

# Role of Femvertising in Enhancing Women's Empowerment in FMCG Brand Campaigns

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## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

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Advertisements that endorse and empower women and girls are referred to as "Femvertising". These advertisements frequently defy stereotypes and portray women in powerful and competent roles. The study explored the contribution of Femvertising in women's empowerment. This empirical study aimed to look at three key indicators of women's empowerment: Autonomy, Self-efficacy, and Gender role equality exhibited in advertisement campaigns. The three brands chosen for analysing these three indicators were Hamam, Horlicks and Vim. Data was gathered through a structured questionnaire from 188 respondents. The study found that self-efficacy significantly influences perceived women's empowerment. Gender role equality attitude varied with the Educational attainment. Additionally, self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between gender role equality and perceived women's empowerment, while autonomy moderated the link between self-efficacy and gender role equality, with high autonomy weakening the association. These results underscore Femvertising's potential to reshape societal perceptions and promote women's empowerment through empowering commercials.

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## SARI PATI

*Iklan yang mendukung dan memberdayakan perempuan dan anak perempuan disebut sebagai "Femvertising." Iklan ini sering kali menentang stereotip dan menggambarkan perempuan dalam peran yang kuat dan kompeten. Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi kontribusi Femvertising dalam pemberdayaan perempuan. Studi empiris ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis tiga indikator utama pemberdayaan perempuan: Otonomi, Efikasi Diri, dan Kesetaraan Peran Gender yang ditampilkan dalam kampanye iklan. Tiga merek yang dipilih untuk menganalisis ketiga indikator ini adalah Hamam, Horlicks, dan Vim. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner terstruktur dari 188 responden. Studi ini menemukan bahwa efikasi diri secara signifikan memengaruhi pemberdayaan perempuan yang dirasakan. Sikap terhadap kesetaraan peran gender bervariasi berdasarkan tingkat pendidikan. Selain itu, efikasi diri secara parsial memediasi hubungan antara kesetaraan peran gender dan pemberdayaan perempuan yang dirasakan, sementara otonomi memoderasi hubungan antara efikasi diri dan kesetaraan peran gender, dengan otonomi tinggi melemahkan hubungan tersebut. Hasil ini menegaskan potensi Femvertising untuk mengubah persepsi sosial dan mempromosikan pemberdayaan perempuan melalui iklan yang memberdayakan.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Promoting women's empowerment is a societal obligation (Rajvanshi, 2017). It involves a multifaceted, expansive process for women, encompassing the development of an internal sense of self, the capacity to take action based on this self-perception, and a strong emphasis on connectedness (Sheilds, 1995). Measures like supporting women's education, and providing loans, financial aid, and other resources contribute to empowering women. Given that empowerment passes from mothers to their daughters, empowering a woman also translates to empowering the next generation (Jamil & Bukhari, 2020). Empowerment plays a vital role in determining a woman's genuine standing in society and augments her ability to drive meaningful changes (Shooshtari et al., 2018). Empowered women possess a distinct form of inner strength and personal empowerment that stems from intrinsic power (Keshet & Simchai, 2014). It's viewed as pivotal in enabling women to be self-reliant and fostering their socio-economic advancement (Nisser & Ayedh, 2017).

The representation of women in advertising significantly impacts societal perceptions of women, including how men perceive them and their expectations regarding appearance (Soni, 2020). Empowerment advertising is a highly focused approach aimed primarily at female consumers (Tsai et al., 2021). "Femvertising" is a term used to describe an advertising approach that focuses on highlighting women's talents and abilities, while also challenging and countering negative gender stereotypes (Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Femvertising pertains to advertising targeted at women, embodying values of empowerment, feminism, female activism, and promoting women's leadership and equality (Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017). Brands increasingly adopt Femvertising campaigns, using empowered captivating messages to uplift femininity (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2019; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019).

This is the first study to specifically investigate the role of Femvertising with a focus on FMCG brand advertisements like Hamam, Horlicks, and Vim.

The three brands were selected for this study due to their widespread familiarity and daily use among the general public. The study incorporated three independent constructs of women's empowerment: autonomy, self-efficacy, and gender role equality based on existing research and related each advertisement with each construct. The dependent construct measured was Perceived women empowerment, and the independent constructs included Autonomy, Self-efficacy and Gender role equality. This research aims to provide insights into how individuals respond to advertisements featuring empowered women in products that they daily use.

