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THE CHANGE IN REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PERFUME
ADVERTISEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO POWER

A Thesis

Submitted to McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Master of Fine Arts in Media Arts and Technology

By

Rasika More

May 2023

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2023

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ADVERTISEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO POWER

By

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Approved March 31 2023

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ABSTRACT

THE CHANGE IN REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN PERFUME ADVERTISEMENTS WITH RESPECT TO POWER

By

Rasika More

May 2023

Thesis supervised by Dr. Zeynep Tanes Ehle

Gender portrayals in advertising have been examined extensively in the last six decades and remain an important topic. Certain brands have taken the initiative of destabilizing patriarchal norms entrenched in society by supporting modern trends and initiatives through various brand/product campaigns and advertisements that support the fluidity in power and representation. The present study navigates the changes in the representation of women in perfume advertisements that have taken place in the advertising world in the past two decades to see if women are shown to possess a sense of power with their head held high and strong posture, compared to the previous times. A content analysis was conducted with a total of 232 advertisements published in *Vogue* magazine from January 2002 to December 2022. The findings of this research suggest that there has been a significant shift in the balance of power and portrayal of women in perfume advertisements in *Vogue* magazine over the last two decades.

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INTRODUCTION

Advertising informs the public about the products and services so that consumers can make informed decisions. But advertising specifically creates beliefs and behavior patterns that influence people to lean toward certain brands that captivate their attention. Advertising casts a wide influence, and many consumers never perceive its power.

Over the last few years, the media consumption pattern has changed and so has the way products are advertised. Use of social media movements, trends, and issues that need limelight, have often been used in recent times to add an ‘oomph’ factor to the ads. It is safe to say that teens spend an average of eight hours on their phones scrolling through social media and chatting (Techjury, 2023). These social media platforms expose people to a new way of building relationships and receiving content and experiences, which come with new trends and sets of expectations for society. Edutainment content is growing, video productions are being prioritized because of TikTok, brands supporting sustainability and taking a stand for a social issue, and many more. Using some of these trends gives the ads the ‘oomph factor’ that was mentioned earlier.

Along with these concepts, gender portrayal throughout the decades has seemingly undergone a massive change. In the year 2017, the #MeToo movement traveled over the world like a shockwave. It was a rising opportunity for women to speak about the wrongs that happened to them, and they were supported and empowered throughout the world. This movement shifted social norms and opinions about the issues along with destigmatizing societal belief system and broke the silence surrounding sexual harassment and the role of women in society. This movement changed many things for women, and this study will argue that the advertising industry thinks about women from a different perspective than before.

To elevate the advertising of brands, often topics that portray gender in new ways are used to spark controversy or conversation. It is important to understand how the portrayal of gender has changed in the past 20-30 years, precisely before and after the #MeToo movement, closely observing the ads to come up with a conclusion. Women constitute 3.9 billion of the world's population (World Sex Ratio, 2021). However, the depiction of women as sex symbols, objects of desire, and as having subservient behaviors has presented a great concern to feminist scholars, activists, and researchers throughout history (Sharma, Sangeeta and Bumb, Arpan, 2021). The need to map out and take a deeper dive to see the changes that have taken place throughout the years is undeniable.

Plenty of anecdotal and empirical evidence shows some change in how the genders are perceived in today's world (Eagly, et al., 2020). This includes the non-binary umbrella, which was not easy for many people to understand and accept; the increasing acceptance of this umbrella might be the biggest change of all. Millions of dollars are spent on advertising every year, and the pressure on advertising is growing every day. Amidst the fierce competition and the judging by Gen Zs, the need to move away from gender stereotyping is paramount (Gerdeman. D, 2019). Stereotypes have historically guided advertising practices and generated a sense of the world for the public. Often, they are useful and necessary (Åkestam, et al., 2021). But they can also help instill gender prejudice in audiences at a very young age. This gender prejudice was often portrayed in the personal hygiene product category (shampoos, razors, perfume, skincare, etc.) to imply that women 'should' be taking more care of their 'hair' and looks than anyone else. To review intriguing changes over the years, the current study will be focusing on this category of products, mainly studying the perfume advertisements in magazines to observe the shift in how gender is portrayed and portrayal of women with respect to power.

To change and address some of these issues of gender, the advertising world has increasingly been discouraging and disregarding stereotypes. Statistically speaking, 76% of people believe that advertising has the power to shape how people see each other, and the industry has made good use of this power (Urlage, 2021). At a societal level, advertising is a part of the cultural expressions that reflect and impact on how consumers perceive themselves and others (Lorenzen et al., 2004). Because of this, advertisers must have a clear perspective and understanding of the impact they can have. Given the recent social changes, for instance feminist movements fueled by the #MeToo movement, it is important to identify the patterns of change in the advertising industry. Hence this study will navigate the changes that have occurred in the advertising industry over two decades concentrating on gender portrayals in perfume advertisements in the personal hygiene category.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief History of Advertising

Advertising is a way for brands to communicate with potential customers. Since its beginnings, which are thought to date back to carvings made by the ancient Egyptians, advertising has constantly had to adapt and change to suit new mediums and an increasingly savvy audience (Gallegos, 2023). In the pre-digital era, print, broadcast, and outdoors were the only modes of reaching an audience; word of mouth was also one of the important ways of getting the message out there till the advertisers planned strategies they could use.

The Golden Age (1900s) of advertising changed a few things around when the world was introduced to radio and television. Outdoor and print had to take a small step back. This was the time the audience was introduced to the concept to direct advertisements right in their homes which made it more personalized. Cheesy commercials, fuzzy-old televisions, and ads via radio, all of it was a huge part of society, and they had a cultural status. The Marlboro Man and Kellogg's Frosted Flakes characters were often used for packaging to sell products (Gallegos, 2023). Among all the developments that took place in the Golden Era, the ads at the time only had one purpose: to *sell*. When online advertisements and the internet (World Wide Web) were introduced to the world, they helped personalize and evolve advertisements to another level. This evolution caused the focus to shift from 'selling' the product to 'brand-awareness' and 'problem-solving', where the product was no longer the centerpiece, the consumer was.

With time, the internet steered a new way of connecting with the audience; banner ads or popup ads were popular and caused a lot of traffic on websites. In the early 2000s, the first mobile advertisement was released as an SMS (short message service) that redirected consumers to the brand's website; this started the thread of mobile marketing. Soon, the

existence of 3G technology made it possible for consumers to get ads wirelessly on their mobile phone which helped advertisers create more personalized content to engage the consumer better. Brands used emails to convey their messages internationally and started engaging a global audience. As the world was getting used to the new and scary concept of the internet, Facebook penetrated the ad market with a couple of billion users in 2008, and the rest was history. The notion of social media marketing was soon adapted by Twitter and Orkut at the time, and it all transformed advertising completely. From pre-digital times in which outdoor, broadcast, and print media were the only ways to reach the audience to connecting with thousands over a tweet, advertising has come a long way.

Advertising's Role in Social Change

Advertising has been a great source of paid promotion that uses strategy and messaging to make consumers know about a certain product, service, or brand. Advertising has impacted society as much as society has impacted advertising throughout the years. Although many times people are annoyed by ads, they are essential in shaping our opinions on matters from products to politics. Social revolutions make a huge impact on how advertisers communicate with audiences. Advertisers focus on the events happening in the society and stand for issues which need limelight which would either mirror the current times or mold them. Time and time again, through campaigns or social media, advertising has exposed the world to social transformations.

