

Femvertising of sport brands: an empowering gem or a pink washed scam?

A qualitative study on the effect of female empowering marketing of sports brands on women

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.

Niada Maria Francesca-s2609746

Faculty of behavioral, Management and Social Science(BMS)

Bachelor Thesis in Communication Science

Supervisor: Dr. Mirjam Galetzka

30/06/23

Abstract

Objectives:

This study investigates the impact of femvertising from sports brands on women. Specifically, women's perceptions of Nike and Adidas advertisements, as instances of pink washing, will be examined. The purpose of this study is to clarify the advantages and disadvantages of female-targeted advertising from sports brands, in particular from Nike and Adidas. For brands looking to develop sincere and effective marketing efforts, it's critical to comprehend the effects of various marketing techniques on women. Investigating how femvertisement is seen as pink washing adds to the continuing debate over the sincerity and social responsibility of companies. By supporting the challenging of gender preconceptions, this study also advances the discussion about gender equality.

Method:

In order to answer the research question, a qualitative study based on semi structured interviews was executed. The participants who took part in the study were 18 females between the ages of 18 and 30, all differing in their backgrounds and sport habits. Semi-structured interviews were conducted in order to allow the researcher to asked further follow up questions while still adhering to a standard interview format. Firstly, the participants were shown the feminist campaign “Dream crazier” (2019) of the brand Nike. Secondly, the Adidas campaign “Support is everything” (2022) was displayed to the participants. Thematic coding was used to analyze the interviews after data collection using the program “Atlas.ti”.

Results:

The results of the study demonstrate that women's reactions to femvertising from sports brands vary. While some women value businesses' attempts to encourage women,

others see them as profit-driven pink washing. These attitudes are significantly influenced by cultural influences, emphasizing the significance of taking into account the local feminist context. The study's participants were divided over the feminist advertising efforts of sports businesses. While some participants voiced doubt and thought it was profit-driven, others applauded the actions taken to support women. Equal chances, normalizing women's successes, and gender equality in athletics turned out to be fundamental subjects that were influenced by the depiction of diversity and body image in Nike and Adidas advertising. The Nike campaign ended up to have a bigger impact and inspire sentiments of motivation and empowerment.

Conclusion:

This research examined how Nike and Adidas' femvertising affected women, exhibiting a range of reactions and perspectives. While some women saw it as pink washing and supported the firms' efforts, others thought that they weren't truly committed to bringing about social change. Participants' perceptions were impacted by cultural variables, emphasizing the value of authenticity and matching internal regulations with marketing statements. Innovative ideas were supplied by the participation of members of Generation Z and the emphasis on sports brands. In conclusion, this study provides useful insights for sports businesses to develop sincere, inclusive, and socially responsible marketing efforts that promote change. Fostering equity in the sports branding sector requires openness, inclusion, and a long-term commitment.

Keywords: Femvertisement, Pink washing, Feminism, Gender equality, Sports Brands, Nike, Adidas, Marketing.

Table of content

1.Introduction	7
2.Theoretical Framework	9
2.1 Femvertisement	9
2.2 Pink-washing impacting image and reputation	10
2.3 Adidas and Nike	12
2.4 Effects of sport advertisement and social empowerment	13
2.4.1 Representation and Gender equality	13
2.4.2 Social responsibility of sport brands and skepticism of social activism	14
2.4.3 Inclusivity and Challenging Norms	15
2.4.4 Conclusion	16
3. Methods	17
3.1 Participants	18
3.2 Data collection	19
3.3 Campaigns shown	21
3.3.1 “Dream Crazier”	21
3.3.2 “Support is Everything”	21
3.4 Data Analysis	22
3.5 Validity and reliability	23
3.6 Considerations of an Ethical Nature	24
4.Results	24
4.1 Femvertisement and pink washing	24
4.2 Attitude towards Nike and Adidas	27
4.3 Effects of Sports Ads	29
2.4.1 Representation and Gender equality	31
2.4.1.1 Representation	31

4.4.1.2 Gender equality	33
2.4.2 Social responsibility of sport brands and skepticism of social activism	35
2.4.3 Inclusivity and Challenging Norms	36
5. Discussion	38
5.1 Discussions of results	38
5.2 Limitations	42
5.3 Future implications	43
5.4 Conclusion	45
6. References	47
7. Appendix	55
7.1. A. Interview questions	55
7.2.B. Codebook	56
7.3.C. literature log	63

1.Introduction

Gendered marketing is a common strategy used by brands to attract the right consumers and create brand engagement (Alves et al., 2016). Research suggests that gendered advertisement, can significantly influence consumer attitudes and behavior towards sports brands. For example, Lough (2019) indicated that over 50% of women surveyed felt that sports brands' advertising does not represent them or appeal to them. The study also found that over 70% of women surveyed were more likely to purchase products from brands that show a diverse range of women in their advertising. Henceforth, it is no surprise that in recent times this kind of marketing further narrowed down and developed into something called femvertising. Femvertising (female empowerment advertising) is defined as a marketing and communication tactic used by firms to promote their products and increase brand engagement while empowering women of all ages through pro-female themes (Jacobson et al., 2018).

In the last decade an increasing number of brands adopted femvertisement as a marketing strategy, which inspires various researchers to study this phenomenon and its consequences. In recent years, many studies were conducted on the topic of femvertisement focusing on different aspects. For instance in the study from Hainneville and colleagues (2022), which looked at the authenticity of femvertisement from the women's perception and investigating whether femvertisement can be perceived as pink washing. Pink washing is the phenomenon happening when a brand claims to support women more than they actually do in reality (Hainneville et al., 2022). The perception of pink washing could be a threat to the objectives that femvertisement have by making women feel betrayed by the brand instead of empowered (Anderson, 2015).

Allen (2022), on the other hand, used the Dove “Real beauty” campaign as a study case to investigate whether Dove was using femvertisement for social change or for profit. Several researchers such as Hunt (2017) and Yoon (2021) took as a case study the Always #likeagirlcampaign to see the impact of femvertisiment on the representation of women and the audience responses and interactions of the campaign on YouTube. From past research can be seen that as much as the topic of femvertisement has been explored in the branches of average beauty brands, no study covered the specific topic of the impact of femvertisement in the field of sports brands.

Thus, this research aims to fill the literature gap of femvertisement of sports brands by looking into two popular marketing campaigns from Nike and Adidas by analyzing the responses and perceptions of an interviewed sample of women. The two campaigns: Nike’s “Dream Crazier” and Adidas’ “Support is everything” were two very different campaigns, one released in 2019 and the other one in 2022 which aim to empower and support women. Moreover this research aims to investigate whether femvertisement of sport brands could be perceived as not genuinely supporting the cause and therefore pink washing.

In order to determine whether female empowering marketing has an impact on consumers' perceptions of sports brands this study explores the following research questions:

Research question:

The impact of femvertising from sports brands on women.

Sub-question:

To what extent are the femVERTISEMENTS of Nike and Adidas perceived as pink washing by women?

Getting insights on these topics is relevant to enrich the academic fields of communication and by enhance the marketing field by enabling future marketeers to get theirs strategies more suitable for the target audience of choice. In the next section of this paper a theoretical framework will go in depth in the conceptual basis of femvertisement, pink washing, Nike and Adidas and the effects that sport advertisement has on women.

2.Theoretical Framework

2.1 Femvertisement

In modern western societies, equality between men and women, has been a constant objective. Feminism and women empowerment has been drastically increasing in recent years compared to fifty years ago (..) Therefore, brands are adapting to societal trends and match their marketing strategies to them. With the start and rise of the feminist movement according to Busby (1993) brands started to adapt their advertisements in order to appear more feminist. Based on Rajan and Park's literature (2000) feminist advertisement affects different women of the world in various ways because feminism is not a universal concept. Women that differ in factors such as race, nationality and country of origin experience feminism differently. Feminist critics, emphasize the need to acknowledge and respect these differences. They argue that femvertisement should consider and reflect the diverse realities and perspectives of women, rather than promoting a singular and homogenized image of femininity (Rajan et. all, 2000). In turn would be relevant in this research to have participants of different cultural backgrounds to see if nationality and feminism play a role in their perception of femvertisement. With time this kind of advertisement was so popular that in 2014 it was approved to be named femvertisement

after the lifestyle magazine “SheKnows” started a weekly column about it (Åkestam, 2017).

