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Generation Y's attitude towards femvertising in cosmetics: women empowerment or purplewashing?

A Mono-Method Qualitative Study

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, femvertising has become a new issue of interest for companies, specifically in areas targeting women. Indeed, some companies in the cosmetics industry, such as Dove - a pioneer in the field - have been addressing the representation of women in advertising by tackling issues of equality, inclusiveness, and self-acceptance. Defined as female empowerment advertising, femvertising remains an issue that has been little studied in the literature. While some studies conclude that such a strategy is effective on the corporate side, we want to study this issue from a consumer perspective. Since this new marketing strategy is part of the 4th wave of feminism – which stands out from the other waves with a strong online orientation – the prism of social media constitutes the field of study of this thesis, and more specifically Instagram, a social network where the image concern rules. Generation Y, considered as digital natives, being particularly present on these social networks and relatively aware of global issues, we thus focus our research on these people aged between 21 and 41 years old.

In order to shed light on this recent topic, we aim to investigate the attitude of Generation Y toward femvertising in the cosmetics industry. Through this thesis, we try to develop a deeper understanding of if and how the feminist stance of cosmetic brands in their online marketing affects the behaviour of consumers from Generation Y. Besides, this study intends to investigate if, among millennials, there are differences in perception and attitudes towards femvertising according to the cause commitment and activist knowledge of consumers. For this purpose, we developed three research questions that allowed us to study this attitude from exposure to this specific type of advertising, to catch millennials' perception and the way this type of ad affects them, up to their purchase intention. To gather the necessary insights for this research project, a qualitative study through semi-structured interviews among twelve millennials sensitive to cosmetics and/or the feminist movement were conducted, supported by five selected cases of femvertising displayed by cosmetics brands on social media.

The findings of this study revealed three key insights regarding Generation Y attitudes towards femvertising. First, these new representations are perceived rather positively among millennials since it breaks codes, stereotypes, and offers more inclusive representations as requested by these consumers. Secondly, Generation Y consumers being rather committed to social causes, they raise their skepticism are rather cautious about the honesty of this approach, or even react unfavorably to femvertising. Despite this, this marketing strategy using feminist speech and values that are dear to millennials make them hold a positive purchase intention towards cosmetic brands using these claims. This has obvious practical implications for brands to consider. More generally, this bridged some of the identified gaps in the literature and raise important questions for societal and ethical considerations.

Keywords: Femvertising; social brand activism; purplewashing; cosmetics industry; Generation Y; social media; Instagram.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Subject Choice.....	1
1.2. Problem Background.....	2
1.3. Theoretical Background & Research Gaps.....	3
1.4. Research Questions.....	4
1.5. Purpose.....	5
1.6. Delimitations.....	5
2. METHODOLOGY.....	6
2.1. Ontology.....	6
2.2. Epistemology.....	7
2.3. Research Approach.....	8
2.4. Research Strategy & Design.....	9
2.5. Preconceptions.....	10
2.6. Literature Search.....	11
2.7. Choice Of Theories & Concepts.....	12
3. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	14
3.1. Femvertising & Women Empowerment.....	14
3.2. Generation Y Behavior.....	20
3.3. Social Media Marketing.....	25
4. PRACTICAL METHOD.....	29
4.1. Data Collection Method.....	29
4.2. Qualitative Data Collection & Interview Guide.....	29
4.3. Ethical Considerations.....	33
5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS.....	35
5.1. Millennials & Cosmetics.....	35
5.2. Generation Y Consumer Behavior.....	37
5.3. Femvertising & Women Empowerment.....	40

5.4. Purplewashing.....	44
6. DISCUSSION.....	47
6.1. Femvertising & Women Empowerment: a positive perception of these new representations	47
6.2. A committed Generation Y & qualified positive attitude.....	48
6.3. Social Media Marketing & purchase intention	50
6.4. Revised Conceptual Model	51
7. CONCLUSIONS.....	53
7.1. General Conclusions.....	53
7.2. Research Implications.....	54
7.3. Limitations & Suggestions For Further Research.....	56
8. QUALITATIVE QUALITY/TRUTH CRITERIA.....	57
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	59
APPENDIX.....	64
Appendix 1 - Interview Guide	64
Appendix 2 - Femvertising cases used	66
LIST OF TABLES	
Table 1 - Respondents and interview details	32
Table 2 - Results from the thematic analysis	33
LIST OF FIGURES	
Figure 1 – Attitude toward the femvertising, <i>a revised model of attitude toward the ad model of MacKenzie et al. (1986) applied to femvertising</i>	28
Figure 2 – Revised conceptual model regarding attitude toward femvertising	51

1. INTRODUCTION

This section aims to introduce our research topic as well as the issues raised when discussing femvertising to provide the reader with an understanding of its raising importance in society and business. Initially, our interest and the choice of this topic are explained. Followed by a discussion of the problem background, the existing literature on the subject, and the research gaps that can be identified. Finally, our research questions are presented as well as the purpose of this thesis.

1.1. SUBJECT CHOICE

As two exchange students studying Business Administration at Umeå University, we were both concerned by the issues of sustainable development and wanted to deal with it in our thesis. Both aware of these issues during our academic studies, with courses on sustainable finance, eco-design, or responsible marketing, we are also personally concerned with this subject. Respectively specialized in finance and marketing, we are both interested in the cosmetics industry: on one hand by the women's image evolution at stake, on the other hand by its changes, openness, and involvement for self-acceptance. Quite early, we agreed on the idea of studying the sustainability issues in this field.

After investigating the sustainability issue in cosmetics, it can be observed that it had been much more addressed from an environmental perspective than a social or economic one: a simple search on academic databases shows this. Nevertheless, a complete sustainable commitment involves all three elements (Robertson, 2017, p. 3). While previous studies have focused on the issue of greenwashing or green marketing in the cosmetics industry, we thought it would be more novel and challenging to study the issues related to the social aspect in this industry. While the cosmetics industry has an important impact on the representation of women in society by promoting standards and setting beauty trends, it also participates in gender stereotypes. If these representations instrumentalize the representation of women, they participate more globally in a gendered vision of society that must respond to standards, just like men representations under virility injunction (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 797; Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1243; Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015, p. 96). Thus, focusing on the social pillar of sustainability rather than the environmental pillar appeared to be an obvious choice for us.

In parallel to beauty brands' commitments to the environment, some have recently positioned themselves on the social level by taking a stand for women's empowerment (Millard, 2009, p. 146; Drake, 2017, p. 593). While this strategy seems to be profitable and effective for companies using it (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Åkestam et al., 2017; Champlin et al., 2019; Drake, 2017; Feng et al., 2019), we are interested in observing and studying the consumers' side perception of this type of advertisement, henceforth ads, on new diffusion channels, namely online. Generation Y has even been nicknamed *digital natives*, being particularly active online (Prensky, 2001). This Generation, which we will also refer to as Gen Y or millennials, is aware of social causes as much as environmental or even political ones (Oumlil & Balloun, 2019, p. 18; Shetty et al., 2019, p. 171; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598). Thus, this body seemed particularly interesting for our focus.

1.2. PROBLEM BACKGROUND

Following the #MeToo movement, the hashtags #BalanceTonPorc i.e., #SquealOnYourPig has triggered a similar reaction in France and has sparked interest in feminism through various topics such as consent with #JaiPasDitOui i.e., #IDidn'tSayYes or body positivism with #OnVeutDuVrai i.e., #WeWantRealBodies" (Le Mauff, 2020). With these online campaigns, the women's liberation movement has experienced a new phase (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 5). Defined as the power of women to take control and responsibilities for their lives and choices, this movement builds on previous social advances achieved in earlier struggles (Drake, 2017, p. 594). In this same dynamic, women claim the control of their identity and their image since the representation of women is still strongly related to gender stereotypes (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1243. Drake, 2017, p. 593; Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015, p. 83). Unrealistic beauty standards and appearance injunctions are now being challenged. The cosmetics industry is directly concerned as its target is mainly female. Having a great responsibility in the representation of women on the media scene and in their everyday life, some cosmetics brands are taking part in the movement and are redefining the traditional beauty codes (Drake, 2017, p. 594; Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 3). In 2004, Dove has been a pioneer with its "Real Beauty" campaign. This new marketing strategy continued in 2013 on social networks, on YouTube, with the launch of the sketches video that became viral (Millard, 2009, p. 146; Drake, 2017, p. 593).

By embracing this fourth feminist wave - which stands out from the other waves with a strong online orientation -, these brands have understood the importance of the current cause but have also seized an opportunity of growing interest in the market (Drake, 2017, p. 593; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 6). Generation Y is particularly active on online platforms, as experienced and knowledgeable users: they take a stand in this women empowerment movement and represent key targets for brands positioned on this segment (Champlin et al., 2019, pp. 1241-1243; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 7). Brands that include feminist discourse in their marketing strategy - in an effort to always target consumers, to follow trends and societal changes - are promoting "advertisements that celebrate female empowerment", also defined as *femvertising* (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1256). While some brands claim to be part of the women's empowerment movement, this approach remains very controversial and can even be qualified as *purplewashing* (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 118; Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 3; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 2) i.e., brands that are only superficially committed for profit, echoing the greenwashing with the color purple i.e., flagship color of feminism. Since millennials are "more supportive of social causes than Generation Xs and Boomers, [they are] more responsive to brand activism in marketing" (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p.7). Thus, these young people, with their rising purchasing power and social commitment, can potentially constitute a body of demanding consumers in the face of the femvertising efforts of some companies (Champlin et al., 2019, pp. 1241-1243).

All our interest is therefore to study the perception and attitude of millennials towards cosmetic brands, which on social networks femvertised their products, and to see if these consumers of Generation Y consider this type of advertising as contributing to women empowerment or undermining the cause. It is indeed critical for a brand to understand to what extent this commitment can raise doubts and induce scepticism among its consumers about the sincerity of its marketing (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 130; Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1241; Feng et al., 2019, p. 295).

1.3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND & RESEARCH GAPS

The acceptance of femvertising in the media landscape has been explained by Varghese & Kumar (2020) as the result of significant activism for better representation of women at both the societal and corporate levels. Criticism of corporate and commodity feminism increased awareness of the problem and raised more regulation of representation issues. While marketing for women's empowerment is a part of brand strategies today, there has been very little research done from a marketing perspective as Drake (2017) points out.

Femvertising and the purplewashing associated with it - namely its negative counterpart for brands that are falsely committed to feminism - are terms that point out the use, positively or negatively, of feminist speech by firms in their marketing and communication strategies (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 795; Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1256; Drake, 2017, p. 594). As far as sustainability washing is concerned, greenwashing has been much more studied (Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 3). Regarding the cosmetics industry, a simple search in academic databases leads to the same conclusion. Since this issue has been raised quite recently, the literature on femvertising is still at its early stage of research, especially on the purplewashing side. SheKnows Media was the first to resort to femvertising in 2014 to point out the increase of ads using gender equality issues in their marketing strategies (Ciambrello-Powell, 2014; SheKnows Media, n.d.). As the contraction of *feminism* and *advertising*, femvertising refers to women empowerment support through brands' marketing strategy (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019, p. 24; Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 795; Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1256). With femvertising, brands are looking to spread a message about women's strongness status in society and aim to decrease gender equality stereotypes. Since femvertising was coined, the development of several femvertising awards arose to promote women empowerment; but simultaneously critics increased concerning purplewashing (Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 3).

Indeed, as a marketing strategy reflecting a company's social commitment, femvertising is a matter of debate and often blamed for purplewashing. Purplewashing is a common term - which definition can be easily found by searching on Google - that is not academically defined. To the best of our knowledge, no studies are focusing on the term as such, but rather studies that explain the downside of femvertising. This term is however useful to denounce the use of feminism by brands who do not internally work in favour of gender equality and are using women's image to sell more. The color purple usually represents women and feminism - in reference to *The Color Purple* written by Alice Walker in 1982 - whereas the suffix washing denounces the abuse of women image uses (Sedehi et al., 2014, p. 1328). Defined by Sterbenk et al. (2021, p. 11), a term that comes closest to this idea of purplewashing is *fempower-washing*. By this term, they describe the CSR-washing looking from a social prism, and specifically gender equality. Fempower-washing denounces firms that have received femvertising awards or advocate women empowerment in their marketing advertisements but internally do not work in favour of gender equality and give to consumers a false brand image (Feng et al., 2019, p. 295; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 2). This issue having been recently reviewed, the theoretical development remains very limited in this field, and more particularly with regard to the cosmetics industry.

According to company-centric studies, this marketing strategy seems to add value to the business. Regarding the effectiveness of femvertising from a marketing perspective, Drake (2017) found that femvertising has a positive impact on "ad and brand opinions, purchase intentions, and emotional connection to brands". For Champlin et al. (2019), a minimum knowledge of social

issues is essential for a brand that engages on certain social issues to be effective with consumers. When this brand activism appears to be fake, the integrity of the company can be questioned and this can have a strong impact on its reputation and reduce consumers' purchase intentions (Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 11). Well-driven brand activism allows companies to bond with their customers, to meet their expectations, and to engage on common issues. Defined by Kotler & Sarkar (2017) as the commitment of a company to solve societal problems, brand activism appears according to them as the future of marketing. Indeed, it allows companies on the one hand to have a differentiated positioning and on the other hand to attract millennials. With this strategy that plays on personal and emotional levers, millennials feel more connected to companies (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1241; Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p.7). However, of the little literature that has focused on the consumer, it has been done globally among consumers on different products: few studies aim at studying Generation Y. Besides, the consumer-centered approach has a more critical look at the issue of femvertising. Thus, in Abitbol & Sternadori's (2016) research, the young women and men interviewed seem to be quite critical of the different companies presented and question the sincerity of the approach. For Feng et al. (2019), the same scepticism about this kind of advertisement is questioned. While in the Åkestam et al. study (2017), the female sample shows a positive attitude towards the engaged brands. Thus, consumer perception and attitude towards purple marketing remain vague.

This is why it is interesting for our study to focus on Generation Y, as the first high-tech generation, and being relatively sensitive to cause-related marketing (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 304; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 7). Indeed, according to Asselin (2021), Generation Y is the most represented on Instagram with 33,8% of users. This generation is thereby the main target when brands release marketing contents on the platform. Especially since, having mostly reached adulthood as they are born approximately between the 1980s and the end of 1990s, depending on the delimitations: these people with growing purchasing power are a key target for online brand marketing (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 306; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598). Moreover, by studying this issue through the prism of social networks, we hope to bring new insights on the subject that has been mainly treated through traditional advertising tools such as print advertisement (Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015) or television (Drake, 2017). Especially when having a closer look at the most brands followed on Instagram in France, we find big beauty names such as Chanel, Dior, Sephora or L'Oréal who are ranking at the top (Asselin, 2021). Thus, the cosmetics industry appears to be particularly relevant to study in terms of social networks.

1.4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The gaps in the current literature identified have led to the raising of three research questions that will allow us to have a more consumer-centric approach and provide new insights into the social engagement of cosmetic brands. Through this research project, we are interested in understanding the perception and attitude of millennials consumers towards cosmetic brands that take into account feminist claims within their marketing strategies. We want to study the extent to which such advertising may or may not influence their attitudes and thus their decision-making process.

Thus, we propose to investigate:

- **How Generation Y perceives and is affected by femvertising used by cosmetic brands on Instagram?**
- **Do consumers' knowledge and commitment to the feminist cause affect their attitudes?**
- **How does femvertising influence Generation Y's decision-making process?**

1.5. PURPOSE

The primary purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of if and how the feminist stance of cosmetic brands in their online marketing affects the behaviour of consumers from Generation Y. Besides, this study intends to investigate if, among millennials, there are differences in perception and attitudes towards femvertising according to the cause commitment and activist knowledge of consumers. We aim to comprehensively capture the impact of femvertising in cosmetics on Generation Y by focusing our study on Instagram cases.

1.6. DELIMITATIONS

For this research we decided to consciously set limits so that our research work could be done in the time available, with the resources at our disposal, and so that the data would remain comparable. First, the interviewees will only be French aged between 21 and 41 years old. We also decided to only base the examples used for our analysis on one social media: Instagram. The sample studied is interested in cosmetics and interviewees are users of social media - at least Instagram. We choose to analyse a reduced scope of cosmetics brands that will be used as examples through the research process.

2. METHODOLOGY

In this section, we will focus on the philosophical perspective of our research and first express our ontological and epistemological stances. Then, we will clarify the research approach and research design to explain how the research has been conducted. Finally, we will present the theories and concepts selected during our literature search to construct a consistent literature review that supports our subject.

2.1. ONTOLOGY

Ontology relates to the nature of reality, and more particularly how this reality is constructed and what it consists of (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). Defined by Saunders et al. (2009, p. 597) as a “branch of philosophy that studies the nature of reality or being”, ontology - which epistemology means in Greek ‘being’ from *ont-* and ‘theory’ from *-logos*, i.e., deals with the way we theorize the nature of the reality surrounding us (Delanty & Strydom, 2003, p. 6). That being stated, two approaches to the nature of reality derive from ontology.

On the one hand, some consider an external reality independent of the subject included in this reality: the object studied has an "*objective* reality independent of our role as an observer" (Bell et al., 2019, p. 26). Meaning in other words that social phenomena are completely independent from individuals' observations. As a result, the role of the researcher is passive. This is the ontological objectivist position (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). On the other hand, subjectivism considers that the social phenomena appear only because someone is concerned with it: the resolver feels and perceives it (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 110). Thus, it is necessary to “explore the subjective meanings motivating the actions of social actors for the researcher to be able to understand these actions” (Saunders et al., 2009, p.111). Bell et al. (2019, p. 26) even get deeper in their definition by emphasizing whether social entities, art and nature should be analysed like objective entities or if they should be seen as constructed by different actors' perceptions and actions. Raadschelders (2011, p. 920) explains that understanding the structure of ontology can result in implications on the scope of knowledge i.e., epistemology, the methodology to adopt to achieve this knowledge, and also the practices to follow i.e., methods.

In social sciences, Bell et al. (2019, pp. 26-27) go further by introducing the constructionist approach. Knowledge is considered here as the result of the interaction between the social phenomenon considered and the researcher who considers it. These interactions are constantly changing, so the researcher presents a specific version of the social reality, which is not necessarily definitive: knowledge is constantly evolving. Hence, the image of reality is the product of the human mind in interaction with this reality and not the reality itself: phenomena tend to be socially constructed. Phenomena become real thanks to human actions and understandings (Bell et al., 2019, p. 27).

For our research purpose, we choose to adopt a constructionist position as our ontological stance. Our research question embraces this stance as we explicitly state that we try to get a deeper understanding of Generation Y behaviour toward cosmetic brands' femvertising and marketing strategies on social media. To this end, we propose to analyse the perceptions and attitudes of consumers towards these advertising with regard to their knowledge on the subject. Following this

ontological perspective, this can change from one individual to the other as the content analysed can impact them differently regarding their personal experience, social environment, values, and beliefs. We also consider the interviewees' opinions on the subject of femvertising to be socially constructed. Since interpretation will be necessary to investigate the perceptions and attitudes that social actors have towards the marketing actions of cosmetics brands, it is more relevant to follow a subjective constructivist perspective (Saunders, 2009, p. 110). As the femvertised content is also used by cosmetic brands to meet consumer needs and respond to a social change, it is consequently influenced by social actors (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1241; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p.7). This is to say that if there were no social issues and mindset shifts there would not be a phenomenon to study as marketing strategies follow social trends to increase their social impact. Besides, social media used as a new marketing and communication channel has a strong impact on the generation studied (Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598): it leads to different user behaviours, which is also another point that led us to follow a constructionist prism. Finally, as researchers who are part of this Generation Y and who interact with this issue of femvertising promoted by cosmetic brands on social networks, the interpretivist paradigm is more suitable for this thesis. Since the aim of this research is not to create new theories but rather to redefine those already established, this paradigm fits the research project.

2.2. EPISTEMOLOGY

The research philosophy of this thesis is further determined by our epistemological orientation, which is related to the knowledge i.e., the posture that the researcher adopts towards knowledge, what he can know and what is acceptable as knowledge (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 129). From the Greek etymology, episteme means 'knowledge' and logos means 'theory': epistemology can be defined as the theory of knowledge (Delanty & Strydom, 2003). Thus, it is about how things are known and what constitutes a valid knowledge. From the ontologically admitted reality, the epistemological issue raised here is whether the social reality under study can or not be studied according to the same principles, methods, and ethics as the natural sciences (Bell et al., 2019, p. 30; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 129). In epistemology philosophy, there are three main epistemology positions, namely interpretivism, realism, and positivism which help to determine how to conduct the research (Bell et al., 2019, pp. 29-30; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 113).