The study seeks to address the subsequent research questions (RQ):

- RQ1:** How does Self-efficacy affect the perception of women's empowerment?
- RQ2:** How does the level of education vary with Gender role equality?
- RQ3:** How does Self-efficacy mediate the relationship between gender role equality and perceived women empowerment?
- RQ4:** How does Autonomy moderate the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality?

To sum up, this study provides four contributions to the extent of literature on Femvertising and related factors including self-efficacy, autonomy and gender role equality. First, the study will examine the influence of self-efficacy on perceptions towards women's empowerment, Previous studies have extensively analysed the influence of self-efficacy on women's empowerment. However, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding how self-efficacy specifically affects the perceptions towards women's empowerment. Second, the study evaluates whether education levels vary with gender role equality as past studies stated that education greatly contributes to gender role equality. Third, the study undertakes a novel approach through the investigation of how autonomy moderates the relationship between self-efficacy and gender role

equality. Fourth, the study adds to the pertinent literature by examining the mediating role of self-efficacy by an explicit relationship concerning gender role equality with perceptions of women empowerment because existing studies on self-efficacy mediation have encompassed socio-cultural factors and empowerment outcomes.

### **Theoretical background and hypotheses development**

Indicators of women's empowerment primarily encompass economic autonomy, increased social independence, acceptance, and a heightened sense of self-worth (Hossain, 2018). Greater autonomy, evolving social attitudes, education, and employment also wield significant influence on women's empowerment (Bali Swain & Wallentin, 2012; Riaz & Pervaiz, 2018). Achievements such as growth in income, confidence in public speaking, awareness of rights, and active involvement in decision-making at both household and community levels are linked with women's empowerment (Jeckoniah et al., 2012). Therefore, the incorporation of the above-stated elements will break gender stereotypes by empowering women with messages of strength, independence, solidarity, and self-confidence while shedding light on the social issues that hold women back (Chetia, 2021).

This research selected three key constructs to track perceptions related to women's empowerment. The constructs were considered by exploring prior studies and then hypothesised.

#### **Self-efficacy and Perceived Women's Empowerment**

The Self-efficacy Scale is a reliable tool for assessing an individual's belief in their capability to start and continue with certain behaviours. Strong beliefs in one's self-efficacy have been linked to improved personal well-being (Sherer et al., 1982). Self-efficacy beliefs play a crucial role in shaping individuals' thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviours, depending on their confidence in achieving specific goals (Zulkosky, 2009). It is a social psychological factor that impacts individual

functioning and social transformation (Gecas, 1989). Women's empowerment could be tracked by using Self-efficacy (Al-Qahtani et al., 2021). This self-efficacy is instrumental in Femvertising to accomplish tasks and contributes to women's empowered mindset. As previous research has explored the influence of self-efficacy on women's empowerment, this study will shed light on self-efficacy's impact on perceptions towards women's empowerment by proposing the subsequent hypothesis:

**H1:** Self-efficacy positively impacts Perceived women's empowerment

#### **Education and Gender Role Equality**

Gender equality concerns individuals, regardless of gender should have equal opportunities, rights, and responsibilities (D. H. Chen, 2004). Gender equality hurdles every woman faces hinder their economic growth and progress in society (Belingeri et al., 2021). For enhancing gender equality, education occupies a significant role (Bansal, 2021; D. H. Chen, 2004). Also, a survey conducted in Norway evidenced a positive relationship between education and support for gender role equality (Kitterød & Nadim, 2020). So, educating women pivotally contributes to the socio-economic development of a nation (Chetia, 2021). Based on the supporting shreds of evidence, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H2:** The level of education varies significantly with Gender role equality

#### **Self-efficacy as a mediator**

Self-efficacy functioned as a mediator role in the link between socio-cultural factors and women's empowerment (Ghasemi et al., 2019). In a study conducted among 314 Saudi Arabian women, Self-efficacy mediated the relationship of economic and social empowerment (Al-Rashdi & Abdelwahed, 2022). Studying the indirect effect of Self-efficacy iterates the interplay of individual and societal factors' outcome on empowerment. This enduringly contributes to gender role equality. Hence, the study aimed to investigate the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between Gender role equality and perceived women empowerment

