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**Femvertising and its  
impact on the buying  
behaviour of the  
consumers in India**

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## **Femvertising and its impact on the buying behaviour of the consumers in India**

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Anyun Sharma\*\*\*\*\*

### **Abstract**

Femvertising is advertising that uses messages to empower women, addressing the various stereotypes prevailing in the society. The purpose of this study is to understand the impact of femvertising ads on the purchase intention, brand equity, attitude towards the ad, persuasiveness towards the ad and self-referencing with the ad. An experiment-design study was conducted, in which consumers were requested to participate in a study regarding advertising perceptions. The data was analysed using single-factor ANOVA. The analysis found that the consumers exposed to femvertising ads have a higher purchase intention, enhanced brand equity, increased persuasiveness towards the ad and positive self-referencing as compared to those exposed to non-femvertising ads of the same brand. The study has made a theoretical contribution by examining and validating the positive impact of femvertising on aspects such as purchase intention, brand equity, persuasiveness towards the ad and self-referencing. Based on the findings from the study, we recommend that companies can use femvertising as an effective communication tool as it is likely to lead to higher revenues.

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Marketers should be sensitive to the important aspect of role portrayal of women in advertising as it is likely to have an impact on purchase behaviour.

**Keywords:** femvertising, women-centric advertising, brand equity, persuasiveness of ad, purchase intention, self-referencing.

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## 1. Introduction

Women empowerment is an idea that has existed since the 1980s but has gained momentum in the past decade. For almost a century, advertisements in India have only shown women in a home setting, performing the various household chores. Advertisers have also objectified women conveniently to let their product appeal to the male population. One such example is of Unilever, the second largest advertiser in the world, also the owner of the brand Axe. The Axe advertisements have always shown voluptuous women, falling from the sky in the pursuit of the Axemen. But in the last couple of years, brands showcasing women in stereotypical light are facing backlash on social media. This has led to a paradigm shift in the way women were portrayed in advertisements. Today, advertisers are gradually becoming responsible towards the portrayal of women in their advertisements and they are therefore coming up with diverse and positive representations of women that are more relatable and realistic.

The employment of women empowering messages in advertisements is known as 'femvertising'. Femvertising encourages society to break through the stereotypical gender roles and orthodox societal constructs, as seen in "#BreakTheBias" by Titan Raga and Ariel's "#SharetheLoad". These marketing campaigns are recognised for promoting positive empowerment messages for female consumers. Beginning with Unilever brand Dove's Real Beauty campaign, followed by Procter & Gamble's '#LikeAGirl' campaign, the market has seen a rise of socially focused commercials with the advent of social marketing.

In the Indian context, femvertising focuses on issues such as gender equality, conservative norms of the patriarchy and conventional practices of the society. The debut of femvertising

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has induced role inversion and gendered scripts along with addressing sensitive issues prevalent in India. Femvertising ads like – BIBA's #ChangeIsBeautiful, Ariel's 'Share the Load' campaign, DeepikaPadukone's 'My Choice' campaign for Vogue, #BreakTheBias by Titan Raga, Radhika Apte's 'Bold Is Beautiful' for Anouk etc. – have set the wheels in motion for a revolution in the marketing industry. The era of objectification of women to market products has been replaced by the era of women empowerment. A number of brands in India celebrate women on Mother's Day and International Women's Day, but do they really comprehend the significance of femvertising? Does femvertising induce a veritable social change in the society?

While femvertising commercials are commended for addressing realistic issues prevalent in the society, there is inadequate groundwork to establish if and why femvertising has a significant impact on the consumers of a brand. This experimental study seeks to assess how femvertising influences the buying behaviour of customers.

## **2. Review of Related Literature**

"Femvertising" has been defined as advertising that promotes women empowering messages (SheKnows Media, 2015). Femvertising has also been described as a revamped approach to advertising featuring storylines of women empowerment and has proven to have positive influences on sales (Castillo, 2014). Feminist empowerment has also been described as the idea of inspiring women to confidently take control and responsibility for their identity and choices (Alcoff, 1988). The media and advertising industry have recently embraced the notion of femvertising and the very essence of advertisements is being aimed at empowering girls and women. Women are depicted as dynamic, brave and able, urged to put stock in themselves and

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encouraged to understand their normal excellence and potential (Skey, 2015). Research suggests that the advancement women have made both in their careers and society has made them more receptive to marketing that represents their ambitions (Sivulka, 2009).