“The Relationship between Gender Stereotyping in Advertising and Gender-related Developments in Society: The “Mirror” vs. “Mold” Argument” (Eisend, 2009) explains that the "mirror" argument posits that advertising reflects values that already prevail in society. As a result, men and women featured in advertisements generally have been typecast to adhere to

the dominant concepts regarding gender roles. A meta-analysis by Eisend provides empirical support in favor of the "mirror" argument, suggesting that advertising has historically reflected, rather than challenged, female stereotypes and roles in society.

On the contrary, according to the "mold" argument, advertising shapes and impacts the values of its target audience (Eisend, 2009). According to cultivation theory, media content influences social and psychological attitudes toward men and women (Straubhaar, 2014). Advertisers are now using these arguments to try and break the harmful stereotypes and portray genders in a different light, hoping people might tend to incorporate new gender clichés presented by the media into their own concepts of reality.

A prime example would be the #BlackLivesMatter movement, which took the streets of many U.S. cities by storm. Nike used the same movement to stand for the injustice against black people and Nike's 2018 ad showcased a close-up of Colin Kaepernick having a similar motive of aligning brand messaging with shifting priorities. While it led to a small portion of consumers to protest, the ad increased overall support for the brand. Nike's shoe which resulted from collaboration with Kaepernick sold out on the first day of its release (Setty, 2019).

Considering all current social and political movements sparked after the killing of George Floyd, many well-known figures went public to apologize to Kaepernick for criticizing his decision to take a knee during the national anthem (Vogue, 2016, October 14). Nike standing for the Black Lives Matter movement made an impact on society and stood tall through the backlash, sparking exactly what it was meant to: conversation about change. In this context, the advertisers used the 'mirror' argument to reflect the problems that help in changing the perceptions of many and bring social change.

Advertising Personal Hygiene

In today's world, thousands of products are advertised on a day-to-day basis and the public is exposed to 6,000-10,000 ads every day (Carr, 2023). Personal hygiene is a wide category that includes: perfumes, hair care, body care, shaving/grooming products, sanitary products, and healthcare products (handwash, household cleaning supplies). There has been a persistent taboo around advertisements for female hygiene products: tampons, sanitary napkins, menstrual cups, etc. From the beginning of the 1990s, women have been told to maintain their vaginal hygiene. Right from the 1930's when the first tampon was invented, the ads contained misogynistic content: vaginal products which could help from causing a wreck in the relationship to 1960's vaginal deodorants ads that claimed the products could help women's charm last longer (North, 2021).

These gender stereotypes and taboos have been embedded in society for a few decades. Analysis such as Erving Goffman's Gender Advertisements demonstrates that women are more likely than men to be shown as subordinates in print advertisements (Goffman, 1979) and research indicates that television commercials tend to be more sexist than television content itself (Crawford & Unger, 2004). In today's world, this stereotypical depiction of roles can have a direct impact on business outcomes for a company; significant correlations have been found between perceived offensiveness of female role portrayal and purchase intentions for a product, women report that they are less likely to purchase a new product that uses offensive depictions in advertisements (Ford et al., 1991). This clearly indicates that sticking to stereotypes can have a negative impact on the profitability of a company. Because of this, in recent times advertisers swayed away from them.

Women are still massively sexualized within advertising. It isn't as blatant as it has been, and themes of inferiority and overt sexism seem to have rapidly decreased (North, 2021).

Advertisers are trying to replace this with empowerment through campaigns and destigmatizing the concept of 'women's hygiene.' Being clean and bathing every day is a habit and a necessity to present oneself in the world because of this the personal hygiene category has been and will be around for a long time. Ads with female empowerment themes have been applauded for challenging gender stereotypes in the media and raising awareness about issues facing females of all ages while empowering women and young girls (Wallace, 2014).

Advertising and Perfume Industry

The global perfume market size was valued at USD 50.85 billion in 2022 and is expected to register a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5.9% from 2023 to 2030. The market growth is attributed to the growing trend of personal grooming, coupled with increasing demand for luxury and exotic fragrances (Perfume market overview, 2023). These are the current statistics of a billion-dollar market, but this billion-dollar market has had a way of portraying women in its ads. In the contemporary world of advertising, the highly sexualized feminine figure sells products (Haugg, 1998). Sexualized (re)presentations of women have become the common theme running through advertisements for perfume, and these occasionally feature respected, popular, and famous women.

Gender is a complex construct. The advertisers that create such women are geniuses of manufacturing desire through these ads that have one motive: seduce the audience into buying the product and use women as sexual objects. Nussbaum (1995) describes sexual objectification as "treating like an object, something that is really not an object, what is, in fact, a human being" (p. 257). This is usually used to attract and keep the attention toward the brand. Even though this is something that sold thousands of perfumes over the last six to seven decades, today's generation is not that accepting of the 'Sex sells' concept. In today's world,

sustainability is the first priority along with supporting and empowering the current situation (Azcarate, 2022).

A few decades earlier, perfume commercials continued to objectify women by using two stereotypes to portray women in advertisements in a certain way. The two types of commercials were: sensual, sexy women or childish, dependent women. Women's body parts as "sex objects" are determined by facial expression (e.g., a woman's looks suggested sexual desire), posture (e.g., a woman positioned with her legs spread open, activity (e.g., a woman caressing another person in a sexually suggestive manner), make-up (e.g., women wore bright red lipstick), camera angle (e.g. The camera angle emphasized a woman's breasts, hips, buttocks, lower abdomen, or inner thighs), and the amount of skin shown (Sullivan, 1988) (Shikongo, 2019). In the same way, perfume ads from fashion magazines have also depicted women as sex objects through the way they portray their bodies: nudity or body-revealing clothes to attract consumers (Shikongo, 2019). The perfume advertisement from a magazine that sexually objectifies a woman, this includes a bottle of men's Tom Ford perfume resting between a woman's breasts. The woman in the ad is shown as a sexual object for men to enjoy. These are just a few examples of how the perfume industry has showcased women and how it needs to change.

Advertising and Gender Portrayal

Understanding gender is crucial before going in-depth about any gender stereotypes. Gender refers to the characteristics of women, men, girls, and boys that are socially constructed. This includes norms, behaviors and roles associated with being a woman, man, girl or boy, as well as relationships with each other (WHO, 2019). As a social construct, gender varies from society to society and has changed over time. Today's understanding of gender is not as simple

as how it was before. A few decades ago, gender behavior patterns were more stereotyped on T.V., radio or newspaper ads. The woman was shown as submissive, and the man was head of the house with a good job. These roles clearly have the man in power with the women being the ‘cook’ of the house.

These gender roles tend to perpetuate the power inequalities that they are based on. For example, the fact that many men and women think it’s not ‘natural’ for women to speak up in public often poses a key barrier to women’s access to decision-making. “Power equals masculinity” also helps explain why powerful people often demonstrate dominance in gendered ways (Koester, 2015). One of the main focuses of the current study is to understand if there is a shift of power in these gendered roles.

To dive deeper into how the gender stereotypes and portrayal have changed and evolved around time it is necessary to talk about what they are. Stereotypes are generally defined as sets of beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of members of certain groups (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). Gender stereotypes are consequently based on the beliefs that certain characteristics, attributes, and behaviors differentiate the different genders (Eisend, 2010). Historically women and men have been represented a certain way which promotes a sense of hierarchy that has been in the industry for a few years.

