



## An exploration of the influence of Femvertising on Brand Resonance

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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 own work and has not previously been submitted to another University or Higher Education Institution for degree purposes.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research paper explores Femvertising within a South African context. It is an exploration of how female South African consumers perceive Femvertising and the potential effects of Femvertising on brand resonance. This study further investigates the potential of Femvertising as a means of social change as well as the viability of the tactic used by Audi in its Femvertising advertisement.

Femvertising can be defined as advertising that employs pro-female messages imagery and talent (SheKnows, 2016). The development of femvertising is a response to the exploitation and negative stereotyping that has for long been part of the advertising industry (Navarro & Llaguno, 2012). Many view femvertising as not only a positive change in how brands advertise, but also a potential vehicle for bringing about positive social change in terms of gender equality (SheKnows, 2016). Some however are not convinced and believe that Femvertising is merely a new form of exploiting the gender issues that women face in order to make a profit (Iqbal, 2015).

The primary research question addressed in this explorative qualitative study was: How, if at all, does femvertising influence the brand resonance of female South African consumers? The sample of this study consisted of female South Africans between the ages of 25 and 35 who drive an Audi, or similar car, and are exposed to advertising. The qualitative data was collected via a focus group consisting of seven participants.

One of the most significant findings of the study included that consumers view Femvertising as having a positive influence on brand resonates. It was evident that consumers resonate not only to Femvertising, but social messages in advertising as it curates an emotional and psychological connection to the brand, where consumers can relate to the brand more if they can identify themselves, or aspects of themselves in the brand messaging.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research paper reports on a qualitative explorative study into the influence of Femvertising on South African female consumers' brand resonance. The aim of this study was to with the aim of determining if consumers feel that brands that use Femvertising can create strong psychological and emotional connections with the brand thus forging relationships, therefore assessing the influence on brand resonance.

This study will explore female consumer's degree of brand resonance with a brand that makes use of Femvertising and if these brands are authentically making use of femvertising to empower women or exploit feminism. This study will make use of the car brand Audi.

The study consolidates past and current research and expands the reader's knowledge on femvertising and its relationship to brand resonance. An association will be drawn as to how femvertising influences or has an effect on these concepts.

### Background and orientation (contextualization)

According to The Brand Glossary (2018), the established branding consultancy Interbrand's curated online resource about branding, a brand can be defined as, "A living business asset designed to enhance the connection between a business and customer or consumer". A good brand has the ability to ensure relationships that secure and create future profits this is achieved by the brands ability to drive demand and ultimately generating brand loyalty (The Brand Glossary, 2018).

In today's current climate the need for brands to add value to the lives of people that goes beyond product attributes or user benefits, it is becoming increasingly important to consumers globally (Andreasen, 2011).

In a South African article by two esteemed brand specialists, Dr. Carla Enslin and Dr. Thys De Beer (2015) it is argued that sustainability is an integral part of brand building. The article, entitled *What if brand building was invented today – would we organise things as they are? A model for building meaningful brands*, gives insight into how there is no place in today's marketplace for brands that do not add value to the lives of people beyond their fundamental product offering (Enslin & De Beer 2015).

According to Cook, Erwin, Carmody and Enslin (2009), Brands are expected to build sustainable relationships with their customers and maintain their status of being a healthy brand, by integrating the well being of society at large in the design of their organisations. According to an article in 'Brands and Branding' entitled 'How healthy is your brand?' it is argued how valuable it is for brands to establish sustainable relationships with the environment and communities in which they operate in (Cook et al, 2009). Cook et al (2009) claim that as strategic and creative communicators it is our job to initiate conversations in society, by identifying and debating tough topics and societal issues. Most importantly holding companies and indirectly brands accountable, prioritising the engagement of educating consumers and connecting to consumers on a deeper level can achieve this (Cook et al, 2009).

A consumer research study done by SheKnows Media is a substantial source that addresses the phenomenon of femvertising. A recent study by SheKnows Media (2016) showed that 97% of women think society's perception of them is impacted by advertisements, and 90% of women believe that advertisements showing women as sex symbols are harmful. The rise of Femvertising in modern media serves as a catalyst into understanding the phenomenon in a branding context. According to Toonen (2016) the millennial generation's attempt to change sexist advertisement could be their response to women's constantly changing shopping patterns. SheKnows Media conducted a questionnaire in 2014 with over 600 respondents, the outcome of the study showed an exceedingly positive view of Femvertising. 52% of respondents said that they have purchased a product specifically because they like the way the brand portrays women in its advertising and messaging (SheKnows Media, 2016).

The relationship and identification consumers have with a brand are two important factors associated with consumer behaviour, which falls under brand resonance. The intensity of psychological bonding a consumer has with a brand reflects the degree of brand resonance and enables brands to forge long-term relationships with consumers (Raut & Brito 2014). There is an on-going interest into how these two phenomenon, femvertising and brand resonance, can possibly have a casual relationship.

In today's evolving society more is expected from brands, they are required to play a role in social change. An article entitled 'Commercial Marketing and Social Change' on 'The Social Impact Communicator' highlights the importance of brands to become agents of social change. Andreasen (2015) argues that the progression of commercial marketing practices and theories have the potential to make significant contributions to social change. The use of cause-related marketing (CRM) not only contributes towards social change but is a strategic tactic that positively impacts shareholder value (Andreasen, 2015).

One way brands can play a part in social change is to create communications and messaging that does not follow the stereotyping of women but rather portray them in ways which can be empowering to its female consumers. Consumers are increasingly taking note of underlying themes and visual cues in advertising and are voicing their condemnations of brands' messages, therefore it is important for brands to become aware of how certain messages affect consumer perceptions and ultimately the relationship consumers have with brands (Strandberg & Quinn 2015).

## Rationale

The purpose of this research is to explore the role of Femvertising and its effectiveness on female empowerment. The object of the study is Femvertising and how it influences female consumer behaviour. Exploratory research was used because the research aims to explore the relationship Femvertising has with various other theories such as social change, brand authenticity and purchasing patterns.

Femvertising is defined by SheKnows Media as, "Advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages and imagery to empower women and girls" (Toonen, 2016). After coming across an insightful article on the Guardian Online, A discovery was made regarding the phenomenon of "Femvertising". SheKnows Media coined the advertising phenomenon as 'Femvertising' it developed as a response to the female stereotypes, objectification and sexist advertising tactics commonly used throughout the years. Subsequently femvertising has inundated advertising and media, it has become so popular that SheKnows Media a leading online women's lifestyle media platform hosts annual femvertising awards in order to recognise brand that make use of messages and themes of female empowerment (SheKnows Media, 2016).

According to Iqbal (2015) it all starts with a hashtag, like most campaigns these days, however the idea behind pro-female advertising and its effect on women empowerment in this day and age, is what piqued my interest. I started to question whether or not campaigns like #LikeAGirl, #GirlsCan, #ShineStrong and the now infamous Dove Campaign “Real Beauty” actually influence female consumer’s perceptions of the brands they are selling and ultimately the degree to which brands employing this type of social messaging has on brand resonance.

Advertising has a history of exploiting and negatively stereotyping women. In today’s day and age where consumers are connecting with brands that enhance the lives of people in all that they do as well as in how they communicate. Femvertising is a new advertising strategy that aims to challenge gender stereotypes and if used authentically can become a vehicle for social change. SheKnows Media reported in their survey that 70% of respondents believe that brands should take responsibility for using their advertising and messaging to promotes positive messages to women and girls which speaks to society’s desire for brands to come forward and engage with consumers on social causes (SheKnows Media, 2016). This depicts the changing environment in which consumers, especially female consumers find themselves in, and the fact that millennial want brands to actively participate to improve causes such as gender pay gap, gender equality and sexism in the workplace, are just a few of many issues directly affecting women today (SheKnows Media, 2016).

