FEMVERTISING'S EFFECTS ON BRAND LOYALTY AND PURCHASE INTENT

WITHIN GEN Z WOMAN-IDENTIFYING CONSUMERS

Thesis

Submitted to

The College of Arts and Sciences of the

UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of

Master of Arts in Communication

By

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UNIVERSITY OF DAYTON

Dayton, Ohio

May, 2024

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study is to analyze and investigate how woman-identifying consumers connect with and associate femvertising messages with the companies that use them. Some ways in which these connections can be analyzed are through brand loyalty and purchase intention. This study specifically looks at Gen Z women as a target audience for feminine advertising messages. To analyze femvertising in action, the survey for this study included a video clip from the established company, Dove, and its Real Beauty campaign. Through a nonprobability quantitative survey of woman-identifying consumers, aged 18 to 24 ($N =101$), this study found that there were significant positive relationships between woman-identifying consumers' company CSR associations and their brand loyalty, as well as purchase intention. Furthermore, significant results showed a positive relationship between brand loyalty and intention to purchase in woman-identifying individuals. Finally, this study found that loyalty was a key mediator between CSR associations and purchase intent. Implications for this study and future research suggestions are discussed.

Dedicated to Charlie Klausing

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I hold the deepest gratitude toward my advising committee for their feedback, expertise, and guidance through this process. I would like to emphasize that without you, it would have been extremely difficult to carry out this endeavor. Dr. Han, thank you for working with me since I was an undergrad and helping me think more critically about methods. Dr. Sagardia, thank you for bringing out the important details in this paper and wholeheartedly agreeing to be on my committee. Dr. Cas, thank you for uplifting me through my academic journey and gifting me the knowledge to do my best in all my endeavors. I would especially like to thank Dr. Abitbol for his unwavering support, constructive feedback, and positive words of encouragement on the days when I couldn't find the motivation from within. It meant so much.

I would also like to thank Claire Myree, who planted the seed in my head that I could accomplish this thesis, which to me seemed out of reach a year ago. You were right, I would have regretted not doing it.

Lastly, I send my appreciation to my family and friends located all over. Distance does not limit my love for you. You believed in and supported me through it all. How lucky am I?

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is a common saying that one should vote with their dollar as well as their ballot. Meaning, where one spends their money is equally as important as the beliefs that lead them to the polls. Where consumers spend their money shows their support in the values and practices companies hold. Companies can showcase their values by supporting causes that matter not only to the company but to society at large. One cause that companies have developed increasing public support for in their marketing and corporate communication is women's rights. Woman-identifying individuals have had poor representation throughout history (Sobande, 2019). And, when companies featured women in their communication messages before the 1960s, they were stereotyped in unflattering ways as housewives and sex objects (Busby & Leichty, 1993). Cultural shifts and feminist movements have pressured changes in the representation of women in media, so they are seen as equals to their male counterparts (Sobande, 2019).

Women can advocate for how they are represented in media through the way they spend their money. As of 2023, 78% of women are the primary shopper of their household (Rao, 2023). In 2009, women controlled over $20 trillion in annual consumer spending (Silverstein & Sayre, 2009). As culture shifts, women are increasing their societal power and authority as consumers, which influences the messages industries advertise (Ferguson, 2017). With the increasing awareness of societal inequities through the fourth wave of feminism, women are more prone to recognize the role portrayals of their gender in media (Drake, 2017). They connect more with products that appeal, uplift, and relate to them (Drake, 2017). From this, women make their decisions and shift their

expectations for how they are represented in media. With the power they hold as a majority of households' primary consumers, companies have started to adapt messaging to appeal to this pressure.

The focus of companies has shifted to increase positive perceptions and brand associations in consumers through corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. These initiatives are a result of companies increasing activity that benefits society (Carroll, 2016). There are numerous social justice issues that companies can employ in their messaging to appeal to consumers – sustainability, racial equality, and gender equality being a few. The goal of employing support for these initiatives is to increase consumer loyalty and purchase intentions (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Research suggests that there is a significant relationship between how consumers perceive a company and their overall purchase satisfaction and consistent involvement with the brand (Russell-Bennett et al., 2007).

This study analyzes CSR initiatives that focus on feminism through a newer form of feminine advertising called 'femvertising.' Femvertising is advertising that empowers women (Skey, 2015). Brands have begun to utilize this form of advertising after recognizing the benefits that can come from targeting the feminine demographic, which has grown to possess large control over the market. Dove is a prime example of femvertising in action, as they frequently employ CSR initiatives that target female-identifying individuals through specific empowerment messaging. One of their more successful CSR initiatives was their Real Beauty campaign that started in 2004 and increased their sales revenue by $1.5 Billion (Unilever, 2023). With its success, Dove

exemplifies how other organizations can benefit from femvertising and various other CSR initiatives.

There is a wide variety of research when it comes to examining CSR impacts through the lens of the company (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Åkestam et al., 2017). A 2017 study found that "respondents who were exposed to femvertising ads were more likely to report intent to purchase the advertised brand/product than those who were exposed to non-femvertising ads (Drake, 2017). The results from this study emphasize the importance of analyzing female empowerment messages. Additionally, other research has shown CSR initiatives can influence loyalty in their consumers. "By being a good corporate citizen, a company can foster consumer loyalty and turn consumers into company/brand ambassadors and champions who engage in advocacy behaviors" (Du et al., 2010, p. 9). Significant findings in this area of research mandate more be done to represent a diverse demographic.

There is a lack of studying CSR initiatives with women as the target audience. Similarly, the Gen Z demographic is another target audience in which there is a gap in communication literature. The present study intends to fill this gap by analyzing how woman-identifying individuals aged 18-24 are impacted by femvertising in CSR initiatives. This broadens research in specifically examining how the female consumer demographic develops CSR associations toward companies, as well as brand loyalty, and purchase intention.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Corporate Social Responsibility

The public can form perceptions of a company through the corporate social

responsibility (CSR) efforts a company makes (Brown & Dacin, 1997). CSR associations

are related to how the company is perceived in society and its status in relation to social,

environmental, and political issues (Kim, 2011). This thesis focuses on CSR associations

within the public and how they can help build loyalty and purchase intention.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is the activity of a company that benefits

society (Carroll, 2016). There are numerous understandings and definitions regarding

CSR throughout research. Some define it as a company's "obligation to take action to

protect and improve both the welfare of society as a whole and the interest of

organizations" (Davis & Blomstrom, 1975, p. 6). Others write that corporate social

responsibility initiatives are an optional involvement that sets them apart from other

companies (Carroll, 2016). Ultimately, CSR is the idea that when a company invests in

social responsibility, returns can be seen as a result (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Evidence

of these returns can be seen in numerous ways from stakeholders such as consumer

loyalty, employment interest at the company, and increased investments (Bhattacharya et

al., 2009). CSR can be done to satisfy various stakeholders' needs.