Moreover according to Åkestam (2017) femvertising is a type of advertisement, used in campaigns, that aims to empower women and girls by avoiding perpetuating female advertising stereotypes. Whether this strategy actually succeeds, and in what ways it succeeds, is still open for investigation. Thus for this study, research will focus on finding out if the impact of femvertisement and whether it’s actually corresponding to what the definition states. Hainneville (2022), on the other hand, states that femvertisement is defined and based on 5 pillars: female diversity; pro-female supportive messaging; challenging gender stereotypes; accurate representation; and desexualized body image. All Characteristics that will be taken into account in the coding in the methods section of this paper. Furthermore Hainneville (2022) asserts that femvertisement is linked to corporate social responsibility, enhances attitudes and purchase intentions, lessens reactance, creates emotional connections between consumers and brands, and increases consumer awareness of gender inequality.

Henceforth the effects of femvertising, rather than the movement as such, are in focus and this research will go into detail to study to what extend femvertisement especially in the case of sports brands, is linked to the latter effects on the target audience.

2.2 Pink-washing impacting image and reputation

While femvertising aims to promote the empowerment of women and the challenge of stereotypes, there is a need to address a possible problem that can emerge if brands are lacking transparency. The issue in question is called “pink washing” and it impacts not only the consumers trust but also, as a consequence, the image and reputation of the brand

who does it. The term “pink-washing” had its debut in 2002 after a major business that promoted goods with a pink ribbon, which stands for support of breast cancer, turned out to be selling carcinogenic products (Blackmer, 2019). Nowadays the word expanded its meaning to brands who promise support to women and the LGBTQ+ community while acting controversially towards them or not maintaining their promises (Schoier, 2017). For example, presenting themselves as a company who prioritize hiring women and then turning out to be a majorly male dominated company (Drake, 2017).

Anderson (2015) in his study highlights the many risks that pink washing could bring, such as the undermining of the credibility of brands and building a negative reputation for the firm. As a result of the research’s study it was found out that Customers today are very attentive and caring towards social causes hence expecting businesses to demonstrate truthful commitment to the causes they promote (Anderson, 2015). It is therefore fundamental for brands to produce authentic and genuine campaigns that align with their values and actions.

A way to avoid the phenomenon of pink washing is for brands to go beyond surface-level advertising. It is not enough to simply create empowering advertisements because that could seem insincere and forced; brands need to ensure that their internal policies, hiring practices, and support for women in sports are consistent with their marketing messages (Lima,2021). According to Lieven (2015) brands that are perceived to be authentic in their commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment are more likely to attract customers. But can brands appear to be pink washed just based their femvertisement? According to Lima (2021) the audience of feminist campaigns may react negatively and label the brand as pink washed when the campaign lacks knowledge about the real feminist values and maintains sexist stereotypes. That’s brings insight on how

femvertisement could be perceived as pink washing of the brand and therefore this study will explore the perceptions of targeted audiences on femvertising sport campaigns, aiming to uncover the factors that contribute to this perception.

2.3 Adidas and Nike

Adidas and Nike are two of the most popular and well-known sports brands that have embraced feminist advertising and have been in the front line of promoting gender equality and empowering women in sports. Based on Rep-trak scores, which combine and analyze vast amounts of information about consumers perceptions and contribute to defining a brand's reputation, the reputation of Adidas is slightly higher than Nike's. Adidas has a Rep-trak score of 75 while Nike of 72.9 (everything between 70-79 is considered a strong score),(Pratama et.al, 2022). The slightly higher score of Adidas gives an indication of how the reputation of Adidas is slightly better compared to the one of Nike hence one could argue that the campaigns from Adidas are more appreciated than the ones of Nike and makes it worth to study the comparison of the campaigns in terms of which campaigns are going to get the most positive reactions.

Nike has made great advances in improving how women are portrayed in its advertising, moving away from sexualized and objectified images in the 1980s to strong, self-assured athletes in subsequent years (Culhane, 2014) . With the inclusion of pro-women slogans, Nike's "Here I am" campaign from 2007 marked a turning point for the company (Hermes et al, 2009). One of their most celebrated and significant releases, is the 2019 "Dream crazier" campaign with Serena Williams which continued to promote the achievements of female athletes while challenging gender norms (Greska, 2019). Adidas has used femvertisement in a similar way, with popular ads like "She Breaks Barriers" in

2019 and "Watch us move" in 2021 that emphasize gender barriers and diversity in sports (Capecchi, 2021). Adidas' 2022 "Support is everything" breast campaign, however, drew conflicting responses, with views ranging from support for desexualization to offense and inappropriateness (Meierhans, 2022).

These examples indicate the difficulties faced by sports businesses in successfully promoting femvertising without getting caught up in objectification or controversy. Thus the use of the latter campaign from Adidas in combination with the "dream crazier" campaign of Nike would be valuable to for this research in order to obtain insight on the impact they have on women and other or not they perceive any of the two brands as pink washed. These instances demonstrate the challenges faced by sports brands in effectively promoting femvertising without falling into objectification or controversy.

2.4 Effects of sport advertisement and social empowerment

Sport advertisement that has the aim to empower the audience has the potential to contribute to society by motivating people to take part in sports, stretching and changing gender stereotypes, encourage inclusivity and finally promote sports equality (Deloitte, 2020). Scholars like Hainneville(2022) have examined various aspects of advertisement's effects, aspects based on the five pillars of femvertisement will be discussed in the next four sections.

2.4.1 Representation and Gender equality

It is not uncommon to find advertisements that keep alive gender stereotypes and undervalue women, focusing mainly on their physical appearance rather than their successes and performances. This portrayal of women reinforces flawed societal beliefs that are harmful to the image of women (Konczak, 2022).

Furthermore, according to Konczak, (2022) athletes feel subjected to the pressures of conforming to market-driven ideals of femininity and attractiveness and therefore the constant subtle sexualization of women in sports commercials enhances the exclusion of women in high-level sports. This representation of women in advertisements strengthens the belief that women's bodies are weak and not fitting in high level performances which leads to a collective devaluation of women's sports in comparison to men's sports (Konczak, 2022).

Bruce (2016) highlights how also social media representations of sportswomen perpetuate these gender biases and restrict opportunities for women in the sports industry. However Wearden and Creedon (2002) in their study found that Sport advertisement has the power to shape societal perceptions. Therefore by selecting and framing appropriate representations of females sport advertisement could reach a goal of social empowerment and change of stereotypes, giving hope to the scenario of women in sports.

2.4.2 Social responsibility of sport brands and skepticism of social activism

Even though an increasing amount of sport brands nowadays claim to be involved with social activism, their credibility remains uncertain. Naturally, this shift towards social activism could be seen as a positive step towards addressing and potentially solving societal issues. However, there is also a certain level of skepticism surrounding the validity of these efforts. Critics like Konczak (2022) argue that some sport brands engage in social washing or pink washing (in case of marketing for women) where they use social issues as a marketing strategy without genuinely advocating for change or implementing meaningful actions beyond their marketing campaigns.

As defined by Hainneville (2022), and mentioned in the previous sections, femvertisement is based on five pillars that are closely related to social activism. By

mentioning their involvement in these issues in their campaigns, sport brands like Nike and Adidas can align themselves with social activism and promote positive change. Toffoletti and Thorpe (2018) state that sport advertisement often employs these strategies, which emphasize individualism, self-promotion, and marketability. As these factors can be of positive outcome for the brands they can also lead to a rise in skepticism from the fact that sport brands may prioritize their reputation and financial gains over the actual impact they can have on social issues (Toffoletti and Thorpe, 2018). Therefore, it is crucial for sport brands to demonstrate transparency, consistency, and long-term commitment to social causes in order to gain the trust of consumers and stakeholders (Konczak, 2022).

Jacobson et al. (2018) emphasize the impact of femvertising on brand image and the possibility that if not appropriately executed it can also lead to skepticism, indicating that socially aware consumers are very anal about the management of social activism and advertisement of sport brands.

