

Major Project#2: Advertisements and Women

Tingxuan Chen

English 1110: Writing and Information Literacy

Prof. Heather McCabe

11 October 2023

People are actively or compulsively going through advertisements daily, and often the advertisements are objectifying and misogynistic towards women, commodifying them and creating a toxic cultural environment. I am a student in the school of communication, and I am very interested in how the media influences people's thinking and behavior. After watching *Killing Us Softly*, I had a great interest in the relationship between advertising and women, so I chose to further research how advertising portrays women. The goal of my research is to use an academically focused article to help me research more deeply into how advertising poisons women pairs or if it also has a positive effect. Also, I hope to learn more about what it is about advertising that negatively affects women and how there are ways to help women avoid being influenced by these messages.

Vadakkepatt, along with three other authors, created the article called “Can advertising benefit women's Development? Preliminary insights from a multi-method investigation” that comprehensively examines the positive and negative effects of advertising on women. This article provided me with ample information to research the connection between advertising and women. This article, published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* in 2022, explains the interplay between advertising and Internet access on female development. The facilitating or hindering effect on women is analyzed by examining the level of Internet access for advertising. Vadakkepatt argue that the Internet can act as an amplifier; on the one hand it enables the dissemination of ideas and democratizes voices. But on the other hand, its impact on women's development is more ambiguous and advertisements with stereotypes can be sexist. At the same time, Vadakkepatt stated that the level of influence of advertisements on people can differ depending on the consumer culture (Vadakkepatt, et al., 2022). Therefore, the advertising

industry needs to adjust how to reduce the negative impact by promoting women in the right way.

For the worknet, I use semantic phase to explore. The article includes femvertising, sexism, and internet in addition to the recurring theme of advertising and the development of women. Nowadays, advertising has become one of the most important ways of marketing tools, and some of the advertisements are strongly gendered and promote goods by objectifying women. This stereotyping has a strong negative impact on women, such as reducing their perception of themselves and their self-esteem. However, with the addition of the Internet, the reach of advertisements has grown, and people are becoming more aware of the misinformation in the content of the advertisements. The rise of the Internet has added to this wave, as people have taken to the Internet to speak out against stereotypes and to focus on women's development and lives. The word "Femvertising" intrigued me the first time I read this article. The word was coined in 2015 to denote the transformation of advertising to show a more diverse range of female colors and empower women. The recurrence of these words throughout the article suggests that advertising can subconsciously influence the development of women. Through data modeling, elucidating mechanisms, and centering analysis, it was found that the development of advertisements on women depends on the level of internet access and that viewing advertisements without stereotypes can empower women (Vadakkepatt, et al., 2022). All these terms help the reader understand more about the connection between advertising and women.

The second part of the worknet is the bibliographical phase. I started looking for content about women being negatively affected and the effects of femvertising I chose the three articles cited in the focus article. "Advertising "like a girl": Toward a better understanding of "femvertising" and its effects", is an article that examines the effects of advertisements with

stereotypes on the female psyche. The advertising industry needs to change the stereotypes of women and needs to take a more positive and cautious approach when portraying women, challenging the inherent biases (Åkestam, et al., 2017). “Globalization, Technology, and Female Empowerment: Breaking Rights or Connecting Opportunities?” is an article that focuses on the impact of female empowerment. Through experimental evidence, it is found that communication technology is a key element for female empowerment (Alves & Steiner, 2017). [Access to the internet allows women to participate and access information, which enhances women's rights.](#)

The last thing I found was an article named “Twitter still failing women over online violence and abuse”, this article states that women are still being victimized unequally on the Twitter platform and that there is not enough protection for women (Amnesty International, 2020). Women still receive attacks on platforms, especially from racial or minority groups, and marginalized women receive a lot of racial slurs and insults. Twitter needs to change the regulatory model and women will no longer be subject to discrimination and violence. These three articles link to my core article, which explores the impact of advertising on women and the role of the Internet in it for women's development. The Internet's ability to instantly spread has amplified the positive impact of advertising on women, but as it stands the Internet has not fully empowered women more, and some of the stereotypical content in advertising continues to oppress women.