There are four responsibilities of corporate social responsibility: economic, legal,

ethical, and discretionary. These components create a categorization into which business

practices and social responsibility efforts can be sorted (Carroll, 2016). The economic

component states that businesses should prioritize their focus on money and income for it

to be stable and sustainable. Legal responsibilities are requirements by the government by which a business must abide in its operations. Additionally, a company must practice ethical responsibilities, which are not governed by strict rules, but there are expectations within society for companies to enact ethical decisions that avoid harming individuals and the environment. Finally, a company should practice its discretionary philanthropy, which is desired by society and shows that a corporation is separate from its competitors (Carroll, 1979). These four responsibilities are stylized as Carroll's Pyramid of Corporate Social Responsibility (see Figure 1), which shows a hierarchy of needs, where the responsibilities that are most needed are located on the bottom, and toward the top are responsibilities that make companies more superior than others by having them.
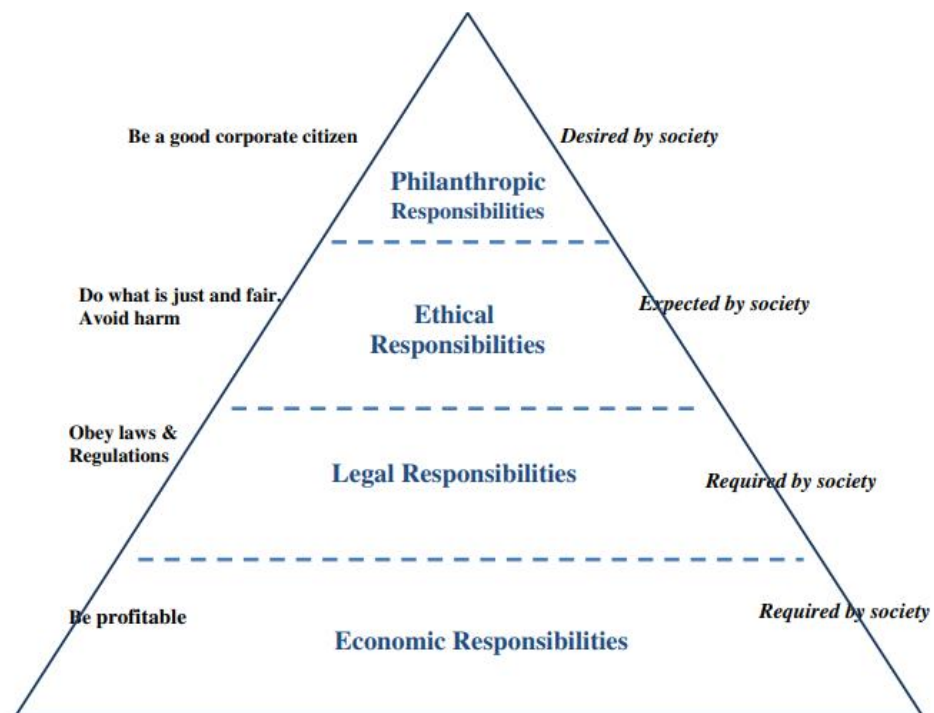
Be a good corporate citizen   Desired by society

Philanthropic Responsibilities

Do what is just and fair, Avoid harm   Expected by society

Ethical Responsibilities

Obey laws & Regulations   Required by society

Legal Responsibilities

Be profitable   Required by society

Economic Responsibilities

Fig. 1 Carroll's pyramid of CSR

Traditionally at the top, Carroll placed ethical and discretionary values because they are not requirements, but add value to a company. More recent research has argued that the pyramid should be reshaped so that it is more reflective of modern business practices

(Baden, 2016). Regardless of the order, stakeholders can associate higher value toward companies that practice all four responsibilities in comparison to companies that follow the bare minimum base requirements (Carroll, 2016). The resulting consumer preference is a strong reason why companies practice corporate social responsibility.

The utilization of corporate social responsibility initiatives heavily influences consumers and other company stakeholders, which has made it a more prominent concern for U.S. corporations (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Kim, 2011). It holds a key space in global corporate agendas now that the market has turned to focus more on socially responsible business practices (Du et al., 2010). Marketplace polls and academic research suggest that stakeholders are more likely to reward socially responsible companies and punish bad companies (Bhattacharya, 2009). In fact, if quality and price is equal, about 87% of American consumers would switch from one brand to another if the other brand is associated with a good cause (Du et al., 2010). For example, Procter & Gamble (P&G) partnered with the Special Olympics annually in the 1980s to raise funds for their cause (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Procter & Gamble offered to match the donations made by consumers for the Special Olympics up to a maximum amount. The initiative increased sales and social perceptions of P&G while also helping the Special Olympics.

Additionally, stakeholder groups beyond consumers are looking at CSR activities to inform their decisions. When it comes to employment, positive corporate social responsibility activity has shown a positive effect on job-seeking intent and employee behaviors – such as increased effort and interpersonal cooperation (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). Furthermore, there is evidence that shows investors can and have made decisions based on the CSR activity of companies (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). When a company

enacts CSR initiatives, financial benefits can be seen beyond consumer groups. Trust is built with various stakeholders. Because of the widespread effect of CSR initiatives on consumer associations, the initiatives can become more deeply rooted in social dialogue.

The social values of companies increase when corporate social responsibility efforts are implemented (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Because of the competitive market, not only are CSR actions beneficial, but they are necessary to level with competitors. Modern companies are now not only expected to sell products, but also to do so with authentic goodwill (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). In reference to Carroll's pyramid, the structured hierarchy and various areas of responsibilities show that stakeholders are expecting more from companies than fulfilling economic and legal responsibilities. Corporate involvement in the social environment and well-being initially started as a voluntary response, however, it has changed into a required process for corporations (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). The benefits of a company enacting CSR activities go further than consumers buying products, but also impacts company perceptions, investing perceptions, and employment interests of their stakeholders (Du et al., 2010). Because of both the financial and social influence, it is obvious why companies are appealed to communicate corporate social responsibility messages. However, the benefits can make it hard to distinguish whether a company is genuine or not.

In general, there are two kinds of CSR motives for companies: extrinsic, where the company is seeking out returns from their actions; and intrinsic, where the company acts out of genuine concern for the issue (Du et al., 2010). With intrinsically motivated responses, the undertakings reduce corporate profit by using up resources that could have been spent by the company, therefore showing these are more genuine passions

(Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). When the shoe brand, Toms, was founded by Blake

Mycoskie, they donated one pair of shoes for every pair sold (Toms, 2023). The intent of

this initiative was intrinsically focused on supporting the community because giving

away half the shoes they make is not the most profitable thing to do.

Alternatively, extrinsic responses are motivated by outside influences, such as

gaining a competitive advantage in the market or improving public relations through

social relations (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). Because of all of the benefits that

companies witness from their CSR actions, minimizing stakeholder skepticism is a

challenge and CSR actions are often seen as an extrinsically-motivated pursuit (Du et al.,

2010). Profit is one of the biggest motivators for a company to determine what values and

morals they should hold. Sobande (2019) analyzed Kendall Jenner's famous Pepsi

commercial, where she was surrounded by minority figures in the advertisement, joined a

civil rights protest, and was the only one able to make a difference by handing a police

officer a soda. From the audience's perspective, the motivation of this commercial

appears extrinsic because Pepsi portrayed a white female serving as the "white savior"

that solved the issue for minority individuals. At the same time, there was global

discourse surrounding race relations and the Black Lives Matter Movement. The

oversimplification of the issue in this commercial made audiences frustrated and

reference it within satirical conversations, rather than receive the intended message

(Doze, 2018). Because of these factors, the message was received by many consumers as

extrinsically motivated, rather than intrinsic.