Similarly, Pratama et al. (2022) conducted a comparative study of global business strategies, focusing on Nike and Adidas. The findings emphasize that effective sport advertisement goes beyond merely promoting products; it requires a holistic approach that aligns with the brand's values and actively promotes social empowerment. These studies collectively emphasize the importance of integrating social responsibility into business strategies as a means to foster positive social change. By presenting a cohesive and fluent approach to social activism and advertisement, sport brands can build trust with consumers and create a genuine impact on society.

2.4.3 Inclusivity and Challenging Norms

Piedra et al. (2021) examine how sports brands marketing strategies contribute to breaking women's boundaries in sports. From the Sport advertisement can play a

transformative role by challenging traditional norms and promoting inclusivity. By showcasing different women's achievements, skills, and determination, advertisements can empower women and inspire others to participate in sports. Therefore it is essential to consider intersectionality when examining the effects of sport advertisement on social empowerment. Intersectionality recognizes that women's experiences are shaped by various intersecting identities, such as race, class, and sexuality (Piedra et.al, 2021). Sport advertisement should strive for inclusivity, representing and empowering women from diverse backgrounds and challenging multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization.

2.4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, sport advertisement has the power to drive social empowerment by challenging stereotypes, promoting inclusivity, and advocating for gender equality. Historically, women in sports advertisements have been subject to objectification and marginalization, perpetuating harmful societal beliefs. However, the emergence of femvertising has opened up opportunities to reshape gender representation and inspire women's participation in sports.

Brands such as Adidas and Nike have led the way in this transformation, but it is essential for sports brands to demonstrate authenticity and a genuine commitment to social causes beyond marketing campaigns. By aligning their values with their actions, sports brands can effectively connect with their target audience and contribute to social empowerment. Moreover, sport advertisement has the potential to break down barriers, promote diversity, and foster a more inclusive society. By embracing these principles, sport advertisement becomes a catalyst for positive social change, inspiring individuals to engage in sports and advancing societal progress towards greater empowerment for all.

This gives input for the following development of the interviews that will explore whether the feminist campaigns from Adidas and Nike have a positive or negative impact on women. Henceforth the effects of femvertising, rather than the movement as such, are in focus and this research will go into detail to study to what extent femvertisement especially in the case of sports brands, is linked to the latter effects on the target audience. Furthermore by examining the potential pitfalls of pink washing in femvertising, the research will gain insights into how sports brands can avoid this phenomenon and construct a solid image and reputation.

3. Methods

In order to answer the research question, qualitative research was performed, more specifically semistructured interviews were conducted on a total of 18 participants. In order to maintain an open interview setting while still following a basic interview outline, semi-structured interviews were done. Participants' ability to offer fresh ideas and perspectives during semi-structured interviews let the researcher learn more about participants' opinion towards the topics of femvertising, pink washing and sports brands' female representation.

Additionally, it made it possible for the researcher to probe farther in case any piece of information resulted unclear or ambiguous, with this more in-depth perspectives of the interviewees could be examined by enabling participants to build upon various ideas and opinions. After data collection, the interviews were analyzed with thematic coding through the software Atlas.ti

3.1 Participants

A total of 18 participants were recruited for interviews, with 15 being contacted through popular social media platforms like WhatsApp and Instagram, while 3 were approached in public spaces at the University of Twente. When choosing study participants, the following factors were taken into account: Self-identifying as female, between the ages of 18 and 30, taking part in sports, or just, generally speaking, being physically active.

The primary factor of reason to select female participants exclusively was that the campaigns chosen are targeted for a female audience, and therefore since the study focuses on the effect of femvertisement on women, the presence and opinion of male participants was to no purpose. The participants recruited came all from different educational backgrounds and/or cultural backgrounds therefore creating a diverse sample to work with.

Participant information included demographic information but also details related to the study's topics. The 18 participants resulted to be 18 women with an average age of 23 years old, mostly Italian, also included individuals from Germany, Romania, Latin American countries (Panama and Ecuador), as well as minorities from Finland and South Africa. All of the participants took part in a variety of sports, such as tennis, volleyball, equestrian, jogging, skiing, swimming, basketball, yoga, and flat football. 17 individuals had completed high school, 5 had a bachelor's degree, and 4 had completed a master's degree. The fact that participants recruited came all from different educational backgrounds and/or cultural backgrounds created a very diverse sample to work with. Moreover they differed significantly also in their political beliefs, creating a lot of divergent points of view which enriched the research.

3.2 Data collection

Before the data collection process could start each and every single participant had to fill a consent form about the confidential use of personal data that was going to be anonymized, voluntariness of participation, being recorded, freedom of information legislation, potential risks, ethical concerns, and the chance to withdraw at any point in time from the research. After the participant agreed to take part to the study the interviews were recorded, saved as audio files which made the next step possible, transcription. To accommodate the preferences of each participant, the interviews were carried out either through video conference or face to face in person. The participants took on average 15 to 40 minutes to answer all the questions depending on their extent of elaboration.

The interviews were organized according to the sections previously discussed in the framework and therefore included open-ended questions aimed to discuss how femvertisement of sport brands made them feel and whether or not it felt like pink washing. All Interviews consisted of 25 questions (see Appendix A) with two campaigns shown in between.

The first questions were to gather demographics data like age, country of origin, educational background and to what extend the participants were physically active. The first set of questions after the demographics intended to know to what extend participants were familiar with the concepts of femvertisement and pink washing and whether they identified as feminist. This questions were inspired the studies of Hainneville (2022) and Anderson (2015), who explored the impact of feminist advertising on women's perceptions and the negative outcomes of marketing as pink washing.

Subsequently the first campaign from Nike was shown and 5 questions about the campaign followed. Similarly to the first campaign the second one from Adidas was

shown and 6 questions were asked. These two central blocks of questions were based on the literature of the theoretical background. The questions related to the representation of women by sports brands are related in the works of Culhane (2014) and Greska (2019), which examined the portrayal of women in sports advertisements. By inquiring about participants' feelings when looking at sports brand advertisements for women's products, the study intended to understand their emotional responses and perceptions of gender representation in these campaigns. The questions regarding the perception of pink washing in the femvertisement campaign, is aligned with the study by Meierhans (2022). By inquiring about participants' opinions about the campaigns, the study seeks to understand their perception of brand authenticity and credibility in supporting women's causes.

The analysis of participants' responses to the Nike "Dream Crazier" and Adidas "All Women Deserve the Best Support" campaigns aims to assess the perceived feminism and empowering nature of these campaigns, their impact, and their level of social responsibility. These aspects were inspired by the literature on femvertising (Pratama et al., 2022; Culhane, 2014) and brand authenticity in supporting social causes (Capecchi, 2021).

To conclude the interview the participants gave their opinions comparing the two campaigns based on questions like *“Which campaign makes you feel more represented and supported as a female?”* Or *“Which one was more powerful or impactful in your opinion?”*. The last question of the interview asked the participants what they hope to see in the future of sports brands marketing, offering valuable implications for marketing managers and the future of targeted marketing.

3.3 Campaigns shown

3.3.1 “Dream Crazier”

In this campaign from 2019, Nike features female athletes performing and chasing their dreams. The video is very emotional and promotes young girls to go against gender stereotypes to follow their dreams. The voice-over is done by the Nike brand ambassador, and international tennis champion Serena Williams. The whole speech is about girls being defined crazy when not fitting the femininity standards, Serena ends the video by saying that the definition crazy shouldn't stop you from pursuing your dreams “and if they call you crazy, just show them what crazy can do”. The video closes with the phrase “it's only crazy until you do it” which then becomes “just do it”, the original Nike slogan. This video was chosen because it is one of the most celebrated and successful Nike campaign representative of female athletes which also won the Grand Prix in the Creative Effectiveness category at Cannes.

3.3.2 “Support is Everything”

The campaign from Adidas that was discussed with the interviewees was released in 2022 and was meant to represent the support of Adidas towards all women. The brand aimed to be inclusive and create a range of products that could work for all women. The campaign is a picture of 25 bare breasts that vary in all shape, form, size and skin complexion. The campaign was done in order to show how breast differ and that in turn need all kinds of different supports and bra shapes and styles. The reason why this campaign was chosen is because it had some controversial feedback when it was first released and it was even banned in some country because it was defined “too explicit”.