The literature agrees to say that positivism belongs to an epistemological stance where natural sciences methods can be applied to study social realities (Bell et al., 2019, p. 30). Through positivism, it is possible to set hypotheses about observable and measurable phenomena and test them in order to generalize the results obtained. With the support of natural sciences techniques, researchers by conducting a deductive process can develop theories in a value-free way (Bell et al., 2019, p. 30; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 114). To avoid any biases, positivists can base their research on pre-existing theories and models to develop their hypotheses and conduct quantitative studies. Close to positivism, realism refers to another philosophical scope which also states that natural sciences methods can be useful and suggests that researchers should focus on external realities. According to realism, reality, independent of the human mind, can be defined through individuals' senses. This means that objective reality can have different interpretations among individuals (Bell et al., 2019, p. 31; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 109; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 114).

In contrast to this stand the interpretivist approach which supports that social reality is too complex to be bound with general laws responding to scientific analysis and methods (Bell et al., 2019, p. 30). Bell et al (2019, p. 31) are clear about the fact that interpretivism considers that social actors are different with multiple social backgrounds. Therefore, the researcher's empathy with these differences is essential in order to dig and understand the subjective meanings of individuals' actions and way of thinking (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 116). According to this dimension, knowledge can come from subjective elements such as feelings, perceptions and interpretations of behaviours (Saunders et al., 2009, p.115). Thus, qualitative studies are used to explore and gain knowledge about the perceptions and attitudes of the social actors under study. Based on the previous explanations, our research implies an interactive and interpretative analysis of the subject.

As we are investigating the individuals' perception and attitudes towards cosmetics femvertising based on their different knowledge backgrounds, this constitutes a complex knowledge that cannot be theorized according to scientific methods as it is too subjective. Based on the previous explanation our research implies an interactive and interpretative analysis of the subject. Therefore, our research is aiming for interpretivism by using qualitative methods as we cannot quantify or numerically measure the feelings, perceptions, intentions, or behaviours of individuals. This stance allows us to better understand these social actors, by adopting their perspective. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 116) point out that this approach is particularly appropriate for research focusing on consumer behaviour or marketing since they are the result of aggregates of behaviour in a particular context. To this end, we engaged with our research objects through semi-structured interviews in order to gain deep insights regarding the subject under study. Each perception and attitude should be seen as subjective as the respondent answer is shaped differently according to their knowledge and background. Through our research, we will try to describe, translate, and analyse at best the data collected with the meaning that is understated rather than focus on frequencies of a phenomena occurrence. The main goal of the research will be through qualitative data collection to interpret it and respond to our research questions by taking into account the importance of subjectivity and the complexity to generate common theories. Following our ontological stance, interpretivism allows us to consider a method that consider individual differences.

2.3. RESEARCH APPROACH

When writing, researchers can adopt a certain research approach that determines the relation between theories and the way the research is conducted i.e., the data collection and analysis of it. The following approaches can be used, namely: deduction, abduction and induction (Bell et al., 2019, pp. 20-24; Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 124-126). First, the deduction approach draws a very logical and linear relationship between research and theory. By using existing knowledge and theories, researchers can construct and empirically test hypotheses. The results obtained are used to confirm or refute the theories mobilized. The aim is to produce specific conclusions from general premises (Bell et al., 2019, p. 21; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 124). Given that this approach is very statistical, uses wide samples and that we do not have the ambition to generalize the results, we do not adopt this approach.

In opposition to the deductive approach, Bell et al. (2019, p. 23) explain that following an inductive approach aims to first gather primary and secondary data about the phenomenon you decide to study and then from this generate theory. This approach is therefore more related to the interpretation and a global understanding of the studied phenomenon. The main objective of an inductive approach is to establish a general conclusion from a limited number of observations of social actors and phenomena. Indeed, this is more about getting a deeper and better understanding of a topic than an intention to generalize (Bell et al., 2019, p. 23; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126).

Finally, abduction consists of switching between inductive and deductive approaches. This approach proposes to overcome the limitations of the other two. Based on a pragmatic perspective, this approach combines deductive and inductive approaches at different points in the research work. By relying on these two approaches and the back and forth between them, abduction helps to create a theory based on observing social actors (Bell et al., 2019, p. 24).

After analysing all three approaches for our work, we choose to follow an inductive approach within the theory that would follow data (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126). As stated by Bell et al. (2019, p. 23), this approach focuses on observations and exploration of individuals' reactions to a phenomenon. Here the phenomenon under study is cosmetic brand femvertising's impacts on a selected group of people: Generation Y. Less rigid than deductive approach, induction is more prone to alternative explanations. This approach seems to be more suitable to our research project. Indeed, through the conduct of semi-structured interviews, we will be able to gather data that we will then methodologically analyse concerning our secondary data to bring out relationships and patterns that femvertising content impact has on Generation Y Instagram users. This coding step is crucial as it is the main part to generate valid results and draw generalizations from the findings. Moreover, according to this approach, the findings are context-based and are dependent on the perceptions of social actors on the studied phenomenon. Therefore, it is more appropriate to focus on a small sample of subjects when following induction than a wide one as in the deductive approach. Often related to interpretivism and qualitative studies, this approach is an efficient way to analyse the data collected for our research purpose in terms of data observation and inference (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 126). Indeed, this allows us to capture different views of the studied phenomenon.

2.4. RESEARCH STRATEGY & DESIGN

After considering the research philosophies and research approaches that underlie our research, it is important to decide on which research design we stand for (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 136). Saunders et al. (2009, pp. 136-137) explain that research design refers to plans and procedures you will follow during the research process i.e., research strategies, research choices and time horizons, which turn “the research question into a research project”. It is about taking into consideration all decisions to make from assumptions to planning data collection methods and analysis (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108). When it comes to the research methods, there are two main approaches associated with different research designs: the quantitative, as numeric data-based research and the qualitative methods, as non-numeric data-based (Bell et al., 2019, p. 35). All upstream work done regarding the ontological, epistemological, and designing stances chosen

need to be coherent with the choices made for the thesis by the researchers (Bell et al., 2019, p. 35).

When writing under a quantitative method, the purpose is to quantify the results of the research in order to test theories constructed on an objective reality (Bell et al., 2019, p. 35). With such research, the validity and reliability of the findings, as well as their cause' investigation by the researcher, are critical (Bell et al., 2019, p. 164). Thus, the main research instruments used to gather quantitative data appear to be questionnaires, structured interviews or structured observations to categorize the elements observed (Bell et al., 2019, p. 166). Following Bell et al.'s (2019, p. 165) statement, quantitative methods follow a different process than qualitative one: elaborate a theory, generate hypotheses, select a research design and sample, gather data, process them, analyse them through statistical tools, develop findings and write conclusions about hypothesis set before.

While conducting qualitative research, the main objective is to understand and explore the underlying motives of a phenomenon (Bell et al., 2019, p. 356). With a qualitative method, the main data collection is done through conducting in-depth and semi-structured interviews which are more open and thereby enable complete exploration of the phenomenon under study (Bell et al, 2019, p. 11; p. 358). Thus, this researcher's involvement allows a better understanding of the subject from the perspective of social actors. Bell et al. (2019, p. 358) point out the main stages when conducting qualitative research: raise general questions, select relevant subjects and sites, collect data, interpret data, build a conceptual and theoretical work through the specification of the research question on the one hand and collection of further data on the other hand and finally write about findings and conclusion.

Looking at the stances we choose upstream - following a constructionist position as our ontological perspective, an interpretivist stance from the epistemological prism and an inductive approach -, we attend to use a qualitative method to fit best to our research subject. Indeed, our research aims to investigate millennials' perceptions and attitudes toward femvertising set up by cosmetics brands on Instagram. We strongly believe that by creating semi-structured interviews and conducting them with Generation Y actors, we can get new insight into the phenomena, as the data collected are conversations that freely reflect the position of individuals on the topic studied. This approach will bring more value to our work as we conduct only interviewees with targeted people rather than using a questionnaire that might not get a large picture and a deeper understanding of social mechanisms at work.

2.5. PRECONCEPTIONS

According to Maxwell (2008, p. 243), researchers' preconceptions refer to what the researchers originally think about the topic they are investigating. It is important before starting to analyse data to know and list preconceptions to tackle bias that could interfere with our research work. Maxwell (2008, p. 243) correlates preconceptions to theories and values shared by researchers but also relates preconceptions to their personal experiences, which have a major impact on the research question phrasing but also the angle chosen to study a specific phenomenon.

This is why we will point out preconceptions that crossed our reflection regarding the topic chosen, as two women studying business administration at Umeå University.

Our primary preconceptions derived from our previous studies and our Business Administration studies at Umeå School of Business, Economics and Statistics. We both followed marketing and communication courses where we learnt theories, concepts and models that are useful to create a background in our research. Thus, we already have knowledge about consumer behaviour toward marketing strategies that is important to consider because it can influence the way we approach our research topic and also interfere with the research process.

While our secondary preconceptions derive from our current interest into the topic of femvertising. As outlined within the choice of the thesis' subject, as two women, entering a workplace where women still struggle to find their place in society, it raises a lot of questions about beauty ideals but also current women's place in society that we are concerned with. We must be careful to not take too personally our research and be aware of the subjective position we have toward this subject. We choose the subject according to our preconceptions as we want to investigate the degree of femvertising strength in the cosmetics industry for millennials. Therefore, we are also aware that as part of the study population, we might be influenced by our own experience. For instance, we decided to focus our study on Instagram as the main social network used by millennials, but we also are daily users of this social media. As both belong to the target group sample age, we will be careful in the analysis of our interviews. As interpretivist, we know that this subjective posture as a researcher is part of the study: this may allow us to better integrate the perspective of the social actors studied and to show some empathy to them. We are aware of this and take into account this subjective dimension in our work.

2.6. LITERATURE SEARCH

Prior literature on a subject indicates how the subject has already been addressed and provides keys to suggest further research, fill gaps in the literature, define a subject of study, make connections between fields, and position the study in the research field (Bell et al., 2019, p. 98). The search for this literature must be organized upstream of the literature review: it is important to identify and understand what criteria will be needed for the research and how to access, retrieve, and evaluate the literature. However, to avoid getting lost in the research process, Saunders et al. (2009, p. 93) suggest setting parameters for analysing the relevance or irrelevance of sources to be able to critically review the literature. We have therefore tried to get an overview of our subject with different perspectives, as complete and accurate as possible in order to provide a study with a solid framework.

To have an effective search strategy, it is necessary to know where to search. As Bell et al. (2019, p. 98) explain, online databases provide a large number of valuable references. They suggest using ABI/INFORM, EBSCO, or SSCI to search for relevant, useful, and interesting documents. Bell et al. (2019, p. 98), as well as Saunders et al. (2009, p. 92), also recommend using the resources provided by our university library. Being cautious in collecting our sources, we focused on Google Scholar and the EBSCO database as well as access to online journals provided by the University of Umeå. Regarding the methodology parts, we refer more to scientific books found at Umeå

University Library. As far as possible we have tried to collect peer-reviewed and accurate articles for our theories and concepts. As our topic is quite novel, we tried to find recent and recognized articles as Saunders et al. (2009, p. 91) emphasize the importance of having "up-to-date literature".

To focus our research, we also defined keywords and search terms. As Bell et al. (2019, p. 101) explain, the use of keywords is a way to find relevant references in search engines. We began searching for articles and documents using a series of keywords such as: "femvertising", "brand activism", "social brand activism", "purplewashing", "feminism washing" then "social media marketing", "online cause marketing" but also "Generation Y", "millennials". With the search process, we expanded and refined our knowledge. The more we read, the more targeted our searches became. It became easier to find interesting articles with answers to our questions and needs. We developed a new way of looking for information: when we found an interesting article, we went straight to the bottom of it and located references that could bring new knowledge to our framework. Over time, we categorized articles and books by level of interest and topic to organize our thoughts and ideas.

2.7. CHOICE OF THEORIES & CONCEPTS

As we are following an inductive approach, the elaboration of a critical literature review allows us to assess what has been done on our topic (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 61). As the issue of femvertising is a relatively recent one in brand marketing strategy, the subject has been to the best of our knowledge very little explored in the literature. Nevertheless, the authors who have addressed the subject allow us to highlight the key concepts when it comes to studying femvertising. As Bell et al. (2019, pp. 90-91) suggested, our choice of theories and concepts focused on those elements relevant to our topic. To support the study of our research questions and the conclusions drawn from this study (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 61), we focused on works related to the phenomenon of femvertising, the influence strategy of social networks and the Generation Y consumers' behaviour.

First, as mentioned before, the subject of femvertising is becoming more and more preoccupying, which has aroused our interest and logically constitutes the starting point and the main concept of our study. The broader study of brand activism allows us to shed light on the motivations of companies and mechanisms at work in these new cause-orientated marketing strategies. We decided to rely on the brand activism concept because previous studies on the subject allow more to link it to femvertising than concepts of cause-related marketing or corporate social responsibility. Femvertising defined as "female empowerment advertising" (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 795) is discussed under its different aspects as it is relatively new and has been mainly studied through the prism of traditional marketing tools (Drake, 2017; Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015). These advertisements that support the women empowerment movement remain debated, which is worth clarifying. Thus, the study of purplewashing allows us to nuance and complete our approach to femvertising. The inclusion of these different aspects is key to a comprehensive view of this phenomenon.

Several stakeholders are involved in the stances taken by brands. Since some previous studies already shed light on the company's perspective, we decided to focus on the consumer's

perspective. As these positions are increasingly expressed online, we chose to focus on Generation Y consumers, who are known for their connectivity and for being more conscious consumers (Valentine & Powers, 2013). Moreover, most studies on consumer perspective did not focus on a particular generation. On the one hand, the study of the Generation Y consumers' behaviour allows us to have a clear overview of the consumption mechanisms at work within this generation and proves to be very useful for the analysis of consumers' perceptions and attitudes toward online advertising. We have limited our study to suitable concepts that can help us to understand the elements influencing their consumer behaviour such as purchasing power, buying process, purchasing patterns but also their lifestyle, values, and cause commitment. On the other hand, as we chose to study femvertising of cosmetic brands through social media, the influence strategies at work on it are keys to study to see to what extent femvertising on these platforms could impact consumers. Finally, the concept of attitude - of which we follow the definition of MacKenzie & Lutz (1989), Ducoffe (1995) and Shimp (1981) - allows us to analyse this behaviour towards femvertising.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section are reviewed the previous literature on femvertising as a particular case of brand activism that is currently being debated; along with an introduction of the target consumers from Generation Y and their behaviour as well as a presentation of the concepts related to social networks as a new marketing tool and the strategies and effects at work on these platforms. Based on this framework, we develop the conceptual model under study in this thesis.

3.1. FEMVERTISING & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

3.1.1. Brand Activism

As its name suggests, brand activism is about how a company, through the marketing of its brand, takes a stand i.e., is *activist*, on social issues. Defined by Kotler & Sarkar (2017) as a business intention to engage in divisive social or political issues, this new strategy has emerged following major shifts in society. It is, on the one hand, due to a new demand from consumers accompanied on the other hand by changes in intercompany relations (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 345). First, in recent years, several authors agree that consumers expect brands to take a position on socio-political issues (Champlin et al., 2019; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020). There has been a shift in consumers being more conscious in their purchasing act and seeking for brands that allow them to meet their new consumption patterns. Indeed, these conscious consumers are more inclined toward brands that appear responsible since the way they consume defines who they are or could be (Åkestam et al., 2017, p.797; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 346). Their demand is essentially focused on more authentic and honest brands, following a bigger request for transparency (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1241). Besides, these issues also affect companies and their stakeholder relations due to new regulations and whose legitimacy may be questioned: thus, to remain competitive, companies engage in socio-political issues (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, pp. 345-346). The visible part of their commitment to consumers is their marketing and communication strategy.

Traditional marketing strategies are no longer appropriate for today's market. Brands must rethink their positioning to differentiate from the competition (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). Designed to influence how consumers perceive companies within a competitive market via price levers i.e., cost leadership and/or quality, via product features or usage i.e., differentiation (Hooley et al., 2008, pp. 43-46). As the next stage of marketing, brand activism appears as a differentiation strategy based on shared values (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1240; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p.7). To Kotler & Sarkar (2017), brands thus serve a "larger purpose than simple profit-seeking", by striving for progress. As brands struggle to differentiate themselves in saturated markets, Manfredi-Sánchez (2019, p. 346) suggests that today's differentiation levers are based on either (1) striking graphic elements or (2) cultural or personal values and beliefs. For Manfredi-Sánchez (2019, p. 356), this is a new communication strategy that makes sense to consumers as it relates to their more conscious lifestyles. Based on shared values between brands and consumers, it is easier to reach the targeted consumers.

Indeed, Champlin et al. (2019, p. 1241) point out that this differentiation strategy has a positive influence on the consumer's decision-making process, with a better attitude and reception towards the brand and its advertising messages. Shetty et al. (2019, p. 163) confirm that brand activism results in a positive attitude of consumers, both in terms of their loyalty and their association based

on shared values and principles. This special attachment thus results in a rise in purchase intention (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 165). However, according to Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020, p. 773), identification with a brand that is committed to moral issues is not always positive for the like-minded consumer: "the effect of self-brand similarity on consumer attitudes, intentions, and behaviour is likely to be asymmetric in the domain of moral judgments".

While the effects of such a strategy are generally positive on consumer behaviour, they are still debated since brand activism is quite novel. To Kotler & Sarkar (2017), it is a "natural evolution" of the Corporate Social Responsibility policy of companies i.e., CSR, that accompanies their transformation. Therefore, brand activism goes further than simple cause-related marketing i.e., CRM, or CSR initiatives: it appears to be more committed or spontaneous. Indeed, according to Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020, p. 773), if brand activism is subject to debate, it is because it positions itself on more sensitive, less generally accepted, potentially divisive subjects. Unlike CSR or CRM, consumers potentially react more to these positions because they are grounded in their values and struggles. Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 446) present brand activism as a purpose and values-driven initiative, unlike CSR or CRM which are marketing-driven. Another point of divergence also put forward is the fact that the subjects addressed are much more controversial (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448). The goal of such a stance is simple: "support a cause, raise awareness, change behaviour and encourage socio-political change, also seeks reputational and economic benefit via consumer appreciation of association with cause" (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 446).

Brand activism is therefore distinct from other engaged practices. With its characteristics, brand activism manifests itself through a company's marketing and advertising communication but must be aligned with its values and vision (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 165). According to Manfredi-Sánchez, (2019, pp. 348-349) brand activism is characterized by 4 elements: (1) conveyed values to connect emotionally with consumers, (2) a new, rather progressive, approach to societal issues, (3) a global audience, and (4) digital diffusion. Vredenburg et al, (2020, pp. 446-448), have developed a similar approach by defining an activist brand as (1) a "purpose and value-driven" brand, (2) that positions itself on divisive, (3) progressive, or convergent issues, (4) in which the brand participates by communicating in an intangible way and by engaging in the practice. Brand activism thus operates in various domains such as business, economic, environmental, political, legal, social (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017). The social dimension, on which our study focuses, is delineated by Kotler & Sarkar (2017) as anything that deals with societal and community issues such as equality e.g., gender, LGBT, race, or age. Companies that engage with the issue of gender stereotypes or the place of women in society are thus positioned on the issue of social activism.

3.1.2. Women Empowerment as a Social Issue

For centuries, Western countries have lived under a strong patriarchal system, which has been defined as a system built by and for man, dominated by them, and where the powers are unbalanced (Beechey, 1979, p. 66). The concept of "patriarchy" has been defined and analysed in sociology. The feminist movement takes a stand against this system to reinstate equality between men and women. For a long time, women were attempting to silence and had to meet all kinds of expectations such as keeping the house tidy or educating children while keeping their husbands satisfied. This testifies a "sexual hierarchy" as mentioned by Beechey (1979, p. 67). Therefore, the

world was shaped by men and women had to respond to their expectations, norms, and beauty ideals (Calogero et al., 2007, p. 19).

The representation of women has suffered for years and still suffers from these ideals of beauty, unreal and stereotyped. As stated by Wolf (2013), beauty ideals and myths are not universal and change geographically according to different countries' history. However, Wolf (2013) explains that with the Industrial Revolution and the appearance of the first beauty signs in the 1830s, women's beauty myths started to gain acceptance in society's mindset. With the beginning of photography in the 1840s, photos were starting to show women's bodies. Such practices increased the number and importance of beauty stereotypes, giving women's goals to reach and match to be seen as beautiful by others. Looking closer to the Western World's stereotypes, Calogero et al. (2007, p. 18) describe through their work Western women's beauty characteristics. For a long time, a woman having light skin appears to be more desirable than skin-colored women, who were seen in the Western world as too *exotic*. Women considered as beautiful in the Western world were the ones with blond long hair, symmetrical breast, thin, skin light with pink lips. These stereotypes have evolved over the years but have remained embedded in society.

