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Investigating Online Gender Empowerment Campaigns: A Multimodal Feminist Discourse Analysis Approach

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ABSTRACT

Women's empowerment and the promotion of women's rights have emerged as significant global movements, continually breaking new ground. This study aims at investigating how women empowerment is visually and verbally codified in advertisements. This study examines two beauty advertisement campaigns launched by Olay and Reebok in 2018: Olay's "#FaceAnything" campaign and Reebok's "#BeMoreHuman" campaign. Both campaigns aim to empower women to believe in themselves. These campaigns focus on promoting awareness of women's individuality rather than asserting women's superiority over men. Presented in the form of advertisements, these campaigns use discourse crafted by producers to convey persuasive messages. To unveil the empowering messages in these advertisement campaigns, this study employs Kress and Van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of Visual Grammar and Michelle M. Lazar's Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (2005, 2007) framework. The findings reveal that both campaigns utilize a variety of linguistic and visual techniques to empower women, challenge traditional gender roles, and promote feminist values. Furthermore, this study explores the inversion of patriarchal discourse within these campaigns as a strategy to empower women. By subverting traditional gender roles and expectations, both Olay and Reebok campaigns challenge patriarchal norms and assert feminist identity and positionality. This analysis sheds light on how advertising language is utilized as a powerful tool to empower women, promote gender equality, and contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender representation in advertising.

Keywords: *women empowerment, advertisements, Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis, Visual Grammar.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world, women are gaining more support in many areas of life, advocating for their right to be treated and seen as equal to men. Gender equality is a fundamental human right essential for creating a more peaceful and prosperous world. However, it is surprising that even now, women still struggle to change societal perceptions about their roles and capabilities. Despite progress, women continue to face significant challenges globally, often remaining underrepresented in positions of power and decision-making.

Women's empowerment and the promotion of women's rights have become integral parts of a major global movement, breaking new ground in recent years. Numerous empowerment campaigns have emerged to raise awareness about women's individuality. Notably, the 2018 campaigns "#FaceAnything" by Olay (Olay 2018) and "#BeMoreHuman" by Reebok (Reebok 2018) aimed to encourage women to believe in themselves, fostering strength and confidence in their abilities and potential. These campaigns seek not to assert women's superiority over men, but to promote equality between genders. This study examines 4

women empowerment advertisements from both campaigns.

Women empowerment campaigns encompass a wide array of initiatives aimed at advancing the rights, opportunities, and representation of women. These campaigns often use various media, including advertisements, to convey messages that challenge stereotypes, promote gender equality, and empower women in different spheres of life. Analyzing such campaigns through the frameworks of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) Visual Grammar (VG) theory and Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis (FCDA) by Michelle Lazar (2005, 2007) can provide valuable insights into the construction of these messages, the visual elements employed, and the underlying ideologies they convey. Women empowerment campaigns often employ diverse strategies to convey their messages.

In light of this background, the study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. How is the representation of women empowerment visually and verbally codified in advertisements?

2. How can multimodality along with Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis shed light on verbal and nonverbal signification of women empowerment?

3. How are Olay and Reebok exposing and countering sexist discourse through the multimodal representation of women's modern existence and vocations?

4. How does the multimodal representation of feminist agency subvert patriarchal sexist discourse to showcase feminist identity and positionality?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Advertisements

The primary goal of advertisements is to promote or sell products or services (Stanton 1984). They reach the masses through various media channels, including traditional media like newspapers and television, and new media such as social media and websites (Bovee & Arens 1992). With the rise of internet usage, which has reached 4.1 billion users globally (Brantner 2016), new media has become more crucial for businesses in promoting their products. Advertisements can also promote ideas, particularly social issues, including social justice (Stanton 1984; Kotler & Sarkar 2021). A company's stance on social issues can significantly affect its sales, as 64% of global consumers consider this before making a purchase (Gray 2019).

Advertisements function as acts of communication involving the producer (addresser), the message, and the audience (addressee). Derived from the Latin "advertere" meaning "to turn towards" advertisements aim to capture the audience's attention. Advertisements come in two main forms: printed (e.g., magazines, newspapers, billboards) and audiovisual (e.g., TV commercials, social media videos). They convey complex meanings through both linguistic and visual elements, engaging audiences in interpreting their messages (Goldman 1992). Initially, advertisement analysis focused solely on linguistic elements. In the 1970s, multimodal analysis began integrating linguistic and image analysis to uncover hidden meanings, marking a shift in advertisement interpretation (Barthes 1977).

Advertisements not only aim to increase product sales but also raise awareness and instill new ideologies. For instance, companies like Olay and Reebok use advertisements to empower women and challenge sexist representations, promoting social responsibility and gender equality. Recently, there has been a notable shift in how women are portrayed in advertisements. Instead of being passive objects of the male gaze, women are now depicted as active, independent, and powerful (Gill 2008). This change in representation influences societal perceptions, contributing to the ongoing movement for women's empowerment.

2.2 Gender Empowerment Campaigns

Women's empowerment campaigns have evolved significantly, influenced by social, political, and cultural movements advocating for gender equality. The history of these campaigns can be divided into several key periods:

2.2.1 Early Movements

The 19th century was a pivotal time for both feminist movements and the abolitionist cause. Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton were instrumental figures in the first wave of feminism, particularly in the United States. Their efforts laid the groundwork for the suffrage movement, which sought to secure voting rights for women and address broader issues of gender equality and women's agency (DuBois 1999). Many women involved in advocating for the abolition of slavery recognized the parallels between the oppression of slaves and the subjugation of women (Davis 1983). For example, prominent abolitionist and

women's rights advocate Sojourner Truth delivered her famous speech "Ain't I a Woman?" in 1851, highlighting the intersections of race and gender in the struggle for equality (Painter 1996). The activism of these women helped shape the social and political landscape of the 19th century, laying the foundation for future movements for equality and justice.

