demands, as

viewers desire commercials with greater complexity and less attention to superficial components. Henderson (2024) analyzes strategic brand management, which offers a framework for comprehending this transformation. Creating a brand identity that reflects consumer expectations and values is a key component of strategic brand management. The respondents' desire for a product-focused strategy indicates how highly they value authentic and transparent marketing purposes, both of which are essential components of effective brand management. The lack of strong criticism (0%) among respondents lends validity to the argument that the current priority given to models, particularly when sexualized, is perceived as improper and incompatible with client demands. This consensus supports Victor's (2023) argument, which underlines the need of connecting brand messaging with customers' changing values, particularly in a market where meaningful and ethical content is becoming increasingly prized.

6.1.4 Perception of Objectification in Fashion Ads: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

One important topic of research to comprehend how visual content influences society attitudes toward gender and identity is the perception of objectification in fashion advertising. An in-depth examination of people's views of sexism in offline and online fashion advertisements is provided by the survey replies. This part delivers an extensive investigation of respondents' comprehension and interpretation of objectification by tying these findings to pertinent ideas and authors covered in the literature review.

A significant fraction of respondents acknowledged that some fashion advertisements objectify women, with 60.2% strongly agreeing and 32.7% saying that such pictures degrade women. These findings support the points made by Hollebeek et al. (2021), who highlight how visual imagery in advertising frequently promotes traditional gender norms by sexualizing women, diminishing their agency and dignity. This consensus among individuals signifies that these commercials are widely perceived as perpetuating a sort of objectification that is frequently condemned in mainstream media, particularly in the field of fashion. Maheshwari (2023) reinforces this viewpoint with his cultural branding notion, which underscores the function of advertisements in creating and reflecting social standards. The

respondents' awareness and disapproval of the use of objectifying imagery reflects an evolution in consumer expectations, with audiences being more critical of firms that fail to adapt to changing norms on gender parity.

Nevertheless, the survey also indicated that reactions to objectification were divided. For one advertisement, 32.2% of respondents thought it was objectifying, 27% disagreed, and 29.9% were neutral. These contrasting answers highlight the complexities of perceiving visual content, implying that presentation, context, and personal values can all influence how gender prejudice and denigration are perceived. Swaminathan et al. (2020) present sociocultural theory, which helps to explain the range in reactions. According to this concept, people's assessments of media are shaped by their social and cultural backgrounds, causing various audiences to interpret the same content differently based on their experiences and societal forces. The varying survey responses show that, while some viewers may easily identify sexism, others may interpret the content differently depending on previous exposure, customs, and morals.

In contrast to the intense sensation of objectification described by many, a substantial number of those surveyed did not find certain commercials demeaning. In one case, 58.3% strongly disagreed, whereas 37.4% disagreed with the claim that a commercial was dehumanizing. These findings indicate that not all fashion commercials come across as objectifying. This variance could be attributable to the ad's content, the setting in which it is presented, or the depiction of the models. This simplified definition of objectification can be seen via the perspective of Kiron's (2022) thesis, which holds that fashion reflects cultural views and attitudes on gender, aesthetics, and strength. Fashion serves as a mirror, influencing not only personal appearance but also media consumption patterns (Giarnieri, 2021). The participants' different answers could therefore reflect how these cultural standards are interpreted, with certain fashion campaign images being seen as supporting modern ideals of empowerment and attractiveness rather than overtly degrading.

Moreover, Brenner's (2023) literature review explores the concept of brand narrative, which could explain the lessened sensation of objectification. Brand storytelling entails crafting storylines that touch profoundly and personally with the audience. If a commercial skillfully integrates its pictures into a captivating tale that highlights the models' strength, authority, and personality, it may be regarded as less objectifying. Respondents who disagreed with

the concept of sexism may have perceived these adverts as communicating a positive, inspiring message rather than propagating inaccurate assumptions.

6.1.5 Perception of Objectification in Fashion Ads: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

Determining the possible impact on brand perception and buying behavior requires a grasp of consumers' behavioral intentions in reaction to sexist advertising. According to the survey's findings, watching sexist advertisements has an enormous impact on people's perceptions of products and their propensity to buy them. This part provides a comprehensive investigation of how sexist advertising impacts buying habits by connecting these findings to relevant concepts and authors from the literature review.

