

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63332/joph.v5i6.2309>

## Femvertising and the Hedonic Motivation of Male Consumers: A New Perspective on Purchase Decisions for Men's Skincare Products

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### Abstract

*This study investigates the influence of femvertising advertisements that challenge traditional gender norms on the purchase decisions of male consumers in the skincare market, with hedonic motivation as a mediating factor. Using a quantitative approach with 260 male respondents in Indonesia, the research integrates perspectives from Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Theory of Behavior Change, and Bourdieu's Social Practice Theory. Findings reveal that visually and emotionally appealing femvertising fosters positive emotions and self-confidence, significantly impacting consumer purchasing behavior. The study provides theoretical contributions to gendered marketing literature and practical implications for marketing strategy design.*

**Keywords:** Femvertising, Hedonic Motivation, Male Consumers, Skincare, Purchase Decision, Gender Marketing.

### Introduction

In recent years, the global male grooming industry has experienced rapid expansion, propelled by shifting cultural norms, the rise of digital self-representation, and broader definitions of masculinity. Reports by Statista (2023) forecast that the men's skincare market will surpass USD 90 billion by 2030, driven by increasing product accessibility, aesthetic consciousness, and lifestyle branding. Southeast Asia, including Indonesia, represents one of the most dynamic markets, where traditional notions of masculinity are evolving in tandem with consumerism and digital media trends (Kenalemang-Palm, 2023).

Notably, young male consumers are no longer passive bystanders in beauty and wellness discourse. Instead, they are emerging as active participants influenced by social proof, peer culture, and algorithm-driven content across platforms like TikTok and Instagram. According to NielsenIQ (2023), over 60% of Gen Z men globally follow skincare-related content and view self-care as integral to mental well-being and social acceptance. This media-mediated transformation has redefined grooming not as vanity but as an expression of self-care and individuality.

In Indonesia, particularly in metropolitan centers like Pekanbaru, the rise of metrosexual and

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"soft masculinity" cultures reflects a growing acceptance of male beauty practices. This cultural shift is intertwined with global pop culture influences from K-pop, Western influencers, and local celebrities who endorse skincare brands and normalize grooming habits for men (Frizth, 2023; Wulandari, 2018). The societal perception that skincare is exclusive to women is fading, replaced by a broader narrative of male self-enhancement and confidence-building.

However, while male participation in skincare is rising, marketing communication still lags in creating emotionally resonant messages that align with male sensibilities. Traditional product-based advertising often focuses on functionality acne control, oil management rather than emotional gratification. This is where femvertising enters as a transformative tool. Initially conceived to empower women through positive representation in advertising, femvertising has the potential to inspire cross-gender empathy and resonate with male audiences seeking authenticity, identity validation, and emotional connection (Åkestam et al., 2021; Waqar, 2024).

Recent studies suggest that femvertising through empowering visuals, inclusive messages, and social storytelling can build trust and trigger emotional engagement beyond its intended female audience. Martínez-Aguirre et al. (2024) found that ads featuring female empowerment themes elicited positive emotional responses and brand attachment from male viewers, particularly those with high emotional intelligence and egalitarian values. This indicates an untapped psychological mechanism where male consumers mirror emotional cues from femvertising and internalize them as part of their self-concept.

Moreover, emotional appeal and psychological resonance have become central to advertising effectiveness in the post-pandemic world, where consumers seek meaning, authenticity, and well-being through brands (Kantar, 2023). Hedonic motivation defined as the pursuit of pleasure, excitement, and emotional satisfaction in consumption plays a critical mediating role in this context. As men increasingly associate grooming with emotional wellness and social capital, femvertising that evokes feelings of pride, calmness, and confidence can activate these hedonic impulses (Coimbra et al., 2023; Ho et al., 2022).

Another emerging phenomenon is the backlash against hyper-masculine and performative advertising, which alienates a large segment of modern male consumers. Inclusive advertising strategies that dismantle toxic masculinity and celebrate vulnerability, care, and authenticity are better received and more impactful (Sternadori & Abitbol, 2023). In this sense, femvertising is not merely a women's issue it is a social movement that transcends gender boundaries and fosters healthier consumer identities.