Next on affinity, I checked out other articles by Ronald Paul Hill, the main author of the [focus](#) article. He is a professor of marketing, so his articles focus on marketing ethics and human development. [The Beauty Myth and Female Consumers: the Controversial Role of Advertising](#) is one of his articles about how pictures of women who are slim and beautiful in advertisements are how they affect women. These overly glorified pictures have caused American women to begin to become dissatisfied with their bodies and go on unhealthy diets (Stephens, 1994). Through

this article, I was able to get a closer look at the negative effects that advertising has on women, as women are much less satisfied with themselves due to sexualized and untrue advertisements. Another article, *The Impact of Violence Against Women in Advertisements*, talks about the violent effects that the advertising media always has on women. Because of the social learning theory, people imitate and learn from what they see, and the violent content of advertisements can cause people to begin to act more violently towards women (Capella, 2010). Both of these articles explore the great harm that advertisements do to women, creating a toxic environment. They help to help me gain insight into how women may be affected by what is being advertised, thus enriching my exploration of the negative effects of advertising on women.

The last part of worknet is choric. My core article was published in 2022, so I searched events related to women's rights in 2022. One thing I found that was very important in 2022 was *Roe v. Wade*, the case of abortion rights in the United States that was struck down by the Supreme Court. Many people said that this event destroyed years of progress and took away women's rights over their own bodies. This event went viral on the internet and people took to social media to voice their opinions. Mane explains that Twitter conversation about abortion and women's rights increased dramatically after *Roe v. Wade* was thrown out and actively discussed this event (Mane, et. al, 2022). This goes along with what my core essay indicated about the internet being able to use its unique strengths to facilitate connections and develop relationships between women. Moreover, I was searching the internet about the recent portrayal and impact of advertising on women, and Creative X's 2023 Advertising Gender Report stated that despite the frequency of women's presence in advertising, there is still a lack of unbiased representation. In 2022, women have appeared in ads more often than men, but they tend to be biased and stereotyped. They found that there are two main types of bias towards women in advertising, one

is that advertisements continue to portray women as symbols in the family, and the other is that women with dark skin color and women older than 60 rarely appear in advertisements (Creative, 2023). This requires the advertising industry to be more gender-inclusive and truly gender equal. In addition to this, I also learned about a very special change in advertising, Dove started a very special brand marketing since 2004. In 2022, Dove and giant game companies launched *Real Virtual Beauty* to encourage the game industry to create more diverse and healthy female images. Dove through this special campaign to convey a sense of "confident beauty", encouraging women to look at themselves in a positive light, which resonates with women. In my core article, Vadakkepatt also uses Dove to show that advertising should promote the image of women with positive content, reduce stereotypes about women, and use media to create positive effects (Vadakkepatt, et al., 2022).

My core essay helped me to explore the connection between advertising and women, for the development of a closer inquiry for women. Through research, it is indeed evident that women receive influences because of the content in advertisements. These influences mainly include physical and psychological influences such as scrutinizing their body image and lack of confidence in their appearance. People tend to underestimate the development of the impact of advertising on women's health, perpetuating social stereotypes about women (Vadakkepatt, et al., 2022). Women in advertisements often have wrinkle-free faces and perfect bodies. However, these glossy images are photoshopped and no one can be completely flawless. However, when it's all over the place with these messages, this image of beauty becomes the dominant consciousness. Women start to get anxious, and they are no longer confident. This kind of advertising often aims to gain profit by consuming women. Of course, this article also made me realize that "Femvertising" can be a good thing and that when the internet spreads these

messages around, more people will start to pay attention. With all this attention, it can empower women to reach out to each other. Both the focus article and my three articles have made me realize that the internet allows women to be bold against these stereotypical messages and help each other online. Also, the advertising industry needs to be changed for the better to send a positive message to women. Vadakkepatt argues that advertising has a large impact on how people think, and the advertising industry and the government need to recognize the role that advertising can play in society (Vadakkepatt, et al., 2022). Through a better regulatory system, advertising and the Internet can be combined to create a positive effect on women. I plan to take a closer look at how the advertising industry can be changed so that women can be positively influenced after researching the toxic effects of advertising on women. Advertisements are all over the place, and it is more important to correctly discern the message they are trying to send.

