



# Analysis on the Influence of Feminist Advertising on the Communication Effect

## -- Take Advertisements of Domestic Women's Beauty Brands as an Example

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**Abstract.** Feminist advertising, as a new form of advertising, not only focuses on the independence and autonomy of women, but also emphasizes the dominant position of women in the consumer market, which coincides with the core goal of brand marketing -- to meet consumer needs and build brand image. The core goal of this study is to reveal the communication effect of feminist advertising. This includes but is not limited to how feminist advertising affects the cognition, emotion and behavior of the audience. Through in-depth analysis of the characteristics of feminist advertising, combined with the relevant communication effect theory, this paper can more accurately grasp the internal connection between feminist advertising and brand marketing. In the specific research process, it focuses on how feminist advertising attracts and impresses female consumers through innovative content and forms. This paper will also explore the psychological, emotional and cognitive changes of female consumers when they accept the messages of feminist advertisements, and how these changes affect their purchasing decisions and brand loyalty.

**Keywords:** feminism, communication effect, brand marketing

## 1 Introduction

In recent years, feminist advertising has gradually become an important force in the market. Feminist advertising empowers women and girls and advocates for gender equality by presenting the talents, messages and images of modern women. These advertisements not only attracted the attention of consumers, but also triggered a wide social discussion. Especially in domestic female beauty brands, feminist advertising is particularly effective in communication. This paper will discuss the communication effect of feminist advertising in domestic women's beauty brands by way of literature review, and summarize the views and conclusions in the literature under different time dimensions.

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## 2 Literature Review

### 2.1 Definition of Feminist Advertising

In 2014, Samantha Skey, the chief marketing officer of SheKnows Media, an American digital media company, coined the word "femvertising", which is a combination of "feminism" and "advertising", in an article in *Adweek*, to show the new development trend of feminist advertising. Along with the feminist advertising boom, the term "femvertising" was widely spread and used [1]. Some foreign scholars have also written "femvertising" as an abbreviation of "female empowerment advertising" in their articles, which is translated as female empowerment advertising in China. In her article, domestic scholar Cao Chun (2017) defined the concept of feminist advertising as: advertisers choose key feminist ideals (such as gender equality, female power, independence and freedom, etc.) as the core, and repackage them through multidimensional information, images, stories and other expression techniques to benefit brands or companies [2]. To sum up, based on feminist advertising cases and literature books, this paper defines feminist advertising as follows: feminist advertising is a commercial product that integrates with the feminist wave and social culture. It has both commercial purposes and transmits feminist concepts on women's equality, social participation, self-expression and cognition. As a new form of advertising expression, feminist advertising is becoming a trend. Although many brands in the industry have applied this form, there are still few related researches in the academic circle.

### 2.2 Research on Communication Effect and Communication Psychology

In the field of feminist advertising, the research on the psychological effect of advertising is the mainstream trend, that is, the various psychological effects produced by the audience after the exposure of the advertisement reflect the impact of the advertisement on the audience, including the impact on the audience's cognition, interest, preference, desire, behavior and other psychological levels. The research finds that feminist advertising can significantly improve the attitude of advertising and brand, and increase the emotional connection between audience and brand. Feminist advertisements rely on the emotion-driven characteristics to stimulate the audience's positive emotions, transfer the emotions to the corresponding products, and enhance the audience's favorable impression of the brand. At the same time, some scholars have confirmed the positive role of feminist advertising in terms of sharing intention, brand attraction and advertising influence. Some scholars focus on the Internet environment to study netizens' attitude evaluation of feminist advertising. Rodrigues found that when consumers post brand-related comments on Twitter and release their personal emotions, they invisibly establish emotional connections with the brand and other consumers, thus affecting consumers' cognition of the brand [3]. Feng et al. used data mining to study the attitudinal tendency of users on Youtube towards Dove's "Campaign for Real Beauty", and the results showed that the discussion among consumers focused on four topics: "definition of beauty", "advertising approval", "other" and "questioning" [4]. However, the domestic research on feminist advertising

started late, and the domestic industry and academic circles have mostly discussed female empowerment advertising due to its commercial significance and consumerist characteristics, and have not yet explored its discourse expression and its impact on the audience's meaning production[5]. Cao Chun (2017) said that in recent years, feminist advertising has explored some fixed themes, such as the concept of "beauty", opposition to gender discrimination and stereotypes in traditional advertising, and emphasis on the power of women as a group. A study on Chinese female consumers shows that feminist advertisements can significantly enhance female consumers' brand identity and stimulate their purchase intention. By showing women's diverse values and lifestyles, these ads satisfy female consumers' need for self-expression and identity, thus enhancing the effectiveness of brand marketing. In general, the production of advertising effect includes a shallow to deep change from cognition, emotional attitude to action. From the perspective of consumers, the effect of advertising communication can be divided into three stages, namely, cognition, attitude and action.

