



Analysing How Brands Use Activism in Advertising Campaigns to Challenge Gender Stereotypes in a South African Context.

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I hereby declare that the Research Report submitted for the BA Honours in Strategic Brand Communication degree to The Independent Institute of Education is my work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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From the bottom of my heart, I thank you and I love you.

ABSTRACT

The portrayal of women in advertising is filled with stereotypes about who women are and what their roles should be in society. These stereotypes in advertising are reinforced through regular exposures and then embraced by individuals as the norm. The aforesaid generalisations can be negative, confining, and degrading, affecting how women perceive themselves and how they're perceived by others. Therefore, the identified problem is that women are still being misrepresented in advertisements forcing them to live according to the deemed gender stereotypes.

The study will further provide insight into how women are affected by gender stereotypes in advertising and how brands can play their part in influencing a change by using activist advertising. This mixed-method study unpacks and discusses the relevant qualitative and quantitative data collection methods which informed the identified findings. The main finding identified was that brand activism can influence a societal change, if authentically implemented by a brand however, though a brand may be steadfast in its activism, consumers don't forget the wrong doings they may have been challenged with in the past. Therefore, brands need to make active strides in reassuring its consumers of the progress they are making in remedying the wrongs.

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

This research paper reports on a mixed-method study into analysing how brands use activism in advertising campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes. This study aimed to determine whether brands that use activist advertising influence a change in society with regards to gender stereotypes.

This study will analyse the perception consumers have of gender stereotypes in society and the influence activist advertising has on challenging these stereotypes. This study will make use of the sneaker brand Nike.

This study consolidates historical and present research while expanding the reader's knowledge on gender stereotypes in advertising and the influence activist advertising has on challenging these stereotypes. An association will be drawn as to how brand activism influences a change in gender stereotypes in advertising and society.

1.1. Background

South African society is confronted with several social differences which are specifically connected to the country's past. These differences are relics of various institutionalised forms of racism and sexism that were established during the apartheid era (Wittmann, 2012). Since 1994, several laws were introduced as part of the South African legislation to promote equality between gender stereotypes (Wittmann, 2012) however, to this day, gender stereotypes play a significant role in the daily operations of the country which, according to Wittmann (2012), demonstrates that the segregation entrenched by the apartheid regime did not entirely disappear when the country got its democracy. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (2020), state that gender stereotypes support a hierarchy of control and privilege that generally favours what is considered male or manly over that which is female or ladylike, strengthening a systemic disparity that undermines the rights of women and confines opportunity for women to express their authentic selves.

Furthermore, the portrayal of women in advertising is filled with stereotypes about who women are and what their roles should be in society. These stereotypes in advertising are reinforced through regular exposures and then embraced by individuals as the norm (Holtzhausen, Jordaan & North, 2011). The aforesaid generalisations can be negative, confining, and degrading, affecting how women perceive themselves and how they're perceived by others (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). However, consumers at present, expect brands to speak out about social issues in a meaningful and authentic manner, as they are jaded about being portrayed erroneously in this day and age (Gilliland, 2021). Hence brands such as Nike have focused their purpose on engaging in social issues to bring about change and become conscious (Da Palma, 2020). Da Palma (2020) states, that advertising and activism have changed during the 21st century, and whether it is to construct notoriety among shoppers or trigger authentic progress in society, both are working hand in hand thanks to brand activism.

This suggests that brands need to tailor their advertising to portray genders in their genuine roles, as both advertising research and practice have emphasized the detrimental impacts of utilizing stereotypes in advertising (Akestam, Rosengren, Dahlen, Liljedal & Berg, 2021). As a result, this study will focus on how brand activism has become an essential part of challenging gender stereotypes.

1.2. Rationale

This research aims to analyse the role of gender stereotypes in advertising and the influence brand activism has in challenging these stereotypes. The focus of the study is brand activism and how it influences a change in gender stereotypes. This study used exploratory research as the research aims to investigate the influence brand activism had on challenging gender stereotypes in advertising and society.

Advertising is the most pervasive and one of the most powerful tools used to influence how individuals perceive themselves and others, as media insinuates messages into our consciousness at every touchpoint (Wood, [n.d.]). Advertising conveys images of the genders, many of which propagate unrealistic, outdated, and limiting perceptions (Akestam et al., 2021). These stereotypes are commonly held generalisations about

the habits and characteristics ascribed to women and men (Walley, [n.d.]) which continue to limit the potential of women. Thus, advertisers need to be aware of and understand the impact of gender-stereotyped advertising (Walley, [n.d.]).

In addition, amongst many relevant issues dealt with by social movements, women discrepancy is of high relevance in our contemporary socio-political sphere and needs to be endorsed by brands globally to educate people on these socio-political issues surrounding women discrepancy and actively find ways to change this narrative (Vredenburg et al., 2020). These discrepancies need to be changed, as consumers tend to view advertising stereotypes as self-relevant, adopting these stereotypes even though they may be dissimilar to the consumers themselves, however when they see the same stereotypes being common throughout different brand adverts, they believe that these stereotypes are true (Walley, [n.d.]). Lastly, if we overlook the effects of gender-stereotyped advertising across the population, we limit the comprehension of our current society and how advertisers may play a more responsible role in it (Akestam et al., 2021).

Therefore, when brands align activist messaging, purpose, and values with prosocial organisational practices, they engage in bona fide brand activism, creating the foremost potential for social change and immense increases in brand value (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020). For this reason, the study will be discussing the stereotypical portrayal of women and how brands use activism to challenge these stereotypes in advertising.

1.3. Problem statement

Research has been conducted on how genders are portrayed in media and advertisers are often criticised as they portray women as product users, and least often as sex objects (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). Furthermore, Holtzhausen et al. (2011) state that studies on the depiction of women in advertising show that women are not portrayed in powerful roles, “they are usually represented as stereotypical nurturers or sex objects, which does not reflect the changes in society”. In the context of this research

study, the portrayal of women in advertising should reflect the present changes in society however, the current portrayal of women is still filled with stereotypes about who women are and what their roles should be in society (Akestam et al., 2021). These generalisations can be negative, confining, and degrading, affecting how women perceive themselves and how they're perceived by others (Walley, [n.d.]). Thus, the challenge facing advertisers is to successfully evolve by portraying women in a non-stereotyped manner, whilst maintaining the intended message. Should these stereotypes in advertising continue to be ignored, we limit our understanding of our current society and how advertisers may play a more responsible role in it however, most importantly, women will continue being confined to demeaning advertising standards which hinder them from being their authentic selves (Holtzhausen et al., 2011).

1.3.1. Why is the problem worth investigating?

This study's problem is worth investigating as it will provide insight into how women are affected by gender stereotypes in advertising and how brands can play their part in influencing a change by using activist advertising.

1.3.2. Research questions

1. How does advertising play a role in making gender stereotypes a norm?
2. How do Nike consumers perceive brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activist advertising?
3. Is Nike challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising?

1.3.3. Research objectives

1. To evaluate whether advertising plays a role in making gender stereotypes a norm in society.
2. To understand the perception Nike consumers, have about brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activism.
3. To analyse whether Nike is challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising.

1.4. Purpose statement

Following the abovementioned problem, the core purpose of this study is to analyse the influence brands have on challenging gender stereotypes by utilising activism in their advertising campaigns. The study aims to showcase how brands can play their role in influencing a change by portraying women in their authentic roles. This should ascertain the validity and feasibility of the use of brand activism. Furthermore, this study should aid brands in aligning their brand messages to ensure that they move away from stereotypical advertising and progress towards brand activism.

1.5. Conceptualization (of key concepts)

According to Owais (2020), conceptualization is the process of identifying and defining the key concepts or phenomena that form the basis of a research study. Conceptualisation is a process that is conducted to provide an in-depth understanding of a concept by specifying its meaning (Owais, 2020). Concepts are building blocks of theory, which reflect the focal points of the social study therefore, this study's concepts are identified and conceptualized in the following sections below:

1.5.1. Theoretical Definition of Key Concepts

i. Advertising

Advertising, according to Weber and Schweiger (2017), is the sponsored dissemination of information across a variety of mass communication media to elicit the desired response. As a result, advertising tries to inform and/or persuade the target audience to take action per the advertiser's interests (Weber & Schweiger, 2017).

ii. Brand Activism

According to Cammaerts (2007), activism is defined as the ability to take action to bring about social or political change. Activism strives to promote constructive social change and can take many forms, including protests, strikes, sit-ins, consumer boycotts, and nonviolent civil disobedience, to name a few (Cammaerts, 2007).

iii. Gender Stereotypes

Gender is not a biologically determined property or an immanent identity, according to Butler's (1988) theory of performative arts, but is constantly acted to stress society standards and construct the notion of gender. As a result, rather than being female or male, society has established gender roles that define what it is to be a female or man (Butler, 1988).

1.6. Overview of Research Methodology

The research study used a mixed-method approach, where the researcher had to use both qualitative research methods as well as quantitative research methods. This exploratory study collected qualitative data using unobtrusive research, where the researcher utilized content analysis. The content analysed by the researcher was the Nike, Dream Crazier ad which was chosen for its relevance to the study. Purposive non-probability sampling was the sampling method used to select the relevant Nike ad. Furthermore, the quantitative data were collected using a survey that was shared with Nike consumers over the age of 18, who are based in South Africa. Lastly, to select the quantitative sample, the researcher used the snowball non-probability sampling method as the respondents nominated other respondents they knew who fit the study's criteria. A thorough explanation of the study's research methodology will be provided and discussed in Chapter 3.

1.7. Proposed Structure of the Paper

The structure of the research paper will be mentioned and unpacked in the section below:

- Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter focused on the study's historical and current background as well as the conceptualization of the key concepts. The study's problem statement, rationale, and purpose statement were discussed in-depth. Lastly, the research questions and objectives were stated.

- Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter entails the conceptualisation of key concepts, where the reader will be provided with a detailed understanding of concepts relevant to the study. Further, the literature review will unpack the theoretical foundation in which theories related to the research problem and objectives are discussed. Concluding this section with the linking of the researches problem and current literature.

- Chapter 3: Research Methodology

This chapter introduces and examines the research paradigm and research design that was followed in this study. The research population and sampling were also discussed, followed by an in-depth explanation of the data collection and data analysis methods. Ending this chapter by mentioning the study's limitations and delimitations.

- Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

The findings based on analysed data are given narratively in this chapter. The findings will be interpreted and debated, while insights into the larger context of the study topic will be explored. Furthermore, the findings will be compared to existing literature and theory. Lastly, the findings' trustworthiness will be taken into account, based on mixed-method approach techniques.

- Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter includes tying research questions to relevant findings, as well as summarizing the study's findings, and making recommendations for future research.

1.8. Conclusion

This research study intends to answer the gaps identified in the literature to be discussed. This study looked into understanding the historical and current content relevant to this research study by unpacking in a South African context, gender stereotypes in advertising as well as the shift towards brand activism. This study will focus on understanding whether brand activism influences a change in gender stereotypes. As a result, this section unpacked the foundation of this research study to introduce the reader to the research topic and problem being investigated in this paper. The results derived from this research will assist industry professionals to create advertising campaigns that showcase gender, especially women in their genuine roles.

2. Chapter 2: Literature Review

A literature review is a comprehensive review of the available literature on your research topic which helps a researcher understand the topic before shaping an argument or justification (Mudavanhu, 2017). This study's topic involves analysing how brands use activism in advertising campaigns to challenge gender stereotypes surrounding women and encourage societal transformation. Therefore, the key concepts relating to this topic namely; advertising, gender stereotypes, and activism will be unpacked to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the study. Additionally, the study's theoretical foundation will be discussed and how it links to the research problem. This literature review will assess and compile existing literature to establish connections between important topic areas as well as to highlight research gaps.