**Autonomy as a moderator**

Autonomy refers to the feeling of independence and individuality, where one has the freedom to make their own decisions and act by their personal beliefs and values. It is an expression of personal integrity and self-determination (Berlin & Johnson, 1989). Women's autonomy is an important indicator of a country's development (Banerjee, 2015). Though women's autonomy is given more importance in India, still women struggle for their independent decision-making role (Patel et al., 2022). Women's autonomy in decision-making refers to an individual's ability to access information and make choices concerning their interests (Aboufaddan & Abdel-Salam, 2019). Self-efficacy is positively correlated with a gender equality attitude, and promoting gender equality leads to higher self-efficacy (H. Chen et al., 2020). As there was a lack of supporting studies on this moderated relationship, the study considered the direct relationships between the moderating variable with Gender role equality and subsequently framed the following hypothesis:

**H4:** Autonomy moderates the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality.

**METHODS**

**Sample and respondents**

A quantitative methodology was used to conduct the study. To gather primary data, a standard questionnaire with validated scales was used on 188 women respondents selected through a Purposive sampling method as the study solely tracked the women respondent's perceptions.

The demographic profile of the respondents can be found in **Table 2**. The data was gathered using Google Forms through the website link.

**Sampling framework**

The sample framework chosen for the study targeted women respondents located in Chennai city, India to analyse their perceptions about empowerment.

**Measures**

The study utilised four constructs to analyse women's empowerment. The constructs underwent evaluation through the utilization of a Likert scale consisting of five points (where 5 represents Strongly Agree, 4 represents Agree, 3 represents Neutral, 2 represents Disagree, and 1 represents Strongly Disagree). The constructs used in the study and references to the previous studies investigating these constructs are detailed in **Table 1**.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic profile**

**Table 2** illustrates the demographic characteristics of the individuals who took part in the survey. Most participants (68.6%) are aged between 17 and 27 years, with the next largest group (15.9%) falling within the 28-38 age bracket. Furthermore, 11.2% of respondents are aged between 39 and 49 years, while 4.3% are over 49 years old. Regarding educational attainment, 47.3% of the respondents hold graduate degrees, 31.4% have attained post-graduate qualifications, and 21.3% have completed higher secondary education (HSC). The occupational breakdown of the respondents indicates that 67% are students, 23.4% are working women, and 9.6% are homemakers.

**Table 1. The Constructs used in the study**

Constructs	Past studies
Autonomy (ATY)	(Hollander, 2010; Kishor, 1995; Kshirsagar et al., 2019)
Gender role equality (GRE)	(Spence et al., 1973; Török, 2022)
Self-efficacy (SE)	(de Hoop et al., 2020)
Perceived Women Empowerment (PWE)	(Shuja et al., 2020)

**Table 2. Demographic profile of the respondents**

Variables	Levels	Frequency	Percent
Age (in years)	17 - 27	129	68.6
	28 - 38	30	15.9
	39 - 49	21	11.2
	Above 49	8	4.3
Education	HSC	40	21.3
	Graduate	89	47.3
	Post-graduate	59	31.4
Occupation status	Working women	44	23.4
	Home maker	18	9.6
	Student	126	67

**Table 3. Reliability Analysis**

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha
Autonomy (ATY)	0.832
Self-efficacy (SE)	0.895
Gender role equality (GRE)	0.881
Perceived Women Empowerment (PWE)	0.878

**Reliability analysis**

A statistical indicator of the reliability or internal consistency between several items in a study is Cronbach's alpha (Bujang et al., 2018). **Table 3** displays the Cronbach's alpha value associated with all constructs.

If a scale's Cronbach's alpha value is 0.70 or greater, it is considered to have adequate reliability (Kılıç, 2016). All the Cronbach's alpha values exceeded 0.80, indicating high internal consistency among items measuring each construct.