### 2.3 Social Effect Research

The sales and communication effects of advertising can directly reflect the economic benefits caused by advertising, but advertising also bears more profound cultural functions. Good advertising can promote the change of social values. The morality, art, aesthetics, dignity and values reflected in advertising have an impact on the economy, education and environment of the society, that is, the social effect caused by advertising. Becker-herby believed that enterprises should carefully adopt feminist strategies as a marketing tool to attract attention which could not obtain long-term results. Only by integrating gender equality into the enterprise values could feminist advertisements really play the utility. Some scholars in our country, under the critical vision of feminist media, This paper discusses the presentation of female images in advertising from the aspects of role shaping, gender acculturation effect and discourse power marginalization [6]. Scholar Li Ruirui (2022) believes that as women's purchasing power continues to grow, many beauty brands have begun to use the symbolic packaging strategy to transform feminist values into attractive "symbolic concepts". This approach encourages women to integrate their personal consumption desires with these values, thus playing a more active role in economic activities. Brands cleverly combine feminist ideology with their core values through marketing, while adapting to the evolution of modern women's views, thus sparking social discussions on feminism and effectively boosting product sales in the market[7]. Scholar Xiang Xiwei (2010) pointed out that in advertising, female images are not only a commercial symbol, but also a cultural symbol. In order to promote the marketing of products, the female images in advertising films are constantly stereotyped, presenting the traditional image of virtuous wife and mother, or the beautiful vase image, to cater to and strengthen the patriarchal ideology [8]. Yang Xianshun et al believe that feminist advertising is a hidden male power advertisement under the cloak of "women's rights". Excessive amplification of women's right to speak and the creation of a strong female image will put women in the position of being stared at again [6]. In summary, if some female consumer brands simply sell symbols and personal emotional values as a new

marketing strategy to promote their products, then in a deeper sense, it is a new form of exploitation and control over women, which is difficult to truly promote the awakening of female self-awareness.

## 2.4 Summary

Through literature review, it can be found that the research on the effect of feminist advertisements mainly starts from the audience level, focusing on the economic impact brought by feminist advertisements, while neglecting the social impact and other aspects of advertisements, especially the communication effect of feminism. Advertising and communication effect are inseparable, and the realization of advertising is the communication effect, so there must be some omissions in ignoring the communication effect. Relying on the continuous evolution of media technology, the unprecedented openness and sharing of social media provides space for the audience's discourse expression. In an environment where the public expression of women's issues has formed a kind of "online voice culture", feminist advertisements often arouse a wide range of topics because of their controversial content; Therefore, this paper focuses on the three surfaces of the audience's communication effect, so as to analyze the social impact of feminist advertising at the macro level, and then construct the research of feminist advertising in the field of communication.

## 3 Research Methods

### 3.1 Advertising Sample Selection

This study chooses video advertising as the sample object. This paper selected three representative advertising cases of female consumer brands as samples for analysis, as shown in Table 1. Through in-depth analysis of the advertising content, communication strategy and market feedback of these cases, this paper can more intuitively observe the specific effects of feminist advertising in brand marketing. Through comparative analysis of these cases, this paper can further reveal the internal mechanism of feminist advertising's influence on brand marketing effect.

As feminist advertising focuses on emotional appeal, video advertising is more suitable for injecting emotional elements in a story-based form than print advertising, which has strong appeal. Moreover, video advertising is inherently attractive, and the conversion rate and interaction rate of video advertising are also higher than other forms. Therefore, this study focuses on the performance strategy of feminist video advertising. Since feminist advertising has not formed a proper term in the Chinese industry, it is impossible to search for samples by the accurate keyword "feminist advertising", so we can only rely on keyword fuzzy retrieval. The author entered the domestic professional advertising portal and searched for sample advertisements with keywords such as "women", "women marketing", "women advertising", "feminism", "women empowerment" and so on. In the retrieval stage, in order to determine that the sample conforms to the characteristics of "feminist advertising".