If these ideals of beauty are considered stereotypical and discriminating, it is because they are strongly related to women's appearance. Wolf (2013) clearly distinguished a difference between men's and women's beauty myths, for instance, women should have symmetrical breasts whereas it has never been mentioned or seen as a beauty norm for men to have a symmetrical breast. Women body has been much more analysed and has been raising more expectations than men's one. As stated by Calogero et al. (2007, p. 19), women's beauty ideals and stereotypes have been shaped by men, they have been considered for a long time as passive objects, "women are to be-looked-at" and their body should represent men's fantasies. Tehseem & Kalsoom (2015, p. 83) completes this idea with the sexualization of the woman's body which must attract men.

In our Western societies, this pressure on the image of women has been all the more mediatized over the years. Johnston & Taylor (2008, p. 946) note that the companies' over-concern about women's appearance contributes to the perpetuation and institutionalization of gender inequality. Furthermore, Kapoor & Munjal (2019, p. 138) point out that advertising and the representations in it have been shown to have a definite influence on people's socialization. Therefore, firms through their advertising campaign contribute and maintain the proliferation of beauty myths and stereotypes (Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015, p. 96). Firstly, contribute because they released huge billboard campaigns and magazine ads showing unreal models responding to society stereotypes. Depending on the consumers targeted, brand ads will change from a country to another and adapt themselves to society's cultural values (Calogero et al., 2007, p. 11). Secondly, maintain and amplify beauty myths because firms keep up using stereotypes in their ads, such as recalling to thinner models. With retouching software, models look thinner than ever, and this representation is increasing the gap between myths and body reality. As mentioned by Drake (2017, p. 593), the media industry has greatly contributed to create and sustain an unreal representation of women. This way, ads show women's representations that are unreal, but which turn to be the new goal causing women eating disorder, body disaffection and so on (Calogero et al., 2007, p. 12).

However, those so-called ideals started to be pointed out and seen as oppressive (Calogero et al., 2007, p. 31; Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p. 944). Empowered and more educated about feminism, women are increasingly critical of these stereotypical ad representations (Drake, 2017, p. 593).

Among several outcries against stereotypes or sexual harassment emerged a new philosophy among women representation: body positivism. While beauty standards have locked women into conflicting relationships with their bodies, keeping them from expressing themselves, the purpose of this movement is to challenge the unreal representation of women's bodies. By taking over Instagram, the reference platform when it comes to sharing photos and videos, women fight against beauty norms and myths in particular fat-shaming, skin imperfections or hair shaving (Le Mauff, 2020). According to Le Mauff (2020), this movement aims at the acceptance of one's own body and the diversity of bodies. These movements directly impact cosmetic brands in their marketing strategies. Facing those movements, they had for most of them to adapt themselves and provide a more natural beauty image in their communications that would speak to more women; just like the successful Real Beauty campaign of Dove (Millard, 2009, p. 146; Drake, 2017, p. 593). However, brands should be careful as it can be double-edged if they do too much. Nowadays, consumers stress the importance of authenticity, honesty, and reality in advertising (Champlin et al., 2019, p. 1241; Shetty et al., 2019, p. 164; Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 449). Therefore, cosmetic brands including diversity, body positivism and inclusivity have a key role in defining beauty through their ads campaign and reaching a bigger audience.

3.1.3. An Introduction to Femvertising

The women empowerment movement inspires women to take control of their choices as well as their identity. While some women will be criticized for meeting the cosmetics diktats, "you wear too much makeup," others will be criticized for not complying "you don't take care of yourself." Struggling between the imperatives of appearance and the emancipation of beauty norms in their feminist practice, White (2018, pp. 141-144) demonstrates that some women operate a reappropriation of so-called feminine codes and reclaim their feminine image. As an example, cosmetics offer the possibility of performing the self without necessarily being in a process of enhancement of beauty (White, 2018, p. 144). This revival of women's influence has different anchors. As Drake (2017, p. 594) explains, women have nowadays a significant place in the economy not only because they have a growing purchasing power but also in the political field where their voices tend to be greater and stronger every day. Regarding the increasing demand from women to give a more accurate representation of their role in society and stereotypes they are suffering from, brands and marketers were urged to answer this call by promoting through their campaign real women life experience (Drake, 2017, p. 593; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019, p. 137). This call for less gendered and stereotyped representations of consumers has been supported by the women's arrival in positions of responsibility in marketing teams (Sterbenk et al., 2021, p. 3).

Exit the zero-size top model, Dove's "Real Beauty" Campaign in 2004 is considered to be the first femvertisement and embodies the marketing shift taken by brands and their willingness to promote body positivism and distinguish physical characteristics from women's personality (Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p. 951). SheKnows Media was the first to highlight and defined this phenomenon in 2014, during an award ceremony recognizing advertisements taking a stand for the feminist cause. This neologism was created to point out the increasing number of advertising challenging gender stereotypes (Ciambrello-Powell, 2014; SheKnows Media, n.d.). As Sterbenk et al. mention (2021, p. 3), femvertising goes beyond gender stereotypes. As explained by Åkestam et al. (2017, p. 802), femvertising stands for "female empowerment advertising" i.e., the promotion of products and services alongside with feminist speech. The stake of this type of advertising for cosmetic brands such as Dove lies in the fact of challenging beauty ideals while selling so-called beauty products

as Johnston & Taylor (2008) note. Are considered as femvertisement, advertisements that reveal women's empowerment through women's real-life messages and bodies images (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 118) as well as advertisements showing women's talents and spreading pro-woman messages (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 1). As quoted by Drake (2017, p. 594), femvertising is based on sharing women empowerment content which is seen as content that will inspire women who will see it and will help them to increase their confidence and identity themselves in their daily life choices.

This type of advertising inevitably resonates with women's current commitment and is rooted in their daily reality. As the content has to be meaningful and relevant to the targeted consumers (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 120), cosmetics brands choose to use natural models with skin imperfections so consumers can associate themselves to the models. Several authors agree that this strategy of brands to take a stand on this social issue by challenging traditional representations can have a positive impact on consumers (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Åkestam et al., 2017; Champlin et al., 2019; Drake, 2017). Abitbol & Sternadori, (2016, p. 123) use the example of Dove and the increase in sales after the Real Beauty campaign to prove the effectiveness of such a strategy. Åkestam et al. (2017, p. 802) show in their study that the use of femvertising limits ad reactance which has the effect of generating better ad and brand attitudes. Drake (2017, p. 594) underlines that the messages carried by these ads are globally well received by women.

In recent years, the success of these advertisements has been applauded online; as evidenced by the declination of the Real Beauty campaign led by Dove on YouTube and then on social networks such as Instagram, the awards ceremony of SheKnows Media or as Kapoor & Munjal point out in 2019 (p. 138), "the advertisements themed on women empowerment has been doing the rounds in the online space". This new approach by brands is seen as a part of the feminism fourth wave. Varghese & Kumar (2020, p. 5) explain that the feminism fourth wave is characterized by the use of two new channels of activism diffusion which are social media and the internet. Through those communicative channels, feminism is reaching new and more activists, such as raising awareness of the cause among millennials. It inserts feminism within the contemporary era of the 21st century and the use of its new technologies. This fourth wave has embraced new struggles such as sexual harassment, consent and rape or self-acceptance, body positivism and identity enhancement (Le Mauff, 2020). Just like the #MeToo movement showed it, the fourth wave relies on the sharing of stories and testimonies in a *safe* online space which affects users and increases their concerns for the cause (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 5). Social media gives feminism a new way to speak out and have more impact on society. It is not unusual nowadays to see celebrities telling and posting their stories on Instagram which then by becoming viral encourage others to do the same (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 6). Nowadays, brands are surfing on this fourth feminism wave to take a stand on social issues, reach more consumers while promoting their products and services.

3.1.4. Purplewashing

Still, these stances taken through advertising are often questioned. Indeed, there is sometimes a gap between marketing actions and the practical reality of commitment. The messages conveyed through femvertising are often laudable, except that the approach may appear hypocritical when the company does not even care about this cause internally, such as dealing with the issues of gender equality within its workforce or concerning wage differences (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 131). Vredenburg et al (2020, p. 449) consider that when the practical reality

of a brand's engagement "is misaligned with purpose, values and messaging", the brand's activism is inauthentic. This discrepancy between engagement messages and engagement reality challenges the sincerity of the brands' approach. The renewed interest in the feminist cause in the last years justifies this concern. Abitbol & Sternadori (2016, p. 133) draw on Winfrey-Harris's writings (2016) to point out a difference between pure feminism with an activist purpose and mainstream feminism, which is more pragmatic. Brands with feminist messages can be seen as committed to the cause, but the profit-seeking nature of brands contradicts the essence of feminism (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p.118). To describe this paradox, Johnston & Taylor (2008, p. 942) refer to feminist consumerism, where Varghese & Kumar (2020, p. 2) refer to commodity feminism or corporate feminism. The legitimacy of such an approach is then questioned insofar as some authors consider that it is not up to a brand to take a position on such subjects and that in any case, this position will be biased by the search for profit that advertising underlies (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016; Johnston & Taylor, 2008).

When applied to cosmetics, femvertising is a matter of debate. The authors who have studied the subject all raise the paradox of carrying messages of women empowerment while selling beauty products. On the one hand, Champlin et al. (2019, p. 1253) demonstrate that cosmetic advertisements that promote an image of strong women or communicate about their struggles as women base their product marketing primarily on female insecurity. Indeed, the products are sold with messages of empowerment, freedom or autonomy, presupposing that women are not currently empowered i.e., emphasizing their weakness or insecurity. The promoted products appear as providential helpers for women (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 131). On the other hand, Johnston & Taylor (2008, p. 954) emphasize through the example of Dove's Real Beauty campaign that accepting one's own beauty rather than the unrealistic one sold by magazines, only changes the perspective of beauty: rather than achieving an ideal of beauty, the woman has to fulfill herself by accepting her own beauty, her image and her representation. The contradiction of its campaigns lies in the fact of "condemn beauty standards while promoting conformity to these same standards" (Johnston & Taylor, 2008, p. 959). Finally, according to Johnston & Taylor (2008, p. 955), the irony of the approach lies in the fact that cosmetic brands mobilize the feminist discourse to attract consumers while some women in their feminist commitment have precisely distanced themselves from cosmetic brands to show their opposition to this system.

As brands have taken up this cause recently, academic studies conducted lately on the subject have not resulted in a commonly accepted definition of this phenomenon. In the common language, the expression purplewashing, which we will use, denounces firms' practices that use the feminist movement to achieve their own capitalist goals. Meaning that brands are hypocrites and only care about selling products: it turns out that femvertisement practices are bringing new consumers, who are hanging on every word said which turns out to be really good for brands' sales revenue (Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 2). Another expression coined by Sterbenk et al. (2021, p. 11) to refer to this practice is fempower-washing. This formulation aims to denounce CSR allegations that are not aligned with firms' real doings and behaviours under strong supportive women practices prism. Brands are accused of practicing fempower-washing when they do not engage themselves into CSR-oriented programs that support women inside or outside the company. More generally, to define the inauthentic stance of brands on social issues, Vredenburg et al. (2020, pp. 444-445) use the term woke washing to denounce brands using activist messaging without clearly record any real actions.

As emphasized by Shetty et al. (2019, p. 165), when firms are taking a stance and show their engagement with strong and engaging marketing productions, they expose themselves to accusations from all parts of being fake in their statements and not really supporting the causes or issues denounced. Regarding femvertising and promoting women empowerment, brands choosing to communicate on this topic are exposing themselves thereby to backlashes denouncing them to not internally stand for women for instance and just doing it for their image on the market. Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 448) point out that these positions in favour of social causes, such as feminism, relate to consumers' value systems. However, since not all consumers have the same values, their system may differ from that of the brand. Since values are strongly anchored in people's emotions and identities, the positions taken by certain brands can be strongly contested. Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020, p. 773) complete this idea by showing that a low self-brand similarity i.e., a disagreement on the moral stand taken by the brand by the consumer, "lead to lower levels of consumer-brand identification" and thus "lower consumer attitudes, intentions and behaviour". Some consumers may be alienated by the brand's stance (Vredenburg et al., 2020, p. 448).

This can lead to criticism, protests and even boycott of the brand. The influence of peers and the group effect that can lead to the acceptance and success of a brand can also generate the opposite effect and expand the rejection movement of a brand (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 346. Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020, p. 775). These accusations being true or false, can be very convincing and if they show good arguments, stepping out of the shadow could cause the brand a lot of damages to its reputation, its image and impact its sales. Shetty et al. (2019, p. 166) add that firms are losing even more when ethics are at stake - socially and environmentally speaking. As Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020, p. 773) mentioned, the challenge for brands today is to measure whether their commitment is worth the potential controversy they are exposing themselves to. Brand activism on social issues such as feminism is not risk-free.

3.2. GENERATION Y BEHAVIOR

3.2.1. Introduction to the millennials

Millennials are a distinct generation because they have experienced and shared particular events, which has led them to develop their own values, beliefs, and attitudes (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 305). The sharing of these common characteristics associated with births during the same period makes it possible to speak of a generation. Although there are no clear delimitations of Generation Y, several authors agree that it comprises those born between 1980 and 2000, a delimitation that we will consider for this study. Indeed, Moreno et al. (2017, p. 135) identify according to different research a generation born approximately between 1980 and 2000. The delimitations used by Lissitsa & Kol (2016, p. 304) are in the same line by considering those born between 1980 and 1999 to belong to this generation. While Bolton et al. (2013; p. 247) consider Generation Y to include those born after 1981. Thus, marking the entry into a new millennium, that's why people of this generation are called millennials. This generation is the child of baby boomers or Generation X (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 136) and is exceeding it in numbers with over 80 million millennials around the world, approximately 4 million more than baby boomers.

Today, Generation Y constitutes the largest consumer population. Indeed, as Valentine & Powers (2013, p. 598) and Moreno et al. (2017, p. 136) point out, these people have grown up, graduated,

and are now workers and leaders in the business place. Therefore, they constitute a powerful consumer group that is the marketers' main target. Having grown up in a period of economic growth, they are rather consumption-oriented and sophisticated in terms of shopping (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 304). Shetty et al. (2019, p. 164) agree on this point and highlight the fact that they are a "valuable and lucrative customer base" that spends a lot and is likely to influence their elders. Brands need to carefully study this generation in order to target them as they behave differently from their parents and respond to different attempts. Brands are now facing two strategic issues if they want to succeed in the future and respond to this generation's needs: manage this new large purchasing power and technologically speaking stay up to date (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 135).

One of the primary characteristics of this generation is their connectivity since they are born into a maturing technological environment. Moreno et al. (2017, p. 142) note that they were born with the digital wave, making them connected individuals. This is why Generation Y is responding to several other nicknames in relation to technologies as Prensky (2001) who defines them as "digital natives" i.e., people who have grown up surrounded by a digital environment and have developed innate abilities towards it. Moreover, this generation contributes to this digital environment in their personal and professional lives by creating, sharing, searching, and consuming digital content (Bolton et al., 2013, p. 245. Moreno et al., 2017, p. 138). Lissitsa & Kol (2016, p. 306) even categorize their relation to and through social networks as "vital". Great users of the Internet and social networks do not turn to the traditional media which have less influence on them (Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598).

This has consequences that should not be overlooked by marketers. Besides being connected, they are also well aware and better educated due to easy access to information and exchanges that are facilitated, whether social or economic (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, pp. 304-306). Facing an increasing amount of information, they know what they like and what they don't, and are able to sort out the trends to define what they want. Millennials are more aware of marketing "old tactics" as called by Lissitsa & Kol (2016, p. 306) and therefore are more suspicious regarding advertisements. Valentine & Powers (2013, pp. 598-599) suggest that new marketing levers must be activated, such as event marketing, product placements or digital media. This generation is clearly a key element in the success of companies, particularly through e-commerce and because of their growing purchasing power, hence the need to adapt (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 138; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598).

Finally, the events experienced by this generation have led them to develop a certain number of values and beliefs that constitute their behaviour, which necessarily has repercussions in their decision-making process when it comes to consumption. Several authors agree that this generation gathers more conscious consumers than previous generations. Lissitsa & Kol (2016, pp. 305-306) collect several perspectives that agree with the idea that millennials are rational and more thoughtful in their purchases, they focus more on products that match their lifestyle and will take actions when they feel they should support what they believe in. In the same perspective, Oumlil & Balloun (2019, p. 18) note that they are rather open to the world and that they "demonstrate concerns about global issues" whether it is at the social, cultural, or environmental level. Concerning the social dimension, Varghese & Kumar (2020, p.7) and Cui et al. (2003, p. 317) agree that they are rather receptive and supportive of initiatives on this subject; this is confirmed by Bolton et al. (2013, p. 252) who explain that they are more "open to change [and] more tolerant

of diversity". Therefore, this value dimension is also a characteristic element that marketers try to target (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 305; Shetty et al., 2019, p. 171).

3.2.2. Attitude toward Brand Activism

As a result of the particular characteristics of this generation, it can be inferred that they have their proper attitude toward femvertising. MacKenzie & Lutz (1989, p. 54) generally define attitude towards advertising as "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favourable or unfavourable manner to advertising in general". Depending on exposure context to advertising and the mood of the person, the advertising attitudes of people can be impacted by the feelings that advertising generates in them. The affective aspect of an attitude towards the ad is generally accepted in the literature (MacKenzie et al., 1986, p. 131); but this definition has been completed with the recognition of a more reflexive process linked to the attitudes that consumers hold (Ducoffe, 1995; Shimp, 1981). Indeed, according to Shimp's (1981, p. 13) perspective, two components are to be considered i.e., cognitive and affective. In this same vein, Ducoffe (1995, p. 12), completed this by showing that this attitude toward the ad is the result of a balance between the affective and the cognitive. However, according to MacKenzie & Lutz (1989, p. 49), there is no distinction to be made between these two elements since they are more "antecedents to the general attitudinal responses". Therefore, attitudes toward the ad can be considered as a whole, knowing that affects and cognition can play a role, which may lead them to vary over time.

In the face of this, the values characteristic of Generation Y e.g., tolerant and engaged, are more rooted in their behaviour and drive their lifestyle (Bolton et al., 2013; Moreno et al., 2017; Shetty et al., 2019). Together, these attitudes and values allow millennials to interpret the world they are living in, and form perceptions towards what we are interested in here, femvertising. Through perception, people process what they feel i.e., select and organize, into a meaning i.e., interpret (Solomon et al., 2019, p. 212).

While limited previous literature exists regarding attitudes toward femvertising, the awareness and concern of Generation Y about social issues give us key insights into their attitudes toward this type of advertising. If members of this generation are more aware of current issues, it is because, as digital natives, they are constantly faced with information on the subject (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 165). Because of their inherent values, millennials consider that it is their duty to "make the world a better place" (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 164; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 597). Generation Y appears to be more aware of the current social issues, both in terms of the amount of information they gather than the content they assimilate. Open-minded and responsible, they generally feel more concerned and therefore supportive of social causes than previous generations (Cui et al., 2003, p. 317; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 7). For Moreno (2017, p. 137), millennials are in fact the instigators of the "latest social movement in the world". Several authors agree that this generation is more affected by initiatives taken on these causes, especially through marketing initiatives (Cui et al., 2003; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; Shetty et al., 2019; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Beyond mere awareness, some consumers have developed real consumer knowledge about the cause, which makes them more educated or informed users, also harder to convince. Faced with the flow of information, Generation Y is characterized by a certain curiosity (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 137). Their ability to learn has been highlighted by several authors: Bolton et al. (2013, p. 252)

see this generation as "better learners", for Lissitsa & Kol (2016, p. 306) millennials are "highly educated in many aspects" while Moreno et al. (2017, p. 137) mention that they are "intelligent young people". Moreno et al. (2017, p. 141) continue with the idea that millennials build their knowledge collectively and test it towards the collective, liking the idea "to use their knowledge to be considered an expert».

While the issue of consumer knowledge has been addressed on the environmental aspect of sustainable issues, to the best of our knowledge, this has not been covered on knowledge from a social commitment. Studies on green knowledge have for some concluded a gap between prior knowledge possessed and consumer attitude in their purchase process (Chang & Watchravesringkan, 2018; Markkula & Moisander, 2012); while others have recognized the important role of this prior knowledge in attitude and purchase intention (Bhaduri & Ha-Brookshire, 2011). As consumer attitude toward the advertising also results from a cognitive process (Shimp, 1981, p. 13; Ducoffe, 1995, p. 12), this issue is critical in the study of millennials' attitude toward femvertising.

