BEAUTY BEYOND STEREOTYPES: AN EXPLORATION OF SEPHORA'S "UNLIMITED POWER OF BEAUTY" AD AND ITS EFFECT ON CONSUMER PERCEPTIONS OF THE BRAND

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Abstract:
This study investigates the impact of Sephora's femvertising brand campaign on consumer perceptions in the beauty industry, with a specific focus on brand image, the effectiveness of femvertising advertisements, and potential influences on future cosmetic brand choices. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 18 participants in Türkiye, and thematic analysis revealed significant insights. The findings highlight Sephora's significant influence on participants' understanding and engagement with the brand. Participants recognized Sephora as a well-known brand, attributing it to effective marketing efforts, collaborations with influencers, and a strong social media presence. The study also revealed diverse perceptions and preferences regarding beauty standards and product usage. Participants acknowledged Sephora's unique qualities, such as premium products and a pleasant in-store experience, while price was mentioned as a limiting factor. Notably, the specific Sephora ad, "the unlimited power of beauty," resonated strongly with participants, emphasizing self-acceptance, inclusivity, and brand activism. Overall, the study underscores the importance of brand awareness, strategic marketing, inclusivity, and empowering messages in shaping consumer perceptions, fostering brand activism, and influencing future brand choices within the competitive beauty industry. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the role of femvertising in consumer behavior and provide valuable insights for marketers and practitioners in the beauty industry.

1. Introduction

Advertising plays a vital role in helping companies achieve their objectives by attracting customers to their products. It serves as an effective means to connect with the target audience, raising brand awareness and influencing consumer attitudes and behaviors. Engaging and appealing advertisements have the potential to positively influence consumer purchasing behavior. (Malik, M. E, et al, 2013).

In the ever-evolving landscape of advertising, a powerful and transformative movement has emerged known as femvertising. This trend represents a shift in the beauty industry towards empowering women, challenging societal norms, and promoting inclusivity and diversity. Since the establishment of the Republic of Türkiye in 1923, women's roles in society have undergone significant changes as part of modernization movements. With the granting of national voting rights and increased participation in social and economic life, women have become key actors in the modernization and development of societies (Yarimoğlu, 2021).

However, women in advertising campaigns were often portrayed with stereotypes and objectified representations. Throughout the years, portrayals of women in advertisements have often depicted them either as objects of sexual desire or as idealized homemakers and nurturing mothers, emphasizing their beauty alongside their domestic roles.(McArthur and Resko 1975; Whipple and Courtney 1985).

Femvertising activities initiated a shift in the representation of women in advertisements, portraying them as stronger, self-confident, and independent (Yarimoğlu, 2021). Gülersöyler (2019) highlights that in Türkiye, women's bodies were objectified in advertisements, with a lack of representation of strong women in advertising campaigns. As a result, the United Nations chose Türkiye as a pilot country to develop women's empowerment campaigns, particularly in the realm of advertising (as cited in Yarimoğlu, 2021).

In 2004, Dove initiated a campaign called Real Beauty," which aimed to challenge stereotyping and objectification of women in advertising. This campaign paved the way for other companies to incorporate women's empowerment activities in their advertising campaigns (Celebre & Denton, n.d, Millard,2009)

The term "femvertising" was introduced in 2015 by She Knows Media (now She Media) in a contest honoring brands that promote female empowerment through their advertising. The concept of femvertising has since become a topic of interest in marketing literature, highlighting the importance of empowering messages, images, and stories in advertising campaigns (Hunt, 2017), and it is characterized by campaigns that celebrate and empower women, challenge gender stereotypes, and promote feminist values. It encompasses a broader vision of equality, social justice, and inclusivity, going beyond the mere inclusion of diverse women in advertisements. This movement aims to disrupt traditional beauty standards and redefine notions of femininity by showcasing real women with diverse backgrounds, body types, ages, and abilities. By emphasizing feminism and challenging gender stereotypes in advertising, brands can effectively empower women through their marketing communications (Ciambriello, 2014, as cited in Kapoor, D., & Munjal, A., 2019).

The origins of femvertising can be traced back to a growing discontent with traditional beauty standards and gender roles perpetuated by advertising. Two notable examples are the "Torches of Freedom" campaign and the Dove "Real Beauty" campaign.

In 1929, Edward Bernays, a public relations pioneer, orchestrated the "Torches of Freedom" campaign. Bernays sought to challenge societal taboos and link smoking with women's liberation. He organized a demonstration in which women marched through New York City smoking cigarettes as a symbol of independence and empowerment .The campaign aimed to disrupt traditional gender norms and expand the female consumer base for tobacco companies. (Gladwell, 1998)

In 2004, the Dove "Real Beauty" campaign was launched with the intention of challenging the media's narrow standards of beauty. The campaign sought to promote a more inclusive and positive beauty ideal by featuring women of various ages, body types, and ethnicities who celebrated their natural beauty. Instead of relying on airbrushed models, Dove chose to showcase real women, who were not professional models and did not fit the typical fashion model mold. The campaign utilized social media to its advantage, leading to widespread sharing and engagement (Gill and Elias, 2014). This groundbreaking approach received recognition for its use of models with different sizes and skin colors, effectively conveying the message that all women are beautiful (Bissell and Rask, 2010).These early examples of femvertising set the stage for future campaigns, demonstrating the impact of advertising on societal values and women's empowerment. They highlighted the potential of marketing to shape cultural perceptions and challenge traditional norms.

