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Examining the empowering effect of femvertising from the corporate social responsibility perspective: a survey-based online experimental study in China

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Femvertising is a marketing communication strategy in which brands encourage and inspire women by incorporating information supporting them to gain profit and social impact. From the theoretical perspective of corporate social responsibility, this study tries to explore the empowering effects of femvertising exposure on Chinese female consumers. Through a survey-based online experiment on 300 respondents, the study found that femvertising can significantly enhance self-esteem and self-efficacy, but has no significant effect on self-control. For female-oriented products, consumers' perception of female empowerment in femvertising is significantly higher than that in traditional advertisements, while there is no significant difference between the two for general product advertisements. The perception of female empowerment influences volunteering behavior intention related to women's rights through a sense of moral elevation. This article expands the application of corporate social responsibility theory in the Chinese femvertising practices. It helps practitioners to evaluate better whether relevant marketing and communication activities strike a balance between commercial interests and social responsibility.

KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, empowerment, femvertising, moral elevation, online experiment

1 Introduction

Commercial advertisements with social impact have emerged on new media platforms for years. Some popular video adverts contain positive and inspiring messages of empowerment, suggesting that contemporary marketing communications are moving towards these themes (Zazzi, 2015). These adverts promote human equality and reject binary oppositions, the most representative of which is femvertising. According to the industry, femvertising is "advertising that showcases the talents, messages, and images of modern women and empowers women and girls" (Skey, 2015). It is also argued that femvertising is a type of advertising that has emerged under the influence of post-feminism to challenge the traditional stereotypes of women (Åkestam et al., 2017), where the adverts use issues of concern to women and are centered around encouraging, respecting, and empowering women to portray an authentic, multi-dimensional image. They aim to please the female population and ultimately lead to consumption by conveying the idea of female empowerment (Becker-Herby, 2016). Viewing

from a cultural perspective, femvertising remains an effective empowering brand strategy (Török et al., 2025).

Femvertising does not always straightforwardly promote feminist ideals and tends to avoid the controversial and sensitive discourse of feminism, emphasizing the “internal empowerment that embraces all women” (Hsu, 2018). Therefore, femvertising is a gentle, depoliticized form of appeal that does not directly make strong claims about gender relations but rather uses the creative techniques of advertising to soften the packaging of feminist ideals. As a result, femvertising has also faced some skepticism, as although female characters are perceived to be empowered, audiences may not necessarily feel empowered themselves (Teng et al., 2021). Some studies have argued that through symbolic visual cues and messages, female empowerment advertisements reinforce stereotypes of female characters and sexism to a certain extent (Gill and Elias, 2014; Grau and Zotos, 2016; Chowdhury, 2025).

Most femvertising studies have been conducted in North America and Western Europe, while few studies target the situation in Asian countries. According to the Global Gender Gap Report, China ranks 103rd out of 148 economies, even though many improvements in gender equality have been made in recent years (World Economic Forum, 2025). There are few systematic empirical studies on Chinese femvertising, and a more objective and detailed examination is needed to explore the mechanism of the effects of femvertisement on consumer perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intention.

2 Literature review

2.1 Corporate social responsibility communication

The theory of corporate social responsibility (CSR) recognizes the need for companies to take on civic responsibilities as “corporate citizens” and to encourage consumers to participate as well. This serves for a corporate image, giving them meaning beyond the material level (Ouellette, 2012). Companies achieve business success by “honoring ethical values and respecting people, communities, and the environment” (Porter and Kramer, 2006). As a good corporate reputation is an important part of marketing strategy and competitive advantage (Porter and Kramer, 2006; Weigelt and Camerer, 1988), it is not only a moral obligation but also an economic imperative for companies to adopt such a stance (Du et al., 2010). CSR covers a wide range of activities, which may vary considerably, but most of them are related to protecting the environment and resources or achieving social justice (Elkington and Rowlands, 1999). Social expectations of business organizations are shifting from the provision of goods and services to prosocial actions, requiring organizations to work towards the betterment of society and public goals, or focus on social issues.

