

Consumer Attitudes towards Femvertising in Russia and Türkiye: A Netnographic Study

Tuba Çevik Ergin^{1*} 
Iana Aleksandrova¹ 

¹ Sakarya University, Department of
Public Relations and Advertising,
Sakarya, Türkiye,
tubacevikergin@sakarya.edu.tr,
iana.aleksandrova1@ogr.sakarya.edu.tr

* Corresponding Author



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Abstract: This research paper examines consumer attitudes towards femvertising within the context of Nike's campaigns in Russia and Türkiye. Through a netnographic analysis of YouTube comments, the research reveals how gender, cultural and political context influence responses to women's empowerment messages in advertising. While women in both countries largely responded positively to femvertising, perceiving it as empowering and motivational, men's reactions were more polarized. Russian men displayed substantial resistance, with many viewing the advertisement's feminist undertones negatively and interpreting it as an imposition of Western feminist ideas that undermine traditional values. This opposition aligns with Russian political discourse, which in recent years has shifted towards the preservation and reinforcement of traditional spiritual and moral values. In contrast, Turkish men were relatively more receptive to femvertising messages, though they still expressed some caution. Türkiye's more varied discourse on gender, which balances secular ideas and traditional Islamic values, contributed to a less polarized reaction to femvertising. The study underscores the importance of authenticity in femvertising, noting the potential for backlash and skepticism towards commercialized feminism, particularly among male audiences. It also highlights the importance of diversity, recommending the inclusion of men, alongside women of varied religions, body types, and appearances, to foster inclusivity and prevent discrimination. These findings enrich the literature on gender-focused advertising, emphasizing the importance of cultural sensitivity and adherence to authentic femvertising principles when employing femvertising strategies across diverse cultural landscapes.

Keywords: Femvertising, Female Stereotypes, YouTube, Russia, Türkiye

1. Introduction

An increasing number of companies have integrated corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their marketing strategies. CSR can serve as an effective tool for product differentiation, since support for CSR initiatives contributes to favorable perceptions of a company's reputation and public image (McWilliams & Siegel, 2001, pp. 119-120).

Feminist advertising, commonly referred to as female empowerment advertising (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 795), has emerged as a growing marketing trend, adopted by major brands as part of their CSR strategies to engage female audiences. For example, Dove, a beauty brand that promotes messages of body positivity and self-acceptance, is widely recognized as a pioneer in this movement with its "Campaign for Real Beauty," launched in 2004 (Rudeloff & Bruns, 2024). Positive associations with a company's support for women's empowerment have been shown to significantly enhance purchase intentions among target consumers (Drake, 2017, p. 593).

Femvertising campaigns have been extensively examined from multiple perspectives within academic research. Studies on femvertising report favorable marketing outcomes, including positive impacts on brand perception, purchase intention, and emotional connection to brands (Drake, 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Åkestam et al. (2017) conclude that femvertising generates lower levels of "ad reactance" compared to traditional advertising approaches.

The majority of research on femvertising focuses on its effects on female consumers (Drake, 2017; Åkestam et al., 2017; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Although males are also potential consumers, and their perspectives may differ from those of women, male attitudes towards femvertising remain

underexplored in academic studies. Abdallah et al. (2018) were the first to investigate male perceptions of femvertising. Additionally, Negm (2024) and Elhajjar (2022) analyzed consumer reactions to femvertising among both men and women in Egypt and Lebanon, respectively.

Most femvertising research has been conducted within Western contexts (Drake, 2017; Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017; Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019), while other countries are scarcely investigated in academic work. Moreover, there is a significant lack of comparative research examining consumer perceptions of femvertising across various countries. To address these gaps, this paper aims to expand knowledge on consumer reactions to femvertising campaigns in Russia and Türkiye using a netnographic approach. Specifically, it explores gender-based differences in attitudes towards femvertising, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of femvertising within both marketing practice and academic research.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Feminism

Feminism has evolved significantly over time, integrating elements from diverse cultural contexts, progressively addressing various issues, and amplifying the voices of remarkably diverse identities (Lagrasta et al., 2024, p. 3084). Despite the existence of numerous definitions of feminism, the fundamental aim of the feminist movement remains the eradication of sexist oppression. This goal encompasses challenging and rejecting restrictive cultural norms regarding women's physical appearance and expected behaviors (Kvaka et al., 2024, p. 2). Traditionally, the history of feminism is categorized into four distinct waves (Lagrasta et al., 2024; Rampton, 2015; Mohajan, 2022).

Feminist ideas existed long before the emergence of the "first wave", yet they had not coalesced into a formally recognized movement (Kinser, 2004, p. 127). The first wave of feminism spanned the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, arising within a context of urban industrialization and liberal socialist politics. This movement is generally considered to have formally begun at the Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, where approximately three hundred men and women gathered to advocate for gender equality (Rampton, 2015, p. 1). Nonetheless, some scholars argue that the origins of the women's movement can be traced to First Nation American and African American women, who laid the groundwork for women's rights long before the Seneca Falls Convention (Kinser, 2004, p. 128). The first-wave feminists, often labeled "suffragettes" (Maclaran, 2012, p. 463), primarily campaigned for property rights, equitable wages, child guardianship, access to education, and the right to vote (Kinser, 2004, p. 128).

The second wave of feminism began in the 1960s and extended into the 1990s, emerging alongside the anti-war and civil rights movements and an increasing awareness among various minority groups globally. During this period, issues of sexuality and reproductive rights took center stage (Rampton, 2015, p. 3). However, women of color critiqued earlier feminist perspectives, contending that the feminist theories of the time were shaped by racial biases that women's complex social realities (Dinçer, 2023, p. 286).