3.4 Data Analysis

Done with the data collection process all the 18 interviews were transcribed and anonymized. In order to analyze qualitative data a methodical approach of locating, evaluating, and reporting patterns within the data is necessary (Gibbs, 2007). The analysis was carried out in a more steps, which the next paragraphs are going to outline and describe.

The analysis process started with the Familiarization with the data: Each recording was listened at least once and each transcript was read multiple times to gain a thorough understanding of the content. Side notes were taken in consideration and main themes were noticed. After reading it and noticing the main emerging topics the latter were identified and categorized in order to come overarching themes, shared experiences and similar opinions. With the the identified themes it was possible to create a codebook (see appendix B) to conceptualize and code the data. The final coded transcript ended up having 23 codes. Since the questions were based on the literature of the framework also the coded answers and codes turned out to be recalling the main topics previously discussed. The codebook consisted therefore of 23 codes that included codes like feeling of representation, attitude towards feminism, attitude toward sports, social responsibility, diversity, branding and marketing, gender equality and preference of sport campaign. The codes were ultimately grouped in three main themes.

The three main themes were: Demographics, Femvertisement and pink washing and effects of sport advertisement. The data was coded entirely by thematic analysis. Because

the questions are open-ended and quite discursive, word-by-word coding, axial coding or grounded theory wasn't going to be the most suitable coding method. Instead, themes and the participants' attitudes towards broad issues seemed preferred more adequate and thematic analysis turned out to be satisfactory (Gibbs, 2007).

3.5 Validity and reliability

To ensure the quality of the data, a variety of strategies were used. First and foremost, the use of purposive sampling allowed for the identification of people who had relevant experiences and viewpoints. Second, the use of interviews that were only partially organized gave the researchers the ability to be flexible in their line of inquiry and gave the participants the chance to expound on their comments.

Thirdly, To make sure that the codebook (see Appendix B) was reliable a test for intercoder reliability was carried out on 10% of the interviews transcribed. The number of coded interviews for the intercoder reliability test was supposed to be 1.8 and therefore one normal and one short interview were coded. The coding of two different researchers led to the calculation of the Cohen's Kappa which resulted in 0.71, with 0.7 being the minimum value of acceptance for the intercoder reliability test (O'Connor, 2020) we can say the codebook is reliable enough to be used. Furthermore the use of thematic analysis made it possible to conduct an analysis that was both methodical and open to scrutiny, as well as one that was founded on the facts.

3.6 Considerations of an Ethical Nature

Ethical considerations were continuously taken into account over the entire research procedure. Everyone who participated in the study gave their consent to participate and be audio taped after receiving all necessary information, and their identities and privacy was always respected. All participants were informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time and without consequences. Furthermore the researcher did everything in their power to make the interview fluent and made sure to make the participants comfortable in the talk at all time.

4.Results

In the following section the findings of the coding process will be presented. The subsections will be based on the main themes and will describe the topics and opinions coded.

4.1 Femvertisement and pink washing

According to the results of the questions about femvertisement and pink washing it resulted that most participants were not aware about the meaning of these concepts. For this theme the codes included were “feminist identification”, “knowledge of femvertising” and “knowledge of pink washing” and “pink washing perception”. Overall, a majority or

the participants (n=11) consider themselves feminists. A small subgroup of participants (n=3) do not consider themselves feminists. The remaining 4 participants answered “partially”, meaning that they consider themselves feminists based on the situation or that they were confused about the term feminism (all of the 7 interviewees who had a negative response to feminism were of Italian origin). Most participants (n=15) were not familiar with the term “femvertising” and some of them (n=7) were also unaware of the term “Pink washing”.

After showing the campaigns, the participants expressed their perceptions on pink washing in relation to what they were just shown.

One participant expressed her point of view on femvertisement and directly associated it to pink washing:

“Pink washing, that's what I feel about every single feminist advertisement that I see is doing because I do not believe that any company in this whole world cares about women or men or anybody all they care about is money.”

Similarly another participant expressed their political view on the topic, criticising the extremes that femvertisement reached:

“I believe it is ads female targeted. I'm not shocked that it exists considering the capitalist world we live in that's very profit oriented. I don't think it's necessarily bad or immoral to

build your advertising at such that it targets it's main audience, but [...]it has gotten to a malicious point."

The same participant further added that brands are always claiming that they support women or help charities but never help and support women of the main audience with concrete help.

"I think maybe in relation to this campaign they could add some like "drop the pink tax" on some of the women design to make me believe they aren't pink washing"

Instead, looking at the comments related to pink washing in the case of the Adidas campaign there are contradicting opinions, some participants were positive about it and sustained that Adidas is not a pink washed brand:

"For adidas the thing is that i have seen quite a lot of women in sports in a good way, so I really do think they truly support women"

While others were very negative about the campaign and the brand in general:

"I never seen adidas doing anything in my sport (flat football) and so I think this is just pink washed"

Most participants expressed that even in the hypothetical case that the brand might have been pink washing it was condoned as long as the brand acts honestly about it and takes responsibility for its flaws. Especially if women are benefitting from the impact of the campaigns:

“It’s for lucrative objectives and it supports the cause... like for sure it’s for marketing but it’s also a marketing TO SUPPORT women so it’s like a win-win situation, as long as they are being transparent about it”

4.2 Attitude towards Nike and Adidas

In this section the findings about the participants thoughts and feelings about Nike and Adidas are going to be presented. The codes that this theme used were: “Favorite sports brand”, “Sports and sports activities”, “Branding and marketing” and “Preference sport campaign”.

Many participants mentioned Nike as their favorite sport brand (n=5), while for Adidas only one participant indicated it as their favorite brand. The majority of participants (n=12) instead indicated other brands as their favorite such as Puma, Gymshark, Alo and others.

After watching the campaigns participants were asked how they felt about the brand. Most participants took the campaigns in isolation without associating the brand to it, saying that the campaigns do not influence how they perceive the two brands.

“Even though I don’t like the campaigns, I’m not mad at the brand or anything...I don’t feel any specific way towards it to be honest”

Others instead did associate the campaigns to the brand and expressed their perplexities on how Adidas should manage better their content.

“Don’t really like how Adidas expresses the cause, making use of a strong/ sensible picture to capture attention.”

Similarly, some participants (n=3) agreed with the one above but showed less sentiment in their reaction:

“I’m very neutral when it comes to adidas, the idea behind the campaign could be a start but they need to narrow down their strategy”

On the other hand, more participants felt positively influenced from the campaigns towards both brands:

“I had respect for the brand and now I like it more, I would buy from them”

Lastly, there were some participants that felt extremely positive about the two brands indicating how they even benefitted from the campaigns and how the brands made them feel:

“Nike is currently focusing on women for their well-being. I feel like this is more a “call” to women empowerment, rather than an actual marketing campaign. I would say that it makes me feel more valued”

As participants (n=9) found the Nike efforts beneficial other participants (n=5) were also impacted in positive ways by Adidas:

“Adidas makes me feel more realistic and open-minded as I hadn’t really ever thought of the struggle of different women with different breasts wearing sports bras”

4.3 Effects of Sports Ads

This theme was analyzed with a large amount of codes. Therefore, this section will be structured in more sections based on the codes inspired from the theoretical framework.

The latter codes are: “representation”, “gender equality”, “social responsibility”, “trust

and doubt”, “body image”, “diversity”, “Campaign that gave a better feeling”, “Most representative campaign”, “Most impactful campaign” and “Most supportive campaign”.

The first effect that the campaigns stimulated was an emotional response. Many participants (n=8) reported positive impressions of the Nike one such as:

“I have shivers, i get so emotional it’s insanely good, i feel empowered”

A majority of participants (n=11) felt “Empowered, motivated, unruffled, hopeful” triggered to take part in a sport activities or even motivated to go on a run immediately.

“It makes me feel empowered, as If I can do anything I want, i really like it!”