From a communication perspective, CSR is “an interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings an object into being” (Phillips and Hardy, 2002). CSR advertisements are required to both promote corporate values and support legislative or other political action, as well as

build acceptance of the product or service (Bostdorff and Vibbert, 1994; Sinclair and Irani, 2005). Historically, CSR research has emphasized organizational-level factors, with much less attention on individual-level factors (Aguinis et al., 2024). There is limited understanding of the variables and processes involved in consumer responses to CSR communication (Wang and Anderson, 2011), and there is still a dearth of research on perceiving and assessing CSR (Diehl et al., 2016).

Though originating from the Western world, the core principles of CSR fit with the Chinese cultural values of Confucianism, Taoism, and Collectivism, emphasizing interpersonal harmony (Wang and Juslin, 2009). The traditional values have been embodied in CSR programs and practices in China that focus on balancing corporate gains with societal contribution (Wang and Juslin, 2009). A prior study found that Chinese social media users are more likely to engage in CSR communication to demonstrate their group membership and identity (Chu et al., 2020). This study continuously focuses on the Chinese context and on valuing CSR activity and its implications for business and advertising practice and research, to make a necessary addition to the development of strategic communication.

2.2 Femvertising and female psychological empowerment

Empowerment is a fundamental research topic in psychology, and the process of empowerment first arises at the individual level and is highly related to traditional psychological concepts such as self-esteem and self-efficacy (Lin and Yang, 2019). Empowerment refers to an individual’s ability to control their goals and outcomes (Zimmerman and Rappaport, 1988), as well as their ability to control resources and decisions (Narayan-Parker, 2005). It can be defined as the process of empowering individuals, interpersonal, or collective political power, giving individuals, groups, or communities the power and ability to take action to make a difference (Boehm and Boehm, 2003). In a commercial context, consumers’ psychological empowerment refers to the psychological experience of having authority and influence over circumstances that may affect them and constitutes a significant motivating factor in consumer behavior (Wathieu et al., 2002). Market campaigns can arouse consumers’ sense of empowerment with specific stimuli, information, and advertising claims.

As empowerment is not a universal concept, women cannot just imitate what is being followed in mainstream cultures (Amir et al., 2024). The different aspects of female empowerment include decision-making, control over income, freedom of mobility, and self-esteem (Török et al., 2025). It can be understood as self-enhancement, freedom and convenience, internal strength, confidence, and feeling at ease with their own identity (Kordrostami and Lacniak, 2022). One of the main manifestations of corporate social responsibility marketing communication is empowering consumers. Compared to the empowerment information in advertising, how much empowerment information consumers perceive and internalize is more important for achieving the social effects of advertising. Consumer-perceived empowerment can be conceptualized as an umbrella term that encompasses concepts such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, and

self-control (Narayan-Parker, 2005). Based on the different levels of perceptual empowerment, this study proposes the following three hypotheses:

H1: Femvertising exposure positively affects the self-esteem of female consumers.

H2: Femvertising exposure positively affects the self-efficacy of female consumers.

H3: Femvertising exposure positively affects the self-control of female consumers.

2.3 Female empowerment, moral elevation, and prosocial behavioral intention

Exposure to information related to corporate social responsibility can stimulate a sense of moral elevation. Moral enhancement refers to a moral emotion that arises when an individual sees or hears the moral behavior of others. This emotion can lead to changes in the individual's physiological, emotional, and behavioral tendencies, such as feeling warm, moved, or encouraged (Haidt, 2003), leading to a tendency towards prosocial behavior. Moral enhancement is caused by charity, kindness, loyalty, self-sacrifice, or any other strong virtue expression (Haidt, 2003).

Moral elevation mediates the relationship between CSR activities and consumers' intentions to donate to social causes, as well as between CSR activities and volunteering intentions (Freeman et al., 2009; de Van Vyver and Abrams, 2015). CSR activities can elicit a sense of moral elevation in consumers, which in turn encourages them to engage in donating and volunteering to social causes that are closely related to company-sponsored CSR issues (Romani and Grappi, 2014). Virtuous corporate support for certain causes can motivate individuals to engage in certain forms of virtuous behavior modification. Morally uplifting positive emotions may be a powerful but understudied mechanism that can explain such changes. Little attention has been paid to investigating how corporate behavior induces more general consumer responses to major causes or social problems associated with CSR efforts (Aguinis et al., 2024).