Acknowledging intrinsic and extrinsic motivation is one way for companies to be

more effective and to combat skepticism of their CSR initiatives (Du et al., 2010).

"Support must be perceived as authentic and genuine, lest a company's goodwill efforts be seen merely as attempts to burnish reputation in the interest of turning a profit" (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018, p.1). The success of the CSR strategies relies on how well the organizations link with the public's perceptions about their CSR practices (Kim, 2011). Ultimately, organizations can and should enact CSR initiatives to keep up with competitors, but they need to uphold open and honest conversations with stakeholders about how they benefit from the situation.

While there are many benefits to reap from CSR initiatives, companies must consider the cause-fit before investing time and resources to ensure that the strategies are received in the intended way. Cause-fit can be defined as the link between a cause and the company's product, brand image, position, and/or target audience (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). It shapes how much consumers think about and evaluate a company and its social initiatives (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Consumers are intelligent and aware that manipulation tactics can exist in marketing. Because of this, companies need to utilize the concept of cause-fit, so that their image is not negatively affected, and their genuine messages are received well.

Research has shown that stakeholders will not believe, and even go so far as to punish companies where the CSR initiatives do not have a good fit or seem insincere in their approach. In a 2006 study, consumer perceptions of CSR initiatives were measured based on fit, motivation, and timing (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). It was found that low-fit (i.e., a company supports a cause that does not seem to logically make sense for the company's business purpose) negatively influenced consumer beliefs, attitudes, and intentions, regardless of whether the motivation was intrinsic or extrinsic. This is an

example of how low-fit initiatives negatively impact how audiences receive them. CSR research has proven this time and time again, where consumers are skeptical of a company's support of social causes that do not fit with the company's cause. "Low fit initiatives are likely to diminish overall attitude as well as perceptions of corporate credibility, corporate position, and purchase intention" (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). This emphasizes the importance for companies to only initiate corporate social responsibility if it aligns with the company image.

In contrast, high levels of perceived fit between an organization and its social initiatives are received better by stakeholders because the actions are seen as appropriate and on brand (Aaker, 1990; Speed & Thompson, 2000; Till & Busler, 2000). Moreover, when it is acknowledged that the company is motivated by its own interests, there is no reduction in credibility (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Consumers are aware that companies need to make money, so this reflects that there are no negative feelings toward that fact. Rather, resentment can be formed when the benefits awarded to the company do not fit the values held (Becker-Olsen et al., 2006). Being open and honest with stakeholders about motives along with properly timing the dissemination of information can facilitate effective initiatives (Kim, 2011).

One form of corporate social responsibility that has been examined in recent times is the idea of women empowerment as seen through the lens of advertising. This combination of feminist theory and advertising is known as "femvertising." However feminist theory must first be analyzed in the context of communication to understand this fully.

Feminist Communication Theory

Feminist communication theory has several common definitions, from which it claims meaning. In general, it is the belief that gender and power interact and influence each other in the presence of other elements like race, sexuality, and class (Cuklanz, 2016). Identities interact with each other to create power relations from which individuals exist, and feminist communication theory analyzes how they exist together in writing. Overall, feminist theory in communication examines and explains gender, gendered power, and other power dynamics within communication texts (Cuklanz, 2016).

The theory draws from interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and women's liberation movements in the 1970s (Byerly, 2018) and has historically been very broad in its application. There has been much development over the years since feminist theory's start. At the beginning of the theory in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the focus was on rediscovering women's rhetorical contributions to politics. During this time, there was a focus on the lack of representation of women in media and these patterns were documented (Cuklanz, 2016). By the late 1980s, there was a broader framework of general feminist theory. At this time, feminist scholarship did not truly incorporate the intersectionality of diverse elements like gender, race, class, and sexuality, but rather the focus was still on women and their inequalities in media (Cuklanz, 2016). Moving forward to the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a development of post feminism in media and culture, which challenged the intersectionality and inclusivity of the theory. A recent focus of the feminist communication theory has been examining the oversexualized female form in mainstream media and challenging ownership of the femininity of the body (Gill, 2007). The fourth wave has developed to become more

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inclusive in its representation and has focused on challenging the power of media and the possession of women and their bodies.

Feminist theory cannot be studied alone, but it must be in coexistence with and fight against an oppressive force (Byerly, 2018). With this in mind, feminist theory in communication studies female objectification and the male gaze in media, text, and film (Wood, 2015). It can sometimes be documented where the act of looking is coded as masculine and the act of being looked at is feminine (Byerly, 2018; Cuklanz, 2016; Wood, 2015). It falls into the category of critical theory, where the purpose is to critically analyze the patriarchal structures that are currently in place (Ferguson, 2017). Feminist theory is not solely about women, but the world and creating a space for equality, freedom, and justice among all.

How women were represented in media follows the trajectory of the four waves of feminism. Feminism has developed over time, facing its own challenges and having to adapt as a movement through waves (Sobande, 2019). The first wave occurred in the late 19th century during the women's suffrage movement and their efforts to secure the right to vote. The second wave of feminism occurred from the 1960s to the 1980s when issues of equality and discrimination were met with a focus on the collective power of women. The third wave began in the 1990s and focused on equality for the individual despite gender, ethnicity, race, religion, culture, and age (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). The fourth wave of feminism is the current wave, which began in the 2010s, and focuses on challenging gender norms, issues of sexual harassment, and body shaming (National Women's History Museum, 2021). The four waves of feminism have advanced the rights of women and other minority groups by challenging discriminatory social norms.

Scholars have claimed that a cultural devaluation of women was the start of gender differences in media and culture (Cuklanz, 2016). Before the third and fourth waves of feminism, women were rarely portrayed in media as multidimensional characters. Advertisements often showed women in four ways: as housewives, dependent on men, not capable of making important decisions, and as sex objects (Busby & Leichty, 1993). In Busby and Leichty's study (1993), they found that from 1959-1969, there were significant changes to how women were being represented in ads. It was in alignment with the new waves of feminism. The number of magazines that had family role ads for women decreased (10%), while the "decorative roles" increased significantly (17%) (Busby & Leichty, 1993). Because of social pressure, companies started depicting a lifestyle for women that was beyond raising a family and tending to a household.

These expectations for women to fulfill are difficult, but companies would provide a solution through commodity feminism (Goldman et al. 1991). The commodity narrative emphasizes an existing desire that needs to be solved or satiated, in this case through purchases. Some companies tell women to buy products to feel empowered and confident, however, it is the same companies that have historically made women ashamed of their bodies to seek out solutions in their products (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). The consumers were told to rely on products to solve their problems, rather than ask why the problems exist in the first place (Goldman et al., 1991). The narrative of women was created through the lens of men, rather than the subjects (Ferguson, 2017). Regardless of its negative effect on women-empowerment, the commodity narrative is still present in our capitalistic society.

Instead of getting women to use their products to achieve perfection as intended, the messaging that companies were using alienated women (Drake, 2017). In a consumer society, women's bodies are depicted as something to be possessed, shaped, and changed with products and solutions only money can provide (Li, 2022). The message that was spread through media was that the female body had to look a certain way, which was unattainable for many to achieve, no matter how much money was spent. The objectification of women in media made women ashamed of their own existence and made women feel powerless under the critical glare of masculine authority figures (Li, 2022). Women were engaged in a power struggle, where money and the patriarchy were often coming out on top. That struggle is still occurring, but shifts in cultural standards have made companies alter their messaging to meet feminist ideals.