2.2.2 Early to Mid-20th Century, Second Wave

The mid-20th century to the 1980s marked the second wave of feminism, focusing on broader issues beyond suffrage, such as reproductive rights, workplace equality, and challenging traditional gender roles. Key figures like Gloria Steinem, Betty Friedan, and Audre Lorde played crucial roles in raising awareness and pushing for legislative changes (Davis 1983). Despite criticisms of lacking inclusivity, this wave significantly shaped public discourse on gender equality (Mann and Huffman 2005). The achievements and challenges of the second wave of feminism continue to inform ongoing discussions and efforts to advance gender equality and social justice today.

2.2.3 Late 20th Century to Present

Significant advancements have been made from the late 20th century to the present. Key developments include:

1. Legislation: Laws addressing domestic violence, workplace discrimination, and reproductive rights have been enacted globally, reflecting increased recognition of women's rights (Cook and Cusack 2011; Tripp 2016).

2. Global Conferences: The UN's World Conferences on Women, particularly the Beijing conference in 1995, have mobilized international efforts to address gender disparities (Evans and Evans 2003).

3. #MeToo Movement: Starting in 2017, this movement highlighted the pervasive nature of sexual harassment and assault, prompting significant social and legislative changes (Gill and Orgad 2018; Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose 2018).

4. Gender Equality in Business: Recent campaigns have focused on achieving gender parity in corporate leadership and addressing workplace stereotypes, although progress remains uneven (Beaman and Buchstaller 2021).

5. Grassroots activism, led by women's organizations and individual activists, has been crucial in driving change. Social media platforms have amplified these efforts, enabling global advocacy and solidarity through hashtags like #MeToo and #HeForShe (Keller, Mendes, and Ringrose 2018; Mendes 2015).

Despite progress, challenges such as gender-based violence, pay gaps, and unequal access to education and healthcare persist. Ongoing advocacy is essential for addressing these issues and achieving full gender equality. Overall, women's empowerment campaigns have built upon past movements while adapting to contemporary challenges. Continued efforts and new strategies are needed to push for gender equality and create a more inclusive society.

2.3 Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)

Michael Halliday's Systemic Functional Grammar (1985), initially developed in the 1950s and 1960s, conceptualizes language as a system of meaning-making. It identifies three semiotic functions of a register. First, field is the context in which a text operates. Second, tenor is the relationships between communicators. Third, mode is the communication medium.

SFG emphasizes three metafunctions that are realized through the choices of field, tenor, and mode resources. First, the ideational metafunction, which focuses on representing experiences and construing the world through language, emphasizes the content and meaning of a message. Second, the interpersonal metafunction, which deals with the interaction between speaker and listener, highlights how language enacts social relationships and expresses attitudes. Third, the textual metafunction, which pertains to the organization and coherence of texts, ensures clarity and cohesion in communication (Halliday and Matthiessen 2013).

SFG provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing language use within specific contexts, viewing language as shaped by its functions. This approach has significantly contributed to linguistic studies by allowing detailed analysis of language structure and function in diverse contexts. The theory's metafunctions have been applied to various languages, such as English, Spanish, and Chinese, and fields like teaching English as a Foreign Language and translation studies, demonstrating its versatility and importance in linguistic research and education

2.4 Multimodality

Multimodality is an approach that examines how multiple modes of communication, such as text, color,

images, gestures, and sounds, interact to create meaning. This approach was significantly advanced by scholars like Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, who laid the foundation for multimodal analysis. They, along with others like Bob Hodge (1988), Kay L. O'Halloran (2004), Anthony Baldry (2000), and Paul J. Thibault (1991), introduced Multimodal Discourse Analysis (MDA), which investigates how various semiotic resources come together in discourse to convey complete meaning.

Multimodality acknowledges that communication extends beyond language, incorporating social semiotic elements that influence meaning-making. It is a rapidly developing field in linguistics, driven by the increasing recognition of how these diverse modes are used in daily communication. Scholars such Carey Jewitt (2014), David Machin (2012), and Andrea Mayr (2012) have contributed significantly to the field, highlighting the interdisciplinary nature of multimodality and its application across digital media, advertising, education, and everyday interactions.

The approach emphasizes the importance of understanding the interplay between different modes and how they collectively construct meaning. Multimodal analysis reveals the psychological impact of these combined modes, influencing how messages persuade and lead audiences to specific actions. Overall, multimodality provides comprehensive insights into the dynamic relationship between various communicative modes and their role in shaping discourse and meaning.

2.5 Visual Grammar

The theory of VG is a valuable tool in visual communication, complementing verbal language. In VG theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), the SFG metafunctions are redefined: ideational becomes representational, interpersonal becomes interactive, and textual becomes compositional. The representational metafunction relates to the relationship between participants, objects, settings, and viewers, visually encoding our experiences of the world. It encompasses two categories: narrative and conceptual. The narrative structure clarifies actions and events using vectors (oblique lines) to indicate directionality and relate participants. On the other hand, the conceptual structure focuses on analyzing participants in terms of classifications, serving as carriers of symbolic meaning (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

The interactive metafunction, inspired by the interactive metafunction of SFG, addresses the interaction between viewers and participants in the image. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this interaction is created through elements such as gazes, frame size, social distance, and viewing angles. Analyzing this metafunction requires attention to the visual configuration of the image act, social distance, and the visual recognition of attitude or perspective. These elements determine how viewers engage with and interpret the image, influencing the communicative impact.

The compositional metafunction, derived from the textual metafunction of SFG, integrates the representational and interactive metafunctions into a cohesive whole. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), this is achieved through three systems of analysis: information value, salience, and framing. Information value assigns different meanings to various spatial zones within an image. Salience determines the prominence of elements in an image, guiding viewers' attention. Framing draws boundaries within an image, highlighting relationships between different elements. Together, these systems help to create a unified and meaningful visual composition.