2.1. Theoretical Framework: Social Construction Feminism by Judith Lorber and Susan A Farrell (1991).

The Social Construction Feminism theory of Lorber and Farrell (1991) is used as the foundation for this study's analysis of pertinent ideas concerning gender stereotypes and the essential adjustments that must occur in the social institution of gender and its social construction.

Judith Lorber and Susan A Farrell's (1991) theory of Social Construction Feminism was born from the numerous variations of the Feminist Theory. The various feminist theories examine women's experiences of gender subordination, the foundations of women's oppression, how gender inequality is maintained, and suggest various solutions to gender inequality (Jones and Budig, 2008). For example, Liberal Feminism argues that women's oppression is caused by their unequal access to legal, social, political, and economic institutions (Jones and Budig, 2008). Their approach promotes women's equal legal rights and participation in public areas such as education, politics, and the workplace (Jones and Budig, 2008). On the other hand, according to radical feminism, women's subjugation stems from their sexuality. They contend that violence, objectification, and societal institutions like medicine and religion dominate women's bodies, as stated by Jones and Budig (2008).

Radical feminists believe that sexism is the oldest and most persistent form of oppression and that overcoming gender injustice requires the abolition of patriarchy and obligatory heterosexuality (Jones and Budig, 2008). This would be achieved by giving women more autonomy over their bodies, which would include changes to sexuality, childbirth, and parenthood (Jones and Budig, 2008). However, Jones and Budig (2008) state that, gender inequality is rooted in capitalism, according to Marxist and Socialist Feminists. They claim that capitalists and individual males take advantage of women's unpaid domestic reproductive work, which leads to women being exploited as a low-wage and disposable workforce (Jones and Budig, 2008). Jones and Budig (2008) further state that patriarchy, according to Marxist feminists, is created by capitalism and will be abolished when capitalism is abolished. Although patriarchy and capitalism, according to socialist feminists, are two independent oppressive systems, they advocate for a redistribution of duties within the family, as well as changes in access to education, healthcare, economic opportunities, and political power (Jones and Budig, 2008).

Be that as it may, social construction feminism examines the entire structure of the gendered social order, it views gender as a societal institution that is embedded in all of society's major social groups (Lorber, 1997). Gender determines the allocation of power, privileges, and economic resources as a social institution (Lorber, 1997). Lorber (1997) further states that alternative methods of acting and organising work and family life are essentially impossible when gender norms and expectations are embedded into women's and men's sense of self as a specific sort of human being.

Additionally, in social construction feminist theory, women and men are socially differentiated to justify treating them unequally, as inequality lies at the foundation of gender itself (Lorber, 1997). Furthermore, because gendering is so persistent, Lorber (1997) claims that, while gender is connected with other unequal statuses, correcting the gendered portion of these systems of inequality may be the most difficult. As a result of this pervasiveness, a large number of people feel that gendering is biological and so "natural" (Lorber, 1997). Having said that, Lorber and Farrell's (1991) views are supported by other social theorists such as Judith Butler, who has oriented her work towards feminism and queer theory and argues for gender

performativity. This means that repeating socially acceptable "male" and "female" performances reifies the categories, giving them the impression of a naturalized and fundamental binary (Lumen Learning, n.d.). According to Lumen Learning (n.d.), Butler, further argues that gender is never a constant description of a person, but a person is always "doing" gender, performing, or diverging from socially accepted gender stereotypes. Lastly, Butler claims that gender is more than just acting a specific way; it is also about embodying and believing certain gender norms, as well as engaging in activities that correspond to those standards (Lumen Learning, n.d.). These performances legitimize gender categories' essentialism (Lumen Learning, n.d.).

The social construction feminist theory is relevant for this research study as the study aims to encourage brands to challenge gender stereotypes and promote societal transformation through brand activism. While the social construction theory contends that features formerly assumed to be unchangeable and merely biological are products of human definition and interpretation molded by cultural and historical settings and must be deconstructed, as equality cannot be founded on gender (Lorber, 1997). Furthermore, genital and hormonal ambiguities in infant sex classification are disregarded or overturned, and the gendering of sports and physical labour ignores overlaps in female and male physique and musculature (Lorber, 1997). Lober (1997) also states that gender distinction, approval of recognized gendered conduct and appearance, and condemnation of departures from established standards are all aspects of power and social control, according to the social construction feminist perspective. Religion, the law, and medicine enforce gender boundaries and repress gender diversity through moral condemnation and stigmatization, such as designating gender incorrect conduct as immoral, unlawful, and crazy (Lorber, 1997).

Therefore, with the above being mentioned, brands should depict women in their authentic manners, and move away from societal stereotypes. As stereotyped gender portrayals in advertising have negative effects on the stereotyped gender (Akestam et al., 2021). Akestam et al. (2021) further state that gender stereotypes can hurt adults and children by encouraging preconceptions about them that may limit how they view themselves and how others see them. Thus, brands

should use brand activism in advertising to challenge these stereotypes and encourage societal change.

2.2. Key Concepts

2.2.1. Advertising:

Weber and Schweiger (2017) define advertising as a paid propagation of information through an array of mass communication channels to trigger the desired action. Thus, advertising aims to inform and/ or influence the targeted audience to take action in line with the interest of the advertiser (Weber & Schweiger, 2017).

Almost every individual has grown up consuming mass media however, looking at all the marketing channels available, advertising is well-known for its lasting impact on viewers' minds, as its exposure is widespread (Kumar & Raju, 2013). As a subset of the promotional mix, advertising serves as a major instrument in generating brand awareness in the minds of potential consumers to eventually make a purchase decision (Kumar & Raju, 2013). The evolution of advertising backdates into ancient times, where advertising focused primarily on flashy prints and exaggerated claims about product benefits which fuelled a national dependency on consumption (School of Journalism and Communication, 2018). The industry in this era flourished however, the 1950s came and consumer exploitation in advertising became a primary issue of modern society, once the government noticed, they introduced legislation such as The Packaging and Labelling Act to protect consumers (School of Journalism and Communication, 2018). Under this regulation, advertising was forced to adjust.

The well-known Golden Age of Advertising emerged in the 1960s and 1970s where there was a wide shift towards creativity and less focus on product benefits (Weber & Schweiger, 2017). Advertisements integrated design and copywriting in new appealing ways which captured the interest of consumers and abandoned the materialistic and consumeristic ways of the previous century (Weber & Schweiger, 2017). This era was heavily influenced by social movements and sub-cultures which allowed brands to build relationships with their audiences (School of Journalism and Communication, 2018). As the advertising evolution continued, art and commerce synthesized, market

research became more sophisticated, and “liberated” communities (LGBTQ, black communities, and women) were targeted (Weber & Schweiger, 2017).

Today, advertising is the focal point of creative social influence and complex research strategies as stated by the School of Journalism and Communication (2018). This era has emerged with better techniques that leverage new technologies to effectively track and reach new consumers (School of Journalism and Communication, 2018). Gone are the days where people were limited to three channels, now, consumers are spoiled for choice, being able to select from different social platforms as well as traditional media (Weber & Schweiger, 2017). Information is filtered through various points of identity and ideology, allowing consumers to consume information from channels that subtly assert their identities (School of Journalism and Communication, 2018). The School of Journalism and Communication (2018) states that, as identities and consumerism proceed to merge, advertising is entering a time in which social relevance will be fundamental to success and this explains the surge of brand activism. Therefore, brands need to effectively learn their consumers to understand their values, beliefs, and needs, especially when it comes to their expectations of a brand so the brand can cater accordingly.

2.2.2. Activism:

Cammaerts (2007) defines activism as the ability to take any action with an intent to bring about social or political change. Activism aims to influence a positive transformation in society, and it can be performed in numerous ways such as protests, strikes, sit-ins, consumer boycotts, or non-violent civil disobedience to mention a few (Cammaerts, 2007). However, brand activism has attracted the attention of advertisers who work in both multinational and national brands (Shetty, Venkataramaiah & Anand, 2019). Shetty et al. (2019) state, that brand activism occurs when a brand or organisation shows their support of social-political issues by either making public statements, donating money to a cause, or making a cause-related statement through their advertising communication. This act of activism creates a buzz around the brand and attracts the attention of consumers, as well as impacts the company in a favourable manner as their profits increase, they gain loyal customers who associate the brand with positive traits (Shetty et al., 2019).

Brand activism is an extension of corporate social responsibility (CSR) where brands make a commitment and create content that benefits the societies and consumers impacted by their products (Eyada, 2020). Brands further play a leadership role by steering attention and interest towards a certain social-political cause with the desire to encourage improvements in society (Eyada, 2020). However, some brands that partake in “woke washing”, which is the act of participating in inauthentic activist messaging to impede improvements in society and mislead consumers with claims (Vredenburg, Kapitan, Spry & Kemper, 2020). “Woke washing” may result in the impediment of business returns and brand equity (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Authentic brand activism is salient as consumers support brands that take a stand on social issues.

A brand that has been authentic in its activism is Nike (Vredenburg et al., 2020). Their 2018 Dream Crazier campaign aimed at challenging gender stereotypes surrounding women by stating that “women are just doing it (Ennis, 2019). The campaign was a start of a journey celebrating women amid the controversial climate against transgender inclusion in sports as well as the deemed acts of women in society (Ennis, 2019). Contrastingly, Pepsi aired an advertising campaign in 2017 which is said to have trivialized the Black Lives Matter movement (The New York Times, 2017). The advert aimed to convey a message of unity, peace, and understanding however, it trivialised the protests against the murder of black lives by the police which infuriated consumers and audiences alike (The New York Times, 2017). The above-mentioned examples of brand activism showcase the importance of salient brand activism as consumers oppose brands that “woke wash”.

Therefore, it can be assumed that brands can no longer keep quiet about social-political issues as consumers seek and support brands that take a stand. This study will further investigate the influence of brand activism on gender stereotypes to better understand the level of influence required.

2.2.3. Gender Stereotypes:

According to Butlers’ (1988) theory of performative arts, gender is not a biologically decided quality or an immanent identity but is continuously performed to emphasize societal norms to create the idea of gender. Therefore, rather than being female or

male, society has created gender roles that prescribe the act of being a female or male (Butler, 1988).

Numerous authors have argued that gender is socially constructed, such as; Haslanger (2017), who states that gender is social learning, a result of nurture or how an individual was brought up. Secondly, Millet (1971), regards gender as cultural, rather than biological due to differential treatment. She believes that gender is a product of upbringing and cultural notions of what is appropriate to each gender (Millet, 1971). Lastly, Eagly and Wood (1988) consider gender as socially constructed rules, on how men and women should behave, that only exist in the minds of perceivers. However, for this study, Butlers' (1988) idea of gender performativity will be implemented as it captures the notion of gender norms or stereotypes being social constructs that may be eliminated if we allow people to express their true identities without being criticised.

Judith Butler grew up being classified as a female even though she was described as androgynous and manlike due to her wardrobe choice and appearance (Fischer, 2016). She had to continually explain her gender to those who couldn't see past her self-identity and so she decided to challenge people's thinking by publishing a book surrounding gender (Gessen, 2020). Butler introduced "gender performativity", the belief that gender isn't something we are but something we do frequently (Fischer, 2016). According to Fischer (2016), Butler further explains gender as performativity as she believes that gender is a continued action that becomes associated with a group of people, for example, if an individual has female parts and decides to be recognisable as a "girl" by doing girl things, society will assume that the individual will live according to societal "girl" standards like being straight and submissive. Butler's theory around gender performativity further highlights the need for challenging existing stereotypes in society, as these stereotypes are not only misrepresenting women but also limiting their growth (Holtzhausen et al., 2011).