The third wave of feminism, spanning from 1990 to 2010, is marked by the emergence of diverse currents within feminist thought, including trans-feminism, eco-feminism, and post-feminism (Lagrasta et al., 2024, p. 3084). The term "third wave feminism" was introduced by American writer, feminist, and activist Rebecca Walker in her influential 1992 article "Becoming the Third Wave" (Mohajan, 2022, p. 13). This period is characterized by a critical reassessment of foundational concepts, challenging traditional notions of "universal womanhood," as well as constructs of body, gender, sexuality, and heteronormativity (Rampton, 2015, p. 4). Third-wave feminism is often referred to as "power feminism" (Kinser, 2004, p. 131), as it embraces a vision of women as strong and defiant, with working women across various sectors resisting subjugation to a patriarchal system (Mohajan, 2022, p. 14).

Since the 2000s, the rise of new information and communication technologies has sparked discussions about a digitally-driven fourth wave of feminism. This wave gained momentum as women increasingly used online platforms to share their experiences, voice their concerns, and challenge patriarchal norms, leading to its characterization as digital or cyber feminism. Although fourth-wave feminism echoes many goals of the third wave – including intersectional, queer, trans-inclusive, and body-positive politics – it amplifies these demands within digital spaces, initially through blogs (Dinçer, 2023, pp. 286-287). Prominent social justice campaigns, like #MeToo and #TimesUp, have further defined this movement as “hashtag feminism” (Mohajan, 2022, p. 15).

2.2. Female stereotypes in advertising

Stereotypes are defined as sets of concepts associated with specific social categories (Vinacke, 1957, p. 230). Stereotypes are prevalent in advertising, particularly those related to women. Given the significant influence of advertisements and media images on shaping societal gender perceptions, the persistence of female stereotypes perpetuates expectations and judgments that restrict life opportunities for women (Eisend, 2010, pp. 418-419). The UK Advertising Standards Authority (2017) associates gender stereotypes in advertising to concerns about body image, objectification, sexualization, gender-specific characteristics and roles, and the ridicule of individuals for deviating from conventional gender norms.

A substantial body of academic research explores the use of female stereotypes in advertising and other fields (Knoll et al., 2011; Eisend, 2010; Matthes et al., 2016). Many advertisements continue to rely on gender-stereotypical portrayals of women, often depicting them as housewives or mothers, objectifying them sexually, or presenting them as decorative figures. Such advertisements commonly associate women with household appliances, furniture, or products related to beauty, cleaning, and fashion (Middleton et al., 2020, p. 685).

Advertising also promotes unrealistic beauty standards for women, portraying a narrow ideal of attractiveness characterized by extreme slimness, height, and flawless skin. Exposure to such images often leads to body dissatisfaction and lowered self-esteem among women (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002, p. 3333). The media industry frequently objectifies women through techniques such as body cropping. For instance, depicting only a woman’s legs while omitting the rest of her body diminishes her humanity, contributing to the hyper-sexualization of fragmented body parts (Andersen, 2002, p. 232).

Consequently, it can be concluded that throughout the history of advertising – and even in the post-feminist era – stereotypes and generalizations have objectified, sexualized, and oversimplified women (Lima & Casais, 2021, p. 607), ultimately undermining their inherent value and disregarding their diverse capabilities and identities. In response to such reductive portrayals, the trend of femvertising has emerged, aiming to counteract female stereotypes in advertising and promote more nuanced and varied representations of women (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 795). Although stereotypical portrayals of women still persist (Negm, 2024, p. 1079), there has been a rise in campaigns conveying more empowering and positive messages targeted at women in recent years (Varghese & Kumar, 2022, p. 442).

2.3. Femvertising

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, as women achieved greater financial independence, advertisers began to acknowledge the frustration many women felt about being objectified and overwhelmed by unrealistic portrayals of femininity. In response, they started to reevaluate their approach to female consumers and adjust how women were represented in their campaigns. One key strategy involved associating women’s emancipation with the consumption of corporate goods, capitalizing on feminist ideals like independence, freedom, and sexual agency. Goldman in 1992 termed this approach “commodity feminism”. This shift spurred a trend in advertising that moved away from confining women to domestic or objectified roles, instead portraying them as confident and empowered

individuals, distinct from passive figures of the male gaze. Nevertheless, in this era of commodity feminism, female sexuality continued to be depicted in ways that is meant to be pleasing to men (Gill, 2008, pp. 39-40).

Commodity feminism, using the language of empowerment, implies that a woman must first make a purchase to claim power, framing her value as contingent upon her consumer choices (Crouse-Dick, 2002, p. 19). Through pseudo-feminist rhetoric, young women are encouraged to believe that they can “empower” themselves by purchasing products associated with traditional femininity. Despite this guise of empowerment, women are still presented with an artificial construction of beauty standards and are subtly encouraged to prioritize finding love as central to their lives (Gengler, 2011, p. 68).

It could be argued that femvertising represents a direct response—or even a backlash—against the commodity feminism that largely defined female-centered advertising until the early 2000s (Becker-Herby, 2016, p. 17). The term “femvertising” was first introduced during a panel discussion at AdWeek in 2014, moderated by Samantha Skey, chief revenue and marketing officer of SheKnows Media (Bahadur, 2014).