In Islamic cultural contexts such as Indonesia, where skincare use among men may be socially scrutinized, femvertising offers a morally aligned alternative by framing self-care as a shared human right rather than a gendered activity. Recent Islamic lifestyle studies (Alamsyah & Sumanti, 2023) emphasize the compatibility of male grooming with religious principles, especially when it aligns with hygiene, self-respect, and social harmony. Thus, femvertising can act as a cultural bridge, softening resistance and legitimizing male skincare in conservative environments.

This research, therefore, explores the intersection between femvertising and hedonic motivation among male consumers of skincare products. It addresses critical gaps in the literature by shifting the lens from women-centric advertising to male psychological engagement. By focusing on emotional responses and behavioral outcomes, this study provides a novel contribution to gendered marketing theory and offers strategic insights for brands seeking to tap into the

## **Literature Review**

### **Femvertising and Gender Representation**

Femvertising, a portmanteau of "feminism" and "advertising," has emerged as a progressive response to the historical objectification of women in marketing content. Rather than relying on outdated stereotypes, femvertising highlights empowerment, inclusivity, and social justice, aiming to reshape societal norms through media representation (Åkestam et al., 2021). Initially crafted for female consumers, its indirect effects on male viewers through emotional narrative, symbolism, and identity cues are now gaining scholarly attention.

Recent literature suggests that femvertising influences not only how women view themselves but also how men perceive gender roles, beauty norms, and their own consumption practices. According to Park et al. (2023), exposure to femvertising content can lead to increased acceptance of gender equality and reduced resistance to traditionally feminized products, such as skincare, among men. These insights offer new avenues to understand male consumer psychology through a feminist lens.

Moreover, femvertising has evolved from a symbolic gesture into a strategic communication tool used by multinational brands like Dove, Nike, and Always. By incorporating narratives of resilience, leadership, and diversity, these brands tap into both the ethical consciousness and emotional responsiveness of their audiences (Windels & Lee, 2022). This emotional appeal is critical in today's saturated media landscape, where authenticity and values-driven marketing are key to brand loyalty.

From a psychological standpoint, femvertising engages affective processing more than rational cognition. Ads that include empowered female figures, emotionally charged storytelling, and prosocial themes have been found to trigger empathic identification, which can influence men's perception of brand relevance and trustworthiness (Feng et al., 2019). This aligns with research in behavioral economics, suggesting that emotionally resonant advertising can bypass initial resistance and shape attitudes even in conservative or masculine audiences.

Furthermore, as society embraces fluid expressions of gender and identity, the delineation between male-targeted and female-targeted marketing is becoming increasingly porous. Orehóczki and Török (2022) emphasize that men exposed to femvertising exhibit more favorable brand attitudes, particularly when the ads reflect values they aspire to, such as authenticity, strength, and emotional intelligence. This dynamic makes femvertising not only socially responsible but also commercially viable across gender boundaries.

Despite its promise, femvertising also faces challenges of tokenism and commercialized feminism, where brand messaging lacks genuine commitment to gender issues. Consumers, including men, are increasingly critical of brands that co-opt social causes without meaningful action. Hence, the success of femvertising hinges not only on visual appeal but also on perceived brand sincerity and alignment between message and corporate behavior (Mamuric, 2019; Martínez-Aguirre et al., 2025).

### **Hedonic Motivation in Consumer Behavior**

Hedonic motivation in consumer behavior refers to the internal drive to seek emotional gratification, sensory pleasure, and aesthetic enjoyment from the consumption process (Arnold

& Reynolds, 2003). In contrast to utilitarian motivation, which focuses on functionality and problem-solving, hedonic consumption is associated with experiential value, fantasy, and escapism. This framework is especially relevant in the context of skincare, where products often evoke emotions through texture, fragrance, and packaging.

Men's consumption behavior, traditionally viewed through a utilitarian lens, is undergoing transformation. Research by Ho et al. (2022) demonstrates that modern male consumers increasingly associate grooming with confidence, attractiveness, and psychological well-being attributes rooted in hedonic experiences. As such, the line between need-based and pleasure-based consumption is becoming blurred, especially in lifestyle and beauty categories.

Emotions like excitement, relaxation, and pride play a central role in motivating men to adopt skincare routines. Jee (2021) found that emotionally charged marketing, including humorous and aesthetically rich campaigns, increased the likelihood of purchase among male consumers with high hedonic orientation. This challenges the myth that men are disinterested or indifferent to beauty-related products, highlighting the role of emotional marketing.