The reason for doing this study is to shed a light on how social messaging employed by brands, specifically Femvertising can influence the relationship consumers maintain with brands. It is evident that female consumers respond to pro-female advertising and feel a connection with brands that start controversial conversations. This study aims to explore the degree to which Femvertising plays a role in how consumers view the strength of their relationships with brands.

## **Problem statement**

The problem is that limited research exists on Femvertising within a South African context and as a result, brand and advertising agencies are not mindful of the effects of Femvertising on South African female consumers’ brand perception and ultimately its

ability as strategy to achieve brand resonance (Esch et al. 2006). Femvertising which is a tool to employ pro-female advertising and empowerment has been criticised, like the recent feminist movement, as a ploy to generate publicity and drive sales, however there is a need for feminist issues such as equality, addressing the gender pay gap and sexism to be understood, discussed and to be transformative than merely trendy (Veti & Shapiro 2018). The African continent, and thus South Africa are still fighting for female worth in society, where women face gender related challenges on a daily basis and this is where Femvertising can be used as a powerful tool for the feminist cause, as it is an effective tool that helps empower women and is a tool advertisers in South Africa should embrace (Veti & Shapiro 2018).

### **Purpose statement**

The core purpose of this study is to explore the influence of Femvertising on consumer's brand resonance how, if at all, it affects their relationship with and response to the brand. The study hopes to inform brands and the advertising agencies they employ of the effects of Femvertising on female South African consumers' brand resonance. This should determine the validity and feasibility of the use of Femvertising in a South African context. As a result, this study should assist brands in aligning their brand messaging strategy so as not to isolate targeted consumers, but rather employ Femvertising as a tool to start conversations about social issues, specifically issues faced by women in society.

### **Research questions and Objectives**

The primary research question for this study is:

What is the influence of Femvertising on brand resonance on South African female consumers?

#### **Research Questions**

- What is the brand resonance of Audi?
- What is the role of Femvertising in the car industry?
- What influence does Audi's gender pay gap advert have on its brand resonance?

#### **Research objectives**

- To contextualise Femvertising within a South African market.
- To determine how female south African consumers perceive Femvertising

- To determine if brands that use Femvertising as an advertising strategy can achieve brand resonance.
- To explore the brand resonance of Audi.
- To explore the concept of Femvertising especially as it relates to the car industry.
- To determine the influence of Audi's gender pay gap advert on its brand resonance.

## Proposed structure of the paper

### Chapter 1: Introduction

This Chapter includes elements like background and context to the study as well as motivation of doing the study. A problem statement, purpose statement will be discussed as well as the inclusion of the research questions and objectives. Proposed chapters will be briefly discussed to give an overview of the structure of the paper

### Chapter 2: Literature Review

Conceptualisation of key concepts will be addressed as to provide the reader with a better understanding of concepts relevant to the study. This literature review chapter will cover the theoretical foundation and how it links to the research problem. It will provide details of the issues/problem being investigated and the literature review will link the problem and current literature.

### Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

This chapter will cover an outline of the paradigm used in approaching this study. Research methodology includes a detailed explanation of the research problem, and relevant research questions and design used to investigate the research problem and data collection methods used, it will entail a description of their application and relevance. This chapter provides elements about population and sampling method used and its application, including details pertaining to the unit of analysis, sample group and size. Details pertaining to procedures used during data collection and specifics of materials/resources used during data collection will be discussed. The data analysis technique used and how it was implemented to analyse the data will be reviewed.

### Chapter 4: Findings and Interpretation of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings based on analysed data presented in a narrative format. An interpretation, discussion and insights of the findings in terms of the broader

context of the research problem will be discussed. Findings will be linked to previous literature and theory. Trustworthiness of the findings will be considered based on the fact that a qualitative research approach will be employed.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

The final chapter provides interpretation, discussion and insights of the findings in terms of how the research question(s) were answered, the research problem solved and the research goal reached. The implications of findings for future practices will be discussed. Final conclusions will be given including an evaluation of the success of the research and possible future actions and/or research, to examine and determine the heuristic value of the study. It also covers the ethical implications as well as limitations and delimitations of the study and how they were addressed.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The aim of this chapter is to summarise and synthesize the body of existing literature related to the subjects explored in this study. Existing literature has been analysed, evaluated, and compiled so that it contextualizes major themes in this study and highlights the current research problem.

The following is an outline of key themes covered and how they are structured in this literature review. Firstly, a conceptualisation of key concepts in the form of a table which defines key concepts and terms within the context of this study. This is followed by a review on the theoretical foundation used and how it links to the research problem. Keller's Brand Equity Model (CBBE) and the role of Brand Resonance in the theoretical foundation will be discussed in terms of how it links to the research Problem. The purpose of this literature review is to present information that illuminates the research problem. This study will explore the impact of Femvertising on the brand resonance of South African female consumers. The aim of this literature review is to summarize and synthesize existing literature related to the topics explored in this study, namely Femvertising.

Literature has been assessed and compiled to find integrations between major subject themes as well as to identify gaps in current research.

## Conceptualisation

Table 1: Conceptualisation of key concepts

| Concept              | Definition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Context                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Brand resonance      | Brand resonance refers to the relationship a consumer has with a brand and the extent to which a psychological bond has been made with the brand (Keller, 2001).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Brand resonance in terms of the study refers to how Femvertising, if at all, influences the brand resonance of the brand. It aims to identify how Femvertising affects the level of activity created by this loyalty. |
| Feminism             | Feminism refers to a broad range of ideas, approaches, political and social movements and ideologies aimed at advocating for gender and sex equality for women. Feminism is a movement that seeks to attain equality and social rights for women in all key areas which includes; education, personal, economic, employment, and cultural sphere of human endeavours (Offen, 1988).                                                                                   | Feminism is the basis of the new form of advertising that this study is based on (Femvertising).                                                                                                                      |
| Fourth-wave Feminism | The fourth wave of feminism is a new development within the feminist movement that started in 2008 and continues today (Feminist.com, 2011). Kira Cochrane, editor of <i>All the Rebel Women</i> , defines fourth wave feminism as a movement that is characterized by technology. (Cochrane, 2013). Researcher, Diana Diamond, defines fourth wave feminism as a movement that "combines politics, psychology, and spirituality in an overarching vision of change". | According to SheKnows (2016) Femvertising started as a result of fourth wave feminism. The online prevalence of fourth wave feminism determines its relevance in femvertising.                                        |

|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Femvertising        | Advertising that uses pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls (SheKnows Media, 2016).                                                                                                                                 | Femvertising is a new advertising strategy that this study investigates as well as its relation to brand resonance and social change.                                                                                                                         |
| Empowerment         | Empowerment refers to making an individual or group stronger and more confident, specifically in the ability to take control of their lives and the claiming of their rights (Oxforddictionaries.com, 2018).                                      | This study aims to determine the influence femvertising has on empowering south African women who resonate with brand that make use of the Femvertising strategy.                                                                                             |
| Exploitation        | Exploitation is a term used to refer to the taking advantage of a specific group's insecurities, therefore disparaging and profiting from an originally uplifting movement.                                                                       | This study aims to determine the authenticity of using Femvertising as an advertising strategy. To determine whether female south African consumers view Femvertising as empowering or a form of exploitation.                                                |
| Gender stereotyping | Gender stereotypes are widespread beliefs about the characteristics and qualities attributed to men and women in society. These so called gender norms often dictate the role men and women are expected to play in society (Sikdar & Sumit 2008) | Gender stereotypes in advertising plays an essential role in the development of Femvertising and therefore in this study. The way men and women are portrayed in the media specifically advertising, is why femvertising became a springboard to dispel these |

|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                           |
|---------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | gender stereotypes.                                                       |
| Social change | Social change refers to a term used to indicate the changes that occur in human interactions and interrelation over time, in terms of behaviour patterns and cultural values and norms. Sociologists suggest that society is a network of social relationships thus social change is a significant alteration in the system of social relationships (Sociologyguide.com, 2018). | This study explores Femvertising as a possible vehicle for social change. |