For the campaign of Adidas the feelings were a bit more ambiguous. Some participants (n=4) said that they were not “touched by the campaign” but they added that it could have been because of the lack of visuals and sounds that first campaign had instead.

“the first one moves me more but I think that's quite easy to film, edit and put some music

and create this response. The second one instead is probably more unique, more

controversial and it reaches a lot more people because of that.”

Although the participants thought the first campaign stood out more, when the second one was favourably regarded, it elicited many more in-depth reactions:

“it makes me more aware of my body in a good way”

All the positive comments that were mentioned towards the campaign “All women deserve the best support” were referred to self perception of the participants body and were positive.

“It makes me feel somehow comfortable, especially towards myself”

In the next three subsections further aspects and effects that emerged from the analysis of the interviews will be elaborated.

2.4.1 Representation and Gender equality

This subsection included the codes “representation”, “gender equality”, “Campaign that gave a better feeling”, “Most representative campaign”, "Most impactful campaign” and “Most supportive campaign”.

2.4.1.1 Representation

At the question asking whether women are well represented in sports advertisements most women disagreed, stating that in commercials, women are always represented as very standard and feminine.

“Bad they are always representing the “feminine” sports and nothing else, like gymnastics, ballet, swimming but never like rugby, soccer or basketball and it’s always about beauty never performance”

Even though most participants (n= 15) thought that women are not accurately represented in sports brands advertisements a lot of them said that the at least one of the at least one of the two campaigns made them feel represented.

“Yes I do think the campaign is representative, as it shows the struggle for women to be understood and also respected in sports it works because it’s illustrating real examples”

This theme section included also the codes regarding the opinions about the campaigns and therefore which campaign was believe to be more impactful, which campaign was believed to be more supporting and representative of women and which campaign made them feel better about themselves. The Nike campaign was believed to be the most impactful campaign and the one that made the participants feel better about themselves (in both the two questions Nike was coded 11 times) meanwhile in the question about which campaign was believed to be the most supporting and representative

of women the two campaigns were mentioned with the same frequency (9 times Nike and 9 times Adidas).

4.4.1.2 Gender equality

Gender equality appeared to be topic that was mentioned very often. Infact this code was also the most frequent code used with a reoccurrence of 90 times. The main aspect that the Nike campaign highlighted was the different standards that are set for men and women in sports, participants found mostly injustice in the different ways to define the reactions and handling of emotions of women compared to men:

“It is one side of being a female, I'm showing them crying because of sports or being angry because of sports not because I'm being emotional. [...]So yeah, maybe it is not the whole female experience, but the experience of being a female in sports.

The gender equality was also the most overlapping code with the future hopes, in fact the majority of participants are hoping to see in future advertisement and marketings complete gender equality on many fronts:

“Normalisation, so that we are so much over gender inequality that it's not worth to mention the extra effort towards women, there are the same opportunity for everyone no matter what, just pure 100% equality and not point out or need to clarify that we are strong because we clearly are and it's not worth to mention”

In all interviews participants admitted that feminist marketing is being perceived as “forced” in the last years and that it makes women stand out too much creating imbalances between genders, participant 17 for example, stated:

“ It doesn't always have to be that women are on top of something, even though that's very nice in the moment and empowering, but I think the end goal is equality. So just things that are very inclusive towards both men and women, where no gender really has to be on top and the other one be left behind. Just more inclusivity and equality.”

On the same page, many other interviewees referred negatively to the fact that women are always pointed out to be victims of inequality, which is believed to slow down the process of gender equalization and contributes to depicting the wrong picture about women in society:

“I wish they will be showing that women are powerful and not victims, don't point out that we are physically weaker, even in the gender differences we are very strong and powerful and also show equally the same sports for both genders there are so many sports that are very high level and not watched just because girls play it...like my case, there were nationals of flat football last year in my city and no one knew anything about it.”

Another urge the participants felt for the future of sports marketing was more female athletes in the marketing of male oriented sports:

“Having practiced for years a sport that was not born as a female discipline I think that women are able to perform in the same way as men [...] I would like to see more female in sports representation, Even in markets where perhaps women's sport is not as influential as men's, [...]it would certainly make people talk instead on the Marketing level because it would be new stuff.”

2.4.2 Social responsibility of sport brands and skepticism of social activism

Analyzing participants attitudes towards the campaigns reveals that Social responsibility is very relevant to the consumers but it's also very suspected of negative actions from brands. Many participants had the feeling that femvertisement is just an obligatory part of the social responsibility of a brand on a topic that is just now starting to trend.

“I think that, after some years, it started being a marketing tactic to make women feel more included: Nowadays I get the impression that it is a “must” for companies in order to fit societal standards”

Not only did the campaign raise ethical concerns but from some participants (n=2) it was also a matter of what is allowed online and one participant was struck specifically from one comment which she agreed with:

“looking at the comments, they express the concern about posting such picture, while less provocative posts are banned. This comment “wow, you actually got away with posting nonsexual female nipples[...] so now that Instagram is okay with a famous company posting nonsexual female nipples, I'm sure the same right will be extended to the rest of us, right?” really caught my attention, and I kind of agree”

Overall what participants mostly complained about was how the social responsibility of sports brands was fundamental and yet not very positively executed.

2.4.3 Inclusivity and Challenging Norms

Another effect that the analysis of the interviews highlighted was the beneficial effects and appreciation of diversity and body positivity of the campaigns.

In the contexts of diversity and body image, both campaigns were equally mentioned in positive ways. For Nike one participant mostly valued the diversity that was shown in the video mentioning an empowering effect that the video had on her:

“it shows very different kinds of women. Women, diverse women in different sports, different ages, different looks and ethnicities and body sizes. So for me, that's very, very nice and empowering. And it shows how we can, when we have an intention, follow and pull through to get what we want”

For the campaign of Adidas the responses were polarized. There were participants who found it comforting and supportive of females in sports saying that is helpful for the emancipation of women bodies for example one interviewee said:

“I also like this campaign as it’s controversial, due to the exposed breasts, and smart, so it has a big impact in my opinion,[...] it makes me feel valued, it normalizes the diversity of women’s bodies”

On the same concept of body image more than one participant found the Adidas campaign comforting and helpful for their own relationship with their body. The fact that it was showing such a vast variety of breasts differing in size, shape and color made relatable for most participants:

“I’ve been so insecure about my body so many times it’s an ongoing thing. So definitely the Adidas campaign is my favorite”

Overall even though both campaigns were criticized under some aspects they were very positively judged on the aspect of body image and diversity, especially the second one

from Adidas that didn't always obtain the best reactions out of the participants, under the facet of diversity and body positivity attained the most appreciation.

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact of femvertising from sports brands on women. The following section will discuss and evaluate the interview findings according to and in line with previous sections of this study.

To achieve a greater level of insight the impact of marketing on women will be related to the initially discussed theoretical implications.

Moreover, reflections on methods, research limitations and practical implications will be included in this section along with a summary of the most relevant findings followed by the overall conclusion of this research.

5.1 Discussions of results

The results of the 18 interviews highlighted specific thoughts and attitudes of female consumers towards femvertising, pink washing, Nike and Adidas and gender inequality in sports. This analysis of the data will provide insights into the impacts that femvertisement of sports brands have on women. The impact of the two displayed campaigns differed

significantly based on many factors. As Rajan and Park (2000) stated in their literature the concept and identification of feminism can differ based on cultural factors. This could have resulted in an influence on the perception of femvertisement. In fact, the 7 Italian interviewees who didn't consider themselves (totally) feminists were also among the participants who were not supportive of the campaign from Adidas claiming that it was inappropriate, weird and violating women.

Participants who believed the brand to be authentic in supporting women's causes from the beginning were significantly more optimistic toward the campaigns, while those who showed initial skeptical attitudes towards the brands were very strict in their judgement towards the two campaigns. This confirms the findings by Lieven (2015) and Lima (2021) who found out with their studies that brands that are seen as genuinely dedicated to gender equality and empowering women have a higher chance of attracting customers. Merely producing advertisements that promote empowerment may come across as inauthentic and contrived. Therefore, brands must align their internal policies, hiring practices, and support for women in sports with their marketing messages to maintain consistency.