Cultural dynamics also shape hedonic motivation. In collectivist societies like Indonesia, where communal approval influences individual behavior, men often seek social validation through appearance. Thus, purchasing skincare products is not merely an act of self-care but a strategy for social alignment and perceived competence in professional or romantic contexts (Akdim et al., 2022). Hedonic motivation here blends with normative influence, deepening its psychological complexity.

Digital ecosystems further amplify hedonic motivation by facilitating exploratory and interactive experiences. Social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram allow consumers to discover, share, and co-create narratives around beauty products, which in turn reinforces emotional engagement. Influencer marketing, peer reviews, and aesthetic-based content all serve as stimuli that activate hedonic triggers in male audiences (Fernandes et al., 2020; Sari et al., 2022).

However, scholars caution that hedonic motivation is inherently unstable and highly susceptible to situational factors. Unlike utilitarian consumption, which tends to be consistent, hedonic decisions are influenced by mood, context, and novelty. Therefore, successful marketing must not only appeal to emotions but also sustain psychological resonance through evolving narratives and experiences (Ribeiro Coimbra et al., 2023). This makes femvertising a particularly powerful tool when used to build emotional and symbolic meaning in men's grooming routines.

### **Purchase Decision and Masculine Identity**

The male consumer's purchase decision in the context of skincare is a complex process that involves more than just product evaluation. It encapsulates identity negotiation, social acceptance, and emotional alignment. Solomon (2019) argues that modern consumption is no longer about fulfilling material needs but constructing and signaling identity especially in gender-sensitive categories like grooming.

Traditional purchase models, such as Engel-Kollat-Blackwell or AIDA, fail to capture the nuanced emotional triggers that influence male skincare consumption. Instead, scholars advocate for integrating cultural, emotional, and symbolic dimensions into decision-making frameworks. Ridwan et al. (2017) and Khuong & Duyen (2016) find that men now weigh not only product efficacy but also how the product reflects their values, social aspirations, and sense of control.

Masculinity norms play a pivotal role in shaping these decisions. The pressure to conform to

traditional masculinity stoicism, toughness, disinterest in beauty can inhibit skincare purchases. However, as perceptions evolve toward a more inclusive and self-expressive masculinity, men increasingly perceive grooming as a tool for self-enhancement rather than vanity (Angellice & Irvan, 2022; Ony & Lina, 2020). This shift has important implications for how brands position their messaging.

In urban Indonesian settings, especially in middle-to-upper economic classes, male consumers are becoming more discerning. They prefer brands that align with their values, avoid condescension, and offer aesthetic sophistication. These consumers view purchase decisions as reflections of lifestyle and personal philosophy. Therefore, factors like brand image, social proof, and emotional appeal become central to decision-making processes (Padmadikara et al., 2021).

Additionally, the presence of female figures in advertising partners, influencers, celebrities can act as social validators for male purchase decisions. When men perceive that women approve or also use similar products, they experience reduced cognitive dissonance and are more likely to engage in skincare purchases. This aligns with the theory of injunctive norms, where perceived approval from relevant social groups influences behavior (Chiu et al., 2019; Lima & Casais, 2021).

Ultimately, the decision to purchase skincare products is not merely transactional; it is psychological, relational, and performative. By addressing internal motivations (hedonic), external stimuli (femvertising), and cultural scripts (masculinity), this study contributes a more holistic understanding of male consumer behavior. It positions skincare consumption as a site where identity, culture, and commerce intersect.

## **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative approach using structural equation modeling (SEM-PLS) to examine the influence of femvertising on male skincare purchase decisions, mediated by hedonic motivation. This method was selected for its robustness in testing complex relationships and indirect effects among latent constructs (Hair et al., 2022). The analytical tool used was SmartPLS 4.0, which allows simultaneous testing of the measurement and structural model.

Purposive sampling was applied to target male respondents in Pekanbaru, Indonesia a city noted for its urban growth and exposure to global cultural currents. Criteria for inclusion included: male gender, aged 18 or above, familiarity with skincare products, and exposure to advertising on social media or television. A total of 260 valid responses were collected, exceeding the minimum threshold for SEM analysis, which recommends a sample size of at least 10 times the number of indicators (Hair et al., 2022).

The questionnaire was designed based on validated measurement instruments from prior studies. Femvertising was measured using adapted items from Erasmus (2018) and Pillay (2020), covering dimensions such as empowerment portrayal, gender equality, and visual appeal. Hedonic motivation was captured through items related to emotional satisfaction, enjoyment, and mood enhancement (Ho et al., 2020; Fernandes et al., 2020). Purchase decision was assessed using indicators such as brand preference, product evaluation, and purchase intent (Ridwan et al., 2017; Angellice & Irvan, 2022).