**Table 1.** Analysis of advertising content and effectiveness

2016 SK II "She Finally Went to the Matchmaking Corner"	The core of the AD revolves around the topic of "leftover women", revealing their plight in the face of family and social pressures through the inner monologues of several single women. In the AD, some of the women express the hardships they suffer because they are unmarried, such as being considered incomplete and unfilial. At the end of the video, the women go to the matchmaking corner with their parents, demonstrating their independence and confidence and challenging traditional ideas about marriage. The video had 690,000 views on the night of its release, and by the next morning, it had more than 1 million views.
2018 CHANDO "The Interview No Man Can Pass"	The advert reveals gender bias and discrimination in the workplace by showing a series of interview scenarios. The questions and demands put forward by the interviewer, such as giving up family responsibilities and gender dominance, are actually alluding to the extra pressure and unfair treatment women face in the workplace. Through these scenes, the advertisement makes the audience feel the difficulties of women in the workplace, thus triggering the consideration of gender equality. The video has been viewed 66.5 million times, exposed 246 million times, read 140 million times and interacted 410,000 times.
2022 PROYA "The Lion Dance Girl "	By showing the charm of lion dance culture and challenging gender prejudices, the advertisement successfully conveyed the brand concept and enhanced the brand image. Against the background of the lion dance culture, the AD tells the story of a young girl who resists, accepts and finally inherits the lion dance culture, showing the image of brave and independent women in a new era. The lion dance culture in the AD is not only an important part of traditional Chinese culture, but also reflects the inheritance and challenge of traditional culture through the girl's perspective. The advertisement has become a phenomenon marketing case. On Women's Day, the topic was read 290 million times, discussed 182,000 times, and the topic's popularity exceeded 120 million [9].

Through the detailed introduction and analysis of these cases, this paper can have a deeper understanding of the application and value of feminist advertising in brand marketing. These cases not only show the unique charm of feminist advertising, but also provide us with valuable inspiration and reference, which is helpful to promote the wide application and development of feminist advertising in brand marketing [10].

### 3.2 Questionnaire Design

The contents of the questionnaire cover the extent of consumers' cognition of the advertisement, whether the information conveyed by the advertisement is accurate and attractive, and whether the advertisement has influenced consumers' purchasing decision. In this study, questionnaire survey was used to obtain data. In order to ensure the effectiveness and rationality of the questionnaire design, the preliminary

questionnaire was formed by quoting the familiar questionnaire scale in the existing relevant researches at home and abroad, and combining with the semi-structured interview results of a number of people with more experience in watching online advertisements. On the basis of feedback from several test measurements, the preliminary questionnaire was revised, and a formal questionnaire was finally formed.

The questionnaire mainly consists of the following parts:

The first part introduces the basic information of the respondents. It includes the consumer's gender, age, education, disposable income, Internet access time and weekly online time.

The second part, the influence factors of feminist advertising effect. It mainly discusses the eight sub-dimensions that affect the effect of feminist advertising: media service quality, media awareness, consumer experience, consumer involvement, brand loyalty, consumer innovation, advertising information pertinence and advertising emotional drive.

The third part, feminist advertising communication effect.

It mainly evaluates the communication effect of feminist advertisements from three aspects: cognition, psychology, attitude and action of female consumers.

The second and third parts of the questionnaire adopted five-level Likert scale scoring system.

A score of 1 indicates complete disagreement; A score of 2 indicates relatively disagreement;

3 is average; 4 is more or less agreed; A score of 5 indicates complete agreement

Independent variable: The perceived dependent variable of feminism: A study of the communication effects of advertising.

Questionnaire design: The research decided to select female consumers as the survey object. In the specific operation, the form of electronic questionnaire was adopted, and the distribution place of questionnaire was mainly social media and social networking websites. Planned distribution: 200 copies.

In order to improve the quality and representativeness of the questionnaire, pre-survey work was carried out, and necessary amendments and optimization were made to the questionnaire to ensure that the formal questionnaire was more effective.