In contrast to previous literature, which indicated, based on Reprtrak rankings, that Adidas had a higher score, majority of participants indicated their favorite campaign to be the one from Nike. Even though there were aspects under which the campaign of Adidas prevailed, the overall attitude towards the brand seemed to be more in favor of Nike. This incongruence in the reputations of the brands might be given by the fact that while this study took in consideration just women opinions, Reprtrak builds its database on large scale of opinions drawn from all kinds of people.

In past studies, Wearden and Creedon (2002) found that Sport advertisement has the power to shape societal perceptions. By choosing and framing suitable female images, sport advertisements might achieve a goal of societal empowerment and enhanced gender equality. What the results highlighted the most is that women wish to see more female representation in the marketing of male-dominated sports since it would positively challenge the stereotypes that limit females. Sports brands should take these insights into consideration in order to ensure gender equality in the messages they deliver. For the most part the marketing tactics of these two sports brands were making the interviewees feel empowered, motivated, strong and comfortable in their skin. According to multiple studies Nike has been criticized over the years for making profit over societal issues like gender inequality in sports, (Anderson, 2015) confirming the points of view that some participants shared.

Furthermore, while social responsibility, another femvertisement pillar of Hainnesville's (2022) work, holds significant value for the audience, a considerable number of participants expressed skepticism about the commitment to social activism of sports brands. This skepticism arises from the perception that these brands may prioritize their reputation and financial success over any potential social impact, potentially diminishing the trust and confidence of customers (Toffoletti and Thorpe, 2018).

The results, based on the last pillars of Hainneville (2022) about inclusivity, diversity and desexualization of the female figure, were mostly positive. All participants appreciated the diversity of women in both campaigns and some pointed out how valuable the Adidas campaign was for not sexualizing the female body. However as previously observed from Meierhans (2022) while some people considered it to be desexualizing and suitable, others found it to be rude and disrespectful.

Moreover, the interviews conducted in this study revealed that consumers are more likely to trust and believe in brands that advocate for women if they also provide practical assistance to their main customers. This assistance can include offering discounts and creating product lines specifically designed by women. Another new finding that emerged from the interviews pertained to women's aspirations for equal representation and their rejection of content that is stereotypically designed for them in a predominantly stereotypical pink feminine manner. This type of representation was perceived as lacking relatability and failing to adequately represent the diverse experiences and preferences of most women. Consequently, participants emphasized the importance for brands to strive towards achieving complete equality in their marketing efforts. For example, before launching a campaign, brands were advised to question whether they would develop an analogous campaign targeting men. By taking these concrete steps, brands can be perceived as more genuine and committed to empowering women. These findings highlight the importance of brands going beyond words and actively supporting women in ways that directly benefit their customers. By doing so, brands could possibly build stronger connections with their target audience and foster greater trust and loyalty (Hainneville, 2022).

Femvertising campaigns by sports brands have a varying impact on women, with some finding them empowering and appreciating the efforts made to promote gender equality, while others view them as pink washing, questioning the brands' sincerity and perceiving them as profit-driven rather than genuinely committed to women's causes. Overall, the impact of femvertising on women is multifaceted, with some women responding positively and feeling empowered, while others perceive it as pink washing

and question the authenticity of the brands' motives.

The perception of femvertisement from Nike and Adidas as pink washing among women participants varied. Some women expressed concerns and detected hints of pink washing in the campaigns of both brands. They believed that the brands may prioritize their reputation and financial success over genuine commitment to social change. These women viewed the campaigns as inauthentic and insincere in their portrayal of women's empowerment. However, it's important to note that not all women perceived the femvertisement of Nike and Adidas as pink washing. Some women appreciated the brands' efforts and believed in their authentic commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment. These women saw the campaigns as genuine and impactful in challenging stereotypes and promoting positive representation of women in sports.

In conclusion, the perception of femvertising campaigns from Nike and Adidas as pink washing varied among women participants. While some women questioned the authenticity of the brands' motives, others appreciated the brands' efforts and perceived them as genuinely supportive of gender equality and women's empowerment.

5.2 Limitations

Limitations in this study should also be acknowledged in order to improve future research on the topic. Starting off from the research design the choice of content shown played a role since the study was based off just two campaigns (even though they are from two different brands) are not enough to say something about the entire category of sports brands.

As far as a qualitative approach gave the chance to participants to go in depth in the topics discussed and really make sense of what they meant while sharing their points of

view, their responses might have been biased, for example one participant started the interview stating her dislike for Nike and ended up giving very Adidas oriented answers, barely mentioning Nike and even when mentioned it was mentioned negatively. Another factor that could have biased the participants were the emotions that were triggered with the viewing of the brand content that might have influenced the participants making them lose a rational perspective on the topic. Furthermore the biased attitude might have been not only from the participants side but also subconsciously adopted by the researcher. Even though the interview questions were designed as neutral as possible there are chances that in the semi-structured interviews the researcher might have framed them in a way that guaranteed a biased answer, and likewise with the probing of further explanations.

Another limitation of the study was that the researcher did not state any concepts definitions at the beginning of the interviews, which in the cases of terms like Pink washing and Femvertisement was positive because the researcher could find out how undetected these constructs are in society, but in cases like feminism the definition would have been necessary. Within the four people who defined themselves as partially feminist, one asked what the researcher meant by feminist and the others were also confused on what the term could indicate. Moreover the people that did say no to being feminists mentioned it as if feminism was a negative movement but later in the interview mentioned how gender equality is necessary, showing therefore how the clarification of the term would have been necessary.

5.3 Future implications

Based on the previous discussion this study has several theoretical and practical implications that are going to be presented in the following paragraphs.

Firstly this study contributes to the understanding that feminist concepts can vary based on cultural factors. This highlights the need for brands to consider the local feminist context when developing femvertising campaigns. Based on the results gathered there is a great understanding of consumers attitudes when talking about femvertisement and female targeted marketing. This insight can be taken into account in marketing strategies of the future for more targeted campaigns. For instance in order to develop feminist advertisements effectively, brands should expand their research and acquire a deep understanding of feminism within the specific socio-cultural context of the targeted country. This is essential due to the inherent variation in feminist concepts and perspectives, which are shaped by contextual factors such as historical, cultural, and social influences. By engaging in informed inquiry and analysis, brands can align their advertising strategies with the nuances and sensitivities of the local feminist discourse, thereby ensuring a more accurate and relevant portrayal of feminist ideals. Such an approach enables brands to avoid misrepresentations or misinterpretations, and instead foster meaningful connections with their target audience by demonstrating an authentic understanding and appreciation of local feminist perspectives (Rajan et al., 2000).

Secondly the findings reinforce the importance of authentic commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment for attracting customers. Since sport advertisements can shape societal perceptions and contribute to empowerment and enhanced gender equality, brands and marketers should frame their campaigns accurately in the representation of women. Brands that are perceived as genuine and dedicated to these

causes have a higher chance of building trust and loyalty among consumers (Hainneville, 2022).

Lastly the findings from the research underscore the skepticism among participants regarding the commitment of sports brands to social activism. This highlights the need for brands to ensure that their social responsibility efforts are perceived as genuine and not driven solely by reputation and financial success. The results given from the participants answers suggest the brand to pay more attention to the aspects of social responsibility and reputation, both attributes that are worth invest in and work on, paying special attention on the aspects of inclusivity, gender equality, female normalisation and honesty.

5.4 Conclusion

This study investigated the impacts of femvertisement from Nike and Adidas on women. This study found that femvertising campaigns from sports brands like Nike and Adidas, have significant effect on women. Women's responses to these campaigns vary, with some feeling empowered and supportive of the brands' efforts to promote gender equality and women's empowerment.

However, some women perceive these campaigns as pink washing, questioning the authenticity of the brands' commitment to social change and believing that they prioritize profit and reputation. The perception of femvertisement from Nike and Adidas as pink washing differs among women, with some expressing concerns and others appreciating

the brands' genuine efforts. Overall, the impact and perception of femvertising on women are complex, highlighting the need for brands to ensure authenticity and genuine dedication to gender equality in their marketing efforts.