Gender stereotypes have always been a part of advertising so much so that, in recent times, potential negative effects have been highlighted (Akestam et al., 2021). This is due to the growing industrial use of what is known as femvertising and dadvertising as well as the increase in research articles investigating gender stereotypes in advertising

(Akestam et al., 2021). Furthermore, there is an increasing awareness in the industry of the possible negative impact that stereotyped gender portrayals have on viewers (Akestam et al., 2021). The British Advertising Standards Authority released a report in 2017 stating the potential harm gender stereotypes have as they invite assumptions about people that may negatively restrict how they perceive themselves (Advertising Standards Authority, 2018). Therefore, advertisers need to consider cross-gender advertising to accommodate all viewers instead of misrepresenting a gender (Akestam et al., 2021).

Lastly, the industry needs to move away from negative gender portrayals as consumers are now supporting brands that are inclusive and vocal about social-political issues (Akestam et al., 2021). Thus, brands need to consider being inclusive with their advertising campaigns as consumers are seeking brands that align with their beliefs and values and that promote equality in all forms.

Conclusion

This literature review aimed to discuss and understand the current literature available on the primary concepts of this study, as well as unpack the relevant theoretical framework while linking it to the research problem. The literature reviewed and the theoretical framework discussed suggest that there is a link between societal stereotypes and the false portrayal of gender in advertising, however, this connection is relatively inconclusive and worthy of further investigation. The literature also implies that how gender is portrayed in advertising has negative effects on the stereotyped gender which is usually female. However, while unpacking the study's key concepts, the literature further revealed that with the use of brand activism, a more genuine portrayal of gender may be achieved, influencing a societal transformation with regards to gender. Nevertheless, this will be further investigated during the researcher's study. The following section will unpack the study's relevant research methodology.

3. Chapter 3: Research Methodology

Research methodology can be defined as a systematic procedure to problem solving (Goundar, 2012). It describes how a researcher may proceed with their study and includes learning about the many methodologies that can be utilised in the conduct of research as well as tests, experiments, surveys, and critical studies (Goundar, 2012). Essentially, research methodology refers to the processes used by researchers to describe, explain, and predict phenomena (Goundar, 2012).

The purpose of this exploratory study is to analyse the phenomena of gender stereotypes and how brands can use brand activism to challenge these stereotypes by using a mixed-method approach to produce well-validated conclusions. This section will discuss the appropriate research approach and design, the relevant population sampling as well as present the data collected for this study.

The identified research problem is that brands misrepresent genders especially women in advertising which has a negative affect on them. This results in women not being able to live authentically as they consistently have to live according to the deemed stereotypes. However, with the rise of brand activism, women will be able to live authentically as brands will be potraying them for who they truly are, and not what society deems them to be. In order to explore this research problem and find appropriate solutions, the studies reseach questions would need to be answered.

Research Questions:

1. How does advertising play a role in making gender stereotypes a norm?
2. How do Nike consumers perceive brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activist advertising?
3. Is Nike challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising?

3.1. Research paradigm

According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017: 26), a research paradigm can be defined as “a basic set of beliefs or worldview that guides research action or an investigation”. Essentially, it is a researcher’s way of understanding the reality of the world and studying it (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

There are three major research paradigms namely; positivism which is known as the scientific method of investigation as it supports the belief that knowledge is based on objective, observable and verifiable facts only (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Interpretivism, is the response to the limitations and weaknesses of positivism as it aims to gain an in-depth understanding of human and social reality by recognizing an individual’s interpretation and understanding of the social phenomena (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Lastly, critical realism reinforces the belief that uncovering myths assists in societal transformation to free individuals from all forms of oppression while empowering them through knowledge (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Thus, the identified paradigm for this study is critical realism as the study aims to reveal myths and transform society (Rehman & Alharti, 2016) by encouraging brands to challenge gender stereotypes surrounding women.

Critical realism was developed in the 1970 and 1980s by Bhaskar as an alternative to positivism and interpretivism paradigms (Lawani, 2020). This method explores the underlying casual relationships between social events to gain a better understanding of problems and therefore being able to propose strategic recommendations to address social-political issues (Lawani, 2020). Fundamentally, critical realists believe that “the social world can be understood if people understand the structures that generate events” (Bal, 2020). Critical realism will be further examined by unpacking its epistemological, ontological, methodological and axiological positions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017).

Epistemology:

According to Du Plooy-Cilliers (2014), epistemology is the theory of knowledge which involves determining the validity of knowledge and what does not. Therefore, critical realism is based on real world phenomena and associated with societal knowledge as it is transactional and subjectivist (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). It obtains knowledge by

observing and deciphering meaning to clarify the components of reality that must exist prior to the events and experiences that transpired (Lawani, 2020). For this reason, this study would need to ensure in-depth understanding of both gender stereotypes and the influence of brand activism in advertising on societal change. Additionally, the results of the study cannot be generalised past the target sample as critical realism is of a subjective nature.

Ontology:

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) state that, ontology is the philosophical study of reality, being or becoming and existence which is concerned with the assumptions made about the social phenomenon under investigation. The ontological position in critical realism believes in a real world autonomous of people's perception, and that casual structures that clarify a phenomenon may remain concealed until activated in particular circumstances (Lawani, 2020). Thus, for this study, the ontological position will reveal the assumptions made about the influence of brand activism in advertising on challenging gender stereotypes.

Methodology:

Research collection methods, theories, procedures and principles are referred to when using the term Methodology, as they guide a specific approach to research (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Critical realism aims to expose myths and theories as well as use knowledge to empower people to transform society therefore, a mixed-method approach is regularly used which combines both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods to supplement each other (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). This approach is preferred as according to critical realists, the use of multiple data collection sources increase the validity and reliability of a study (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Thus, in order to understand how brands, use activism in advertising to challenge gender stereotypes, the mixed-method approach will be implemented.

Axiology:

Kivunja and Kuyini (2017) refer to axiology as the ethical concerns that need to be examined when planning a research paper. It is the study of value, examining what's good or bad in life and what we find worthy (Deane, 2018). A degree of subjectivism is accepted in research by critical realists and they support the idea that it is almost

impractical to do value-free research, as the research topic is usually value laden (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Thus, they accept their own biases and most importantly value equality and human liberation (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). Therefore, this study will examine the research gathered on brands using activism to challenge gender stereotypes and draw conclusions on what can be regarded valuable insights.

In conclusion, the researcher will be able to meet the study objective by following a suitable guideline for the study as the relevant research foundation has been identified after unpacking the positions of critical realism. The studies selected research approach and design will be discussed in the sections below.

3.2. Research approach and Research design

3.2.1. Mixed-Method Approach

Johnson, Onwuebuze and Turner (2007) define the mixed-method approach as the type of research in which a researcher integrates qualitative and quantitative research methodologies for the broad purposes of deep understanding and corroboration. The mixed-method approach is about heightened knowledge and reliability, as its purpose is to add to the existing literature by expanding and strengthening a study's conclusions (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). However, in order to utilize this approach effectively, both quantitative and qualitative research need to be unpacked and understood (Creswell, 2012).

Quantitative research according to Apuke (2017), can be described as an explanation of a phenomenon, through collecting and analysing numerical data using statistical methods. It entails gathering data to quantify information and apply it to statistical analysis in order to support or refute competing knowledge claims (Apuke, 2017). Therefore, one of the following quantitative research methods can be used to gather information such as, survey research, which includes the use of statistical tools to measure the characteristics of a specific population using scientific sampling procedures and a customized questionnaire (Apuke, 2017). Correlational research, which is used to determine whether, and to what extent a relationship exists between two or more variables in a population (Apuke, 2017). Following experimental research, where the researcher investigates the treatment of an intervention into the study group

and then measures the outcomes of the treatment, and lastly, casual-comparative research which entails a researcher investigating an issue by studying the variables in retrospect (Apuke, 2017). In closing, quantitative research aims to generate knowledge and create understanding about the social world (Allen, 2017).

Qualitative research on the other hand is the process of gathering, analysing and interpreting non-numerical data as defined by McLeod (2019). It can be used to comprehend how an individual subjectively perceives and interprets their social environment (McLeod, 2019). Qualitative researchers therefore investigate phenomena in their natural environments, aiming to understand or interpret occurrences in terms of the meanings people assign to them (McLeod, 2019). A qualitative approach to research is exploratory, attempting to understand "how" and "why" a given phenomenon, or behavior, acts as it does in a certain environment. Therefore, to collect qualitative research, the following methods can be utilised; in-depth interviews, documents, focus groups, case study research, ethnography as well as diary accounts (Busetto, Wick & Gumbinger, 2020). Qualitative methods thus produces in-depth understandings of how people perceive their social reality and, as a result, how they behave in that social world (Busetto et al., 2020).

Now that quantitative and qualitative research have been unpacked, the study will continue discussing the mixed-method approach. This approach has been chosen for this study as neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone could answer the studies research questions (Shorten & Smith, 2017). This study will therefore utilise the Exploratory Design, which consists of two phases where the results of the qualitative method assist in informing or developing the quantitative method (Berman, 2017). This approach is founded on the assumption that an exploration is required for one of several reasons; measures or instruments are unavailable, variables are unknown, or no guiding framework or theory exists (Berman, 2017). This design is best suited for when a researcher needs to construct and test an instrument because one isn't accessible, to identify important factors to analyse quantitatively when the variables are unknown, or to generalise results to different groups (Berman, 2017). For this reason, the exploratory design will be utilised as the study's purpose is to investigate the use of activism in brand advertising to challenge gender stereotypes.

Furthermore, there are two exploratory design models which will further assist the researcher in analysing the qualitative and quantitative data. The instrument development model and the taxonomy development model. Both these models start with the qualitative phase and end with the quantitative phase however, they differ in how the researcher connects the two phases and how the two methodologies are prioritised (Berman, 2017). Thus, for this study, the instrument development model will be followed where the researcher will be required to develop and implement a quantitative instrument based on qualitative results (Berman, 2017). For the first phase of this model, the researcher first conducts a qualitative investigation of the research issue, after which the qualitative findings are used to drive the construction of quantitative instruments (Berman, 2017). The researcher then quantitatively implements and validates this instrument in the second data collection phase, therefore, the development of the instrument item is connected through qualitative and quantitative methodologies (Berman, 2017). This model will therefore provide the researcher with the relevant information for the research study.

Lastly, regarding strategies relating to timeframes there are two, namely; longitudinal and cross-sectional studies (Bhat, 2020). Longitudinal studies looks at data gathered from the same sample over a long period while, cross-sectional studies observes data that has been collected at a single point in time (Bhat, 2020). However, for this study cross-sectional studies will be implemented as this study aims to understand the relationship between activism in advertising and gender stereotypes being challenged. Additionally, due to the time and resource constraints of this study, cross-sectional studies will provide an understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

In closing, the chosen methodology will assist this study by obtaining fuller and richer information, as well as answering the research questions (Schoonenboom & Johnson, 2017). The following section will unpack the relevant research design for this study.

3.3. Population and sampling

A population is a group of people or objects that have common, binding characteristics and are the focus of a research topic (Wani, n.d.). The population can be further defined by establishing parameters which will highlight the specific characteristics relevant to a study's population (Wani, n.d.). Therefore, the study's population and sampling will be further discussed below.