This questionnaire is divided into the following three categories of people: 1. College students (including master and doctoral students). 2. Professionals living in first - and second-tier cities, who have strong purchasing power, are the biggest target groups for advertisers. 3. people living in small towns, this type of people compared to lower education, and living in relatively backward economic small towns, the third type of sample is mainly to carry out some counter evidence support.

### **3.3 Semi-Structured Interview**

In order to further understand the impact and extent of feminist advertising on the improvement of women's self-consciousness and the construction of identity, This paper selects a series of representative advertising cases of female cosmetics consumer brands (CHANDO "No Man can pass the Interview", SK II "She Finally Went to the Matchmaking Corner", and PROYA "Lion Dance Girl") and conducts semi-structured

interviews with their audience groups. This paper intends to interview 10 senior audiences of the above brands, and the interview duration is 30 minutes. The habits, psychological changes, willingness and behaviors of female consumers will be explored through semi-structured interviews.

## 4 Results

This paper selects a series of representative advertising cases of female consumer brands of beauty and cosmetics, and conducts extensive questionnaire survey on their audience groups. The contents of the questionnaire cover aspects such as consumers' cognition of the advertisement, whether the information conveyed by the advertisement is accurate and attractive, and whether the advertisement influences consumers' purchasing decision. Through the analysis of the questionnaire data, this paper finds that female consumers generally hold a positive attitude towards advertisements with feminist elements, believing that these advertisements are closer to their lives and needs and can arouse resonance. In the semi-structured interview, 93.3% of the respondents believed that this type of advertisement would enhance women's female consciousness. The story plot and role setting in the advertisement, as well as the promotion through social media and partners, enable the advertisement information to be accurately conveyed to the target audience, and produce good communication effects. Interview A said that advertisements can influence the public's opinion to a certain extent, and this type of advertisement can improve her awareness of women to a certain extent if it is well shot. Interview B also made it clear that after watching these feminist advertisements, as a woman, she had great resonance and got great encouragement from them. She also said that she had more and deeper understanding of female consciousness. Interview C also gave an example, saying that like several women who were pressured to get married in SK II's "She Finally Went to the Matchmaking Corner", she once faced such pressure, and it was not until she got married that the pressure disappeared. She said she hoped that more and more advertisements of this kind would not only make more and more women realize that they can control their own pace of marriage and childbearing, but also make the people around them more understanding of women. It is worth noting that interview E believes that the improvement of women's awareness is not only for women, but also for men, or it is gender-neutral. However, for the male group, it should be more about men's calm towards the improvement of women's social status. However, most respondents believe that the traditional idea that men are strong and women are weak is still deeply rooted in China, so it is impossible to improve women's consciousness overnight. In the process of improving gender equality and raising women's awareness, advertising can only play a very weak impact, and real change depends on many aspects, such as the improvement of public knowledge and literacy, the further development of society and economic development. Therefore, some interviewees also said that feminist advertising will have a more profound effect on educated groups and feminists themselves. Almost all female respondents said that feminist advertising helped construct their self-identity and group identity to some extent. Interview H said that

these advertisements were very immersive and made people feel more sure than ever after watching them, as if they were those brave, confident and independent people in the advertisements. Interview G said that she is a follower of feminism, she always thinks that she or women are the best, after watching these feminist advertisements, the feeling in her heart is stronger, just like what she likes has been recognized as happy. Interview I said that after watching these videos, she felt very proud of being a woman! Now there are a lot of discussions about women's issues on the Internet and in society, and many people call for "girls help girls". Every time she sees this kind of thing, she sighs that women are really loving.

## 5 Analysis of the Impact of Integration Path

When deeply exploring the influence of feminist advertising on communication effect, this paper has to consider the combined effect of cognition, emotion and behavior. These three paths do not exist in isolation, but interweave and influence each other, and jointly build consumers' overall perception and response to brands.

From the perspective of cognitive path, feminist advertising effectively changes the audience's cognitive structure of brands by conveying positive and independent female images. For example, Hovland et al believe that communication is "the process in which one person (the communicator) delivers stimulus (usually verbal) to influence the behavior of another person (the receiver)". In short, communication is a process of conscious and purposeful influence. Feminist advertising marketing is a kind of activity obviously with the subjective motivation of the communicator. Through marketing strategies and communication skills, brands can achieve certain advertising communication effects. When the female image in the advertisement is in sharp contrast with the traditional stereotype, the audience's brand cognition will be updated, and then produce a more positive and positive evaluation of the brand. This kind of cognitive change lays a solid foundation for the improvement of brand marketing effect. Feminist advertising mostly uses fine persuasion strategies, such as emotional resonance and authoritative endorsement, to effectively guide consumers to associate the brand with brave and independent female images, thus enhancing the positive image of the brand.