2.6 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

FCDA combines CDA and Feminist Linguistics, with its paradigm attributed to Lazar (2005, 2007). FCDA aims to examine social change and understand the complexities of gender, language, power, and ideology. It deeply explores how dominant gender identities are maintained through power and ideology in discourse. Lazar (2005, 2007) emphasizes that gender intersects with factors like sexuality, religion, ethnicity, age, social class, education, and geography, making FCDA an interdisciplinary approach that highlights both obvious and subtle gender assumptions across different contexts and communities.

The necessity of a feminist label for FCDA, despite its roots in CDA, stems from the need to create a feminist perspective on language and discourse studies to critique and challenge patriarchal ideology (Lazar 2005). While CDA aims to expose all forms of hegemony and injustice, not all gender-focused studies within CDA adopt a feminist perspective (Lazar 2007). For feminist scholars, it is crucial for CDA to include a distinct feminist voice that critically examines gender as an underlying oppressive category in social practices (Lazar 2005). This feminist labeling would enrich literature on feminist views and highlight the restrictive nature of gender norms, enhancing the visibility and recognition of feminist contributions to CDA (Lazar 2007).

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FCDA is a framework for examining language and communication through a feminist lens, aiming to uncover and challenge gender inequalities, stereotypes, and power dynamics embedded in discourse (Lazar 2005). It analyzes texts, conversations, media representations, and societal discourses to reveal hidden biases and inequalities, exploring how language constructs and maintains gender norms and identities (Cook and Cusack 2011). FCDA goes beyond traditional discourse analysis by incorporating feminist perspectives, providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between language, power, and gender (Lazar 2007). It examines how language is used to negotiate, dominate, or resist power, revealing imbalances in discourse (Gill 2007).

FCDA aims to expose hidden power dynamics and inequalities in discourse, showing how language shapes and reflects societal attitudes toward gender. It seeks to empower marginalized voices, challenge oppressive discourses, and advocate for more equitable and inclusive communication practices. By combining feminist approaches to language with CDA methods, researchers can thoroughly explore how social inequalities and power structures are created, sustained, and can be changed. Lazar (2005, 2007) highlights that CDA's multimodal semiotic techniques are useful for understanding the connections between gender, language, power, and ideology in texts and conversations, providing a comprehensive critique of how gender is constructed through discourse.

FCDA is dynamic and evolving, adapting methodologies and theoretical frameworks to address emerging issues related to gender and power. It is used across academic disciplines to analyze and challenge gender-related discursive practices, contributing to the broader goal of gender equality and social justice. Lazar (2005, 2007) outlines five fundamental interlinked praxes of FCDA, including feminist analytical activism, gender as an ideological structure, the complexity of gender and power relations, discourse in the (de)construction of gender, and critical reflexivity as praxis.

Feminist analytical activism combines critical analysis with activist approaches to challenge gender inequalities embedded in discourse (Lazar 2005). Gender as an ideological structure highlights that gender is socially constructed and influenced by societal ideologies. The complexity of gender and power relations explores multifaceted power dynamics within gender dynamics (Gill 2007). Discourse in the (de)construction of gender examines the role of language in shaping and reshaping gender identities and power dynamics. Critical reflexivity as praxis emphasizes self-reflection and reflexivity within feminist activism and scholarly pursuits (Lazar 2007). Together, these tenets form the foundational framework of FCDA, providing a comprehensive approach to understanding and challenging gendered discourses, power structures, and inequalities through both analytical and activist lenses.

2.7 Previous Studies

Numerous studies on multimodality have been conducted in different discourses. Farooq's (2020) research investigates the persuasive and attractive modes used in six e-advertisements. The analysis is done using the theoretical framework of Multimodal Discourse Analysis of Kress and van Leeuwen (1996). The data collected is analyzed based on the three metafunctions of VG: representational, interactional and compositional. The data was analyzed like semiotic resources, focus on the font, capitalization, boldness etc. in detail. The findings showed that the visuals were rich in semiotic meaning and all the elements served the purpose of persuasion and attractiveness to persuade and attract the audience to buy the products

On the other hand, some studies have been conducted with a feminist perspective. Murad, Mushtaq, and Binth E. Zia (2022) delved into the feminist traces present in advertisements within Pakistan. The research aimed to dissect the implicit meanings embedded in these advertisements, which seemed to challenge entrenched gender norms while advocating for feminist perspectives on body image, skin tone, and traditional gender roles. By conducting a thorough analysis of both the linguistic and visual elements of these advertisements, the study highlighted their crucial role in dismantling gender stereotypes and promoting feminist ideals within the context of Pakistani society. Grounded in the visual multimodal approach proposed by Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), the study revealed a notable trend in Pakistani advertisements wherein numerous companies rejected conventional socio-cultural norms associated with women, instead championing feminist ideologies as the emerging societal standard. Through a focus on the theme of transformation, the research argued that this shift in advertising strategies reflected an intentional effort to challenge the entrenched patriarchal mindset prevailing in Pakistani society regarding the roles and status of women.

Moreover, ElYamany (2024) explored similar themes within FCDA, offering valuable insights into the intersections of gender and discourse. ElYamany's research emphasizes the significance of language in constructing gender identities and reveals how discourse perpetuates or challenges existing power

structures. Her findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the complexities of gender relations and the role of language in both reflecting and shaping societal ideologies.

Despite the variety in investigating visual elements in advertisements, there seems to be a research gap when it comes to investigating online gender empowerment campaigns while integrating both a Multimodal and FCDA perspective. Combining these approaches provides a deeper understanding of how visual and verbal elements interact to construct and convey messages of gender empowerment, revealing detailed insights into the representation and empowerment of gender in digital media.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The current research utilizes a dual theoretical framework, combining Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) VG theory with FCDA as proposed by Michelle Lazar (2005, 2007). This study employs VG theory to analyze the visual elements of advertisements, while adopting a FCDA perspective to examine the broader discourse present within the advertisements.