Skey (2015) defines femvertising as “advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls”, underscoring its relevance as an emerging marketing trend. Åkestam et al. (2017, p. 796) describe femvertising as an advertising appeal rather than an ideological movement. Additionally, Rudeloff and Bruns (2024) characterize it as a set of activities and messaging strategies through which organizations position themselves as corporate brands advocating for female empowerment.

Becker-Herby (2016, pp.18-19) identifies five key principles of femvertising campaigns from a marketing professional’s perspective: employing diverse female talent, delivering inherently pro-female messages, challenging traditional gender stereotypes, downplaying sexuality, and portraying women authentically. Hainneville et al. (2023, p. 939) provide a conceptualization of femvertising from the consumer’s perspective, highlighting six dimensions of authentic femvertising: transparency, consistency, identification, diversity, respect, and the challenging of stereotypes.

By refocusing on women’s empowerment and shifting representations of women in media, femvertising has been shown to drive sales effectively and positively influence both advertisement and brand perceptions (Drake, 2017, p. 597). This aligns with findings from a 2014 SheKnows Media survey, in which 52% of women reported purchasing a product due to favorable portrayals of women in advertisements. Additionally, 71% of respondents believed that brands have a responsibility to use advertising as a platform to promote positive messages aimed at women and girls (Skey, 2015). However, some femvertising campaigns face criticism for reinforcing sexism (Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017, p. 13) or exploiting feminist ideals as tools to achieve economic and business goals (Varghese & Kumar, 2022, p. 442).

Authenticity is a central theme, as female audiences expect that the truth and transparency portrayed in campaigns will also be reflected in the brand's business practices. For instance, although Dove is often regarded as a pioneer of femvertising through its Campaign for Real Beauty, consumers remain skeptical of the brand's perceived authenticity (Feng et al., 2019, p. 299). Hainneville et al. (2023, p. 934) distinguish between authentic and inauthentic femvertising, describing the latter as “fempower washing” or “femwashing,” which can ultimately disempower rather than empower women.

2.4. YouTube and user-generated content

YouTube is one of the most popular social media platforms globally, ranking as the second most-used social platform with 2.491 billion users worldwide. On average, active YouTube users spend 28 hours and 5 minutes per month on the platform (WeAreSocial, 2024). Unlike traditional media advertising – such as radio, TV, newspapers, and magazines – social media advertising enables immediate public

interaction with advertisements (Knoll, 2016, p. 284). YouTube allows users to engage with content in various ways: registered users can rate videos (like or dislike), upload content, comment on videos, and share them with others (Khan, 2017, p. 236).

YouTube comments exemplify user-generated content (UGC), defined as "media content created or produced by the general public rather than paid professionals, primarily distributed online" (Daugherty et al., 2008, p. 16). Rather than solely consuming content from a single broadcaster, YouTube users observe peer commentary before, during, or after video consumption (Walther et al., 2010, p. 470). While only around 20% of social media users actively create UGC, many passive users receive and engage with this content, influencing their brand attitudes and purchase intentions based on the active users' opinions (Feng et al., 2019, p. 292). The impact of brand advertising may be either reinforced or diminished by the positive or negative nature of UGC (Knoll, 2016, p. 285), underscoring the importance of studying UGC within the context of advertising on social media.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research questions

The objective of this study is to analyze and compare consumer attitudes towards femvertising in Russia and Türkiye by examining YouTube comments on Nike's femvertising campaigns. Specifically, the study aims to determine whether gender-based differences in reactions exist when individuals are exposed to femvertising advertisements.

The research questions are formulated as follows:

RQ1: What are the overall attitudes of women and men in Russia towards femvertising?

RQ2: What are the general attitudes of women and men in Türkiye towards femvertising?

RQ3: What primary themes do women and men address in their comments regarding Nike's femvertising campaign in Russia?

RQ4: What key topics do women and men discuss in their comments about Nike's femvertising campaign in Türkiye?

3.2. Research design

This study adopts an exploratory research design based on qualitative data analysis. Exploratory research provides insights into themes or phenomena of uncertain nature (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 133). Qualitative research aims to deliver "an in-depth and interpreted understanding of the social world" (Ormston et al., 2014, p. 4).

A netnographic approach is employed to examine reactions to femvertising in Russia and Türkiye. Netnography is a qualitative, interpretive research methodology focused on behaviors and interactions within online communities. This approach entails observing how individuals communicate, share opinions, and express themselves on digital platforms, including forums, social media, and blogs (Kozinets, 2015, p. 19). To analyze YouTube comments, a content analysis was conducted. Content analysis is defined as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use" (Krippendorff, 2018, p. 24).

3.3. Sample

This study examines two of Nike's femvertising campaigns created for International Women's Day in 2017 and launched in Russia and Türkiye. Nike was selected due to its prominent role in implementing femvertising strategies that promote women's empowerment and challenge traditional gender roles and its early adoption of feminist empowerment as a marketing strategy to engage consumers. Nike began featuring female athletes in advertisements in the late 1980s (Lucas, 2000, p. 151).

Nike's campaigns were also chosen because these two advertisements were locally launched in Russia and Türkiye while adhering to a unified global objective: encouraging women to overcome societal, physical, and cultural barriers and become more active (Kantli, 2018). This simultaneous release across culturally distinct regions provides an opportunity for a comparative cross-national analysis.

These campaigns generated substantial engagement and discussion on YouTube, making them rich sources for analysis. The Russian video "What are girls made of?" (Original: "Из чего же сделаны наши девочки") garnered 11 million views, while the Turkish promotional video "This is us" (original: "Bizi böyle bilin") received 5.8 million views (NikeWoman, 2017a; NikeWoman, 2017b).