According to the questionnaire, a significant majority of participants (50.2% agreed and 28.4% strongly agreed) believed that sexist advertising had a negative impact on their impression of certain organizations. This conclusion is consistent with Brown and Dacin's (1997) brand equity theories, which claim that corporate ties have a significant impact on how consumers react and relate to products. Jackson (1999) additionally investigates how a company's connection with negative assumptions or depictions of gender might undermine consumer respect and loyalty. A brand's capacity to maintain a positive public image is critical to its long-term market position, and sexist advertising can harm this image, potentially leading to a decrease in market share and long-term financial issues.

In addition, the poll concluded that sexist advertising had a significant impact on customers' likelihood to buy from a brand. After seeing a sexist advertising, a considerable majority of respondents (50.7% disagreed and 23.2% strongly disagreed) reported reluctance to purchase products from a fashion company. This outcome demonstrates how mismatches between a brand's principles and marketing strategies can undermine credibility and cause consumer mistrust (Holmes, 2022). Beyond that, it is consistent with the findings of Brown et al. (2018), who observed that companies with gender-diverse practices perform 22% better than their counterparts, implying that inclusive and nondiscriminatory branding not only fosters trust but also boosts overall corporate performance.

This thorough investigation draws attention to how important it is for enterprises to contemplate the potential long-term implications of their advertising strategy, as well as the significant impact that sexist publicity can have on customer purchasing behavior and brand perception.

6.1.6 Final Reflections on Advertising Influence: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

The study's final segment focused on determining the precise components of sexist ads that those surveyed found most upsetting as well as the overall influence of fashion advertising on consumer purchase decisions. This part provides a comprehensive examination of how promotion affects consumer behavior and attitudes by connecting the poll's results to relevant theories and sources from the academic review.

As stated in the report, 86.7% of participants believe fashion commercials affect their shopping decisions. This result is consistent with the idea of branding and how it affects customer behavior, as emphasized by Hrebicek (2015), who stresses the significance of brand attachment in influencing buying decisions in the connected global economy of today. In the words of Hrebicek (2015), brand value is critical since companies not only outperform the worth of the items themselves, but also play a crucial part in determining consumer purchasing choices. This indicates that a brand's impression has significant effects on not only individual actions, but also consumer identity and cultural preferences.

The survey indicated that participants strongly preferred advertising themes that highlight authenticity and naturalness (71.8%) and diversity and inclusivity (66.5%). In contrast, themes of luxury and beauty (22%) and risky sexuality (1.9%) were less popular. This trend in client preference underlines the necessity of brands matching with their customers' beliefs and expectations, as Saini (2024) notes that modern consumers are increasingly inclined to penalize organizations that fail to conform to their views on social and moral principles. The substantial desire for authenticity and naturalness is also consistent with Baumgarth et al. (2020), who demonstrate that businesses that can deliver genuine experiences and build trust-based, long-term connections are more likely to catch and sustain customer attention.

The survey also identified the most disturbing elements of sexist advertising, with respondents citing objectification of the female body (61.7%), reinforcement of gender stereotypes (60.3%), negative impact on self-perception (57.4%), and encouragement of gender violence (35.4%) as the most problematic. These findings are consistent with the fashion industry's long-standing complaints, particularly its role in sustaining damaging appearance standards and objectifying women in numerous media, as stated by Potts (2020). The reinforcement of gender stereotypes and their negative consequences on self-perception are especially evident in commercials and fashion promotions, which frequently perpetuate these concerns from historical contexts such as Renaissance paintings to present marketing (Kiron, 2023b).

A small minority of respondents (0.5%) said they were unconcerned about the issues posed by sexist advertising or were more concerned with other matters, such as body sexualization. This suggests that, while the vast majority of consumers find sexist advertising unpleasant, a tiny proportion may hold opposing opinions or do not see these issues as important. The disparity in perspectives can be explored through the "mirror" and "mold" viewpoints in advertising theory. As to Pollay's (1987) analysis, the "mirror" perspective posits that people of this kind can perceive advertisements as a mere reflection of prevailing cultural norms, which could include antiquated or discriminatory ones. In contrast, the "mold" concept, as articulated by Manstead and McCulloch (1981), believes that publicity not only represents but actively alters social values, potentially preserving obsolete beliefs. This duality is consistent with cultivation theory, which states that media descriptions, especially those in marketing purposes, impact people's views of reality, and thus their opinions and actions (Gerbner, 1998). Thus, consumers' various answers may reflect their differing beliefs about whether advertising mirrors or molds the ideals of society.