Femvertising, in essence, intersects with activism—a term rooted in the pursuit of social or political change through action and advocacy (Oxford Languages, 2023). Femvertising, a form of activism within the advertising realm, incorporates feminist values and messages of empowerment to challenge systemic inequalities and promote awareness (Drake, 2017). As consumer exposure to advertisements increases, brands are recognizing the need to authentically communicate their stance on societal issues, aiming to establish an emotional connection with their audience and gain awareness (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Dahlén & Rosengren, 2016). This shift has led to a rise in female empowerment-focused ads that challenge traditional advertising methods, provoking thought and promoting positive change.

This study centers on Sephora as a case study to explore the impact of femvertising on consumer perceptions within the beauty retail sector. Established in 1969, Sephora has transformed the industry through its self-service model and innovative store design, offering a diverse product range from 250 brands, encompassing both luxury and accessible preferences (Sephora, 2023). Operating in 34 countries with a notable online presence, Sephora demonstrates commitment to social and environmental responsibility through initiatives like "Sephora Stands" (Sephora, 2023).

Sephora's "Unlimited Power of Beauty" campaign not only showcases a diverse product range but also utilizes advertising as a platform to inspire self-expression, confidence, and individuality (LVMH, 2020). Aligned with

femvertising's broader objectives, Sephora serves as an ideal subject for exploring the evolving dynamics between beauty brands and consumers amidst changing societal norms.

As femvertising continues to evolve, Sephora's dedication to empowering women places it at the forefront of this transformative movement. This article aims to explore the impact of Sephora's "Unlimited Power of Beauty" campaign on consumer perceptions, shedding light on the transformative power of femvertising and its implications for the beauty industry. The paper seeks to investigate how Sephora's use of femvertising influences consumer perceptions of the brand and, consequently, their purchase intentions.

Through its self-service model and innovative store design, Sephora, founded in 1969, has revolutionized the beauty industry. Offering a wide range of 250 brands and 16,000 product options, Sephora caters to both luxury and accessible preferences. Trained beauticians provide exceptional service, offering makeup, skincare, and perfume consultations. As part of the LVMH Group, Sephora operates in 34 countries with a strong online presence. Reflecting a commitment to social and environmental responsibility, Sephora's program "Sephora Stands" aims to increase positive social impact (Sephora, 2023). The "Unlimited Power of Beauty" campaign not only markets the extensive product range but also employs advertising as a platform to inspire self-expression, confidence, and individuality (LVMH, 2020).

As femvertising continues to evolve, it has demonstrated its potential to redefine societal norms and reshape consumer expectations. This article aims to explore the impact of Sephora's "Unlimited Power of Beauty" campaign on consumer perceptions, shedding light on the transformative power of femvertising and its implications for the beauty industry. The paper seeks to investigate how Sephora's use of femvertising influences consumer perceptions of the brand and, consequently, their purchase intentions. The research questions set to be answered include participants' perspectives on Sephora's brand image, thoughts on product-related aspects, perceptions of the femvertising advertisement, reactions to the advertisement, changes in perceptions post-viewing, and the impact of femvertising on consumer behavior and brand choices in the beauty industry:

What are participants' perspectives on Sephora's brand image, including their thoughts on the products, pricing, placement, and promotional activities associated with the brand?

How do participants perceive Sephora's "Unlimited Power of Beauty" femvertising advertisement?

What are participants' reactions and interpretations of the "Unlimited Power of Beauty" femvertising advertisement?

Do participants' perceptions of Sephora change after viewing the "Unlimited Power of Beauty" femvertising advertisement?

Do participants' opinions on the effectiveness of femvertising advertisements impact their consumer behavior and brand choices in the beauty industry?

The subsequent sections of this article begin with a critical review of the existing literature on brand image, brand activism, and femvertising. Then, the chosen research method is presented, explaining how the research question will be investigated. This is followed by the analysis and discussion of the empirical data in relation to the theoretical framework. The study concludes by presenting the key findings and considering the practical implications of the research for managers in the industry.

2. Literature review
2.1. The importance of branding
The value placed on brands is not new, but it is getting momentum in almost every industry. This is shown by the rising number of requests for brand studies made through market research organizations. The goals are various: brand image research, want to establish international brands, legitimacy of a brand expansion, brand architecture relevance, and desire to refresh the brand (Michel, 2017). The branding process is done with the aim of converting consumers into loyal customers in the long term (Idea soft, 2018).