Quite a bit of research has been done about the representation of women in advertising in a variety of geographical locations including Australia (Browne, 1998), France and Denmark (Furnham et al., 2000), China (Cheng, 1997), Sweden (Milner & Collins, 2000), India (Sharma, et al., 2021). None of the previous studies focus on one single category of products but most of the studies report that there is still some amount of stereotyping that exists in society. Women were shown in weaker positions, as a housewife, portraying them as sex objects or showcasing them as silent. These roles were similar in every category of advertisements: Food, travel,

perfumes, hygiene, skin care, etc. Even though we like to think this was six to seven decades ago, that is not the truth. The 2000 Herbal Essence shampoo commercial featured a woman in the courtroom fighting a case when she suddenly hears something the judge says and has the ‘urge’ to wash her hair in the middle of the courtroom. The soft moaning sound of her, while she was washing her hair, became known as a thinly veiled orgasm by the brand. The ad features a trio of burly men storming in and singing “she’s got the urge” and starts washing her hair. This is portraying a woman in a way that doing her job in the court is not as important as her urge to wash her hair.

These ads date back three decades and it’s still hard to believe these ads were acceptable at the time. Although this is just a gist of what the world of gender portrayals is, many factors have sparked changes in gender portrayals from time to time.

Gender and the #MeToo Movement

One of the turning points in the past decade for women was when the #Metoo movement took place in early 2017 detailing allegations of systemic sexual assault committed by movie mogul Harvey Weinstein. The movement started back in 2006 when Tarana Burke forced a conversation about the intersection of gender and power. The revelation of Weinstein’s actions opened the floodgates to a barrage of allegations against powerful, famous men, fueling what would become the cultural atom bomb of the #MeToo movement. (Team, T., 2021). This movement was a wakeup call for all the people who had taken advantage of women and taken women’s silence for granted. Thousands of women all over the world gathered the courage and spoke about the sexual harassment that they had gone through. One tweet started the spark that turned into a wildfire. This movement brought to the forefront the dehumanizing truth that regardless of decades of legislation and organizational policies, instances of sexual assault and

harassment remained common, ongoing, and ignored (Leopold, et al., 2021). This movement made the world come closer to the truth and reality which led to many changes in workplace policies and the implementation of laws against sexual harassment, extending the statute of limitations for sex crimes and passed many bills for sexual misconduct.

#MeToo Movement and Advertising

The #MeToo movement had its own impact on the world of advertising and marketing as many powerful men were accused and people were tiptoeing around this topic (Team, 2021). A few brands put in their own effort after #MeToo to let the world know the message they stood for. One of the ads by *Schweppes* embodies the true nature of change that's needed in the world. The sparkling beverage brand ad starts with three women visiting a nightclub wearing sparkly dresses. But unlike the average ad for a drink frequently consumed at bars and clubs, this video highlights how frequently women get groped in these places. The video, which *Schweppes* created with its advertising agency Ogilvy, highlights the problem in the context of Brazil, where 86% of women have reported being harassed in nightclubs. The brand worked with engineers and designers to create a dress that tracked how frequently a woman was touched against her will (Segar, 2018). The entire video is about what those women experience in the club for nearly four hours. They were touched a total of 157 times. Acknowledging this ad is important because it is still directed toward the sales of *Schweppes* but after this campaign, the brand was associated with feminist and progressive values which might make people more loyal to the brand. The brand was able to capitalize on something this big by just playing it smart and creating awareness.

Along with this example, *Gillette* also took an initiative by asking men to be accountable for their actions. The brand was bombarded with praise and backlash at the same

time by the audience. “We Believe” ad—a 48-second spot that *Gillette* shared on its social media accounts— plays on the company’s tagline of “Is this the best a man can get?” to address issues like bullying, sexual harassment, and the #MeToo movement. Since the commercial’s debut, some people voiced their support for its rebuke of the “boys will be boys will be boys will be boys” mentality while others threatened to go so far as to boycott both Gillette and parent company Procter & Gamble (Topping, et al., 2019).

This campaign from *Gillette* was a conversation starter on how men need to be accountable for what they do today, and it was immensely praised by the supporters of #MeToo. Even after facing controversy and backlash for this campaign, sales of Gillette were not affected (Image 1 & 2). In fact, there was a spike in the web search and google shopping for Gillette around and after the “We Believe” campaign which shows that the brand was trending strongly (Google trends). *Schweppes* and *Gillette* are just two examples of the ad campaigns which supported the movement and stayed in the present leaving all concrete gender portrayals behind. Therefore, we can expect that #MeToo has influenced advertising in some way.

The Current Study

Overall, the world of advertising and marketing has gone through quite a change over a period of time adjusting and acclimatizing around the issues and the trends. Even though plenty of research has been done on gender portrayals in advertising, no study focuses on women’s representation in personal hygiene ads (haicare, perfume, skincare, menstrual care, etc), particularly perfume advertisements. Throughout the years, there have been a couple of studies that focus on the change in the representation of women (Kang, 1997, Shikongo, 2019) but neither of them focuses on a two-decade time period. In the personal hygiene category,

perfume advertisements have historically and particularly portrayed women as sex objects, fragile, submissive, and weak. The goal of this current study is to understand how much of this representation has changed in the present time and to navigate that by looking at ads from magazines and to see if women are shown in power in current times or not.

Research Questions:

1. How has the portrayal of women in perfume advertisements changed in respect to power over the past 20 years?
2. Are women more likely to be portrayed in power in perfume advertisements over the past 20 years?
3. How does the #MeToo movement relate to the changes in portrayal of women in perfume advertisements?

METHODS

The most appropriate research approach to examine the change in the representation of women in perfume advertisements with respect to power is content analysis. Content analysis is a research method used to analyze and understand the content of various forms of communication, such as advertisements. It involves systematically analyzing and categorizing the content of a text, image, or audio clip to identify patterns, themes, and underlying meanings (Stempel III, 2003). This method is particularly useful for analyzing perfume advertisements from *Vogue* magazines as it allows to identify and categorize the different types of appeals used to target specific audiences. A content analysis will allow for a thorough evaluation of the advertising campaigns and through inter-coder reliability, a standard can be measured to ensure acceptable results.

Methodological Framework

The current research study aims to explore how the portrayal of women has changed in perfume advertisements over the last two decades and whether women are shown in power. To achieve this, I will use content analysis and focus on the perfume ads in *Vogue* magazine and evaluate the ads based on Erving Goffman's theory of gender. Goffman's model for decoding behavior concentrates on hands, eyes, knees, facial expressions, head postures, relative sizes, positioning and placing, head-eye aversion and finger biting and sucking. He felt the simplest gestures, familiar rituals or taken-for-granted forms of address were sources for understanding relations between the sexes and the social forces at work behind those relations (Kang, 1997).

The following theoretical definitions in Goffman's *Gender Advertisements* are utilized in this study:

(1) **Relative Size:** One way in which social weight (e.g., power, authority, rank, office, renown) is expressed rigorously in social situations is through relative size, especially height. The male's usual superiority of status over the female will be expressible in his greater girth and height. It is assumed that differences in size will correlate with differences in social weight (Goffman,1979).

(2) **Feminine Touch:** Women, more than men, are pictured using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object or to cradle it or to caress its surface or to effect a "just barely touching." This ritualistic touching is to be distinguished from the utilitarian kind that grasps, manipulates, or holds (Goffman,1979).

(3) **Function Ranking:** When a man and a woman collaborate face-to-face in an undertaking, the man is likely to perform the executive role. This hierarchy of functions is pictured either within an occupational frame or outside of occupational specializations (Goffman,1979).