6.1.7 Qualitative Analysis of Open-Ended Responses on Gender Representation in Fashion Ads: Analysis and Theoretical Integration

This part analyzes the questionnaire's open-ended responds, concentrating on how gender representation in fashion advertising is perceived and how businesses might improve in this area. The analysis was carried out by detecting reoccurring themes, grouping related

responses, and refining these topics to ensure that they accurately reflect the respondents' perspectives. The theoretical framework developed in previous chapters provides a solid foundation when evaluating these results.

Respondents generally cited the Dolce & Gabbana campaign as an illustration of old gender stereotypes, including the depiction of women in submissive roles. This portrayal, as noticed by several participants, reflects societal standards that link femininity with submissiveness and dependence. These findings support Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann's (2011) argument, which contends that gender stereotypes are founded in historical labor divisions, with women associated with lower-status domestic roles and males with higher-status, breadwinning jobs. Respondents' input indicates an increasing awareness of these prejudices, as well as a desire for media sources to challenge rather than promote obsolete societal norms.

Another major issue voiced by participants was the sexualized representation of women in the Dolce & Gabbana promotion, with many expressing dissatisfactions with how the advertisement reduced women to simple objects of desire. This argument lines up with the findings of Kahn (2020) and Saad (2020), who argue that fashion enterprises frequently propagate binary concepts of masculinity and femininity, with women depicted as submissive and men as dominant. Reichert (2003) goes on to criticize this trend, pointing out that commercials that use sexual imagery usually reinforce traditional gender norms by portraying women as passive objects. The complaints leveled at the campaign are a reflection of a larger cultural concern over the detrimental ways that such reductionist imagery feeds into biases and damaging assumptions about gender.

A few people amplified their criticism to include a broader cultural and social context, claiming that the Dolce & Gabbana advert is part of a larger media trend that perpetuates harmful norms of society and outdated gender preconceptions. Grau and Zotos (2016) endorse this viewpoint, arguing that advertising functions as a visual representation system that both reflects and modifies cultural standards, particularly those linked to sex roles. The participants' thoughts indicate a rising comprehending of how media depictions may sustain societal inequities, underlining the need for advertising campaigns to shift away from enforcing outmoded preconceptions and toward presenting more positive and inclusive tales.

Opinions to the Calvin Klein advertisement were more varied, with some participants recognizing that the ad's sexualized aspect was acceptable given the brand's identity. This subject emphasizes the delicate interaction between customers and sexualized images in branding, in which certain levels of sexualization are reasonable, particularly when congruent with the brand's established image. This complexity highlights the significance of a consistent brand identity, as noted by Lenkert (2023), which helps separate a company from its competitors while promoting recognition, loyalty, and trust. Brenner (2023) additionally highlights the necessity of integrating brand identity, design, and content with the target audience's aspirations and concerns in order to establish meaningful relationships. The numerous reactions to the ad show how crucial it is for marketers to strike a balance between traditional expectations and emerging customer demands, ensuring that their content engages authentically while retaining brand integrity.

A few attendees praised the Calvin Klein advertisement's depiction of power and independence, especially the models' facial expressions and nonverbal hints. This reply coincides with Sobande's (2019a) discoveries, which show that corporations are gradually recognizing the power of presenting authentic women in their commercials and embracing themes of female empowerment. The positive reception of these aspects suggests a change toward a higher awareness of women's strength and agency in fashion, as emphasized by Guber (2024), where various points of view are becoming increasingly important in molding the industry's future. This illustrates the constant problem in publicity of finding an equilibrium among traditional expectations and more contemporary images of gender.

The Calvin Klein advertisement's consistency with the brand's long-standing notoriety for provocative and often explicit content emerged as a significant theme. Participants stated that, despite possible controversy, the campaign met their expectations for the company in question. This discovery is consistent with Aaker's (1996) research on how brand personality affects consumer perceptions and expectations. Consumers' understanding of this constancy indicates how a strong brand voice may influence the way marketing initiatives are seen and appreciated, even when they face criticism.

The affirmative, diverse, and inclusive representation of women in the H&M advertising was highly appreciated by the participants. This positive reaction lends confirmation to Lyu and Kim's (2020) results, which indicate that displaying a commitment to diversity and

equality can help enterprises improve their reach and public image. Furthermore, the company's focus on displaying diverse identities is consistent with the broader corporate trend described by Zwieglinska (2024), which views expanding inclusion, particularly in leadership roles, as a vital component in boosting corporate performance. This reflects a growing consumer demand for commercials featuring an eclectic mix of personalities, as well as the ongoing societal movement toward greater embrace and expression.