Qualitative Population and Sampling:

The study's relevant qualitative population is a Nike ad that addresses gender stereotypes as the researcher aims to understand the viewers perception through analysing the ad comments. The ad under analysis is the Nike Dream Crazier ad, which celebrates women in sport "who have broken barriers, brought people together through their performance and inspired generations of athletes to chase after their dreams" (Nike, Inc., 2021). This ad specifically celebrates women and their accomplishments, the things they were told they couldn't do. This ad was purposely selected as, Nike is well-known for its history and leadership in taking a stance on social and political matters in its advertisements (Eyada, 2020). The Nike ad is from the past five-years to ensure that the research being analysed is dated.

Following the accessible qualitative population, the sampling technique needs to be identified. Due to the established population being YouTube video comments, the selected sampling selection method is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling has four sampling methods which include, convenience, purposive, quota and snowball sampling (McCombes, 2021), however, for this study purposive sampling is utilised. Purposive sampling entails the researcher utilising their knowledge to pick a sample that will be most beneficial to the study objectives. (McCombes, 2021). This sampling approach is appropriate for this study since the researcher's goal is to collect data that is indicative of the total population and to gain a preliminary understanding of a small or under-researched group.

Quantitative Population and Sampling:

The quantitative population for this study is people, or more specifically, male and female respondents who are older than 18 years old and reside in South Africa.

Furthermore, the study's accessible population is selected based on the following criteria;

- Aware of Nike as a brand;
- Purchase items from Nike; and
- Have watched the Nike 'Dream Crazier' ad.

This population is relevant to the study as they are the population who base their brand loyalty and purchasing decision on whether a brand is a purposive brand. Fromm (2019) states that, Gen-Z's demand their favorite brands to stand for something, in ways that benefit society, growth, and profit. Furthermore, the researcher aims to acknowledge the respondents understanding of gender equality and whether they believe Nike's activist advertising is influencing a shift in gender stereotypes.

Further to the established population, the selected sampling method needs to be identified which is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling entails "the researcher selecting samples based on the subjective judgement of the researcher" other than random selection (Fleetwood, n.d.). This is the chosen sampling technique as the researcher aims to use reliable literature to collect comprehensive information on the research topic being investigated.

Additionally, non-probability sampling includes sampling methods to assist in selecting the relevant sample such as; convenience, consecutive, quota, purposive and snowball sampling (Fleetwood, n.d.). For this study, snowball sampling will be implemented which involves existing participants nominating more people they know, so the sample size increases like a rolling snowball (McCombes, 2021). This sampling method will allow the researcher to implore respondents to share the survey with individuals who fit the relevant population. The below figure briefly showcases the survey respondents:

No. of Participants	Age	Gender	Residency
27	24 - 53	Male, Female and Agender	South Africa

Figure 1: Survey Sample

Therefore, both the studies qualitative and quantitative population is accessible for the researcher as the survey respondents are reachable through the use of social media platforms and the content to be analysed is available on the internet for public consumption and viewing.

3.4. Data collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods will be used for this study as the selected research approach for the study is mixed-method approach. Furthermore, due to the selected research design being exploratory, the study will start with identifying the relevant qualitative data collection method and followed by the quantitative data collection method.

Qualitative Data Collection Method:

Qualitative data has two data collection methods namely; field research which aims to observe, interact and understand individuals in their natural environments (Bhat, n.d.). Secondly, unobtrusive research which analyses the subjects under study without interfering with the subject (DeCarlo, n.d.). However, for this study, unobtrusive research will be utilised as the researcher will be analysing data to gain an in-depth understating of the phenomena.

The researcher purposely selected the Nike 'Dream Crazier' ad as it is the most relevant ad for the study however, prior to the selectio of the ad, the researcher looked up all the Nike ads from the past five years. This showed to be an impossible task for the researcher as Nike has launched countless ads within this timeframe therefore, the researcher decided to narrow the search. The researcher then searched for 'the most influential Nike ads in the last five years' and numerous results appeared but the researcher selected the most recent result (2020) which was named "5 Most Inspirational Ad Campaigns By Nike With Powerful Messages" (Wilson, 2020). When opening the wedpage, the researcher was given an option of five ads, which the researcher watched. The ads which the researcher watched were the Nike; "What are girls made of?", "Don't Ask If Your Dreams Are Crazy", "Dream Crazier", "One Day We Won't Need This Day", and "You Can't Stop Us" (Wilson, 2020). All the ads had a

powerful message and were standing for a social issue however, for this study, the Nike “Dream Crazy” ad was the most appropriate.

Therefore, the advertisement depicts how women have been portrayed as hysterical or emotional when they have dared to dream big or express themselves openly (Wilson, 2020). Furthermore, it highlights female athletes who have broken down barriers, brought people together via their performances, and motivated future generations of athletes to pursue their aspirations (Wilson, 2020). This is the reason the ad was selected for this study.

Quantitative Data Collection Method:

For quantitative data, the researcher will implement non-experimental research which entails the researcher observing the context in which a phenomenon occurs and analyses it to obtain data (Wiese, n.d.). With non-experimental research, the researcher is unable to control, manipulate or alter the information, they rely on interpretation and observation to conclude (Wiese, n.d.).

Due to the researcher wanting to understand the target populations perception of gender stereotypes in advertising and their thoughts on Nikes brand activism, a survey was conducted. The researcher drafted an online survey which consists of 10 close-ended questions. The survey started off with a brief description of the research topic and the research aim, highlighting the researcher’s objectives. Following this introductory section, the first set of questions were asked, which were based on psychographics and the studies population criteria. Hereinafter, the succeeding set of questions were based on equality and gender stereotypes, and what respondents perception of the Nike as well as whether they think other brands should adopt a brand activist approach within their communication strategy. The survey is provided in Appendix B or can be accessed on the following link: <https://forms.gle/8utZErus9pF6P5Q2A>.

This survey has assisted the researcher with comprehensively understanding respondent perception and their sentiments surrounding gender equality. The respondents feedback will be discussed in the following section.

3.5. Data analysis

Data analysis is described as a process of cleansing, manipulating, and modeling data to identify relevant information for business decision making as defined by the Department of Library and Information Science (n.d.). Furthermore, the goal of data analysis is to extract usable information from data and make decisions based on that information (Department of Library & Information Science, n.d.). This section will be discussing and presenting the data analysis methods for both qualitative and quantitative data collected in the previous section by using the appropriate data analysis process. The data analysis procedure will aid the researcher in acquiring information by using appropriate software or tools that will allow the researcher to study the data and discover patterns in it (Department of Library & Information Science, n.d.). The researcher can make judgments or reach findings based on the information and data (Department of Library & Information Science, n.d.).

Qualitative Data Analysis:

There are several qualitative data analysis methods however, the four most common are; content analysis, narrative analysis, discourse analysis and grounded theory (Bhatia, 2018). For the study's qualitative research data, content analysis will be implemented as the researcher will be observing and deriving insights and conclusions from the Nike "Dream Crazier" ad available on YouTube. Content analysis is used to analyse documented data in the form of media, physical items and text (Bhatia, 2018). Therefore, content analysis will be implemented to analyse the relevant Nike ad on YouTube.

According to Roller (2019), qualitative content analysis is the methodical reduction of content, studied with careful consideration for the environment in which it was generated, in order to uncover themes and extract meaningful interpretations of the data. Additionally, priori codes have been used to find categories for the data being analysed. Priori codes are codes that are established before exploring the present data (Prochaska, n.d.). Priori codes can be deductive, implying that a researcher would apply pre-existing codes imposed by theory or past research findings (Armat, Assarroudi, Rad, Sharifi & Heydari, 2018). On the other hand, inductive priori codes are employed when there are no or few preceding ideas or research findings, implying that the researcher must develop their own codes based on the data (Armat et al.,

2018). The researcher used the deductive dominating strategy for this study, which indicates that the researcher would base their analysis on the chosen theoretical framework, but because there are no pre-existing codes, the researcher will need to build codes depending on the data being analysed (Armat et al., 2018).

According to Dudovskiy (n.d.), the following steps need to be followed to analyse qualitative content data;

1. Prepare and organize data.

Transcripts, notes, papers or any other important material needs to be printed out or assembled (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Furthermore, sources must be labelled, any demographics the researcher may have must be gathered as well as any other information that may aid in data analysis (Dudovskiy, n.d.). For this study, an advertisement needed to be analysed therefore, the researcher converted the Nike “Dream Crazier” ad into image frames which made it easier for the researcher to analyse the ad. The ad has 412 comments however, the researcher only analysed 91 comments as the other 321 comments were either in a foreign language, querying about one of the athlete names, speaking about which assignment they got this ad for or placing an unidentifiable emoji.

2. Develop and apply codes.

Coding may be defined as the categorizing of data; hence, the researcher must provide meaningful names to all codes (Dudovskiy, n.d.). For the coding process, the researcher read through the comments multiple times to ensure that they identify the relevant categories. The researcher identified eight categories which they linked to the relevant comments. The categories identified were; positive responses, psychological connection, anti-feminist responses, equality, Nike working conditions, inclusion, symbolism and empowerment. These categories will be further linked to themes.

3. Identify themes, patterns and relationships.

There are no generally applicable procedures for generating findings in qualitative data analysis (Dudovskiy, n.d.). In qualitative studies, the researcher's analytical and critical thinking abilities are crucial for data processing. As a result, no qualitative study can be replicated to provide the

same findings (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Nonetheless, there is a set of methodologies that may be used to detect common themes, patterns, and linkages within sample group members' replies in respect to the codes specified in the previous step (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Thus for this study, once the researcher identified the relevant categories, they then established themes for each category. The researcher accomplished this by analyzing primary data for terms and phrases most frequently used by respondents, as well as words and phrases associated with uncommon emotions (Dudovskiy, n.d.). Brand feelings, resonance, hate speech, equal rights, labour practice, social cause, religious archetypes and acceptance were the eight identified themes for the study. These themes will be further unpacked below.

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Brand Feelings	Positive Responses	"very cool" "i wish i could like this 1000 times." "very good" "I am a man and I like this! Go girls" "I'm All for CRAZY!!!" "Woman give birth and bring life in to the world... Crazy! #Strong" "Wow!! I just saw this video for the first time. Definitely saving this to show to my daughter in sha Allah 🤲🏻" "Best!!!!" "this video is speaking nothing but facts." "Seems to be on the similar lines of Apple's campaign of misfits but very powerful indeed." "This is my favourite commercial... happy international women's day...." "That's right only the crazy can do amazing!!" "Tell me that slam at the end doesn't give you goosebumps #boom" "I've watched this a million times and I still come back to it" "Really nice advertisements" "Nike's marketing strategy will cover sport industry for so long 🙌" "This is probably one of the best ads I've ever seen in my life" "I Love that." "So, if they wanna call you crazy? Fine, show them what crazy can do 🙌🙌🙌" "LOVE LOVE LOVE, you Nike team! You deserve every penny you earn to run these marketing campaigns! You have a cause!" "Great...now I'm crying!" "lol funny asf i think all your likes are from bots" "This gave me chills damn" "Damn this got me emotional" "This gives me so much power" "wow i got goosebumps" (x4) "this made me cry... so beautiful. show them what crazy can do. Nike believes in you. I believe in you. just do it" "Chills" "Semanya actually does have a disorder, meaning she has more testosterone than normal women..." "It was so good it made me cry"

Figure 2: Brand Feelings and Positive Responses

The above figure displays the first identified theme and category. The category identified by the researcher was "positive responses" as there were numerous comments surrounding how the Nike 'Dream Crazier' ad is "very cool", the "best" and "powerful". Linking the ad to positive traits. Furthermore, judging by the comments, the ad evoked heartfelt emotions in the viewers which made them feel connected, for example, there was a viewer who commented "this made me cry... so beautiful. Show them what crazy can do. Nike believes in you."

