

**The incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising
from the 1990s to the 2020s.**

A Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The advertising industry has an illustrious history of commodity feminism, which entails the utilisation of feminist ideology in advertisements in order to increase sales to female consumers. Various scholars have specifically criticised the cosmetics industry for exploiting feminist ideology by arguing that they depict a paradoxical reflection of feminist ideology as they utilise an amalgamation of remodelled feminist ideologies to promote their products whilst continuing to portray traditional, patriarchal beauty ideals for women and female stereotypes. In recent years, however, a new form of commodity feminism has developed, namely femvertising. This type of advertising has received particularly positive attention from scholars as they argue that femvertising is different from previous types of commodity feminism as it focuses on challenging these stereotypes and beauty ideals, empowering women to be self-confident, focussing on their power instead of their appearances, and in general exploiting feminist ideology less. Existing literature extensively discusses the concept of femvertising in relation to the cosmetics industry and how this might change the promotion of traditional beauty ideals and female stereotypes, however, one specific market which remains understudied is the luxury fragrance industry. Therefore, this study aimed to fill this gap by answering the following research question: How is feminist ideology incorporated in luxury fragrance advertising in the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s? To answer this research question, this study conducted a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) to analyse sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements that are collected from eight luxury brands from which one advertisement originates from the 1990s to 2000s and one ad from the 2010s to 2020s period. The results show that luxury fragrance advertising from the 1990s to 2000s incorporated feminist ideology in a rather contradictory manner as it both advocated for postfeminist and third-wave feminist ideals such as embracing femininity and women’s sexual agency whilst additionally communicating non-feminist beliefs by for instance sexualising women and reinforcing negative traditional female stereotypes. In addition, the analysis revealed that luxury fragrance advertising from the 2010s and 2020s incorporated third-wave, fourth-wave, and general feminist ideology by primarily focussing on female empowerment, women’s freedom, and the inclusion of a wide variety of women. This study concluded that the incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising did change with regard to the shift from primarily incorporating postfeminist ideology to incorporating third- and fourth-wave feminist ideology, however, that the incorporation of feminist ideology did not change considering that the majority of the 2010s and 2020s luxury fragrance advertisements continued promoting stereotypical beauty ideals for women.

KEYWORDS: *luxury fragrance advertising, feminism, commodity feminism, femvertising, multimodal critical discourse analysis*

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1. Introduction

Over the past century, the feminist movement has encouraged women from all over the globe to fight for equal rights. The accomplishments of these movements range from establishing women's right to vote and follow education to increasing awareness and action around violence against women (Cochrane, 2013). One fundamental change related to the success of the feminist movement, amongst other social movements, is the changing representation of women in advertisements (Maclaran, 2012). Throughout the 1900s to 1950s, advertisements primarily portrayed women as sexual objects, corresponding with the dominant ideology and women's societal position during a time when women were subordinate to men (Freeman, 1984). In the late 1960s, however, women's position in Western society changed due to societal trends of women joining the workforce and second-wave feminism, which encouraged women to challenge patriarchal systems and ideologies (David, 2016). To remain appealing to female consumers, the advertising industry initiated a fundamental shift in the 1970s through commodity feminism, which entails the incorporation of feminist ideology and ideals, such as freedom or sexual agency, in advertisements to increase sales (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991).

In the 1990s, commodity feminism became increasingly popular among advertisers due to the increasing purchasing power and financial independence of women, the adoption and popularisation of feminist ideals in media culture, and the rise of postfeminism with which women advocated for the belief that the struggle for gender equality was over and criticised the oppressive, exploitative, and patriarchal nature of advertisements (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Consequently, the advertising industry increasingly incorporated (post-)feminist ideology in the 1990s and 2000s by celebrating femininity and advocating for women's entitlement to prioritise their own needs and desires over others' (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019).

With the rise of third-wave feminism in the 2000s, however, commodity feminism attracted increasing criticism as scholars argued that the oppressive and exploitative nature of advertisements did not change since women remained to be depicted in sexualised ways that fit the patriarchal standards for women (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). This ultimately resulted in the demand for a new type of advertising in the 2010s, which was dubbed femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016; Maclaran, 2012; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Femvertising is defined as a new form of commodity feminism which actively seeks to empower women through pro-female messaging and imagery by challenging traditional female stereotypes and beauty ideals and, in contrast to commodity feminism prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s, incorporating feminist ideology in a less exploitative way (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

A great deal of literature and research has discussed femvertising. In general, Case (2019) and Hsu (2018) for instance discovered in their studies on femvertising from Fortune 500 brands that femvertising indeed led to more progressive marketing for women by empowering female consumers

through emphasising women's strength and personalities instead of sexualising them, by depicting a wide variety of women in terms of body types, ethnicities, and more, and by spreading cultural awareness about women's concerns, such as abortion or menstruation. In addition, Michaelidou et al. (2022) uncovered that non-luxury brands utilise femvertising messaging to a greater extent than luxury brands since luxury brands often include more traditional female stereotypes and sexualised portrayals of women. Multiple studies on femvertising in the luxury cosmetics industry confirm this specific finding as they discovered that luxury cosmetics advertising usually oversimplifies and reduces women's power and confidence to solely their bodies by being beauty-centred, and that these advertisements continue promoting traditional beauty standards, such as being skinny and young, instead of challenging these stereotypes (Patton & Vasquez, 2008; Qiao & Wang, 2019).