Many individuals praised the H&M advertisement's relatability and authenticity, pointing out that the models resembled "real people" rather than idealized characters. This is in tune with the importance of authenticity in branding, as highlighted by Leesh (2024), who believes that media should depict people in a sympathetic and genuine manner to create engagement and dedication. The urge for realism proves that shoppers are increasingly preferring visuals that reflect real-life diversity and experiences over the idealistic and frequently unreachable depictions that have traditionally dominated fashion promotion.

A number of respondents expressed satisfaction for the H&M advertisement's gender-neutral components, which prevented the perpetuation of conventional sex stereotypes. Sark (2023) delves on the topic of gender inclusivity in fashion advertising, examining the industry's progressive shift away from inflexible gender standards and toward more adaptable and egalitarian representations. This theme is closely related to these larger discussions. The positive reaction to these gender-neutral elements implies that there is an increasing thirst and appreciation for pluralistic and non-binary pictures in the media.

Regarding the poll question on suggestions for fashion brands to improve gender representation, the open-ended replies revealed a strong preference for inclusive and varied illustration in fashion advertisements. Consumers expressed a significant desire for brands to represent an expanded variety of body shapes, races, and gender identities. This embodies an increasing consciousness and popularity of authenticity in advertisements, according to Sobande (2019a), who underlines the necessity of featuring real women and supporting female empowerment themes in marketing campaigns. Moreover, as observed by Zwieglinska (2024), this need for inclusivity is in line with the larger organizational trend towards diversity in leadership roles, where the inclusion of varied perspectives is considered as essential to boosting corporate performance.

Those surveyed also stated the relevance of incorporating real-world diversity into fashion commercials. Comments like "Fashion brands should reflect the real world" and "I want to see people of all shapes, sizes, and backgrounds represented" point to a shift in advertising that is more representational and fairer. This sentiment is consistent with the conversation held by Lyu and Kim (2020), who believe that brands can improve their online presence and credibility by displaying a commitment to diversity and equity. Additionally, Kahn (2020) points out that fashion firms have for years reinforced binary concepts of masculinity and femininity through carefully crafted pictures, although the replies show an obvious desire to move beyond these restricting depictions and toward a more encompassing characterization of sex.

Another significant topic was the call for reducing the sexualization of models in ad campaigns. Respondents encouraged firms to "Try to sexualize the idea of women less and focus more on the products," indicating a preference for quality over sexual material. This argument is consistent with Reichert's (2003) analysis of how sexualized imagery in advertising frequently perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes by depicting women as passive objects. The request for "Less sex, more substance" represents an evolution toward advertising that values the product and encourages more ethical gender images, stepping away from the industry's history of objectification.

Responding individuals also stressed the crucial role of integrity and genuine portrayal in fashion commercials. Participants urged corporations to "Show real people" and feature "Real stories" that represent a wider spectrum of life experiences. This need for authenticity is strongly related to the theories presented by Sobande (2019a), which focus on how businesses are beginning to realize just how vital it is to use real, relatable people in their ads. The quest for more honest and varied tales in advertising mirrors a larger movement in culture toward prioritizing real-life heterogeneity over unrealistic, often unreachable norms.

Ultimately, advancing gender parity in fashion advertising was given a lot of attention. In response to a request for more equitable and fair representations in advertising, respondents recommended that firms "Move away from gender stereotypes" and "Promote gender equality." This is consistent with Grau and Zotos' (2016) examination of how advertisements frequently endorse and sustain societal power systems and clichés. The replies point to a

larger shift in culture toward inclusiveness and equality, with customers expecting businesses to set the standard for equality between men and women in the fashion sector.

6.1.8 Data Analysis and Hypothesis Validation in Response to the Research Question

This subsection explores the survey data in order to address the research question (RQ1) and support the study's hypotheses. The goal is to identify the factors that shape Gen Z's opinions about sexism in gender representation in fashion advertisements across a range of media platforms.

The research question posed in this study is: "Which elements influence Gen Z's perceptions of sexism in the gender representation in ads for fashion across various media channels?"