Lastly, focusing on the literature produced on the attitude toward brand activism of consumers in a more general way, allows us to gain some insights on our subject. In general, Generation Y consumers have a positive attitude towards brand activism. First, femvertising as a form of brand activism is rather well accepted among the millennials, as they are demanding that firms take such stances (Kotler & Sarkar, 2017; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 356). According to Shetty et al. (2019, p. 171), these consumers prefer brands that manifest brand activism in their marketing. Second, it seems that consumers are more trustful to companies engaging in social issues. Indeed, for Valentine & Powers (2013, p. 598) the majority of millennials likely trust, pay more attention to marketing and potentially buy more products from socially responsible companies. The third element of this positive attitude is millennials' identification with femvertising. For Kapoor & Munjal (2019, p. 138), advertising is merely a "mirror in which people see themselves in various everyday situations." Thus, if millennials are able to identify with femvertising that advocates for similar struggles and values they hold, they are more likely to adopt a positive attitude towards these advertisements (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 141).

However, the characteristics of this generation also make them sceptical about brand activism. For some, it is just another marketing strategy for profit. Several authors agree that millennials being more aware of marketing tactics, they are more sceptical of brands engaging in brand activism (Bolton et al., 2013; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; Shetty et al., 2019). On the one hand, there is scepticism based on the information and knowledge that millennials possess that questions the sincerity of brands' approach. Stances may then appear to them as false and not based on real actions: they then denounce fake activism (Bolton et al., 2013, p. 252; Shetty et al., 2019, p. 165). On the other hand, they may simply consider that the brand is not doing enough or is not legitimate despite the company's actions (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 165). This attitude toward engaged advertising can lead to brand avoidance on the part of consumers or even boycotts if the stance does not suit them (Shetty et al., 2019, p. 172).

3.2.3. Generation Y Decision Making Process

Understanding the attitudes of Generation Y consumers towards brand activism, and more specifically femvertising, is critical for marketers and brand managers. Indeed, the attitude toward

advertising is a key step in the consumer's decision-making process. MacKenzie et al. (1986, p. 141) have shown the influence of attitude toward advertising on brand attitude and intention to purchase. Ducoffe (1995, p. 1) recognizes that the value given to advertising is an important determinant of consumer attraction and potential purchase interest. In their interaction with advertising, consumers will follow a sequence of exposure, attention, interpretation and perception that can translate into the act of purchase, which is then evaluated in the post-purchase phase (Solomon et al., 2019, p. 212; p. 588). The attitude toward advertising, even if it does not necessarily turn into purchase intention, still influences the consumer's decision-making process or at least his attitude toward the brand that produces this content. This being said, getting deeper insight, through the previous literature done on the consumer behaviour of Generation Y comprehensively, gives us keys to understand what influences and motivates them, and therefore, generates such an attitude.

Generation Y is generally known for being very volatile in their purchasing decisions. They will switch to different brands based on trends and brand popularity and change their taste as quickly as trends change. With lifestyle being a core aspect of their consumption, they will be more likely to focus "on style and quality rather than price" (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 306). Lissitsa & Kol (2016, p. 306) explain that millennials tend to deliberate less and therefore make decisions faster regarding their purchases than other generations. The hyper-availability of personalized products plays an important role in this behaviour: young people want everything, right away. Added to this is the fact that they can collect information to evaluate their decision when they want, where they want and in great detail because of the information digitalisation (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 142). As a result, consumers are not as loyal to brands as previous generations. Several authors agree that they do not tend to repeat their purchase from the same brands (Lissitsa & Kol, 2016, p. 306; Moreno et al., 2017, p. 138; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598).

Focusing on what influences their buying decision, it seems that millennials place a high value on their peers. This influence guides them in their decision-making process whether it is in the attention they pay to certain advertising and their product and the interpretation they grant to it whether it is if the purchase can suit their relationship with their peers. First, they consider information shared by their peers to be more *credible* because it comes from genuine people who give their own opinions i.e., "people like me" (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 138). For Moreno et al. (2017, p. 142), millennials often refer to their peers for their opinion on the "merit of a website or product". Valentine & Powers (2013, p. 599) also discuss how this generation dislikes being the target of advertising and prefers to rely on "their friends' opinions" when it comes to their purchasing choices. A study by Kapoor & Munjal (2019, p. 151) showed that women like to share and discuss femvertising if they like the content which results in a positive WOM i.e., word-of-mouth, towards advertising among consumers. Indeed, millennials in their evaluation of a potential purchase are very sensitive to WOM and even more so to e-WOM i.e., electronic word-of-mouth which is the sharing of information about a brand or a product by consumers, spontaneously and in their daily discourse (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 138). Knowing that with social networks, millennials as big users of these platforms can easily exchange their opinions. Depending on whether the WOM is negative or positive among millennials, this can have repercussions on the brand and its advertising e.g., rejection or acceptance.

Besides, millennials place just as much importance on positioning themselves as influencers by giving their opinions via content sharing with their peers (Bolton et al., 2013, p. 245; Moreno et

al., 2017, p. 140). As connected consumers, they can share their tastes and preferences with others in real-time (Moreno et al., 2017, p. 135). Moreover, several authors point out that this influence allows them to gain self-esteem: for Bolton et al. (2013, p. 249) millennials "feel important when they provide feedback about the brands or product they use", while for Moreno et al. (2017, p. 141) they like to be considered as experts in the eyes of their peers by sharing information. From this perspective, they also act as influencers, which affects their attitude towards advertising.

Finally, since millennials are characterized as highly individualistic and self-centered (Bolton et al., 2013, p. 247; Valentine & Powers, 2013, p. 598), advertisements relying on their self-esteem, their ambition and showing them a flattering projection of themselves tend to influence them in their attitude. As advertising acts as a mirror, it allows consumers to form an image of themselves and identify with it (Åkestam et al., 2017, p. 797; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019, p. 138). In their study, Kapoor & Munjal (2019, p. 150) showed that women with high public consciousness i.e., the consumer's self-perception, have a positive attitude towards femvertising. Thus, brands that embrace aspirational advertising i.e., advertise what an audience wishes to achieve or gain, reflect an aspirational image of what millennials could be and influence them in their decision-making process (Drake, 2017, p. 595). Another identification lever is to rely on celebrity endorsement or influencers who can influence millennials in their attitude towards advertising or even the brand (McCormick, 2016, p. 43). By identifying with these people, millennials will be more likely to show a positive attitude towards advertising. By identifying with these figures, millennials demonstrate a positive attitude towards advertising. This strategy of identification is an essential element of influence for brands since, as Moreno et al. (2017, p. 141) point out, brand loyalty can manifest itself when there is "a link of identity".

3.3. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING

3.3.1. Social Media as a new marketing channel

The notion of Web 2.0 was developed when social media emerged on the Internet as they radically changed the way people used it and reshaped their relationship with the world surrounding them. When talking about social media, Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (2012, p. 4445) differentiate main social media categories which are blogs, social networks, forums and analysis sites. In the wake of what is called Web 2.0 (O'Reilly, 2009), we have seen a main shift in web technologies that affect more consumers' psychology. The web is now more seen as an interactive platform more powerful than before. For instance, when using the Web in their marketing strategies, firms now have more audiences than ever as when they publish some content on it, it goes worldwide but they also get answers directly from consumers (Berthon et al., 2012, pp. 262-263).

By becoming a virtual platform, the web becomes a place of dialogues, of discussions where now consumers share with their networks their feedbacks about products or services provided by firms (Sajid, 2016, p. 1). As stated by Berthon et al. (2012, p. 264), we can see a gradual power shift between consumers and firms. Consumers are now involved directly in the promotion or demotion of products and services. By realising informal or constructed reviews and comments with photos or videos on their profile, consumers are now sharing their opinion on social networks and giving access to it to their communities. Because consumers are honest with their audience, their opinion

is important for brands as it would be better for brands to have positive comments and see its number of consumer increases (Berthon et al., 2012, p. 264).

Even if it can be double-edged, brands are choosing to go on social media because they cannot do without it (Sajid, 2016, p. 3). First, they do not owe publishers and distributors anymore and they do not have to pay them to enhance their image. Now brands can do advertisements and reach current and prospective customers by themselves through the utilisation of social media, this is called Social Media Marketing (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012, p. 4451). As detailed by Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (2012, p. 4446), social media appeal firms because they rely on targeting advertising algorithms - those are predicting which products or services could be useful for one user before him/her knowing about it and would target him/her by releasing targeted brands' ads.

In connexion with this targeting method, brands who are trying to reach a specific community, also call on influencers to present and promote their product through their post - they can be seen as commercials 2.0 (Sijad, 2016, p. 2). Those influencers influence their respective communities and could give to brands a real trust forward in their selling. To reach the main consumer group, Generation Y, brands must keep up with the trend which here is to be accessible on the different social networks. Indeed, Generation Y represents the largest part of worldwide Instagram Users - approximately 24,85% of the users on the platform (Asselin, 2021).

3.3.2. Summary - Femvertising & the influence of social media

The persuasive power of social networks and the audience available there, have convinced brands to use these social networks for the influence they can exert. Indeed, social networks have seduced and brought together many potential consumers, who gather there to exchange, inform themselves, or be entertained. In 2012, Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (p. 4445) noted that "39% of companies surveyed by McKinsey Quarterly use social-media services as their primary digital tool to reach customers, and that proportion is likely to increase to 47% within the next four years". The value of these platforms for brands lies in the ability to keep branding their image in a new space while connecting with their consumers and reaching potential new consumers (Bolton et al., 2013, p. 254; Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012, p. 4446). For brands that engage on social issues, the use of social networks resonates both with the targeted consumers, often rather young and aware of current issues, and the digital roots of new forms of activism, such as femvertising within the fourth wave of feminism (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 349; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p.6). As Dove's successful Real Beauty campaign shows, the influence of social networks is a key element for marketers. The influence of marketing is therefore on several levels, responding to what the consumer is looking for on the online platform i.e., interaction, information, and entertainment. Regarding interaction, this literature review has already insisted on the importance of socialization for social network users as well as the importance of peer influence, through a focus on Generation Y.

By responding to consumers' need for information on social networks, beloved platforms among young people, brands can influence them. Millennials, in particular, are turning to online platforms and the plethora of information they contain to fuel their thirst for knowledge. Information is available everywhere and right away. As for sharing platforms, social networks allow them to access the information they value, shared by relative users such as friends, family, or celebrities.

Smith (2011, pp. 491-493) shows the importance of information seeking by this generation in their decision-making process. While their purchase behaviour is volatile, their decision-making process is thoughtful to suit their values, peers, and current trends. Among private content, there is branded content which is part of brand marketing strategy. This blurred line between content allows brands to more easily target their consumers. As a media sharing network, users' lifestyles are reflected in their profiles. By providing the necessary information to meet consumer demands in their content or on their brand pages, companies are able to influence consumers (Foreman, 2017).

The content disseminated by brands that commit to social issues via social networks also influences consumers through the emotional levers triggered. Beyond the cognitive aspect, marketers also rely on the affective aspect to trigger an attitude towards their advertising. As stated by Drake (2017, p. 597), emotional appeals in ads lead to increased attitude and engagement towards femvertising. Going further, Kapoor & Munjal (2019, p. 139) explain that this emotional dimension has a definite influence on the attractiveness of the consumer towards the advertisement but also on his purchase intention. They confirm in their studies, the "individual's tendency to seek out emotional situations" which has a significant influence on their attitude towards femvertising. This emotional connection with the consumer is even more essential for brands, as this link is sufficient in itself as a differentiating element. In their study on millennials' perception of brand activism, Shetty et al (2019, p. 172) showed that millennials' emotional connection with brands committed to a cause does not change according to price. These emotional appeals are thus key elements of brand influence on social media.

Focusing now only on the form of the posted content, some visuals are appealing to young people and will drive them to engage with the generated content. Some specific graphic features impact the consumer and stay in their mind. As Manfredi-Sanchez (2019, p. 346) argues, among other things, what allows a company to stand out from the saturated brand landscape is its image through logos, slogans, designs, or symbols. Similarly, in his study, focused on digital marketing strategies impacting millennials, Smith (2011, p. 495) showed that what grabbed millennials' attention was the use of graphics. Exposure to imagery can spark consumer attention and interest, then initiating a perception sequence (Solomon et al., 2019, p. 212). Yet, some social networks, such as Instagram, are based primarily on image consumption and in this differ from other social networks. Image use requires less cognitive effort: consumers are left to scroll to be entertained (Chen, 2018, p. 32). This available brain time is an opportunity for brands to persuade these consumers. Especially since Chen (2018, p. 32), shows in his study that millennials may be inclined to this type of advertising if it reinforces their social identity, their social ties, via peer recommendations or if it allows them to access unpublished information. Image as a key element of advertising also appears as a persuasive lever for brands wishing to show their cause commitment on social networks. This dimension is especially critical as femvertising aims to change the stereotypical image shared in the media.

3.3.3. Attitude toward femvertising

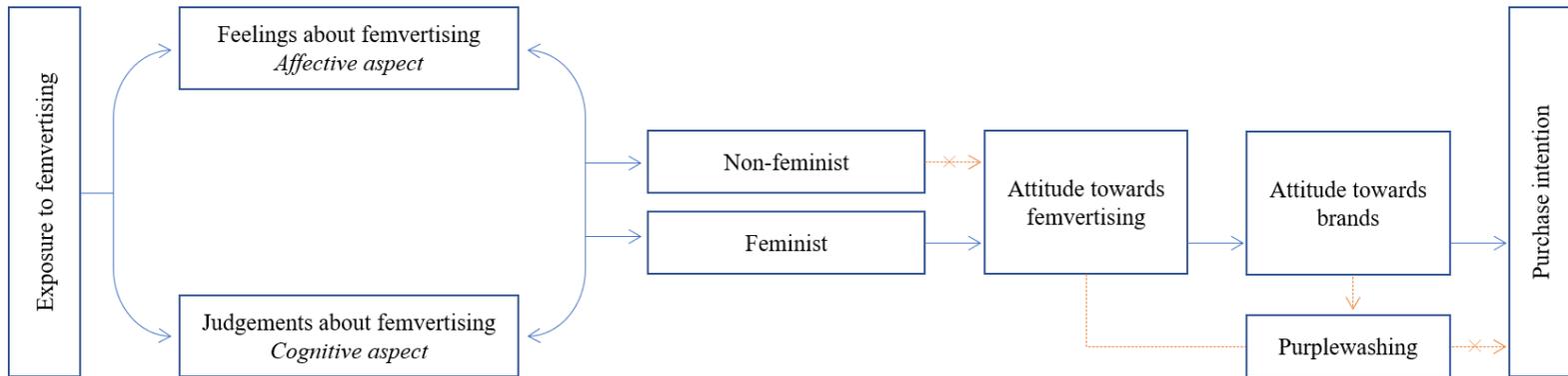


Figure 1 – Attitude toward the femvertising, a revised model of attitude toward the ad model of MacKenzie et al. (1986) applied to femvertising.

Based on MacKenzie et al.'s (1986) model of attitude toward the ad as a mediator of advertising effectiveness, we propose an updated version adapted to the case of femvertising after reviewing the literature. Indeed, it appears through the concepts studied that millennials exposed to an advertisement will hold a different attitude towards advertising depending on whether or not they are involved in the feminist cause. According to this first model, non-feminists will not develop a particular attitude towards femvertising because they will not be sensitive to the feminist cause, so these advertisements will not particularly influence their purchase intention and will not prove to be effective on them. While feminists, millennials seem more likely to react favourably or unfavourably to femvertising because of their knowledge, value system and commitment to the cause i.e., their cognitive and emotional predispositions. So, depending on the attitude they hold towards femvertising and if a case of purplewashing seems to be proven or not, they may or may not be influenced in their decision-making process and their purchase intention by this exposure to the femvertising. This is at least what we will attempt to study through our research questions and semi-structured interviews within this thesis.

4. PRACTICAL METHOD

In this section, the method for collecting data and analysing it to conduct our qualitative research will be explained. Our sampling method, the interview guides, and the way the interviews were conducted will be explained. We will conclude this section by detailing the ethical considerations we took into considerations during this data collection.

4.1. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

When it comes to collecting data, there are two main types of data to consider. Indeed, according to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 256), secondary data and primary data should be considered when conducting a research project. Secondary data refers to any data that has already been generated by another organization for another purpose. Some researchers reuse data that has already been gathered for previous projects which enables them to save time and money. If these data are relevant, they are a useful source for conducting research (Bell et al., 2019, p. 12; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 268). According to Saunders et al. (2009, p. 259), this can be documentary, multiple sources or survey data produced by other researchers in their previous work or by institutional, governmental, or business organizations. However, in a qualitative research approach, it is more complex to use this type of data and be sure that it will fit the research project (Bell et al., 2019, p. 534).

While primary data is considered to be the new data gathered directly by researchers when conducting their research (Bell et al., 2019, p. 12). There are several ways to collect primary data such as through observation, interviews, or questionnaires (Bell et al., 2019, p. 11; Saunders et al., 2009, pp. 288-360). If the purpose of a study is specific, collecting primary data will provide access to relevant and reliable data appropriate to the study being conducted. As our research topic was relatively new to academic research, specific to the cosmetics industry, and focused on Generation Y, we considered that it was more relevant to collect primary data.

By collecting primary data, we can gather all the complex data that fall under our topic. The primary data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews. Since we are conducting qualitative research, it made more sense to conduct non-standardised interviews than standardised interviews, which involve a survey strategy in which the data are analysed quantitatively, leaving little space for expression and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 321). Semi-structured interviews are conducted as follows: a list of themes and questions to be addressed is drawn up in advance of the interview, but during the interview, the order of these questions may vary according to the flow of the conversation, new questions may appear, and others may not be asked if the subject has already been dealt with or no longer seems relevant (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 320). The advantage of such a method is to ensure that key themes are addressed while being relatively flexible and open-ended.

4.2. QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION & INTERVIEW GUIDE

4.2.1. Sampling Technique and Access

When conducting research, a sampling technique can be useful when it is not possible for reasons of convenience, economy, and time to access the entire population under study (Saunders

et al., 2009, p. 212). There are two main sampling techniques to overcome this: probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling permits statistical generalizations of a population and is most often associated with surveyed-based studies (Bell et al., 2019, p. 11; Saunders, 2009, p. 214); whereas the non-probability technique selects samples for a particular purpose (Saunders, 2009, p. 233). While with the first technique every person in a population has the same chance of being selected, the non-probability technique allows the researcher to choose the sample based on his or her subjective judgment i.e., the probability for each person to be selected is not known (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 213).

In light of our research questions, we were able to define what type of sample would be most appropriate for our study. Several authors note that a probability sample is not always appropriate (Bell et al., 2019, p. 389; Saunders et al. 2009, p. 233). First, given that our study focuses on Gen Y's perceptions, attitudes, and knowledge about femvertising, surveying the entire population in order to process it according to the rules of a random sample would require a great deal of time and resources that we do not have. Second, we were not interested in doing statistical generalizations, as the probability technique allows (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 213). Finally, given that qualitative studies focus primarily on the quality of the data generated rather than the quantity, we decided to use self-selection sampling. Self-selection sampling is a technique that allows anyone who wishes to participate in research to do so (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 241). Since our research questions focus on the behaviours and knowledge of Generation Y consumers regarding femvertising, consumers who are aware of this issue and want to give their opinion were welcomed. As Saunders et al. (2009, p. 241) point out, the advantage of such sampling is the willingness and dedication of those self-chosen to be interviewed on the topic.

Based on this technique, we posted a message respectively on each of our Facebook profiles, our school's group and we benefited from shares from our relatives allowing us to expand the circle of people we could reach. In order to meet the objectives of our study, the only criteria mentioned in our post were age - the person had to fit the posited delineations of Generation Y, between 21 and 41 years old as defined by Moreno et al. (2017, p. 135) and Bolton et al. (2013, p. 247) - and possible cosmetic or feminist awareness. This second dimension was not mandatory, just an option to get people interested in our topic. The post met with some success, giving us access to more people to interview than we had anticipated. So, in order not to bias the selection of interviewees, we turned to those who had expressed interest in the interviews first, notifying the others of this and keeping in touch with them in case of withdrawals. Knowing that too few interviews may lead to too superficial data, but that too many interviews may raise a time issue in terms of time and transcription, we limited ourselves to 12 interviews. Saunders et al (2009, p. 235) suggest that a sample size of 12 is sufficient for a qualitative study using non-standardized interviews with a homogeneous group. We felt at the end of these interviews that our topic had been relatively well covered: similarities could be noted across the interviews. The data provided was satisfactory and relatively rich to deduce a certain saturation of our results i.e., "the additional data collected provides few, if any, new insights" (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 235).