Surprisingly, one luxury industry which remains understudied with regard to femvertising and the incorporation of feminist ideology in advertisements is the luxury fragrance industry. This is interesting because specifically this industry has a long history of presenting traditional female stereotypes and roles and promoting narrow beauty ideals for women (Gill, 2007; Ringrow, 2016). Therefore, to address this gap in literature, this thesis aims to study whether luxury fragrance advertising incorporates feminist ideology and how this incorporation of feminist ideology developed with the shift in commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s to the rise of femvertising in the 2010s and 2020s. My research question is: How is feminist ideology incorporated in luxury fragrance advertising in the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s? This thesis will specifically analyse video advertisements, because this form of advertising offers more time and space to develop a story and thus to (potentially) implement feminist messages (Jancsary et al., 2016).

Studying the incorporation of feminist ideology in the luxury fragrance industry holds great societal relevance as the ideologies, female stereotypes, and beauty ideals for women presented in these advertisements can have a profound societal impact (Gerbner, 1969; Ringrow, 2016; Stevens and Ostberg, 2012). As explained by Gerbner's (1969) cultivation theory, long-term, repeated exposure to media that solely represent certain ideologies, power relations, or ideals in unobtrusive ways can make consumers subconsciously adopt and normalise these ideologies, which consequently helps to sustain these particular ideologies, power relations and ideals in society. In this way, (not) incorporating feminist ideologies and representing women in a specific way can have considerable influence on the incorporation of feminist ideology in society and impact on the gender roles, beauty ideals, and the overall position and treatment of women in society (Ringrow, 2016). Besides societal relevance, the scientific relevance of this study resides in filling a gap in existing literature on femvertising, commodity feminism, and the luxury fragrance industry as it aims to contribute new results on the incorporation of feminism in luxury fragrance advertising.

To answer the research question, the first section of this paper will include a theoretical framework which presents the concepts of feminist ideology, commodity feminism, and femvertising in relation to luxury fragrance advertising. Subsequently, the methodology will discuss the method of

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) which was applied to analyse sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements that are collected from eight luxury brands from which one advertisement originates from the 1990s to 2000s and one ad from the 2010s to 2020s period. The fourth chapter presents and discusses three themes from the analysis of advertisements from the 1990s to 2000s, namely the depiction of women as temptresses; highlighting girliness; and advocating for women's entitlement to pleasure, and three themes from 2010s and 2020s luxury fragrance advertising, including the inclusion of a diverse variety of women; emphasising women's strength; and advocating for women's freedom. Finally, the last chapter will present an overall conclusion to this thesis by answering the research question, discussing the limitations of this study, and presenting recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

To understand and compare how feminist ideology is incorporated in luxury fragrance advertisements from both the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s, this theoretical framework begins with discussing feminist ideology by defining the concept of ideology and by utilising the wave narrative to distinguish feminist ideology throughout feminism's years of existence. Afterwards, the concept of commodity feminism is introduced in order to understand the incorporation of feminism in cosmetics advertising in the 1990s and 2000s. Lastly, the concept of femvertising will be discussed as a form of commodity feminism in order to understand how the incorporation of feminism has changed in the 2010s and 2020s.

2.1 Feminist Ideology & the Wave Narrative

In general, scholars have defined and explained the concept of ideology in a variety of ways. In *Ideology and Discourse*, Van Dijk broadly defines ideology as belief systems or, in other words, "the fundamental beliefs of a group and its members." (2011, p. 7). With this definition, Van Dijk (2006, 2011) argues that ideologies essentially are social representations of the social identity of a group or movement since it reflects their shared general ideas or beliefs about the world and specifies their cultural values. Whereas Van Dijk (2006, 2011) thus views ideology as a socially shared system of beliefs, other scholars define ideology as a collection of social practices (Althusser, 1970; Lazar, 2007). According to Althusser (1970), people adopt certain ideologies by engaging in specific actions, social relations, and discourse about these certain actions and social relations. Therefore, Althusser (1970) claims that social practices from members of a social group or movement define the ideology of that particular group or movement. Van Dijk nevertheless rejects defining ideologies as manifestations of social practices as he argues that whilst ideologies are the basis for social practices, ideologies cannot simply be reduced to "ideological practices", because ideologies are more general and abstract than social practices (2011, p. 8). He suggests that for instance people might have ideologies without actually always acting upon them or expressing them and that certain social practices could be inspired by more than just one specific ideology. Therefore, this thesis will utilise the definition of ideology as belief systems by Van Dijk (2006, 2011) as it firstly makes it easier to detect feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertisements through studying the core beliefs that are embedded in these ads and it secondly helps to acknowledge that, next to solely feminist ideology, luxury fragrance advertisements can additionally be based on other ideologies and factors such as capitalism (Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2007).

In addition, scholars often define ideology in association with the legitimisation of dominance and power (Lazar, 2007; Ringrow, 2016; Triece, 2018; Van Dijk, 2006, 2011). As explained by Van Dijk, power can be defined as "the control one group has over (the actions of the members of) another group" (2011, p. 35). In this way, he argues that ideologies function as a means to assert control

through a cognitive dimension, meaning that it helps to control and influence people's perspectives on certain power relations, topics, and more. As a consequence, scholars argue that ideologies could function as a means of asserting power over groups as they could help to establish, justify, and maintain dominance and unequal power relations by controlling people's assumptions on these dominant groups and their social practices (Lazar, 2007; Ringrow, 2016; Triage, 2018; Van Dijk, 2006, 2011). However, Van Dijk (2006, 2011) claims that ideologies are not necessarily dominant since he suggests that ideologies could function as systems which help to sustain and legitimise resistance and opposition against dominance, relationships of power, and social inequality. As explained by Van Dijk (2006, 2011), oppositional ideologies, such as feminist ideology, are therefore not just 'anti-ideologies' which are in this case anti-sexist but instead have their own beliefs. Hence, utilising the definition of ideology as belief systems by Van Dijk (2006, 2011) helps this thesis to acknowledge feminist ideology as a distinct, non-dominant ideology which in turn provides a way to analyse and study the incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertisements with similar methods as studying dominant ideologies.