I believe in you. Just do it”, which shows that the viewer developed an emotional connection with the ad. For this reason, the identified theme was “brand feelings” as according to Keller (2001), customers' emotional responses and reactions to a brand are referred to as brand feelings. They also pertain to the social currency evoked by the brand (Keller, 2001).

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Resonance	Psychological Connection	“Remarkable message. So, me.” “I hear this statement ALOT.you're crazy. I love crazy.”

Figure 3: Resonance and Psychological Connection

According to the Collins Cobuild English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (n.d.), psychological connection refers to a connection with someones mind and thoughts. With that being said, psychological connection is what Nike achieved with the “Dream Crazier” ad. One of the viewers stated “remarkable message, so me” and the other stated “I hear this A LOT... you’re crazy. I love crazy”, creating the sense that they resonate with the ad. Therefore, the identified theme for this category was “resonance”, as judging from the comments, that is what the viewers felt from the ad. Brand resonance is the final step of the Keller (2001) brand equity models and refers to the nature of the customer's relationship with the brand and the degree to which they believe they are “in sync” with the brand (Keller, 2001). On that account, it can be said that Nike has achieved brand equity.

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Hate Speech	Anti-Feminist Responses	<p>"if men are as strong as women then why are they in separate leagues and why are they skinny asf compared to men tell me mf scientist"</p> <p>"guys have a biology advantage stop complaining about it"</p> <p>"Anything to call yourself oppressed"</p> <p>"Women: destroying their tennis racquets in temper tantrums and screaming at people while throwing off their jackets and sobbing Nike: ah yes, empowerment."</p> <p>"Nike trying to make women feel like victims in 2020. Who is out there saying it's crazy for a woman to compete in a hijab? (No one) Semenya has a genetic disorder that has resulted in her having to take testosterone beyond normal levels. That's not "crazy" it's just people sticking to rules to make it fair for fellow female athletes. No one's calling you crazy because you're a female. It's 2020. If you go unhinged, tear of your jacket, get in a refs face, and are told to calm down it's not because you are a woman. It's because you've become unhinged. Anyone would do the same if a male coach did something similar. Just Nike continuing to be woke in attempt to sell more sneakers."</p> <p>"So, oppressed. You can tell by the powerful corporations pushing the propaganda Yuri Bezmenov warned us about in 1983."</p> <p>"Me and I hate it"</p> <p>"I mean i get the message but most of it is factually wrong. who tf called a girl crazy for competing in sports?"</p> <p>"There's a difference between equality of people and equality of outcome. Know the difference because I'm not gonna give you a VIP victim pass"</p> <p>"School is so broken now , that this corporate propaganda ad is what they teach. I can't wait for the fall....it's coming."</p> <p>"the only reason i think this add is stupid is because not many men actually said you can't be something, only a hand full, and now all women are saying that all men think their delusional"</p> <p>"This is so wrong, I got no words for it..."</p> <p>"Fuck me they just can't stop lol."</p> <p>"Good God Nike has gone full woke retarded, Crazy is thinking any of this is relevant. Women are not oppressed in America. If anything, men are."</p> <p>"Love how its stating that when they cry they are called dramatic and so on yet nobody said any of that about women...ever lol Way to feed the sheep more food for no thoughts...at all."</p> <p>"I guess all the dislikes are from men 😏😏"</p> <p>"Wow must be nice to have a day based on your gender."</p> <p>"What sport, besides Tennis, can the best US female athlete beat the best US male athlete in?"</p> <p>"This the dumbest one I ever seen"</p> <p>"Serena Williams is a millionaire, I doubt she a victim"</p> <p>"Now they complain about transgender athletes. Crazy 😏😏😏😏 lol I thought you wanted to play with the men. Here's half of one. It's there a problem miss?"</p> <p>"women sports is boring who even watches it."</p> <p>"Pushing the feminist agenda. That's Soooo original😏"</p> <p>And of course, you are all swallowing it. Because obviously a mega giant corporation cares about you and your feminism. Give me a break."</p> <p>"Aren't you hurry imppppppppp. We hear you it will be okawwwwww. God bless your little delusional hearts!!!! Lol"</p> <p>"This is pathetic"</p> <p>"This is so embarrassing"</p> <p>"How HYPOCRITE can this be when they say "winning 23 Grand Slams, having a baby and then coming back for more" but they don't support their female athletes while they are pregnant to help them come back? They should put more resources on their human assets rather than putting them on sentimental ads."</p>

Figure 4: Hate Speech and Anti-Feminist Responses

An anti-feminist is a person or group of individuals who are hostile to feminism (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Furthermore, they can be considered to detest, loathe, or be excessively biased towards women as stated the Merriam-Webster (n.d.) dictionary. The reason the researcher categorised the above comments as "anti-feminist" is due to the fact that all the comments are being negative towards women equality, women in sports, women having a voice and being empowered. The comments come across as aggressive and cynical, commenting on women and the message behind the ad in a very derogatory manner. For example, one of the commentators said "if men are as strong as women then why are they in separate leagues and why are they skinny asf compared to men, tell me mf scientist". This comment has tones of aggression

and body shaming, basically telling women that due to how they look and because they are in a different league as men, they cannot expect to be afforded the same opportunities as men, which is what this study is trying to break, stereotypes. For this reason, the theme identified for this category is hate speech. Hate speech is defined as an expression that goes beyond ordinary insults or harsh words and may impinge on the dignity of certain individuals or groups (South African Human Rights Commission, 2021). Additionally, it is derogatory phrases or terms used to demean a specific group of people's intelligence, humanity, attractiveness, or beliefs (South African Human Rights Commission, 2021). The above definition relates to the comments provided by the commentators as the comments are derogatory.

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Equal Rights	Equality	<p>"First of all, women now a days are equal and who are calling women this woman are just as equal as men this is a scam"</p> <p>"Women fought so hard and are still fighting for equal rights"</p> <p>"This commentary makes it so cringe. Women are equal there's just Biological differences"</p>

Figure 5: Equal Rites and Equality

The fourth identified theme was "equality". According to the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018), equality is about giving everyone an equal chance to make the most of their life and skills. It is also the concept that no one should have fewer opportunities in life because of how they were born, where they come from, what they believe, or if they have a disability (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). The Nike ad showcases female athletes in their natural environments, making the most of their lives and talents. Therefore, "equal rights" was the identified theme as it sums up the comments related to equality. One of the comments stated, "women fought so hard and are still fighting for equal rights", showing that, the ad celebrated women by portraying them in an equal manner and challenging social boundaries that have been existing for decades.

Labour Practice	Nike Working Conditions	<p>"Woman athletes aren't at a disadvantage lol if you want to talk about this ask Nike about their overseas sweatshops which are a lot worse"</p> <p>"and what about the women working in Nike's sweatshops in Pakistan and Bangladesh? when will we give them an opportunity???"</p> <p>"opportunity for what? What about all the men working in sweatshops and kids???"</p> <p>"not only woman suffering ya, know all genders in the workshop are suffering also ambar. NK is right you gotta grab that opportunity don't just wait"</p> <p>"you know what I think is crazy? Nike has a terrible history of mistreating women. Not paying female employees as much, mistreating of female athletes, them not caring about inappropriate behaviour shown to female staff....that's crazy Nike."</p> <p>"its not just women in sweatshops, its more kids, and men, so calm down"</p> <p>"Slightly ironic considering Nikes oppression of women in the third world..."</p>
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Figure 6: Labour Practice and Nike Working Conditions

Nike, as a brand, promotes humanity and its full potential, yet it has a history of treating its employees as if they were not human at all (New Idea, 2019). Nike was exposed for unethical industrial practices by American labour campaigner Jeffrey Ballinger in 1991 (New Idea, 2019). Nike was exposed for low salaries, child labor, and bad working conditions; nevertheless, in 2018, the shoe giant was sued by two former female workers who accused the company of establishing a culture of gender discrimination and sexual harassment (Robertson, 2020). Though Nike appears to have improved its reputation and factory monitoring efforts, boosting the minimum salary of employees and expanding factory audits, consumers appear to remember the company's history despite the fact that it has become a leading activist brand. For this reason, the researcher identified "working conditions" as a category, and "labour practice" as a theme. For example, one of the commentators on the Dream Crazier ad said, "you know what I think is crazy? Nike has a terrible history of mistreating women. Not paying female employees as much, mistreating of female athletes, them not caring about inappropriate behaviour shown to female staff....that's crazy Nike". This shows that consumers want brands to be ethical and transparent.

Social Cause	Inclusion	<p>"Where are the Asian women sports start???"</p> <p>"Nike, I want to dream crazier. When are you going to speak up against Asian Hate?"</p>
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Figure 7: Inclusion and Social Cause

Consumers want to feel included and acknowledged by brands and those around them, especially during this time of social-political issues. Nike has been known to be an activist for #BlackLivesMatter, Equality, Arabic women in sports

and many other issues however, consumers would like the brand to include other nationalities who are also being demeaned. For example, one of the commentators said “Nike, I want to dream crazier. When are you going to speak up against Asian Hate?”. Which shows that many consumers acknowledge the strides Nike is doing to challenge social issues as they see the difference the brand is doing however, consumers want more. It is unfortunate to see how many nationalities are marginalised and illtreated hence, the selected category was “inclusion” and the theme “social cause”.

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Religious Artefacts	Symbolism	“This commercial was awesome except for the hijab part. That is a religious thing that should not be conflated with women’s equality. Obviously, it is worn by females in their religion, but should be a separate issue and does nothing but put a sour taste in my mouth. Sports. Real results, competition, a thing shared by women and men. Bringing people together. Religion, no equality, created factions and intolerant nonsense. No thanks.”

Figure 8: Symbolism and Religious Artefacts

A symbol is described as a word or phrase that indicates or has several connotations beyond itself (Louis, n.d.). Furthermore, symbols always have both a literal and metaphorical meaning (Rose, n.d.). For example, a cross symbolizes Christianity, while a serpent symbolizes the devil and deception, different symbols may have both a literal and figurative meaning. A Hijab is a cultural garment, which Islamic women wear which allows them to maintain their modesty, morality, and freedom of choice (Killian, 2019). It shows their obedience to God and serves as a continual reminder to adhere to Islamic values (Killian, 2019). Therefore, people from different cultural and religious backgrounds should respect the Muslim religion and those that are different to theirs. The seventh identified category was “symbolism” and the theme was “religious artefacts” as there was a viewer who commented on one of the athletes in the ad who was wearing a Hijab. The viewer commented, “this commercial was awesome except for the hijab part. That is a religious thing that should not be conflated with women's equality. Obviously, it is worn by females in their religion, but should be a separate issue and does nothing but put a sour taste in my mouth. Sports. Real results, competition, a thing shared by women and men. Bringing people together. Religion, no equality, created factions and intolerant nonsense. No thanks”. The comment came across as problematic as the commentator seems to have an issue with a women athlete wearing a Hijab

to compete in sports. This is a problem as Islamic women have been fighting for women's right to religious expression in their clothing choices (Killian, 2019) therefore, stating that a Hijab shouldn't be a sign of women equality is contradictory to the reason these women have been fighting for religious expression and feeds into the stereotypical standard of women having to look and dress a certain way in order to be accepted in certain social classes.