Branding is the process of endowing products and services with the authority of a brand. ("The Scope of Branding - Ebrary") Building differences are at the heart of branding. It is critical to teach consumers "who" the product is, "what" the product accomplishes, and "why" consumers should be concerned while branding a product (Kotler & Keller, 2006). Brand is all the indicators that give the product the intense attention to help customers to identify and differentiate it (Aaker, 1991). Branding helps consumers in their decision making by creating cognitive knowledge and psychological traits about products and services. It is also giving value to business (Kotler & Keller, 2006). The brand's value is determined in part by its ability to differentiate itself from competitors and the function it plays with

consumers and distributors. Individuals place a greater or lesser importance on brands in their purchasing decisions depending on the circumstances of consumption (Michel, 2017)

2.2. Brand knowledge: brand image & brand awareness
Brand knowledge consists of brand awareness and brand image. Brand awareness refers to consumers' ability to remember and recognize a brand, while brand image refers to the association's consumers have with the brand (Keller, 1993). Brand awareness is composed of brand recognition and brand recall. Brand recognition involves confirming prior exposure to the brand, while brand recall involves retrieving the brand from memory (Rossiter & Percy, 1987). It has an impact on consumer decision making, as it increases the likelihood of considering the brand and influences brand choices (Bettman, 1979; Baker et al., 1986; Nedungadi, 1990). Brand awareness also affects the formation and strength of brand associations in the brand image (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986).
Brand image encompasses associations with a brand, including product features, benefits, emotions, and values. It can be measured through surveys, focus groups, and market research methods (Keller, 1993). Brand associations can be categorized into attributes, benefits, and attitudes, each playing a role in shaping the brand image.
Attributes refer to the physical and functional characteristics of a product or service, such as size, color, shape, and performance features (Keller, 1993). They can be product-related or non-product-related, and non-product-related attributes can produce brand personality attributes that evoke emotions (Plummer, 1985).
Benefits are the value consumers attach to product or service attributes and can be functional, experiential, or symbolic (Park et al., 1986). Functional benefits satisfy basic motivations, experiential benefits fulfill experiential needs, and symbolic benefits address social approval or self-expression needs (Maslow, 1970; Solomon, 1983).
Attitudes refer to customers' overall evaluations or feelings towards a brand, influenced by past experiences, advertising messages, and word-of-mouth recommendations (Keller, 1993). Attitudes are formed based on beliefs about the brand's attributes or benefits and the evaluative judgment of those beliefs, shaping the overall attitude towards the brand (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The strength of brand attitudes can be evaluated by the time taken to appraise an attitude, with easily accessible attitudes being more likely to shape brand choices (Farquhar, 1989; Fazio & Zanna, 1981).
Customer perceptions of the brand's image and value proposition are influenced by these brand associations working together (Keller, 1993).

2.3. Brand activism
Brand activism refers to the strategic use of brand marketing and advertising to take a stance on societal issues and connect with consumers on an emotional level . Traditionally, brands focused on positioning based on product performance, but with changing consumer expectations, brands now prioritize values and community involvement. Brand activism encompasses various subcategories, including social, legal, business, economic, environmental, and political activism, which allow brands to demonstrate their commitment to specific causes (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Social activism, one of the prominent forms of brand activism, addresses issues such as gender equality and race. Brands have historically reinforced gender stereotypes in advertising, but there is a growing trend towards challenging traditional gender roles and promoting equal opportunities. Through brand activism, companies strive to make a positive impact on society while fostering a deeper connection with consumers. In recent years, there has been a noticeable rise in marketing campaigns aimed at empowering women, often referred to as "femvertising (Jacobson et al., 2018).

2.4. The concept of femvertising
As the number of women in the workforce continues to increase, many marketing professionals are starting to incorporate messages about female empowerment into their advertisements. This tactic, which is referred to as femvertising, is designed to encourage women to purchase more products and services(Castillo,2014). Femvertising is a marketing strategy where brands create ads that promote pro-woman messages and empower women, as defined by Abitbol and Sternadori (2016) and Varghese and Kumar (2020). According to Varghese and Kumar (2020), femvertisement are ads that highlight women as empowered individuals, using their real-life experiences and body images. These ads aim to establish an authentic and positive relationship between brands and consumers, particularly women, by reflecting their values and beliefs. Femvertisement also include those that feature women's abilities and

convey messages that are supportive of women. Becker-Herby (2016) identifies five key pillars that define a Femvertisement, and these criteria can be observed in the following examples of successful Femvertising campaigns.

Table 1:the five pillars of femvertisement by Becker-Herby(2016).

Criteria of femvertisement (Becker-Herby, 2016)	
1	Utilizing a range of female talents
2	Messaging that predominantly supports or promotes females.
3	Recognizing gender stereotypes and questioning prevailing notions of societal expectations for women and girls.
4	Minimizing the emphasis on sexuality.
5	Portraying women in an authentic manner.

2.5. Femvertising and its impact consumer behavior

Femvertising, which promotes female empowerment, has been the focus of research examining its impact on consumer behavior. Previous studies have primarily explored consumer traits and positive responses to femvertising, including enhanced brand attitudes and increased purchase intentions (Akestam et al., 2017; Drake, 2017; Jacobson et al., 2018; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Femvertising campaigns have been shown to be effective in generating positive consumer attitudes and driving sales in the cosmetic industry (Dan, 2016; Abditbol & Sternadori, 2016).