By utilising the definition of ideology as a system of beliefs, one can generally explain feminist ideology as the belief in the existence of gender inequality or "the systematic disadvantage of women" (Gray & Boddy, 2010, p. 368). Here, gender is defined as the socially constructed characteristics associated with being a man or a woman, including behaviours, roles, and norms (Butler, 2006; Ringrow, 2016; Krijnen & Van Bauwel, 2021). According to Ringrow (2016), feminism often deals with gender since society's assumptions about what it means to be a man or a woman often determine how women are treated in society. Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2021) do however suggest that gender is a fluid concept, meaning that it changes per culture and time depending on society's assumptions about what it means to be a man or a woman. Therefore, Ringrow (2016) claims that gender and the perception of gender inequality can vary greatly among groups or between individuals. To better understand and recognize gender, Talbot (2008) and Krijnen and Van Bauwel (2021) suggest that one should capture gender through gender stereotypes which are generalised views or assumptions within a particular culture about attributes, characteristics, or roles of men or women which are labelled as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. Before the existence of the feminist movement, the gender stereotype for women mostly included being the subordinate sex or (sexual) objects. As the feminist movement developed to end this gender inequality, Gray and Boddy (2010) explain that feminist ideology can broadly be defined as the belief in the social, political, and economic equality of the sexes.

However, because the feminist movement has existed since the 19th century and has developed throughout the centuries depending on the social, political, and economic position of women in society, feminist ideology has significantly changed throughout the centuries as well (Gray & Boddy, 2010; Snyder, 2008). Therefore, to better understand feminist ideology and its developments throughout the centuries, scholars often categorise feminism through a wave narrative,

which divides feminism into four different periods of feminism, or so-called waves, which are characterised by particular sets of beliefs, and documents the rise of these waves and their flow into different feminist waves throughout the centuries (Evans, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Snyder, 2008). Existing literature on the wave narrative claims that the first wave of feminism developed at the end of the 19th century (Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010). As explained by Gray and Boddy (2010), the first wave of feminism mainly revolved around the ideology that women should have human rights and be treated as independent human beings, since women mainly were regarded as property of men in these times. Therefore, first-wave feminism is primarily characterised by the goal of gaining civil rights and the suffrage movement with which women fought for their right to vote (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). After World War Two, women's participation in the labour force and civil rights movements inspired the emergence of the second wave of feminism (David, 2016; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010). David (2016) explains that whereas women did gain civil rights and the right to vote in most Western countries, they still felt subordinated and excluded in other aspects of life such as personal, political, economic or social life since they often needed a man's approval to do certain tasks or could not participate in certain activities such as education. Therefore, second-wave feminism carries the ideology that women and men should be equal in all aspects of life (David, 2016; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). In this way, second-wave feminists were primarily concerned with eliminating gender inequality by for instance questioning and challenging traditional gender and family roles and fighting for equality in the labour market, women's educational opportunities and access to child care which would give women more time to get education and work experience (David, 2016; Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010).

In the late 1980s, the submovement of postfeminism emerged, which is characterised by the belief that the second-wavers' fight for gender equality was achieved, meaning that women can enjoy full equality in all aspects of life (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Hence, postfeminists assume that women can "have it all" if they put their minds to it, which makes the struggles of women solely a personal matter and, according to Lazar (2007, 2009), obscures the social, cultural, political, or economic constraints that groups of women face. Another characteristic of postfeminism is the critique and rejection of the unfeminine image which they think second-wavers created (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010). As explained by Gray and Boddy (2010), postfeminists criticise second-wave feminists for their anti-men sentiments and rejection of feminine traits which led Western society to depict and generalise feminists as man-hating lesbians, creating a bad image for women in general (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2007, 2009). Whereas second-wave feminists mainly rejected feminine values and behaviours in order to achieve gender equality, postfeminists believe that rejecting femininity only increases women's oppression as it indirectly favours masculine values and behaviours (Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar,

2009). Therefore, postfeminists primarily emphasize celebrating all things feminine by reclaiming their femininity through their appearances and behaviours and embracing their sexuality by focusing on sexual freedom, choice, and their power to seduce men (Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009).

Due to the increasing financial independence of women, the changing social and political position of women in society, and the adoption of feminism in popular media, a third wave of feminism developed at the end of the 1990s (Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Snyder, 2008). As explained by Becker-Herby (2016), the third wave of feminism is mainly characterised by openly embracing intersectionality and individualism. Here, intersectionality refers to the belief that feminism should welcome every woman regardless of their race, gender, or sexual preferences (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Snyder, 2008; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Becker-Herby (2016) and Snyder (2008) propose that this aspect of intersectionality differs third-wave feminists from first- and second-wave feminists as they argue that previous waves only included the perspective of white, middle-class women. Besides intersectionality, third-wave feminism additionally embraces individualism in the sense that third-wave feminists reject the belief that all women share a set of shared experiences and instead believe that and revolves around women's freedom of choice in every aspect of life, corresponding with postfeminism (Becker-Herby, 2016; Snyder, 2008). Furthermore, similar to postfeminism, Snyder (2008) claims that third-wavers consider themselves to be entitled to equality and self-fulfilment, even though they recognize ongoing gender inequality. In this way, third-wave feminism celebrates femininity as well by believing that women are entitled to claim sexual pleasure and play with their femininity. (Becker-Herby, 2016; Snyder, 2008).