(4) **Ritualization of Subordination:** A classic stereotype of deference is that of lowering oneself physically in some form or other of prostration. Correspondingly, holding the body erect and the head high is stereotypically a mark of unashamedly superiority, and disdain. The configurations of canting postures can be read as an acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation, submissiveness, and appeasement (Goffman,1979).

(5) **Licensed Withdrawal:** Women more than men are pictured engaged in involvements which remove them psychologically from the social situation at large, leaving them unoriented in it and dependent on the protectiveness of others who are present. Turning one's gaze away from another can be seen as having the consequence of withdrawing from the

current thrust of communication. The individual also can withdraw his/her gaze from the scene at large and be psychologically "away" from the scene. Maintaining a telephone conversation, for example, is a sign of licensed withdrawal (Goffman,1979).

These are the five categories which Goffman spoke about in his research and expanded on how these matched with the magazine and print advertisements back in the day. Researcher Kang (1997) worked on a similar paper concentrating on portrayal of women in magazine advertisements from 1979 to 1991. Along with this, he revisited Goffman's theory and added two more categories to his analysis to analyze gender portrayals in magazines and print: Body Display and Independence and Assertiveness.

(6) **Body Display:** Sometimes ads show little stereotyping of women in terms of relative size, feminine touch, function ranking, ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal, while the female models show high degree of nudity which is another important way of stereotyping. This category was introduced to compare the level of female models' body display (i.e., body-revealing clothes or nudity) between years. Body-revealing clothes include mini-skirts, tight skirts or evening gowns which expose cleavage, "short"-shorts, "see-through" clothes, halter dress, or bathing suits. Nudity is defined as unclothed models, including models translucent under apparel and lingerie, models clothed in nothing except a towel, or models depicted with no clothing. "Close-up" shots where the shoulders of the models are bare are considered as nudity. This category is very useful in the current times as many of the perfume commercials display women half-naked (Kang, 1997).

(7) **Independence and Self-Assertiveness:** The analysis of stereotyping has been approached from a different perspective here which focuses solely on the more subtle representation of an ad which provides important clues to gender relations. The main motive is to concentrate on the 'big picture' to obtain the overall message of an ad. This category was added to evaluate

the female model's overall images in terms of independence and self-assertiveness (Kang, 1997).

Along with Kang, Ester Shikongo in 2019 worked on a similar study focusing on the representation of women in the perfume ads in *Vogue* and *Cosmopolitan* magazines from 2017-2018. The research was an in-depth analysis of how females are sexualized through advertisements. Semiotic theory and Post structural Feminist Theory were used to analyze and come to a conclusion.

The goal of the current study is to examine perfume advertisements that represent and feature women and to identify whether or not these women have been depicted in an empowering role from 2002- 2022. The next section outlines the steps I will take to answer the overall research question which was illustrated in the Literature Review.

Sampling

Vogue is a widely recognized and respected fashion and lifestyle magazine that has been in publication for over 125 years. As a result, it has a significant influence on the fashion industry and popular culture. *Vogue*, compared to other magazines, has a large readership and a global reach, making it an ideal choice for content analysis. Additionally, *Vogue* has a long history of featuring high-quality, visually stunning advertisements that reflect the latest trends in fashion and beauty. As such, it is an excellent source for analyzing the representation of power in perfume advertisements. Furthermore, the longevity of *Vogue's* publication means that it provides a rich and diverse archive of advertisements spanning several decades. This allows for a comprehensive analysis of trends over time and provides insight into the evolution of the representation of power in advertising.

For reasons explained above, *Vogue* magazine published from 2002-2022 was defined as the population of this study. Out of the 252 *Vogue* magazine issues published within those years, around 20% were selected as the sample for analysis. In total 50 issues were analyzed to come to a conclusion. The method of random sampling (using a random number generator in Excel) was used to identify the issues to be included in the sample. All the perfume ads in the sample issues were included in the analysis. The unit of analysis for this study was the visual aspect of the print ad and the verbal message (ad copy) that the ad carried. All the ads were analyzed on the overall message that the ad carried and whether it features a woman in a situation where she is free to make her own decisions for herself and not a man.

Instruments

The analysis was based on Erving Goffman's theory of Gender Advertisement. In line with content analysis methodology, the ads were categorized and entered into an Excel datasheet. Following the apriori coding approach, for each Goffman's (1979) and Kang's (1997) categorization of gender advertisement, different numbers were assigned to each type of observation. Each category had particular numbers associated with the possible responses (i.e. 1 for Yes, 2 for No, 0 for NA, etc.). The following measures were coded and recorded in the datasheet:

Brand Name was noted in the data sheet as the sponsoring brand.

Campaign Name was noted based on the tagline of the advertisement.

Celebrity was noted as the featured model in the advertisement.

Month of the Issue ranging from 1 to 12 was noted along with the **Year** of the issue ranging from 2002 to 2022. The year was later re-coded into groups of five-years for statistical comparison.

Individuals portrayed in the advertisements were coded as 1 for single female, 2 for two females or more, 3 for a man and women, 4 for man plus two women, 5 for more than three females, 6 for nonbinary and 7 for other.

Relative Size was coded as 1 for man in power, 2 for women in power, 3 for both in power and 0 for not observed.

Feminine Touch was coded as 0 for no (not observed), and 1 for yes (observed).

Function Ranking was coded as 1 for man being superior and 0 for not applicable.

Ritualization of Subordination was coded as 0 for women in superior/head held a high position, 1 for women in submissive stature, 2 for man and women both being in power, and 3 for not applicable.

Licensed Withdrawal was coded as 0 for no (not observed), 1 for yes (observed), and 2 for not applicable.

Body Display was coded as 0 for no (not observed) and 1 for yes (observed).

Independence and Assertiveness was coded as 0 for no (not observed) and 1 for yes (observed).

Procedure and Data Analysis

Twenty percent of issues from *Vogue* magazine from 2002-2022 were randomly selected and all ads within the selected issues were analyzed based on Erving Goffman's theory of Gender Advertisements as laid out under the measures section. The data was obtained by visiting the archives of *Vogue* magazines at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh

over a 3 week period. Each perfume ad was examined and corresponding data for each category was entered in the Excel coding sheet by the researcher. Repetitive ads were identified and noted while entering the data. The analyzed ads were also recorded on the researcher's phone for cross-checking the coding accuracy. After all the data was entered in Excel, the dataset was converted into an SPSS file for statistical analysis.

RESULTS

In total, 234 perfume advertisements that appeared in *Vogue* Magazine from January 2002 to December 2022 were analyzed. Out of 234 advertisements, two had no humans depicted in the ad, and therefore were removed from the analysis. A total of 46 ads were repeated over the years. But since the ads published were dispersed over two decades, they were still accounted for in the analysis.