Furthermore, the results indicated that cultural factors play a significant role in shaping the perception of femvertisement, as participants' attitudes varied based on their cultural backgrounds and understanding of feminism. Authenticity emerged as a crucial factor in determining consumer support for brands. Participants were more optimistic and positive towards brands that were perceived as genuinely supporting women's causes. On the other hand, participants who detected hints of pink washing were strict in their judgment towards Adidas and Nike. These findings align with previous research, emphasizing the importance of brands aligning their internal policies and practices with their marketing messages to maintain consistency and build trust. Differently from previous studies this research brought two innovative points, firstly the inclusion of Gen Z participants who provided valuable and up-to-date insights into current perspectives and secondly the focus on sports brands which is usually not taken into consideration.

Overall, this study offers valuable information for sports brands seeking to create persuasive, genuine, and socially conscious marketing campaigns that connect with their target audience and drive positive societal change. Transparency, inclusivity, and long-term commitment are key in fostering a culture of equality within the sports branding industry.

6. References

- Adidas women on Instagram: “breasts of all shapes and sizes deserve support and comfort tailored to them. which is why our new sports bra range contains 43 styles, so everyone can find the right sports bra for them. in sport, everybody should feel free and inspired by what their bodies can achieve. To see the full story and explore the collection, click the link in our bio. #supportiseverything.” (n.d.). https://www.instagram.com/CZwIVwss6xRutm_source=ig_embed&ig_rid=29011bb2a8c3-4691-9160-2c14b2f8cc8e
- Åkestam, N., Rosengren, S., & Dahlen, M. (2017). Advertising “like A girl”: Toward a better understanding of “femvertising” and its effects. *Psychology & Marketing, 34*(8), 795–806. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21023>
- Allen, E. (2022). Jess Weiner and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign: Selling Feminism for Profit or Social Change?. *Women Leading Change: Case Studies on Women, Gender, and Feminism, 6*(1), 18-37. <https://journals.tulane.edu/ncs/article/view/3663>
- Alves, H., Fernandes, C., & Raposo, M. (2016). Social media marketing: A literature review and implications. *Psychology & Marketing, 33*(12), 1029 – 1038. DOI: 10.1002/mar.20936

Anderson, P. R. (2015). *FEMINISM AND MARKETING: CULTURAL CHANGE OR PINKWASHING*. [Doctoral Dissertation, Texas Christian University]. https://repository.tcu.edu/bitstream/handle/116099117/10279/P_Anderson_Feminism_and_Marketing.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Arens, L. (2020, September 18). *Exploring the publics' responses to inspirational social media marketing campaigns through content analysis : a case study - #LikeAGirl by Always*. [master thesis, University of Twente]. <https://purl.utwente.nl/essays/83389>

Blackmer. (2019). Pinkwashing. *Israel Studies*, 24(2), 171. <https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.24.2.14>

Busby, L., & Leichty, G. (1993). Feminism and advertising in traditional and nontraditional women's magazines 1950s-1980s. *Journalism Quarterly*, 70(2), 247–264. <https://doi.org/10.1177/107769909307000202>

Bruce, T. (2016). New rules for new times: Sportswomen and media representation in the third wave. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 74(7-8), 361–376. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-015-0497-6>

Bruce, T. 2015. “Assessing the Sociology of Sport: On Media and Representations of Sportswomen.” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 50 (4–5): 380–384. doi:10.1177/1012690214539483.

Campaigns of the world. (2020, January 11). *Nike - Dream Crazier | #JustDoIt* [Video].

YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfX5jeF6k4>

Capecchi, S. (2021). Le campagne di femvertising e le reazioni delle audience online. Le contraddizioni del femminismo pop. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, 62(1),

131-163. <https://doi.org/10.1423/100624>

Culhane, M. (2014). The Evolution of Nike's Advertising to Women in Vogue

Magazine: 1988-2005. *Scholarsbank.uoregon.edu*. [https://](https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/18139)

scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/18139

Daniels, E. A., & Wartena, H. (2011). Athlete or Sex Symbol: What Boys Think of Media

Representations of Female Athletes. *Sex Roles*, 65(7-8), 566–579. [https://doi.org/](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9959-7)

[10.1007/s11199-011-9959-7](https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-9959-7)

Deloitte Sports Retail Study 2020. (n.d.). Deloitte Deutschland. Retrieved June 27, 2023,

from [https://www2.deloitte.com/de/de/pages/consumer-business/articles/sports-](https://www2.deloitte.com/de/de/pages/consumer-business/articles/sports-retail-study-2020.html)

[retail-study-2020.html](https://www2.deloitte.com/de/de/pages/consumer-business/articles/sports-retail-study-2020.html)

Dahlbeck Jalakas, L. (2016). The Ambivalence of #Femvertising : Exploring the meeting

between feminism and advertising through the audience lens. *Lup.lub.lu.se*. [http://](http://lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/8872529)

lup.lub.lu.se/student-papers/record/8872529

Drake, V. (2017). The Impact of Female Empowerment in Advertising

(Femvertising). *Journal of Research in Marketing*, 7(3). [https://core.ac.uk/](https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/229163714.pdf)

[download/pdf/229163714.pdf](https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/229163714.pdf)

- Fink, J. S. 2015. "Female Athletes, Women's Sport, and the Sport Media Commercial Complex: Have We Really Come a Long Way, Baby." *Sport Management Review* 18 (3): 331–342. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2014.05.001.
- Gibbs, G. (2007). Analyzing Qualitative Data. *Analyzing Qualitative Data*, 38–55. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781849208574>
- Grohmann, B. (2009). Gender Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46(1), 105–119. <https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkr.46.1.105>
- Grow, J. M. (2008). The gender of branding: early Nike women's advertising as a feminist antenarrative. *Women's Studies in Communication*, 31(3), 312–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2008.10162545>
- Hainneville, V., Guèvremont, A., & Robinot, É. (2022). Femvertising or femwashing? Women's perceptions of authenticity. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.2020>
- Hextrum, K. (2019). Bigger, faster, stronger: how racist and sexist ideologies persist in college sports. *Gender and Education*, 32(8), 1–19. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2019.1632418>
- Hunt, A. R. (2017). *Selling Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of Femvertising*. <https://dlib.bc.edu/islandora/object/bc-ir:107483/datastream/PDF/view>

- Jacobson, C., Katalin Abdallah, L., Liasse, D., & Lund, E. (2018). Femvertising and its effects on brand image: A study of men's attitude towards brands pursuing brand activism in their advertising. LBMG Strategic Brand Management-Masters Paper Series. *Journal of Research in Marketing*, 7(3),593-599. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003141655-11>
- Kończak, J. (2022).An image of a woman in a sports advertisement. *Journal of Education, Health and Sport*, 12(5), 215-230.<https://doi.org/10.12775/jehs.2022.12.05.016>
- Lieven, T., Grohmann, B., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J. R., & van Tilburg, M. (2014). The effect of brand gender on brand equity. *Psychology and Marketing*, 31(5), 371–385. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20701>
- Lieven, T., Grohmann, B., Herrmann, A., Landwehr, J. R., & van Tilburg, M. (2015). The effect of brand design on brand gender perceptions and brand preference. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49, 146–169. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-08-2012-0456>
- Lough, N., & Geurin, A. N. (2019). *Routledge Handbook of the Business of Women's Sport*. Routledge.
- Lucas, S. 2000. “Nike’s Commercial Solution. Girls, Sneakers, and Salvation.” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 35 (2): 149–164. [doi:10.1177/101269000035002002](https://doi.org/10.1177/101269000035002002).