Globally, many femvertising ads have been setting new records by winning awards and accolades for their creative and empowering depiction of women. Sexism and objectification have been replaced by girl power and strength. Several global brands – Toyota, Nationwide Insurance, P&G, etc. – have demonstrated the true power of femvertising with girls' self-esteem. In India too, several femvertising ads– DeepikaPadukone's 'My Choice' video for Vogue, Radhika Apte's video for Anouk, Ariel's 'Share the Load' campaign, etc. – have set in motion the debate on the true spirit of femvertising (Samad & Chowdhary, 2017).

Always' #LikeAGirl campaign, depicts an epic battle to stop the drop in confidence girls experience during puberty; this video shines light on young girls' self-esteem. Jalakas (2016) has investigated the activities produced because of femvertising; by investigating femvertising from a crowd of people's point of view and investigating which responses and activities these battles create, and how these can be contextualized. The “#RealBeauty” campaign by Dove, is an unmistakable illustration that deflates the stereotypical standards of physical beauty by celebrating the diversity in women. From curvy to petite, from different skin colours to different hair types, Dove effortlessly communicated that all are beautiful in their own way. Dove launched six exclusive bottle shapes and sizes to corroborate the diversity in women's beauty, thereby showcasing that beauty cannot have one defined standard.

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Drake (2017) has studied the effects of femvertising on aspects such as attitude towards the ads and purchase intention. Her research indicates femvertising has a positive impact on purchase intention, better attitude towards ad, higher emotional connect and improved perception of women as compared to non-femvertising ads. However, the hypothesis that femvertising ads have a positive impact on female gender role portrayal was not supported. A study conducted by Abitol and Sternadori (2016) revealed that the participants had mixed views about a brand's pro-female messages. Some participants loved the women empowerment message but did not necessarily show support for the product or the brand itself, while other participants claimed that the advertisements made them think about the stereotypes women deal with, but that their overall attitude towards women and the product or company did not change as a result of their exposure to femvertising messages.

Many feminist advertisements are seen by people as more of a trend than a socially responsible action (Abitol & Sternadori, 2016). In this view, Bharadwaj (2017) found that some of these new age ads trying to annihilate the gender stereotype actually end up perpetuating it. Therefore, a brand needs to be extremely careful with what they are depicting in these femvertising ads and how it will be interpreted by the audiences. While the representation of women as multidimensional beings is praised globally, the campaigns must relate to the company as a whole as well.

Since the 1950s, (Eisend, Plagemann & Sollwedel, 2014) gender stereotypes have been a central focus in the advertising industry, in order to create a prompt sense of identification amongst the target audience. Some advertisements have highlighted typecasts prevalent



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between men and women throughout history to build a rapport with the audience. These depictions of women in advertising have entrenched a representation of women using utopian images and stereotypical portrayals with the most contributing factor being the media industry (Jalees & Majid, 2009).

The Cultivation Theory (Shrum, 1996) illustrates how the social reality a consumer believes in, is “cultivated” through gender portrayals in the media. “Cultivation” in the context of this theory, elucidates the way a consumer’s actual reality morphs into the reality showcased in television ads which ultimately, have an impact on their buying behaviour. The media industry, through the years, has used the cultivation theory to promote a certain standard that women need to uphold in the society.

Recently, the advertising industry has seen a shift in trend depicting idealized portrayals of reality in the minds of the viewers, and have started promoting positive empowering messages for women, as television ads heavily influence the perceptions through a subtle cultivation of idealistic dogmas and depictions (Gunter 1995, Manstead and McCulloch 1981). In context to the cultivation theory, upward comparisons with media images do not increase body-focused anxiety if women are impelled towards self-improvement, rather than self-evaluation (Halliwell & Dittmar, 2004). Both millennials and those who are aware of feminist issues are extremely sensitive to the way brands depict gender and emphasize on the non-conformist gender portrayals (Ford et al., 1991).

Tucker (1957) argued that the product a customer uses depicts his/her personality. Today, products, services and suppliers are supposed to have an image determined not only by the

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physical specifications of the product but also by numerous other factors like packaging, advertising and price. This image is known as the product image. Levy (1959) initiated the idea of self-image and product image congruity. The consumers were thought to prefer products with images congruent with their self-image (Douglas et al., 1967) as usage of a particular product displayed their self-image to the world. If we look at the self-esteem perspective, a consumer is motivated to purchase a product with a positive self-image to maintain his own self-image. According to Grathwohl (1967), self-concept is a symbolic image of self, one identifies with, and, the behaviour of an individual strives to protect and enhance that very image. The consumers' buying behaviour conveys an apt symbolism of a pre-emptive image of self to both the consumers and his environment.