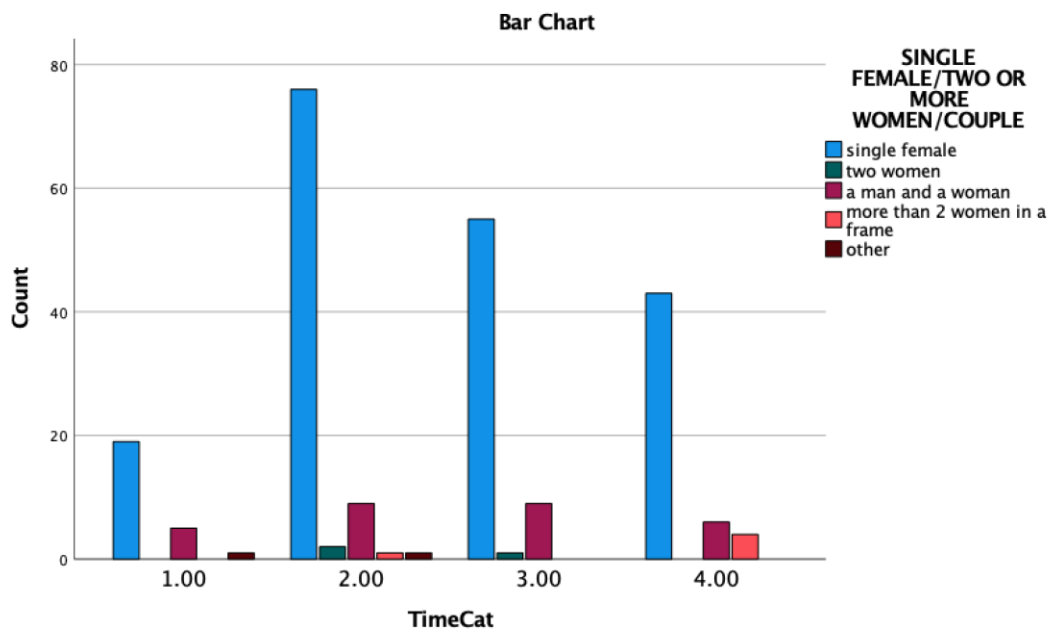
Overall, the December issues of *Vogue* magazine carried the most (55) advertisements in the last two decades followed by September (41) and October (37) issues. Out of all the perfume brands advertised, Dior had the most number of ads in all the issues over the years followed by Lancôme and Calvin Klein. The most frequently featured celebrities in the analyzed advertisements were Julia Roberts (Lancôme - 9 times), Charlize Theron (Dior - 8 times), and Natalie Portman (Dior - 8 times), who have been the brand ambassadors or product partners of the promoted perfumes.

The years 2007 to 2011 carried the most number of ads. The period of two decades was split into four sets of five years to best represent the time progression: 2002 - 2006 (Set 1), 2007 - 2011 (Set 2), 2012 - 2016 (Set 3), and 2017 - 2022 (Set 4). All measures were tested against the time variable. This was to see if time affected each of the categories and to understand how with time the representation of women has changed in respect to individual categories.

To answer the research questions on how the portrayal of women changed over time in perfume advertisements, a series of Crosstabs with Chi-square analysis were performed. The results are as follows for gender portrayed, for each categorization of Goffman, (1979) and Kang, (1997).

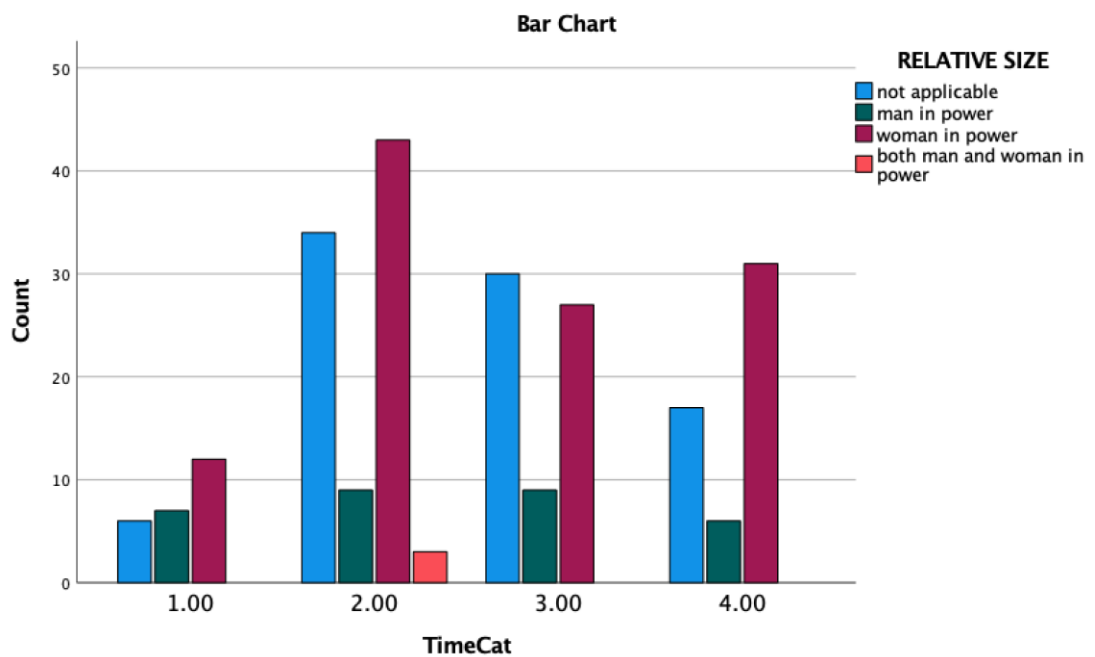
Individuals Portrayed

This category focuses mainly on who is involved and presented in the advertisement (i.e., single women, multiple women, etc.). The results of the Chi-square crosstab test revealed no statistically significant relationship between variables time and women shown in power $\chi^2(12, n=232) = 17.07, p = 0.147$. The results suggest that any observed relationship between the variables is likely due to chance and not a true association. This finding explains that over the years how many people were depicted in perfume advertisements has been consistent throughout the years. Particularly, single females have been consistently depicted most frequently throughout the years.



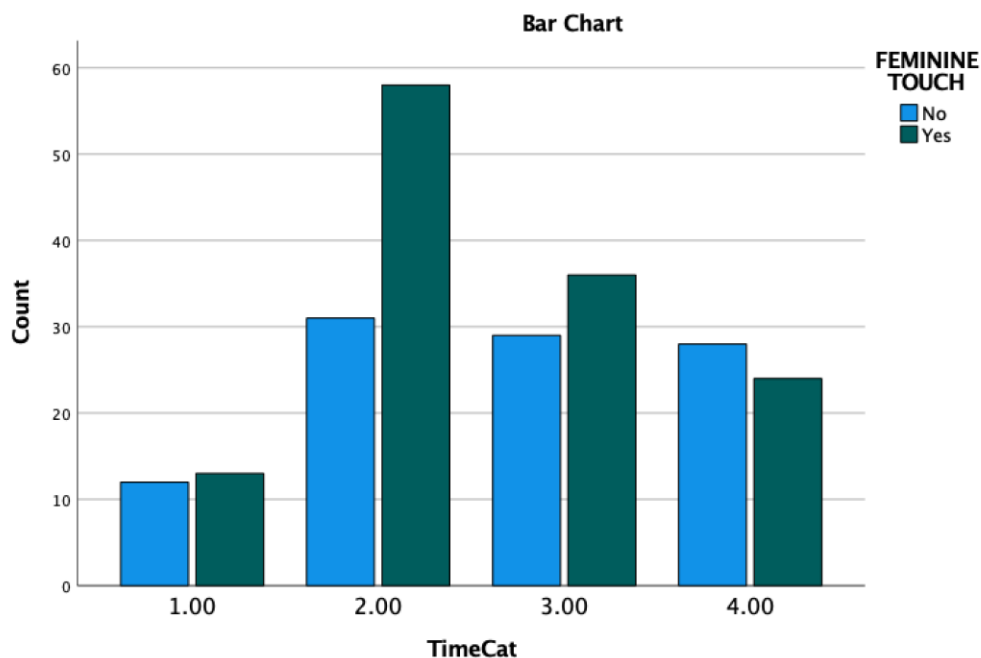
Relative Size

Relative Size refers to the way social weight (power, rank, authority) has been shown in a particular advertisement. The results of the crosstabs analysis show no significant differences for this category $\chi^2(9, n=232) = 14.40, p = 0.109$. The distribution of women has been consistent over the years. Every five years, women have been in power and that is the dominant category, which means time has had no particular effect on if women had more social weight or not, they have always been shown in power throughout the years.