As a result of long-term gender inequality and stereotypes issues, many women are not brave enough to be independent and pursue their own dreams (Yang et al., 2025). Femvertising links female empowerment with the brand, making women feel more confident and powerful when using their products (Gomez-Borquez et al., 2024; Kordrostami and Lacznik, 2022). Femvertising campaigns that promote feminist ideals, such as successful campaigns by Dove and Always, have been particularly effective in forming positive advertising attitudes by evoking emotional connections and empowerment among consumers. Femvertising is a type of cause marketing focused on empowering women and improving the image of women. Similar to CSR campaigns, femvertising can help companies to build brand trust among consumers (Koç et al., 2024). Supporting the CSR activities of a company constitutes a prosocial act and engaging in such behavior is contingent on empowerment, which means the feeling that one can make a difference (Fernandez et al., 2022). Therefore, we use perception of female empowerment advertising messages as a stimulus for consumers to develop a sense of moral elevation, and consumers' volunteering

behavioral intention related to women's rights as a prosocial behavioral intention. We therefore propose the following hypothesis:

H4: The sense of moral elevation mediates the relationship between consumers' female empowerment perception of advertising messages and volunteering behavioral intention related to women's rights.

3 Methods

3.1 Participants

The research used the survey-based online experiment method, and data were collected in April 2023. Quota sampling was used in this study. The sample size was determined based on the percentages of the urban and rural populations, the educational level, and the monthly income levels in different provinces, as reported in the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2021). A final sample of 300 participants was obtained, and they were Chinese females aged 18–59. The study invited eligible respondents to participate in the experiment through a professional survey company.¹ Qualified respondents received cash rewards after completing the questionnaire.

3.2 Stimulus

The main experiment was a 2 (femvertising vs. traditional advertising) \times 2 (female-oriented product vs. general product) factorial design, with a set of femvertisement for the experimental groups and a set of traditional female-image commercials for the control groups. The product types were categorized into female-oriented products and general products. In this study, cosmetics and personal care products were chosen as representatives of the female-oriented product type, and mechanical and electronic products were chosen as representatives of the general product type. The video ad materials for the experiment are from Dove, Pantene, OLAY, and Always in the cosmetics and personal care category, and Huawei, VIVO, Mercedes-Benz, and Meizu in the mechanical and electronic category. Table 1 demonstrates detailed information for the experimental materials.

3.3 Procedures

To ensure these groups of advertisements are comparable and differ in terms of the type of advertisements, a pre-test was conducted with 68 female undergraduates from the same university as the researcher, which was used to test manipulation of design, as well as to ensure that there were no significant differences in brand familiarity and product utility in the advertised cases. Specifically, participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental or control group of advertisements and assessed the following statement on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree): 'Overall,

¹ www.wenjuan.com

TABLE 1 Details for the experiment groups.

No.	Product and ad types	Video link
1	Female-oriented product + femvertising	https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1sN411A78W?share_source=copy_web
2	Female-oriented product + traditional advertising	https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1gk4y1v7Q3?share_source=copy_web
3	General product + femvertising	https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV14v4y1p7Wk?share_source=copy_web
4	General product + traditional advertising	https://www.bilibili.com/video/BV1t84y1u7e5?share_source=copy_web

the female characters in the advertisements are non-traditional and break gender stereotypes. Participants were also asked to indicate their previous experience of exposure to or use of the product or brand in the advert by rating the statement: 'The product in the advert is practical', 'I am familiar with the product in the advert', 'I am familiar with the brand.' Pretest results show that female empowerment adverts ($M = 5.59$, $SD = 1.00$) scored higher ($t_{(27,66)} = 2.36$, $p < 0.05$, Hedge's $g = 0.73$) than traditional female-image adverts ($M = 4.64$, $SD = 1.76$) in terms of breaking gender stereotypes. There is no significant difference in the perceived utility of the advertisements between the two groups ($t_{(66)} = 1.25$, $p = 0.22$). In addition, there is no significant difference in familiarity with the product ($t_{(66)} = 0.33$, $p = 0.75$), nor is there a significant difference in the participants' familiarity with the brand ($t_{(66)} = -0.05$, $p = 0.964$).

In the main experiment, all participants (none of whom participated in the pre-test) were randomly assigned to the four conditions. The steps of the main experiment were 'fill in the informed consent form → fill in the pre-test questionnaire → watch the advertisement video → fill in the post-test questionnaire'. Participants ticked the box to give informed consent to the study, and then answered the pre-test questions on trait self-esteem, trait self-efficacy, and trait self-control, watched the advertisement video, and finally filled out questions on state self-esteem, state self-efficacy, state self-control, female empowerment perception, moral elevation, volunteering behavior intention, and demographic information.