3.4. Data collection and data analysis

YouTube users are more likely to leave comments on videos rather than engaging with existing comments or exploring subcomments by clicking "View Replies" (Walther et al., 2010, p. 471). Consequently, primary comments attract more user attention than replies or subcomments, positioning them as influential elements in shaping the discourse surrounding a video (Feng et al., 2019, p. 295). Accordingly, this study focuses solely on analyzing primary comments, excluding subcomments from the research.

To retrieve YouTube comments, the Comment Exporter for YouTube tool was utilized, facilitating the collection of 1,979 user comments (excluding replies) from the two YouTube videos. Data collection occurred on October 19, 2024. Each comment was analyzed, with user profiles used to categorize comments by gender. Comments without sufficient profile information for gender identification were excluded. After removing comments from non-target countries and filtering out spam, the final sample comprised 1,364 unique comments (706 Russian and 658 Turkish). The collected data were analyzed using MAXQDA software, a tool specifically designed for qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method research (MAXQDA, nd).

3.5. Coding procedure

Both inductive and deductive approaches were employed to develop the coding scheme. The deductive method draws upon established categories from prior research relevant to the study (Ardèvol-Abreu, 2015, p. 433), while the inductive approach allows categories to emerge organically from the data during analysis (De Vreese, 2005, p. 53).

The advertisements were examined across two dimensions. The first dimension classifies comment types based on the audience's emotional responses to the analyzed advertisements, aiming to understand the overall discourse. The second dimension addresses the main topics reflected in the femvertising advertisements. The following scales were evaluated in this research.

3.5.1. Attitudes towards advertisement

Assessing attitudes towards advertisements (Aad) is crucial for companies, as it influences both brand perception and customers' purchase intentions (Biehal et al., 1992, p. 20). Attitude towards the ad is defined as a "predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to a particular advertising stimulus during a specific exposure" (MacKenzie et al., 1986, p. 130). Similarly, Kirmani and Campbell (2009, p. 292) describe Aad as "the thoughts and feelings that consumers experience regarding the advertisement".

This research utilizes categories developed by Campbell et al. (2011, p. 97) to classify consumer comments on YouTube: "inquiry", "laudation", "debate", and "flame". Based on this framework, the following coding scheme was developed.

1. "Inquiry-answer" response (collaborative-conceptual): This occurs when consumers seek additional information about the advertisement, such as details about its creators, soundtrack,

composer, or purpose. These comments reflect a desire for deeper understanding and clarification. Additionally, this response includes information provided by other viewers, such as identifying text in the video or famous sportswomen featured.

2. “Laudation” response (collaborative-emotive): In laudatory responses, consumers express admiration and praise for the advertisement and its feminist messages, emphasizing its positive aspects. These comments often highlight the motivational, inspirational, or professional elements of Nike’s advertisements, advocating for women’s empowerment, freedom of choice, and individuality.
3. “Debate” response (oppositional-conceptual): This refers to a rational, thoughtful discussion in which participants present differing perspectives or opinions on the advertisement or its themes. These responses may criticize the advertisement as promoting Western feminist ideals, reinforcing new stereotypes, or commercializing feminism. Some comments advocate for traditional gender roles, supporting opinions with arguments and facts to foster structured discourse.
4. “Flame” response (oppositional-emotive): This response emphasizes the negative aspects of online discourse, where emotional reactions escalate into personal attacks rather than constructive discussions. Unlike the “debate” category, which is characterized by measured discussion, the “flame” response is marked by hostility and aggression towards the advertisement and feminist themes, often involving profane language.

3.5.2. Main topics

The analyzed comments were classified into three broad categories: those that are related to the advertisement, those that address broader topics, and other comments. After careful reading and applying open coding, the main topics discussed in comments on Nike’s femvertising campaigns were identified in Table 1. Some categories were derived from femvertising research by Lima and Casais (2021). A single comment may encompass discussions on multiple topics.

One proficient human coder, fluent in both English and Russian, conducted a quantitative content analysis of 1,338 YouTube comments using the developed coding scheme.

Table 1

Categories of Analysis

Category	Description
Classification of Comments Related to the Advertisement	
Empowering, Motivational, Inspirational, Emotional	This advertisement builds an emotional bond with consumers, empowering women to break free from traditional gender stereotypes.
Professional	Professional acting/music/light/singing/ video voiceover; creative idea; exceptional marketing.
Feminist	The advertisement reflects the values of the feminist movement. The references to feminist advertisements can be positive, negative, or neutral.
Unprofessional / Meaningless	Unprofessional acting/music/singing. The advertisement lacks meaningful content. It reinforces new stereotypes.
Inauthentic	Fictional, pretentious
Commercialization of Feminism	The brand aims to increase sales rather than advocate for female empowerment.

Table 1 (Continued)

Imposition of Western Feminist Ideas	This advertisement imposes Western feminist ideas that disrupt traditional values.
Males Inclusion	The importance of including men in advertising to show gender equality
Inclusion of Diverse Women in Femvertising	The need to include women of different body types, races, religions, and professions
Questions and answers about advertisement content	Various questions and answers related to the advertisement's content (e.g., actors, music).
Classification of Comments that Address Broader Topics	
Criticism of Outdated Gender Stereotypes	Broader social discussions on gender equality and gender stereotypes affecting both women and men
Support for Traditional Gender Roles	Belief that men should be earners and women homemakers; criticism of women's career ambitions; and support for traditional views of femininity
Comments on Nike's Brand	Praise or criticism of the brand, discussion of its policy
Other Comments	
Other Comments	Comments on topics that are difficult to detect; comments that do not relate to any of the aforementioned topics

4. Presentation of Results

The content analysis of the online comments on the two selected femvertising campaigns, as presented in Table 2, 3, 4, and 5, provide extensive insights into consumer reactions to femvertising in Russia and Türkiye.