Kapoor and Munjal (2017) conducted a study examining the relationship between self-consciousness, emotions, attitude towards femvertising, forwarding intention, and purchase intention. They found that femvertising helped build self-esteem and empowerment among women. However, the study also revealed that femvertising was seen as a strategy to manipulate emotions and did not significantly impact purchase intention. Drake's (2017) study demonstrated that exposure to female empowerment messaging in advertisements had a positive impact on attitudes and purchase intentions. However, the influence on perceived gender representation in advertising was not significant. Wojcicki (2016) noted that women engage more with empowering advertisements, indicating their effectiveness. Femvertising also contributes to shared female consciousness and has a substantial impact on sales performance (Marcus Reker, 2016; Edelman, 2017).

Femvertising campaigns have shown potential in shaping consumer behavior and attitudes, although further research is needed to fully understand their effects on purchase intentions and gender representation in advertising.

2.6. Femvertising in the beauty industry

Femvertising challenges traditional gender norms and empowers women in the beauty industry. It delivers empowering messages and represents diverse notions of beauty, inspiring women to embrace their individuality and reject societal beauty standards (Alcoff, 1988; SheKnows Media, 2014). Successful femvertising campaigns like "Always like a girl" and Dove's "Real Beauty" have challenged stereotypes and encouraged women to celebrate their natural beauty.

Femvertising aims to empower consumers, providing affirmation and self-confidence (Becker-Herby, 2016). Surveys show that women recall campaigns with positive portrayals and are more likely to make purchases based on such representations (SheKnows Media, 2014). Studies indicate that exposure to empowering messages in advertisements

leads to more favorable attitudes toward the advertised products and brands (Akestam et al., 2017). Men also respond positively to brands perceived as supporting gender equality (Jacobson et al., 2018).

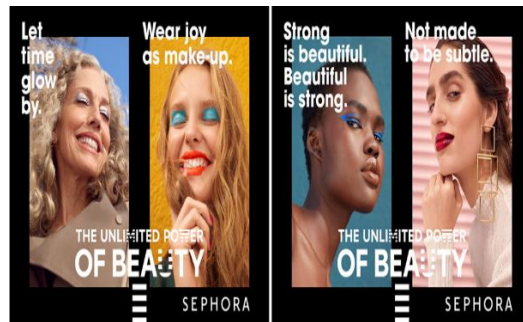**2.7. The "Unlimited Power Of Beauty" Brand Campaign By Sephora**

Figure 1: The campaign of Sephora "The unlimited power of beauty"

The new brand campaign by Sephora, titled "The Unlimited Power of Beauty," marks a significant shift in the perception and celebration of beauty. According to Guillaume Motte, President of Sephora for Europe and the Middle East, the campaign aims to emphasize that beauty is not a norm but a universal, plural, and inclusive concept that provides self-confidence and empowerment. Sephora's campaign reflects a new brand identity and posture, which will be further emphasized through mini stories featuring the creators of brands exclusively available at Sephora, such as Fenty, Huda Beauty, Anastasia Beverly Hills, and others. Additionally, testimonials from Sephora's internal teams and top clients will contribute to the personal testimonial aspect of the campaign (CB News, 2023).

The campaign emphasizes Sephora's commitment to celebrating and embracing beauty in all its forms, reinforcing the brand's position as a leader in the cosmetics industry (LVMH, 2023). Sephora believes that every woman has her own definition of beauty, and through self-affirmation, beauty becomes a powerful force. The campaign seeks to challenge traditional beauty standards and promote inclusivity and diversity. With its inclusive vision and celebration of individual beauty, "The Unlimited Power of Beauty" campaign aligns with the evolving perception of beauty in society. Sephora aims to empower individuals to embrace their unique beauty and redefine beauty norms (LVMH, 2023). The campaign signifies Sephora's commitment to driving societal change through its brand activism and cultural footprint.

Figure 2: Picture from the film on Youtube "the unlimited power of beauty"

The film campaign, "The Unlimited Power of Beauty," launched by Sephora, invites viewers on a captivating journey of self-reflection and empowerment. Directed by Jonas Lindstroem, the film depicts the various stages of a person's life, showcasing moments of doubt, joy, and strength .It emphasizes the idea that beauty is not confined by age,

appearance, or style, but is a powerful tool for self-expression (CB News, 2023). The campaign challenges societal norms and promotes inclusivity by celebrating the diversity of beauty. Through its inspiring storytelling and authentic representation, Sephora's film campaign encourages individuals to embrace their unique beauty and redefine traditional beauty standards. By embracing "The Unlimited Power of Beauty," Sephora reaffirms its commitment to empowering individuals and solidifies its leadership in the cosmetics industry (LVMH, 2023).Nadine Ijewere, a British photographer, contributes to the campaign by capturing a series of portraits that showcase the richness of beauty across different ages, genders, physiques, and styles. The chosen cover of "I'm not In Love" by Kelsey Lu enhances the emotional power of the campaign (CB News, 2023).