3.1.1 Visual Grammar

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) VG theory focuses on analyzing how semiotic modes are utilized in visual communication to convey meanings effectively. Their theory emphasizes the importance of understanding the interplay between different semiotic modes in advertisements to communicate ideologies and meanings to the target audience. Theory of VG is composed of three metafunctions: the representational, interactive, and compositional. As mentioned before Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) used the three metafunctions of language in SFG -ideational, interpersonal, and textual function- to produce corresponding metafunctions of images- representational, interactive, and compositional meaning.

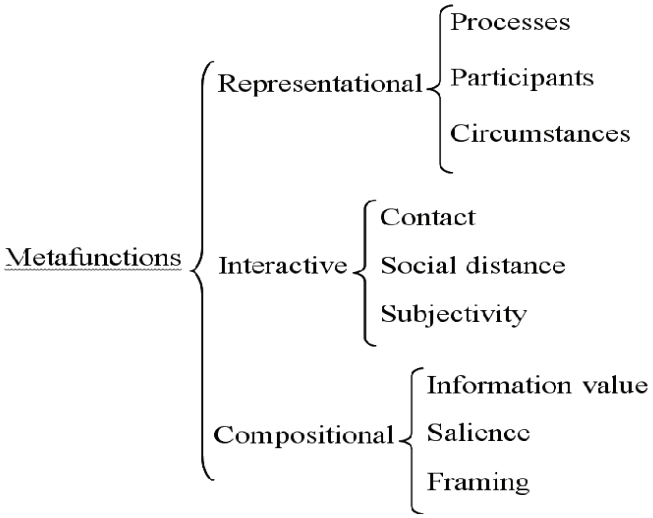


Figure 1: The three metafunctions of VG Theory by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

3.1.1.1 Representational Metafunction

The representational metafunction, derived from Halliday's ideational metafunction, focuses on how relationships between elements in the world and within us are visually represented. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), any semiotic mode must represent objects and their relationships as experienced by humans. This metafunction is concerned with two categories: participants, processes. Participants are either represented or interactive, while processes are divided into narrative and conceptual.

Participants in visual images, which can include people, places, objects, or identifiable entities, are depicted in various ways that contribute to their roles within the visual representation. For example, in an image of a family picnic, the family members are the participants. These participants can be either interactive or represented. Interactive participants engage in the act of communication, such as those who speak, listen, write, read, create, or view images. Represented participants are the subject matter of the communication, encompassing people, places, and things depicted in the image.

Processes in VG refer to actions, events, or relationships shown in the image, conveyed through visual techniques such as composition, framing, and other elements. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) classify images into narrative and conceptual categories. Narrative processes depict dynamic actions and events, with vectors indicating interactions between participants. These vectors can be formed by bodies, limbs, tools, eye-lines, or gestures, connecting actors and goals. Narrative processes include action processes, where vectors originate from the actor, and reactional processes, where vectors are created

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by participants' gazes.

Conceptual process, on the other hand, refers to the relationship between participants according to a specific class. They are essentially not involved in any dynamic activity, rather they show participants according to their class or meaning. For instance, how participants engage and interact (Kress & van Leeuwen 2006). The conceptual processes are classified into three main types: classificatory, analytical, and symbolic; however, this thesis focuses solely on the symbolic type.

Symbolic processes are specifically concerned with what an image "means" in a broader, more abstract sense. They deal with the ways in which participants in an image represent more than just themselves; they symbolize ideas, values, identities, and more. Symbolic processes can be further categorized into symbolic attributive processes and symbolic suggestive processes. In symbolic attributive processes, one participant in the image serves as the "carrier" and is associated with symbolic attributes that provide meaning. These attributes are elements that convey qualities or abstract concepts about the carrier. For example, a person depicted wearing a crown symbolizes royalty. The crown here is the symbolic attribute, and the person is the carrier of this attribute. The attribute is usually an object, a piece of clothing, or a specific element added to the carrier. The relationship is one of meaning rather than action or identity.

In contrast, in symbolic suggestive processes, the symbolic meaning is not attributed to a specific carrier through an attribute, but rather the entire setting or elements within the image suggest a symbolic interpretation. The symbolism arises from the overall composition and context rather than specific attributes. The interpretation is often broader and more interpretive, involving the viewers' knowledge and cultural context. For example, an image of a stormy sea can symbolize turbulence or chaos, where the symbolic meaning is suggested by the scene as a whole rather than by a specific attribute attached to a particular element.

3.1.1.2 Interactive Metafunction

The interactive metafunction, inspired by Halliday's interpersonal metafunction, explores the interaction between the producer and viewer of an image. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), producers encode social meaning into images through elements like gaze, social distance, camera angle, and modality.

Firstly, gaze is divided into "demand" and "offer". A "demand" is created when participants in an image look directly at the viewer, establishing a connection. An "offer" occurs when participants do not look directly at the viewer, presenting them as objects of contemplation. Secondly, social distance refers to the relationships implied by the distance between participants and the viewer, ranging from intimate close-ups to detached long shots. Thirdly, camera angles, both vertical (high, low, eye level) and horizontal (frontal, oblique), affect how participants are perceived in terms of power, involvement, and status. Fourthly, modality, in visual terms, refers to the credibility and accuracy of an image, expressed through elements like contrast, color saturation, and detail. High modality images appear more realistic and credible, whereas low modality images convey a more abstract or symbolic representation.

3.1.1.3 Compositional Metafunction

The compositional metafunction, derived from Halliday's textual metafunction, integrates the representational and interactive metafunctions to create coherent visual designs. This metafunction involves three systems: information value, salience, and framing. Firstly, information value refers to the significance attributed to different visual elements based on their placement within the image. This can be categorized into "ideal" and "real" (top and bottom), "given" and "new" (left and right), and center and margin. These placements influence how information is perceived, with "ideal" conveying general or emotive information and "real" conveying factual information. "Given" elements represent familiar concepts, while "new" elements highlight novel information. "Center" placement signifies core information, while "margin" indicates subordinate elements (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

Secondly, salience determines the prominence of visual elements through factors like size, contrast, and placement, guiding viewer focus. For example, in a group photo, a centrally placed person in bright clothing might have higher salience. Framing involves the use of visual elements to connect or separate components within an image. This can include dividing lines, cropping, or composition choices that establish visual hierarchy and guide viewer interpretation. Thirdly, framing can create cohesion by connecting elements or emphasize individuality by separating them. Together, these metafunctions provide a comprehensive framework for understanding how visual elements combine to create meaning in visual communication (Kress and van Leeuwen 2006).