4.1. Russian consumer attitudes to femvertising

Research Question 1 examines the overall attitudes of women and men in Russia towards femvertising.

Table 2

Gender-Based Analysis of Attitudes Towards Femvertising in Russia

Type of Response	Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%
Inquiry-Answer Response	28	7	23	8
Laudation Response	355	88	141	47
Debate Response	5	1	31	10
Flame Response	15	4	108	36
Total	403	100	303	100

An analysis of YouTube comments from Russia reveals notable gender-based differences in responses to Nike's femvertising campaigns. Among female respondents, a substantial majority (88%) conveyed positive sentiments, primarily categorized as "laudation" responses. These comments indicate strong support for the advertisement's themes of women's empowerment. A smaller proportion (7%) of women engaged in "inquiry-answer" responses, reflecting a level of engagement or curiosity regarding the content of advertisement. Conversely, 4% of female respondents expressed hostile and aggressive

attitudes towards the advertisement and feminist concepts. Only 1% of women engaged in “debate” responses, contributing thoughtful reflections on the femvertising campaign.

In contrast, male responses were more divided. While 47% of men provided laudatory comments, a significant percentage (36%) offered “flame” responses, reflecting hostile views on the advertisement. This suggests a heightened level of resistance to femvertising among Russian men. Additionally, 10% participated in “debate” responses, indicating a greater willingness to discuss and potentially challenge the messages conveyed in the advertisement. Only 8% of men expressed curiosity about the content of advertisement.

4.2. Turkish consumer attitudes to femvertising

Research Question 2 explores the general attitudes of women and men in Türkiye towards femvertising.

Table 3

Gender-Based Analysis of Attitudes Towards Femvertising in Türkiye

Type of Response	Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%
Inquiry-Answer Response	90	18	31	19
Laudation Response	386	78	89	55
Debate Response	5	1	11	7
Flame Response	14	3	32	20
Total	495	100	163	100

Attitudes in Türkiye display a similar trend to those observed in Russia, albeit with some notable distinctions. Turkish women predominantly conveyed positive feedback, with 78% offering “laudation” responses, indicating strong support for the femvertising messages. The proportion of women engaging in “inquiry-answer” responses (18%) is higher than in Russia (7%), suggesting increased interest or a desire for further understanding of the advertisement's content. Minimal opposition was observed, with only 3% and 1% of Turkish women expressing “flame” and “debate” responses, respectively.

Among Turkish men, a majority (55%) also provided laudatory comments, though a substantial portion (20%) engaged in “flame” responses, suggesting some resistance to the campaign's feminist messages. Additionally, Turkish men were likely to participate in “debate” responses (7%), similar to their Russian counterparts, indicating a strong inclination towards discussing potentially diverse viewpoints. Similar to Turkish women, Turkish men demonstrated interest in the femvertising advertisement's details, with 19% participating in “inquiry-answer” responses.

4.3. Thematic analysis of Russian consumer comments

Research Question 3 investigates the key topics discussed in comments regarding Nike's femvertising campaigns in Russia. A single comment can cover multiple topics.

Table 4*Key Issues Highlighted in Russian Comments on Nike's Femvertising*

Main Themes	Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%
Empowering, Motivational, Inspirational, Emotional	287	60.2	94	26.6
Professional	31	6.5	17	4.8
Feminist	13	2.7	40	11.3
Unprofessional / Meaningless	5	1.0	28	7.9
Inauthentic	1	0.2	8	2.3
Commercialization of Feminism	4	0.8	15	4.2
Males Inclusion	2	0.4	13	3.7
Imposition of Western Feminist Ideas	0	0.0	11	3.1
Inclusion of Diverse Women in Femvertising	0	0.0	3	0.8
Questions and Answers about Advertisement Content	28	5.9	23	6.5
Criticism of Outdated Gender Stereotypes	54	11.3	14	4.0
Support for Traditional Gender Roles	7	1.5	42	11.9
Comments on Nike's Brand	26	5.5	14	4.0
Other Comments	19	4.0	32	9.0
Total	477	100	354	100

The thematic analysis of comments from Russian consumers reveals distinct gender-based differences in responses to Nike's femvertising campaign.

Russian women's responses primarily centered on the motivational and empowering aspects of the advertisement, with 60.2% of messages reflecting these themes. These comments conveyed a profound sense of inspiration, emphasizing the advertisement's ability to boost confidence and self-esteem. Many women described feeling deeply moved and inspired, often sharing emotional reactions such as, "The first ad that gives me goosebumps all over my body," "I've already watched it about 30 times and can't stop. It's magical...", and "An awesome, inspiring advertisement!" Many Russian women found the advertisement's message deeply empowering, expressing a strong connection to themes of strength and independence. Comments such as, "It's time to show that women are not weak beings or princesses! Women are scientists, astronauts, programmers, engineers, authors, artists, composers! Women deserve more!" highlight this sentiment. These reactions demonstrate a profound resonance with the advertisement's empowering messages, reflecting its ability to inspire and affirm women's capabilities.

Furthermore, Russian women considered the analyzed advertisement to be professional (6.5% of messages), highlighting its "professional vocals", "beautiful and harmonious visuals", and "creative embodiment of the idea". They also viewed it as feminist (2.7%), emphasizing the positive impact of the

feminism movement on society. Additionally, women in Russia actively engaged with the advertisement's content by asking and answering questions (5.9%).