Waters and Ellis (2013), in gender-related advertising research, have criticized the idealistic body goals for women that the advertisements promote. Consequently, men's perception of women has been distorted to expect women to have unrealistic body images as portrayed in the media. These typecasts play an important role in the identity negotiation for both genders. Cultural expectations engender these stereotypes; for example, in most cultures, masculinity is associated with power, ambition, success, and rationale, whereas, femininity is synonymous with emotion, protection, warmth and attraction (Wood, 1999).

Both men (Pope, Phillips, Olivardia, 2000, Agliata & Dunn, 2004), and women (Stice and Shaw, 1994; Heinberg and Thompson, 1995; King, Touyz, and Charles, 2000) attempt to emulate the advertising models they are repeatedly exposed to in their reality. In the past, this

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process of self-modelling has led to lower self-esteem, depression and body dissatisfaction in people. (Mitchison, Harry, Griffiths, Murray, Bentley, Gratwick, Harrison & Mond, 2016).

Today's women are a combination of knowledge, intelligence and ability. They are financially independent and have a greater purchasing power, as compared to the past. They not only have increased needs but also are in the pursuit of fulfilment of self-value (Sivulka, 2009)a. Marketers need to understand the detailed psyche of women's attitudes and behaviour to capture the modern market.

However, there have been very few studies on the impact on femvertising in the Indian context. There is a need for a study that seeks to find whether a relationship exists between the women empowering ideologies used by the media industry and the buying behaviour of a consumer in India. It is essential for brands seeking to leverage their platforms to empower women, spread positive messages, to form an emotional connect with millennial female consumers. The results of this research should encourage marketers to utilize empowering narratives in their female-targeted advertisements.

As brands continue to recognize the societal shift towards empowering women, femvertising becomes an essential tool for marketers to wield, in order to form an authentic bond with their consumers (Becker-Herby, 2016). Considering the lack of adequate research in the upcoming field of femvertising; this experimental study seeks to fill this gap and establish a relationship, or lack thereof, between the femvertising ads and the measures of the construct of buying behaviour.

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### 3. Statement of the Research Problem

The past decade has seen the rise of women empowerment as a predominant theme in advertising in India; “#BreakTheBias” by Titan Raga and Ariel’s “Share the Load” being prime examples. While these advertisements celebrate and emancipate womanhood and encourage a progressive mentality in the Indian society, there is a scarcity of factual research for the marketing implications of these ads, in contrast to, regular ads based on issues, unlike feminism.

### 4. Hypothesis Development

#### Purchase Intention

One of the definition of purchase intention is that it is the individual’s awareness to make an attempt to buy a brand (Shabbir, M. S., Kirmani, S., Iqbal, J., & Khan, B. 2009). Researchers have also argued that intention is different from attitude. While attitude means evaluation of products, intention is the person’s motivation in the sense of his or her intention to perform behaviour. (Drake, 2017) has found that femvertising ads have a positive impact on customer purchase intention, such that when customers are exposed to an advertisement with women empowering messages, they exhibit greater intention of buying the product displayed.

These findings have led to the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1:** Femvertising ads lead to higher purchase intention when compared to a non-femvertising ad of the brand.

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### **Persuasiveness of the ad**

The cognitive- response model holds that persuasion is a function of people's reflections on and cognitive responses about the content of a message (Greenwald, 1968; Wright, 1980). Cognitive responses are defined as any thoughts that arise during the process of elaboration when people relate message material to other message content or to their pre-existing knowledge and views stored in memory. Accordingly, this model suggests that persuasion reflects the net favourableness of the cognitive responses that people evoke as they elaborate on a message received from advertising. We propose the following hypothesis to understand the impact of femvertising on persuasiveness of the ad.

**Hypothesis 2:** The persuasiveness of a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad.

### **Brand Equity**

Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand equity is developed through enhanced perceived quality, brand loyalty, and brand awareness/associations, which cannot be either built or destroyed in the short term but can be developed only in the long run through carefully designed marketing investments such as advertising. Following hypothesis is proposed to investigate if femvertising has an impact on brand equity.

**Hypothesis 3:** Femvertising ads lead to an increase in the brand equity of the brand when compared to a non-femvertising ad.