### **Theoretical Framework: Keller's Customer based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model**

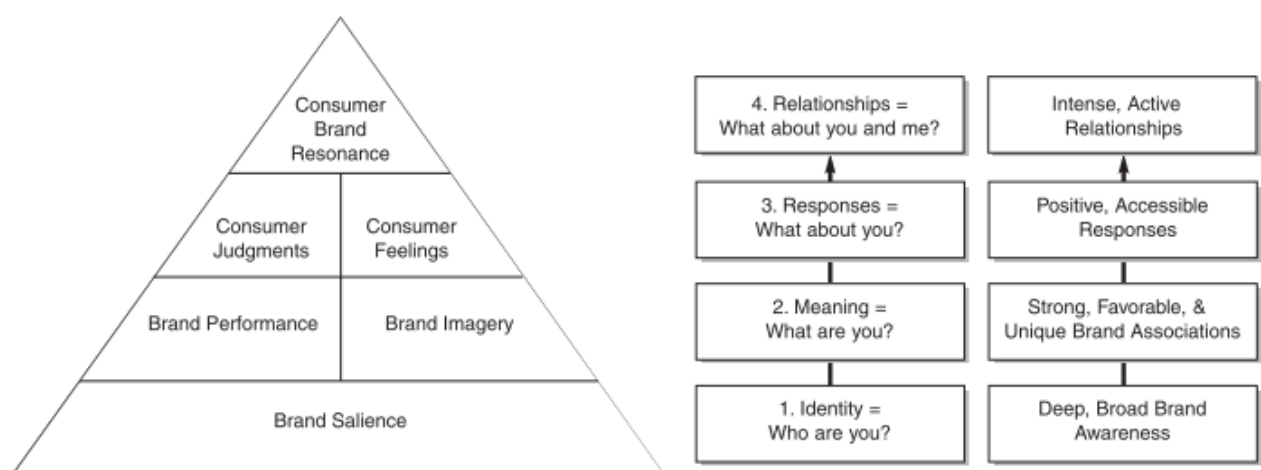
This study makes use of Keller's (2001) customer based brand equity model (CBBE) as the basis for the exploration of relevant theories surrounding brand resonance and the role of marketing communications in the form of customer relationships, with brand resonance being the optimal form.

Keller's Brand Equity model is also known as Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) Model published by Kevin Lane Keller in his widely used textbook, "Strategic Brand Management. Within a pyramid, the model emphasizes four key levels that you can work through to create a successful brand. These four levels are: Brand Identity, Brand Meaning, Brand responses and `brand relationships. Within these four levels are six building blocks that further help with brand building. These six building blocks are salience, performance, imagery, judgments, feelings, and resonance. Once all the other brand building blocks are established, brand resonance can be achieved (Keller, 2001).

According to Keller (2001) the use of the CBBE model is to help brands in their brand building efforts; the most valuable brand-building block is brand resonance, which can only be reached once all other brand-building blocks have been achieved . According to a

Kevin Lane Keller (2001) in a working paper entitled *'Building Customer-Based Brand Equity: A Blueprint for Creating Strong Brands*, "the power of a brand resides in the minds of customers". The foundation of the model is that a brand's equity relies on what customers learn, feel, see and hear about the brand (Keller 2001). It is the responsibility of marketers to establish strong brands by ensuring that customers have a meaningful experience with a brand, thus establishing feelings, images, beliefs perceptions and opinions that positively associate to the brand, ultimately forming an emotional and psychological connection (Keller 2001).

Brands should be accountable for how they depict women and recognise that any brand can be pro-female. Not only is female empowerment becoming increasingly rampant but that women positively receive the messages (Drake, 2017). Brands are frequently using female empowering messaging and leverage on this emotional tactic. Consumers form attitudes, beliefs and opinions about brands by means of engaging and experiencing the brand. Therefore emotional appeals in advertising communications can result in increase of attitude and engagement (Bulbul & Menon, 2010). Therefore brand resonance can play a crucial role in the brand building and equity of a brand, consumers build strong relationships with brands that connect with them emotionally. Taking into account the modern women who is strong advocate for female empowerment and gender equality, the ability of a brand to emotionally resonate with its female target market, can result in achieving the ultimate level of brand- building – brand resonance.



**Figure 1: Keller's CBBE Model**

Source: Keller (2001)

## Brand Resonance

Keller (2003) states that, “Brand resonance’ refers to the nature of the relationship that customers have with the brand and the extent to which customers feel that they are ‘in sync’ with the brand”. Intensity and activity characterise the two dimensions of brand relationships. Intensity refers to the depth of the psychological bond that customers have with the brand, ultimately describing the depth of loyalty felt by the consumer. Whereas activity refers to how frequently the consumer buys and uses the brand, which relates to brand engagement and the extent to which the consumer seeks out brand information, events or other loyal customers (Keller, 2003).

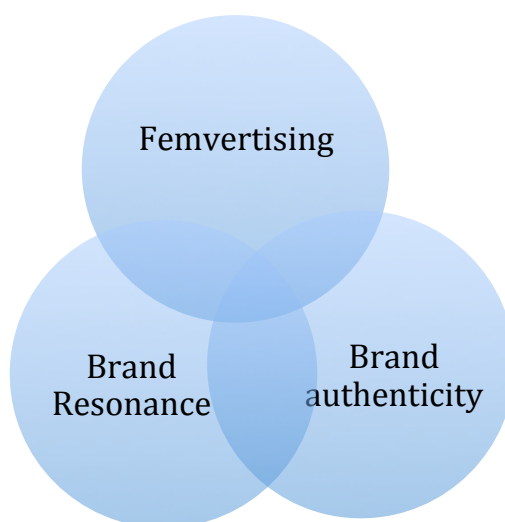
Brands that use femvertising authentically can achieve brand resonance, by reacting to female consumers attitudes and beliefs the brand can help establish a strong relationship with its female consumer, one where consumers actively interact with the brand on a regular basis as well as share their experiences with others (Keller, 2003). Consumers who actively seek to engage with a brand and express a high degree of loyalty is what true brand resonance are about. Researching if Femvertising does have a high degree of resonance with its customers can prove to be a valuable tool.

## Brand Authenticity

According to Marsden (2015) Brand Authenticity can be defined as, ‘[t]he extent to which consumers perceive a brand to be faithful toward itself, true to its consumers, motivated by caring and responsibility, and able to support consumers in being true to themselves.’ The Perceived Brand Authenticity Scale (PBA) measures four dimensions; credibility, integrity, symbolism and continuity (Marsden, 2015). Brand authenticity is a four dimensional construct, these dimensions include (1) continuity, (2) originality, (3) reliability, and (4) naturalness (Bruhn, Schoenmüller, Schäfer & Heinrich, 2012).

Napoli, Dickinson, Beverland, and Farrelly, F. (2014) conducted a study whereby a tool by which firms can evaluate the effectiveness of strategic decisions designed to deliver an authentic brand offering was developed. The consumer-based brand authenticity (CBBA) scale is an objective measure of brand authenticity, which includes the opinion of the consumer. Four separate studies were undertaken to generate and refine scale items

(Study 1), determine and then confirm the underlying factor structure of brand authenticity (Studies 2 and 3), and finally to test for convergent, discriminant and predictive validity of the scale is conducted (Study 4) (Napoli *et al.*, 2014).