Lastly, whereas some scholars argue that solely three waves of feminism exist, more and more scholars are starting to acknowledge the fourth wave of feminism which, according to Parry et al. (2018) and Varghese and Kumar (2020), developed in the 2010s. One key characteristic of fourth-wave feminism is its technological mobilisation and interconnectedness through globalisation as it emerged through the rise of social media platforms such as Instagram (Maclaran, 2012; Parry et al., 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). By connecting with feminists all over the globe through social media, Parry et al. (2018) propose that fourth-wave feminism expands the aspect of intersectionality from the third wave by focussing on gender inequality issues around the world. Parry et al. (2018) and Varghese and Kumar (2020) additionally suggest that fourth-wave feminists further explore the aspect of intersectionality by focussing on inclusivity by for instance accepting transgenderism or challenging female stereotypes by encouraging women to go beyond society's ideal standards for women. With this, another key characteristic of fourth-wave feminism is its emphasis on and belief in female empowerment, which includes inspiring and encouraging women to confidently determine their own choices, take control and responsibility for their identity and lives, and to freely be themselves (Drake, 2017; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Lastly, another characteristic of fourth-wave feminism is its expanded focus on the third wave's aspect of individualism by utilising social media to

share personal stories about topics such as sexual violence, sexism in the workplace, or victim-blaming as a form of activism (Drake, 2017; Parry et al., 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Whereas the wave narrative thus helps to distinguish feminism and the different feminist ideologies throughout the years, it is worthy to note that the wave narrative holds some disadvantages. Many critics of the wave narrative argue that it oversimplifies the complicated history of feminism as it indirectly suggests that solely one distinct type of feminism and feminist ideology exists at a certain moment in history (Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Parry et al., 2018). This aspect of the wave narrative is problematic as newer waves often seem to adopt certain parts of feminist ideology from previous waves, as previously seen with third- and fourth-wave feminism (Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010). According to Evans and Chamberlain (2015), the wave narrative additionally indirectly and incorrectly suggests that feminism developed in chronological order throughout history, whereas instead these waves co-existed and interacted with each other throughout history, as revealed by post-feminism and third-wave feminism. Furthermore, the wave narrative also proposes that feminism developed in the same manner over the globe, whilst in reality the development of feminism is different for every place in the world depending on the social, cultural, economic, and political environment (Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010). Scholars do nevertheless argue that the wave narrative could be utilised as an umbrella concept to capture the peaks of feminist activism and to distinguish and understand the differences and relationships between feminist ideologies throughout the years (Evans, 2015; Evans & Chamberlain, 2015; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Parry et al., 2018). In this thesis, the wave narrative will therefore be utilised to uncover and distinguish the different feminist ideologies in the luxury perfume advertisements in the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and 2010s to 2020s.

2.2 *Feminism in advertising - Commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s*

To uncover, analyse, and compare how feminist ideology has been incorporated in luxury fragrance advertisements from the 1990s until now, we must discuss commodity feminism. The concept of commodity feminism was firstly introduced by Goldman, Heath and Smith in *Commodity Feminism* (1991) to explain a new trend in advertising in which advertisers attempted to tie the emancipation of women and feminism to consumerism. Goldman et al. (1991) explain that commodity feminism refers to the utilisation of feminist ideals, such as independence, freedom, or sexual agency, in the promotion of products and services to increase sales. In other words, commodity feminism suggests that to unlock feminist ideals, a woman must first purchase a particular good or service, such as perfume (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991). In the perfume industry, the rise of commodity feminism was particularly evident in the utilisation of the feminist ideal of freedom as Goldman (1987) for instance discovered in his analysis of perfume advertisements that multiple adverts utilised symbols of freedom, such as birds, or liberating words, like “unleash” or “free

yourself”, to signify freedom. Whilst the incorporation of feminist ideology by the advertising industry was partially positively welcomed by consumers, various scholars and consumers additionally criticised the advertising industry for the disingenuous nature of the advertisements (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Goldman et al. (1991) developed the paradoxical term commodity feminism to instead criticise the advertising industry for exploiting and appropriating feminism by detaching feminism from its socio-political importance and meaning. Goldman et al. (1991) explain that by utilising feminism to promote products or services, feminism itself becomes objectified as it is attached to a certain look or style. The notion of commodity feminism therefore reveals the paradoxical nature of these advertisements as feminist ideals, such as freedom, independence, and choice, are only accessible through a restricted, forced-choice of buying specific products (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Despite the fact that the advertising industry employed commodity feminism since the 1970s, the 1990s is considered as a considerable shift for commodity feminism by various scholars (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009; Maclaran, 2012). This shift was firstly provoked by the increasing purchasing power and financial independence of women due to the changing socio-political and economic position of women in society (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007). In addition, the rise of post-feminism prompted increasing criticism about the oppressive and exploitative nature of advertisements and their idealised, patriarchal depictions of women (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Furthermore, as previously discussed, feminism was increasingly adopted in popular media culture in the 1990s, making feminism more accessible and understandable to a larger audience of women (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010). Therefore, to remain appealing to female consumers, the advertising industry increasingly incorporated (post-)feminist ideology in the 1990s and 2000s (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009). As explained by Lazar (2009), this shift in commodity feminism resulted in the beauty industry in so-called “entitled femininity” advertising, which revolves around the celebration of femininity and the notion that women should be entitled to pleasure and leisure (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009).