- Meierhans, J. (2022, May 11). *Adidas sports bra adverts banned over Bare breasts*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-61413184>
- Mudrick, M., Burton, L., & Lin, C. A. (2017). Pervasively offside: An examination of sexism, stereotypes, and sportscaster credibility. *Communication & Sport*, 5(6), 669-688. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479516670642>
- O'Connor, C., & Joffe, H. (2020). Intercoder reliability in qualitative research: Debates and practical guidelines. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 19(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406919899220>
- Piedra, J., Núñez-Domínguez, T., & Troyano-Rodríguez, Y. (2020). Be more human. Is Reebok breaking women's boundaries in sports? *Sport in Society*, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17430437.2020.1772233>
- Pratama, A. Z., Sutopo, W., Hisjam, M., & Istiqomah, S. (2022). Comparative Study of Global Business Strategy: Lessons Learned from Excellent Sports-wear Companies (Nike and Adidas). In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Operations Management Istanbul, Turkey* (pp. 3062-3071).
- Rajan, R. S., & Park, Y.-M. (2007). Postcolonial Feminism/Postcolonialism and Feminism. *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, 53-71. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470997024.ch3>

RepTrak Platform | RepTrak. (n.d.). Www.reptrak.com. Retrieved June 23, 2023, from <https://www.reptrak.com/reptrak-platform/reputation/#:~:text=The%20RepTrak%20database%20combines%20and>

Hermes, K. A., & Ritzenhoff, K. A. (2009). Sex and Sexuality in a Feminist World. *Google Books*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. <https://books.google.de/books?hl=en&lr=&id=uJwYBwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA52&dq=PRESTON>

Schoier, G., & Patrizia De Luca. (2017). *Cause-Related Marketing: A Qualitative and Quantitative Analysis on Pinkwashing*. 321–332. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-55723-6_25

Silverman, D. (2011). *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. SAGE.

Silverman, D. (2013). *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about qualitative data*. Sage.

Smallwood, R. R., Brown, N. A., & Billings, A. C. (2014). Female Bodies on Display: Attitudes Regarding Female Athlete Photos in Sports Illustrated’s Swimsuit Issue and espn : The Magazine’s Body Issue. *Journal of Sports Media*, 9(1), 1–22. <https://doi.org/10.1353/jsm.2014.0005>

Sterbenk, Y., Champlin, S., Windels, K., & Shelton, S. (2021). Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 177(3). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04755-x>

Toffoletti, K., and H. Thorpe. 2018. “Female Athletes’ Self-Representation on Social Media: A Feminist Analysis of Neoliberal Marketing Strategies in Economies of Visibility.” *Feminism & Psychology* 28 (1): 11–31. doi:10.1177/0959353517726705.

Wearden, S. T., & Creedon, P. J. (2002). "We Got Next": Images of Women in Television Commercials during the Inaugural WNBA Season. *Culture, Sport, Society*, 5(3), 189–210. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713999865>

Yoon, H. J., & Lee, M. (2021). A femvertising campaign always #LikeAGirl: video responses and audience interactions on YouTube. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09589236.2021.2012135>

7. Appendix

7.1. A. Interview questions

1. How old are you? Where do you come from?
2. what's your relation with sports?
3. What's your educational background?
4. What would you consider your favourite sports brand?
5. Do you know or did you ever heard of femvertising? if yes what's your opinion about it?
6. Would you say women are fairly represented by sports brands?
7. How do you feel when looking at sports brands advertisement for women products?
8. Would you consider yourself a feminist?
9. Have you ever heard of pink washing?

Introduces the first campaign, shows the video of Nike "dream crazier"

1. How do you feel about this campaign? Or how does this campaign makes u feel?
2. What do think of this brand, would you by from them based on what you just saw?
3. Would you say this campaign is feminist or empowering to women? Why (not)? How (not)?
4. Based on this campaign do you think the brand genuinely supports the cause or would you say it's just for lucrative objectives? What could have been different to be more credible?

5. Would you say the campaign represents females appropriately?

Introduces second campaign "All women deserve the best support" campaign by Adidas

1. How does this campaign make you feel?
2. Based on this campaign how does this brand make you feel?
3. Would you define this campaign as feminist?
4. Do you think this brand supports this cause just for marketing purposes? What could be changed in order for you to trust the brand more?
5. Do you think this campaign is respectful towards women?
6. This campaign was banned in some countries (UK for example) How do you feel about it?
7. What campaign made you feel better about yourself?
8. Which campaign makes you feel more represented and supported as a female?
9. Which campaign do you prefer generally speaking?
10. Which one was more powerful or impactful in your opinion?
11. What do you hope to see in the future from sports brands?

7.2.B. Codebook

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Femvertisement and pink washing	Knowledge of pink washing	Participant's knowledge of pink washing	"Yea I think I know what Pink washing is"
	Pink washing perception	Participant's perception of brands pink washing	"I feel like the campaign is not genuine...I would say the brand is pink washed"
	knowledge of Femvertisement	Participant's knowledge of Femvertisement	"no never heard of femvertisement"

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Attitude towards Nike and Adidas	Feminist identification	Participants attitudes and identification towards feminism	“yes I’m a feminist”
	Favourite sport brand	Indication of participant’s favorite sport brand before viewing the campaigns	“I really love puma, it has been my all time favorite”
	Sports and sports activities	Participants opinions of brands attitudes in sports	“in Italy we still have the myth of football and therefore we are constantly bombarded by images of male soccer from any sport brand”
	Branding and marketing	participants opinions on branding and marketing of Nike and Adidas	“compared to Nike, this is more about a marketing tactic”

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
	Preference sport campaign	participant's preference of sport campaign shown	“I definitely preferred the nike campaign”
	Campaign that gave a better feeling	Participants choice of campaign which gave them a better feeling	“I think the first one made me feel better about myself”
	Most representative campaign	Participants choice of campaign which made them feel more represented	“The Adidas one represents women better”
	Most impactful campaign	Participants choice of campaign they reputed more impactful	“the second one is more impactful”
	Most supportive campaign	Participants choice of campaign which made them feel more supported	“I have to say, both made me feel represented as a woman”

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
Effects of sport advertisement	Representation	Accurate representation of women in advertisements (Hainneville, 2022)	“Recently the whole scandal of nike having a trans model for bras made me madcap it wasn’t representative of women”
	Gender equality	Participants’ opinions on equal opportunities and access to resources from both sexes	“I’m definitely for gender equality”

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
	Social responsability	(Hainneville,2022)	“the whole female support wave is very big right now so it’s really hard to tell whether they do it just for money or sincerely for the cause. But should be their responsibility to do what they say”
	Trust and doubt	participants skepticism and faith in sports brands advertisement	“I liked it until i saw it was nike, they would never do it if it was a mens campaign”
	Emotions	Emotional connection or reaction to the brand campaigns (Hainneville,2022)	“ I have shivers, I get so emotional it’s insanely good”

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
	Body image	Pro-female body positivity and desexualization of women's bodies (Hainneville,2022)	“very controversial, I do not support body positivity” “It’s just expressing nudity which to me, in this case does not seem vulgar nor sexy”
	Diversity	Diverse representation of women's appearance and talents (Hainneville, 2022)	“I like how normalizes the diversity of women's bodies.”

Theme	Code	Definition	Example
	Future hopes	Partipants' future expectations from sports brands advertisement	“I hope to see normalisation in a way that we are so much over gender inequality that it's not worth to mention the extra effort towards women”

7.3.C. literature log

Date	Website	Search term used	Hits	Useful articles
12-3-23	Scopus	“Pinkwashing” OR “advertisement”	36665	3
12-3-23	Scopus	“Pink washing” AND “femvertisement”	0	0
14-3-23	Scopus	“Feminism” AND “sports”	462	1
14-3-23	Scopus	“Feminism” AND “Marketing”	186	2
14-3-23	Scopus	“Sports” AND “Marketing”	4452	3
22-3-23	Scopus	“Feminism” OR "marketing”	376504	1
2-4-23	Scopus	“Gender equality” AND “marketing”	91	1
10-4-23	Scopus	“Nike” AND “Marketing”	175	2
10-4-23	Scopus	“Nike” OR “Marketing”	345588	0
10-4-23	Scopus	“Adidas” AND “Marketing”	95	1
10-4-23	Scopus	“Adidas” OR “Marketing”	344618	0
10-4-23	Scopus	“Adidas” OR “Nike” AND “Feminism”	14	4

Date	Website	Search term used	Hits	Useful articles
11-4-23	Scopus	“Gender stereotypes” AND “Sports”	222	2
26-5-23	Scopus	"qualitative research" AND "semistructured interviews"	6393	1
26-5-23	Scopus	"thematic coding" AND "semistructured interviews"	39	1
24-6-23	Scopus	“Feminism” AND “Nationality”	94	2