**Figure 2: Conceptual Framework**

**Relationship Between Femvertising, Brand Resonance and Brand Authenticity**

Source: Researcher's Own

Napoli *et al* (2014, pp. 1096) concluded that, “consumers feel they have been denied an existence that is real or authentic and are going to demand products that reflect the renewed desire for what is authentic”. Richards (2017) states that According to Cohn & Wolfe’s 2017 Authentic Brand study consumers widely value brands that are authentic. Consumers what to buy brands that do more than just make money, they are in search of brands that are authentic and take into consideration the influence they have in communities by making a meaningful impact it has on those communities and contribute to making the world a better place (Richards, 2017). Cohn & Wolfe’s 2017 Authentic Brand study examined the role of authenticity of business and how authentic brands impact consumers. Audi was named number seventeen on The Global Authentic 100, thus showing how the brand is perceived as being authentic globally. It is therefore important for the brand to maintain its authentic status; this is especially true when brands use social messaging tactics such as Femvertising. The brand must ensure that any messaging is seen as authentic and aligns with the core values of the brand.

## Gender Stereotypes in advertising

Gender stereotyping is the generalization of others based on their gender (United Nations, 2017). Advertisers use what consumers believe about the norms of gender roles to promote and advertise their products, and this premise is what interests researchers on social and cultural consequences of gender stereotyping in advertising (Zotos & Grau, 2016). The use of gender stereotyping and gender roles are often implemented by advertisers, popular media are adamant on portraying men and women in traditional positions (Social Psych Online, 2017).

Despite societal changes many researchers believe there is evidence that shows how female gender roles are still depicted as 'traditional' in advertising (Social Psych Online, 2017). According to Eisend (2010) '[t]he integration of log odds of several gender role variables taken from 64 studies shows that gender stereotyping is prevalent in advertising, with the odds of females presented in a particular category being between 1.5 to almost four times the odds for males.'

## Femvertising

Femvertising is defined by SheKnows Media as, '[a]dvertising that employs pro-female talent, messages and imagery to empower women and girls' (Toonen, 2016). According to Iqbal (2015) it all starts with a hashtag, like most campaigns these days, however the idea behind researching femvertising is identifying its effect on women empowerment in modern times. The strategy of femvertising is based on the idea that advertising can empower women and sell products at the same time.

According to Bahadur (2014), advertisements that celebrate women rather than objectify them are proving to not only empower women but are good for a company's bottom line. The leading female lifestyle platform, She Knows media polled 628 women, where 91% of the respondents say the way women are portrayed in advertising has a direct affect on self-esteem, especially that of young girls. The poll also showed that 94% of the women agree that portraying women as sex symbols in adverts is harmful (Bahadur, 2014).

Even though Femvertising is proving to be a valuable tool in advertising, not only impacting social change but empowering women through brand campaigns, especially

social media campaigns that allow active engagement with the female consumer, one has to consider the down-side of Femvertising and consider its value in terms of authenticity. Some researchers consider it to be a fad, rather than a positive progression of feminism and question whether advertisers have grasped the concept of reaching a female audience (Brideson, 2015).

The factor of authenticity is of paramount importance when using femvertising as a communications strategy, it pushes transparency and truth beyond advertising and towards an alignment of the brand with its messaging, where consumers want brands to support female business practices within its corporate context as well (Becker-Herby 2016).

### **Femvertising in a South African Context**

Globally brands are starting to tap into the trend of celebrating feminism, however according to Media Update (2017), “in South Africa brands are struggling to adapt the way that they speak to female consumers, or even to recognise the importance of the female consumer in their market”. South Africa is a diverse country and brands need to celebrate the variety of ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds instead of assuming the relevance of feminism to certain groups. Embracing the authenticity of women desiring to be themselves instead of focusing on over-used stereotypes is an aspect South African brands need to take into consideration (Media Update, 2017).

An example encapsulating this view is the #useyourand campaign from Gillette Venus, the campaign discusses how young girls are assured that they can be anything when they grow up from a ‘beautiful astronaut’ to a ‘soccer-playing ballerina’, however in reality women fall into a category and are boxed in and labeled a certain way. Gillette encourages women to step outside the box and defy the labels, the campaign encourages women to take a stand, when labeled as being smart or pretty, the brand urges you to say “Yes, and?” The overall premise of the campaign is to inspire women and girls to #useyourand (Media Update, 2017).

South Africa is ranked fifteenth out of 144 countries in terms of gender equality, according to data from the World Economic Forum (Global Gender Gap Report 2016, 2017). The

index is designed to divulge inequalities towards genders. eNews Channel Africa launched an online application during the 2014 Elections called Voting Aid. Responses to VotingAid showed that 36 percent of South African women believe that the government is doing enough to empower women compared to the 56 percent of South African men (eNCA.com, 2017).

### **The evolution of feminism and its impact on the media**

According to the *English Oxford Dictionary* (2018) Feminism is defined as, '[t]he advocacy of women's rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes'. Offen (1988) explains the term feminism as a developing ideology that is both a set of ideas and a broad goal, which is to destroy the patriarchy. Feminism has been classified into three waves over the years these three traditionally recognised waves of feminism focus on politics, culture and academia. It is important to note that these separate waves were created in response to the shifting of ideologies and philosophies that inform feminism. Change over time. These shifts represent the current political, cultural and academic climates of the time, which indirectly inform the type of feminism during that era (wave) . First wave feminism started spanned over the 1830's to the start of the 1900's and was focused on fighting for equal contract and property rights. Second wave feminism broadened the debate on gender equality between the 1960's and 1980's. Third wave feminism rose as a backlash to the inactive movements and failure of second wave feminism. Starting in the 1990's it shifted the fight towards micro politics and gender equality (Gaez & cortes 2017).

### **Post –feminism and its role in the media**

Post-feminist can be defined as “of, relating to, occurring in, or being the period following widespread advocacy and acceptance of feminism” (Merriam-Webster.com, s.a). The term post-feminism was first used in the 1980's to describe the backlash against second wave feminism and according to Gill (2007), the term is used loosely and contradictorily to indicate a theoretical position, a type of feminism after the second wave, or a regressive political stance.

Fourth wave feminism is the new phase of feminism currently occupying today's world, however it has not officially been named 'Fourth wave feminism' but is rather a on-going process to describe the next wave in feminism which is defined by technology, specifically

the media online. Fourth wave feminism is defined by technology, where women are able to grow a strong popular movement online (Cochrane, 2013). Most modern feminists describe themselves as intersectional-feminists; this theory is about the way multiple oppressions, such as the overlapping identities including race, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity. Today's feminists generally seem to see fourth wave feminism as an attempt to promote a platform for the voices and issues of those who are marginalized. It provides a structure for issues such as; class, race, age, ability, sexuality, gender and other issues that combine to affect women's experience of discrimination (Cochrane, 2013).

### **Criticism of Femvertising: Commodity feminism and Marketplace feminism**

The term commodity feminism refers to brands that use a version of feminism to market products to women. Brands tell women that a commodity will empower them and make use of a “commodity narrative”, which always addresses desire, most often about the desire for self-identity (Mcintyre, 2014).

Goldman et al (1991,pp.333) suggests that commodity feminism is market motivated therefore producing the audience as a commodity. Advertisements have become a vehicle for commodity narratives, where feminist culture is used to sell products, thus reducing feminist ideologies for commercial purposes (Blackwellreference.com, 2017).

The captilization of femvertsing is becoming increasing prevelant , body positivy is used as a tool of feminist activism in marketing campaigns where female empowerment is used to sell products (Luck, 2015).Products specifically targeted towards women such as beauty and personal care use body positivity in advertsiing to engage with the female consumers feelings and therefore associations with the product. Luck (2015) suggests that even if the brand in question is controversial in some feminist circles the use of femvertising helps women feel involved in activism. Body positivity has been appropriated by some advertisers ; instead of advocating for change the brand serves the same beauty standards it tries to resist therefore not being compatible with the true goal of feminsim. An example of commodity feminsim is the “Aerie Real” campaign, where lingerie brand Aerie pledged to use “real girls” and untouched images in their advertsing. However its mantra of “getting real” falls flat because it is evident in the campaigns that although being “untouched” images, the use of models in its campaign lack diversity and ultimately the

use of real girls and women. The use of curvy models and lack of racial diversity in its campaigns prove that while trying to relate to the cause, the adverts don't inhibit the realness of its consumers, flaws and all (Luck, 2015).