3.4 Measurement

Trait Self-Esteem Scale (TSES, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.91$) and State Self-Esteem Scale (SSES, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$): The original scale (Rosenberg, 1979) was adapted for this study, and each contained 10 items. The TSES asked participants before the experiment to rate their self-esteem, including 'I feel that I have many strengths,' and 'I can do things as well as most people.' The SSES asked participants after the experiment to rate their self-esteem after being introduced to a female identity, including 'As a woman, I feel that I have many strengths,' and 'As a woman, I can do things as well as most people.' Both are based on the Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Trait Self-Efficacy Scale (TSEFS, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$) and State Self-Efficacy Scale (SSEFS, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$): The original scale (Chen et al., 2001) was appropriately adapted, and each contained 8 items. The TSEFS was set before the experiment by asking participants to rate their self-efficacy, including 'I can achieve most of the goals I have set for myself,' and 'I can cope successfully with many challenges.' The SSEFS was set after the experiment by asking participants to bring in their female identity, including 'As a woman, I can achieve most of the goals I have set for myself,' and 'As a woman, I can successfully cope with many challenges.' Both are based on the Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Trait Self-Control Scale (TSCS, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$) and State Self-Control Scale (SSCS, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.96$): The original scales (Tangney et al., 2004) were adapted appropriately, and each contained 13 items. The TSCS asked participants before the experiment to rate their self-control, including 'I can resist temptation' and 'I can work efficiently to achieve long-term goals,' while the SSCS asked participants after the experiment to rate their self-control after being introduced to the female identity, including 'As a woman, I can resist temptation,' and 'As a woman, I can resist temptation.' Both are based on the Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Female Empowerment Perception Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.72$): Perception of female empowerment messages (Teng et al., 2021). It consists of 3 items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), such as "The women in the advertisement have a strong inner self" and "The women in the advertisement are independent."

Moral Elevation Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.90$): Degree of positive perception of moral emotions (Jiang and Zheng, 2017). It contains 11 items, such as 'The advertisement makes me feel moved' and 'The advertisement makes me want to be a better person with better morals.' (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree).

Volunteering Behavior Intention Scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.74$): willingness to engage in public service behavior related to women's rights issues (Romani and Grappi, 2014). It consists of 3 items (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree), such as "I would like to volunteer in the community for women's rights" and "I would like to support individual or group activities that work for women's rights."

4 Results

4.1 Descriptive results and manipulation check

Three hundred adult females participated in the online experiment, with a valid sample of 75 in each of the four groups (female-oriented product + femvertising, female-oriented product + traditional advertising, general product + femvertising, and general product + traditional advertising). The participants were Chinese females in the age range of 18–59 ($M = 34.99$, $SD = 9.707$), with more participants in the age group of 40–49 years old, accounting for 31% of the total sample. Among the participants, 192 (64%) lived in urban areas, and the majority whose current location was in East China (29%). More than 75% had a junior high school education or higher, and the majority of women had a monthly personal income between CNY 2,000 and 4,999 (33%). Table 2 shows demographic information in detail.

TABLE 2 Descriptive statistics of demographic variables.

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	<20	8	2.7%
	20–29	92	30.6%
	30–39	89	29.7%
	40–49	93	31.0%
	≥50	18	6.0%
Education level	Without formal education	12	4.0%
	Primary education	62	20.7%
	Junior high school education	114	38.0%
	High school education	56	18.7%
	Vocational education	29	9.7%
	Undergraduate education	24	8.0%
	Master's degree or above	3	1.0%
Monthly income	<CNY 1000	81	27.0%
	CNY 1000–1999	78	26.0%
	CNY 2000–4999	99	33.0%
	CNY 5000–9999	21	7.0%
	CNY 10,000–99,999	12	4.0%
	CNY 100,000–499,999	7	2.3%
	≥CNY 500,000	2	0.7%
Marriage status	Not married	65	21.7%
	Married	235	78.3%

The results of the manipulation test show that two experimental groups of female empowerment adverts ($M = 6.09$, $SD = 0.679$) score higher on breaking gender stereotypes than the control groups of traditional female image adverts ($M = 5.89$, $SD = 0.778$) ($t_{(298)} = -2.371$, $p < 0.05$, Hedge's $g = 0.27$). There is no significant difference in the perceived utility of the products in the advertisements between the experimental and control groups ($t_{(298)} = -0.07$, $p = 0.95$). There is no significant difference in the main experiment participants' familiarity with the product ($t_{(292.87)} = 1.11$, $p = 0.27$) or with the brand ($t_{(298)} = 381$, $p = 0.70$). Participants' recall of brands and product types in advertisements was generally accurate.