One key characteristic of this type of commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s is thus the emphasis on women’s entitlement to pleasure and leisure by prioritising their own needs and desires over others (Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009; Windels et al., 2019). This emphasis on women’s entitlement to pleasure and leisure is revealed through various themes in commodity feminism advertisements, including self-indulgence and pampering, pleasuring the self, and the focus on women’s choices (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Firstly, one way in which commodity feminism highlighted women’s entitlement to pleasure is by stating that women should be self-indulgent and pamper themselves through consumer activity (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Here, advertisements would thus suggest that women should treat themselves by buying specific products that satisfy their own

needs and giving themselves some “me-time” (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). As explained by Lazar (2009), the cosmetics industry often associated self-indulgence and pampering in commodity feminism of the 1990s to 2000s with luxury by suggesting that women are entitled to luxury and that therefore they should splurge on luxury products such as perfume, corresponding with the splurging mindset due to the economic boom in Western society in the 1990s.

Secondly, another way in which commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s presented the notion of women’s entitlement to pleasure and leisure is through the emphasis on their agency in choosing for pleasure (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019). Lazar (2009) and Windsels et al. (2019) explain that commodity feminism from the cosmetics industry would highlight women’s agency in pleasure by stating that women should purchase and use products for solely their own pleasure through for example arguing that women should wear make-up or perfume for themselves instead of men. In addition, advertisements would additionally emphasize women’s agency in pleasure by depicting that women could enjoy themselves and experience pleasure without men through utilising products (Lazar, 2009). Lazar (2009) explains that these advertisements often utilised sexual terms such as “surrender” or “be seduced” and mainly focus on the product, such as perfume, to market their products as women’s way to pleasure instead of having to rely on men. In this way, the emphasis on women’s entitlement to pleasure and leisure in commodity feminism of the 1990s and 2000s corresponds with postfeminist ideology as it suggests that women are entitled to pleasure and to prioritize their own needs and desires over others such as men (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2007, 2009; Snyder, 2008).

Another key characteristic of commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s is the celebration of femininity (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Maclaran, 2012). As explained by Gray and Boddy (2010) and Lazar (2009), this celebration of femininity in advertising developed as a reaction to the aforementioned criticism of post-feminists on second-wave feminists’ rejection of feminine behaviours and values. Hence, commodity feminism in the cosmetics industry from the 1990s to 2000s focused on celebrating femininity by reclaiming stereotypical feminine values and/or practices and with that reasserting sexual differences (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windels et al., 2019). As stated by Lazar (2009), one way in which commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s reclaimed feminine stereotypes in order to celebrate femininity is by “girling women” (Lazar, 2009, p. 390). Here, advertisements mainly focused on the girlhood time of women by emphasizing youthfulness, innocence, and playfulness. According to Lazar (2009), one way in which advertisements highlighted girlhood is through utilising feminine colours, such as pink, purple, or red, or feminine symbols, like flowers, crystals, or heart shapes. In addition, Windsels et al. (2019) claim that advertisements also emphasized girliness by depicting young girls’ fantasies by for instance dressing women up in princess-like dresses and glittery accessories. Furthermore, Lazar (2009) explains that cosmetics advertisements often referred to femininity by utilising juvenile reference terms for women such as ‘girls’, girly adjectives such as “sweet pink” or “adorable and soft”, and by utilising juvenile voices.

Furthermore, Lazar (2009) and Windsels et al. (2019) argue that commodity feminism in cosmetics advertisements also focused on girlhood by using slender women and dressing them in girly, juvenile clothing and girly make-up, like bright blush, long lashes and pink lip gloss, in order to focus on the youthfulness of women. In this way, commodity feminism in the cosmetics industry reflected the aforementioned postfeminist ideology as they reflected the belief that women should embrace, celebrate, and reclaim femininity (Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019).

Lastly, another way in which commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s celebrated femininity is by portraying them as confidently and enthusiastically embracing their feminine identity with an element of fun and self-conscious play (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019). As explained by Gill (2007), advertisements mainly portrayed women as being confident with their feminine identity through giving them sexual agency and choice in sexual acts. According to Lazar (2009) and Gill (2007), women showed their confidence in their femininity by being portrayed as temptresses who utilised their feminine appearance to play with men by confidently teasing, seducing, and distracting men in order to fulfil their needs and desires in the meantime. The author additionally argues that women were depicted to have the upper hand during intimate acts in order to signify women's sexual agency and choice in intimacy. In this way, this characteristic reflects the aforementioned postfeminist and third-wave feminist ideology on celebrating femininity and playing with one's feminine identity as a reaction to the rejection of femininity by second-wave feminists (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Snyder, 2008). To summarize, commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s reflected postfeminist ideology by celebrating femininity through reflecting on girlhood or by portraying them as confident and assertive subjects by emphasizing their entitlement to take control of their (sexual) pleasure and leisure (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019).