To address this, the study proposes four hypotheses:

- H1: The way that gender roles are presented in fashion ads has a big impact on how people perceive sexism.
- H2: Perceptions of sexism are directly affected by the level of sexual objectification in fashion advertisements.
- H3: The idea of sexism is reinforced by unachievable beauty standards in fashion commercials.
- H4: The distinct media consumption habits of Generation Z alter their perspectives on sexism in fashion promotion.

The poll results, which are bolstered by theoretical frameworks, highlight a number of crucial elements influencing these opinions, such as how gender roles are portrayed, sexual objectification, unattainable beauty standards, and Gen Z's particular media consumption patterns.

The results of the questionnaire show how gender stereotypes portrayed in fashion ads have a big influence. Most respondents had negative opinions of traditional depictions, which show males in dominant or authoritative roles and women in passive or submissive roles.

This is consistent with the idea of Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2011), which holds that media perpetuates gender stereotypes by equating them with historical work divisions. The data emphasizes how sensitive Gen Z is to these representations, as a sizable portion of those surveyed cite the propagation of gender stereotypes as a primary cause of their impressions of sexism.

The degree of sexual objectification in fashion ads is another significant variable that forms opinions about sexism. The survey found that many respondents consider the objectification of women in advertisements to be a big issue, which contributes to their impression of such ads as sexist. This validates the opinions of Donovan (1977), Lai (2021), and Kilbourne (1999), who highlight how media sexual objectification of women reduces them to nothing more than objects of desire, therefore perpetuating sexist beliefs. The data collected clearly reveals that advertising that rely excessively on sexualized imagery are more likely to be seen as sexist by Generation Z, reflecting a broader cultural trend toward considering women as humans rather than objects.

The persistence of unattainable beauty standards is another factor that significantly shapes Gen Z's understanding of sexism. Advertisements that promote unrealistic expectations of beauty, which are perceived as perpetuating detrimental gender stereotypes, have drawn criticism from respondents. In accordance with Donovan (1977), Kiron (2022), Eisend (2010), and Åkestam et al. (2017), such norms can harm self-esteem and promote sexism by establishing unattainable perceptions of femininity. The survey's results validate that Gen Z associates advertisements that highlight these unrealistic goals with sexism.

One reason that influences how Gen Z views misogyny is the different media habits they have adopted. According to the poll results, Gen Z is exposed to a diverse array of content through their heavy usage of social media, including initiatives that prioritize inclusivity and diversity. Their expectations for more welcoming and polite branding appear to be shaped by this exposure, which also seems to increase their knowledge of societal concerns, such as sexism. The impact of media consumption patterns on sexist beliefs, however, is complicated and mediated by personal values and larger cultural trends. This suggests that, although media habits play a significant role, they interact with other factors to shape these ideas.

In terms of the hypothesis, these are substantially supported by the survey data. The statistics supporting the H1 show that Gen Z's perceptions of sexism are greatly influenced by how traditional sex roles are portrayed in fashion ads. More specifically, 61.7% of respondents said that one of the main problems with sexist ads is how they perpetuate gender stereotypes. This result is consistent with the theoretical viewpoints of Frevert and Walker (2014), Brown (2019), and Zawisza and Cinnirella (2010), who contend that gender roles play a role in influencing people's perceptions of sexism.

The premise is supported by the qualitative comments, wherein a number of participants expressed dissatisfaction over the portrayal of women in positions that are passive or inferior. For example, respondents took issue with ads that show males as powerful or dominant and women as reliant or subservient. This is consistent with the theory developed by Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2011), which holds that gender stereotypes have their roots in societal expectations and the historical division of labor. According to the statistics, Gen Z is becoming more and more skeptical of these depictions, which points to a change in societal standards and a growing desire for more progressive and equal sex representations in marketing materials.

These outcomes support H1 by showing that Gen Z's opinions of sexism are greatly affected by traditional gender roles in fashion ads. The report underscores the necessity for firms to reevaluate how they depict gender in their promotional materials, as it indicates a clear association between the propagation of gender stereotypes and unfavorable impressions of sexism.

Both types of data gathered from the survey provide solid backing for H2. Most respondents (ranging from 67.3% to 60.2% across various ads) concurred that the images of women in the ads they saw were objectifying. This lends credence to the theory that one of the main forces influencing how sexism occurs in fashion advertising is sexual objectification.