4.2 Hypotheses testing results

In order to explore what effect femvertising exposure has on women's self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-control, paired sample t-tests were conducted on the two experimental groups of femvertisement to compare the differences in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-control before and after the subjects viewed the

TABLE 3 Paired t-tests of femvertising groups.

Pair		N	M	SD	t
Pair 1	Self-esteem pre-test	150	5.544	0.945	-2.119*
	Self-esteem post-test	150	5.647	0.908	
Pair 2	Self-efficacy pre-test	150	5.580	0.820	-2.302*
	Self-efficacy post-test	150	5.664	0.780	
Pair 3	Self-control pre-test	150	5.302	1.212	-1.807
	Self-control post-test	150	5.389	1.239	

* $p < 0.05$.

advertisements. The results in Table 3 present a significant difference in the mean values of self-esteem and self-efficacy measured before and after the two groups, but the difference in self-control is not significant. There is a significant increase in the participants' self-esteem and self-efficacy after viewing the femvertisements. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported, and H3 is not.

A multifactor ANOVA was conducted through SPSS 24.0 to test the main and interaction effects of ad type and product type. Two-factor ANOVA was used to evaluate the effect of the type of advertisement and product type on the perceived level of female empowerment. Overall, there is a significant effect of ad type on the female empowerment perception ($F = 6.429$, $p = 0.012 < 0.05$), a non-significant effect of product type on the female empowerment perception ($F = 1.691$, $p = 0.195$), and a non-significant interaction effect between the two ($F = 0.271$, $p = 0.603$).

Specifically, for female-oriented products, femvertisement differs significantly from traditional advertisements, with the former having a higher level of female empowerment perception than the traditional advertisement ($p = 0.028 < 0.05$ 95%CI = [0.023, 0.395]), and for general products, femvertisement has a higher level of female empowerment perception than the traditional advertisement group, but the difference is not significant ($p = 0.167$, 95%CI = [-0.058, 0.333]). Table 4 presents the group differences.

Next, as for responding to the question of how consumers' perception of empowerment affects their volunteering behavior intention related to women's rights and interests, it is necessary to do a correlation analysis of the main variables. From Table 5, it can be found that female empowerment perception, moral elevation, and volunteering behavior intention are significantly and positively correlated. Therefore, further regression analysis can be done to test the hypothesis.

To test H4, this study utilized the SPSS Macro PROCESS software, applying Bootstrap methodology with a resampling setting of 5,000 (Hayes, 2017). PROCESS uses ordinary least squares path analysis to determine the direct and indirect effects of the variables by estimating the coefficients in the model. In conjunction with previous studies, the control variables in this study were age, education level, income level, marital status, household status (urban or rural), product type, and ad type.

TABLE 4 Descriptive statistical results of female empowerment perception in four groups.

Ad type	Product type	N	M	SD
Femvertising	General	75	6.071	0.503
	Female-oriented	75	6.196	0.529
	Total	150	6.133	0.518
Traditional advertising	General	75	5.933	0.695
	Female-oriented	75	5.987	0.621
	Total	150	5.96	0.658

To examine whether the perception of female empowerment influenced volunteering behavioral intention related to women's rights, we did a mediated effect analysis (Model 4, 5,000 samples, 95% CI). In this model, the study analyzes female empowerment perception as the independent variable, moral elevation as the mediating factor, and volunteering behavioral intention as the dependent variable. According to Table 6, female empowerment has a significant positive impact on their moral elevation ($\beta = 0.693, p < 0.01$), a significant positive impact of moral elevation on volunteering behavioral intention ($\beta = 0.511, p < 0.01$), and female empowerment perception indirectly positively affects volunteering behavioral intention through moral elevation ($\beta = 0.412, p < 0.01$). Thus, H4 is supported. The theoretical model for the prosocial effect of female empowerment advertising messages is shown in Figure 1.