Whereas various scholars welcomed these changes in advertising and commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s, many scholars have criticised the advertising industry for remaining exploitative, oppressive, and paradoxical in nature. Firstly, although the advertising industry did mostly reject portraying women as sexual, passive objects, many scholars critique advertisements from the 1990s and 2000s for still objectifying and sexualising women in other ways (Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). According to Gill (2007), advertisements shifted from the objectification to the subjectification of women by giving women the entitlement to pleasure and sexual agency but depicting as if they always choose to present themselves in an objectified manner because it seemingly suited their interests to do so. This self-fetishization of women, as Goldman et al. (1991) call it, therefore suggests that the exploitative, patriarchal nature of advertisements did not change because women were still portrayed in a beautiful, sexy way that resembles the heterosexual man's ideal for women. Gill (2007) argues that, in this way,

advertisements mainly depicted the stereotypical ideal for women of being attractive, white, and young, instead of including a diverse variety of women.

In addition, since commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s mainly focused on the appearance of women in order to celebrate femininity and reclaim female stereotypes, various scholars argue that this type of advertising reduced femininity to solely a bodily property as they often did not include social or psychological characteristics (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). In this way, advertisements thus indirectly suggested that women's bodies are their only source of power and femininity, which in turn once more sexualised and objectified women (Gill, 2007, 2008; Lazar, 2009). Furthermore, by portraying women as young girls to embrace femininity and female stereotypes, Lazar (2009) argues that advertisements might indirectly communicate that society can describe and treat women of all ages as girls, which consequently could disacknowledge their power and reinforce traditional gender roles which feminists yet want to distance themselves from.

Whereas advertisements thus did advocate for women's entitlement to pleasure and leisure, celebrate femininity, and portray women as active, assertive subjects with (sexual) agency, the oppressive and exploitative nature of advertisements did not change as women remained to be portrayed in ways that fit patriarchal standards for women and ads exploited feminism through suggesting that women could only reclaim their femininity and entitlement to pleasure by buying certain products or services. Therefore, various scholars argue that the nature of commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s did not change. Over time, this type of commodity feminism gained more and more criticism from (female) consumers which led advertisers to progressively switch to a new type of advertising in the 2010s, namely femvertising.

2.3 Feminism in advertising – Femvertising in the 2010s and 2020s

To analyse how feminist ideology is incorporated in advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s, we must discuss the concept of femvertising. Next to the increasing criticism about commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s, a variety of other factors contributed to the rise of femvertising, beginning with consumers' need for companies to participate in brand activism. In the 2010s and 2020s, consumers have increasingly started to not only favour brands for their products or services but also for which values and interests brands support, which initiated brands to find ways in which they can support societal causes or movements in order to build emotional connections with their customers, gain a positive brand image, and increase long-term sales (Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Hence, supporting the social movement of feminism with brand activism is increasingly popular in the advertising industry to attract female customers and gain a good brand image (Hsu, 2018; Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Another crucial factor in the rise of femvertising, according to Becker-Herby (2016) and Varghese and Kumar (2020), is the popularity of third-wave feminism and the emergence of fourth-wave feminism. As aforementioned, at the beginning of the 2000s, popular media culture increasingly adopted third-wave feminist ideals by

creating television or films with pro-female themes or by showing celebrities who take a feminist stance themselves. In this way, feminist ideals became increasingly popularised, which consequently decreased feminists' bad reputation for being lesbian man-haters and increased the popularity of feminism in general (Becker-Herby, 2016; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). In addition, the development of the fourth wave of feminism and their intense online activism only increased the popularity of feminism as now every person could access feminist debate (Becker-Herby, 2016; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Therefore, to remain attractive to female consumers, advertisers started utilising femvertising as a means to sell their products and services at the beginning of the 2010s.

Scholars define femvertising as a new form of commodity feminism which actively seeks to empower women through pro-female messaging and imagery (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). To give an illustration, one advertising campaign that scholars consider to be the frontrunner of femvertising is the 2004 Dove Real Beauty campaign, which aimed to build women's self-confidence and celebrate real women by challenging female stereotypes through depicting a wide variety of women (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Murray, 2013). Whilst femvertising is still considered to be a form of commodity feminism by scholars as it ultimately utilises feminist ideology to promote products or services, various scholars propose that femvertising is considerably different from commodity feminism prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s, which can be seen through the characteristics of femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018).

As aforementioned, one key characteristic of femvertising is the empowerment of women through pro-female messaging and imagery (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Becker-Herby (2016) explains that femvertising often includes inspirational, empowering messaging with the aim of making women feel self-confident and motivated. In this way, femvertising ideally focusses on reinforcing and celebrating positivity through focussing on positive aspects of women's lives or through appreciating and normalising their issues, imperfections, and psychological well-being (Becker-Herby, 2016; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). This significantly contrasts commodity feminism prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s since, according to Gill (2007) and Becker-Herby (2016), advertisements from this period usually communicated that women should monitor and regulate their appearances as imperfections were argued to decrease their femininity and that their products were the only way to 'fix' these imperfections. According to Case (2019), another way in which femvertising empowers women is through highlighting women's sentiment of strength by emphasizing their physical and mental strength and power. Hsu (2018) explains that advertisements often depicted women in powerful poses, with symbols of power such as lions, or by depicting women in situations which require mental or physical strength. In this way, Becker-Herby (2016) and Case (2019) argue that femvertising places a greater emphasis on women's personalities and capabilities as their source of power in contrast to commodity feminism of the 1990s and 2000s which, as aforementioned, mainly focused on women's bodies as their sole source of power. As a consequence, various scholars argue that femvertising is significantly different from