Russian women voiced criticisms regarding outdated gender stereotypes affecting both women and men (11.3%), advocating for freedom of choice in professional pursuits, appearance, and self-expression: "If a girl wants to do boxing, that's normal, just as if a boy wants to study ballet. Think more broadly!" Female consumers also frequently commended Nike's brand (5.5%), with many expressing gratitude for producing an empowering advertisement for women. A small portion of Russian women were negative towards femvertising, perceiving the advertisement as unprofessional (1%), inauthentic (0.2%), or primarily profit-driven rather than a genuine advocacy for women's empowerment (0.8%), while also expressing support for traditional gender roles (1.5%).

In contrast, Russian men's responses were more critical. While a vast majority of men commented positively on the motivational and empowering aspects of the campaign (26.6% of messages) and highlighted the professional aspects of the advertisement (4.8%), some male consumers viewed the advertisement's feminist undertones (11.3%) negatively, perceiving it as an imposition of Western feminist ideas (3.1%) that threaten traditional Russian values. Some men found the advertisement unprofessional or meaningless (7.9%), inauthentic (2.3%), particularly disapproving of the adaptation of the classic Soviet song "What are boys made of?" for advertising purposes: "The normal Soviet children's version of the song was replaced with an adult version. To be honest, it was simply spoiled. As a result, the new lyrics no longer resonate with the soul in the same way as the original children's version!" Concerns about the commercialization of feminism (4.2%) also emerged, with some men arguing that the campaign primarily sought to drive sales rather than genuinely promote women's empowerment.

Russian men highlighted that both genders should be featured in femvertising advertisements (3.7%), perceiving the exclusion of men in such campaigns as discriminatory. There were suggestions to diversify the portrayal of women by including not only athletes but also women from different professions, such as cosmonauts, engineers, miners, nurses, and drone operators (0.8% of messages). Similar to female consumers, Russian men showed almost the same level of interest in the advertisement's details (6.5%).

Compared to Russian women, male respondents were less critical of outdated gender stereotypes (4%) and displayed greater support for traditional gender roles (11.9% of messages). Russian men endorsed the ideals of traditional family structures and conventional femininity, with comments such as, "Why? Why are you doing this and stopping being a girl? These cool sportswomen are no longer women, not girls... They are incapable of becoming wives and mothers... Why turn girls into warriors and iron ladies? The main advantage of a woman is precisely that she can afford to be weak and dependent. She can get married, become a wife and mother, inspire a boy to become a real man, and raise children to be good and kind people..."

In discussing Nike's brand (4% of messages), Russian men's reactions were divided: some expressed appreciation for the well-crafted advertisement, while others voiced satisfaction with Nike's departure from the Russian market.

4.4. Thematic analysis of Turkish consumer comments

Research Question 4 explores the primary themes discussed in consumer comments concerning Nike's femvertising campaigns in Türkiye. A single comment can cover multiple topics.

Table 5*Key Issues Highlighted in Turkish Comments on Nike's Femvertising*

Main Themes	Women		Men	
	N	%	N	%
Empowering, Motivational, Inspirational, Emotional	341	59.3	70	40.0
Professional	47	8.2	8	4.6
Feminist	13	2.3	6	3.4
Unprofessional / Meaningless	6	1.0	16	9.1
Inauthentic	4	0.7	9	5.1
Commercialization of Feminism	3	0.5	6	3.4
Males Inclusion	1	0.2	1	0.6
Imposition of Western Feminist Ideas	0	0.0	0	0.0
Inclusion of Diverse Women in Femvertising	3	0.5	1	0.6
Questions and Answers about Advertisement Content	90	15.7	31	17.7
Criticism of Outdated Gender Stereotypes	14	2.4	1	0.6
Support for Traditional Gender Roles	3	0.5	7	4.0
Comments on Nike's Brand	46	8.0	11	6.3
Other Comments	4	0.7	8	4.6
Total	575	100	175	100

Turkish women focused predominantly on the motivational, inspirational, and empowering elements of the advertisement (59.3% of messages), with comments such as, "I get a burst of self-confidence every time I watch this ad", "Every time I see this ad, I get fired up", and "As a woman, I felt the power inside me. It's more than an ad..." This strong resonance indicates that Nike's femvertising campaign effectively connected with Turkish women, evoking emotions tied to self-confidence and empowerment.

Turkish women also regarded the advertisement as professional (8.2%), noting the quality of the voice-over, engaging content, and the impactful selection of Turkish sportswomen for the femvertising campaign. Similar to Russian women, women in Türkiye viewed the advertisement as feminist (2.3%), recognizing its effort to challenge stereotypes surrounding women. Additionally, compared to Russian consumers, Turkish women showed greater curiosity and a stronger desire for further clarification about the advertisement's content (15.7% of messages).

Unlike their Russian counterparts, Turkish women expressed limited criticism of outdated gender stereotypes (2.4%), with statements like, "People think women are good for nothing but housework and going to the market", and "It is a very good ad, as if it covers those who say that women cannot do sports, women cannot fight, women should not work..." A small number of women (0.5% of messages) were inclined to support traditional gender roles in their comments, as exemplified by a comment highlighting maternal strength: "My mother gave birth to six children and raised them even though she

wore a burqa. None of these women can give birth to even one child and cannot show that courage. That's why it's an empty ad."