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### **Self-referencing**

Self-referencing is defined as a processing strategy where an individual processes information by relating a message, such as advertising, to his or her own self-structure (Burnkrant & Unnava, 1995). Perceived similarity is positively associated with judgements of attractiveness (Klohn & Leo, 2003). Simply put, people relate to those who are similar to themselves. From a theoretical perspective, self-referencing represents a cognitive process whereby ad information is related to self.

Following hypothesis is proposed to investigate if femvertising has an impact on self-referencing.

**Hypothesis 4:** Self-referencing by the customers towards a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad.

### **Attitude towards the Ad (Role portrayal)**

Attitude towards the ad is defined as a predisposition to respond in a favourable or unfavourable manner to a particular advertising stimulus during a particular exposure occasion (Lutz, 1985). Recent research has identified attitude toward the ad as an important construct to study the effects of advertising on brand attitude and purchase intention. Following hypothesis is proposed to investigate if femvertising has an impact on Attitude towards the Ad.

**Hypothesis 5:** Femvertising ads lead to an improvement in the attitude towards an ad when compared to a non-femvertising ad.

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## 5. Research Methodology

The study used 4 advertisements, two of them (Ariel #Share the load Campaign, Titan Raga #Break the Bias) were femvertising ads (employing pro-female messages) and the other two (Ariel Matic, Titan Viva) were non-femvertising ads. An experiment research design was used where participants were divided into following four groups:

**Group I:** 40 participants in the age group 18-34 years were shown the Ariel Share the Load ad campaign which addressed the stereotypical image of a woman at home (Femvertising Ariel)

**Group II:** 40 participants in the age group 18-34 years were shown the Titan Raga Break the Bias ad campaign which addressed the stereotypical image of a woman at a workplace (Femvertising Titan).

**Group III:** 40 participants in the age group 18-34 years were shown the Ariel Toughest Dried-In ad which was a non-femvertising ad.

**Group IV:** 40 participants in the age group 18-34 years were shown the Titan Viva ad which was a non-femvertising ad by Titan.

The Group I and II when combined together served as the test groups for the research design as they were used to assess the impact of femvertising ads. Consequently, Group III and IV acted as the control groups for the research design as they were shown non-femvertising ads. Steps were taken to reduce the effect of external environmental variables while the survey was being conducted.

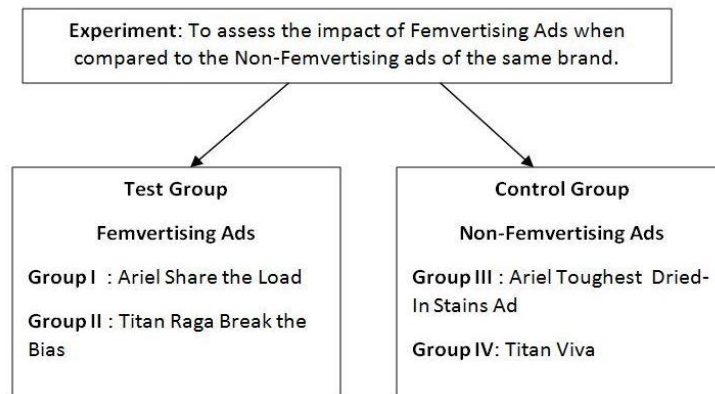


Figure 1: Experiment Design Test and Control groups

We searched for femvertising ads in India and came across many advertisements with different themes like Body positivity (Dove Real Beauty), Equal rights (My choice by Vogue), Gender Scripts (Biba), Role Inversion (Share the Load by Ariel) and stereotypes associated to a women's success at a workplace (Break the Bias by Titan Raga). Out of these advertisements, we selected "Share the Load" ad by Ariel and "Break the Bias" by Titan Raga and decided to use the stereotypes associated with *Women at Home* and *Women at a Workplace* as two major themes for the study.



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***About the ads:***

***Share the Load by Ariel India***

The Share the Load ad campaign by P&G's detergent brand Ariel is in the top 10 list of best marketing campaigns by the World Advertising Research Centre (WARC). The advertisement shows a father looking at her daughter perform all the household chores while taking important calls from work and working on her laptop. She is running here and there in the house, doing laundry while her husband is watching TV. The father writes a letter to the daughter, apologizing her for not setting an example for her as he himself never helped her mother in household chores. The campaign developed by BBDO and Mediacom Mumbai raises a question in the mind of the viewer that why household chores like laundry are assigned to women and urges the men in the house to Share her Load, starting with laundry.