The link of the campaign on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N__H4N-eTJQ

3. Methodology

The study will be conducted through a qualitative study using semi-structured in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews, a qualitative research method, involve in-depth, open-ended conversations to explore participants' perspectives and experiences on a specific topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). These interviews use probing questions to elicit detailed responses, providing nuanced and contextually rich insights into human experience. This approach allows for a comprehensive exploration of participants' understanding and perspectives regarding Sephora's brand, the femvertising campaign "the unlimited power of beauty", and its influence on their perceptions and purchase intentions (Patton, 2002). By using in-depth interviews, researchers can delve into the participants' experiences, beliefs, and attitudes, capturing rich and detailed insights (Liamputtong, 2013). The open-ended nature of semi-structured interviews enables participants to freely express their thoughts and provide nuanced responses, contributing to a deeper understanding of their perceptions and behaviors (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

3.1. Sample Selection

The sample for this study was selected using a purposive sampling technique to ensure representation from individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds residing in Türkiye. The aim was to capture a range of perspectives influenced by different cultural structures while being immersed in the ethnic culture of Türkiye (Patton, 2002). The target population consisted of individuals between the ages of 20 and 36. To identify potential participants, a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods was employed. Initially, individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Turkish, Arab, Pakistan, Greek, Lithuanian, Uyghur) living in Türkiye were approached based on their availability and willingness to participate. These individuals served as the initial contact points for recruiting additional participants through their social networks, facilitating access to a broader range of cultural backgrounds and experiences (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006).

A total of 18 participants were included in the study, comprising 11 women and 7 men. The sample size was determined based on the principle of data saturation, where new information and insights were no longer emerging from the interviews. The inclusion criteria for the participants were being between the ages of 20 and 36 and having an understanding and familiarity with Sephora's brand and the concept of femvertising. Participants were selected to ensure diversity in terms of cultural backgrounds, age, and gender, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of their perceptions and experiences related to the brand campaign. Ethical considerations were adhered to throughout the study, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants.

3.2. Data Collection Procedure

The interviews were conducted using a combination of face-to-face, Zoom, and phone call methods, based on participants' preferences and availability.

Dimensions	Questions/Resources
Perception of Beauty	1. When I Say "Beauty" What Comes to Your Mind? 2. Do You Think That Beauty has Standards? How? 3. How can You Describe the Beauty of Women? 4. Do You think that there are some factors that affect beauty? If Yes Like

	What? How? 5. Do the Positive or Negative Comments that People Bring About Your Appearance Create A Psychological Pressure on You? 6. Do You Think That The Use Of Beauty Products (We Can Explain That Not Just Makeup, It Includes Perfumes, Skin Care, Hair Care) Affect Beauty? 7. Why Do People Use Beauty Products? To Satisfy What? 8. What Are The Beauty Products You Use?
Brand Perception (Sephora)	1. When I Say Beauty What Cosmetic Brands Come To Your Mind (At Least 3 Brands)? 2. What Beauty Products Brands Do You Like? Why? 3. Have You Ever Heard About Sephora? 4 .How Did You Learn About It? 5. How Do You Find This Brand? 6. If Sephora Were Human Being How It Would Look Like? 7. What Is Special About This Brand Comparing To The Competitors? 8. Do You Think That Advertisements Influence Your Thoughts About A Brand?
Advertisement Impact	*The Advertisement is Showed to The Respondents; "The Unlimited Power of Sephora".* 1. What Are Your Thoughts About This Advertisement? 2. What Is The Message Behind This Film? 3. Did You Find Any Similarities In This Advertisement With Your Own Experiences, What Are They? 4. Does This Advertisement Change Your Perception About Sephora? How Can You Describe It? 5. After Watching This Advertisement, Would It Have A Positive Effect On Your Choices Of Cosmetic Brand In The Future?

The interview guide and the questions were developed incorporating insights from the article by Chandon (2003) titled "Note on Measuring Brand Awareness, Brand Image, Brand Equity, and Brand Value," as well as the literature review and the Sephora advertisement, "The Unlimited Power of Beauty," which was shared with the participants. Inspired by scholarly works such as Shiya Nandan's "An Exploration of the Brand Identity-Image Linkage: A Communication Perspective," Keller's foundational work on "Customer-Based Brand Equity," and Bambang Sukma Wijaya's insights into "Dimensions of Brand Image.

Table 3: Methodological Framework - Interview Guide Dimensions and Questions

The questions aimed to delve into participants' perceptions of beauty and brand. The interview guide consisted of three main parts: Perception of Beauty, Sephora and Brand Perception, and Advertisement and its Impact.

Participants were asked about their perceptions of beauty, the use of beauty products, and experiences with various beauty brands, as well as their thoughts on brand awareness, brand image, and brand personality related to Sephora. Additionally, participants were shown the Sephora advertisement and asked about the message conveyed, any similarities found with their own experiences, changes in their perception of Sephora, and the potential influence of the advertisement on their future cosmetic brand choices. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis, while field notes captured non-verbal cues and contextual information during and after each interview. This multifaceted approach ensured a well-rounded exploration, combining theoretical frameworks with real-world context.

3.3. Reliability test
To enhance the reliability of the research questions, a pilot study was conducted with a representative subset of participants. This preliminary testing aimed to evaluate the clarity and understanding of the questions (Creswell, 2013). Participants were interviewed in conditions similar to those planned for the main study. Feedback from the pilot study informed adjustments to the wording and structure of questions, ensuring their comprehensibility. The insights gained from this pre-testing phase contribute to the overall reliability of the research instrument for use in the main qualitative study.