3.1.2 Feminist Critical Discourse Analysis

FCDA is a term that is generally attributed to Lazar (2005, 2007). FCDA critically approaches texts using linguistic methods with an overarching feminist impetus (Lazar 2005a, 2007). FCDA is a sub-discipline of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) as a whole, which is in very general terms an approach to language that considers its connections to power through linguistic analysis. Lazar outlines the main goal of FCDA as: '[...] to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken-for-granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities' (2007, p. 142). Lazar (2005b, p. 5–19, 2007, p. 145–155) identifies the five key tenets of FCDA. These five tenants are feminist analytical activism, gender as ideological structure, complexity of gender and power relation, discourse in the (de)construction of gender, and critical reflexivity as praxis. These five tenets encapsulate the fundamental pillars of FCDA.

This research has employed FCDA with a specific focus on the **discourse in the (de)construction of gender**. This approach centers on understanding how discourse shapes and reshapes gender identities and power dynamics. FCDA perceives discourse as a social practice that both reflects and perpetuates social norms and power structures. By examining how language constructs gender identities and power relations, the study aims to uncover the complexities of gender dynamics and contribute to broader goals of gender equality and social justice.

3.2 Data Description

The data selected for this research is gathered from online resources. Four online advertisements are gathered from two different online campaigns. The first data selection is Olay's #FaceAnything" campaign which was featured in Vogue magazine in the September 2018 issue. The campaign includes ten advertisements, while only two are selected for analysis. The second data selection is Reebok's "#BeMoreHuman" campaign which was featured in 2018 on Vogue website. The campaign includes 5 advertisements while only two are selected for analysis. Both, #FaceAnything and #BeMoreHuman campaigns, aim to empower and support women. These 4 advertisements were accurately chosen to serve the purpose and the objective of the research.

3.3 Procedures of Analysis

The procedures of analysis follow a structured sequence. Firstly, the researcher transcribes each ad. Secondly, an in-depth exploration of the VG Theory is used, starting with the representational, then the interactive, and concluding with the compositional aspects. Thirdly, each advertisement is examined from a feminist perspective. Fourthly, the advertisements undergo examination from a patriarchal viewpoint to uncover how language inversion affects traditional gender roles, aligning with FCDA's discourse (de) construction principles. This systematic approach ensures comprehensive analysis of each ad.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This section includes the analysis and discussion of four advertisements: two from Olay's campaign and two from Reebok's campaign.

4.1 Olay #FaceAnything Campaign

4.1.1 Olay - #FaceAnything – Confident

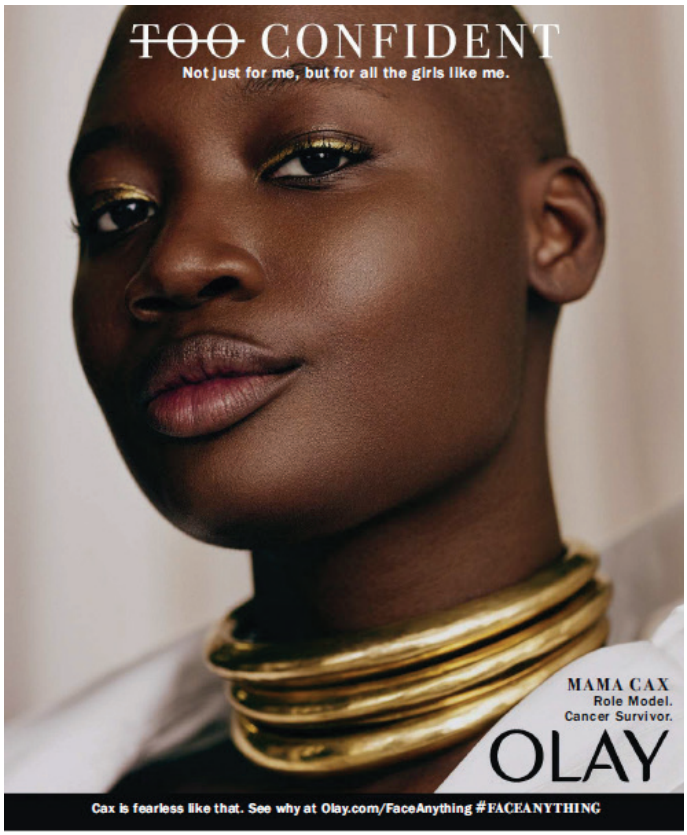


Figure 2: Olay - #FaceAnything – Confident

According to Figure 2, the title is "~~TOO~~ CONFIDENT". The subtitle is "Not just for me, but for all the girls like me". The model is represented with a strong confident look. At the bottom right corner, the description says "Mama Cax, Role model, Cancer survivor". The footnote says, "Cax is fearless like that. See why at Olay.com/FaceAnything #FaceAnything".

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework in VG theory, the researcher analyzes the ad using representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions. Firstly, the **representational metafunction** deals with the participants and the processes. Cax, the bald black model, is the central participant. She is presented in a non-transactional narrative process, meaning she is portrayed without engaging in direct actions or interactions within the ad. Instead, her conceptual symbolic portrayal emphasizes qualities of confidence and empowerment.

Secondly, the **interactive metafunction** examines the social interactions between the represented participants and the viewer. The model's direct, strong gaze from a high-angle, close-up shot of her face creates a "demand image," inviting the viewer to engage. This direct gaze suggests that the model embodies strength and confidence. There is full color saturation of modality and maximum representation of details to emphasize the focus on the model.