***Break the Bias by Titan India***

Ogilvy & Mather India Ltd. launched an advertisement for Titan Raga in 2016, which leaves a lot open to interpretation. This commercial brings out the mental blocks of Indian society with elegance and simplicity. The advertisement depicts one of the executives is reading out names of recommended employees. One of the employees, "Kiran, recommended by Rajat" intrigues everyone in the room and piques their curiosity. Kiran is described as a young, talented and hardworking fresher who has impressed Rajat with sheer dedication and due diligence towards work. They share a close professional relationship. By now, everyone in the room is smirking

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knowingly— picturing a chemistry brewing between the enigmatic mentor and the charming protégé, assuming this chemistry to be the reason for Rajat's recommendation. However, to everyone's shock and dismay, when Kiran is summoned to the conference room, he turns out to be a man. This throws light on the prejudice faced by women at workplace which is clouded by biases prevalent in the Indian society. The short film is a compelling narrative which urges viewers to salute women who succeed despite these hurdles and #BreakTheBias.

The primary data was collected using a questionnaire that consisted of multi-item scales to measure the purchase intention, brand equity, persuasiveness of the ad, self-referencing and attitude towards the ad. For the results to be accurate, it had to be ensured that every participant reviews the advertisement before answering the questionnaire. Hence, convenience sampling was chosen as a sampling procedure. The participants were 160 graduates and undergraduate students in the age group 18-34 years from diverse backgrounds like management, advertising, liberal arts, law and engineering studying in Narsee Monjee School of Management Studies, Mumbai.

These students were chosen as the sample, as they are part of the generation Z and hence can identify themselves best to the theme of women at home (Ariel Share the Load ad) as they will soon be starting a family of their own and women at workplace (Titan Raga Break the Bias) as they will be soon starting their professional careers.

The participants were first shown the advertisements and then they were asked to answer a questionnaire, consisting of multi-item scales for the measurement of purchase intention, brand equity, attitude towards the ad (Role-Portrayal), self-referencing and persuasiveness of the ad.

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The data collected was analysed using one way ANOVA on the two combined datasets (femvertising and non-femvertising) to analyse the differences amongst the test and the control groups.

### **5.1. Methods and Instruments of Data Gathering**

The instrument used for gathering primary data was a questionnaire, which consisted of 5 multi-item scales based on a seven point Likert model (1- Highly disagree...7- Highly Agree).

#### **5.1.1. Measures of the Questionnaire:**

**Attitude towards the Ad (Role-Portrayal) (Ford and LaTour 1993).** This scale was used to measure the participant's perception towards the gender roles that are played by men and women in advertisements. The scale was adopted from Ford and LaTour 1993, which had reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.8. The scale consisted of 12 items that tried to understand how the participants feel about the stereotypical portrayal of women as a gender in advertisements.

**Persuasiveness of the Ad (Pham and Avnet 2004).** The scale for persuasiveness of ad was adapted from (Pham and Avnet 2004), in which the composite reliability was reported to be 0.8.

**Self-Referencing (Martin, Lee, and Yang 2004).** The scale for self-referencing was adopted from (Martin, Lee, and Yang 2004), which has reported the Cronbach's alpha of 0.8. The 7 item scale is used to identify how much a participant can associate with the theme of the ad.

**Brand Equity Scale (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000).** The scale for brand equity was adopted from (Yoo, Donthu, and Lee 2000), which has reported the Cronbach's alpha of 0.93. The scale

was used to measure the value of the brand in the minds of the participants as compared to other competing brands.

**Purchase Intention Scale (Baker and Churchill 1977).** The scale for purchase intention was adopted from (Baker and Churchill 1977), and has reported values of 0.93 by Kilbourne, Painton and Ridley (1985). The scale was used to measure the participant's willingness to buy the product after seeing the advertisement.

## 5.2. Reliability and Internal consistency of the questionnaire

Table 1: Reliability statistics using Cronbach's alpha

<b>Reliability Statistics using Cronbach's Alpha</b>		
<b>Questionnaire Tested</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha value</b>	<b>Number of Items</b>
Attitude Towards the Ad (Role portrayal)	0.693	12
Brand Equity	0.774	3
Persuasiveness	0.743	3
Purchase Intention	0.806	4
Self-Referencing	0.841	7

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All 160 responses were considered while calculating the reliability of every variable.

A Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.7 denotes that there is good internal consistency and reliability in the scales used and the responses recorded. However, the Cronbach's Alpha for Attitude Towards the Ad (role-portrayal) scale was found to be lower than 0.7, which implies that the scale is not consistent with the responses and hence not reliable for further analysis. The reason for this discrepancy might be because the respondents were not able to understand the questions or had some confusion regarding the meaning of the questions posed to them. Therefore, due to the lower reliability of the scale, "Attitude Towards the Ad" (role-portrayal) (Hypothesis 5) has been dropped. The research is continued with one less variable, since the conclusions drawn from the data collected on "Attitude Towards the Ad" (role-portrayal) might not be accurate.

### **5.3. Validity of the questionnaire**

Validity of the questionnaire was tested using factor analysis of the individual scales. The extraction method used for the analysis was Principal Component Analysis (PCA). Results indicated that all four scales extracted a single component, with average variance explained also crossing the 0.5 threshold, indicating convergent validity of the data.

Table 2: Validity statistics using Factor Analysis

<b>Validity Statistics using Factor Analysis</b>		
<b>Questionnaire Tested</b>	<b>No. of components extracted</b>	<b>Average Variance Explained</b>
Brand Equity	1	0.6936
Persuasiveness	1	0.6554
Purchase Intention	1	0.6425
Self-Referencing	1	0.5060

## 6. Data Analysis and Results

As the study used an experiment design, to test the hypothesis single factor ANOVA (analysis of variance) was used to compare means of the two samples, the test group and the control group. The responses of Group I (Ariel Share the Load) and Group II (Titan Break the Bias) were combined to form the test group which is the femvertising ad group. The responses from Group III (Ariel Toughest Dried-In stains) and Group IV (Titan Viva) were combined to form the control group or the non-femvertising ad group. Single factor ANOVA was performed individually for purchase intention, self-referencing, persuasiveness of the ad and brand equity for testing the hypothesis.

One way ANOVA is used to determine whether the two population means differ significantly or not. The test compares the average and variance of the samples, while calculating the F value and P value to check significance. For the study, the tests were conducted at 95% confidence interval and hence  $\alpha = 0.05$ .

The means of the responses of femvertising ad group respondents and the non-femvertising ad respondents were calculated, and then compared against each other using ANOVA to see if there was any significant difference amongst the femvertising and non-femvertising respondents, that is to say, whether there is significant change in the behaviour of the people (with regards to the variables measured) due to the femvertising ads.

### 6.1. Hypothesis Testing: Using One-way ANOVA

**Hypothesis 1:** Femvertising ads lead to higher purchase intention when compared to a non-femvertising ad of the brand.

**H<sub>01</sub>:** The mean purchase intention of a customer to buy a product after seeing a femvertising ad is equal to the mean purchase intention of a customer seeing a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>A1</sub>:** The mean purchase intention of a customer to buy a product after seeing a femvertising ad is more than the mean purchase intention of a customer seeing a non-femvertising ad.

$$H_{01}: M_{PI(FEM)} = M_{PI(NFEM)}$$

$$H_{A1}: M_{PI(FEM)} > M_{PI(NFEM)}$$

where  $M_{PI(FEM)}$  is the mean purchase intention of the femvertising ad group and  $M_{PI(NFEM)}$  is the mean purchase intention of the non-femvertising ad group.

Table 3: Purchase Intention Summary Statistics and ANOVA

*Summary Statistics*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Purchase Intention - Non-Fem</b>	80	284	3.55	1.256962025
<b>Purchase Intention – Fem</b>	80	318.25	3.978125	1.704420491

*ANOVA*

<b>Source of Variation</b>	<b>F-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>F Critical</b>
<b>Between Groups</b>	4.951498556	0.027484246	3.900988696

In accordance with directional hypothesis, ANOVA for the two samples (Test Group i.e. Fem and Control Group i.e. Non-Fem) has been considered. It has been found that the average for Fem Group is greater than the average for Non-Fem group. The calculations show the p-value



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to be 0.027. F-calculated also comes out greater than F-critical. Since  $p\text{-value} < \alpha$ , the null hypothesis is rejected, and at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level the alternate hypothesis that femvertising ads leads to higher purchase intention when compared to a non-femvertising ad of the brand is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2:** The self-referencing by the customers towards a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** The mean persuasiveness of a femvertising ad is equal to the mean persuasiveness of a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>A2</sub>:** The mean persuasiveness of a femvertising ad is more than the mean persuasiveness of a non-femvertising ad.

$$H_{02}: M_{P(FEM)} = M_{P(NFEM)}$$

$$H_{A2}: M_{P(FEM)} > M_{P(NFEM)}$$

where  $M_{P(FEM)}$  is the mean persuasiveness of a femvertising ad and  $M_{P(NFEM)}$  is the mean persuasiveness of the non-femvertising ad.