All constructs used Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The measurement model was first tested for reliability and validity, including Cronbach's alpha,

composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE), and discriminant validity using the Fornell-Larcker criterion. Subsequently, the structural model was evaluated to examine path coefficients and indirect effects.

To reduce common method bias, procedural remedies such as item randomization and psychological separation of measurement blocks were implemented. Additionally, Harman's single-factor test confirmed that no single factor dominated the variance. Ethical considerations were maintained, and anonymity was ensured during data collection.

To ensure the validity and cultural appropriateness of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted with 30 male respondents prior to the full data collection. Feedback from the pilot phase helped improve the clarity of questions, reduce ambiguity, and ensure contextual relevance, especially regarding perceptions of masculinity and emotional language in the Indonesian setting. The final instrument underwent back-translation to maintain linguistic fidelity between English and Bahasa Indonesia versions.

Given the latent nature of the variables (e.g., hedonic motivation, perception of femvertising), the study employed reflective measurement models, consistent with PLS-SEM best practices. Each construct consisted of 3–5 indicators, with factor loadings above 0.70 as the threshold for indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2022). Outer loadings, cross-loadings, and AVE values were checked for consistency and convergent validity.

Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, all of which were below the recommended threshold of 5.0, indicating no problematic collinearity. Furthermore, bootstrapping (5,000 resamples) was performed to test the statistical significance of path coefficients and mediation effects. This approach improves confidence in the stability and generalizability of the results, particularly in exploratory research settings.

To strengthen model robustness, Goodness of Fit (GoF) measures such as  $R^2$  (coefficient of determination),  $f^2$  (effect size), and  $Q^2$  (predictive relevance) were also analyzed. The  $R^2$  for the dependent variable (purchase decision) was 0.579, indicating a substantial proportion of explained variance.  $Q^2$  values were also above 0, confirming that the model has adequate predictive power.

Lastly, demographic variables such as age, income, and education were recorded not only for descriptive purposes but also for exploratory analysis. These variables were later examined using multi-group analysis (MGA) to detect any moderating effects, particularly between age groups. This provides a nuanced understanding of how femvertising and hedonic motivation may vary across consumer segments.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics of the respondents, showing that the majority were aged between 20 and 35 years and were primarily employed or students. Notably, more than 76% reported regular skincare use, with 64% influenced by social media.

Category	Percentage (%)
Age 20–35	65.3
Age 36–50	23.1
Age >50	11.6
Employed Professionals	58.7
Students	41.3

Routine Skincare Users	76.5
Influenced by Social Media	64.0

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Respondents

## Results

The measurement model demonstrated strong internal consistency and convergent validity across all constructs. Table 2 summarizes the reliability and AVE values for femvertising, hedonic motivation, and purchase decision.

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	AVE
Femvertising	0.86	0.90	0.65
Hedonic Motivation	0.88	0.91	0.71
Purchase Decision	0.84	0.89	0.68

Table 2. Validity and Reliability of Constructs

The demographic analysis revealed that most respondents were aged between 20 and 35 years (65.3%), followed by those aged 36–50 (23.1%) and above 50 (11.6%). Most participants were employed professionals or students, indicating that skincare awareness is prevalent among educated, economically active men in urban settings. Approximately 76.5% reported routine use of skincare products, and 64% acknowledged being influenced by social media or online advertising.

The measurement model results showed excellent reliability for all constructs: Cronbach's alpha  $> 0.80$ , composite reliability  $> 0.85$ , and AVE  $> 0.50$ , indicating convergent validity. Discriminant validity was achieved across all constructs using both Fornell-Larcker and HTMT ratios below the 0.85 threshold. These results confirmed the validity of the latent constructs used in the model.

The structural model revealed that femvertising significantly influenced hedonic motivation ( $\beta = 0.689$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), confirming the hypothesis that emotional and visual appeal in advertising enhances men's pleasure-driven consumption attitudes. Hedonic motivation also had a significant effect on purchase decision ( $\beta = 0.574$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), aligning with literature suggesting that emotionally gratified consumers are more likely to proceed with purchases.