Thirdly, the **compositional metafunction** deals with the arrangement of elements within the image to create meaning through information value, salience, and framing. According to the information value, the direction of the writing and the model draws the viewers' attention from top to bottom. The title "~~TOO~~ CONFIDENT" in bold font draws attention, positioning confidence as a statement rather than a negative attribute. The subtitle "Not just for me, but for all the girls like me" extends this message to all women, encouraging them to embrace their strength. This subtitle carries a welcoming meaning to all girls and women who will see this ad. They should all stand strong and confident against any patriarchal label. The vertical orientation of the descriptive text about Cax, who is presented as an American-Haitian model, disabled rights activist, and cancer survivor, reinforces her role as a symbol of resilience. The model is Cacsmy Brutus, known as Mama Cax, who was an American-Haitian model and disabled rights activist. With her prosthetic right leg, Cax was an unusual figure in modern fashion modeling. She is also a cancer survivor who is sending a message to all the girls to be strong like her. Lastly, the footnote at bottom, "Cax is fearless like that. See why at olay.com/FaceAnything #FaceAnything" stresses the idea of confidence and empowerment while providing a concrete call for action from the viewer. The strategic placement and font size of the textual elements guide the viewer's eye from the top to the bottom. The clear framing of Cax with minimal distractions ensures that she remains the focal point. This layout creates a visual hierarchy, leading the viewer from the aspirational message at the top, through the central representation, to the actionable information at the bottom. In conclusion, this ad verbal and visual elements clearly support women empowerment.

According to a feminist perspective, this ad verbal and visual messages are clearly employed to empower women. The title "~~TOO~~ CONFIDENT" challenges traditional gender norms by affirming confidence as a universal trait, not limited by gender. The cross-out of "too" suggests that confidence should not be seen as excessive or atypical for women, but rather as a standard trait. This inversion of patriarchal discourse reclaims the label "confident" for women, countering societal norms that stigmatize confident women as "too confident".

According to patriarchal sexist discourse, women are presented as "too confident", while according to language, this attribute shames women with the presupposed masculine trait of confidence as if she is out of norms—i.e. patriarchal norms for what is deemed good women. The empowerment message here is that "I am only confident as a human being regardless of my gender identity". In conclusion, Olay's #FaceAnything empowerment campaign subverts societal ideologies to later undermine any sexist attributes. This ad clearly fits an example of **discourse in the (de)construction of gender,** according to FCDA, as it deconstructs and criticizes the typical gender stereotypes that are associated with women.

4.1.2 Olay – #FaceAnything – Defiant



Figure 3: Olay – #FaceAnything – Defiant

According to Figure 3, the title is "~~TOO~~ DEFIANT". The subtitle is "I see things differently. That's all". The model is represented with a strong confident look. At the bottom left corner, the description says, "Jillian Mercado, Voice for diversity in Fashion". The footnote says, "Jillian is fearless like that. See why at Olay. com/FaceAnything #FaceAnything".

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework in VG theory, the researcher analyzes the ad using representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions. Firstly, the **representational metafunction** depicts Mercado as a defiant model who is characterized by a "boyish" look and strong stance that conveys non-conformity and strength. She is depicted in a non-transactional process, wherein she is shown without engaging in direct actions or interactions. This conceptual symbolic meaning emphasizes Mercado's defiance through her appearance and pose.

Secondly, the **interactive metafunction** shows Mercado's direct gaze and the close-up shot of her face creating a demand image that work together to convey confidence and create a strong, intimate connection with the viewer. The full color saturation of modality and maximum representation of details emphasizes the focus on the model.

Thirdly, the **compositional metafunction,** according to the information value, the direction of the writing and the model draws the viewers' attention from top to bottom. The title at the top, "~~TOO~~ DEFIANT" with "too" crossed out, sets an aspirational, redefining tone. Meanwhile, Mercado is centered and prominently framed, making her the focal point and emphasizing her importance. At the bottom, the brief description of Mercado as a "voice for diversity in fashion" highlights her significant role in advocating for representation and inclusivity within the fashion industry. Mercado, who has muscular dystrophy and uses a wheelchair, challenges conventional beauty standards and stereotypes in the fashion world. By modeling and being prominently featured in campaigns, she demonstrates that beauty and fashion are inclusive and diverse. She actively promotes the idea that fashion should be accessible to and representative of all people, regardless of their physical abilities, race, gender, or other characteristics. She represents marginalized groups within the fashion industry. In addition, the footnote, "Mercado is fearless like that. See why at olay.com" grounds the message with a concrete call to action. According to the information value, the strategic placement, and font size of the textual elements guide the viewer's eye from the top to the bottom. The clear framing of Mercado with minimal distractions ensures that she remains the focal point. This layout creates a visual hierarchy, leading the viewer from the aspirational message at the top, through the central representation, to the actionable information at the bottom. By analyzing the ad through the lens of VG theory, one can see how it strategically uses representational, interpersonal, and compositional metafunctions to convey its message of defiance and empowerment.

According to a feminist perspective, this ad supports women. The title "~~TOO~~ DEFIANT" sends a message of rebelliousness. By labeling Mercado as "too defiant" the ad celebrates her defiance and non-conformity as empowering traits. The striking out of the qualifier "too" suggests that defiance is not excessive but appropriate and necessary, challenging the viewer to reconsider their perceptions and highlighting the strength in being defiant. The subtitle "I see things differently. That's all" reinforces the idea that it is acceptable and even admirable for women to have their own perspectives and opinions, challenging the patriarchal notion that women should always comply with societal expectations. Mercado's role as a "voice for diversity in fashion" highlights the importance of representation and inclusion in the industry, advocating for diverse perspectives and experiences. Moreover, the juxtaposition of Mercado's boyish appearance with the title "~~TOO~~ DEFIANT" further emphasizes her defiance against societal expectations, disrupting stereotypical representations of women in advertising, which often adhere to narrow ideals of beauty and femininity. Instead, it celebrates Mercado's unique identity and challenges viewers to reconsider their preconceived notions of gender. In doing so, the ad promotes inclusivity and diversity while also challenging patriarchal discourse that seeks to enforce rigid gender roles. By featuring a "boyish" model in a position of empowerment and visibility, the ad sends a powerful message about the importance of embracing authenticity and rejecting societal expectations of how women should look and behave. This presents an intriguing narrative that can be interpreted differently through feminist and patriarchal lenses.