The third and fourth waves of feminism created a standard for companies to meet in their messaging. Through cultural pressure, women started achieving more equality in social and professional settings. As a result, companies had to orient their messaging to align with the new societal standards (Scholz, 2012). Values of equality, independence, and equity are seen more in media when women are depicted (Cuklanz, 2016). Feminists moved away from their focus on being physically appealing, to focusing on professional accomplishments and personal goals (Scholz, 2012). The previously popular messaging strategies that sexualized the feminine body and diminished self-worth in women were not as successful (Drake, 2017). Advertisers adapted by asking the question of "how do we address the 'target audience women'" rather than "what do consumers want?" (Goldman et al., 1991, p. 338). Corporations have since caught on to the advancement of

ideas and have altered the way that they portray women in media to improve consumer relations.

Femininity in media was originally associated with the physical characteristics of women, such as their hair, eyes, or breasts (Goldman et al., 1991). The use of this type of imagery is no longer having the same effectiveness (Drake, 2017). Alternatively, feminism within media focuses on "independence, participation in the workforce, individual freedom, and self-control" (Goldman et al., 1991, p. 337). Women want to see themselves portrayed in media based on their goal-oriented needs (Sivulka, 2009). It is important to emphasize this difference between feminism in advertising and depicting the feminine in advertising. With the development of the fourth wave of feminism, more women have become aware of the offensiveness toward and objectification of the female body that occurs throughout media (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). While the subject of the message is women in both situations, the meaning of the message is altered depending on the portrayal of women.

Today, we see a new form of representation of women in media that aligns with the new wave of feminism. Companies have increasingly started to empower women in their messages and social causes. Female audiences who are exposed to female empowerment advertisements show significantly higher levels of purchase intent and higher positive attitudes toward the brand (Drake, 2017). Because of these significant results, companies are increasing efforts to communicate women's empowerment, while also selling their products (Goldman et al., 1991; Drake, 2017). From this emerges femvertising, where an emphasis is placed on female empowerment in company

messaging. This differs from portraying the feminine in advertising because it goes beyond external beauty.

Femvertising

Femvertising can be defined as a communication strategy that depicts women and girls through messaging and imagery that is empowering (Skey, 2015). It combines the words "feminism" and "advertising" to make a new term that describes when women are represented in advertising through messages of empowerment. Femvertising is created for women from their own perspective. It is one of many ways in which brands try to meet consumer urges to take sociopolitical action, which has become increasingly important in recent years (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). The goal of femvertising is to cultivate a target population's corporate associations by incorporating public relations strategies in messaging (Kim, 2011). Ideally, using femvertising as a CSR practice would increase the likeability of a brand and build good relationships with stakeholders.

Overall, feminism is often associated with protecting women's rights, fighting for equality for all, and tearing down an oppressive patriarchy (Sobande, 2019). However, there is conflict within the feminist movement itself on who the movement supports. Feminism is often criticized for only representing a small percentage of women – those who are privileged, white, and able-bodied (Okolosie, 2014). When a company enacts femvertising, there is a risk that they will be perceived as exploiting women or not supporting minority women (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). Companies must practice a balance between being perceived as performative and meeting stakeholder needs and expectations through their products and initiatives (Sobande, 2019). This promotes the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for CSR because companies want their

actions to be perceived as genuine (Du et al., 2010). Cause-fit must also be analyzed

before including femvertising as part of a public relations strategy (Varadarajan &

Menon, 1988). Femvertising was initially utilized in companies that directly relate to

feminine audiences through selling female products like Always, Dove, and Pantene

(Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). The cause-fit for these brands was high because their main

target audience was female-identifying.

There has also been a progression of femvertising into gender-neutral products

such as Verizon and Google (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). When there is not a strong

cause-fit, an initiative can be perceived as a money-grab and inauthentic, so it needs to be

ever more closely managed and thought out. Enacting femvertising can be challenging as

companies need to represent women accurately and not group them into a stereotyped

one-size-fits-all category. "Portraying women as men-like citizen-customers is indeed not

enough to end misogyny or change the gendered status quo" (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016,

p. 122). A company can come off as disingenuous if its messaging is different from the

reality of most women.

Inauthenticity when it comes to representing women can be called "pink-

washing," and ultimately is linked to discriminatory actions, homophobic policies, and

gender stereotyping (Blackmer, 2019). Pinkwashing exists when an organization covers

up its wrongdoings toward a group of individuals. It is derived from the term

whitewashing, which was used to describe when crimes were covered up through

misrepresentation of evidence (Blackmer, 2019). Ultimately, the term used in this

situation applies to the covering up of inequalities toward women. Because companies

have historically targeted structural inequalities and minority groups with their marketing

campaigns, it is pertinent to explore the strategies that are in place to connect with the public to ensure that malpractice is not occurring (Sobande, 2019). It is ethically important for companies to avoid using corporate social responsibility initiatives as a way to manipulate relationships with consumers for financial gain. Inauthenticity through pinkwashing can be avoided if companies cultivate corporate values that go beyond basic economic and legal requirements as seen in Carroll's pyramid. By creating ethical and discretionary values and working to explore diversity management, it will be easier for stakeholders to believe in corporate social responsibility initiatives (Carroll, 2016; Lanzalonga et al., 2023).

Inauthenticity can be seen in the example of the "pink tax" that is imposed on feminine products. The "pink tax" occurs when companies sell women's products that are noticeably more expensive and less cost-effective than their male-marketed counterparts (Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). This points out a clear discrimination based on gender because women are getting less quality at a higher price, which when consistently occurring, can intensify financial inequalities between genders in society (de Blasio & Menin, 2015).

Inauthenticity through the "pink tax" can have strong negative effects on consumer associations toward a brand. Gillette was one company that suffered massive backlash when their support of the #MeToo movement in a 2019 Superbowl commercial was received as inauthentic. This inauthenticity stems from Gillette's position in the personal care industry, in which women's personal care products cost more 56% of the time, compared to men's 13% (de Blasio & Menin, 2015). The Gillette Superbowl ad tried to reinforce the importance for men to speak up and support women, but because the

company's actions did not align with the message, it was received with irony. Gillette's prices between products have historically not been equal between genders, with color being the only difference between some women's razor products and their cheaper male-targeted variations (Yang et al., 2020). As a result, the ad, which had more than 14 million views on YouTube, had more than twice as many "dislikes" as "likes" (Smith, 2019). Furthermore, some consumers sought out different razor providers as a form of protest (Smith, 2019). Because of their incongruency in actions and messaging, Gillette's CSR initiative did not build consumer loyalty toward the brand.