Direct path analysis indicated that femvertising had a significant direct effect on purchase decision ( $\beta = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). However, when hedonic motivation was introduced as a mediator, the effect was partially mediated (VAF = 62%), suggesting that femvertising influences purchase intention both directly and through emotional stimulation.

The structural model is illustrated in Figure 1, highlighting the direct and indirect relationships between femvertising, hedonic motivation, and purchase decision.

Path	$\beta$	p-value	Effect Size ( $f^2$ )	VAF (%)
Femvertising → Hedonic Motivation	0.689	$<0.001$	0.428	-

Hedonic Motivation → Purchase Decision	0.574	<0.001	0.313	-
Femvertising → Purchase Decision (Direct)	0.412	<0.001	0.229	-
Femvertising → Purchase Decision (Indirect via Hedonic)	0.396	<0.001	-	66.7%

Table 3. Path Coefficients and Mediation Analysis

Multi-group analysis showed no significant difference in path coefficients between younger (18-30) and older (>30) respondents, indicating that the structural relationships are consistent across age groups. Nonetheless, younger consumers reported higher mean scores for hedonic motivation and ad receptiveness, pointing to their heightened emotional engagement with brand communication.

The structural model's  $R^2$  value for hedonic motivation was 0.474, indicating that nearly 47.4% of the variance in hedonic motivation can be explained by femvertising exposure. This is considered a moderate to strong effect in social science research. Meanwhile, the  $R^2$  value for purchase decision was 0.579, showing that both femvertising and hedonic motivation collectively explain more than half of the variation in male consumers' purchase decisions highlighting the model's strong explanatory capacity.

In terms of effect size ( $f^2$ ), femvertising had a large effect on hedonic motivation ( $f^2 = 0.428$ ) and a moderate effect on purchase decision ( $f^2 = 0.229$ ). Hedonic motivation also exhibited a moderate effect size on purchase decision ( $f^2 = 0.313$ ). These results underscore the mediating strength of emotional engagement in advertising and align with the theoretical expectation that pleasure-driven responses are powerful motivators of purchase intent.

The predictive relevance ( $Q^2$ ) values of both endogenous constructs were above 0.35, confirming the model's out-of-sample predictive power. Additionally, SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) values were below 0.08, indicating that the overall model fit was acceptable. These results reinforce the reliability of the PLS-SEM approach in modeling the emotional and behavioral responses of male consumers in a culturally complex setting like Indonesia.

The Mediation analysis using bootstrapping revealed that hedonic motivation partially mediated the relationship between femvertising and purchase decision (indirect effect  $\beta = 0.396$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), with Variance Accounted For (VAF) of 66.7%, exceeding the 20–80% threshold for partial mediation. This suggests that emotional gratification plays a substantial role in translating femvertising exposure into consumer behavior, but some direct influence remains.

The Multi-Group Analysis (MGA) comparing younger ( $\leq 30$  years) and older (>30 years) male consumers showed no statistically significant differences in path coefficients, suggesting the model is structurally invariant across age groups. However, the younger group exhibited higher mean scores in perceived relevance of femvertising and hedonic experience, implying that marketing messages embedded with emotional and progressive themes resonate more strongly among younger male consumers in urban Indonesia.