3.4. Data Analysis
To analyze the collected data in this study, the interviews were recorded and transcribed for further analysis. The transcribed data was stored in an Excel document, focusing on the most relevant findings. To ensure confidentiality, respondents were anonymized and assigned alphabetical aliases (A-R). Thematic analysis was conducted to interpret the transcribed data, as it is a suitable method for identifying patterns relevant to the study's objectives (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process involved coding the data and organizing it into themes. These themes were then compared and matched with the underlying theory and conceptual framework to draw conclusions regarding the impact of brand activism on brand image. The thematic analysis aimed to identify recurring patterns, themes, and insights within the data set. By examining the coded data and systematically categorizing it into themes, we were able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' perspectives and experiences related to Sephora's femvertising campaign and its influence on brand image.

3.5. Limitation of the study
The study acknowledges several limitations that may influence the interpretation and generalizability of findings. The sample size, although consistent with qualitative research standards, is relatively small and may limit broad applicability. The focus on specific cultural groups may not fully represent the diverse cultural spectrum in Türkiye. Time constraints during the study period might have impacted the depth of exploration, and the single-brand focus on Sephora, along with the reliance on a specific advertisement, restricts the study's transferability to other beauty brands or alternative campaigns. Additionally, the inherent subjectivity in thematic analysis introduces constraints on interpreting data consistently. The study encourages future research to address these limitations for a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics within femvertising campaigns and their impact on consumer perceptions in the beauty industry.

4. Findings
The results section provides nuanced insights from in-depth interviews, delving into beauty perceptions, brand engagement, and the impact of Sephora's advertising. Segmented findings cover diverse beauty associations, Sephora familiarity, views on beauty standards, and the effectiveness of the femvertising campaign. This analysis contributes valuable insights to consumer behavior in the beauty industry.
Part 1: In this part of the study, participants had diverse associations with the concept of beauty. Some mentioned specific beauty brands, while others associated beauty with makeup, clothes, and inner qualities. Nature and natural representations were also mentioned. Participants mentioned a range of beauty products they use, including Sephora and other well-known brands. Sephora was prominently mentioned when participants associated beauty products with the concept of beauty. These findings align with the study's aim of exploring participants' understanding and perceptions of Sephora's brand and its influence on their perceptions and purchase intentions. The participants' associations with beauty and their usage of beauty products provide insights into brand awareness and engagement with beauty-related products and brands. This contributes to understanding participants' perspectives on beauty, brand image, and the impact of advertising on brand perception, which are key objectives of the study.
Part 2: Sephora
In this part of the study, all participants demonstrated familiarity with Sephora, considering it a well-known brand. Participants mentioned various sources through which they have learned about Sephora, including word of mouth, social media platforms, personal experiences shared by friends and family, the internet, and advertisements. Some participants even mentioned specific instances of purchasing products from Sephora, indicating their direct

interaction with the brand. The responses indicate the wide reach and recognition of Sephora among the participants. The brand's visibility through advertising, social media presence, and positive word of mouth contribute to its reputation and brand awareness. Participants' experiences of purchasing products from Sephora also highlight their engagement with the brand and its offerings. These findings align with the study's objectives of exploring participants' familiarity with Sephora as a brand and understanding how they have become acquainted with it. The participants' responses provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of Sephora's marketing and communication strategies, emphasizing the significance of word of mouth, social media, and advertising in building brand awareness. These insights contribute to a comprehensive understanding of Sephora's brand image and its influence on consumers' perceptions and behaviors.

Part 3: beauty and self, beauty of women , beauty standards

Participants held diverse views on beauty standards, emphasizing the subjectivity influenced by individual preferences, culture, and media. They highlighted physical attributes and inner qualities as key aspects of women's beauty, with various factors impacting beauty, such as physical aspects and personal care routines. The impact of external opinions on psychological well-being varied, with some participants acknowledging pressure while others prioritized self-confidence and inner beauty. These responses highlight the subjective nature of beauty and the influence of societal standards, media, and personal experiences. Self-acceptance, self-love, and a healthy mindset are crucial in navigating the psychological impact of external comments.

Part 4: brand image – appearance – product claim

Participants expressed varied views on whether beauty products affect beauty. Some believed that beauty products enhance certain features or hide imperfections, citing examples like hair conditioner, skincare products, and perfume. However, others felt that beauty products do not increase beauty but rather reveal existing beauty or cover flaws. Participants cited motivations for using beauty products such as self-satisfaction, self-care, and the desire to meet societal standards. Overall, these insights contribute to understanding the impact and motivations behind beauty product usage.

In Part 5 of the study, the analysis of participants' responses revealed several insights regarding Sephora's brand image:

1. Differentiation from Competitors: Participants recognized Sephora's unique qualities compared to its competitors. These included premium quality products, a diverse range of brands, a pleasant in-store experience, and effective advertising through social media collaborations with influencers. Sephora's emphasis on quality, variety, and customer engagement contributed to its distinctiveness in the market.