**Brand Campaigns considered under each construct**

The study took into consideration three brand campaigns which were shown to the respondents with each construct. Horlicks were related to Self-efficacy to examine how it instils courage and confidence among women when facing challenges. Vim was related to Gender role equality and underscores women to work. This would help to understand how women think about gender equality in sharing household chores. Hamam always emphasises the importance of women protecting themselves while they are outside and

**Table 4. FMCG Brand Campaigns considered for each construct**

Construct	Brand	Product category	Campaign	Message
Self-efficacy	Horlicks	Functional Nutritional drink	When did you grow up?	Children should not only be restricted to the inherent physical growth, but also to the bravery and self-assurance they exhibit as they develop.
Gender role equality	Vim	Dishwasher	Change your perspective, look beyond dishes	Women are not defined only by their household responsibilities but have a life beyond it. When a man does the dishes, he's 'helping' the woman of the house.
Autonomy	Hamam	Bathing soap	Go safe outside	Encourages mothers to train their daughters to protect themselves just as Hamam, the soap protected them from the outside elements.

taking an autonomous approach would help yield its impact. **Table 4** highlights the campaigns utilised in the study.

**Results of Hypotheses tests**

**H1:** Self-efficacy positively impacts Perceived women’s empowerment

Linear Regression was employed for testing **H1**. **Table 5** represents the results of linear regression. The R-value of 0.369 measures the degree of a significant relationship between Perceived women empowerment and three indicators of women empowerment. R<sup>2</sup> value indicates how the degree of change in Perceived women empowerment can be explained by Self-efficacy. The R<sup>2</sup> value is indicated in the above table as 0.136. which implies a 13.6% change in Perceived women empowerment due to Self-efficacy. The p-value observed is below 0.01 indicating a positive impact of Self-efficacy on Perceived women empowerment. Thus, Hypothesis (**H1**) is supported.

**H2:** The level of education varies significantly with Gender role equality

A One-way ANOVA test was employed for testing **H1**. **Table 6** shows that the respondents with different levels of educational attainment differ significantly in their attitude towards Gender role equality. The significance value of 0.19 was less than the threshold of 0.05 (F = 4.044; p < 0.05). This revealed that there is a significant mean difference among the respondent’s education towards Gender role equality. Hence, Hypothesis (**H1**) is supported.

**Testing the mediating and moderation hypothesis**

To conduct moderation and mediation analyses for **H3** and **H4**, version 4.2 of the PROCESS macro developed by Andrew F. Hayes was utilized, employing Model 1 for moderation and Model 4 for mediation.

**H3:** Self-efficacy mediates the relationship between Gender role equality and perceived women empowerment

The study evaluated whether self-efficacy mediated the relationship between perceived women's empowerment and gender role equality. **Table 7** presents the results of the mediation analysis.

**Table 5. Linear Regression Analysis**

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficient	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	3.491	0.211		16.510	<0.001
Self-efficacy	0.275	0.051	0.369	5.406	<0.001
R value			0.369		
R <sup>2</sup> value			0.136		
F value			29.230		

\*\*p < 0.01

Dependent variable – Perceived women’s empowerment

**Table 6. One-way ANOVA results**

Variable	Educational attainment	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	F	Sig.
Gender role equality	Higher Secondary	40	4.8000	.64351	4.044	0.19
	Graduate	89	4.5534	.57588		
	Post-graduate	59	4.4576	.59479		

**Table 7. Mediation Analysis Summary**

Relationship	Total Effect	Direct Effect	Indirect Effect	Confidence Interval (CI)		t-statistics	Conclusion
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Gender role equality → Self-efficacy → Perceived Women Empowerment	0.5193	0.4685 (0.000)	0.0508	0.0063	0.1047	2.0402	Partial mediation

The results indicated a significant indirect effect of Gender role equality on Perceived Women empowerment ( $b = 0.0508, t = 2.0402$ ). Also, the direct effect of Gender role equality was found significant when considering the mediator ( $b = 0.4685, p < 0.001$ ). Hence, Self-efficacy partially mediated the relationship between Gender role equality and Perceived Women empowerment. As a result, the hypothesis (H3) is supported.