Marketplace feminism is a term used to describe the exploitation of the feminist movement. Andi Zeisler the author of the book *"We Were Feminists Once: From Riot Grrrl to CoverGirl®, the Buying and Selling of a Political Movement takes on corporate exploitation of the feminist movement"*, acknowledges the growth of "marketplace feminism" As a "cool, fun accessible identity' which is depoliticized as it is proving to be a trend instead of confronting inequality (Douglas, J. 2016).

Andi Zeisler suggests that the term empowerment can,'[m]ean anything from " self-esteem- building" to "sexy and feminine" to "awesome", empowerment has become a way to signify a particular female way of being'. That is gender essentialist and commercially motivated (Zeigler, 2016). Exploring marketplace and commodity feminism in the advertising arena can help consumers' distinguish between the authenticity of Femvertising or the degree to which it has been appropriated.

### **Social change: empowering women through Femvertising**

Brands' advertising has become an agent for social change; marketing and advertising have played an integral role in shaping society. According to Edelman (2017) ideology is dominating conversation around the globe and the 2017 *Edelman earned brand study* showed that 50% of purchase decisions are based on beliefs. The new normal for belief driven consumers is that they will buy, switch or even shun brands based on the brands view on controversial and social issues, showing that 30% of consumers are buying or boycotting more than they were three years ago (Edelman, 2017).

A brand's response to the new era of belief driven buyers isn't whether or not to respond but rather how and when. Edelman (2017) suggests that brands that ignore social change run the risk of becoming redundant in the minds of the consumer, as they become trapped in a "no brands land" where consumers become indifferent towards the brand.

## Audi's use of femvertising

According to Zurschmeid (2016) car brands need to make use of the concept of social currency in order to remain relevant. Social currency refers to a new paradigm coined by Erich Jochimsthaler that revolves around seven dimensions namely; personal identity, social identity, expression, conversation, affiliation, information and utility. A strong brand that makes use of these seven values, ensures consumer engagement by ultimately starting conversations and appealing to the consumer's ability to connect with a brand (Zurschmeid, 2016). The fact that the top two dimensions of personal identity and social identity plays a key role as it reflects how individuals see themselves in a social structure. Females want to resonate with a car brand that they can identify with, and this is where Femvertising plays a role.

One of the most discussed advertisements during 2017 Super Bowl was Audi's ad about the gender pay gap, called "Daughter". It received critical acclaim for identifying and acknowledging a current social issue as it pushes back on gender stereotypes, however the advert was received more negatively than positively (McGregor, 2017). SheKnows Media president Samantha Skye argues that despite the backlash, Femvertising advertisements will continue for brands as it invites audiences to start a conversation about complex issues, such as gender inequality. The continued use of Femvertising by brands will enable an emotional connection, especially for females where they can identify themselves in brands and brands that use this tactic correctly and authentically prove it is more than just a trend but a gateway to discuss and bring important issues to light (McGregor, 2017).

However, this is where Audi's brand authenticity is questioned. Following the advertisement backlash occurred, as many people pointed out that Audi's executive team is predominately male. Therefore their authenticity was questioned, as many believed the brand was jumping on the Femvertising trend instead of using the tactic authentically (McGregor, 2017).

## Chapter 3: Research Methodology

### Introduction

The purpose of this explorative study is to explore the phenomenon of Femvertising by using qualitative data to produce well-validated conclusions (Creswell et al. 2016). The research methodology that is to be explained in this chapter was selected because it best way to solve the research problem and answer subsequent questions.

The problem is that limited research exists on Femvertising within a South African context and as a result, brands are not aware of influence of Femvertising on South African female consumers' brand resonance. Consumer brand resonance determines the degree of connection a consumer has with a given brand and it is thus vital to establish which tactics can be employed in order to increase brand resonance. In order to explore this research problem primary research questions and objectives have been developed.

The primary research question is:

What is the influence of Femvertising on brand resonance on South African female consumers?

The secondary research questions of this study are:

- What is the brand resonance of Audi?
- What is the role of Femvertising in the car industry?
- What influence does Audi's gender pay gap advert have on its brand resonance?

### Research paradigm

The three dominant research paradigms are Positivism, interpretivism and critical realism. Positivism can be described as an approach of the natural sciences, where the application of natural sciences methods are used to study specific phenomena, positivists believe that science could enlighten people and make the world better (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014). Critical realism was born as a response to positivism's non-humanistic and small mindedness, as well as how it emphasises the causal nature of universal laws. Critical realism recognises that the natural and social sciences are different and therefore the way on which reality is experienced is built on how people perceive quality. To transform social relations by exposing, critiquing and changing any unjust practices in society are responsibilities critical realists believe in. Even though the topic of Femvertising is associated with empowering female consumers, and feminists take on the

role of activists. This study is to explore the phenomenon that is Femvertising in terms of how it impacts brand resonance and can therefore be described as Interpretivist. Interpretivism wants to understand human behaviour, as this study wants to explore how consumers behave towards femvertising (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

A paradigm is a way of looking, doing and thinking. The paradigm that is most suited to the exploration of Femvertising and its impact on brand resonance is Interpretivism. The three dominant research traditions are often guided by different positions. The following assumptions describe my study and how it is guided by positions in terms of interpretivism.

The ontological assumptions, which guide my study, are the nominalist position as it deals with concepts such as gender, feminism and equality, which are nominalist in nature.

The epistemological assumption, which my research gravitates most towards, is the interpretative stance as it is a view of what social science is. A constructionist perspective can also be mentioned, as an important aspect of the research will be the analysis of respondents' dialogue.

The methodological considerations of the research lean more towards an empathetic approach as I as the researcher is both empathetically and subjectively immersed in the research.

My research will be based on the Interpretivism paradigm, which is primarily based on the idea that people are fundamentally different from objects (du Plooy-Cilliers, Davis and Bezuidenhout, 2014).

The paradigm used for this qualitative study is interpretivism. Interpretivist researchers interpret the world around them and use an epistemological position of someone who is co-creating and sharing knowledge, as well as creating relationships broadening their understanding of different points of view (UK Essays, 2013). The interpretivism paradigm allows for 'Rich' data to be collected, usually by means of qualitative data however quantitative is used to. The research carried out is subjective, and often influenced by opinions of the researcher (UK Essays, 2013).

The aim of interpretivism is to create a shared meaning not only to understand the research but also interpret it. Creswell, Ebersohn, Elof, Ferreira, Nieuwenhuis, Pietersen

and Plano Clark (2016: 23) state that in the interpretivism paradigm there is no distinction between subject and object, therefore the truth is relevant and subject to subjective elements such as social context, conventions, norms and standards of the researcher. The Interpretivist paradigm allows for a more insightful understanding into the phenomenon of Femvertising, where both qualitative and quantitative data can be used to support each other by creating more depth and understanding into the topic. The Interpretivist paradigm focuses on understanding the human experience, in this case understanding the female consumer's perception of Femvertising is of great importance. Meaning orientated methodologies such as interviewing and observation rely on the subjective relationship between the researcher and subjects. The Interpretivist paradigm therefore allows for a more complete understanding of the Femvertising phenomenon.