2. Evaluation of the Brand: Overall, participants held a positive view of Sephora. They appreciated the elegance and premium quality of its products, as well as the clean and well-present stores. However, some participants mentioned that the prices of Sephora's products were relatively high, which might limit accessibility for some customers. Nevertheless, Sephora's reputation for offering high-quality products, especially in the beauty and perfume categories, was acknowledged.

3. Personification of Sephora: Participants provided varied descriptions when asked to imagine Sephora as a person. Common themes included beauty, elegance, confidence, and good perfume. Some participants envisioned a stylish and trendy woman, while others imagined a girl with a unique and unconventional appearance. Overall, the personification of Sephora reflected a positive and attractive image.

These findings provide valuable insights into Sephora's perceived strengths compared to competitors, customer perceptions of the brand's products and pricing, and the imagined personality traits associated with Sephora. They contribute to discussions on brand positioning and customer preferences in the beauty industry.

In Part 6, the analysis focused on the impact of advertisements and participants' thoughts on a specific Sephora ad, "the unlimited power of beauty":

1. Effect of Advertisements on Thoughts about a Brand: Most participants agreed that advertisements influence their thoughts about a brand. Advertisements were seen as influential in shaping opinions about products, influencing purchasing decisions, and creating brand awareness. Factors such as influencers' opinions, discounts, and the overall image portrayed in advertisements were mentioned as influential.

2. Thoughts on the Advertisement: Participants had diverse opinions about the "unlimited power of beauty" ad. Some found it nice and appreciated the storytelling aspect, showcasing the journey of a girl from childhood to old age. Others found it confusing or sad, as it portrayed the changing meaning of beauty over time. The ad emphasized

self-acceptance, self-love, and embracing individuality. The use of empowering words, cinematography, and music received praise from some participants for making the ad interesting and motivating.

3. Message behind the Advertisement: The perceived message behind the ad varied among participants. Common interpretations included the idea that Sephora empowers individuals to embrace their own beauty, regardless of societal standards or age. The ad conveyed the importance of self-confidence, accepting oneself, and not seeking validation from others. It emphasized that beauty comes from within and should be celebrated in its natural form. Participants also noted the ad's inclusion of diverse groups, such as targeting black women and the LGBTQ+ community, which added to the message of inclusivity.

These responses highlight the impact of advertisements on brand perception, with participants acknowledging that advertisements can influence their thoughts and decisions. The analysis of the specific Sephora ad reveals a range of emotional reactions and interpretations, focusing on self-acceptance, empowerment, and the celebration of individual beauty. These insights can be valuable for understanding the effectiveness of Sephora's advertising strategies and the perception of its femvertising approach.

In the last part, participants' responses regarding their perception of the Sephora ad and its potential impact on their future choices in the cosmetic sector were analyzed:

1. Change in Perception about Sephora: Participants had varied opinions about whether the advertisement changed their perception of Sephora. Some participants mentioned a positive change in their perception, seeing Sephora as a brand that promotes self-acceptance, spreads positive messages, and focuses on individual beauty rather than just selling products. Others did not feel a significant shift in their perception.

2. Description of the Advertisement: Participants used various words and phrases to describe the advertisement, such as empowering, delivering a message, showcasing the nature of beauty in different styles, increasing self-love, and reflecting a philosophy behind the brand. Some participants appreciated the fact that the ad emphasized self-acceptance and challenged traditional beauty standards. Others noted that it made them more interested in Sephora as a brand, as it went beyond selling products and conveyed a deeper meaning.

3. Effect on Future Choices in the Cosmetic Sector: Participants had mixed opinions on whether the advertisement would have a positive effect on their future choices in the cosmetic sector. Some participants expressed an openness to considering Sephora's products in the future, as the ad aligned with their values of self-acceptance and positive messages. They mentioned being more inclined to choose brands that spread similar messages. However, others stated that the advertisement did not significantly impact their future choices, as they already had a preexisting perception of Sephora or had different preferences in terms of cosmetics.

These responses indicate that the Sephora advertisement had a varying degree of influence on participants' perceptions and future choices. While some participants felt a positive change in their perception and expressed a willingness to explore Sephora's products, others did not perceive a significant shift or had different considerations in their cosmetic preferences. This analysis suggests that the advertisement had a mixed impact on participants' perceptions and future choices in the cosmetic sector.

5. Conclusion

The comprehensive exploration of Sephora's femvertising brand campaign, "The Unlimited Power of Beauty," through qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews has unearthed rich and nuanced insights into the intricate tapestry of consumer perceptions within the dynamic beauty industry. By meticulously examining the impact of femvertising on brand image, consumer perceptions, and the effectiveness of advertisements, this study offers a multifaceted understanding of the evolving relationship between consumers and beauty brands.

What renders this study truly distinctive lies in its multifaceted approach and the unique socio-cultural context it encapsulates. By delving into the perceptions and engagement of participants in Türkiye, this research stands out in its ability to capture a diverse spectrum of perspectives within a specific cultural framework. The study's exploration of beauty associations, brand image, and the impact of advertisements unfolds against the backdrop of Türkiye's socio-cultural landscape, providing a lens into the nuanced dynamics shaping consumer behaviors and perceptions within this vibrant and diverse market.