4.2.2. Interviews Conduction

To properly study our research question, we decided to conduct semi-structured interviews to collect relevant primary data, as mentioned above. These interviews were prepared by creating an interview guide that delineated the themes and topics to be addressed during the interview. As

Saunders et al. (2009, p. 329) explain, the themes of the interview are drawn from the literature review and the associated key concepts that we wish to address in our study. This guide helps both in the conduct of the interviews and in the analysis of the resulting data. Indeed, it allows us to go further on certain subjects depending on what the interviewee expresses (Bell et al., 2019, p. 211). We then based our questions on different concepts such as the behaviour of Generation Y, social media marketing, women empowerment, femvertising, and purplewashing ([Appendix 1](#)).

The questionnaire was constructed as follows: it starts with demographic questions to define the background of the interviewees, then we ask some opening questions to therefore approach the different concepts of our study and confront them with the cases of femvertising selected for the study ([Appendix 2](#)) in order to ask directive questions to finish with questions that allow the interviewees to tell us about their feelings regarding the interview. Some of the questions were designed to be open-ended and general; however, if these questions were not answered, we clarified their scope in other questions to gain insights into these elided topics and avoid being too redundant throughout the interview. This flow of the guided interview allows us to build trust with the interviewees by ensuring that they consent to the recording and use of the data for an academic purpose. The opening questions allow us to deal with common issues before moving on to more specific topics. The selected cases ([Appendix 2](#)) allow us to confront the interviewees with their perceptions and to observe their respective attitudes. These cases were selected because they met the characteristics of femvertising as defined in our literature review i.e., affirmed positions on feminism taken by companies in their marketing, and dealt with different themes e.g., body positivism, harassment, genderless or anti-agism (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016, p. 118; Varghese & Kumar, 2020, p. 1). Some of these brands are proven cases of femvertising like Dove or Mawena in which feminist speech is part of their DNA. We have based our cases brand selection on the possible awareness of consumers to these brands: our choice was made on brands possibly known in the cosmetics landscape in France. We selected those brands of different sizes, different consumer targets and different degrees of commitment. Finally, the closing questions allow the interviewees to conclude the interview by opening the subject and inviting them to share their feelings.

Before launching the interview process, we conducted two pilot interviews to test the relevance of our questions, to see if the interview was fluid and how much time they would require. These pilot interviews allowed us to make some adjustments and then launch the interview period, which took place over one week. As you can see from the table below, we conducted 12 interviews. In line with the focus of our study, all interviewees are from Gen Y i.e., aged between 21 and 41 years old; they all are women living in an urban area. 5 out of the 12 are currently working and 7 are still studying, but it can be noted that the students have already had some work experience. The table shows the length, the date, and the type of each interview. Most of the interviews were conducted remotely, but thanks to the Zoom platform we were able to conduct video interviews which allowed us to not miss the non-verbal communication of the people, especially when viewing the selected cases. The interviews were conducted as planned i.e., we informed each interviewee of the interview process, the anonymization of the data and its purely academic use, and then requested their consent to record it for transcription.

Interviewee	Age	Interview Duration	Interview Type	Date
Interviewee 1 - I1	24	34 minutes 09 seconds	Zoom	04.05.2021
Interviewee 2 - I2	22	48 minutes 22 seconds	Zoom	04.05.2021
Interviewee 3 - I3	26	25 minutes 22 seconds	Face-to-face meeting	04.05.2021
Interviewee 4 - I4	23	34 minutes 41 seconds	Zoom	05.05.2021
Interviewee 5 - I5	23	33 minutes 14 seconds	Zoom	05.05.2021
Interviewee 6 - I6	39	22 minutes 08 seconds	Face-to-face meeting	05.05.2021
Interviewee 7 - I7	23	23 minutes 40 seconds	Face-to-face meeting	06.05.2021
Interviewee 8 - I8	21	22 minutes 44 seconds	Zoom	06.05.2021
Interviewee 9 - I9	24	28 minutes 11 seconds	Zoom	06.05.2021
Interviewee 10 - I10	25	44 minutes 38 seconds	Zoom	07.05.2021
Interviewee 11 - I11	21	30 minutes 28 seconds	Zoom	08.05.2021
Interviewee 12 - I12	40	34 minutes 43 seconds	Zoom	09.05.2021

Table 1 - Respondents and interview details

4.2.3. Transcribing, coding & analysing

Once the interviews were conducted, and thanks to the audio recordings, we were able to produce a written transcription of them. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 485) define transcription as "reproduced as written" or "word-processed" of what was recorded. As mentioned by Bell et al. (2019, p. 445), the advantage of audio recording is that it captures both what people say and the way they say it. Furthermore, this allows us to complete our memory and to carry out as many examinations as possible, both from our part and from the part of other researchers. Each interview was therefore transcribed as soon as it was conducted to avoid the time consumption that Saunders et al. (2009, p. 485) warn us about. However, we can note that this transcription of the interviews helped us a lot to proceed to the analysis of the collected data.

The challenge when dealing with data from interview transcripts is to manage the complexity of the dataset. Although qualitative analyses are not too suitable for coding analytical procedures, there are techniques that allow these data to be coded (Bell et al., 2019, p. 518). By coding each transcript, we can improve the readability of these data and thus proceed with their analysis. The process of coding is defined by Bell et al. (2019, p. 12) as "breaking down the data into component parts which are then given a label" i.e., it allows us to reduce the data by grouping it under more general categories and themes. Saunders et al. (2009, p. 503) explain that this reduction of the data will make it possible to display the data, in order to better organize it and finally draw and verify the conclusions that come from it.

One of the most commonly used approaches is thematic analysis, although there is no clear and commonly accepted way of conducting it (Bell et al., 2019, p. 519). This approach is relatively accessible (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 77), which is why as beginners in the field we used this

approach to analyse qualitative data. This allows us to put the information into different themes i.e., categories created by the researchers based on the transcript of the collected data and related to the research focus (Bell et al., 2019, p. 519). The technique suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 86) consists of six steps. By transcribing our results and reviewing them to get an overview of the interviews conducted, we completed the first step of becoming familiar with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87). In the second step, by identifying similar data with keywords, we were able to generate the initial codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88). The third step consists of studying the coded materials to identify themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 89). For this Bell et al. (2019, p. 519) suggest looking for repetitions, similarities, and differences among the interviewees, the vocabulary used along with the images, metaphors, and analogies as well as the missing data. The fourth step is to review the themes that were created (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91) to select, define and name the relevant themes in phase five (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). From this thematic analysis, the themes presented in Table 2 emerged. This allowed us to produce the following part of this dissertation, namely the findings' part, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 93) in step six.

1. Millennials & cosmetics	2. Generation Y consumer behaviour	3. Femvertising & women empowerment	4. Purplewashing
<i>1. 1. Care & well-being</i>	<i>2. 1. Connected & interconnected users</i>	<i>3. 1. Femvertising knowledge</i>	<i>4. 1. Scepticism confirmed</i>
<i>1. 2. Beautification & self-improvement</i>	<i>2. 2. Aware consumers</i>	<i>3. 2. Femvertising experience</i>	<i>4. 2. Disavowed brands</i>
<i>1. 3. Stereotyped & gendered</i>	<i>2. 3. Knowledgeable consumers</i>	<i>3. 3. Femvertising opinion</i>	<i>4. 3. Paradox challenged</i>
<i>1. 4. Societal evolution & changes in representations</i>	<i>2. 4. Conscious & committed consumers</i>	<i>3. 4. Femvertising & buying influence</i>	<i>4. 4. Nuances & progress</i>

Table 2 - Results from the thematic analysis

4.3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The subject under study, femvertising, embodies by itself current social issues regarding women's status in society and its empowerment through marketing strategy. The use of women's bodies and beauty has always been an issue and raises a lot of ethical dilemmas. Therefore, ethical considerations in our work are a must when conducting our research project, we have to think about how we will access the data we need but also dilemmas that could raise with it (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 168). As suggested by Bell et al. (2019, p. 110), ethical considerations also deal with the treatment given to interviewees during our research but also aim to delimit or not subjects we should or should not have with them. Bell et al. (2019, p. 126) stress the importance of ethical considerations in the quest for honesty and transparency of the research regarding all parties involved. Which are two important criteria taken into consideration when analysing the qualitative quality of the work and attesting the truth of the research process.

Bell et al. (2019, p. 114) distinguish four different unethical behaviours to avoid when conducting business research which are the following: “harm to participants, lack of informed consent, invasion of privacy, involved deception”. By harm to participants, Bell et al. (2019, p. 114) imply different ways of harming participants to your study, it can be physical but could also be mental. As we will be conducting mostly online interviews, it appears complicated to harm the interviewee physically. However, concerning mental harm, we will be careful to not bring mental breakdown or stress as we will remind all participants that the purpose of the research is only academic. We will also reassure them by mentioning again the confidentiality we will work with but also remind them that all statements made will remain fully anonymous. To be sure to get informed consent from the participants we give as many explanations as possible about the purpose of our study and the reasons why we are conducting it, so they decide to participate in our research in full knowledge of the facts (Bell et al., 2019, p. 118). Thirdly, Saunders et al. (2009, p. 190) describe the privacy principle as a consequence of informed consent. We will hence remind each participant that if any question in any way makes one feel uncomfortable, they do not have to respond to it even more if they feel that we overstep on their private life. We know that our subject might affect people differently and could also step inside interviewees' privacy therefore according to the different answers we will get through the interview we will formulate questions differently or move forward quickly to other aspects of the subject. Finally, we will conduct an upstream pilot study to test our interview guidelines and check that questions are in relation to the subject, so we prevent deception from interviewees (Saunders et al., 2009, p. 190).

5. QUALITATIVE FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

In this section are revealed and analysed the findings from our qualitative research. We will look at the interviewees' responses through the different themes addressed during our semi-structured interviews: Generation Y behaviour, their relationship with social media as well as cosmetics; women empowerment & femvertising concerning the five cases selected; and purplewashing.

5.1. MILLENNIALS & COSMETICS

5.1.1. Care & well-being

By introducing respondents to the theme of cosmetics in a general way, we were able to gain insights on their uses, practices, and perceptions of this world before entering into more specific themes on their purchasing behaviour or their cause commitments as connected users. When asked to define cosmetics and their use of them, the respondents have a fairly broad vision of the field, ranging from care i.e., skincare and pharmaceutical product, to beauty i.e., makeup. Almost all of them except interviewee 8 define cosmetics through the prism of care, which they use daily, as a “*routine*” for interviewees 3 and 6 which states that “*it is a moment of pleasure*” or even a “*ritual*” for the interviewee 10. According to them, this category includes products such as creams, body and face creams, masks, or care products. They consider that these products have properties that allow them to feel good, correct imperfections, or treat their skin as specified by interviewee 5 for whom “*it is not going to be soap but a moisturizing soap, not only a cream that removes pimples but a cream that has properties for a shiny complexion*”.

Concerning these products, they are rather loyal and know what works for them, like interviewee 2 who “*uses creams, which are sold in pharmacies, the same for 10 years every day*”. If most of them use several creams every day, one-third of them question the real efficiency of these products as respondent 12 who says that “*one should not expect miracles when using cosmetic products*”; or question the necessity to have so many products as respondent 5 who says “*I do not think we need 12,000 steps of skincare. There are products that you could have in one or two copies only...*”.

5.1.2. Beautification & self-improvement

On the other side of the prism of their definition, more than half include makeup in cosmetics. Makeup is used more occasionally among respondents. Two interviewees explain that through the years, especially between high school and the end of university they reduced their routine and makeup consumption in their daily life while increasing and looking for better products for their skin, they also tend to use more natural makeup. From another perspective, some need make-up to feel good in society as respondent 10 tells us “*I do not use a lot of cosmetics, but to feel good and look good I feel the need to use some, especially mascara and eyeliner on my eyes and concealer where I have imperfections!*” or respondent 8 who uses makeup only when socializing: “*I wear makeup when I go out with girlfriends during the day or in the evening... and that's about the only time I will actually wear makeup.*”.

Most respondents associate makeup with the idea of self-improvement, such as respondent 5 who says that “*cosmetics are what helps to improve one's physique*” or respondent 10 who considers a “*panel of products [...] that allow to add artifices to a natural base*”. Respondent 8 even adds that these are products that “*help to beautify a person*”. Some are sceptical about this type of product, such as respondent 9, who thinks that “*generally speaking, companies make money on a malaise of people with their self or their complexes by conveying the idea of beautifying people. It may make them feel better, but they will often try to convince consumers that they have a problem so that they will turn to their product... But this is not necessarily the case!*”. Others consider or at least would like to consider makeup as a purely creative element that does not allow them to beautify themselves but rather to perform their identities, such as respondent 2 who says “*there is a lack of space for creativity*” or respondent 5 who considers that “*the value of beauty and fashion, in general, is really a self-expression, a creative expression without necessarily a modification of the human body or self. I would like to see more absurd things, even if I know that it is not to everyone's taste*”.

5.1.3. Stereotyped & gendered

All of the respondents share the vision of a cosmetics industry that conveys glossy, idealized and unreal representations of women, as respondent 3 emphasizes “*they are here to sell you something beautiful [...] it is well done but biased, pretty to look at but very biased*”. If a minority accommodates these representations as they are pretty, good for the brand image and inspires them, most of them reject them because these images do not represent the reality. The image of women in this industry is described as fake, degrading, sexualized, objectified; quite restrictive and lacking diversity, as interviewee 11 describes it “*I find that women are hugely objectified and that the image of the ‘perfect woman’ is often conveyed with this idea that it is absolutely necessary to look like her*”. Many raise the issue of retouching that makes the images lack realism. Idealization bothers most of the respondents who say they do not identify themselves as interviewee 8 who says, “*I do not think it is really good because there are people who only see the reality of things through these images and think it is the norm when it is not*”. Besides, many of them deplore the lack of diversity that does not represent the reality of cosmetic uses, focusing only on women, but not all women and not all their bodies - and neglecting the targeting on men.

More than half of the respondents indicated that this influences the representation of women in general in society and the image they have of themselves. Respondent 10 highlights this paradox by showing that “*In most cases, a woman has to be well dressed, well presented and it is a strong belief that can become a pressure... [...] Women receive a lot of injunctions, often contradictory like ‘you wear too much makeup’ or ‘you don't wear enough makeup’... and that they are constantly pulled between the two opposites of what they should or should not do. It is quite complicated to find a natural place for yourself*”. Thus, some considers the cosmetics industry as a fake and pure marketing strategy that is creating needs based on women complexes as respondent 2 says that “*it is a very superficial and nonessential industry*” or respondent 5 who thinks that it is “*the promotion of things that we don't need*”.

5.1.4. Societal evolution & changes in representations

However, most of them noted an evolution in recent years in the representation of women in cosmetics, especially through social networks. They agree that there is an evolution regarding

women's representation and diversity of models such as respondent 5 who *"[finds] that today women are more accepted than before concerning their identity, their multiplicity, and their entirety, especially in terms of diversity"* or the respondent 11 who highlights that *"stereotypes are challenged in favour of new representation"*. The evolutions observed concern more diverse representations of bodies, skin types or phenotypes. This has the effect of improving attention to brands like respondent 4 who notes that *"With this mind-opening, I am more attentive than before to the cosmetics industry. Before, I was more inclined to reject everything because I didn't recognize myself at all in the people who were represented and in the values that were carried"*. It can even improve their identification with these representations, such as respondent 2 who notes *"I don't think I identify myself in any representation, maybe more via Instagram now... because in mainstream media like TV or street ads I don't recognize myself... [...] As there are more skin types represented, more skin tones, I may recognize myself more in the advertising today, but it remains niche brands"*.

This is actually related to their desire and claims in terms of future advertising in cosmetics. The great majority of them would like to see more *"different bodies and a less gendered marketing"* as interviewee 1 points out i.e., inclusive marketed representation including all women and men. Besides, half of them want to see more natural and less retouched images like interviewee 11 who notes that *"today we should be able to be attracted by-products without the models being retouched"* or respondent 12 who wants to see more *"women who are not retouched on photoshop 40 times giving photos of people who do not exist"*. Regarding the perception of cosmetics social media marketing, respondent 2 summarizes that there is an *"interdependence between the improvement of some representations on Instagram and the way some brands align themselves with those representations"*. Some respondents remain sceptical and consider that some progress still to be made in terms of representation, such as respondent 9 who observes that *"the image is not very positive even if it is improving nowadays"* as well as respondent 2 who notes that *"it remains representations used as a marketing tool and therefore for consumption"*.

5.2. GENERATION Y CONSUMER BEHAVIOR

5.2.1. Connected & interconnected users

When asked about their connectivity, all respondents are present on social networks, having in common the fact of being on Instagram. Eight respondents over twelve are on more than four social media among Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok. They all use these networks on a daily basis; although some try to set limits for themselves as interviewees 4, 10 and 12 because they feel that they spend too much time on it, it can even be addictive as respondent 8 noticed. For each social media, they are looking at it for a specific purpose and related information search. They will not look for the same content on the different platforms just like respondent 2 who uses *"Facebook mainly for cultural events, internship searches and for classes, YouTube for quite specific content like illustration but no more lifestyle and beauty content at all while Instagram I use it for everything"*. We can note among the interviewees that their use of these social networks is multiple. As a general overview, we can see that all respondents are using social media to inform themselves about news, the latest trends, for their work or studies as well as to find information about particular topics by searching for podcasts or reviews for example. Besides, more than half indicate that it allows them to find inspiration, whether it is aesthetic, projects or

inspirational figures such as influencers. This type of content is consumed because it matches their lifestyle or values. Most also mention that it allows them to interact with relatives, follow the content they post and keep them up to date on what they are doing as well. Finally, it allows them to be entertained especially when they are bored, like respondent 3 who looks for “*entertainment on Instagram most of the time*”, respondent 5 who says that she “[*goes*] on those social networks and scroll when [*she is*] bored”, respondent 8 who says that it helps her “*pass the time*” or respondent 11 who looks for “*funny posts like memes*”.

It can also be noted that all respondents, except respondent 8, follow brands even if they all specify that it does not represent the majority of the content followed. Reasons given for this engagement with brands are related to their lifestyle, needs, contests offered by brands or inspirations for aesthetics or values. However, none of them use the marketplace functions of these platforms. Only respondent 1 mentioned the existence of the marketplace and said she did not use it. Even though they are connected users, when asked about their cosmetic purchasing habits, very few of them rely on online shopping, except respondents 2, 4, 5, 7 and 10, for whom this is very recent and rare.

5.2.2. Aware consumers

All of the interviewees admit that they had already encountered sponsored content on Instagram and insist on the numbers they see every day, qualified as “*a lot*” or even “*too much*”. They say that this content is always targeted based on their searches or profile. Indeed, all respondents are at least confronted with one of these so-called “*feminine*” product categories: clothing, period panties, cosmetics, jewellery, or decoration. Interviewee 7's response is typical of this: “*I see a lot of sponsored content! All the research I do on the internet, I see it afterward in sponsored content. I have cosmetics, clothes, the other day I was looking for decoration and I got decoration...*”. However, these consumers are not fooled and know that this is another marketing lever for brands. Interviewees 4, 9, 10 or 11 who have a link with the business field understand that brands reach a bigger audience on these networks, that they can develop “*a whole [brand] visual identity*” and that it is a must-have in marketing today. All the consumers interviewed are aware that they are being targeted and some of them accept it because the contents match their lifestyles, values and needs. Interviewee 10 tells us that “*the product is in line with my needs and values and either luck plays a role, or they track and target me well; being realistic I think it is more the second option*”. They also know that the products that will impact them the most are those that do not appear as traditional ads and could be considered as content shared by their friends. Most of the time they are original, out of the ordinary and eye catchy. Some of them appreciate that brands are on social networks because it allows them to create a community of consumers around the brands, like respondent 8 who notes that “*often [cosmetics brands] do repost of people testing their product and I think that's cool. Plus, Instagram is more of a spontaneous platform than the ads you see on TV or the billboards and posters on the street... it is more interactive! People can give their opinion*”.