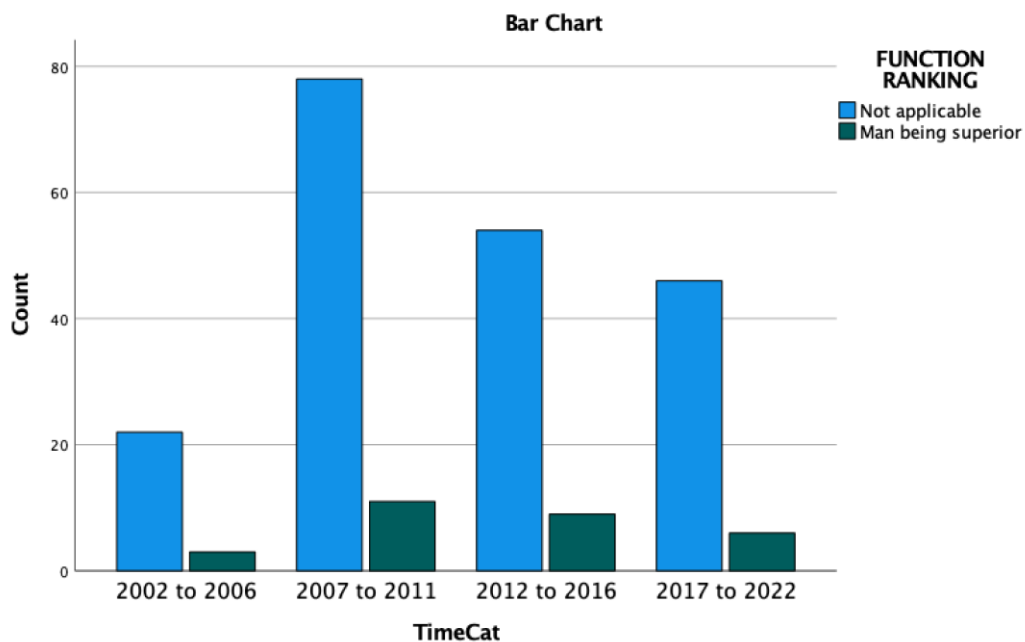
Feminine Touch

This category indicates that women are more likely to use their fingers to trace outlines of an object or cradle, caress, or effect a “just barely touching” scenario. Out of the 232 ads analyzed, the presence of feminine touch was accounted for in almost a 50-50 ratio: 56% yes, and 43% no. Over the years, there is a 60-40% percent chance that women in the ads have the element of feminine touch. The findings of the Crosstabs analysis are not significant for this category, $\chi^2(3, n=232) = 5.22, p = 0.156$. Therefore, no time period has a significantly different proportion of feminine touch than the other.



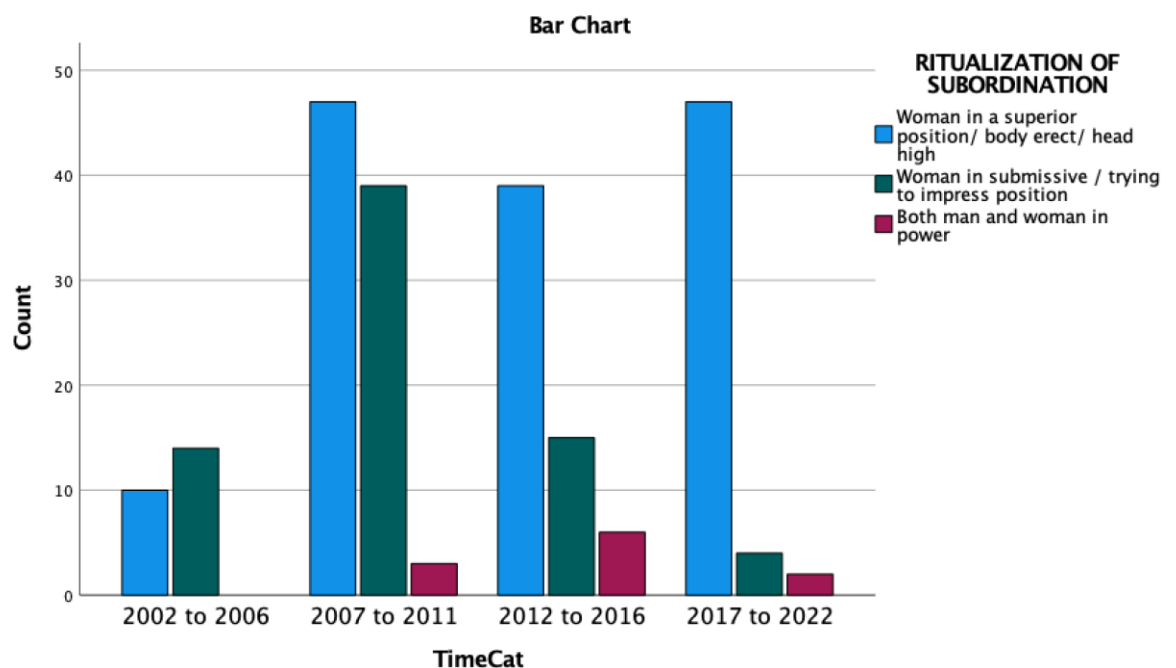
Function Ranking

This category focuses on the hierarchy of functions either within an occupational frame or outside occupational specializations. It refers to when a man and women are face to face in an ad, the man is likely to perform the executive role. Out of the 232 ads analyzed, 87.3% ads did not feature a couple because of this, the majority of the advertisements did not apply to this category. The findings after running the Crosstabs indicated that the results were not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n=232) = 0.227, p = 0.973$. This explains that most of the ads feature a single woman at any period of time.