Additional knowledge regarding the matter is provided by the comments from respondents. A number of individuals conveyed apprehension with the representation of women as only objects of desire, with minimal to no focus placed on their uniqueness or abilities. Donovan (1977), Lai (2021), and Kilbourne (1999) have long denounced the objectification of women in the media as a major factor contributing to sexist attitudes. This is in line with their

theoretical work. Many respondents urged for ads that place a lower value on the models' sexualization and more on the product, calling for a decrease in sexualized imagery.

"It's time to stop sexualizing models and start respecting them more in ads," remarked one respondent, indicating a wider cultural shift away from the idea of women as objects and toward human beings. Numerous other people had a similar opinion, indicating that Gen Z is especially sensitive to concerns of sexual objectification and is likely to consider ads that largely rely on such imagery as fundamentally sexist.

The above findings match hypothesis H2, showing that views of sexism are directly influenced by the degree of sexual objectification in fashion ads. The information underscores how critical it is for corporations to abandon tactics that dehumanize women in favor of more polite and empowering narratives.

The information offers strong proof in favor of H3. The detrimental effect of unrealistic beauty standards on respondents' impressions of sexism in fashion ads was stressed by a sizable number of respondents (57.4%). This result aligns with criticisms made by Donovan (1977) and Kiron (2022), who contend that unattainable beauty standards not only undermine self-worth but also foster a limited and frequently unachievable ideal of femininity, so reinforcing sexist beliefs.

This notion is further strengthened by the survey's personal replies. Many of the attendees voiced their dissatisfaction with the abundance of heavily Photoshopped photos and the focus on models who are faultless or incredibly skinny. "Ads should feature real people with real stories, not just idealized versions," said one respondent, highlighting the growing demand in fashion advertising for diversification and transparency.

This critique aligns with the theoretical viewpoints of Eisend (2010) and Åkestam et al. (2017), who contend that the media's promotion of unreachable aesthetics contributes to the dehumanizing and devaluation of women and reinforces negative expectations for women. According to the study, Gen Z is especially aware of these challenges and is inclined to see ads that promote unrealistic beauty norms as supporting misogyny.

Hence, the outcomes enhance H3, showing that unrealistic expectations of beauty in fashion ads support sexist beliefs and exacerbate unfavorable impressions of gender description.

The study achievements, which shows a complex relationship between Gen Z's media consumption patterns and their opinions of sexism in fashion advertising, partially concurs with H4. The majority of respondents (59.7%), according to the examinations, spend between one and two hours a day on social media. This exposure to a variety of information may have an impact on their perceptions of and reactions to fashion commercials.

However, the link between individual media habits and judgments of sexism was more nuanced than anticipated. Although there is proof that Gen Z's heavy social media use has made them more conscious of societal concerns, such as sexism, the data does not show a direct link between media consumption patterns and sexism beliefs.

The open-ended answers imply that Gen Z's expectations for fashion advertising have been modified by their access to a diverse array of social media content, including campaigns that highlight inclusivity and diversity. "I want to see more ads that reflect the diversity I see in real life," stated one participant, demonstrating how their media intake alters their desire for more diverse portrayals in media outlets.

These results imply that although Gen Z's media consumption patterns do affect how they perceive sexism, this impact is mediated by more general cultural trends and personal beliefs. As a result, while H4 is supported, the findings indicate that the relationship between media consumption patterns and perceptions of sexism is more complicated than previously thought.

Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate how gender roles, sexual objectification, unachievable beauty standards, and media use patterns affect Generation Z's perceptions of sexism in fashion advertising. The study sought to address the following main research question: "Which elements influence Gen Z's perceptions of sexism in the gender representation in ads for fashion across various media channels?" by means of an in-depth review of survey data and qualitative replies.

The results of this study validate that the main factors influencing Gen Z's opinions of sexism in fashion advertising are unachievable beauty standards, sexual objectification, and gender roles. Most respondents expressed dissatisfaction with depictions of women in positions that were modest or subservient, and they were extremely critical of ads that reinforced traditional sex biases. This is consistent with the arguments of Eagly, Wood, and Diekmann (2011), who contend that media presentations of sex roles reinforce ingrained gender preconceptions that have their roots in historical labor inequalities. The data also supported H1, showing that Gen Z's perceptions of sexism are greatly impacted by gender roles that appear in fashion commercials.