Some Turkish women viewed the advertisement as unprofessional (1.0%), inauthentic (0.7%) or criticized it for using feminism to drive sales (0.5%). Female consumers expressed the need to include hijab-wearing women, Black women, and plus-sized women in the advertisement (0.5%) to better reflect diversity and prevent discrimination. In discussing Nike's brand (8% of messages), Turkish women praised Nike's brand, congratulating it for creating a "great" and "meaningful" advertisement.

Turkish men applauded motivational and empowering messages of the advertisement (40% of messages), expressing sentiments like, "They showed that women can be strong; I think it was a superb ad...", "Being a woman is not a weakness... I'm not a girl, but I'm just excited after watching the ad..." Compared to Russian men, Turkish men demonstrated greater curiosity, with 17.7% engaging in question-and-answer-style comments. They, like Turkish women, praised the professional aspects of the advertisement (4.6%) and frequently acknowledged Nike's efforts (6.3% of messages), expressing congratulations for a well-executed campaign.

Turkish men shared some criticisms with Russian men, perceiving the advertisement as unprofessional (9.1% of messages) or inauthentic (5.1%) and expressing concerns about the commercialization of feminism (3.4%). However, fewer Turkish men than Russian men described the advertisement as feminist (3.4% compared to 10.8%), although both groups primarily associated the term "feminist" with negative connotations. While Russian men frequently advocated for traditional gender roles in society (11.9%), Turkish men placed less emphasis on this theme in their comments (4%). Also, criticisms of outdated gender stereotypes were less prevalent among Turkish men (0.6% of messages) than among Russian men (4%).

5. Discussion

The findings of this study, based on a netnographic analysis of YouTube comments on Nike's femvertising campaigns, offer meaningful insights into consumer attitudes towards femvertising in Russia and Türkiye. While both countries generally display supportive attitudes towards messages of women's empowerment, significant differences emerge, shaped by gender as well as distinct political and socio-cultural factors.

1. Positive reception of femvertising among women

Women in both Russia and Türkiye demonstrated overwhelmingly positive responses to Nike's femvertising campaigns. The motivational and empowering aspects of the advertisements resonated strongly, as seen in the high proportion of "laudation" responses (88% in Russia and 78% in Türkiye). However, Turkish women seemed to be more engaged in the campaign's content (18% compared to 7% in Russia). This finding aligns with previous studies by Elhajjar (2022), Åkestam et al. (2017), Drake (2017), Pillay (2020), and Rodrigues (2016), which suggest that femvertising campaigns generally succeed in eliciting positive emotional responses from female audiences by promoting empowerment and challenging traditional gender norms.

2. Mixed reactions from men: resistance and criticism

While a vast majority of men in both Russia and Türkiye responded positively to Nike's femvertising campaigns (47% of laudatory responses in Russia and 55% in Türkiye), their reactions were mixed, with notable resistance to the feminist messages. Turkish men appeared more receptive to femvertising, showing fewer "flame" responses (20%) and more engagement with the advertisement's content (19%) compared to their Russian counterparts, who had higher "flame" responses (36%) and fewer "inquiry-answer" responses (8%). This result is in line with Elhajjar's (2022) findings that men tend to be more critical of femvertising than women.

The thematic analysis of Turkish and Russian men's comments reveals that both groups were inclined to label the advertisement as "feminist," often with negative connotations; however, this sentiment was less prevalent among Turkish men. Many in both groups viewed the campaign as a commercialization of feminism and described it as unprofessional or trivial. Russian men, in particular, interpreted the campaign as an imposition of Western feminist ideals, possibly influenced by the growing tension between Russia and Western countries. Russian male consumers also emphasized the need for male representation in femvertising campaigns. These findings suggest that, while Turkish men may show greater openness to feminist messaging, notable resistance persists across both groups.

3. Cultural and political influences on consumer reactions to femvertising

Cultural and political contexts play a significant role in shaping consumer reactions to femvertising in Russia and Türkiye. Until 2022, liberalism and conservatism in Russia developed concurrently. However, amid increasing geopolitical tensions with Western countries, Russian society began shifting towards a new value paradigm rooted in traditional values (Стешин & Алфимов, 2022). In 2022, Russia established the foundations of a state policy prioritizing the preservation and reinforcement of traditional spiritual and moral values. These values include patriotism, high moral ideals, strong family bonds, an emphasis on spiritual over material priorities, compassion, and collectivism (РИА Новости, 2022). To further promote this policy on family protection, 2024 was declared the Year of the Family in Russia (РИА Новости, 2023). Thus, Russian political discourse tends to favor traditional values, a perspective reflected in the reactions of many male consumers, with 46% demonstrating an oppositional response to femvertising, including 36% with "flame" responses and 10% with "debate" responses. Support for traditional gender roles and conventional views of femininity (11.9%) featured prominently in the comments of Russian men. In contrast, Russian women displayed relatively low resistance to femvertising (5% of oppositional comments).

Türkiye also demonstrates resistance to femvertising, though it is less pronounced compared to Russia. The findings reveal that 27% of Turkish men opposed femvertising, with 20% expressing hostility and 7% offering a more debate-oriented response. Among Turkish women, only 4% expressed resistance, compared to 5% among Russian women. This may relate to the more fluid nature of gender discussions in Türkiye. Although Türkiye remains a traditional society, it has achieved significant legal advances aligned with international conventions on gender equality. Consequently, political discourse on gender in Türkiye is more diverse, with secular ideas coexisting alongside traditional Islamic values. Gender issues in Türkiye continue to be shaped by ideological debates surrounding Islam, modernization, and Westernization (Güneş-Ayata & Doğan, 2017, p. 616).