5 Discussion and conclusion

Through the lens of corporate social responsibility theory, this study tries to discover the social impact mechanisms of femvertising targeting Chinese female consumers. This work would be valuable to comprehend brands' efforts on the incorporation of westernized female empowerment in advertisements created for Asian markets (Amir et al., 2024). The main findings of this study are as follows: (1) Exposure to femvertising messages significantly increased self-esteem and self-efficacy, but had no significant effect on self-control. (2) There was no interaction between ad type and product type on consumers' perceptions of female empowerment. For female-oriented products, consumers' perceptions of female empowerment were significantly higher in femvertisements than in traditional advertisements; for general products, there was no significant difference between femvertisements and traditional advertisements in terms of female empowerment perception. (3) Female empowerment perception affects consumers' volunteering behavior intention related to women's rights through moral elevation.

Unlike other corporate social responsibility messages, femvertising messages trigger narrative self-reference, which helps to construct positive self-awareness more directly (Escalas, 2007). Specifically, advertising connects the stories of women overcoming difficulties and achieving success with the experiences of ordinary consumers, and female audiences in particular generate positive reactions and experience the persuasiveness of advertising. They will believe that the values promoted by advertisements are consistent with their ideas and that femvertisements reflects their values and beliefs (Um, 2022). In addition, the non-stereotyped female image in feminist commercials tends to be more in line with active self-affirmation and does not lead to passive self-objectification (Anschutz et al., 2009), which provides some explanations for the research findings that female empowerment adverts have an increasing effect on women's

self-esteem and self-efficacy. However, some studies have found that although female participants who watched femvertisements performed better in speech tasks after the experiment, they did not truly feel empowered (Couture Bue and Harrison, 2019). Existing feminist research provides an important foundation for understanding the complexity of media empowerment, but systematic empirical research is still needed to better understand the phenomenon of media empowerment (Couture Bue et al., 2023) and determine the effectiveness of advertising in empowering women. The feminist advertising that this study focuses on may only increase female empowerment in terms of perception, without achieving in-depth implicit empowerment.

The effectiveness of femvertising largely does not depend on the type of product. Both female-oriented and general products can successfully empower women in marketing activities, but female-oriented product advertising can achieve better results. This echoes with a previous study, which suggests that high congruence between the brand and femvertising messages results in more positive attitudes toward femvertising (Um, 2022). Brand marketing that aligns with feminist beliefs can show consumers the consistency between their expectations for the company and social cause (Keller, 1993), while marketing that aligns poorly with feminist beliefs may be perceived by consumers as inconsistent with previous expectations and associations, potentially leading to the formation of negative attitudes (Foreh and Grier, 2003).

Femvertisement cultivates consumers' sense of moral enhancement, thereby forming a willingness to engage in public welfare behaviors related to women's rights. Female consumers typically regard femvertising favorably, and they are looking for authenticity and real progress to be made toward gender equality practices (Buckley et al., 2024). This study found that it conforms to the logical chain of 'appraisals—emotional responses—coping.' Specifically speaking, people's evaluation of internal and situational conditions leads to emotional reactions, which in turn trigger coping activities. Riordan (2001) believes that purchasing female empowerment ideals may enhance the sense of immersion associated with personalized identity, but it does not leave much room for developing an understanding of the full complexity of self-empowerment. In this study, femvertisement with strong emotions stimulated a strong desire to help in support of the goal of women's rights and interests. High-impact advertisements that evoke strong emotions and resonate may require less exposure, but can successfully influence attitudes and decisions (Bagozzi and Moore, 1994).

Chinese Femvertising emerges in an era when increasing globalization and a renaissance of Confucianism coexist. The conflict between the free market principle emphasizing open access and a socialist state highlighting social stability shapes advertising content creation (Wang, 2003). As feminist activism is subject to strict censorship in China, the cultural space provided by social media becomes an important means for lay consumers to express their collective resistance (Mao, 2020). Thanks to the increasing education and earning levels among Chinese women, the wave of femvertising from the West has influenced this transition (Lazar, 2006; Windels et al., 2020). In this study, the older generation perceived empowerment as a collective concept involving mutual respect and safety, while the younger generation looked at it as a discourse of emancipation based on individual rights and freedoms. The essence of empowerment has shifted from a collective concept of social transformation to an individualistic concept of self-transformation (Vibhute et al., 2023). While notions of assertiveness, independence, and confidence are becoming a universal fashion symbol for consumers across the world, young Chinese women tend to reject portrayals of aggression and rebelliousness, which are undesirable traits in Confucian values (Gan, 2023).