In patriarchal sexist contexts, the title "~~TOO~~ DEFIANT" is seen negatively, implying disobedience to established norms. Patriarchal sexist discourse expects women to be submissive and compliant without question. The subtitle "I see things differently. That's all" softens this rebellious tone for a patriarchal audience but still challenges the idea of unquestioning conformity. The footnote "Jillian is fearless like that" threatens patriarchal norms by suggesting that women who defy expectations are unafraid to challenge power structures. While the ad supports women's

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empowerment from a feminist perspective, it also challenges patriarchal norms. This aligns with FCDA's critique of traditional gender stereotypes through the **discourse in the (de)construction of gender**.

4.2 Reebok #BeMoreHuman Campaign

4.2.1 Reebok - #BeMoreHuman – Stand Together



Figure 4: Reebok - #BeMoreHuman – Stand together.

According to figure 4, Gigi Hadid is centered in the middle as the model. The slogan is split on both sides of the model; left side says, "Stand together. Move together.", while the right side says "Change the world together. #BeMoreHuman". On the top right corner, the Reebok logo is placed. Lastly on the bottom left corner there is a description, "Gigi Hadid / Model, Designer" then "Shop4Reebok.com".

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework in VG theory, the researcher analyzes the ad using representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions. Firstly, the **representational metafunction** shows that Hadid is centered in a non-transactional process. The conceptual symbolic meaning represents empowerment through the slogan "Stand together. Move together" and "Change the world together". These phrases highlight the power of solidarity and collective effort in driving change.

Secondly, the **interactive metafunction** is portrayed in Hadid's direct gaze at the viewer which acts as a demand, inviting the audience to engage with the message and take part in the collective action. The horizontal frontal angle suggests involvement from the viewers and gives a sense of inclusion and invitation. The far personal distance allows for a connection with Hadid, making her approachable yet maintaining a degree of professionalism and aspiration. The use of full color saturation and maximum representation of details enhances the realism and vividness of the ad, making it visually striking and attention-grabbing.

Thirdly, the **compositional metafunction** addresses the arrangement of elements within the image to create meaning through information value, salience, and framing. Hadid is placed centrally, acting as the nucleus of the ad and drawing immediate attention. The slogan and Reebok logo are arranged vertically, guiding the viewer's attention from top to bottom, while the bottom description, model and designer, and website link provide actionable steps for the viewer. Hadid is an American fashion model who launched her first fashion brand in 2022 and is renowned for her appearances on prestigious fashion runways and her influence on global audiences. The ad foregrounds Hadid and the empowering slogan, making them the most salient elements and directing the viewer's focus to the key messages of unity and change. The clear framing with minimal distractions ensures Hadid remains the focal point, creating a visual hierarchy that leads the viewer from the aspirational message, through the central representation, to the actionable information. Overall, the ad successfully employs visual and verbal elements to promote the idea of empowerment.

According to feminist perspective, this ad calls to empower women to unite and advocate for change collectively. The main message emphasizes solidarity among women, encouraging them to "stand together, move together, and change the world together". The ad highlights the strength and resilience found in female unity, suggesting that when women support each other, they become a formidable force capable of achieving significant accomplishments.

According to a patriarchal sexist discourse, the advertisement reinforces traditional gender roles and stereotypes about women's dependence on men. Instead of emphasizing female solidarity and empowerment, the patriarchal interpretation focuses on the idea that women need each other because they are weaker or less capable than men. This view could suggest that women's strength derives from their ability to support and rely on each other, rather than from their individual agency or capabilities. Additionally, the patriarchal sexist perspective downplays the importance of women making decisions for themselves, implying that they should defer to male authority or seek validation from men. Contrary to this interpretation, the advertisement clearly deconstructs traditional gender roles. By emphasizing female empowerment, the ad challenges stereotypical portrayals of women as passive or subordinate and contributes to the **discourse of the (de)construction of gender** by offering an alternative, more empowering narrative for women.

4.2.2 Reebok – #BeMoreHuman – Electrify the World



Figure 5: Reebok – #BeMoreHuman – Electrify the World

According to Figure 5, Ariana Grande is centered in the middle. On the left side the slogan says, "One person's light can electrify the world. #BeMoreHuman". On the top right corner, the Reebok logo is placed. Lastly on the bottom left corner, there is a description, "Ariana Grande/ Artist, Social Advocate" then underneath "shop4reebok.com".

According to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) framework in VG theory, the researcher analyzes the ad using representational, interactive, and compositional metafunctions. Firstly, the **representational metafunction** is Grande portrayal through a non-transactional process. The conceptual symbolic process is presented in the slogan "one person's light can electrify the world" symbolizing power through the powerful impact one individual can have.

Secondly, the **interactive metafunction** is presented in Grande's direct gaze at the viewer creates a demand, engaging the audience directly. The frontal horizontal angle suggests directness, making the viewer feel on the same level as the model, fostering a sense of connection and involvement. She is depicted at a close social distance, allowing viewers to connect with her. The ad uses full color saturation and maximum representation of details, enhancing its vividness and appeal, making the visual elements stand out and seem more realistic.