### **Research approach and design**

Qualitative research is an approach used to explore and understand the meaning individuals assign to a social problem. A qualitative research approach is necessary because the research questions guiding this study are about personal perceptions and feelings. Qualitative research places an emphasis on understanding phenomena and therefore qualitative research uses exploratory research questions as opposed to close-ended questions (Creswell et al, 2016: 54). The qualitative approach enables the questions regarding brand resonance, social change and female empowerment in regards to Femvertising to result in a complex and interesting dynamic, where personal behaviours and ideas can be discussed. The qualitative approach has the objective to understand, explore or describe people's behaviours attitudes and relations between their actions.

Research design is based on the chosen paradigm thus enabling the researcher to make use of a strategy that best fits the type of research by serving as a plan. The plan helps guide the researcher in terms of moving from the underlying philosophical assumptions to specifying the selection of participants, the data collection methods and to the data analysis technique to be completed (Creswell et al, 2016:72). The selected research design enables the researcher to select the most appropriate plan that will predict the structure of the study as well as its execution. Exploratory research is used in qualitative research and refers to a research area that has emerged due to societal changes and is based on the premise that it will help obtain new insights, concepts and confirm assumptions. Descriptive research however is a design that aims to describe a problem

systematically and can be used in quantitative and qualitative research (Creswell et al, 2016 : 76). Case study design focuses on an occurrence (case) that is set within a real world context and is most often based on a constructivist worldview. According to Creswell et al (2016:82) this design realises the ,” `importance of the subjective human creation of meaning” thus not rejecting objectivity. Therefore the most appropriate research design is exploratory as it best correlates with the Interpretivist paradigm.

This study makes use of an exploratory research design. This design is a useful approach to help gain information about a topic and focuses on gaining insights and familiarity for later investigation, thus the research problem still in the beginning stages. Femvertising and in particular its role on brand resonance is a topic with limited research. Therefore exploratory research is used to help develop a snapshot into the situation of Femvertising and its influence on branding.

### **Population and sampling**

A population comprises of all the individuals that make up a group of the research study. A population consist of all units, individuals, processing aspects that the researcher is interested in. Selected individuals or groups are chosen to generalize the study’s findings (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

A target population is everyone that falls into the population parameters. The population has the equal chance to act on the information they are provided with and the researcher can gain understanding from the specific population to conduct a research analysis. (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In this study the target population is all female consumers in South Africa who are exposed to advertising, in terms of this study Audi advertising.

The accessible population refers to the portion of the population that can be incorporated in the research analysis. The accessible population is a lot more refined than the target population (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In the exploration of the influence of Femvertising on female South African consumer’s brand resonance, the target population was narrowed down to the accessible population which included female consumers in South Africa between the ages of 25 and 35, who drive a car and either drive (have driven) an Audi or aspire to drive an Audi or car brand similar in nature and who have been exposed to

various advertising which is often online campaigns, social media communications, and therefore would include consumers who have internet access.

Participants in this study were selected using non-probability sampling methods namely convenience sampling, as the participants are already known and in contact with the researcher, therefore being easily accessible to conduct the study (Du Plooy-Cilliers,, 2014: 142). Convenience sampling is an appropriate method because of the smaller scale of the study as well as time and budget constraints. The sample group for this qualitative study consisted of one focus group consisting of seven participants.

Participants were contacted via email and pre-screened to ensure that they fit into the sample parameters as mentioned above. The participants were selected based on the pre-screening and seven out of the twelve possible participants were selected as participants for the focus group. The participants, being female can therefore be described as people in terms of unit of analysis.

## Data collection

Qualitative data was collected through the use of one focus group consisting of seven participants. It was assumed that the group dynamic of a focus group allows for interaction between participants where they can build on each other's answers and opinions and creates a forum for an open discussion. Group dynamics is an integral part of the focus group and the discussion of responses was encouraged so that participants could have a conversation about a specific topic and elaborate on ideas and comments that were discussed. This data collection method allows for group communication to help widen the range of responses and initiate forgotten details of personal opinions or experiences (Creswell et al, 2016:95)

Focus group participants were given a brief introduction to the research topic and an explanation of the ground rules were given. Opening questions were established to help ease participants into the focus group process and enabled the researcher to establish a relationship with the participants. Firstly a car discussion was initiated and two Audi adverts were shown to gain initial reactions to the brand's advertising efforts. The first advert called "What are you waiting for?", an advert for Audi Sa's Q range, as well as an advert called "believe in the future of driving". These two adverts gave the participants a

sense of Audi's typical advertising campaigns. Two adverts were shown as examples of Femvertising in order to form the basis of the discussion and gain immediate perceptions on the topic. These two adverts were Always "Like a girl" and Nike's advert with Serena Williams, titled "Until we all win", these adverts were shown as they depicted the essence of the femvertising tactic employed by brands. These adverts were selected because they were good examples of femvertising, not the epitome of perfect femvertising or examples of Femvertising gone wrong. A last advert was shown to the group called "Daughter" by Audi, which addresses the gender pay gap, this advert was selected because it is unusual for Femvertising to be used in advertising in the automobile industry, and it highlighted a topical issue currently facing society today, gender inequality. This aspect of the advert lends itself to social messaging used by brands.

The aim of this focus group was to gain in-depth insights into how Femvertising is perceived amongst South African females and its subsequent effect on brand resonance. Advantages of this focus group included the in depth nature of responses as well as the emergence of unanticipated findings and insights. A key element of explorative study is that responses are not limited to specific questions, this is evident in a focus group. As debates occur within the focus group respondents have time to give more thought to their answers in the discussion, which is another advantage. These climates the possibility of participants giving responses based on what they think the researcher wants to hear (Creswell et al, 2016).

Disadvantages of the focus group are that some participants may dominate the conversation. The discursive nature of focus groups may lead to some participants being hesitant to share their opinions in apprehension of being criticised. The success of the focus group also depends on the researcher's ability to be unbiased and not lead the conversation when probing questions. Therefore it is important for the researcher to stimulate different responses but follow the predetermined questions in the guidelines, to ensure specific research questions are answered (Pickering & Watts, 2008).

## Data analysis

Through qualitative analysis and interpretation, data is transformed into findings, the researcher is immersed in the data and identifies and describes the patterns and or themes emerging from the data, by interpreting their meaning. The data analysis method used in this study is qualitative content analysis, this refers to the content as text, and

therefore it can interchangeably be called textual analysis. Content analysis is a step-by-step approach that compiles and refines substantial bodies of text into clear and distinguishable content classifications for analysis. This method of analysis is appropriate to this study in that it is focused on and provides understanding to content and contextual meaning of text, helping the researcher to create valid conclusions (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014).

Content analysis uses the deductive approach, where the researcher argues from the general to the specific using a conceptual framework to identify specific codes within the text, which can be grouped, and linked together to form specific themes (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). In the case of this research study the conceptual framework, Keller's CBBE Model as defined in conceptualisation above guided the data analysis process.

According to Du Plooy- Cilliers (2014) coding is when the researcher organizes sections of data into broad categories with shared meanings; this is done when the researcher conducts a qualitative content analysis. The data was ordered into categories and then ultimately categories were organised into certain themes, which were applied to all text or data. Line by line coding was used in this study to analyse thematic data, therefore enabling the researcher to read through every line of text and mark the phrases, words and sentences that were essential to the study (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). Thematic content analysis was the most appropriate data analysis technique for this study's focus group as it allows the researcher to use the study's research questions and objectives to help guide the analysis and identify underlying themes that emerged throughout the focus group. Analysing the themes with guidance of the guideline questions enables the researcher to find in overall themes as well as in depth insights into the participants views and perceptions of femvertising as it relates to advertising.

The procedures followed during the analysis were as follows:

1. Familiarisation with data

- Transcripts of the focus group were read and r-read in order to establish an overview of data.

2. Initial code development

A list of codes was made where constant comparison between coding and text was carried out. This step was done once the researcher is familiar with the data and allows for a broad range of responses to emerge therefore broadening the range of

potential findings and insights in this explorative study. Concepts can also be termed as a coding unit; therefore, the researcher establishes a set of concepts that represent a set of text or data that relate to the study (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014).