commodity feminism prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s, because femvertising represents women through empowered depictions instead of sexualising them (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Another characteristic of femvertising is the challenging of stereotypical beauty ideals for women, namely to be skinny, white, and young (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). According to Becker-Herby (2016), one way in which advertisements challenge female stereotypes is by including a diverse set of women in their imagery. In this way, femvertising could celebrate all body types and sizes by including women of all shapes, ages, ethnicities, and so forth, which reflects the third-wave and fourth-wave ideologies on intersectionality (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Maclaran, 2012; Snyder, 2008). This makes femvertising considerably different from 1990s and 2000s commodity feminism as, instead of reinforcing traditional female stereotypes and beauty ideals, femvertising thus represents a wide variety of women which helps to battle traditional female stereotypes and beauty ideals (Becker-Herby, 2016; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Another way in which femvertising challenges female stereotypes, according to Becker-Herby (2016), is by portraying women in roles and scenarios outside their traditional roles. Whereas for instance women formerly were regularly presented in motherhood duties or solely the role of being sexual, femvertising portrays women in for instance daredevil scenarios, different professions, or in mentally-challenging tasks (Case, 2019). As a consequence, scholars argue that, in contrast to 1990s and 2000s commodity feminism, femvertising provides the opportunity to reclaim certain female traits or issues that were misrepresented by male-dominated media through challenging patriarchal, idealistic stereotypes and emphasize women's right to choose, be, and do whatever they want (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Lastly, according to Becker-Herby (2016) and Hsu (2018), the third characteristic of femvertising is the focus on authenticity. Here, authenticity implies that all elements of the advertisements, including their products, message, and the overall brand, should feel 'real' and make sense to audiences by reflecting sincerity. As stated by Becker-Herby (2016), one way in which brands communicate authenticity in femvertising is by downplaying sexuality in the sense that portraying women in a sexual manner is not their prime concern, in contrast to previous advertising trends. In femvertising, women are thus only portrayed with for instance exposed skin when it truly fits the situation, such as whilst working out in sports bras (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018). Case (2019) states that another way that advertisers communicate authenticity in femvertising is by placing their product features in less prominent places, meaning that they focus more on telling women's stories instead of directly selling their products. This decline in product prominence corresponds with the aforementioned increasing demand of consumers for brands to support certain causes or interests, as Case (2019) argues that the personality of the brand and story behind the product or service has become a critical aspect in femvertising. Furthermore, another way in which

brands can signal authenticity, according to Hsu (2018) and Varghese and Kumar (2020), is through actively engaging in activism besides advertising through for instance donating money or partaking in online activism.

Whereas multiple studies did reveal that femvertising has a positive impact on consumers' brand opinions, purchase intentions, and emotional connection to brands (Akestam et al., 2017; Drake, 2017), many scholars have questioned and criticised femvertising for multiple reasons (Akestam et al., 2017; Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). As femvertising is a form of commodity feminism, it is often criticised by scholars for exploiting feminism since companies only support feminism to increase sales instead of wanting to contribute to societal change (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). Hsu (2018) argues that the cosmetics industry is specifically prone to this exploitation of feminism and hypocrisy since the cosmetics industry has a long history of promoting unrealistic beauty standards, such as women being extremely skinny. Furthermore, Qiao and Wang (2019) discovered in their studies on cosmetics advertising in the 2010s and 2000s that the cosmetics industry usually oversimplifies and reduces women's confidence to solely their bodies as these advertisements are often beauty-centred, corresponding with criticism on commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s. Furthermore, a great deal of criticism on femvertising questions whether femvertising actually challenges female stereotypes (Qiao & Wang, 2019; Rodríguez-Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017; Patton & Vasquez, 2008). Rodríguez-Pérez and Gutiérrez (2017) found in their study that, whereas advertisements did include a variety of women in terms of body size, appearance, age, or ethnicity, the advertisements still reproduced female stereotypes by portraying these women with stereotypical personalities, such as portraying Asian women as being smart. Therefore, this thesis will utilise the concept of femvertising and its characteristics in order to uncover whether the incorporation of feminist ideology truly has changed luxury fragrance advertisements from the 1990s and 2000s to the 2010s and 2020s.

3. Methodology

To answer the research question ‘How is feminist ideology incorporated in luxury fragrance advertising in the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s?’, this study conducted a MCDA of sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements from both of these periods and their underlying feminist ideologies. The first section of this chapter will discuss the data collection process by explaining and justifying the data selection process and by explaining the inclusion criteria for the sample. Afterwards, the method of MCDA is discussed with regard to its relevance for the study and how it was applied to this study. The third section will describe how the sample of luxury fragrance advertisements was analysed by presenting the tools for MCDA provided by Machin (2016), Machin and Mayr (2012), and Hirvonen and Tiittula (2010) and discuss each step of the data analysis. Lastly, this chapter will reflect on the validity and reliability of this research.

3.1 Sample & data collection

This thesis will focus on analysing and comparing feminist ideology in video advertisements from the most popular, or top-selling, fragrance launches of the top-selling, international luxury fragrance brands from the periods of the 1990s until the 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s. For the purposes of this thesis, luxury is defined by solely the characteristic of price since, according to Beasley and Danesi (2002), other characteristics of luxury such as prestige, social status, or quality vary immensely across different cultures. Therefore, to determine which brands are selling luxury perfumes, luxury perfumes were categorised in a similar way as Allied Market Research (2019), namely as costing 100\$ or more per 100ml or 3.4fl oz.