Other companies must learn from Gillette's mistakes and analyze the messages they are creating. Utilizing femvertising within companies is challenging because it represents a manipulated and staged performance of women's power (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). There are many ways that femvertising can go wrong, but when done well, femvertising has many benefits. Examples of this positive outcome can be seen in Dove's "Real Beauty campaign" and the "Like a Girl" challenge by Always (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). These ads altered expectations within culture for what women and girls are supposed to look like and do. Femvertising initiatives like these are different because they try to strengthen their organization-public relationships with depictions of realistic and ordinary girls, which imitate the reality of their target audience (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). By utilizing femvertising in PR strategies, companies can increase their stakeholder relationships and solidify brand loyalty. Of the women polled in a 2016 industry survey, 51% said they liked femvertising messages and 52% had purchased a brand's product specifically because of the positive portrayal of women in the brand's advertising (Dan, 2016). Furthermore, 72% of respondents in a 2022 survey indicated

that they expect brands to take a stand on issues impacting women (Marketing Charts, 2022).

A company that exemplifies femvertising is Dove. Dove has become popular for its strong connections with femvertising, but it has not always been that way. In 1990, the Dove Beauty company plateaued in its competition with other brands after its special cleaning agent patent expired (Allen, 2022). The company needed to find a way to stand out, and eventually in 2004 it started its Real Beauty Campaign after realizing most women did not see themselves as beautiful (Dove, 2024). Since then, the focus of Dove's communication has looked different.

Dove is now often participating in CSR initiatives and has championed female empowerment since 2006 with their Evolution campaign (Dove Evolution, 2015). One advertisement from this campaign recorded the transformation of a woman model from the start of when she was getting her makeup done, to the extensive photo editing process, and lastly the final product on the billboard. It starts a conversation about how society's idea of beauty has been misshapen and unachievable expectations have been set for women to compare themselves to. The ad focuses on the internal beauty of women rather than the external. Ultimately, for Dove and other companies enacting femvertising, the goal is to improve consumer perceptions.

Since the launch of its femvertising campaigns, Dove has seen significant positive results financially and socially. The company's sales revenue grew from $2.5 billion in 2004 when the campaign was first implemented, to $4 billion in 2014 (Skene, 2017). From this, it can be seen that a successful implementation of femvertising would set apart a company from others and could lead to stronger brand loyalty and purchase intent

among the targeted consumers. Because of its popularity, prominent history, and success, Dove was selected to be included as an example in the survey for this study to test how purchase intent and brand loyalty are impacted in consumers after viewing femvertising.

Loyalty and Purchase Intent

Various studies have connected CSR initiatives with positive behavior responses by consumers (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer, 1997; Ellen et al., 2006; Folkes & Kamins, 1999). Companies try to rectify and/or improve consumer perceptions and loyalty through CSR initiatives. The benefits that companies reap from these initiatives are both social and financial.

Socially, brands can benefit from CSR initiatives through the increased positive perceptions that incur. One positive behavior response that is imperative to clarify and define is loyalty. Numerous definitions of loyalty can be found in literature (Dick & Basu, 1994). In the corporate field, stakeholder loyalty can be defined as a consumer's preference toward a company and/or its products based on previous use and experience (Aaker, 1991). For this study, the term loyalty means that an individual is repeatedly using or purchasing an item and develops an affinity with that brand over others that are offered on the market (Assael, 1998). Loyalty aligns very closely with another measure in this study, which is purchase intent. Brand loyalty is developed from repeated choices with a brand, not a singular purchase (Assael, 1998). It can also be known in literature as attitudinal loyalty, or a predisposition of consumers to commit to a brand and their intentions to support the brand (Mellens et al., 1996). It is how a consumer views a company, which can be associated with commitment (Russell-Bennett et al., 2007).

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The loyalty developed from CSR initiatives can also impact financial returns for a brand. Behavior loyalty can be defined as the observable actions a consumer takes to support a company such as repeat purchases and spending behaviors (Russell-Bennett et al., 2007). An individual can show behavioral loyalty towards a company, through their intention to put a positive behavior in effect. In the case of purchase intent, the behavioral loyalty being shown is purchasing a product from a specific brand (Perloff, 2003). Research has connected consumer's perception of a company and their overall purchase intent. For example, Russell-Bennet et al. (2007) found that consumers exhibited more behavioral loyalty toward a product when a consumer had attitudinal loyalty. Behavior loyalty is defined as a consumer's repeat purchases of a brand by their own choice of patronage (Hammond et al., 1996). It has been shown in research, that not only do consumers develop a higher brand loyalty if companies reflect similar shared values, but it also can influence purchase intention (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). Because of these benefits, it is important to analyze the effects that CSR initiatives have on brand loyalty and purchase intention within woman-identifying consumers to achieve future significant results.

Several factors can influence loyalty in consumers. First, gender is a variable that must be considered in how messages are received. The findings within Jayawardhena et al.'s (2007) study were consistent with previous literature, stating that gender and prior purchases have a significant effect on purchase intention. When analyzing consumer purchase orientations during online shopping, both gender and prior purchases had significant effects on purchase intention (Jayawardhena et al., 2007). Research can connect the purchase intent of an individual with their loyalty because it is a repeated act

of support (Dick & Basu, 1994). Because of this, it is important to specifically analyze gender in relation to brand loyalty and purchase intent.

Another factor that can influence brand loyalty and purchase intent is company size. Smaller brands have been found to generally attract less loyalty among their buyers than large brands do among theirs (Ehrenberg et al., 1990). Results of this can be seen in Jayawardhena et al.'s (2007) study, where multi-channel retailers had more loyalty displayed in their consumers than smaller companies.

Another factor that influences loyalty is company engagement in media. Online platforms can be utilized to conduct CSR initiatives. Internet use still varies significantly between genders, where women's and men's purchasing behavior and time spent on the internet are different (Jayawardhena et al., 2007). The platform where Gen Z receives much of their information is social media, and they generally prefer online media sources to offline (Morning Consult, 2022). Ultimately, the medium a company utilizes can impact the success of an initiative just as much as the message.

Additionally, customer support services and consumer relations are factors that can influence loyalty in consumers. Companies have developed apps and rewards programs to track consumer spending and distribute points or other forms of rewards to maintain high brand loyalty and consumer associations (O'Brien & Jones, 1995). Another example of increasing loyalty and purchase intent can be seen in return policies. A lenient return policy and having multiple return locations can benefit a company by decreasing behavioral restraint and increasing purchase intent (Oghazi et al., 2018). In Dove's case, having multiple store locations as part of a larger company is beneficial to provide an easier return process for the consumer because of proximity (Oghazi et al., 2018).

Utilizing gender as part of these strategies creates a targeted audience. Dove has a rewards program and a 30-day return policy for their products (Dove, 2023). Through these strategies and the utilization of femvertising, Dove encourages brand loyalty and purchase intent among consumers, specifically woman-identifying audiences. Studying Dove's effectiveness in brand loyalty and purchase intent can be useful to other companies and expanded upon in future research.

In reference to the research stated thus far, one research question and several hypotheses have been formed to guide this study:

RQ1: Do woman-identifying consumers associate the use of femvertising strategies with the companies that use them?

H1: The more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their brand loyalty will be.

H2: The higher brand loyalty of woman-identifying consumers, the higher intention to purchase.

H3: The more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their purchase intention will be.