THEME	INDUCTIVE CATEGORIES	VIEWER COMMENTS
Acceptance	Empowerment	<p>"the point of this commercial is to show that women were thought to never have a chance in sports, that the man will always be better. But women have broken these boundaries and that is so empowering"</p> <p>"Look, I agree that the ad was maybe a little exaggerated. but have you ever seen women on your school's football team, on the NBA? Maybe there's one or two, but I've never heard of them, which just proves how hidden away they are. And if you are a man, you have no say in saying whether a woman has been told what she can and cannot do. Even if you are a woman, it can be easy for you to say if you've never gone through it, but I am SURE that there have been many women who have been told they can't participate in a sport, or have felt left out in a club with mostly boys. It goes for boys too, at my school I asked the cheerleading coach if a boy could join the team and she said no. And I appreciate that you support women's fight for equality. All I'm saying is that while yes, over the years gender equality has improved, it is not perfect. It is being hidden away and no one really talks about it which is what this ad is trying to address in my opinion."</p> <p>"No one's complaining in fact we're saying nothing's wrong with what WOMEN can do"</p> <p>"Always try for more ♡"</p> <p>"Such a great ad. Loved the message! We really can't wait for them to change and look at us as someone great. Instead, be your own kind of great and if they call you crazy for that, get crazier and continue doing great things! Much love to all the women out there :)"</p> <p>"Be crazy ♡♡"</p> <p>"I say AMEN to women power Hallelujah!!!"</p> <p>"Women had always supported me in my life to push me to my limits and be myself. I will always stand up for women empowerment."</p> <p>"This gives me more pump than my pre-workout actually every time 🏋️"</p> <p>"The only person you need to believe in you... is yourself!"</p> <p>"It's only crazy until u do it Just do it ... ♡♡♡"</p> <p>"powerful, finally embracing my own "crazy" and loving it. so tired of the "good girl" crap I was brought up with."</p>

Figure 9: Empowerment and Acceptance

The last identified category was "empowerment" and the theme was "acceptance", these were selected as a few of the viewers praised the ad for being empowering to women and girls. This commentary basically celebrated and complimented Nike for their constant support on social issues and breaking boundaries. The viewers who complimented Nike for the "Dream Crazier" ad identified the true message behind the ad which was to celebrate women and their accomplishments, the things they were told they couldn't do. For example, one of the comments read, "the point of this commercial is to show that women were thought to never have a chance in sports, that the man will always be

better. But women have broken these boundaries and that is so empowering". This shows that Nike's brand activism has empowered many and made them believe in themselves.

Now that the qualitative data has been analysed, the researcher has gained in-depth understanding into what perception viewers have of the ad and Nike as a brand. It additionally gave the researcher insight into the perception consumers have of Nike's brand activism. The following point will discuss the last step in analyzing qualitative data.

4. Summarise the data.

At this step, you must connect research findings to hypotheses or study goals and objectives (Dudovskiy, n.d.). This step will be extensively unpacked in chapter 4.

Quantitative Data Analysis:

For the quantitative data, there are two data analysis methods available. Inferential analysis which aims at revealing the relationships between variables, while the descriptive analysis assists researchers to find absolute numbers to summarise single variables and find patterns (Bhatia, 2018). However, for this study descriptive data analysis will be implemented as the study aims to find patterns in the data collected and summarise single variables.

The researcher sent out a 5 minute online survey for respondents to complete, and received 29 responses however, only 27 survey responses were analysed by the researcher as 2 of the respondents didn't watch the Nike Dream Crazy ad which was required. The survey consisted of 10 close ended questions which focused on understanding individual perceptions on gender stereotypes in advertising, importance of gender equality and whether brands should influence a gender stereotype change in advertising. All the respondents were over 18 years of age, they frequently purchase from Nike and reside in South Africa. Therefore, the survey responses are shared and analysed below.

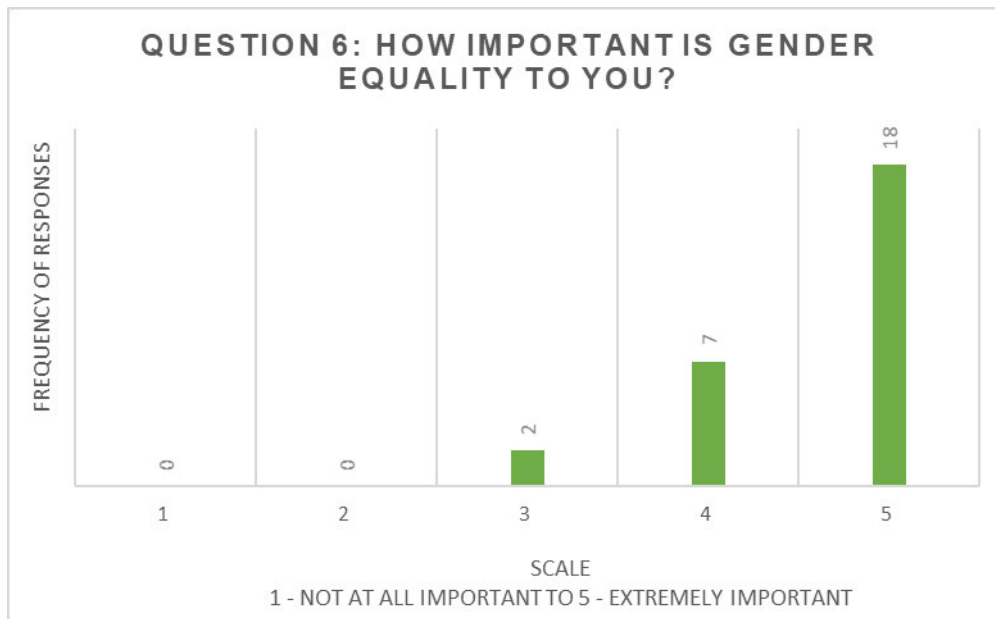


Figure 10: Survey Question Six

The above question was asked by the researcher to understand how important equality is for the respondents as part of the study aims to promote equality. The researcher provided the respondents with a scale from 1 – 5, 1 being “not important at all” and 5 being “extremely important”. Judging from the graph above, majority of respondents find equality important, which shows that a fraction of society wants to live authentically, without societal standards.

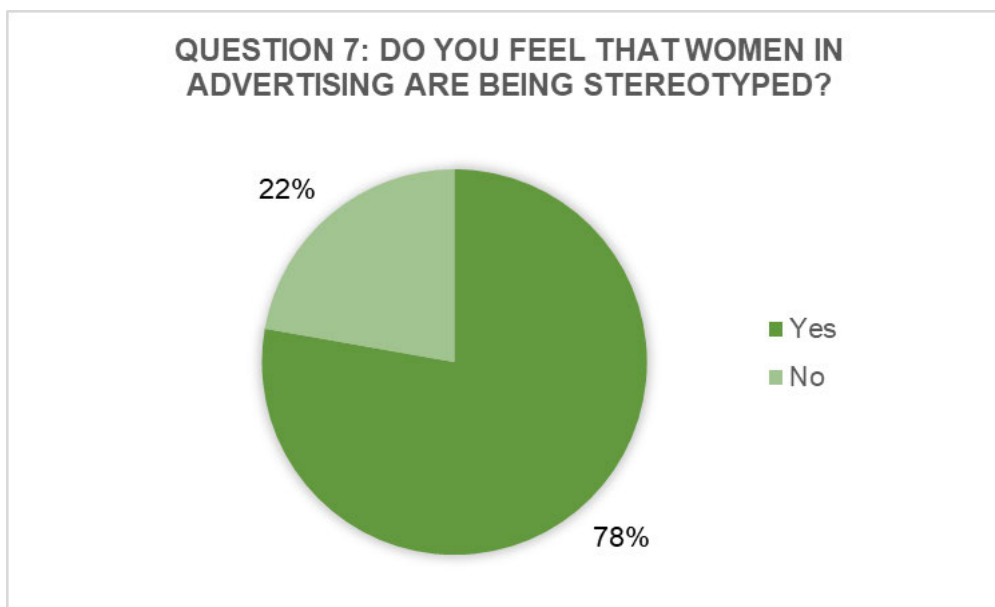


Figure 11: Survey Question Seven

This research study aims to analyse brand activism and the role it plays in challenging gender stereotypes, as the researcher found a gap in literature regarding this.

However, there is literature that states that there has been a significant shift in the portrayal of gender in advertising which suggests that gender stereotypes are a thing of the past. Nonetheless, examining the above pie graph suggests otherwise. 78% of respondents believe that gender stereotypes in advertising is still a prevalent concept. Therefore, the above shows that stereotypes in advertising is still a cause for concern.

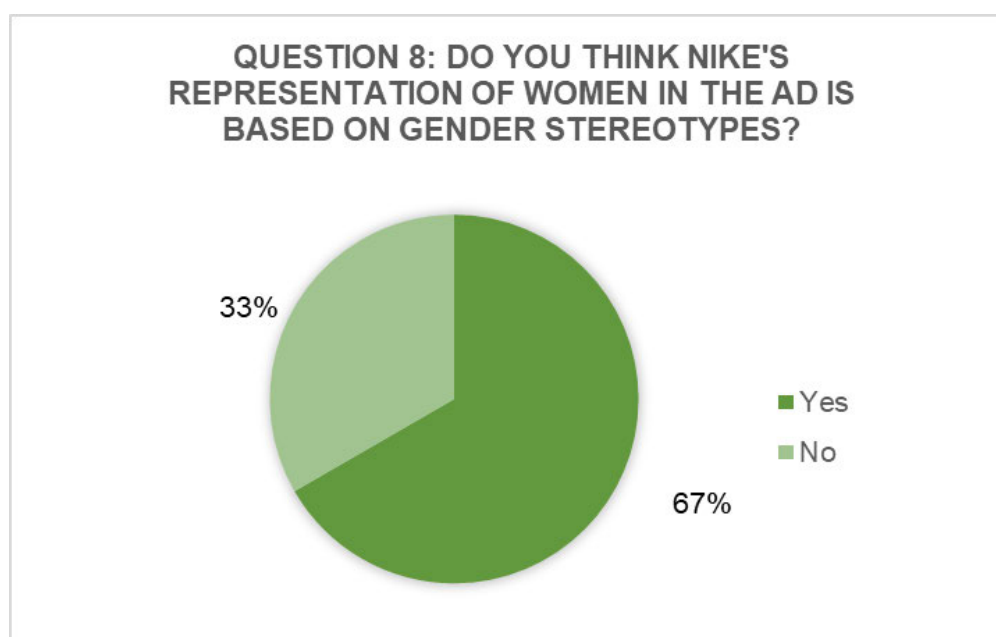


Figure 12: Survey Question Eight

The researcher based the eighth question of the survey on whether respondents think the Nike "Dream Crazier ad is stereotyping women based on societal standards. Majority of respondents answered "yes" to the question, meaning that they believe the ad is stereotyping women. For this reason, the researcher is of the opinion that the question was misunderstood by the respondents however, the researcher will proceed to base the analysis, interpretation and conclusion of this study using the results received.