While others will have a rejection approach towards these ads. Interviewee 1 describes herself as “*the kind of person who will uncheck all the cookies*” as well as interviewee 2 who tells us “*I skip sponsored content. Even sometimes when I have time, I flag the post with*”. “*I don't want to see this content anymore*”; while interviewee 3 for whom “*it is not the content I look for when I am on an app for entertainment*”. In general, more than half of our sample is annoyed by this

sponsored content which constitutes a “*visual pollution*” for respondent 9, something oppressive that she “*didn’t ask for*” according to respondent 3. Interviewee 10 pointed that “*the amount of current sponsored content has reached the limit*” she can tolerate. Indeed, users agree that some brands e.g., period panties, are too pushy on these social networks. Despite their awareness, some have already clicked on sponsored content such as respondent 2 who admits that “*I clicked and saved without even knowing that it was an ad in the beginning*”. While most admit to being aware of marketing techniques, they say they can be influenced or blame their curiosity: the design of the post or the “*redundancy in the publication*” as respondent 6 highlights can attract them. Thus, these ads sometimes create needs as respondents 1 or 8 point out with the example of menstrual panties that they had not previously thought of. These ads get into the consumers' minds as things they will keep in mind in the event of a future need.

5.2.3. Knowledgeable consumers

When asking about their cosmetics buying process and the steps they take before buying, all respondents do research, that are either more or less extensive through different channels. The majority relies on peer reviews that they trust. Whether it is friends or family, influencers who talk about products, share their experience, this allows consumers to get information, like interviewee 3 who tells us “*If my mother tells me about an anti-wrinkle cream and says it is great, I will go buy it right away. If a friend tells me that this scrub is great and that we have the same skin texture, I say why not otherwise on brand websites as Sephora, customer reviews with a little more concrete feedback on the product in question*”. Indeed, some of them will prefer to look on the website to gather consumer reviews they identify with because these reviews are honest and unfiltered, like interviewee 5 who says “*The information I am going to seek out for my cosmetic products, I'm going to look for it first and foremost in consumer reviews. I recently discovered that I have rosacea and it is something I still don't fully understand, so when I see that someone has the same skin problem as me and recommends a product, I figure that the information he or she shares is reliable*”. The influencers that these consumers trust can also help them in their search for information, even if half of the respondents remain suspicious of the quality of the advice given and products promoted.

Others consider that going to physical stores is also a good way to get advice from saleswomen, professionals, or pharmacists because they know their products well and their effects. One-third of our sample considers that going to physical stores is a good way to keep informed and to be sure of the quality of information gathered. The information sought may concern the product, its components, effectiveness, or application, depending on the level of knowledge of the consumers.

5.2.4. Conscious & committed consumers

In addition to get informed about their purchases, some respondents long process before buying cosmetics. On the one hand, a minority of our sample do not hesitate too much as respondent 3 said, “*I don't think about it, or I already have an idea and then I go there to confirm my idea*”. While interviewee 10 is in an intermediate position since she tries to “*remain minimalist in [her] purchases [...] even if sometimes [she] takes the 'least worst' product if [she] really need it on the moment*”. On the other hand, more than half of the interviewees, will have a long reflection process about the utility and need of the product, like respondent 4 who wonders “*I have this process of thinking 'Am I buying because I basically have hair or skin problems right now? or is*

it just a desire that I want to satisfy?'”. Most of the time they will look for information but do not buy at the end as respondent 2 will *“think about what [she] likes and look at a few things but rarely go to the purchase stage”*. Some also try to buy less than before in order to become more responsible like respondent 5 who considered: *“When I started buying too many products and my closet was full of products, I realized that I didn't need an extra moisturizer... from that moment I began to take a very long time before deciding to buy. Now I make lists of cosmetics that I would like to buy, and I see at the end of the month if I need these products or not”*.

More than half of them try to buy products that constitute a need and limit themselves in their non-essential purchases. One of the criteria that stands out in their purchases is the effectiveness of the product: they do not want useless products. However, half of them recognize that they can be fooled by marketing through packaging, beautiful advertisements. Respondent 4 thinks that *“the packaging plays a role even if [she] would like not to... A beautiful product with nice colors is more likely to attract me”* as well as respondent 11 who tells us that *“the packaging plays an important role... My eye will first be attracted by the packaging”*. Others are more sceptical about these elements of brand images and consider that it is only marketing like interviewee 9 who thinks that *“[cosmetic brands] mostly sell water in cosmetics... and some active ingredients. L'Oréal for example is not really cosmetics but pure marketing!”*.

Following a responsible approach, two-thirds of the interviewees indicated that they were looking for information on the components of the products concerning their environmental impact or on the skin. Some of them use applications such as Yuka or Clean Beauty i.e., applications that indicate the quality and the environmental impact of products, such as interviewee 12 who says *« I scan, I look at what I think of the ingredients. If I like it, I validate it and I buy it, otherwise, I don't use it. I have been scanning for two years via the Clean Beauty application. [...] I choose brands like Caudalie and Body Shop - natural, without animal testing, without paraben”*. The origin of the cosmetics, the respectful components i.e., organic, non-allergenic, and not tested on animals, and the transparency of the brand are key elements that the great majority of respondents consider in their purchase. However, arguments such as price, which remains one of the most important criteria for most respondents, can stop them in their responsible buying approach.

5.3. FEMVERTISING & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

5.3.1. Femvertising knowledge

Although for the majority of them, eleven out of the twelve interviewees had never heard about the term 'femvertising', this term seems familiar. Some of them, when thinking about a definition of the term, define femvertising as *“making ads pronouncing her feminist side”* according to respondent 1 or *“promotion of products that embody values”* according to respondent 8. However, others do not consider the feminist dimension and are even sceptical about the term, as respondent 5 defines it as *“advertising that targets the characteristics of femininity not necessarily towards women”* or *“ads targeted at women”* according to respondent 7. Respondents 2 and 10 immediately defined femvertising by its negative side i.e., a definition closer to purplewashing as *“the promotion of women through so-called more inclusive, more representative ads, but which in the end only aim to attract more consumers”* according to respondent 2 or something *“surfing the feminist wave for commercial purposes”* for respondent 10. Respondents are mainly all aware of that kind of ad, even if there is a lack of knowledge and are not experts in the matter, they are

sensitized. Except for respondent 12 who has *"more examples of campaigns that put forward the woman object than the responsible woman, unfortunately ..."*, all respondents have examples of brands practicing this type of advertising in mind. The examples given overlap between respondents' answers with period panties, clothing, and cosmetics brands. Messages carried by these brands are about body positivism, genderless and women empowerment.

Faced with this awareness of brands' commitment, out of the twelve respondents ten consider themselves as feminists. Respondents 3 and 6 do not feel personally committed to the movement, especially for respondent 3 because of all the *"drifts"* related to the movement and because she is *"for the woman equal to the man but not superior to him. It is a beautiful fight but not [hers]"*. When asking them about their commitments, we can see that those women are either committed to themselves and their image but also committed to share their engagement with others. First, they are committed for themselves like the respondent 10 is doing personal work to detach herself from the representations she has internalized: *"I am already working on deconstructing all the injunctions that have been taught to us and that seem essential, but when you dig a little deeper, you realize that these facts are based on nothing...For that, I listen to podcasts and I read books, I watch videos and I follow people on social media who are more advanced than me on the subject... I think I'm making progress today in my awakening to the subject, via a lot of documentation"*. Most of them try to inform themselves, communicate and share with their peers on subjects such as gender equality or fight against sexism. Some of them define themselves as being involved on a daily basis in a natural way, like respondent 4 who tells us *"my involvement is rather natural. For example, I take care of my way to speak, I am careful to feminize everything, I correct the way my peers talk..."*; while others work on their peer's motivation like respondent 12 who tries to *"push young women in [her] field of work to stand up and assert themselves in order to be tomorrow's seniors' partners"*; militate such as respondent 1 or demonstrate like respondent 8. Finally, respondent 2 is part of engaged movements and defines herself as *"involved in the radical branch of feminism and more in the queer, lesbian, radical communities"*.

5.3.2. Femvertising experience

When confronted with the selected cases, the interviewees were impacted by the messages shared and the emotional dimension of the spots but less by the visual aspect. The example of L'Oréal is the one that has provoked most reactions, notably because it is a statement about which *"we have all been confronted with such situations"* as interviewee 11 highlights or as interviewee tells that she *"feels more concerned in her daily life about street harassment, so it made more impression on [her], also because they give keys and concrete solutions"*. The committed message of this advertisement has raised the awareness of some interviewees, such as interviewee 4, who comments *"I had chills, I found that it was a beautiful and touching message"* as well as interviewee 9 who tells *"I was close to tears, it is very emotional"*. Storytelling created by the Body Shop also constitutes an emotional appeal because, as shared by respondent 10 *"people give their feelings and advocate the idea that people are not just a physical or appearance that does not speak or a model that has nothing in his head ... The women who are represented there give life to their image, humanize it"*.

This allows the majority of them, ten out of twelve, to identify with or at least feel better about their representation. It can be noted that the most positive remarks are related to the ads they identify the most with like respondent 2 who says that *"the Urban Decay ad with characters like*

Lizzo was nice, and it makes me feel good to see these people... [...] I appreciate when there are figures that I like culturally or artistically in partnership with brands: I think it is a guarantee of sincerity and quality” or as well with respondent 7 who liked the Dove commercial *“typically with the girl talking about sports and different types of fitness, I found it good. After the Urban Decay one I liked it a little less, probably because I'm not part of the target, I associate myself less with that. But what touched me the most were the contents that tell you to ‘love yourself as you are’, in this theme of self-love. That speaks to me more than ‘be bold’”*.

However, some address the inappropriateness of these advertisements, such as the message carried by L'Oréal, which arouses the scepticism of respondent 12 who has *“real mistrust towards these big brands”* shared by respondent 2 who found that *“everything is wrong, L'Oréal puts itself in a position of saviour”*. The Body Shop also raised some critics because of the choice of models and the subject tackle here. For respondent 2 these brands still show a women idealisation because their ad *“all gorgeous [women who] talk about the ability ‘to dream big’ but they are not ordinary women”* while for respondent 6 *“by putting on people from minorities or with generous physique then I no longer identify myself because it is not me”*. Finally, the visual appeal of the Urban Decay ad was too much for more than half of the interviewees who found it violent, too dynamic, punchy *“and do not find it especially novel”* in the format as interviewee 1 pointed out. Therefore, most of them did not identify themselves in this ad because they did not feel concerned and found it similar to traditional ads.

5.3.3. Femvertising opinion

When asking them what they think about this type of ad, through the different respondents' answers, it appears the idea that it participates in the change of representations and by the same token *“it is a good way to change mentalities”* according to what is said by respondent 8. With the promotion of diversity and feminist messages, those representations go beyond the clichés and beauty standards as mentioned by respondent 12 who appreciates Doves' ads showing a more natural dimension with *“imperfect bodies that remind that nobody needs to be in the standards”*. Respondent 7 is going further *“if not cosmetics industry who will?”*. As sum up by respondent 11 *“this breaks the code while today there are still a lot of girls who are complexed because we see unreal models in the media...”*. More than two-thirds of the interviewees consider that the messages delivered are in general *positives, good, interesting, laudable, changing or different*. Only respondent 3 remains sceptical regarding those possible shifts brought by those cosmetic brands' statements *“I don't really see what, it changes, we keep seeing the same actresses on ads”*. Overall, they consider these messages to be strong symbols for brands. Particularly since, as interviewee 4 observed *“it is a good initiative because it is going to become common practice because everyone is doing it. It can have a snowball effect where more and more brands do it and potentially it can have an informative or educational effect on the cause... Because even if it is not qualitative educational teaching, it can still touch us and we remember things from the ads, so it is better if the message is positive and helps to change things!”*. Thus, some consider that in addition to changing representations, it can be a good strategy for companies and can have *“very good consequences on the financial aspects”* as mentioned by respondent 4.

However, some nuanced their enthusiasm in front of the reuse of several brands of feminist statements. Respondent 8 explains that *“there is a kind of hype around feminism... it can help them sell products”*. Others are more sceptical such as respondent 11 who is stating that *“companies not*

originally feminist use the speech more to follow a trend". Most of them are sharing their fear about the real motives behind these messages as respondent 2 saying that *"there were some brands that I felt more sincere than others"* unlike respondent 1 who questions the point of doing this if *"there is no real commitment behind it"*. Respondent 10 is summarizing by categorizing brands in three categories: *"First, there are the brands that have been convinced of this from the beginning and have been developed under a feminist perspective [...]. Even if there is a profit motive, the approach is often quite sincere and consistent. Secondly, some companies have been existing for a longer period and that were not particularly committed to the cause a few years ago, but by studying the market and following the trends, they have adapted themselves, whether it is to keep up with the trend or not to be too far from social progress... We can give these brands the benefit of the doubt [...]. Finally, there are the brands that follow the movement in a more neutral way, only because it is the trend without taking any real stance or action behind it! Overall, this remains a positive initiative, but we must be careful about the sincerity of the brands!"*.

5.3.4. Femvertising & buying influence

When asked if this could impact their purchasing decisions, most agree that they could be influenced by this kind of cause stance. Only respondents 1, 3 and 6 consider that it would not impact their consumption. On the one hand, respondent 1 announced that she would look into the sincerity of these initiatives and do some research on her own because she remains suspicious of the controversial background of certain brands, such as L'Oréal; on the other hand, respondents 3 and 6 are not at all affected by this type of position, which does not fit into their value system. Regarding the other interviewees, we identify some key incentives that encourage them to buy products after seeing those ads. Some admit that if the brand displays values that fit into their value system, they may be attracted to it as respondent 11 says that *"a brand that has the same commitments and values as mine attracts me"*. Others will still do more research before buying the products to ensure the sincerity of the approach as respondent 10 who knows that *"an ad can be very beautiful but behind it there is nothing. It can certainly attract [her], but [she] will still look on the internet if there are no reviews, reports or proof of their commitment"*; or keep this brand in mind in the event of a future purchase. Also, since these brands promote a more diverse image of women, they can identify more easily with the brand, which leads some to get attracted as interviewee 4 who answers when asked if this type of advertising could influence her purchasing decisions *"Yes, for sure... Because in itself it reflects my values and I identify more with these brands!"* as well as the interviewee 12 who says *"it encourages me to buy, much more than the perfect L'Oréal models - which repels me, which is a barrier for me. I find this communication much more interesting to me than the messages of perfect beauty"*.

However, many indicated that this would not be a decisive factor in their purchase decision because as committed consumers the environmental impact of the product is to be considered. Respondent 1 remains sceptical because *"I know what they put in their product; I know the components..."*. As respondent 9 is stating to resume *"the self-acceptance aspect is good but not at the cost of having bad products on my skin"*.

5.4. PURPLEWASHING

5.4.1. Scepticism confirmed

After confronting the respondents to femvertising examples, we introduced to them the notion of purplewashing. Out of the twelve interviewees, none of them officially heard the term before this interview. However, some made connections to things they knew, such as respondent 10 who knew that purple is “*the colour of feminism*” and who defined purplewashing as greenwashing but applied to feminism. Respondents 1, 7 and 10 also made the connection between greenwashing and purplewashing by stating that it would probably be the same but to denounce a misuse of the feminist discourse by the brands. For most of them who had expressed scepticism about the femvertising approach before being confronted with the term, this confirmed their scepticism. Indeed, more than half of the respondents consider that if they “*didn't necessarily have the term in mind... it is something that's at the heart of the debates today, so it is not surprising that there is a concept that exists to define that*” as respondent 5 highlights it. Many say they are not surprised that brands are not always truthful.

Being aware of purplewashing, nearly half of the consumers agree that they will pay more attention to this brand strategy. This could indeed influence their decision-making process and push them to be more informed. Following this perspective, respondent 4 is saying that “*it changes my perception because it has that same effect on me as greenwashing has... So why not for purplewashing... I think I will look for more information because I feel like I have been misled by these messages. Maybe I will take more care to check the messages*”. Respondents who were already in the process of researching the sincerity of brands confirm their position. Indeed, respondents 1 and 9 are pointing out the responsibility of consumers to look for information like they do such as “*[looking] at the brand's history, [trying] to understand the business model*” and advice to “*look within the company for key indicators about parity for example*”. In the face of this, respondent 8 is the only one who continues to trust brands about this subject “*since I personally don't know anything about it, I don't see the difference! I don't know if I'll be more suspicious... I prefer to trust the brands and I hope that the really good brands will attract me more!*”.

5.4.2. Disavowed brands

Beyond the obvious scepticism of consumers, trust is broken for some consumers. Indeed, half of the interviewees consider that it is a dishonest, hypocritical practice that misled consumers. Some underline that this cause recuperation or this woke washing for capitalist purposes is far from the goal of social progress of a feminist approach. These interviewees are ready to boycott the brand if evidence of purplewashing is uncovered, like interviewee 10 who says that “*If the purplewashing is publicly revealed, it will boycott the brand... I think it is really dishonest: you might as well not go that far in presenting your commitment if there is a gap with the practical reality*”. From the same perspective, interviewee 11 states “*If I'm a customer of a brand and I find out they're doing this, knowing that I like committed and transparent brands, I'll feel betrayed, because I trust brands to have real commitments... So, if I find out that they are doing purplewashing I will find it dishonest. A brand can't call itself feminist and want to change things if nothing is done internally... Then I will stop being a customer*”. In a more general way, the interviewees who feel responsible in their purchases, especially at the environmental level, will take the same approach as with greenwashing and will turn away from these brands. Respondent

5 illustrates this dimension saying, *“I'm going to be discouraged from buying if a brand is against certain social progress, like racism or homophobia issues... but taking a stand for a cause without any real commitment behind it isn't going to encourage me either”*. Overall, respondents seem to be a bit on the fence, for most of them it is good to take stances, but we can see from their answers that reality of commitment will play a key role in their buying decisions.

5.4.3. Paradox challenged

Faced with purplewashing, the paradox raised by the interviewees is the following: is it interesting to take a stand for a cause if you do not really commit yourself? For some interviewees, it is a tricky and risky strategy to adopt as respondent 4 is considering *“It is risky [as a strategy]! because it is a subject that is so central to our society that brands should not be clumsy with it... Brands that take a stand must take a stand for real! If I start my own brand tomorrow and it is a small brand, I will say go for it; but if it is a huge company that's already being accused of animal cruelty or whatever, I will tell them to make sure their message is grounded at a practical level”*. If the goal is only to follow a trend, then it is not anchored in the feminist movement and may even hurt the cause. Respondents 7 and 9 point out the capitalist bargain at the heart of the accusation - *“it is using feminism to sell products”* and even *“it is feminism bashing, playing on those messages to gain customers”*. Respondent 2 is even adding *“I think it is really tragic because it standardizes and participates in the normalization of feminism... I do not think it is great for the feminist struggle!”*. More generally, respondent 1 alerts to the idea that *“a multinational company can make all the commitments it wants, there is no such thing as ethical capitalism or green capitalism. It is still capitalism where the goal is to make the biggest profit possible and to crush the competition”*.

For some, it is not up to brands to take a stand on these issues. Indeed, if the L'Oréal ad was at the heart of the debate, it is because the brand is committed to a cause that, according to some interviewees, is beyond it, namely street harassment. Respondent 5 raises this point by stating *“When I watched the L'Oréal ad, I thought: is this a joke? It is completely antinomic... Why make an ad to learn how to intervene in street harassment? Couldn't we rather learn how to stop harassing? I also have a hard time seeing how they relate this to their business...”*. Ads like Urban Decay's that stay in the makeup segment by showing the possibilities of creativity and *“as a way to perform with our identity”* makes more sense for respondent 2. In this same perspective, the most accepted example of femvertising among the interviewees is Mawena certainly because the commitment is linked to the product. Indeed, many of them underline that this image of an older woman, unretouched, with white hair, which does not carry any particular message, remains a strong symbol. This allows to change the representations while remaining in line with the product sold as underlined by respondent 1 *“to see someone who puts a serum and who has the age to put a serum and who does not have the face completely retouched or botoxed as it is often the case it is also good: it is changing!”*. Respondent 2 also mentions *“having a muse that is different from the others and standard [...] but who is nevertheless a very beautiful woman like her without needing either a facelift or to appear as someone who is ten years younger than her age - especially since these are completely outdated beauty criteria -: it is for me a very subtle way to embody these values!”*. A point of agreement raised by some interviewees is therefore that brands committing themselves must do so in the context of cosmetics.