H4: Woman-identifying consumers' brand loyalty will mediate the relationship between CSR associations and intention to purchase.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

To address the research question and hypotheses posted for this study, an online

Qualtrics survey (see Appendix A) was administered through a convenience sample of

woman-identifying college-aged peers. All participants ranged from 18-24 and completed

the questions of their own free will. This age group was chosen because the focus of this

study was to see the impact of femvertising on a younger demographic. This fills a

research gap by studying a demographic that is not common in current published research

in this field.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were selected through purposive sampling. This form of sampling is

used for smaller subsets of a larger group (Baxter & Babbie, 2003). It would be nearly

impossible to collect data from the entire demographic of women aged 18-24. Because of

this, the present study measured a subset of this larger population through purposive

sampling. The present study ensured that the research question and hypotheses posited

were in alignment with the selected demographic for the study. Demographic questions

were posited at the start of the survey such as age, gender, ethnicity, and race.

Responses were collected in several ways to get diverse and representative results.

Because no compensation was available for participants in the survey, it was intrinsically

motivated. First, surveys were sent out to women's groups on college campuses. Several

examples of this are athletic teams, professional business groups, activist organizations,

and sororities. Other groups on campus that the study was shared with were religious and

social life groups. Additionally, leaders of LGBTQ+ and multicultural and minority

groups were contacted and asked to disseminate the survey. One of the more prominent

ways this survey was shared was through word of mouth. The study also utilized the

snowball sampling method, where the last question on the survey asked participants if

they were willing to share this study with other individuals who fit the demographic. If

they chose to, they could include the names of potential participants. Finally, a copy of

the original survey with an added bot check was posted on social media – LinkedIn,

Instagram, and Reddit. For these online platforms, it was important to use a bot check to

ensure accurate data collection. The Reddit boards that were posted on were r/GenZ,

r/SampleSize, and r/SurveyExchange, with the last board yielding the best results.

The goal number of responses received was initially at least 150. However,

limited resources and having a specific demographic limited this number. Before

applying demographics and eliminating incomplete responses, 256 responses were

collected. Of this, only 101 respondents completed the survey and were deemed valid

responses. Demographics and completion of the survey determined which responses were

valid. As this study analyzed woman-identifying individuals, 100% of the respondents

identified as women ($N = 101$). The age range considered for this study was 18 to 24

years old, with the average being 21.18 ($SD = 1.97$). 5.9% of respondents indicated that

they were Hispanic/Latinx ($n = 6$), while 94.1% were not Hispanic/Latinx ($n = 95$).

88.1% of the respondents identified as White ($n = 89$), 5.9% identified as Asian ($n = 6$),

2.0% identified as Black ($n = 2$), and 4.0% identified as Other ($n = 4$). When asked if

they had purchased a product from Dove in the past 6 months, 60.4% of respondents said

yes ($n = 61$), while 39.6% of respondents said no ($n = 40$).

Procedures and Measures

To start the procedure, candidates for the study received a link to the survey. By clicking this link, they agreed to participate in this study. They were informed that at any point, they were able to leave the survey by exiting the link. After this, demographic questions were asked to determine eligibility. Those who did not pass this section were thanked for their time and were not able to access further questions. The eligible participants were directed to the start of the survey. In the first section, they answered questions gauging their familiarity and association with Dove. The first question they were asked was if they purchased from Dove in the last six months. Additionally, participants were asked questions related to their attitude toward Dove. These questions are adapted from previous literature (Kim, 2011; Brown & Dacin, 1997) and were measured on a 5-point scale. An example question measuring attitude is: "I associate Dove with environmental responsibility."

In the next section of the survey, participants were instructed to watch a preselected video from a Dove femvertising campaign titled the "Self-Esteem Project." The video features younger Gen Z individuals, therefore aligning closely with the demographic for this study. The strong pathos and high fit of this video made it the selected choice. Additionally, Dove was chosen as an example in this study because their femvertising campaigns are substantial and well-marketed. Dove has multiple written statements that could have been shown, however, a video is optimal in this case because younger demographics commonly consume information through videos on social media platforms. According to a survey conducted in August 2022, 50% of Gen Z news consumers reported that they used social media networks as their primary daily news

source (Morning Consult, 2022). Because of these factors, one of Dove's lesser-known femvertising videos was selected for the survey to avoid preconceived notions while also maintaining a high fit with the Gen Z woman-identifying demographic.

Following the video, this study utilized scales in previous research where CSR associations, loyalty, and purchase intentions were measured.

CSR Associations

The statements utilized in Abitbol and Sternadori's (2018) article provide a published five-point scale measure that was used to test CSR associations. The CSR associations that were measured in these statements are: consumer welfare, philanthropy, employee welfare, community involvement, and environmental welfare. Adapting from Lichtenstein et al. (2004), five statements were asked about Dove: "Dove seems genuinely concerned about consumer welfare;" "Dove believes in philanthropy and giving generously to worthy causes;" "Dove is likely to follow employee-friendly rules and policies;" "Dove is highly involved in community activities;" "Dove is highly concerned about environmental issues" ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 3.88$, $SD = .76$).

Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty refers to an individual's preference toward a brand and its products. This preference in products would typically lead to a stronger purchase intent, and repeat purchases of goods and services (Assael, 1998). Utilizing a measure from Kang (2014), brand loyalty was measured using four statements: "My first choice of personal care to shop at is Dove"; "In the next year, I will buy from Dove more"; "I will continue to buy from Dove even if its prices rise somewhat"; and "I will continue to use Dove even if I experience a few problems" ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 2.86$, $SD = .99$).

Purchase Intent

To measure purchase intention, this study adapted Putrevu and Lord's (1994) 5-point Likert scale. They evaluated purchase intention with 3 items. To maintain consistency for users throughout the questions, this study measured purchase intent on a 5-point scale. Participants were asked the following three questions: "I will purchase Dove the next time I need a personal care product;" "It is very likely that I will buy from Dove;" "Definitely, I will buy some product of Dove" ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 3.20$, $SD = 1.09$).

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

This study utilized SPSS 28 to analyze the research questions and hypotheses stated in this study. RQ1 asked if woman-identifying consumers associate the use of femvertising strategies with the companies that use them. An independent samples t-test was conducted in which woman-identifying consumers who purchased a Dove product in the last six months was the independent variable and CSR associations was the dependent variable. Results showed that woman-identifying consumers who did not purchase a Dove product in the last six months (M= 3.90, SD = .62) was not significantly different from those that did (M= 3.88, SD = .85) in terms of CSR associations (t = -.13, p = .90), indicating a small difference in size.

H1 posited that the more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their brand loyalty will be. A linear regression was used to test this hypothesis. Results supported H1, $F(1, 99) = 51.72$, $B = .76$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .34$. The more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their brand loyalty will be.

H2 posited that the higher brand loyalty of woman-identifying consumers, the higher intention to purchase. Linear regression was used to test this hypothesis. Results supported H2, $F(1, 99) = 298.60$, $B = .95$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .75$. The higher brand loyalty of woman-identifying consumers, the higher intention to purchase.

H3 posited that the more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their purchase intention will be. Linear regression was used to test this hypothesis. Results supported H3, $F(1, 99) = 69.05$, $B = .92$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .41$.

The more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their purchase intention will be.