Both Russian (10%) and Turkish men (7%) tended to engage in thoughtful debates about the advertisement's content, suggesting a degree of willingness to consider feminist messaging rather than outright rejection. This reflects a nuanced interplay between modernity and traditionalism in both countries.

4. Ethical concerns

Criticisms of femvertising as a commercialization of feminism reflect broader global concerns, as audiences in various contexts may perceive femvertising as insincere if it appears to leverage feminist themes solely for profit (Lima & Casais, 2021, p. 614). This concern was particularly evident among Russian and Turkish male consumers, who often questioned Nike's motives, expressing skepticism about the authenticity of the brand's intentions.

Some Russian men criticized the advertisement for excluding men from the campaign, suggesting that this exclusion reinforces a gender divide. In contrast, Turkish women emphasized the importance of including women of diverse body types, religions and backgrounds in the advertisement to promote diversity and prevent discrimination.

Diversity is one of the key dimensions of authentic femvertising (Hainneville et al., 2023, p. 934). Including both genders and various social groups can enhance authenticity of the advertisement and address concerns about diversity in femvertising. Additionally, the inclusion of men in femvertising campaigns is essential to demonstrate that products may appeal to both genders. This diversity can also be enhanced by depicting the constraints imposed by gender stereotypes on both men and women (Lima & Casais, 2021, p. 617).

In Türkiye, one extended comment – exceeding 5,000 characters – provides a critique of the advertisement's content, stating, "Nike released an advertisement titled 'Know Us Like This'... The ad communicates various messages aimed at young girls... It begins with a young girl stepping away from a family photo to start boxing and concludes with another girl stepping on and leaving the house... The ad seems to belittle activities traditionally enjoyed by women... It conveys messages like: leave your family, do boxing instead, avoid cooking, lift weights instead of wearing gold jewelry, win medals rather than adorning yourself..." This comment reflects a perception that the advertisement promotes Westernized values that may conflict with local traditions.

Respect is a fundamental aspect of authentic femvertising (Hainneville et al., 2023, p. 934). By considering and respecting the cultural values of the country where the advertisement will be aired (Albers-Miller & Straughan, 2000, p. 356), advertisers can mitigate negative reactions, enhance the advertisement's authenticity, and effectively challenge existing gender stereotypes. However, femvertising campaigns that focus solely on individual achievements risk creating new stereotypes. Women should have the freedom to choose their own paths, whether prioritizing family, pursuing a career, or balancing both. By depicting a broader range of roles –including family, career, friendships, and social life – femvertising can help each woman feel represented. This inclusive approach not only grants women greater freedom of choice but also helps prevent the formation of new stereotypes and reduce potential resistance among men in more traditional societies.

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the complex dynamics shaping consumer attitudes toward femvertising in culturally distinct contexts such as Russia and Türkiye. The findings underscore the significant role of gender, cultural norms, and political climates in influencing how audiences respond to advertisements promoting women's empowerment.

Russian and Turkish women overwhelmingly perceived Nike's femvertising campaigns as motivational and empowering. The advertisements were particularly effective in fostering a sense of self-confidence and challenging traditional gender stereotypes. In Russia, women highlighted the professional quality of the advertisement and its ability to inspire. Similarly, Turkish women expressed admiration for the campaign's inclusivity and its resonance with their aspirations. These responses affirm the growing acceptance of femvertising as a powerful tool for promoting gender equality and empowering women across different cultural landscapes.

In contrast, male audiences demonstrated more polarized reactions. Russian men were notably critical, often perceiving the campaign as an imposition of Western feminist values that clashed with their traditional norms. This resistance reflects broader socio-political shifts in Russia, where traditional values have gained prominence in recent years. Turkish men, while less resistant, still expressed cautious engagement, often debating the advertisement's content and questioning its authenticity. However, their responses indicated a greater openness to feminist messaging compared to Russian men.

These findings emphasize the critical need for advertisers to balance global feminist ideals with local cultural sensitivities. Authenticity emerged as a central theme; audiences in both countries were quick to criticize perceived insincerity or the commercialization of feminism. For femvertising to succeed, campaigns must move beyond superficial messaging and demonstrate genuine commitment to diversity

and inclusivity. This includes representing a broader spectrum of women and integrating male perspectives to foster a more comprehensive and relatable narrative.

While the findings of this study offer valuable insights, several limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, this study focuses solely on main comments on YouTube, excluding subcomments. Future research could address this limitation by expanding the sample to include both comments and subcomments, thereby providing a more comprehensive view of the discourse.

Secondly, certain demographic characteristics of YouTube users –such as age, education, marital status, income level, and employment sector – are unknown, which may significantly affect the research results. Thirdly, the analysis in this paper examines only one femvertising campaign from each country. Future studies could broaden the scope by analyzing additional femvertising campaigns within these countries to enhance the generalizability of findings.

Moreover, a comparative cross-national study could explore consumer attitudes towards femvertising across a more diverse range of countries, including certain Arab and African nations, Asian countries (e.g., China, Japan), as well as Australia, India, and members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (e.g., Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Belarus). This study specifically examines consumer reactions to femvertising within the athletic gear category. Future research could explore whether attitudes towards femvertising vary across different product categories, providing valuable insights into the contextual nuances of femvertising effectiveness.

Finally, future studies could investigate consumer attitudes towards femvertising campaigns through the lens of Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory. For instance, research could examine how consumer reactions to female empowerment advertising differ in masculine vs. feminine and individualistic vs. collectivist societies, offering a deeper understanding of cultural factors influencing femvertising reception.

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