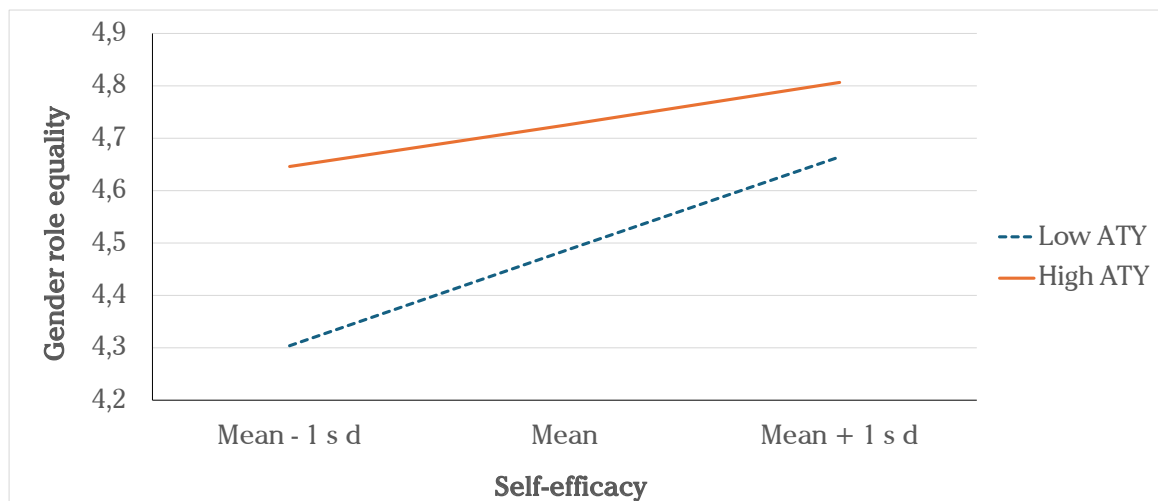
**H4:** Autonomy moderates the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality

The study evaluated whether Autonomy moderated the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality. **Table 8** presents the results of the moderation analysis.

The results showed that Autonomy had a significant negative moderating effect of Autonomy on the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality ( $b = -0.1099, t = -2.1756, p = 0.0309$ ), supporting **H4**.

**Table 8. Moderation Analysis Summary**

Variables	Coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	4.6045	0.0415	110.8456	0.0000	4.5225	4.6864
Self-efficacy	0.1884	0.0721	2.6139	0.0097	0.0462	0.3307
Autonomy	0.1830	0.0760	2.4091	0.0170	0.0331	0.3329
Int_1	-0.1099	0.0505	-2.1756	0.0309	-0.2096	-0.0102



**Figure 1. Autonomy moderates the link between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality**



### **ATY - Autonomy**

The graphical simple slope analysis was also performed to gain a deeper comprehension of the nature of the moderating effect. As can be seen from **Figure 1**, the line for High ATY is relatively steeper. This shows that, compared to Low ATY, the impact of Self-efficacy on Gender Role equality is substantially stronger at High ATY. Furthermore, as the level of ATY increased, the strength of the relationship between Self-efficacy and Gender role equality declined. Hence, Hypothesis **(H4)** was supported.

### **Discussion**

The study aimed to understand how Femvertising, which refers to advertisements that feature empowered women in everyday products, can enhance women's empowerment, with a specific focus on FMCG brand campaigns. The research investigated the constructs of autonomy, self-efficacy, and gender role equality to examine how these advertisements influence women's perceptions of empowerment by framing four hypotheses. The findings from the analysis of hypotheses provided valuable insights into the relationship dynamics among these constructs, and the findings highlighted the pivotal role of Femvertising in promoting women's empowerment.

First, the study revealed that self-efficacy significantly influences perceived women's empowerment. The results support the findings of a study conducted on self-efficacy that indicated self-efficacy is a strong predictor of women's empowerment (Al-Qahtani et al., 2021). High self-efficacy is closely linked to empowerment as it reflects a woman's internal confidence and personal power. When women have high self-efficacy, they are better prepared to face challenges.

Second, the results evinced a significant association between educational attainment and gender role equality attitude. The findings were consistent with the study on the positive relationship between education and support for gender role equality

(Kitterød & Nadim, 2020). This emphasizes the necessity of enhancing access to education for women to challenge traditional gender roles and advance gender equality.