### 3. Discovery of themes

- Similar ideas and codes that are related to the coding units were combined into categories. There was sufficient categories to cover all the data, thus it is comprehensive, mutually exclusive and specific. Concept mapping can be developed based on a combination of an inductive (raw data) and deductive (previously conducted theories and studies) coding scheme (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). Initial themes were established as codes made patterns in responses, relevant to the research objectives of the study.

### 4. Review of themes

Once semantic themes were identified and explored these themes can be described as being surface level, thereafter, latent themes that assess underlying respondent assumptions were identified

### 5. Defining and naming themes

- Finally, latent themes were then defined and named in order to simplify the data analysis process and the reporting of findings and insights.

### 6. Findings were reported

- Findings were drawn up and the interpretations of themes or categories based on conclusions were drawn.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion**

Findings from this qualitative exploitative study often influence of femvertising on female South African consumers' brand resonance are reported as follows: a discussion of major themes and findings these, which arose from the qualitative data, and finally holistic reporting of findings based on specific research objectives.

### **Perceptions of the Audi brand**

In order to gain initial insights into how participants perceived the Audi brand, an initial car industry conversation was started to help participants ease into identifying initial thoughts about Audi as a brand, especially how it is generally perceived. The group were asked to share their initial thoughts of the brand and then watch two adverts about the brand and give emotional responses as to how those adverts shaped their perception of the brand. It

is important to note that most participants initial perceptions of Audi was that it can be described as a sporty brand associated with elegance and class. Participant 7 noted that Audi is seen as being “elegant and classy”. Participant 5, 6 and 7 described the brand as “Sporty”.

It is important to note that initial brand perceptions of Audi was that it is a brand that is synonymous with being sporty, however after watching the two Audi adverts, the participants views on the brand changed, as many participants resonated with the brand because they could identify with the brand on a more emotional and psychological level. Participant 4 resonated with the first advert because of its sense of adventure, they could see themselves in the brand and aspire to be like the brand, “ I have a love for travel and adventure so to me it was more appealing”. However it is important to note that majority of the focus group resonated with advert 2 as they felt it was more memorable and had an emotional connection, which they could relate to. Participant 3 noted that the advert played on your heartstrings , because it was emotional and humorous.

The participants initial impressions of the Audi brand were based on elements of sport and elegance, however after watching the adverts, participants could relate to the brand on a deeper level because tactics used such as humour, emotion and aspiration, resonated with the participants as they felt more connected to the brand.

### **Connotations with the term Femvertising**

An initial question regarding first impressions of the term femvertising was posed to the group, the aim was to illicit first impressions and ideas regarding the phenomenon, before explaining the concept in detail. Participants ascribed the term to be female advertising that was aimed at women, predominately feminists. Participant 5 described it as , “ Female advertising. So , adverts specifically aimed at women”. Whereas participant 3 noted that “these adverts really appeal to feminists”. Therefore it is evident that participants preconceived connotations with the term feminism came into play”.

In order to facilitate a comfortable discussion within the focus groups a definition of Femvertising described by SheKnows media was read to participants (SheKnows, 2016). Subsequently two femvertising adverts were played for the participants , so they could gain a better understanding of the concept by seeing examples in advertising campaigns.

It is evident that after engaging with femvertising, participants had a better grasp on the concept and its meaning. Participant 4 noted :

“Uh just from my side, I think it's the most empowering form of advertising in the modern age, because of how females are advancing, and getting into various career paths that were generally not available back in the day, or how we are on the media stage, or any sort of platform that we're using now that we weren't able to use in the past. And that's why I think it's definitely, “Femvertising” is growing rapidly, because it's the only way to advertise and to get females to buy into a brand, because they feel like they're being heard, and they're being understood, and finally we have a voice”.

It is important to note that consumers who are exposed to ads that employ femvertising tactics will not necessarily encounter the term ‘femvertising’. However, connotations with the term femvertising and its ‘root word’ feminism give insight into how consumers currently view approaches to gender roles such as feminism. It also shows that consumers who are unaware of the concept, have predetermined notions regarding the concept.

### **The lack of social messaging in advertising in a South African context**

After being exposed to adverts with social messaging at its core, in the form of femvertising, many participants argued that brands in South Africa should start using social messaging, such as Femvertising, in their advertising efforts. Social messaging, that creates conversation, pushes boundaries and highlights important social issues is lacking in a south African context. Due to the fact that social messaging, such as Femvertising that address gender inequality and female empowerment are rooted in an emotional context, participants said they were more likely to relate to a brand that dives into addressing social issues as it provokes emotional connections and feelings. Participant 7 noted that “ We don't do that type of advertising here. We don't go into that much depth. That's our problem. We don't try getting the message across”.

The consensus was that consumers would relate more to a brand that employed social messaging techniques, and agreed that not enough south African brands use social messaging and there is room for brands to employ such messaging, such as by using Femvertising.

## Gender stereotyping

A recurring theme amongst participants responses was stereotyping, it was brought up numerous times throughout the focus group discussion, especially when participants analysed the Femvertising adverts shown.

Participants noted that in the Always Like a girl advertisement, various references were made to how girls are seen as weak. Even one participant noted that in their personal life as a teacher, when boys start screaming or act a certain way they tell them to stop acting like a girl. This participant noted that it is stereotyping and could be seen as offensive, “I don’t realise, you know when I’m saying it, what it actually means”.

Another participant noted that women are always “fighting to be heard”, and that the Nike advert is, “targeting the oppressed”, as often strong or ambitious women are seen as too loud or over confident, whereas males with similar qualities are respected.

## Correlation between femvertising and Audis brand resonance

After watching the Audi “daughter” advertisement many participants agreed that they appreciated the fact that a Brand like Audi acknowledged an important issue such as the gender pay gap, as females they appreciated the fact that they are being heard. The participants noted that they respected the brand for dispelling the stigma that girls will never grow up to be as equal as boys. One participant noted that social change is a result of brands starting conversations about important social issues, “I respect them one hundred percent. One hundred percent respect them more as a brand, just because they spoke out, about an issue that no one speaks out about, other than women in the position. No big companies have come out about the gender, the pay gap, at all, so, a lot more respect towards them”.

Participants noted that they felt proud to be female and more empowered, “Yes I was proud to be a female, firstly, because of the little girl in the race. Um, and then, and secondly empowered because if we have a brand like Audi behind us, then, like, change is imminent”.

In conclusion majority of the participants argued that the Audi “daughter” advertisement can be seen as positive and resonated with the brand more because it connected with

them on an emotional level, “ If I drove an `audi I would feel proud watching that video, one hundred percent. however some participants noted that even though the advert was impactful it would not drive them to engage more with the brand, in terms of sharing the advert on social media or bringing it up by recommending it to friends or family.

Participant 4 captured the essence of why the Femvertising tactic influenced their brand resonance:

“Good advertising focuses on the why. Why choose Audi. Because they’re taking a stance. Why choose Always? Because we’re saying ‘like a girl’ is positive. Why choose Nike? Because we’re empowering women. They focus, all of these people are focusing on the why. Merc’s gonna show you a fancy car. There you go. And then when you want a fancy car you’re gonna go buy Merc. But if you want something that’s supporting, so, advertising, so the feminists are going to say Yes, I want that, because they are supporting us! I don’t care about VW and that their prices are better. Audi is supporting us. If it’s the same price range, I’m going Audi.” So they’re focusing on the why they’re doing things, not what they’re doing.”

The overall consensus was that the participants resonated more with Audi in a positive manner after watching the Femvertising advert, used by the brand, as they could identify with the content of the advert and appreciated the brand taking a stance on an important issue such as the gender pay gap.