Thirdly, the **compositional metafunction**. According to the information value, Grande is placed centrally, making her the focal point of the ad. The slogan is placed from left to right, which draws the viewer's attention naturally across the ad. This placement utilizes the conventional reading direction in many cultures, making the slogan more accessible and prominent to the audience. By aligning the text in this way, the ad ensures that the message is easily noticed and absorbed, enhancing its overall impact and effectiveness. The bottom description, "artist and social advocate", along with the website link, represents the real and provides actionable steps for the viewer. Grande, as an artist and social advocate, has made significant contributions to the music industry and championed various social causes, including mental health awareness and racial equality. The ad ensures that Grande and the slogan are the most prominent elements through foregrounding, using color contrast and size to draw the viewer's attention immediately to these key components. The bold black font and capitalization of certain words emphasize details, making them stand out. The clear framing with minimal distractions ensures that Grande remains the focal point. This layout creates a visual hierarchy, leading the viewer from the aspirational message, through the central representation, to the actionable information. Overall, the ad effectively uses visual and verbal elements to communicate its empowering message.

According to a feminist perspective, this ad featuring Grande as the model with the statement "one person's light can electrify the world" serves to empower women by highlighting the potential for individual impact and influence. The ad message aligns with feminist principles by emphasizing the importance of recognizing and celebrating the unique qualities, talents, and abilities of each person, regardless of gender. By focusing on the idea that every individual possesses the power to illuminate the lives of others and spark positive change, the ad challenges traditional gender norms and stereotypes that may limit women's sense of influence. The word "one" is powerful because it emphasizes individuality and inclusivity. It signifies that a single person, regardless of gender, can have a profound impact. By using "one" the statement avoids specifying gender, thereby promoting equality and suggesting that anyone, whether male or female, has the potential to "electrify the world". This inclusive language underscores the idea that every individual possesses unique power and significance, contributing to a message of universal empowerment. It is more powerful than using the word "women" because it broadens the scope of the message, making it applicable to all people and highlighting the equal potential and worth of every individual. Furthermore, by featuring Grande, a prominent female figure known for her talent, creativity, and resilience, the ad reinforces the message of empowerment and encourages women to embrace their own strengths and capabilities. The ad inspires women to recognize their own power and value, and challenging gendered expectations and limitations.

From a patriarchal sexist perspective, this ad reinforces traditional gender roles by focusing on individual success and beauty, suggesting that women's empowerment is tied to their appearance and personal

achievements. It seems to imply that women's worth and influence depend on their ability to stand out as individuals, rather than through collective efforts or solidarity. This focus can perpetuate gendered stereotypes and overlook systemic barriers and inequalities that prevent women from fully realizing their potential. However, despite these patriarchal sexist interpretations, the ad supports women through the **discourse of the (de)construction of gender**. By featuring a highly successful and empowered female celebrity, it challenges conventional gender norms and stereotypes, while reinforcing the idea that women can make a meaningful impact on the world around them. According to FCDA, this ad deconstructs traditional gender expectations and promotes a narrative that supports women's empowerment, while challenging patriarchal sexist ideologies.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 Findings

This study employed a Multimodal Feminist Discourse Analysis Approach. The selected data was analyzed using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) VG Theory and the principles of FCDA as outlined by Lazar (2005, 2007) with an emphasis on the discourse in the (de)construction of gender. Olay "#FaceAnything" and Reebok "#BeMoreHuman" campaigns were used for analysis. In summary, the analysis of Olay and Reebok campaigns offers valuable insights into the representation of women in advertising and the strategies employed to convey messages of empowerment and identity.

The Olay campaign, with its emphasis on diversity, inclusivity, and the celebration of natural beauty, challenges traditional beauty standards and promotes self-confidence among women. By featuring women of different ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds, Olay portrays beauty as multifaceted and inclusive, resonating with a diverse audience and promoting a more inclusive definition of beauty. Furthermore, the campaign's use of empowering slogans and affirmations encourages women to embrace their individuality and reject societal pressures to conform to narrow beauty ideals.

On the other hand, the Reebok campaign focuses on physical strength, resilience, and empowerment through physical activity. By featuring strong and influential women Reebok presents athleticism as a source of empowerment and self-expression for women. The campaign's emphasis on action, determination, and solidarity underscores the importance of physical and mental resilience in overcoming challenges and achieving success.

Overall, both campaigns contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender representation in advertising and the empowerment of women. By showcasing diverse representations of femininity and promoting messages of self-confidence, resilience, and empowerment, Olay and Reebok challenge traditional gender norms and inspire women to embrace their authentic selves. As advertisers continue to evolve their approaches to gender representation, these campaigns serve as examples of how brands can empower and uplift women through thoughtful and inclusive storytelling.

In summary, the analysis of both the Olay and Reebok campaigns reveal how advertising language can be used to empower women, challenge traditional gender roles, and promote feminist values. While both campaigns have their strengths and weaknesses in terms of addressing issues of sexism and gender bias, they ultimately contribute to the ongoing conversation about gender representation in advertising and the empowerment of women. These findings underscore the potential of advertising to not only reflect societal norms but also to actively shape and redefine them, particularly in relation to gender equality and empowerment.

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The study focused on only two women empowerment campaigns, which may not be representative of the broader spectrum of such campaigns. This limited scope can restrict the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or types of advertisements. Moreover, both FCDA and VG theory involve a degree of subjective interpretation by the researcher. While efforts were made to maintain objectivity, personal biases may have influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. In addition, the campaigns analyzed may be rooted in specific cultural contexts that influence their design and reception. The findings might not be directly applicable to campaigns from different cultural or societal backgrounds, limiting the cross-cultural applicability of the results. Addressing these limitations in future research could enhance the comprehensiveness of the findings, contributing to a deeper understanding of gender representation in advertising and its broader social implications.

5.3 Recommendations for Further Research

Future research should include a larger and more diverse set of advertisements from different

cultural contexts to understand the global dynamics of gender representation in media. Conducting longitudinal studies to track changes in the portrayal of women in advertising over time could provide insights into the evolution of gender norms and the impact of feminist movements. Also, incorporating an intersectional approach that considers race, class, sexuality, and other social categories would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how different identities are represented and empowered in media. Finally, comparing women empowerment campaigns across different brands and industries could reveal best practices and common pitfalls, contributing to more effective and impactful advertising strategies. These recommendations for further research aim to build on this foundation, encouraging more nuanced and inclusive approaches to women representation in advertisements.

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