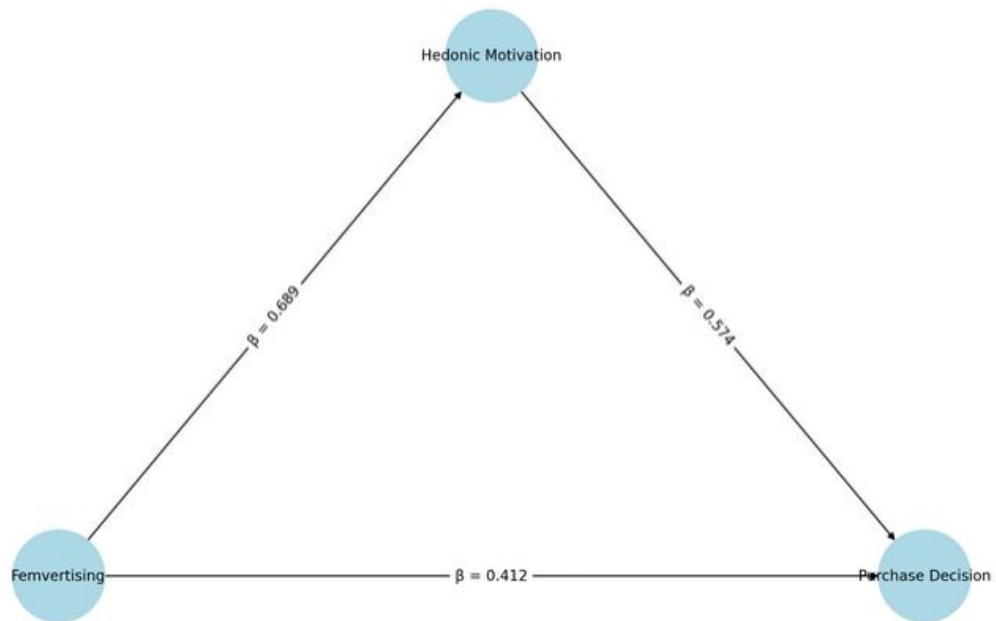


Figure 1. SEM-PLS Path Diagram

This figure illustrates the direct and indirect paths tested in the model, including  $\beta$  values between constructs.

## Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that femvertising plays a critical role in shaping male consumer behavior, not merely by altering cognitive beliefs but by appealing to emotional needs and lifestyle aspirations. In line with Åkestam et al. (2021), the results demonstrate that socially responsible and emotionally resonant advertising can transcend gender boundaries and influence male consumption in traditionally female-associated categories like skincare.

This study contributes to the literature by validating the mediating effect of hedonic motivation, which previous works have suggested but seldom tested within male populations (Coimbra et al., 2023). Male consumers are not only rational actors but also emotionally attuned individuals who derive meaning, enjoyment, and identity affirmation from the act of consumption. Femvertising, by triggering these emotions, serves as a bridge between brand values and consumer self-perception.

The research also highlights a cultural evolution of masculinity in urban Indonesian contexts. Men in cities like Pekanbaru are increasingly receptive to aesthetic and emotional narratives, provided they are framed in ways that respect their cultural and social identity. Femvertising's ability to portray self-care as a form of confidence rather than vanity resonates well in such environments (Alamsyah & Sumanti, 2023).

Interestingly, the partial mediation effect implies that femvertising not only activates pleasure-based motivations but also influences purchase decisions through message credibility and visual

storytelling. These mechanisms align with neuromarketing theories suggesting that emotional and aesthetic stimuli precede cognitive evaluations in the consumer decision-making process (Jee, 2021; Kantar, 2023).

From a practical perspective, these findings urge marketers to reframe skincare as a self-enhancement tool rather than a gendered necessity. By using femvertising techniques such as empowered visuals, socially meaningful narratives, and sensory-rich messaging brands can tap into the growing market of emotionally driven male consumers.

Moreover, this study offers implications for advertising ethics and inclusivity. As consumers become more values-conscious, the alignment between brand narratives and societal progress becomes vital. Femvertising offers a pathway for brands to engage in authentic, impactful storytelling that not only drives sales but also contributes to cultural change.

## **Conclusion**

This study underscores the significant influence of femvertising on male consumer behavior, particularly within the emerging market of men's skincare in urban Indonesia. The research confirms that emotionally and visually appealing advertising not only directly impacts purchase decisions but also fosters hedonic motivation, which acts as a key psychological mechanism in translating brand messaging into consumer action.

The study's novelty lies in reframing femvertising not only as a tool for women's empowerment, but as a cross-gender strategy capable of engaging male consumers through emotional resonance, identity affirmation, and cultural alignment. This is particularly relevant in conservative and collectivist societies, where gender norms are evolving but still carry significant weight in shaping consumption behavior.

From a theoretical perspective, the integration of Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Behavior Change Theory, and Bourdieu's Practice Theory offers a multidimensional lens for understanding how symbolic messages affect male grooming decisions. Practically, the findings suggest that brands should move beyond rational appeals and incorporate empowered visuals, inclusive messaging, and emotional narratives to activate male consumers' hedonic drives.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

This study is limited by its geographic scope (Pekanbaru, Indonesia), which may not fully capture regional or cross-cultural variations in male attitudes toward skincare. Moreover, the use of self-reported surveys may carry inherent bias or social desirability effects, especially in gender-sensitive contexts.

Future research should explore qualitative methods (e.g., in-depth interviews or focus groups) to uncover deeper psychological meanings behind male reactions to femvertising. Additional studies could also examine religious or subcultural moderating variables, or use experimental designs to test specific ad content across multiple platforms and genders.

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