H4 posited that woman-identifying consumers' brand loyalty will mediate the relationship between CSR associations and intention to purchase. To test H4, the SPSS macro PROCESS (model 4) used bootstrap methods with resampling set to 5,000 (Hayes, 2013). Results revealed that loyalty (B = .63, SE = .09, 95% CI [.45, .82]) significantly mediates the relationship between CSR associations and intent to purchase, thus H4 was supported.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore femvertising's effects on Gen Z women identifying consumers' purchase intent and brand loyalty. The results indicated several significant findings. The research question that guided this study asked if woman-identifying consumers associate the use of femvertising strategies with the companies that use them. Those who purchased a product from Dove in the past six months did not have significantly different CSR associations from those who had not purchased a product from Dove in the past six months. There is little difference in CSR associations between the two groups, therefore meaning the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. One reason why this may be is the popularity of Dove and their initiatives. Because Dove's brand, values, and CSR initiatives are strong and well-known, being a current customer may not influence how consumers perceive the company.

Next, this study measured the relationship between consumer associations and brand loyalty. Results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between the two values, specifically, the more woman-identifying consumers associate a company with femvertising, the stronger their brand loyalty will be. Through effectively presenting companies in a positive light in relation to social, environmental, and political issues; CSR initiatives strengthen how organizations are perceived by the public (Kim, 2011). When a company invests in public associations, consumer brand loyalty is one of the returns that can be seen (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). This study reinforces previous research that analyzed the relationship between consumer associations and brand loyalty, and shows that for Gen Z woman-identifying consumers it is significant.

Additionally, this study found that there is a positive relationship between brand loyalty and purchase intent in Gen Z woman-identifying consumers. The results demonstrated that the higher brand loyalty of the woman-identifying consumers, the higher their intention to purchase. The findings from this study align with literature where purchase intent is connected with brand loyalty because it is a repeated act of support (Dick & Basu, 1994). When brand loyalty is formed in consumers, their commitment and trust can be seen through repeat purchases.

Furthermore, there were significant results showing a positive relationship between femvertising associations in woman-identifying consumers and their purchase intention. This is significant because most studies do not directly connect CSR associations with purchase intentions – there are other variables that are often involved that are used to support this influence including organization-public relationships, company-cause fit, and corporate ability, to name a few (e.g., Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018; Becker-Olsen; Kim, 2011). Through this significant finding in this study, CSR associations can be seen as directly influencing purchase intent. Corporate social responsibility initiatives are an effective way in which companies can reflect similar shared values as their consumers, which can influence purchase intention (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2018). When a company invests in public associations, consumer purchase intent is one among other returns that can socially and financially benefit the company (Bhattacharya et al., 2009). From this study and building off previous research, when consumers develop significant associations with companies, they are more likely to develop purchase relationships with them.

Finally, this study found that the relationship between woman-identifying consumers' perception of a company's CSR efforts and their intention to purchase is significantly influenced by their brand loyalty. Research has previously connected this, where consumers' perceptions of a company were associated with their overall purchase intent and their consistent involvement with the brand (Russell-Bennet et al., 2007). This study upholds Russell-Bennet et al.'s (2007) findings and shows that brand loyalty strengthens the relationship between associations and purchase intent. Through their purchase intent and repeat purchases, consumers show commitment toward companies and their portrayed values.

Because of these significant findings, this study reinforces why it is essential to study in this target demographic. The results from this study showed that for Gen Z woman-identifying consumers, purchase intent, brand loyalty, and CSR associations all influence their relationships with companies and their products. The Dove Real Beauty campaign video used in this study aligns closely with the motives and characteristics of the fourth wave of feminism. For these initiatives, women are not marketed as sexual objects, but rather as human beings that work toward their goals. Woman-identifying audiences had increased brand loyalty and purchase intention when they associated a company with these forms of femvertising. Therefore, this study reaffirms the importance for companies to communicate in ways that align with and are familiar to their audiences.

Theoretical Implications

The contributions made in this study can be seen in several ways. This study expands corporate social responsibility literature as well as feminist communication theory. Feminist communication theory initially analyzed gender and other power

dynamics within communication texts (Cuklanz, 2016). These dynamics were eventually studied in media and now can be integrated into public relations by applying them to corporate social responsibility. This can apply specifically within the realm of communication aimed at Gen Z female-identifying audiences.

Fit is a driving force for consumerism and the results from this study show it as an important factor for Gen Z woman-identifying consumers. Literature and research in this field consistently support the importance of high-fit initiatives (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Du et al., 2010; Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). When an initiative does not fit with the overall brand or practices of a company, it can make the efforts appear inauthentic, manipulative, and extrinsically motivated for profit (Du et al., 2010). Fit influences how stakeholders evaluate a company and is therefore an important aspect for companies to research prior to acting out initiatives.

Practical Implications

The current study's findings show that Dove's femvertising campaigns were effective in strengthening purchase intent and brand loyalty for their woman-identifying consumers. The results from this study can provide direction for corporations and practitioners in strengthening the impact of their brand's messages.

First, the findings from this study show that the efforts of Dove in creating CSR campaigns are not in vain. Dove has developed numerous femvertising messages that have positively influenced their brand image in the public. The associations that consumers developed from the Dove Real Beauty campaign and other initiatives positively influenced brand loyalty and purchase intention. For Gen Z women, their personal values and the values companies stand for are important, this is apparent in the

significant results in this study. Because of these strong values, Gen Z woman-identifying individuals are more likely to exhibit behavior loyalty toward Dove and their products when forced to choose between multiple alternatives at the store.

As a result of its CSR initiatives, Dove receives both financial and social benefits from its stakeholders. When Dove aligned their company values with the values of their target audience, they saw a direct positive effect on consumers' purchase intent. This is backed by other research that has connected the employment of CSR initiatives with positive behavior responses by consumers (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer, 1997; Ellen et al., 2006; Folkes & Kamins, 1999). Therefore, this study reinforces this when enacted with femvertising and a feminine audience. For Gen Z woman-identifying consumers, they will show positive behavior responses. If companies contribute to social issues through CSR initiatives, consumers can reciprocate by contributing to a company's financial success through purchase behavior.

There are other factors that contribute to Dove's success, one being the fit of the initiative with the consumers' needs and the company's products/brand. Dove's femvertising initiative was strong because it closely aligned with the female-identifying target audience and their needs. Because of this, the Dove femvertising initiative made a strong impact as seen in the results section. To appear genuine when communicating CSR initiatives, companies should pay attention to how closely the cause fits with consumer needs. It also needs to fit the mission and services of the brand, so that it makes sense to include it in company messaging. By aligning marketing campaigns and messages with feminist values and perspectives that resonate with female-identifying target audiences, organizations can enhance engagement and build strong loyalty with their target

audience. Companies with females as primary consumers, including companies such as Dove, should continue allotting resources toward femvertising initiatives, as the initiative continues to strengthen connections with consumers.

Furthermore, this study shows the importance of developing brand loyalty in consumers, especially as it mediates the relationship between corporate social responsibility associations and purchase intentions. From this study, practitioners can learn several ways to build loyalty in their target audiences. By focusing on building loyalty in consumers through high-fit corporate social responsibility initiatives that align with consumer needs, companies can benefit financially and socially. In doing this, Dove expanded its sales revenue by 60% after implementing its initial Real Beauty campaign (Skene, 2017). It has also grown to become one of the three biggest brands under its parent company, Unilever (Unilever, 2023). It has a presence in 80 countries and continues to implement CSR initiatives that focus on female empowerment, sustainability, animal welfare, and youth education (Unilever, 2023). With the implementation of these issues, Dove has increased how consumers perceive the brand, and it has become much more than a soap company. Consumers associate Dove with purpose and meaning, which aligns with their own values. Similarities and associations with companies allow consumers to trust in the company and its products more, choosing Dove over other alternatives when given the choice.