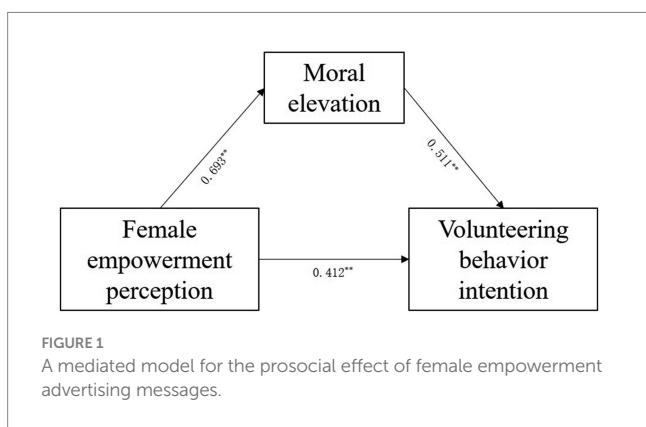
TABLE 5 Correlation between main variables and descriptive statistical results.

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Volunteering behavior intention	–							
2. Female empowerment perception	0.639**	–						
3. Moral elevation	0.696**	0.614**	–					
4. Age	0.053	0.017	0.085	–				
5. Education	–0.056	0.011	–0.051	–0.157**	–			
6. Income	0.014	0.029	0.005	0.032	0.749**	–		
7. Marital status	0.043	0.037	0.085	0.631**	–0.023	0.103	–	
8. Household status	0.051	–0.023	–0.047	0.072	0.034	–0.054	0.196**	–
M	5.848	6.047	5.784	34.990	3.370	2.450	1.780	1.640
SD	0.707	0.597	0.675	9.707	1.299	1.259	0.413	0.481

** $p < 0.01$.

TABLE 6 Mediated effect analysis.

Variable	Moral elevation			Volunteering behavior intention		
	Coeff	SE	t	Coeff	SE	t
Constant	1.600	0.375	4.273**	0.469	0.340	1.379
Female empowerment perception	0.693	0.053	13.152**	0.412	0.059	7.045**
Moral elevation				0.511	0.052	9.906**
R^2	0.387			0.570		
F	23.028			42.673		

** $p < 0.01$.

This study provides some new insights for corporate social responsibility advertising communication, helping to ensure that their feminist advertising messages have a positive impact on consumers, and the close connection between business institutions and support for female empowerment can lead to positive behavioral intentions. It extends the applicability of CSR theory beyond commercial utility: By examining the impact of femvertising on women's self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-control, while investigating its role in advancing women's rights. The study

draws on insights from multiple disciplines, including advertising, public relations, corporate social responsibility, and gender representation in the media, forming an interdisciplinary perspective that is crucial for the development of strategic communication (Werder, 2015). When selecting social initiatives that support women's rights, companies must recognize current trends and assess the importance and impact of their business activities on society, with a focus on female consumers. Brand owners should internalize this mission and capitalize on the opportunities it presents by highlighting and positioning themselves as catalysts for change (Jambrino-Maldonado et al., 2023).

The study inevitably has some limitations. Methodologically speaking, there is still a lack of explicit manipulation checks. This may leave doubts about whether the stimulus can truly reflect the independent variable and affect the validity of the conclusions. Four experimental femvertising videos only chose two types of products as representatives; future studies may compare the advertising effects of other product types. The online survey-based experiment could be effective, but it tends to have self-report bias and lacks close and long-term observation. It would be supplemented by face-to-face experiments or a mixed design with qualitative approaches. As for the contextual limitation, this research was conducted in China. Samples from different geographies and cultures in the Global South should be analyzed to determine whether the results in this study are solid.

Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The study involving humans was approved by the Institutional Review Board of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (protocol code: H20221991, date of approval: 21 April 2022). The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

RF: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing.

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Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared that this work was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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