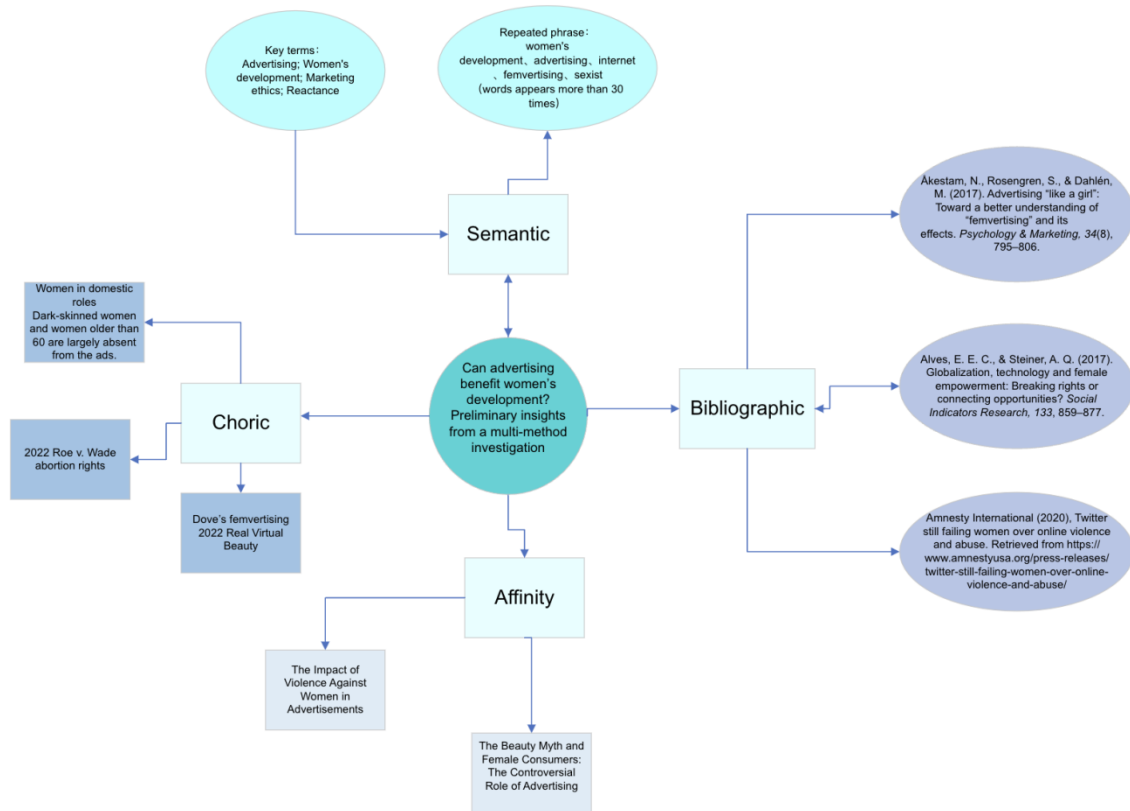


Figure 1

This worknet contains four parts. The middle of the worknet is my focal article “Can advertising benefit women's Development? Preliminary insights from a multi-method investigation”. The whole worknet has four branches which are semantic, bibliographic, affinity and choric. For the Semantic part I have the keywords draw form the focal article, such as advertising, women’s development, and marketing ethics. The repeating phrase including internet, femvertising and so on. Then move on to the bibliographic, I have three additional articles listed. For the affinity part I have two articles written by Ronald. One is “The impact of violence against women in advertisements” and the other one is “The beauty myth and female consumers: The controversial role of advertising”. For the last part choric, I have three things linked with the focal article. First, the advertisement usually features women in domestic roles

and dark-skinned women and elder women are largely absent from the advertisements. Second, in 2022 *Roe v. Wade* had a further step. Third, Dove's femvertising had made launched a campaign called *Real Virtual Beauty*.

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