Companies need to ensure that they do not promote femvertising messages that they do not enforce in their own culture, or they are at risk of backlash from consumers and being accused of "pink-washing," (Blackmer, 2019). This form of low fit can be detrimental to a company's campaign and cause damage to existing relationships

(Becker-Olsen et al., 2006; Naumovska & Purcarea, 2021). With high-fitting, intrinsically motivated initiatives, companies can show consumers that they are genuinely concerned (Varadarajan & Menon, 1988). The success of corporate social responsibility strategies relies on how well the organization aligns with these perceptions that the public develops about the organization and its practices (Kim, 2011). This study reinforces previous research in demonstrating that high fit is an important component that companies need to consider, especially in this sample population. The significant results show that for this target demographic, how Gen Z receives the CSR initiatives directly influences whether they will purchase from a company. There are numerous factors that consumers account for when purchasing products, but when it comes to deciding between products of the same price, Gen Z women-identifying consumers will choose the product that they trust. Through corporate social responsibility initiatives, companies build consumer loyalty and associations in a way that seems genuine when the messages are high fit with the brand. As a result, consumers feel stronger toward a brand and are more likely to purchase from them, making the findings from this study an important reference when practitioners develop organization-public communication strategies.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although the findings of this study push literature on CSR and feminist communication forward, there are limitations that point to future directions. First, the initial goal was to collect more than 150 responses, however, the final number totaled 101. While still able to achieve significant results with this smaller sample size, more participants could have made this survey more representative. Furthermore, while diverse groups were reached out to through a non-probability/convenience sample, a majority of

respondents identified as white. A more diverse sample may provide insights as to how femvertising strategies impact people of different ethnicities.

Another challenge that this survey faced was the inclusion of a 3-minute video. The survey prohibited respondents from moving on in the survey until the video was completed. This portion of the study had a large drop-off, where respondents closed out of the survey. Moreover, it was the participants' responsibility to pay attention to the contents of this video, and there were no measures beyond the time limit that ensured the video was watched. Therefore, it is possible that some respondents did not fulfill the requirements of the survey and were distracted with other tasks while the video played. A shorter video might have prevented a drop-off in respondents. This medium was chosen because it aligned with the demographic being studied, as younger generations are relying more on online content to stay connected as opposed to other forms (Morning Consult, 2022). Furthermore, this study relied on self-reporting by utilizing the survey method. Future studies could employ other methods, such as an experiment, which will help control for the interactions of certain variables, but also will ensure participants are not distracted while completing the research.

This study only included one company. Dove is a popular company, and individuals could already have preconceived notions about the brand. Future studies could include either a fictitious company which will help mitigate preconceived notions or have multiple companies featured to control for specific brand effects. Finally, one last limitation is that this study only focused on female empowerment as a CSR strategy. Future research can expand upon the findings of this study by examining different corporate social responsibility initiatives such as sustainability, LGBTQ+, or other social

justice issues. In doing so, researchers can examine if results are dependent on the initiative. Finally, future studies can use alternative methodologies to help answer on a deeper level why these findings are significant. A qualitative analysis could provide narrative responses from participants that reinforce or challenge the significant findings from this study.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Through examining the impact of femvertising on the Gen Z demographic, the current study contributes significantly to the practice and knowledge of corporate communication with consumers through corporate social responsibility initiatives. As a newly emerging consumer group, Gen Z utilizes advancing technology and media to inform their purchase behaviors. By analyzing Dove's femvertising initiatives in media as an exemplar, organizations can utilize the significant findings from this study to create high-fit initiatives that provide financial and social returns.

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APPENDIX A

Survey for Woman-Identifying Individuals

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH
Research Project Title: FEMVERTISING'S EFFECTS ON BRAND LOYALTY AND
PURCHASE INTENT WITHIN GEN Z WOMAN-IDENTIFYING CONSUMERS

You have been asked to participate in a study conducted by Annete Marie Klausing from
the University of Dayton, in the Department of Communication.

The purpose of this study is to examine how woman-identifying consumers associate the
use of femvertising strategies with the companies that use them.

**Please ensure that you read the information below, and ask questions about
anything you do not understand before deciding whether or not to participate.** Your
participation is not required. It is voluntary and you have the right to stop the study at any
time for any reason. You will be required to watch a video as part of this study. In that
section, you will not be able to skip ahead and you must pay attention to the content of
the video, or your responses will be invalid. This survey should take you about eight
minutes to complete. You will not be compensated for your participation. All of the
information you provide will be confidential. Only the researcher and faculty advisor will
have access to your anonymous responses. Identifying information will not be collected,
however we cannot guarantee the security of the computer you use or the security of data
transfer between your computer and our data collection point. We urge you to carefully
consider this prior to answering questions. Participants are ONLY eligible to participate
if they are over the age of 18.

Please contact the following investigators if you have any questions or concerns:
Annette Klausing, klausinga1@udayton.edu
Dr. Alan Abitbol, AAbitbol1@udayton.edu

If you feel as if you have been treated unfairly, or you have questions regarding your
rights as a research participant, please email IRB@udayton.edu or call (937) 229-3515.

Please answer the following demographic questions.

1. What is your race?
- American Indian or Alaska native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify)

2. What is your ethnicity?
- Hispanic/ Latinx
- Not Hispanic/ Latinx

3. What is your age? (Please only type the number of years)

4. To which gender do you identify?
- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary / third gender
- Prefer not to say

If respondents do not align with the woman-identifying age 18-24 demographic, they will be thanked and will not continue to the rest of the survey.

In the first section, they will answer questions gauging their familiarity and associations with Dove.

5. Have you purchased from Dove in the last six months?

- Yes
- No

6. I associate Dove with innovative products.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

7. I associate Dove with good quality products.
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

8. I associate Dove with global success.
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

9. I associate Dove with environmental responsibility.
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

10. I associate Dove with philanthropic giving.
- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

In the next section of the survey, participants will be instructed to watch a preselected video from a Dove femvertising campaign titled the "Self-Esteem Project."

[INSERT VIDEO HERE]

Following the video, CSR associations, loyalty, and purchase intentions will be

measured.

CSR Associations

11. Dove seems genuinely concerned about consumer welfare.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

12. Dove believes in philanthropy and giving generously to worthy causes.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

13. Dove is likely to follow employee-friendly rules and policies.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

14. Dove is highly involved in community activities.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

15. Dove is highly concerned about environmental issues.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Brand Loyalty

16.. My first choice of personal care to shop at is Dove.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

17. In the next year, I will buy from Dove more.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

18. I will continue to buy from Dove even if its prices rise somewhat.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

19. I will continue to use Dove even if I experience a few problems.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Purchase Intent

20. I will purchase Dove the next time I need a personal care product.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

21. It is very likely that I will buy from Dove.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

22. Definitely, I will buy some product of Dove.

- Strongly disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Strongly agree

Thank you for your responses.

30. If you know someone who fits the target demographic for this study as a woman-identifying individual age 18-24, please provide their name and an email that they may be contacted with.