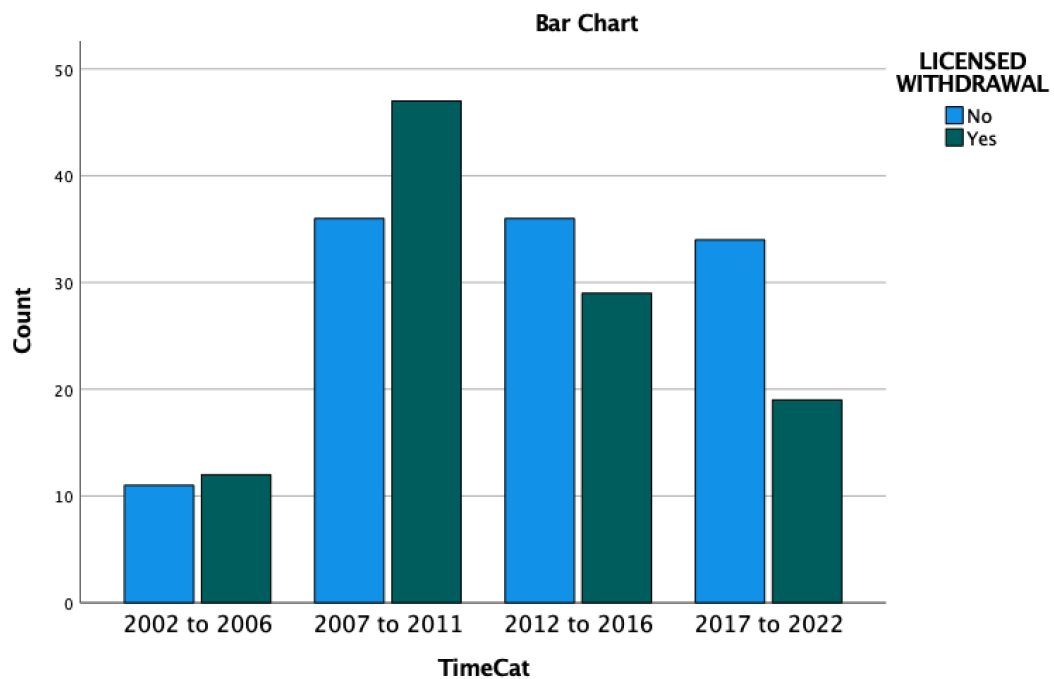
Ritualization of Subordination

This category includes the classic stereotype of lowering one's body, being submissive, or pleasing a person. Correspondingly, holding the body erect and the head high is stereotypically a mark of unashamed superiority. Postures can easily showcase one's position placement in an advertisement if they are in power or not. The Chi-square results of the Crosstab test revealed a statistically significant relationship between time and if women are shown in power with the head held high, $\chi^2(6, n=232) = 33.6, p = 0.001$. In the early 2000s, women were stereotyped in submissive roles, going forward, in the mid-2000s, men and women were almost equally shown in power and lastly, in the last 2000, women were featured as powerful. Even though the element of body display is still intact, the women are no longer in submissive roles; they are confident.



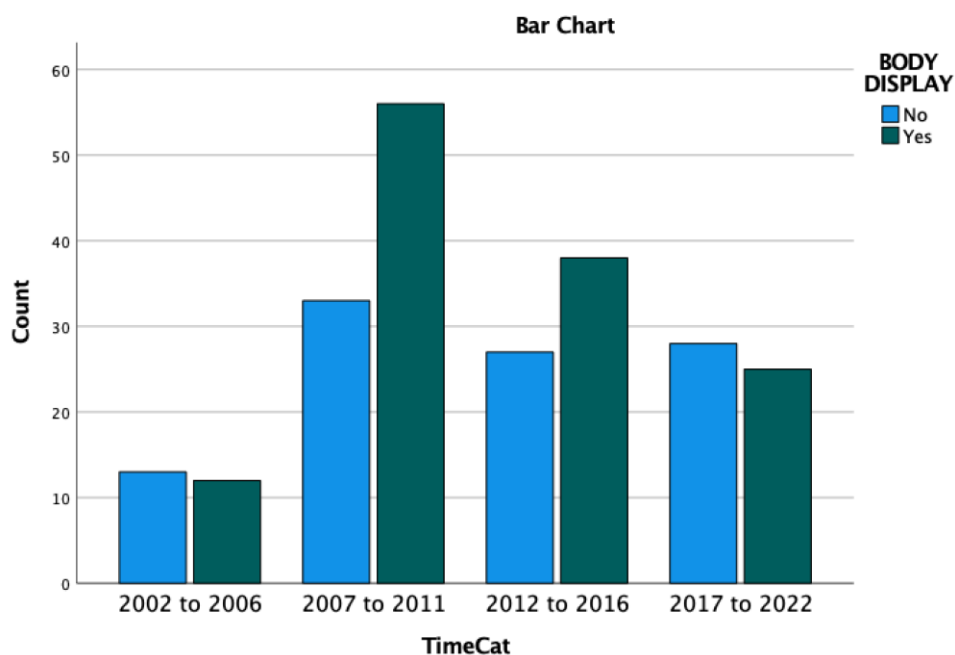
Licensed Withdrawal

Women more than men are pictured engaged in their thoughts which psychologically removes them from a social situation at large; it makes them dependent for protection from others (men) who are present. Turning one's gaze, and staring at something at a distance are signs of licensed withdrawal. The results of Crosstabs analysis to see if women over time have been portrayed as less psychologically absent were not significant, $\chi^2(3, n=224) = 6.06$, $p = 0.108$. Throughout the years, 52.2% of women in advertisements were shown as attentive and present in the situations. The mid-2000s was the time when women were featured as withdrawn in social situations or even if there was a single female in the frame, the women would be staring anywhere but at the camera which takes away their power.



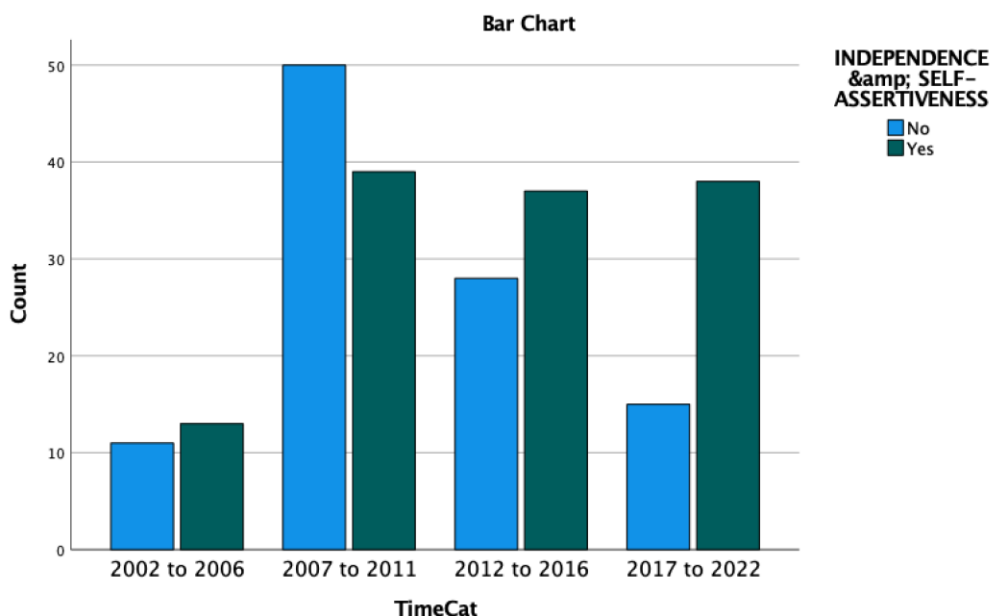
Body Display

This category refers to the levels of a female model's body display (body revealing clothes, nudity). Body-revealing clothes include mini-skirts, tight skirts or evening gowns which expose cleavage, "short"-shorts, "see-through" clothes, halter dresses, or bathing suits. Nudity is defined as unclothed models, including models translucent under apparel and lingerie, models clothed in nothing except a towel, or models depicted with no clothing. "Close-up" shots where the shoulders of the models are bare are considered as nudity. This category is very useful in the current times as many of perfume commercials display women half-naked. The crosstab analysis result indicates that this category is not statistically significant, $\chi^2(3, n=232) = 4.20, p = 0.240$. Overall, 56.5% of women were featured in body-revealing clothes and the highest concentration was during the years 2007-2011. However, body display was not observed differently across periods.