The topic of gender roles in fashion advertising is still controversial since Gen Z views the representation of women in submissive or passive roles as an outmoded reflection of society standards. In addition to being detrimental, many respondents noted that these images don't align with the current cultural milieu, which is becoming more and more pro-gender equality. Gen Z's rejection of conventional gender norms is consistent with larger social movements that support gender parity and the destruction of patriarchal media structures. The demand for more equitable and balanced portrayals from the modern era implies that fashion firms must modify their business models to satisfy the changing demands of a socially conscious consumer base.

The results also amply demonstrated how sexual objectification shapes individual's views of sexism. Many of the respondents cited the objectification of women as a major reason behind their negative assessment of fashion ads. This lends credence to H2, which proposed that the degree of sexual objectification in advertising has an immediate effect on how sexism is considered. The participant's recommendations for a decrease in sexualization and an emphasis on more respectful and powerful depictions of women confirmed the work of

Kilbourne (1999) and Lai (2021) on the detrimental impacts of sexualized imagery in communication.

In fashion marketing purposes, where women are still frequently shown as little more than objects of desire, sexual objectification is still a major subject. The growing opposition to body commercialization and greater exposure to feminist discourses on the web are probably the main causes of Gen Z's enhanced sensitivity to these concerns. According to the statistics, ads that use sexualized images are perceived as being more out of touch with the values of younger people. This generation supports a change to more effective depictions that accentuate personality and capacity rather than just physical appearance and is against the dehumanization of women in ads.

In a similar vein, the study supported H3, which proposed that sexist stereotypes are strengthened by unattainable ideals of beauty. Several respondents voiced their displeasure with ads that uphold unachievable standards of appeal, pointing out that such depictions undermine women's self-esteem and contribute to their objectification. This is consistent with the theoretical stances of Eisend (2010) and Donovan (1977), who contend that the media's promotion of unattainable beauty standards feeds into detrimental gender norms and misogyny.

The information showed a resounding rejection of fashion adverts that support unreachable aesthetics, such as the exaltation of incredibly skinny models or the distortion of reality through digital enhancements. Respondents belonging to Generation Z indicated an unambiguous desire for commercials featuring a variety of body types and reliable representations of attractiveness. The poll results clearly demonstrate the link between sexism and unobtainable standards of beauty, since many of the participants underlined the negative impact of such pictures on their sense of self-worth and body image. This is in line with the expanding body positivity movement, which calls for more inclusive and genuine narratives of attractiveness in commerce and the media.

The association between Gen Z's media consumption patterns and their views of sexism turned out to be more nuanced than initially anticipated, even though H4 was somewhat supported by the data. The study indicates that media consumption habits interact with broader cultural trends and individual beliefs in affecting opinions, even while Gen Z's exposure to diverse content on social networks has heightened their awareness of global

problems, including sexism. This suggests that media consumption influences Gen Z's thoughts about sexism in fashion advertising, but it is not the only issue.

Because of their diverse media intake routines Gen Z is confronted with an array of content that questions established conventions and encourages tolerance. Nevertheless, cultural background and individual beliefs operate as a mediating factor in how these platforms affect sexism views. Even if social media raises consciousness about topics like gender equality, the evidence indicates that different people interpret the same content differently. Some respondents' opinions on what constitutes sexism in fashion advertising may be shaped more by distinct cultural movements or by their own personal encounters. This complexity highlights the need for more investigation into the manners in which media viewing habits interact with other variables to shape gender and sexism points of view.

In conclusion, the outcomes of the present investigation demonstrate that unattainable beauty standards, sexual objectification, and the presentation of gender roles are the key influences on Gen Z's perceptions of sexism in fashion advertising. In addition to demonstrating the complex relationship between media consumption patterns and attitudes toward sexism, the data validates the theories put forth. Incorporating such components into their marketing plans will help marketers target Generation Z. Traditional and objectifying depictions of women will be replaced with accessible, various, and empowered ones.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with any study, limitations should be addressed. The use of self-reported data, which is prone to social desirability bias, is one of the research's limitations. Rather than voicing their genuine thoughts, participants might have answered in a way they thought would be socially acceptable. Moreover, only Gen Z members were included in the sample, which offers insightful information about this group but might not be indicative of other generations.

The emphasis on fashion ads, while important, only represents a small portion of the larger media environment, which is another drawback. Further studies could broaden the focus to cover other types of promotion, such those in the entertainment, political, or beauty industries, to give a more complete picture of how gender is represented in various media industries.