The in-depth analysis of Sephora's brand image and the femvertising campaign's impact within the Türkiye beauty market is a testament to the study's uniqueness. It traverses beyond conventional analyses by integrating cultural

nuances and socio-cultural influences specific to Türkiye, enriching the discourse on brand perception and consumer behavior within the beauty industry.

In essence, this investigation into Sephora's femvertising brand campaign serves as a beacon illuminating the complex nexus between brand perception, consumer behavior, and the ever-evolving landscape of beauty standards. As the beauty industry traverses a dynamic path influenced by societal shifts, this study contributes not merely to academic discourse but offers pragmatic insights for marketers navigating this competitive terrain. By delving into the intricate layers of consumer engagement, this research provides a foundation for understanding the multifaceted dynamics that govern consumer choices within the contemporary beauty landscape.

Diverse Associations with Beauty; participants' diverse associations with the concept of beauty provided a fascinating glimpse into the intricate web of perceptions surrounding this multifaceted term. The spectrum of associations, ranging from specific beauty brands to inner qualities and natural representations, emphasizes the subjective nature of beauty. The intertwining of Sephora with participants' beauty product associations underscores the brand's influence in shaping consumer perceptions within the broader landscape of beauty-related products.

Sephora's Ubiquitous Presence; the universal acknowledgment of Sephora as a well-known brand reflects its pervasive influence in the beauty industry. Participants attributed their awareness to a multitude of sources, including the influential role of word of mouth, the expansive reach of social media, personal experiences, and the impact of strategically crafted advertisements. This collective awareness not only reaffirms Sephora's market prominence but also underscores the potency of its marketing strategies in building and sustaining brand awareness and engagement.

Beauty Standards and Self-Expression; the study's exploration of participants' views on beauty standards uncovered a complex interplay of factors influencing individual perspectives. The emphasis on self-acceptance, self-love, and inner beauty emerged as resonant themes, revealing a paradigm shift in societal ideals. The study underscores the evolving nature of beauty standards and the increasing importance of fostering a healthy mindset that encourages self-expression and individuality.

Brand Image and Consumer Perception; the in-depth analysis of Sephora's brand image illuminated participants' recognition of its distinctive qualities. The brand's commitment to premium quality products, a diverse range of brands, and an immersive in-store experience differentiated it from competitors. While participants expressed an overall positive view, concerns regarding pricing raised considerations of accessibility. The personification of Sephora as an elegant, confident entity contributed to the positive and attractive image associated with the brand.

Impact of Advertisements and "The Unlimited Power of Beauty" Ad; the acknowledgment of the influence of advertisements on brand perception became particularly evident in the analysis of Sephora's femvertising approach. The scrutiny of "The Unlimited Power of Beauty" ad revealed a kaleidoscope of reactions, highlighting its impact on themes of self-acceptance, empowerment, and the celebration of individual beauty. The ad's inclusive messages, specifically targeting diverse groups, added a layer of authenticity to Sephora's femvertising strategy.

Influence on Future Choices in the Cosmetic Sector; participants exhibited a spectrum of responses to the femvertising campaign's impact on their perception of Sephora. While some experienced a positive shift, associating the brand with self-acceptance and positive messages, others reported minimal change. The dynamic description of the advertisement, characterized by terms such as empowering, delivering a message, and reflecting a philosophy, underscores its depth and resonant impact on participants. However, the mixed influence on future choices in the cosmetic sector suggests a complex interplay of factors influencing consumer decisions.

Implications and Future Directions; this extensive study offers critical implications for marketers and practitioners in the beauty industry. It underscores the pivotal role of strategic marketing, inclusivity, and empowering messages in shaping consumer perceptions. The positive reception of Sephora's femvertising strategy aligns with contemporary societal values, emphasizing the importance of authenticity and diversity in advertising. However, the study also hints at the need for continued exploration. Future research endeavors could delve into the longevity of femvertising effects, the role of individual characteristics in shaping responses, and the potential integration of these strategies into broader marketing frameworks.

In essence, this investigation into Sephora's femvertising brand campaign serves as a beacon illuminating the complex nexus between brand perception, consumer behavior, and the ever-evolving landscape of beauty standards. As the beauty industry traverses a dynamic path influenced by societal shifts, this study contributes not merely to academic discourse but offers pragmatic insights for marketers navigating this competitive terrain. By delving into

the intricate layers of consumer engagement, this research provides a foundation for understanding the multifaceted dynamics that govern consumer choices within the contemporary beauty landscape.

For businesses, adopting a strategy that embraces diversity and inclusivity, inspired by Sephora's approach, is crucial for fostering positive brand perceptions. Investing in effective and empowering advertising campaigns that go beyond product promotion can significantly influence consumer attitudes. Prioritizing engagement on social media platforms, as highlighted by participants, enhances brand visibility and appeal. For academicians, future research should focus on exploring the cross-cultural impact of femvertising on beauty standards and advertising, providing nuanced insights into diverse societal responses. Additionally, examining the long-term effects of inclusive advertising on brand loyalty and consumer behavior can contribute to a deeper understanding of the sustained impact over time.

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