Table 4: Persuasiveness Summary Statistics and ANOVA

*Summary Statistics*

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
Persuasiveness - Non-Fem	80	280.6666667	3.508333333	1.679254571
Persuasiveness – Fem	80	368.6666667	4.608333333	1.712447257

*ANOVA*

Source of Variation	F-Value	P-value	F Critical
Between Groups	28.54024466	3.15167E-07	3.900988696

In accordance with directional hypothesis, ANOVA for our two samples (Test Group i.e. Fem and Control Group i.e. Non-Fem) has been considered. After the analysis, it was found that the average for Fem Group is greater than the average for Non-Fem group. The calculations show the p-value to be 0.000000315. F-calculated also comes out greater than F-critical. Since  $p\text{-value} < \alpha$ , the null hypothesis at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level is rejected, and the alternate

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hypothesis that the persuasiveness of a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad is accepted.

**Hypothesis 3:** Femvertising ads lead to an increase in the brand equity compared to a non-femvertising ad of the brand.

**H<sub>03</sub>:** The mean brand equity of a brand after using femvertising ad is equal to the mean brand equity of the same brand when using a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>A3</sub>:** The mean brand equity of a brand after using femvertising ad is more than the mean brand equity of the same brand when using a non-femvertising ad.

$$H_{03}: M_{B(FEM)} = M_{B(NFEM)}$$

$$H_{A3}: M_{B(FEM)} > M_{B(NFEM)}$$

where  $M_{B(FEM)}$  is the mean brand equity of the brand for the customers who watched the femvertising ad and  $M_{B(NFEM)}$  is the mean brand equity of a brand for the consumers who watched the non-femvertising ad.

Table 5: Brand Equity Summary Statistics and ANOVA

*Summary Statistics*

<b>Groups</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>Sum</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>Variance</b>
<b>Brand Equity - Non-Fem</b>	80	263.3333333	3.291666667	1.435654008
<b>Brand Equity - Fem</b>	80	298.6666667	3.733333333	1.764838256

*ANOVA*

<b>Source of Variation</b>	<b>F-Value</b>	<b>P-value</b>	<b>F Critical</b>
<b>Between Groups</b>	4.875986025	0.028673223	3.900988696

In accordance with directional hypothesis, ANOVA for the two samples (Test Group i.e. Fem and Control Group i.e. Non-Fem) has been considered. It has been found that the average for Fem Group is greater than the average for Non-Fem group. The calculations show the p-value to be 0.028. F-calculated also comes out greater than F-critical. Since  $p\text{-value} < \alpha$ , the null hypothesis is rejected, and at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level the alternate hypothesis that femvertising ads lead to an increase in the brand equity of the brand as compared to non-femvertising ads is accepted.

**Hypothesis 4:** Self-referencing by the customers towards a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>04</sub>:** The mean self-referencing towards a femvertising ad is equal to the mean self-referencing towards a non-femvertising ad.

**H<sub>A4</sub>:** The mean self-referencing towards a femvertising ad is more than the mean self-referencing towards a non-femvertising ad.

$$H_{04}: M_{S(FEM)} = M_{S(NFEM)}$$

$$H_{A4}: M_{S(FEM)} > M_{S(NFEM)}$$

where  $M_{S(FEM)}$  is the mean self-referencing toward a femvertising ad and  $M_{S(NFEM)}$  is the mean self-referencing towards the non-femvertising ad.

Table 6: Self-Referencing Summary Statistics and ANOVA

*Summary Statistics*

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance
<b>Self-Referencing - Non-Fem</b>	80	261.1428571	3.264285714	0.9439938
<b>Self-Referencing - Fem</b>	80	313.2857143	3.916071429	1.463546241

**ANOVA**

Source of Variation	F-Value	P-value	F Critical
Between Groups	14.11647109	0.000241293	3.900988696

In accordance with directional hypothesis, ANOVA for the two samples (Test Group i.e. Fem and Control Group i.e. Non-Fem) has been considered. After the analysis, it was found that the average for Fem Group is greater than the average for Non-Fem group. The calculations show the p-value to be 0.00024. F-calculated also comes out greater than F-critical. Since  $p\text{-value} < \alpha$ , the null hypothesis is rejected at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  significance level, the alternate hypothesis that the self-referencing by the customers towards a femvertising ad is more than that of a non-femvertising ad is accepted.