Independence and Self-Assertiveness:

Stereotyping of women has been approached from a different perspective here which focuses solely on the subtle representation of women in an ad that provides clues to the overall message of an ad. This category helps to evaluate the female model's overall image in terms of independence and self-assertiveness. The Chi-square results of the Crosstabs test revealed a statistically significant relationship between time and independence and self-assertiveness, $\chi^2(3, n=231) = 10.56, p = 0.014$, meaning that the representation of women in more independent roles varied across time periods. This has been increasing over the years, women might display their bodies, but they are more dominant and headstrong than before. Around 55% of females were shown as independent and self-assertive in the overall sample. Women are still shown as bold and sexy, but they are not subjecting anymore for attracting attention. Out of the two decades, 2007-2011 was the peak time when women still followed the stereotypical roles, and gradually over the late 2000s, there is a distinctive change in the way women are featured in perfume advertisements.



CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research suggest that there has been a significant shift in the balance of power in perfume advertisements in *Vogue* over the last two decades. The early 2000s were marked by a proliferation of advertisements that emphasized the allure of the product itself, often featuring hyper-sexualized images of women in provocative poses. However, by the mid-2010s, there was a clear trend toward empowering imagery that placed the consumer at the center of the narrative.

This shift is evident in several ways. First, there has been a notable increase in the number of advertisements that feature women in positions of power and authority. These women are often portrayed as independent, confident, and successful, and are shown using perfume as a tool to enhance their own power and allure. Second, there has been a move away from traditional gender norms in these advertisements. While early 2000s advertisements often relied on stereotypical images of femininity and masculinity, more recent ads have embraced diversity and inclusivity. This has been reflected in the casting of models of different ages, races, and body types, as well as in the use of gender-neutral messaging.

The statistical analysis revealed that there is a significant relationship between the time frame and the portrayal of women in power in perfume advertisements. These findings have important implications for both the perfume industry and *Vogue* magazine. Advertisers should continue to embrace empowering messaging and inclusive representation to appeal to a more diverse and discerning consumer base. *Vogue* can use this research to inform their editorial decisions and ensure that they are promoting a positive and inclusive representation of power in their pages. The findings of this research also contribute to the broader conversation about the representation of power in media and advertising. By analyzing the changes in perfume

advertisements over time, this research provides insight into the shifting cultural attitudes toward power and gender roles.

The results of this study also suggest some parallels between the depiction of women in relation to power and the progression of the #MeToo movement. Statistical analyses of this study show that there has been a significant change in how women carry and portray themselves, where power dynamics have shifted after 2012 and more so in 2017 corresponding to the first and second wave of the #MeToo movement. The women are no longer withdrawing from being sexy, bold, and independent, they are claiming their sexuality and femininity by being dominant instead of submissive, increasingly so since 2012. Even though the #MeToo movement shook the world, and left women scared, and exposed the raw nature of the real world, it also empowered women to be themselves and not be afraid.

Overall, this study highlights the importance of analyzing trends over time using statistical methods to gain a deeper understanding of societal changes. The use of Chi-square and crosstabs has allowed for a more nuanced analysis of the relationship between variables, providing statistical evidence to support the shift towards more empowering and inclusive perfume advertisements in *Vogue*.

This study can lead many individuals who are looking to find and analyze the societal changes which contribute to the bigger picture of the world. This study suggests it is possible that if advertisements were “mirrors” of society, they reflect that the #MeToo movement did not cower women, but instead pushed them to be comfortable in their own skin. The movement changed the portraits of women from being “the objects of desire” to “strong, confident women” who are ready to face anything. However, the current study can only examine a cross-section of history and cannot draw causal links between the #MeToo movement and women’s portrayal in relation to power. Future studies should examine the relationship between the movement and the portrayal of women's advertisements in a method that can draw causal

relations such as a longitudinal approach. The current study can also be expanded by conducting interviews with the advertising industry professionals to see their perceptions as designers and producers of the advertisements. The current study can also be expanded by analyzing other product ads from the personal hygiene category such as feminine products. Future research could also focus on how men are portrayed and featured in men's perfume ads. In comparison to the female ads, and the increase in the portrayal of women in power, it is worth examining if anything changed about the representation of men. A thorough analysis could be done to see how the stereotypical roles of men have changed over the decades.

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Images:

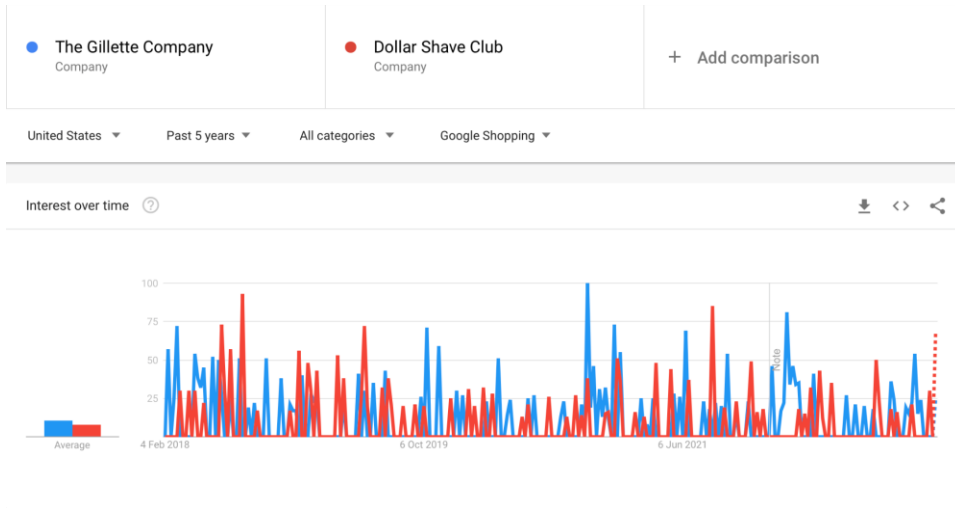


Image 1

Data source: Google Trends (<https://www.google.com/trends>).

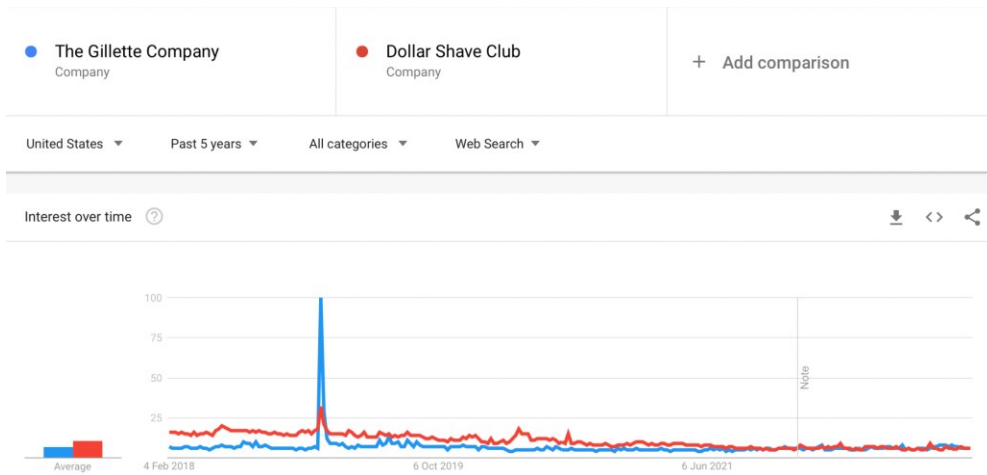


Image 2

Data source: Google Trends (<https://www.google.com/trends>).