### **Reliability and Validity/Trustworthiness**

Reliability and validity are related to the measurability of results, and are most often used in quantitative research. Trustworthiness consists of the following dimensions; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). The pre-testing phase within this study, where the semi-structured questionnaires were pilot tested can help ensure the reliability of the study.

It is pertinent for a researcher to establish that the study’s findings are credible, transferable, dependable and confirmable, in order to corroborate the research in terms of trustworthiness.

### **Credibility**

This refers to the confidence in the qualitative researcher's truth of the research findings. The credibility of findings is often determined by the accuracy of how the data was interpreted. This can be increased by the amount of time spent on analysing, coding and interpreting the findings. (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014).

### **Transferability**

This refers to the ability of the findings to be applicable to other contexts, thus the extent to which the results and analysis can be applied beyond a specific research project. These contexts can include similar situations, similar populations and similar phenomena (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). Transferability is achieved by using in depth description to show that the study's findings can be justifiably applied to another setting. Therefore, it is the responsibility of the researcher to describe the findings described in sufficient detail in order to be applied to similar situations.

### **Dependability**

This refers to the quality of the process of integration that takes place between the data collection method, data analysis and the theory produced from the data (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative for the study to be able to be repeated, enough information from the study should allow for similar findings to be obtained if the study was to be replicated. Dependability can be achieved when an outside audit is conducted, therefore an outside person can review and examine the study in question in order to ensure that the findings are consistent and could be repeated.

### **Confirmability**

This dimension of trustworthiness refers to the degree of neutrality in the research study's findings; therefore, researchers must take steps to ensure that findings emerge from data and not their own predispositions (Du Plooy- Cilliers, 2014). To achieve confirmability the researcher must ensure that personal bias and motivation does not skew the interpretation. As the researcher an audit trail will be provided that will feature every step of the data analysis, ensuring that the study's findings accurately depict the respondents' findings.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

The research problem was that limited research exists on femvertising within a South African context and as a result brands and advertising agencies are not aware of the influence of femvertising on South African female consumers' brand resonance. The findings in this explorative study indicate that femvertising does in fact have an effect on female South African's brand resonance and that this effect is generally positive. The following section offers a discussion and interpretation of the findings in this study in an attempt to translate them into meaningful insights.

### Concluding answers to the research questions

Femvertising that shows women breaking stereotypes is empowering and can be an agent for social change. In a broader context femvertising is social messaging tactic, however brands that employ social messaging influence consumers resonance with the brand. Consumers, who can identify their individuality, connect emotionally and psychologically to a brand that employs social messaging, increases brand resonance as consumers find the brands to be more relatable.

Brand that employ femvertising must ensure that they achieve brand authenticity, by practicing what they preach. The brand's identity and core values need to be aligned with the social messaging the brand aims to portray. Consumers feel it is important for brands to be authentic and are aware of brands that may be using Femvertising as a commodity, because it may seem trendy, however customers resonate more with brand that are authentic. Brand authenticity indirectly plays a role in the degree of brand resonance as consumer's relate to brands that are actually doing good and advocating for social change, not just in their communication messaging but their business practices.

Female South African consumers believe that Femvertising can have a positive influence on gender equality in South Africa. Consumers feel that brands have a social responsibility to be advocates for social change, Consumers believe that brand have a platform to start conversations regarding social change and have the ability to use their voices for good.

Femvertising is generally seen as empowering by south African consumer, however some consumers fear that femvertising is more relatable to females who consider themselves

as feminist and have a vested interest in feminism and feminist issues. Consumers however do appreciate the fact that Femvertising can be used to dispel gender stereotypes and stigmas.

### **Implications of findings for future practices**

Brands should employ femvertising in order to contribute towards gender equality in South Africa. Because female South African consumers view femvertising as positive to the point that they are more likely to support brands that use Femvertising, than those who do not, femvertising is a great way of increasing brand resonance and by extension maintain loyalty. However, brands must ensure that they only make use of femvertising if it is in line with their brand identity, and therefore be authentic as a brand. Brands should extend their use of social messaging in general as it creates an in depth understanding, where a message can truly relate to a consumer, taking into account the identity of the brand and the various social causes it can be related to, shows that it builds a better connection with consumers who can relate to brands on an emotional level.

### **Ethical considerations**

It was important for all participants to be made aware of the academic purposes of the study and what their responses will be used for. Confidentiality and anonymity of respondents in qualitative elements of the study has been ensured throughout. It was important to keep the anonymity of the participants as to avoid any bias or allow it to interfere with the research process. This study made use of voluntary participants only with no financial or other incentives provided in exchange for participation and respondents were free to withdraw comments or responses at any time. Respondents all also have full access to the results of this study. Careful consideration and attention was paid to the focus group guidelines so as not to influence responses. All participants have access to the data and findings of the study and all data gathered is used exclusively for the purpose of this study (Maree, 2007).

### **Limitations of the study**

Limitations are restrictions in one's research analysis that are out of one's control, such as the research budget, resources, information and time. Example: Female South African

consumer's brand resonance impacted by femvertising may be narrowed to South African female consumers in Gauteng brand resonance as impacted by femvertising. Distinguishing the study's limitations reinforces the accuracy and effectiveness of the research results. Researchers conducting an analysis of a specific scope of a study don't have complete control; over every part of the study. Example: There will be some people who will not fit the screening process before conducting the focus group, or those who were selected but did not show up to the focus group (Du Plooy-Cilliers, 2014). One significant limitation of this study was the short time frame in which it will be conducted. Restrictions in terms of participants are also a limiting factor. Due to the smaller scale of this study findings will not be generalised. This study was greatly dependant on primary data due to the fact that there is limited research on the topic of femvertising in a South African context.

### Heuristic value

The research problem is thus that limited research exists on Femvertising within a South African context and as a result the impact of femvertising on South African female consumers' brand resonance is not yet identified by brands. The correlation between brand resonance, brand authenticity and the effectiveness of femvertising has yet to be established, especially within the South African context. Limited literature points to the fact that there is a lack of femvertising used by South African brands to influence consumer's perception of brand authenticity. Brand resonance by means of Keller's CBBE model was part of the study's theoretical framework.

This study was a success overall . the main problem faced during this study was getting enough respondents to take part in the study, the ability of being able to conduct multiple focus group would have allowed for more in depth data to be explored. This study adds to the body of South African Knowledge about femvertising and its application within a South African context is worth investigating further. Recommendations in terms of future studies include making use of a larger sample for both the qualitative and quantitative elements of the study so as to increase the external validity and generalizability of the results. Fewer time constraints would also improve the quality of future research. This topic provides the opportunity for potentially gaining sponsorships in order to fund future research. Showing more adverts to participants will also enhance the quality of the study.

The anticipated contribution of this study will be to broaden the knowledge of Femvertising and create a discussion about how Femvertising can be used authentically by brands to help maintain brand resonance amongst consumers.

## **Final Conclusion**

According to Cook, Erwin, Carmody and Enslin (2009), Brands are expected to build sustainable relationships with their customers and maintain their position of being a healthy brand, by incorporating the well-being of society at large in the design of their organisations.

Brand resonance can play a crucial role in the brand building and equity of a brand, consumers build strong relationships with brands that connect with them emotionally and feel that they are 'in-sync' with them psychologically. Taking into account the modern women who is a strong advocate for female empowerment and gender equality, the ability of a brand to emotionally resonate with female consumers and ensure that strong relationships can be forged, they need to use an inside –out perspective and ensure that their messaging reflects the attitudes, opinions and beliefs of consumers, in this case the need for women to feel empowered by the brands they interact and engage with.

Femvertising has a positive influence on female South Africans brand perceptions, and is generally seen as empowering. Consumers resonate more with brands that make use of social messaging, and femvertising is one aspect of a Variety of social messaging tactics. Further investigation into the topic of femvertising and its feasibility within a South African context is recommended.

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