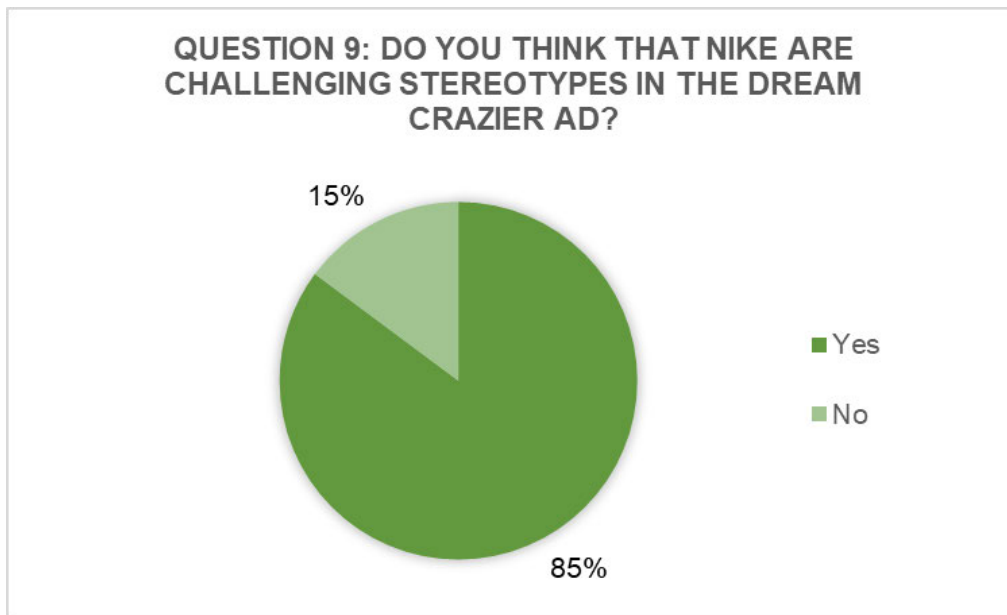


Figure 13: Survey Question Nine

The researcher believes that the responses received for the above question to some degree, contradict the responses received in the previous question. The above question interrogated whether respondents are of the opinion that Nike is challenging gender stereotypes in the “Dream Crazy” ad. Most respondents acknowledged that Nike is challenging stereotypes, which means that respondents don’t think Nike’s representation of women in the ad is based on societal standards.

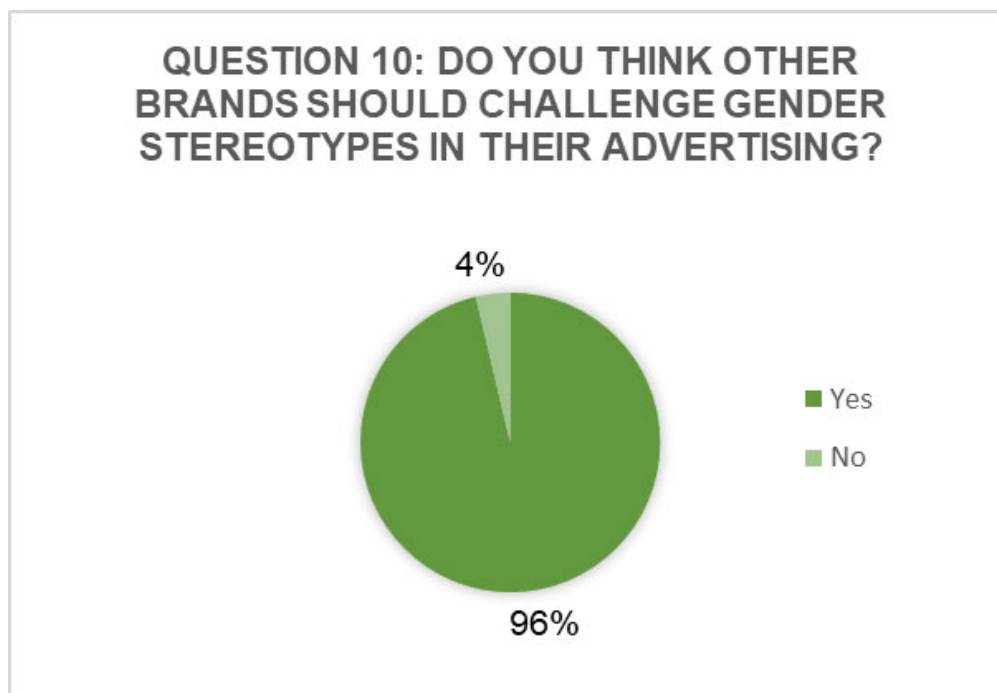


Figure 14: Survey Question Ten

The last question interrogated by the researcher was whether respondents believe that other brands should use brand activism to challenge gender stereotypes in advertising. 96% of respondents acknowledged that it is necessary for other brands to follow Nike's footsteps and challenge gender stereotypes through the use of activism. This shows that respondents believe and acknowledge the strides Nike has taken in speaking out on social issues, specifically women equality.

3.6. Limitations and delimitations

The anticipated limitations for this study were based on the accessibility of the research population and sample. Due to the researcher issuing the online survey on social media platforms, they had no control as to who will complete the survey nor how many people would complete the survey. The researcher aimed to reach a minimum of 40 respondents however, only 29 people answered the survey.

In terms of the study's delimitations, which refer to the study's parameters, the researcher used Lorber and Farrell's (1991) theory of social construction feminism, as well as Butler's (1988) theory of gender performativity. The reason these theories were selected is due to them being based on gender stereotypes and equality of women, which is what the study discusses. Furthermore, the mixed-method approach assisted the researcher in understanding the study comprehensively and ensured that the study's population and sampling were accurate.

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to discuss the relevant research methodology for this study. This chapter discussed the relevant research paradigm and methodology, population and sampling as well as analysed the data collected which would later assist in concluding this research study. The selected paradigm for this study was the mixed-method approach, which the researcher comprehensively discussed followed by the relevant population and sample. Lastly, this chapter analysed and discussed both the qualitative and quantitative data collected by the researcher. Therefore, the following chapter will present and discuss the study's findings.

4. Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses the results of the data collected in Chapter 3. As this was a critical realism study, data was analyzed using both qualitative and quantitative data analysis approaches, and the results are explained below. Furthermore, the findings will be interpreted based on the studies research problem and research objectives.

4.1. Qualitative and Quantitative Data Findings

4.1.1. Qualitative Data Findings

For qualitative data findings, the researcher analysed content, specifically the Nike “Dream Crazy” ad. The ad was analysed based on the comments made by the viewers, as well as against the chosen framework for the study which is the social construction feminism theory. Additionally, the researcher had to identify relevant categories and themes for the data collected as the chosen framework does not have pre-existing themes. Furthermore, the researcher will analyse the ad frames and provide an interpretation of the ad. The Nike “Dream Crazy” ad on YouTube currently has 698 564 views, 10k likes and 412 comments which shows that the ad gained consumer traction. The reason this ad was chosen by the researcher is due to the pandemonium that surrounded the ad when it aired in 2020 and how relevant the ad is to the studies research topic. The ad frames and comments which were analysed are in Appendix C.

The findings presented below will be discussed against the following identified themes and categories:

THEME	CATEGORY
Brand Feelings	Positive Responses
Resonance	Psychological Connection
Hate Speech	Anti-Feminist Responses
Equal Rights	Equality
Social Cause	Inclusion
Religious Artefacts	Symbolism
Acceptance	Empowerment
Labour Practice	Working Conditions

Table 1: Identified Themes and Categories

Objective 1 Findings: To evaluate whether advertising plays a role in making gender stereotypes a norm in society.

4.1.1.1. Portrayal of women in advertising

According to existing literature, women can be portrayed in a number of ways in advertising, but despite the growth of gender ideology and the rise of feminism, they are still depicted in stereotypical roles (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). Given that people form thinking patterns based on the advertisements they are exposed to, stereotypical gender roles are viewed as social standards (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). According to Holtzhausen et al. (2011), prior study indicates that, despite societal changes and movements such as the feminist revolution, women in advertisements are not shown in dominant roles. Additionally, despite the increased prominence of women in the workplace, women continue to be included in stereotyped depictions in advertising, such as the housewife, mother, or sex object (Holtzhausen et al., 2011).

With that being said, the Nike "Dream Crazier" ad challenges these stereotypes by portraying women in dominant roles, which shows that they are trying to change the narrative so women can live authentically. Each athlete included in the ad has their own story and is seen as the hero in their own right. Each frame follows a different female athlete and takes us through the numerous emotions these athletes go through however, highlighting the strength and resilience these athletes have. Normally, females in advertising are portrayed as product users or sex objects (Holtzhausen et al., 2011) therefore, limiting them to societal standards. For example, frame 'A3' portrays women playing football against men, and the subtitles state that "If we want to play against men, we're nuts" (Nike, Inc., 2020) insinuating that women are usually told that they are not physically strong enough or don't have endurance therefore, should seek to play "softer" sports. This feeds into the stereotypes created by society however, by Nike portraying women for who they are shows their support towards equality and that they would like advertising to evolve.



Figure 15: Frame A3

Furthermore, when analyzing the viewer comments, some viewers believe that the Nike “Dream Crazier” ad is “pathetic”, as it is portraying women in an authentic manner and not based on the deemed societal roles. These viewers were extremely against equality and the empowering of women. One of the viewers stated, “anything to call yourself oppressed” and another stated “love how its stating that when they cry they are called dramatic and so on yet nobody said any of that about women...ever lol Way to feed the sheep more food for no thoughts...at all”. These comments show that there are still numerous people who believe in gender stereotypes and who don’t want to see women in powerful roles where they can be celebrated and empowered. Furthermore, some people believe that women are equal to men in society and that the narrative that states women are stereotypes and unequal is a myth. For example, there was a viewer who commented, “first of all, women now a days are equal and who are calling women this woman are just as equal as men this is a scam”. However, on the other hand, there are people who celebrate this ad, and praise Nike for being vocal about social issues, especially gender stereotypes and equality. “Women fought so hard and are still fighting for equal rights” is what one of the commentators stated under the ad.

With the above mentioned, the researcher has found that people are not entirely prepared for the societal shift that is required to achieve an equal society. It makes society uncomfortable to know that gender roles are slowly becoming a thing of the past and that each gender will be independent, as well as be able to live authentically. Furthermore, brands advertisers need to shift towards activist advertising as it will assist with sensitising the society to the societal change that is bound to happen. Additionally, by moving to activist advertising, women will be portrayed in a genuine manner which will help them live authentically and strive to do what they were told they couldn’t.

Objective 2 Findings: To understand the perception Nike consumers, have about brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activism.

4.1.1.2. Consumer perception on Nike's brand activism

Brand activism is an adaptation of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in which businesses make decisions and generate content that help the societies and audiences whose goods they influence (Eyada, 2020). Taking CSR toward the next step, brands become active as visible personalities leading the way to a certain cause (Eyada, 2020). These movements often address social, environmental, economic, or political concerns. Audiences typically care about certain issues over others, which they would like their favourite brands to address; however, some brands are concerned about making political or social statements fearing the backlash that may result from taking a polarizing stance, leading to the isolation of a percentage of their target audience; other brands, on the other hand, have discovered several benefits to using brand activism (Eyada, 2020). Furthermore, purchasing products has become a form of having a voice, making a statement, and exercising power as a result of brand activism (Eyada, 2020). Consumers see the products they buy as an extension of their point of view, values, beliefs, and lifestyles, and as a type of political and social act with the potential to make a difference as stated by Eyada (2020).

Having said that, based on the comments analysed, consumers perceive Nike as an activist brand that influences change and promotes gender equality. Consumers were commending Nike for celebrating women in the ad, and representing them in a non-stereotypical manner. One of the viewers stated, "LOVE LOVE LOVE you Nike team! You deserve every penny you earn to run these marketing campaigns! You have a cause!", another stated "remarkable message. So, me". These comments show that many consumers appreciate the strides Nike is taking and they resonate with the brand, resulting in Nike achieving brand resonance with its consumers.

However, on the other hand, some viewers were showing concern with regards to the Nike sweatshops and the people working at these sweatshops. In the past, Nike has been exposed for low salaries, child labor, and bad working conditions, as well as accused for gender discrimination and sexual harassment. Though Nike appears to have improved its reputation and factory monitoring efforts, boosting the minimum

salary of employees and expanding factory audits, consumers appear to remember the company's history despite the fact that it has become a leading activist brand. For example, one of the viewers commented, “and what about the women working in Nike’s sweatshops in Pakistan and Bangladesh? when will we give them an opportunity???”. This shows that consumers want to associate themselves with brands that are fully authentic and that are genuine in their efforts to better society. Even though Nike has become an activist brand and somewhat redeemed themselves with regards to labour matters, consumers don’t forget and want to be constantly reassured that a brand is treating their employees fairly.