5.4.4. Nuances & progress

Half of the interviewees nuanced their position by trying to find the good sides of this kind of stance taken by brands on social issues. Even if these brands are surfing on a trend and doing this to reach their capital objectives, the simple fact of communicating about these new representations shows that the business is changing. Consumers' societal demands are being heard, as in the case of respondent 1 who says that *“the fact that brands try to communicate on these subjects also shows that society is changing, so in itself it is good, but they don't do it for the right reasons...”*. The brands' way of doing things is certainly clumsy, but it allows the media landscape to change and standards to be shifted in the image of respondent 7 who tells us *“It is not like greenwashing where it is more of a lie. I think that the message has really got through and it is up to them to put in place commitments afterward. The most important thing is that the message got through and that the public hears it”*. In addition, some of them emphasized that brands should not always be blamed. Indeed, respondent 4 maintains that *“I think that we should not always attack the brands... Cosmetic brands are nevertheless the main actors in the way women feel and look in their daily life. It is a good thing that we offer more cosmetics to people who were previously completely ignored by the brands [...] It is a key issue, and these brands have to do it. I think it is good to open up products to diversity, like makeup for men, but if the only objective is to have a brand image, I do not think it is good”*.

6. DISCUSSION

In this section, our findings are discussed in light of our literature review to provide answers to the research questions raised at the beginning of our study. Then, based on this discussion, we present a revised version of our conceptual model.

6.1. FEMVERTISING & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT: A POSITIVE PERCEPTION OF THESE NEW REPRESENTATIONS

As outlined by our findings, the millennials perceive the representation conveyed by cosmetics femvertisement in a positive way. Femvertising appears to be a marketing practice that is in line with what Gen Y women want but also with what they strive for. This completes the view of several authors (Champlin et al., 2019; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; Sterbenk et al., 2021; Vredenburg et al., 2020) who point out that consumers expect brands to take a position on the socio-political issue by given a new insight on the feminist issue. This further supports statements made by Kotler & Sarkar (2017) regarding the demand and acceptance from consumers regarding brands' femvertising. While the definition of cosmetics as care is not debated among the participants of our study, the idea of cosmetics to beautify or improve the self is debated. Make-up entails this idea and desire for self-improvement and beauty, which are considered stereotypical and discriminating by Generation Y, which is in line with what was already highlighted by Calogero et al. (2007) et Wolf (2013). As outlined by our findings, millennials are rejecting these traditional representations of the cosmetics industry that convey an unreal image of a perfect and objectified woman; instead, they are asking for representations to change in order to be more realistic, less photoshopped and less gendered. In this same dynamic, the use of cosmetics as a way to creatively perform one's identity, as supported by White (2018, p. 144) is also an approach supported by the female respondents in our study. Thus, Generation Y perceives rather positively the approach of the brands to change these representations as they meet their aspirations in terms of change in the use of the image of the woman in advertising, which can influence the millennials in their decision-making process according to Drake (2017, p. 595).

Besides these representations also affect them insofar as femvertising allows them to better identify with the images displayed by the cosmetic brands. As outlined by our findings, the emotional appeal through the messages carried by women empowerment echoed in the interviewees. According to Drake (2017, pp. 594-597), these appeals lead to increased attitude and engagement towards femvertising. Indeed, the sharing of similar experiences through storytelling or situation setting evoked the identification of these participants with these instances of femvertising. Our research highlights the importance of emotional appeal in the consumer's identification process which supports Moreno et al.'s (2017, p. 141) perspective which shows that millennials tend to identify to and be positive about femvertising that advocates for similar struggles they hold. As participants pointed out, more natural representations that are different from traditional ads are also likely to attract their attention as supported by Kapoor & Munjal's (2019, p. 138) perspective that to identify with advertisements, this need to be a mirror of real-life and this is exactly what femvertisement is offering to consumers. From our findings, the participants notice the ads far from the traditional clichés of the ad, which are out of the ordinary, original, eye-catching and arouse a visual appeal for them, which is in line with Manfredi-Sánchez (2019, p. 346) for whom brands must differentiate themselves according to graphic or emotionally anchored levers. Thus, this sharing of representations closer to reality affects them positively.

Based on these new representations conveyed by committed brands, the femvertising is well received by consumers. Concerning this marketing strategy, consumers feel that brands are listening to them and take their claims into account. Femvertising is at the crossroad of strong societal demands facing a growing demand break the codes and a change in women representations. As outlined by our findings, millennials see this as a necessary evolution to change codes, standards and ultimately mindsets which confirms the perspective of Drake (2017, p. 593) that marketers have been urged to give a more accurate representation of women from consumers demand. Through their daily use of social networks such as Instagram, consumers are confronted with numerous images that make up their newsfeed, hence the importance for brands to be creative and engaged in order to retain attention and allow identification with the brand and its products. As underlined by our findings, millennials perceive the representations proposed by cosmetic brands through their femvertising, rather positively since these representations are in line with their values and aspirations, represent reality more and allow them to identify themselves. Thus, these consumers have the feeling that their claims are respected by the brands. This perspective is shared by Lissitsa & Kol (2016, pp. 305-306) regarding the attention millennials will give to brands that match their lifestyle and take actions regarding what they believe in.

6.2. A COMMITTED GENERATION Y & QUALIFIED POSITIVE ATTITUDE

This positive attitude is nevertheless qualified by several elements when we consider our findings. Gen Y consumers are hyper-connected, they have grown up and are surrounded by information. Constantly confronted with sponsored content in their use of social networks, they adapt to it although they are irritated by the amount of content they are exposed to. As outlined by our findings and consistent with the previous literature, their decision-making process is relatively long because their consumption is more responsible and conscious: participants are looking for transparency and products in line with their values. Thus, they rely on the sources of information available to them that they trust: their peers, professionals or use social networks, as supported by Moreno et al. (2017) as well as Smith (2011). If in their research process something does not fit what they are looking for, they will not engage with these brands, as the idea of brand avoidance of Shetty et al. (2019, p. 172) supports it. As emphasized by Shetty et al. (2019, p. 165), brands that show their commitment through marketing levers expose themselves to accusations from all parts of being fake in their statement and not really supporting the cause, especially because as outlined by our findings Gen Y's commitment makes them savvy consumers who are perplexed regarding the honesty of brands dedicated to a cause. When introduced to purplewashing, participants who have expressed an interest in the environmental cause compare it to greenwashing and similarly blame the use of feminist discourse for capitalist and marketing purposes. Sensitized to these issues, they are not surprised that this is possible. As Vredenburg et al (2020, p. 449) pointed out inauthentic brand activism, they denounce a dishonest approach that misleads the consumer. Since their values they hold dear are at stake, this overwhelmingly affects consumer trust by damaging it. Relying on MacKenzie & Lutz's (1989, p.54) definition of attitude, these predispositions lead participants to respond unfavourably to femvertising.

Furthermore, Generation Y seems rather aware of the feminist cause as outlined by our findings where the great majority defines itself as feminist and engaged to different degrees which extends the previous literature about a generation concerned by social issues. Supporting the idea of

Moreno et al. (2017, p. 137) that consumers who have developed a real consumer knowledge about a cause are more difficult to convince, our findings show that the most engaged among them are those who have first highlighted their scepticism towards femvertising, saying that it is not a sincere approach and questioning the profit-seeking. The participants in our study confirm the paradox raised by Abitbol & Sternadori (2016, p. 131) i.e., that of a hypocritical approach when the company does not even care about the cause internally. From our findings, a certain perplexity emerges from the respondents who find that brands are surfing on a trend that should not be surfed. This confirms Abitbol & Sternadori's (2016, p. 133) view that there has been a resurgence of interest in the feminist cause in recent years as a cultural trend culture that deviates from its original activist goal. Aware of the marketing techniques and levers to target them on social networks, some perceive femvertising as one more strategy through which brands try to attract them; this expands Lissitsa & Kol's (2016, p. 306) perspective with the idea that Generation Y is also aware of new marketing tactics and therefore more suspicious of brands' motivations. Their scepticism stems from the following debate: for some, it is not up to brands to take a stand on the cause, while others mention that it even harmed the feminist cause by standardizing the struggle, supporting the perspectives of Abitbol & Sternadori (2016) and Johnston & Taylor (2008). Awareness of purplewashing has the effect of confirming the scepticism of those who had already raised the issue, while awakening it for others. This perception of femvertising as a trend and a marketing tool nuances the enthusiasm of Generation Y towards it. This has affected most of them by generating a mistrustful attitude. Participants in the study highlighted a willingness to do more research on brands with feminist values.

Grounded in our findings, it is apparent that Generation Y knowledge and commitment to social causes is a key element in their attitude towards femvertising and cause committed brands. Indeed, the more committed people are, the more knowledgeable they are and the more sceptical they are about femvertising. This corroborates the views of Mukherjee & Althuizen (2020, p. 773) and Vredenburg et al. (2020, p. 448) that brands taking positions on divisive issues that are core to consumers' value systems can alienate them and once deceived they keep this sceptical posture. The existing literature further suggested, that as a result of this scepticism the brand is exposed to backlashes from consumers if the purplewashing is exposed (Mukherjee & Althuizen, 2020, p. 775; Shetty et al., 2019, p. 164). However, this is only partially supported by the findings as only few participants pointed out that they will boycott the brands. Besides, contrary to what our conceptual model suggested, it seems that any form of engagement, especially environmental, could influence the perception, affection, attitude and purchase intention of cosmetic products. This indicates a challenge for brands to rethink their commitment. Especially in the cosmetics field where the commitment needs to be related to the product to limit friction and avoid taking stances that are too far from the field as revealed by our findings. Thus, the enthusiasm for femvertising must be balanced with the level and access to information, knowledge and commitment of Generation Y. Femvertising can be perceived as a new marketing strategy that follows a trend with a simple capitalist goal, which has the effect of breaking trust and inducing distrust of consumers for these brands. The resulting attitude can be scepticism, more research on the honesty of the approach when it is not a boycott.

6.3. SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING & PURCHASE INTENTION

Our findings also gave us an insight into the impact of digital marketing by brands on Generation Y. As pointed out by the participants in our study, brands are more and more numerous on social media and especially Instagram: through official brands accounts and targeted ads they have invested the platform to promote their products and brand image (Sajid, 2016, p. 3). From the consumers' point of view, cosmetic brands' stance on social networks is perceived as a good strategy. Even if millennials are on the edge of saturation in terms of branded content viewed, our findings show that they still understand the need for brands to be present on such platforms. Indeed, the participants in our study recognize that it allows them to reach a larger audience due to the number of users present on Instagram as outlined by Berthon et al., 2012, p. 262-263). Aware that brands target them according to their profiles and based on their lifestyle, they accept it as long as it does not bother them too much even giving them sometimes some purchase inspirations. Indeed, as outlined by our findings the second use of Instagram for the participants is the search for inspiration. They pointed out that they even follow brands on social networks who post content that inspires them both for its aesthetics and the values it conveys. As revealed by our study, participants are aware of the influence mechanisms at stake on the social network while letting themselves be influenced. As a result, it confirms Sajid's (2016) idea that brands must go to social media to increase their influence and sales.

Considering the influence of femvertising, millennials recognize that this can influence them in their purchasing process. However, being in a more conscious and physical purchasing process when it comes to cosmetic purchases, femvertising does not trigger an immediate purchase. Although they are very active on social networks, our findings pointed out that millennials do not use them as a purchasing platform. Faced with these sponsored contents from cause-committed cosmetics brands, they recognize that this may influence their purchase since the products appear to reflect their values and meet their potentials need. As outlined by our findings, an unconscious process can push them to buy if a need arises. This argument testifies to the effectiveness of the algorithms put in place by the networks and used by the brands as pointed out by Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi (2012, p. 4446) which drive attraction for certain products by creating needs in consumers' minds. even if they are far from being fooled. These consumers reveal that if the content is well designed, they may even click on the content to get more information and can consider buying the product. This confirms Smith's (2011, p. 495) view that visual appeal remains an important lever for brands alongside values. From our findings, we can consider that Generation Y consumers hold a rather favourable attitude towards femvertising by admitting that they can be positively influenced by this type of content.

Finally, beyond the simple influence, our findings revealed that they would be willing to buy these products and reflect a positive purchase intention towards femvertising. Regarding accusations of purplewashing and the decision to buy, some consumers admit that even if there is a risk of purplewashing, this does not influence their decision to buy the brand's products in particular as long as the purplewashing is not revealed or publicly known. They attach too much importance to the messages and values disseminated by brands through femvertising. This confirms the perspective of Champlin et al. (2019, p. 1241) that this strategy of differentiation through femvertising has a positive influence on the consumer's decision-making process, with a better attitude and reception towards the brand and its advertising messages. As outlined by our findings, the attachment to feminist values of participants also supplements the perspective of Shetty et al.

(2019, p. 165) who argue that this special attachment in a rise in purchase intention. Therefore, our findings revealed that femvertising can be a good strategy for the brands in order to trigger their decision-making process.

6.4. REVISED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

This revised conceptual model (see Figure 2) takes into account the discussion of our findings which led us to reconsider some of the assertions we had made after reviewing the literature on the subject of femvertising and consumers' attitudes towards this type of advertising. Indeed, our findings indicated that people committed to feminist causes or other causes, particularly environmental causes in our study, held the same attitudes toward femvertising. These committed people found similar patterns between femvertising and purplewashing as with other causes on which brands take a stand. Their commitment and the sharing of values that they cherish with brands lead them to have the same behaviour towards committed brands. It seems that these people adopt the same approach to advertising, whatever the cause the brands support: they tend to be more sceptical and to engage in more research to investigate the brand commitment. On the contrary, people who are not committed to feminism or any other cause will not make any connection with other causes and will remain insensitive to the cause defended by the brands, whether this cause is really defended or only for communicative purposes. Indeed, they do not feel concerned by these causes or even disinterest from the brand, do not recognize themselves to that kind of advertising and even reject some brands because they cannot identify in it. As a result, for our conceptual model, we changed the *feminist* mention to *cause committed* and the *non-feminist* mention to *non-cause committed*. Considering any type of commitment, we also believe that this model can be studied and tested on different studies focusing on the effect of cause marketing on consumer behaviour.

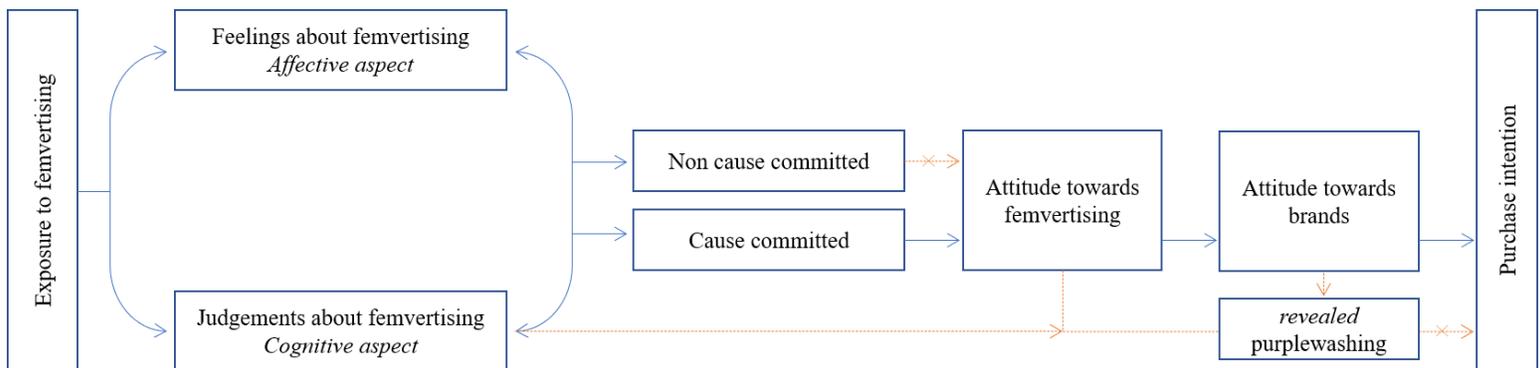


Figure 2 – Revised conceptual model regarding attitude toward femvertising

The second change to this model concerns the notion of purplewashing. We add the revealed purplewashing mention and a link to the judgments or cognitive process that the consumer may have about purplewashing for two reasons. First, people who are engaged and informed about the feminist cause will tend to research on their own or have sufficient knowledge to deduce by themselves that the case of femvertising they are facing is a purplewashing situation. Through their

own cognitive process, they will by themselves reveal the purplewashing. Besides, people with a less strong feminist commitment but who remain committed to feminism or other causes will not necessarily take this approach, but the public exposure of purplewashing will nonetheless lead them to reconsider their purchase intention. In this case, revealed purplewashing is subject to a public denunciation that will impact the consumer's decision-making process. The other links in the revised model remain unchanged from the original (see Figure 1).

7. CONCLUSIONS

In this section, we will give our general conclusions regarding the research topic and the different research questions stated at the beginning of our thesis. We will as well detailed theoretical, practical, and societal contributions brought through our analysis. We will finally discuss our research limitations and point out some key suggestions for further research regarding this topic.

7.1. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of the study is to develop a deeper understanding of Generation Y's attitude towards femvertising in the cosmetics industry considering their feminist knowledge and commitment. By choosing this topic, we wanted to provide insight into a marketing strategy that has received limited attention from the literature. As this marketing strategy engages with social issues shared by consumers, we thought it would be interesting to take a closer look at the consumer perspective on this topic. To investigate consumer behaviour towards femvertising, we addressed the following questions: 1) "How Generation Y perceives and is affected by femvertising used by cosmetic brands on Instagram?", 2) "Do consumers' knowledge and commitment to the feminist cause affect their attitudes?" and 3) "How does femvertising influence Generation Y's decision-making process?". From our literature review, we expected that people who are engaged and informed about the feminist cause would be more likely to generate an attitude towards femvertising. A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews has been conducted among twelve representatives of Generation Y who are aware of and interested in the cosmetics industry and/or the feminist cause in order to gain deeper insights into the issue.

As outlined by our findings, regarding the perception and the way Generation Y is affected by femvertising, we note that the change in women's representations in cosmetics ads is positively received. Indeed, this stands out from the unreal representations conveyed in the media for many years just as Drake (2017, p. 593) points out and challenges gender stereotypes. Based on our findings, these new representations released by brands that are committed to feminism meet millennials' aspirations: from a consumer perspective, brands hear and listen to women's needs, desires and claims. These more realistic representations associated with the sharing of Generation Y values constitute a visual and emotional appeal which generates a better identification of young women consumers with these ads.

However, beyond a generally positive perception and reception of these representations, this new cause marketing approach raises scepticism among millennials who try to distinguish the real commitment from the capitalist goals of these cosmetics brands. This connected generation, surrounded by information and marketing solicitations in its daily life, wants to be conscious of its consumption. For this purpose, millennials use all the trustworthy sources at their disposal to learn about the brands and products they buy. As a result, they are more suspicious of brand marketing strategies being aware of the tools used to target them. Besides, being engaged and developing knowledge in the causes they support, the feminist stance of some brands raises their scepticism: they perceive it as a trend and another marketing strategy to attract them. For some, such a stance is undermining the cause. The more militant women tend to multiply the research concerning the sincerity of cosmetics brands conveying messages of women empowerment. They will not hesitate

to boycott a brand and its products if it is publicly accused of showing no real societal commitment following femvertisement broadcasts.

Finally, our results show that femvertising content can have an impact on the decision to buy a product. We notice that the fact of being continuously exposed to branded ads on Instagram makes consumers remember some of them, especially those that correspond to their values and commitments. At the time of purchase, this comes to mind and weighs in the balance. From a consumer perspective, these products can be decisive elements in influencing a purchase. Thus, the purchase intention of young consumers is rather promising as these products fit into their value system and allow them to identify themselves. As said earlier, the possibility of purplewashing only comes into play in the decision-making process if it is true and publicly denounced.

7.2. RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

7.2.1. Theoretical contributions

When conducting this research, we aim to bring theoretical contributions regarding the existing literature. One of the first contributions brought with our work concerns the link between a new marketing strategy used by brands i.e., femvertising, and its impacts towards consumers. Only a few studies have been conducting regarding femvertising dealing with the consumers' point of view. Indeed, these studies were rather focused on the business side and dealt with more traditional channels than the online prism we studied. We bring another contribution by conducting our research through femvertising on the Instagram platform, the main social media used nowadays by Generation Y. Even if we studied mostly femvertising video, we thought that it would be more interest to study them through Instagram as the platform include the social media part but also a marketplace which seemed to be fitting more to respond to our questions and have a better understanding of the impact of femvertising through the consumers purchasing process.