In terms of emotional path, the emotional response inspired by feminist advertisements has a significant impact on the communication effect. 73.3% of the respondents think that after watching these feminist advertisements, their impression on the brand is improved. The persuasion mode of feminist advertisements also reflects the theoretical appeals of Aristotle's three persuasion angles, which enables viewers to think about some "gender labels" in today's society while their emotions are gradually mobilized, and feel the real contradictions and the truth behind the scenes which are in sharp contrast with the so-called traditional impression from their hearts. If the female image shown in the advertisement can touch the heart of consumers and arouse resonance, it can prompt consumers to have a strong emotional connection. This kind of emotional connection not only deepens consumers' memory of the brand, but also

enhances the brand's attraction, making consumers more willing to interact and share with the brand, thus promoting the spread of brand marketing effect.

The influence of behavior path is more direct. 86.7% of the respondents believed that after watching these feminist advertisements, their brand impression improved, and 4 of them explicitly said that they would buy the brand's products. They also expressed in the interview that they are more inclined to buy brands that can express their personality and values. By accurately capturing and conveying these personalities and values, female consumer brand advertisements have successfully attracted the attention and love of a large number of female consumers. When feminist advertisements successfully change consumers' cognition and attitude through cognitive and emotional paths, consumers' purchasing behavior and loyalty will also be improved accordingly. Female consumers are more inclined to choose brands that can represent their values and attitudes toward life when making purchase decisions, and feminist advertising satisfies this demand by creating positive and independent female images. Therefore, feminist advertising can not only promote consumers' purchase behavior, but also improve brand loyalty and word-of-mouth effect.

From the perspective of the three approaches, the impact of feminist advertising on the communication effect is all-round. It not only changes the audience's cognition of the brand, but also inspires emotional resonance, and finally promotes the audience's purchase behavior and loyalty [11]. In addition, female consumer brand advertising can further promote the improvement of brand marketing effect by improving brand image and word of mouth [12]. For example, the advertising of underwear "inside and outside" brand has triggered extensive discussion and sharing on social media due to its unique creativity and profound connotation, thus greatly improving the brand's exposure and visibility. This kind of word-of-mouth communication can not only help the brand attract more potential consumers, but also enhance consumers' loyalty and stickiness to the brand. This kind of influence mechanism is complex and profound, which needs to be constantly explored and perfected in our brand marketing practice. It also provides us with a new perspective, that is, by shaping positive and independent female images, to promote the communication effect of advertising and the overall improvement of brand marketing effect. The female thought advocated in feminist advertising will be bound to brand responsibility and corporate image in the future. Only when corporate brands are consistent with social issues and honest about their core values can they take the trend of feminist advertising to go further.

## 6 Conclusion

In the Internet era, the dissemination of feminist advertising has also become more diverse and convenient. The rise of new media such as social media and short video platforms has provided a broader space for the dissemination of feminist advertising. Through microblog, WeChat, Douyin and other social media platforms, feminist advertising can quickly spread to the masses of netizens and spark widespread discussion and attention. And feminist advertising, with its unique perspective and expression style, has injected new vitality into the advertising industry. It not only

changed the stereotyped image of women in traditional advertising, but also promoted the re-recognition and respect of women's value in society. These female advertisements reflect the brands' ambition to subvert traditional concepts - the core essence is to pursue a more free and beautiful life. Today, women play an increasingly important role in Chinese society, and as a result, the feminist movement has gradually emerged in China, with the call for gender equality becoming louder and louder. In many advertisements for female consumer products, there is also a greater emphasis on the self-worth of women, in line with this trend. Advertising for profit is inherently in conflict with the core idea of advocating women's autonomy and independence, but this does not negate the value of such advertisements. This idea is conveyed to the audience through the media resources controlled by beauty brands, and for those who are limited by material and living conditions and unable to access such ideas, it is like a light in the darkness, illuminating a new path for them and providing another choice. In the future, I hope that feminist advertising will continue to play an important role in brand marketing, providing more diversified and personalized choices for female consumers.

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