Future research might also look at how intersectionality affects public perceptions of sexism in advertising, analyzing how people's interpretations of media portrayals are determined by the intersections of gender, race, and class. Furthermore, longitudinal research might be done to evaluate how individual opinions of sexism in advertising vary over time, especially in light of shifting cultural norms and technological environments.

Finally, by confirming critical theories and adding to the continuing conversation about gender representation in media, this study provides helpful knowledge into how Gen Z regards sexism in fashion promotion. This investigation offers valuable information for brands looking to develop more inclusive, courteous, and socially conscious advertising campaigns by outlining the factors that influence these attitudes. Fashion enterprises need to be aware of how their customers are changing and work to produce material that embodies the ideals of an equitable culture as the desire for plurality, truthfulness, and gender equality rises.

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Appendix

To provide total transparency regarding the technique employed, the whole survey, including of all the questions in detail, will be provided in the appendix. This will make it easier for readers to comprehend the design and the parameters of the questionnaire as well the procedure used for data collection and analyses during this study.

Master Thesis Survey: Sexism in Branding: Investigating the Portrayal of Gender in Fashion Advertising across Various Media Platforms

I am Michela Penna, a Master's student at Universidade Católica Portuguesa studying Marketing, Communication, and Advertising. My research focuses on the perception of sexism in fashion advertising both online and offline. The title of my thesis is "Sexism in Branding: Investigating the Portrayal of Gender in Fashion Advertising across Various Media Platforms."

This survey explores your perceptions of sexism in fashion advertisements and how these advertisements influence your views and interactions with fashion brands. Your insights will be a crucial contribution to my research. Thank you for participating!

Ethical Considerations:

Your participation in this survey is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without providing a reason. Before starting the survey, you will be asked for your full consent, ensuring you have all the information about the research purpose, procedures, benefits, and risks. All responses will be anonymous and confidential, used solely for academic purposes. Participating in this survey involves no risks, and your input will help advance understanding in this field.

* Indicates a Mandatory Question

1. Do you want to continue with the survey? *

- Yes
- No

Demographic Information

2. Age (GenZ) *

- 14-18 years (born between 2006-2010)
- 19-22 years (born between 2002-2005)
- 23-26 years (born between 1998-2001)
- 27-29 years (born between 1995-1997)

3. Gender *

- Female
- Male
- Other

4. Education Level *

- Less than high school
- High school graduate
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree or higher
- Other

5. Current Occupation *

- Student
- Employed
- Self-employed
- Working student
- Other

Media Consumption Habits (Average Hours Per Day)

6. Social media *

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

7. Television *

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

8. Magazines *

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

9. Other (radio, books, blogs, online gaming, podcasts, etc.) *

- Less than 1 hour
- 1-2 hours
- 3-4 hours
- 5-6 hours
- More than 6 hours

Attitudinal Measures

10. "I believe that advertisements often portray women in a negative light." *

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

11. “The use of sexual imagery in advertisements is generally acceptable.” *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

12. “Using sexual imagery in fashion advertisements is appropriate.” *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

13. “Fashion advertisements should focus more on the product than on the models.” *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Perception of Objectification

14. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

15. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral

- Agree
- Strongly agree

16. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

17. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

18. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

19. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

20. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

21. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

22. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

23. Look at the following picture of this offline advertisement and indicate your level of agreement with the statement: “This advertisement portrays women in an objectifying manner.” *



- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

24. What aspects do you find most problematic in sexist fashion advertisements? *

- Objectification of the female body
- Reinforcement of gender stereotypes
- Negative impact on self-perception
- Encouragement of gender violence
- Other _____

25. Do you prefer fashion advertisements that promote *

- Authenticity and naturalness
- Luxury and glamour
- Diversity and inclusivity
- Sexuality and provocation
- Other

Behavioral Intention

26. “I would purchase products from a fashion brand after seeing a sexist commercial” *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

27. “Sexist advertisements negatively affect my perception of the brand” *

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Neutral
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Specific Brand Advertisement Questions

28. What are your thoughts on this Dolce & Gabbana advertisement regarding gender representation? *



29. What are your thoughts on this Calvin Klein advertisement regarding gender representation? *



30. What are your thoughts on this H&M advertisement regarding gender representation? *



Final Questions

31. Do you think fashion advertisements influence your purchasing decisions? *

- Yes
- No

32. Do you have any suggestions for fashion brands regarding gender representation in their advertisements? *