As a result of the above mentioned content, the researcher has found that consumers don’t blindly support brands, they ensure that a brand is authentic and steadfast in their actions by analyzing every brand touchpoint as well as internal environments. Even though Nike has become the leading activist brand, consumers have not forgotten about the brands past and would like to ensure that Nike has remedied it’s wrongs.

Objective 3 Findings: To analyse whether Nike is challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising.

4.1.1.3. Nike as an activist brand and challenging stereotypes

As mentioned in the literature review in chapter 2, advertising usually distorts the portrayal of women resulting in them thinking negatively of themselves. This has been the norm for decades however, brands need to start portraying women in a more authentic manner in order to encourage equality. To conclude whether Nike is challenging gender stereotypes, the researcher analysed and interpreted the comments under the themes, resonance and acceptance. By examining the comments, the researcher has found that consumers believe in Nike’s brand activism and trust that it will influence a societal change. Nike has instilled faith and trust in consumers by being an activist brand that speaks out on social issues. Furthermore, Nike has empowered women and made them believe in themselves which most brands fail to achieve.

One of the viewers have said, “the point of this commercial is to show that women were thought to never have a chance in sports, that the man will always be better. But women have broken these boundaries and that is so empowering”. Additionally, another viewer stated “such a great ad. Loved the message! We really can't wait for them to change and look at us as someone great. Instead, be your own kind of great and if they call you crazy for that, get crazier and continue doing great things! Much love to all the women out there :)”. These comments show that women have been empowered by the Nike ad and that Nike as a brand is doing a good job in challenging stereotypes through activist advertising.

4.1.2. Quantitative Data Findings

For the quantitative data, descriptive data analysis was implemented as the study aims to find patterns in the data collected and summarise single variables. The researcher sent out a 5 minute online survey for respondents to complete, and received 29 responses however, only 27 survey responses were analysed by the researcher as 2 of the respondents didn't watch the Nike Dream Crazier ad which was required. The survey required respondents to be 18 years or older and it consisted of 10 close ended questions which focused on understanding individual perceptions on gender stereotypes in advertising, importance of gender equality and whether brands should influence a gender stereotype change in advertising. The respondents fully understood the questions.

The survey in which the researcher is drawing findings from was answered by respondents based in South Africa, purchase from Nike and who have watched the Dream Crazier ad before completing the survey. The survey was conducted to gain an understanding of viewer perceptions as well as, to answer the research questions and objectives. As a result, the interpretation of findings below will be based on the research problem, research questions, existing literature as well as research objectives. The quantitative data findings are shared below.

Objective 1 Findings: To evaluate whether advertising plays a role in making gender stereotypes a norm in society.

For the first objective, question 6 and question 7 of the online survey assisted in providing context to the objective. The questions were as follows;

QUESTION	RESPONSES
Question 6: How important is gender equality to you? (scale 1 – 5)	3: 2 respondents 4: 7 respondents 5: 18 respondents
Question 7: Do you feel that women in advertising are being stereotyped?	Yes: 78% No: 22%

Table 2: Survey Question 6 and 7

Examining the responses received from the survey, majority of respondents find gender equality important meaning, they encourage the empowerment of women. Additionally, 78% of respondents said they believe that women in advertising are being misrepresented and portrayed in a stereotypical manner which correlates to some of the results found in the qualitative data study. This shows that equality is an important issue which needs solutions as activist advertising alone won't generate the necessary influence required. However, it will assist in starting the necessary conversations that need to be had by the relevant parties. On the other hand, stereotypes in advertising can be solved by activist advertising as stereotypes are societal standards which have been deemed normal due to the continual portrayal of these standards in advertising. Therefore, brands need to change their advertising strategies by adopting an activist strategy so they are able to challenge stereotypes that exist in society.

Objective 2 Findings: To understand the perception Nike consumers, have about brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activism.

QUESTION	RESPONSES
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Question 8: Do you think Nike's representation of women in the ad is based on gender stereotypes?	Yes: 67% No: 33%
Question 10: Do you think other brands should challenge gender stereotypes in their advertising?	Yes: 96% No: 4%

Table 3: Survey Question 10

The researcher by examining the above table has found that the results are slightly different to the results found in the qualitative study. With regards to the perception consumers have about Nike, 67% of respondents stated that they think Nike portrays women in a stereotypical manner however, 96% of respondents stated that other brand should take direction from Nike and center their advertising towards activism. The researcher finds these results to some degree contradictory as respondents are stating that Nike is doing a great job at being an activist brand and challenging stereotypes however, the brand portrays women in a stereotypical manner. For this reason, the researcher will base the findings for this objective on the findings identified for the qualitative study.

Objective 3 Findings: To analyse whether Nike is challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising.

QUESTION	RESPONSES
Question 9: Do you think that Nike are challenging stereotypes in the Dream Crazier ad?	Yes: 85% No: 15%

Table 4: Survey Question 9

The results gathered from the respondents indicate that Nike is challenging gender stereotypes through activist advertising. These results correspond with the findings identified in the qualitative data. This shows that Nike is an authentic activist brand that strives to influence change and better society. Therefore, concluding from the data received, other brands should adopt an activist advertising approach so influence can become change.

4.2. Validity and reliability / trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is a concept that refers to the way in which researchers determine credibility and reliability of a qualitative research study's results (Koonin, 2014). For this study, to determine trustworthiness in the qualitative data, the researcher will have to ensure credibility. Credibility helps determine how true and accurate the research findings are (Statistics Solutions, 2021). However, the researcher can use triangulation to prove that the findings are credible. Triangulation uses numerous data sources to develop an in-depth understanding of the study's phenomena (Noble, 2019). Triangulation can additionally test validity through the convergence of data from different sources (Noble, 2019). Therefore, the credibility of the study's research findings will be determined using credible authors and organisations literature available.

For quantitative data, validity and reliability was measured. Validity refers to the extent in which a concept can be accurately measured, and reliability refers to the accuracy of the research instrument (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The researcher ensured that the online survey had parameters to ensure that valid and reliable data findings can be extracted. Therefore, the researcher has ensured that the analysed data will assist in answering the research questions.

Conclusion

This chapter has extensively unpacked the qualitative and quantitative research findings, based on the data collected. The qualitative and quantitative data were independently analysed and interpreted to identify findings then were later linked as the findings were similar. The main findings identified were that brand activism can influence a gender stereotype change in society and influence a conversation regarding equality. However, though brands may adopt an activist advertising strategy, consumers don't forget a brand's past and want to ensure that a brand is authentic and steadfast in their activism, ensuring they are doing it for the right reasons. These findings were identified by analyzing and interpreting the Nike "Dream Crazier" ad comments, as well as the answers received from the online survey issued. Additionally, both the qualitative and quantitative data analysed and interpreted was trustworthy, valid and reliable. The following chapter will conclude this study by

highlighting the main research findings and discussing the study's ethical considerations.

5. Chapter 5: Conclusion

This chapter presents a comprehensive conclusion to the complete research study, and each research question presented in Chapter 1 is addressed using the research findings discovered in Chapter 4. Additionally, after addressing the research questions, the researcher makes future suggestions based on the findings of the study. Lastly, the study's ethical considerations are presented.

5.1. Concluding answers to the research questions

How does advertising play a role in making gender stereotypes a norm?

Advertising plays a role in making gender stereotype a norm as advertisers portray gender according to societal standards. These stereotypes in advertising are reinforced through regular exposures and then embraced by individuals as the norm (Holtzhausen, Jordaan & North, 2011). The aforesaid generalisations can be negative, confining, and degrading, affecting how women perceive themselves and how they're perceived by others (Holtzhausen et al., 2011). However, consumers at present, expect brands to speak out about social issues in a meaningful and authentic manner, as they are jaded about being portrayed erroneously in this day and age (Gilliland, 2021). This is the reason consumers want brands to adopt an activist advertising approach, as this will assist in influencing a change in society.

How do Nike consumers perceive brands that challenge gender stereotypes using activist advertising?

By examining the findings identified in the qualitative and quantitative data analysed, Nike consumers perceive activist brands as empowering and authentic. The viewer comments under the Nike and the the responses received from the survey insinuate that consumers want brands to be vocal about social issues as this influences a societal change. Furthermore, purchasing products from an activist brand has become a form of having a voice for the consumer, making a statement, and exercising power as a result of brand activism. However, findings have suggested that that consumers don't blindly support brands, they ensure that a brand is authentic and steadfast in their actions by analyzing every brand touchpoint as well as internal environments. For example, Nike has become the leading activist brand however, consumers are still

questioning Nike's past as they want to ensure that they are supporting a brand that is authentic and has remedied its wrongs.

Is Nike challenging gender stereotypes by using activist advertising?

The researcher discovered from the remarks that customers believe in Nike's brand activism and believe it will influence societal change. By being an activist brand that speaks out on social concerns, Nike has created faith and confidence in consumers. Furthermore, Nike has empowered women and helped them believe in themselves, which is something that most brands fail to do. Both the qualitative and quantitative data analysed and interpreted provided the same results. This shows that consumers long for change and believe that activist brands can influence societal transformation.

5.2. Implications of findings for future practices

The outcomes of this research study will add to the current body of knowledge by demonstrating the influence of brand activism on overcoming gender stereotypes in society. This evidence will help brand managers and advertising strategists understand the impact of brand activism on customers, society, and the brand itself. Furthermore, this study will give industry experts grounds to use an activist advertising strategy in order to influence societal change.

5.1. Conclusions

The aim of this study was to analyse how brands use activism in advertising to challenge gender stereotypes in society. The problem identified was that women are constantly stereotyped in advertising resulting in them having a negative perception of themselves. Therefore, by using activism in advertising messaging, can influence a positive change in society which promotes equality and empowers women. Due to this, the identified research paradigm was critical realism as the study aims to reveal myths and transform society by encouraging brands to challenge gender stereotypes surrounding women. Furthermore, the identified research approach was the mixed-method technique as neither quantitative nor qualitative methods alone could answer the studies research questions.

Further to the abovementioned, this paper extensively unpacked and discussed the

relevant population and sampling methods for this study. The recognised qualitative population was ad comments and the recognized quantitative population were Nike buyers, older than 18 years old, who reside in South African and have watched the Nike "Dream Crazier" ad. The researcher then collected data based on the relevant data collection methods and extensively analysed the data collected. The analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data led to the identification of the research findings.

The main finding identified was that brand activism can influence a societal change if authentically implemented by a brand however, though a brand may be steadfast in its activism, consumers don't forget the wrong doings they may have been challenged with in the past. Therefore, brands need to make active strides in reassuring its consumers of the progress they are making in remedying the wrongs.

In conclusion, it is recommended that future mixed-method study's analyse the impact brand activism has made in influencing a societal change.

5.2. Ethical considerations

For this study, the researcher ensured that the information being analysed is credible and reliable, ensuring that they do not use sources with unidentifiable and false information, the researcher further kept to the research parameters and cross checked information before submitting it as accurate and credible. The researcher did not have to ensure confidentiality nor anonymity as they were not interacting with any individual, they only analysed content available on the internet, as well as request individuals to complete an online survey which didn't require their identities. However, in respect of the ethical conduct of the study, the researcher submitted truthful research data findings that have not been manipulated in any manner. Lastly, the online survey respondents have access to the research findings as the researcher provided their contact details should any respondent have questions about the study. Furthermore, the study information is accessible to Vega staff for audit purposes.

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Appendices:

A: Ethical Clearance Form

B: Informed Consent Form (qual data)

C: Questionnaire (quant) / Interview or Focus group Schedule (qual data)