Another contribution concerns the notion of purplewashing, our work introduces the notion to the literature as it is only used in the common language for the moment. Even if we found in the existing literature another expression to report this phenomenon, this is general expressions that are not as related to feminism as purplewashing; such as “*woke washing*” used by Vredenburg et al. (2020, pp. 444-445) to denounce brands activism through their marketing strategy but without clearly stating any real commitment; or *fempower-washing* coined by Sterbenk et al. (2021, p. 11) to denounce CSR allegations not aligned with firms' real doings and behaviours under strong supportive women practices prism. Our research brings some insights about the expression's definition but also about how it is perceived by consumers. Through this research, we also introduce a new conceptual duality between femvertising et purplewashing, considering purplewashing as the non-committal and purely financial side of femvertising.

Finally, we hope that our literature review in itself will help future studies on the issue. Indeed, we have made a work of gathering existing articles on the topic in order to have the most complete view possible concerning femvertising and purplewashing. Thus, in our opinion, the literature review of this thesis also constitutes a theoretical contribution to the field studied.

7.2.2. Practical contributions

Our findings show that Generation Y consumers are not insensitive to femvertising. Since it concerns their value system and the causes they are committed to, they highlight the controversies that such a position can bring. The simple fact that cosmetics brands are communicating about it and spread messages about this purpose is showing a shift in women's representation most of the time in a good way that can still be nuanced. Nevertheless, as a committed generation, aware of marketing tactics and not easily fooled, a superficial commitment is not meaningful and may cause more harm than good to the brand, so we will suggest that brands prove their commitment. Thus, brands taking a stance when releasing femvertisement should be more transparent about actions they are really conducting to ensure consumers that their speech matches their actions. For that, cosmetic brands should take into consideration the comments and expectations of consumers expressed through our research. Gen Y consumers are looking for brands that are in line with their values regarding the world surrounding them as they are much more conscious than their elders. They urge brands to be more transparent regarding their impacts on the environment e.g., asking for non-tested animals' products, natural components as well as their social commitments e.g., asking for a more diverse representation of bodies, skin types, genders. All these actions to highlight the values of the brand shared with society and with a real anchor can help to increase the credibility of the brands in the eyes of consumers and to establish a bond of trust. Brands must therefore take the measure of these consumer claims in their future marketing strategy if they want to deliver more qualified and relevant content to a targeted group of consumers who want to be heard and who want to see more realistic women's representations.

7.2.3. Societal & ethical implications

Concerning societal consideration, the results show that even if the term femvertising is not widely known, members of Generation Y are aware of the evolution of the representation of women, particularly in the cosmetics industry. Indeed, our research only focuses on chosen cosmetic femvertising but there is a real and seen change in mentality reflected in these advertisements. Because of the engagement of Gen Y women, they expect more from brands in terms of representation: more powerful messages, more diversity, more transparency, more naturalness. A study like ours aims to raise awareness among brands about the importance of changes and evolutions in the representation of women in advertising and the positive impact it has on consumers. It also shows the importance for brands to be accountable and transparent in their cause approach. Thus, through the prism of social networks and committed consumers, we also notice an evolution in the relationship between brands and consumers.

On a societal level, this image renewal from brands that are in line with societal evolution is a source of inspiration for consumers through the transmission of more positive values and images. The media landscape is changing in favour of the brand image of cosmetics companies but also to break down old gender stereotypes that were previously embedded in the industry. From an ethical perspective, it also allows to question the image of the "woman object" and to open the field to all people whatever their gender, their body type or skin type without them feeling discriminated. Thus, femvertising tends to put an end to women's idealisation and to open up to other consumers.

Globally, this topic leads us to raise the issue of sexism in the business world, whether it is the question of harassment or equal pay in the workplace. These issues are not always addressed and solved within companies, as in the case of purplewashing. The feminist movement raises these concerns within companies. However, an important issue to consider for an ethical business engaging on militant issues: can a company sell products using a militant discourse? From an ethical perspective, our subject also raises the question of the appropriation and recuperation of social struggles for commercial purposes, which would be very interesting to explore.

7.3. LIMITATIONS & SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The first limitation of this thesis is related to the sampling and the research model approach chosen, thereby the self-selection sampling. Indeed, we only interviewed twelve respondents belonging to Generation Y that were interested in our subject. So, it might also have reduced the field of possibilities. Moreover, as we published posts respectively on our Facebook accounts, people who responded come from a predisposing environment, even if we got some sharing of our posts. Our research could be taken to another level by expanding its horizon on social prism: by introducing men's opinion on the matter, we can get new insights into their perception and reactions to these types of ads. By expanding this research to another geographical prism, we can also gain new insights from another societal background than the one we study in France i.e., a capitalist western society.

As our subject, femvertising still a gap in the literature, we thought that it would be useful to have a first insight from an industry where women's representation is core to it, which explains why we chose the cosmetics industry. Further research focusing on another industry, comparing industry and see the different impacts it could have on the sample would be equally interesting to continue academic research on this topic. It could bring value to look at the differences in themes chosen by several industries and how they are constructed. This subject would also deserve deeper studies regarding other generations and other sectors. Furthermore, we focused our research looking from a consumer point of view, one thing that could be interesting would be to link these ads to real engagement taken behind by brands with means to conduct the research from a CSR point of view and have a better understanding of the brands' motives to communicate on this subject.

8. QUALITATIVE QUALITY/TRUTH CRITERIA

For this last section, we will go through our quality/truth criteria. Therefore, we will evaluate the reliability and validity of our research project in order to find out how credible our study is.

To evaluate the quality of this work, which is part of business administration research, authors need to prove its credibility. Indeed, as stated by LeCompte & Preissle Goetz (1982, p. 31), research credibility is the main goal when conducting a study, all researchers aim to defend their results' authenticity no matter the method they refer to during the research process. Reliability and replicability in data collection and findings aim to examine the validity of the conclusion generated by the thesis approach (Bell et al., 2019, pp. 46-47). The authors state that we distinguish four types of validity: measurement validity, internal validity, external validity and ecological validity. LeCompte & Preissle Goetz (1982, p. 43) identify internal validity as questioning the measurement and observation made by researchers and external validity as questioning the possibility to use generalities generated by the research to other groups.

First, *validity* consists in considering the accuracy of the findings released (Bell et al., 2019, p.46; LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982, p. 43; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 157). On the one hand, one must question measurement and observation made by researchers i.e., *internal validity*, while on the other hand, one must question the possibility to use generalities generated by research to other groups i.e., *external validity* (LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982, p. 43, Bell et al., 2019, p. 363). To assess internal validity, Lincoln & Guba (1985) assert that researchers must ensure the *credibility* of the results, including presenting these results to respondents to confirm that the results accurately represent the actual reality. Since this thesis was conducted over ten weeks, we were unable to present our results to the participants to check the accuracy of the results. However, we ensured through the transcription work to get a deep understanding of what our participants said. Furthermore, since this thesis is meant to be published publicly and as some people have explicitly asked to access it once it will be done, we will share our thesis with them and by doing so we commit ourselves that the results transmitted reflect what was said. Finally, this thesis has been carried out following suitable research methods to the research question we wished to investigate, and we have relied on relevant literature to carry out our project. Thus, we ensure the *credibility* of our work. Besides, external validity can be assessed by considering the *transferability* of qualitative findings to different contexts according to Lincoln & Guba (1985). Even if our findings are related to a specific context and individual perceptions and attitudes, we hope that the details of our study will allow other researchers to assess whether the study can be generalized to other contexts. For instance, our revised model, in contrast to our original model, appears to be applicable to other contexts, ensuring the validity of this work.

Secondly, *reliability* is concerned with the consistency of the results of the study (Bell et al., 2019, p. 46; LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982, p. 35; Saunders et al., 2009, p. 156). On the one hand, this relies on the replication of the study i.e., *external reliability*, which is rather difficult to assess in qualitative research (Bell et al., 2019, p. 362; LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982, p. 37). On the other hand, *internal reliability* proves the "inter-observer consistency" (Bell et al., 2019, p. 363; LeCompte & Preissle Goetz, 1982, p. 41). To assess this within a qualitative study, Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose to consider the *dependability* of the study, that is, whether the research process is sufficiently documented so that people outside of the project can understand, audit and

critic the path of this thesis development. To this end, we have detailed all the elements of this research project, from the subject choice to our theoretical and methodological choices to the data collection process. All our choices have been justified in order to allow people outside our work to understand our research process and can be found in methodological parts of this thesis. Moreover, if other researchers wish to audit and critically review this process, we have kept detailed records of the entire development of this project such as data transcripts, literature reviews, our thesis schedule or intermediate progress notes. Besides, the advice of our tutor as well as ones of our fellow students, combined with the pilot's study for the practical method allowed us to confront our choices for this thesis and to ensure its quality.

Finally, Lincoln & Guba (1985) propose to evaluate the *confirmability* of findings to ensure the quality of a qualitative research project. This concerns the ability of researchers not to influence the research too much by their personal values or their theoretical inclinations, even if the "complete objectivity is impossible in business research" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; cited by Bell et al., 2019, p. 365). We have therefore tried to have as much distance as possible on the subject and not let our emotions and personal commitment to influence this work by ensuring that this research is accessible to all. To this end, our literature review has been constructed as comprehensively as possible to offer different perspectives to the reader. During the data collection process, we remained as objective and neutral as possible to avoid influencing the respondents towards any answers. We also made sure that our findings fairly represented what we had collected. Thus, we hope to have ensured the confirmability of our findings and the quality of our thesis. Therefore, we assert that this research work meets the criterion of authenticity (Bell et al., 2019, p. 364). Indeed, we have taken care to ensure the reliability and validity of our work as we have just described above. The rigour that we followed in our research, both in terms of methodological statements and data collection, also supports this.

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APPENDIX

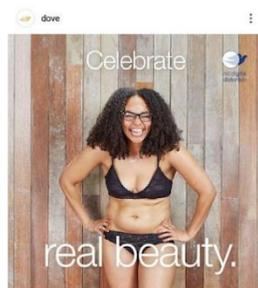
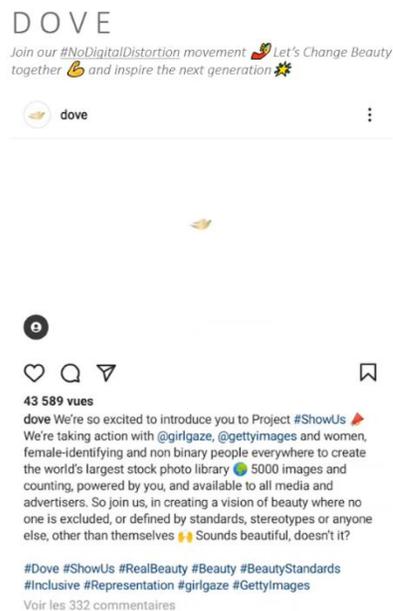
Appendix 1 - Interview Guide

<p><i>The purpose of this interview is to give us insights regarding the topic we are investigating for our master thesis at Umea School of Business, Economics and Statistics. To properly achieve our work, the interview will be recorded in order to be transcribed. Please note that the data will be anonymized, and the results obtained will be used for academic purposes only. If you do not want parts of the interview to be re-transcribed, please let us know.</i></p> <p><i>This is a semi-structured interview where we will first ask questions to get to know you better, then generative questions to find out about your usage and perception of the issues studied - cosmetics & femvertising' perception & attitude of Generation Y, and finally, we will move on to directive questions in reaction to 5 examples of femvertising chosen for this interview.</i></p> <p><i>* are proposed in italics secondary helps to develop the questions of the interviewees</i></p>		
Demographic Questions		
1.	How old are you?	
2.	What is your current occupation?	
3.	Where do you currently live? - <i>urban or rural area</i>	
Opening Questions		
4.	How would you define cosmetics? - <i>or what do you include in the cosmetics category?</i>	
5.	What is your use of cosmetics? - <i>e.g., situation, frequency, relationship with products...</i>	<i>representation, self-construction, purchase behaviour, identification</i>
6.	What is your perception of women's representation in the media or the beauty world?	<i>women representation, perception</i>
7.	In general, what do you think of the cosmetics industry?	<i>women representation, attitude, consumer knowledge, awareness</i>
Theme - Generation Y		
8.	How do you usually buy your cosmetics products?	<i>purchase behaviour</i>
9.	What are the most important criteria when purchasing cosmetics? - <i>delivery time, brand ethics, product efficiency, brand loyalty, influence/clients/friends review...</i>	<i>millennials decision-making process, peer opinion, expert knowledge</i>
10.	Do you search for information about the products you buy? If yes, how? - <i>e.g., websites, peer opinions, social media, consumer reviews, components...</i>	<i>millennials decision-making process, conscious vs volatile consumer, connectivity</i>
11.	How much time do you spend thinking before buying cosmetic products?	<i>decision-making process, conscious vs volatile consumer</i>
12.	How much of your budget do these purchases constitute?	<i>purchase behaviour, purchasing power</i>
Theme - Social Media Marketing		
13.	Which social media are you currently using?	<i>millennials connectivity</i>

14.	How would you describe your use of these social media? And how long do you spend on average on them? - e.g., content followed, purpose of use, frequency, time spent on it...	<i>millennials connectivity</i>
15.	Have you ever seen sponsored content on Instagram? > If yes, what type of content do you see most often? - e.g., brands, format, targeted marketing	<i>social media marketing, emotional/visual/informative appeal</i>
16.	How do you react to this sponsored content?	<i>positive attitude, identification, trust or scepticism, brand avoidance, boycotts</i>
17.	What is most likely to have an impact on you? and why? - what content do you appreciate?	<i>emotional/visual/informative appeal</i>
18.	Do you even follow brands on Instagram? > If so, for which purpose and which ones, especially cosmetics? > If not, why?	<i>social media marketing, millennials brand loyalty, engagement, information/peer influence/entertainment,</i>
19.	What is your perception of cosmetics social media marketing on Instagram? - even if you don't follow that kind of brand	<i>women representation, social media marketing</i>
20.	In general, how do you perceive brands using Instagram to promote their products?	<i>social media marketing, perception</i>
Theme - Women empowerment & femvertising		
21.	Have you ever heard about femvertising? > If so, in what context and how do you define it? > If not, presentation of femvertising as an advertising practice by which brands carry messages regarded as feminist, or at least which try to give back to women their rightful place in society through their marketing, through messages of women empowerment	<i>brand activism, women empowerment, femvertising, consumer knowledge, consumer awareness, conscious consumer, millennials values, committed consumer</i>
22.	Do you have any brands in mind that use this type of marketing or advertising strategy? > If so, which ones and where have you seen them?	<i>women representation, social media marketing, consumer awareness</i>
23.	What do you think about brands taking stances on those issues? And why?	<i>positive attitude, identification, trust or scepticism, brand avoidance, boycotts</i>
24.	Do you define yourself as committed to the feminist cause? > If yes, how would you define your engagement? > If no, why?	<i>millennials values, conscious consumer, consumer awareness, consumer knowledge</i>
Directive Questions - 5 Cases Analysis		
25.	What do you think about the delivered message by the brands?	<i>positive attitude, identification, trust or scepticism, brand avoidance, boycotts</i>
26.	What impacted you the most with these ads?	<i>emotional/visual/informative appeal</i>
27.	Does this type of advertisement could incite you to buy from this specific brand? Why or why not?	<i>millennials decision-making process, consumer values, conscious consumer, purchase behaviour, influence</i>

Theme - Purplewashing		
28.	Some brands are currently being accused of purplewashing, have you ever heard of this phenomenon? > If so, how would you define it? > If not, introduction of the term <i>purplewashing as the use by brands of the feminist movement to achieve their own capitalistic goals (increase sales revenue) without any real practical commitment to the cause</i>	<i>purplewashing, consumer knowledge, consumer awareness, conscious consumer, millennials values, committed consumer</i>
29.	Knowing that, to what extent do you think it affects your perception of the ads we just showed you?	<i>attitude, scepticism, brand avoidance, boycotts</i>
Closing Questions		
30.	Overall, do you think it is a good strategy for cosmetic brands to take a stance on those issues?	<i>femvertising, social media marketing, millennials attitude</i>
31.	In the future, could those types of committed ads to a cause influence your decision-making process?	<i>millennials decision-making process, consumer values, conscious consumer</i>
32.	What would you like to see in future cosmetic brand ads?	<i>conscious consumer, millennials values, committed consumer</i>
33.	Do you have anything to add or that you would like to bring to light?	

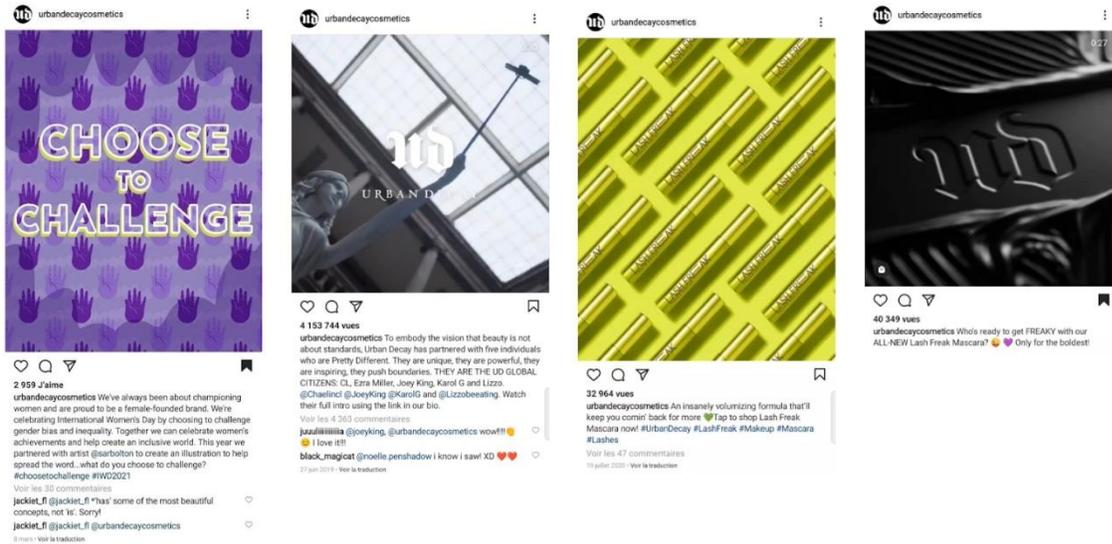
Appendix 2 - Femvertising cases used



> Dove Video Link: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BvgspR-AwBJ/>

URBAN DECAY

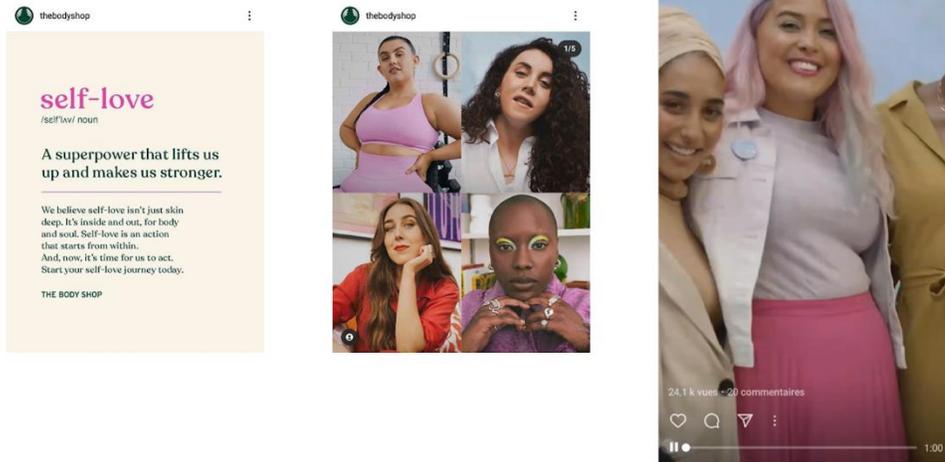
We don't subscribe to beauty standards. Be whatever you want. Pretty Different. Badass. Long-lasting. Cruelty-free.



> Link to Urban Decay video: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BzNqLZdlPua/>

THE BODY SHOP

A force for good in beauty since '76. We believe self-love is our superpower. Start your journey and join the #SelfLoveUprising



> Link to The Body Shop video: <https://www.instagram.com/tv/B39Ch6jnSE3/>



L'ORÉAL PARIS
*Because we are all worth it. Show us your worth with #LOrealParisFamily
 We are for a world without animal testing.*



> Link to L'Oréal Paris video: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CMKBFm6oM2v/>

MAWENA

[ma-we-na] 🌿 Plants powered beauty that gives back 🌳 Skin Tree Project 🌱 Vegan & Cruelty-Free 🖤 Black-Owned Brand



> Link to Mawena video: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CN-fWHbCdO4/>



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