Third, the study elucidated how self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the relationship between gender role equality and perceived women's empowerment. The findings showed that the relationship between perceived empowerment and self-efficacy is partially mediated. The results are conformable with the prior study which analysed the mediating function of self-efficacy in the relationship between economic and social empowerment (Al-Rashdi & Abdelwahed, 2022). This implies that one's belief in their ability to achieve goals and outcomes plays a significant role in shaping their perception of empowerment. Therefore, it is important to promote empowering messages and representations of women in advertising to invigorate their confidence and self-belief.

Fourth, the study found the emanated moderating function of autonomy in the relationship between self-efficacy and gender role equality. Due to a lack of research on this moderated relationship, the study proceeded with analysing this relationship based on the results of direct relationships between self-efficacy and gender role equality (H. Chen et al., 2020). The findings revealed a negative moderating effect of autonomy, indicating that the strength of the relationship between self-efficacy and gender role equality is weak, when autonomy is high. This implies that when women feel a strong sense of independence and control over their lives (high autonomy), their belief in their capabilities (self-efficacy) may have a diminished impact on their attitudes towards traditional gender roles. Therefore, this substantiates the need to advocate women's autonomy as a means of facilitating empowerment and elevating gender equality.

### **MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The research offers useful insights for marketers and advertisers looking to empower women through



advertising campaigns. First, the study emphasizes the significance of including empowering messages and depicting women in ads, especially in the Fast-moving consumer goods industry. By defying stereotypes and showcasing women's abilities, brands can improve their brand reputation and help drive social progress.

Second, the research highlights the importance of education in promoting gender equality and empowerment. Brands can synchronize their marketing approaches with campaigns that advocate for education, especially for girls, to contribute to the overall push for gender equality. By investing in education, women are not only provided with the skills and expertise needed to challenge conventional gender roles but are also encouraged to engage actively in various aspects of society. Scholarship programs could be incorporated to reduce educational gaps and enable women to pursue their aspirations.

Third, by showcasing real-life examples of women overcoming challenges and succeeding in various domains, advertisers can inspire female consumers to cultivate a strong sense of self-efficacy. Additionally, mentorship programs, leadership training, and skill-building workshops can offer women the necessary assistance to enhance self-efficacy. These practical implications could be exercised to create a society where women can realize the maximum inner capabilities hidden in them.

## CONCLUSION

This research offers a significant contribution to the field of Femvertising by presenting valuable perspectives on intricate dynamics between advertising and perceptions of women's empowerment through Self-efficacy, Autonomy and Gender role equality. By examining FMCG brand campaigns such as Horlicks, Vim, and Hamam, this study offers a novel perspective on how advertising can impact women's empowerment through mediation and moderation analyses. The study iterates that Femvertising has a lot of potential

to lead to constructive social change. When women are provided with equal opportunities and resources, they assume an active role in all domains. The strategy of Femvertising connects on a personal level by accurately depicting diverse women and sharing messages that encourage strength and confidence. Therefore, advertisers need to exhibit a genuine commitment to women's empowerment. Campaigns should not only highlight strong women but also actively support initiatives that enhance gender equality. When incorporated seamlessly, women's empowerment will generate a cascading effect that permeates all facets of society, contributing to a flourishing community for women. This study emphasizes that when Femvertising emanates as a powerful force, it will ultimately challenge stereotypes around women and promote a more equitable and balanced society.

## Limitations and future research directions

The study has certain constraints that must be recognized. Firstly, the research was confined to a small sample of women in Chennai, India, which could restrict the applicability of the results. To enhance the external validity of the results, upcoming research should contemplate utilizing a broader and more varied sample.

Secondly, the study was based on information provided by the participants themselves, which could potentially lead to bias. To address this issue, future research could incorporate a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to gain a more thorough insight into the effects of Femvertising on women's empowerment.

Third, the study specifically concentrated on three primary constructs of the perception of women's empowerment. Additional attributes could be explored within this domain. This could involve examining the impact of specific empowerment interventions on women's perception.

Lastly, the study primarily focused on the FMCG sector, indicating a need for exploration in other

industries and contexts. Future research should explore how Femvertising influences women's empowerment in various sectors to offer a more holistic view of its impact. ■

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