Below is a summary table that shows the mean, f-value and f-critical values for the tested variables.

Table 7: Summary table

Variable	Mean		F-value	
	Fem	Non-Fem	F-Calculated	F-Critical
Brand Equity	3.73	3.29	4.88	3.90
Persuasiveness	4.61	3.51	28.54	3.90
Purchase Intention	3.98	3.55	4.95	3.90
Self-Referencing	3.91	3.26	14.11	3.90

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## 7. Discussion

The study has examined the effectiveness of femvertising on the aspects of persuasiveness, brand equity, self-referencing and purchase intention. It could not examine the impact of femvertising on attitude towards the ad since the reliability of the scale used was found to be low. The data analysis supported the hypothesis that femvertising has better persuasiveness, better self-referencing, increased brand equity and higher purchase intention as compared to non-femvertising advertisements. Our findings are in line with previous research findings (Drake 2017), that femvertising has higher purchase intention, emotional connection, better perception and that the respondents were able to identify femvertising as an empowering message.

### *Interpretation of findings*

Femvertising ads have a positive self-referencing and a higher purchase intention when compared to the non-femvertising ads due to the self-image and product image congruity concept (Levy 1959). The self-image of women today has changed over time and is no more that of a woman who is meant to do household chores, but that of one who is empowered and can take independent decisions. Given this revamped self-image, the products whose marketing communications showcase empowering women and gender equality are congruent to the self-image of today's modern woman and hence they are likely to have a higher motivation to purchase such products.

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### ***Theoretical contribution***

The study has made a theoretical contribution by examining and validating the positive impact of femvertising on four aspects of purchase behaviour viz. pervasiveness of the ad, purchase intention, brand equity and self-referencing. The other major contribution of this study is in the findings of self-referencing. Since women are more likely to relate to women like themselves marketers should also consider the important aspect of role portrayal of women in advertising and prevailing societal stereotypes as it is likely to have an impact on purchase behaviour.

### ***Recommendations***

Based on the findings from the study, we recommend that companies can use femvertising as an effective communication tool since it leads to better self-referencing, higher persuasiveness, better brand equity and higher purchase intention as compared with non-femvertising ads. The results of this study support the use of femvertising ads act as an effective communication vehicle and brands should consider using them as a part of their integrated marketing communications strategy.

## **8. Limitations**

The study has certain limitations. The first limitation arises due to the fact that the study was conducted in the city of Mumbai and may not be representative of the entire female population in India. Another limitation arises from the non-probabilistic nature of sampling. The study was conducted with efforts to keep the environment controlled. Despite this, external variables like



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noise or internal state of the respondent might have influenced the individual responses. Lastly, given that the brands in this study are well-known; earlier encounters of the respondents with the brands could have a bias on their responses. In particular, it is possible that the members of the control group have seen the femvertising ad before the experiment and may have formed their perceptions and attitudes accordingly.

## **9. Scope for further research**

To expand on the present study, future researchers may want to run this study on a larger sample across various locations for a greater effect or to determine differences between demographic segments such as age, income, or employment status. Additionally, future research could explore how the effects of femvertising vary by industry, for instance in higher involvement purchases such as cars. Another avenue for further research would be a whether the identified factors differ in various cultural settings. The relationship between femvertising initiatives and the role of consumers' personal value system offer promising avenues for further research.

## **10. Conclusion**

While there has been much debate and discussion in the media about the recent prevalence of advertising that talks about women empowerment, this study is one of the few research studies in India that tries to investigate the efficacy of femvertising. The present study was conducted to understand the effectiveness of femvertising on five aspects such as attitude towards ad, brand equity, persuasiveness, purchase intention and self-referencing. This was done using an experimental design consisting of two groups namely control group which was shown Non-

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femvertising ads and a test group which was shown femvertising ads. The data analysis using ANOVA supported the hypothesis that femvertising has better persuasiveness, better self-referencing, increased brand equity and higher purchase intention as compared to non-femvertising advertisements. This finding, while contributing to the theory of femvertising and its effectiveness, also provides valuable insights to marketers in terms of role portrayal of women in advertising. Marketers must be aware of the changing role of women and must be sensitive to role portrayals in advertising especially considering that they are likely to exert an increased influence in purchasing of consumer products. In today's intensely competitive market, marketers can consider using femvertising to differentiate themselves and their value proposition and such efforts are expected to attract more consumers leading to higher revenues.

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