To determine which brands are internationally top-selling perfume brands, I utilised a variety of research and news articles to find the top-selling perfume brands per country or continent. Firstly, Kantar Media TGI discovered in their study that the top-selling fragrance brands of 2020 by women in the UK included Chanel; Dior; Calvin Klein; Yves Saint Laurent; Paco Rabanne; Marc Jacobs; Mugler; Estee Lauder; Avon; and Dolce & Gabbana (Statista, 2020). In 2021, the top-selling fragrance brands in Britain were again Chanel, Mugler, Yves Saint Laurent, and Paco Rabanne, however, also new brands such as Lancôme and Carolina Herrera (Parsons, 2021). In addition, Grand View Research discovered that whereas USA’s current top-selling fragrance brands are Chanel and Viktor & Rolf, Australia’s are Chanel and Calvin Klein, France’s are Lancôme and Dior, and Japan’s top-selling fragrance brand is again Chanel (Byrdie, 2020). Furthermore, according to a study by PerfumeDirect, the top-selling international perfumes for women of the 1990s and 2000s were from luxury brands such as Chanel, Mugler, Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Viktor & Rolf, and Jean Paul Gaultier, whereas the 2010s and 2020s again included luxury brands like Chanel, Marc Jacobs, and Dior but also new brands such as Chloe and Prada (Greep, 2020). Not all brands do however sell luxury perfumes since for instance Calvin Klein and Avon do not sell perfumes costing more than

100\$ per 100 ml. Therefore, to choose the luxury brands, I firstly checked the prices of their perfumes on their official websites. Secondly, to create a diverse, international sample of luxury brands, I strived to choose a variety of luxury perfume brands from different countries. Furthermore, luxury perfume brands were only chosen if these brands were top-selling in both the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s, as this could truly reflect the most popular trends of that time in terms of feminism and female stereotypes. This selection resulted in the inclusion of the following brands: Chanel, Dior, Yves Saint Laurent, Mugler, Paco Rabanne, Carolina Herrera, Marc Jacobs, and Lancôme.

To determine the top-selling fragrance launches from these brands in the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s, I utilised the online fragrance encyclopaedia *Fragrantica* which keeps a record of all perfume launches in the world (*Fragrantica*, n.d.). On *Fragrantica*'s website, I firstly searched for each specific brand by typing their name in the search bar. Next, I categorised the brand's fragrances on popularity to view the top-selling perfumes of each brand and their year of launch. To find the top-selling perfumes launches of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s, I checked the launch dates of the perfumes to ensure the perfumes were launched in those specific periods. In addition, I excluded unisex perfumes, perfume collections, relauches of old perfumes, and perfume brands that did not include advertising campaigns. Furthermore, to confirm the popularity statistics on *Fragrantica*, I utilised various research articles or magazine articles which included statistics from research firms about the top-selling perfumes per brand. This ultimately resulted in a sample of 16 perfumes with which every luxury brand has one top-selling perfume launch in the 1990s to 2000s and one launch in the 2010s to 2020s (Table 1).

Brand	Top-selling perfume launch of 1990s-2000s	Year of launch	Top-selling perfume launch of 2010s-2020s	Year of launch
Chanel	Coco Mademoiselle	2001	Gabrielle	2017
Dior	J'adore	1999	Joy	2018
Yves Saint Laurent	Cinéma	2004	Libre	2019
Mugler	Angel	1992	Womanity	2010
Paco Rabanne	Ultraviolet	1999	Olympéa	2015
Carolina Herrera	212	1997	Good Girl	2016
Marc Jacobs	Daisy	2007	Perfect	2020
Lancôme	Hypnôse	2005	Idôle	2019

Table 1 - Sample

To gain access to the video commercials of these perfume launches, I utilised the social media platform YouTube. Here, I searched for the videos on both the brands' official YouTube accounts as well as other channels since most commercials for perfume launches from the 1990s to 2000s often were not posted on their official channels. This resulted in a sample of sixteen videos which can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Method

To uncover the underlying feminist ideologies in this sample of luxury fragrance advertisements, the method of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) was applied. MCDA originates from the method of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which aims to study the relationship between discourse and power by uncovering and denaturalising the underlying meanings, ideologies, and power relations in verbal communication (Berger, 2016; Fairclough, 2001; Machin & Mayr, 2012). In CDA, scholars primarily define discourse as a social practice in which language plays a crucial role (Berger, 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Djonov & Zhao, 2014; Machin & Mayr, 2012). In other words, the method examines how verbal communication can construct and convey certain ideologies whilst downplaying or concealing others through for instance choosing specific words or grammar. One crucial aspect of CDA is the notion that power is (re)produced through discourse as it influences the ways in which we acquire, learn or change ideologies, which in this case is feminist ideology (Jancsary et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Dijk, 2006, 2011). Machin and Mayr (2012) explain that by solely representing certain ideologies or power relations in an unobtrusive way, discourse can normalise certain ways of thinking, which in turn helps society to accept or sustain these particular ideologies and power relations. To give an illustration, Ringrow (2016) explains that the advertising industry has (re)produced patriarchal ideologies and power relations surrounding female gender norms by for instance solely portraying women in a specific sexualised, objectified way and being subordinate to men. Another crucial aspect of CDA then is its social constructivist grounding as the method assumes that discourse does not merely reflect society in terms of beliefs or power relations, discourse additionally constructs and shapes society by prioritising certain ideologies and reinforcing power relations by depicting these relations in a particular way (Jancsary et al., 2016; Fairclough, 2001; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Dijk, 1993). In other words, the ways in which we discuss and create meaning about certain events, people, or objects will determine our knowledge, perceptions, and beliefs about these topics and vice versa (Machin & Mayr, 2012; Van Dijk, 1993). This notion of social constructivism is critical for the cosmetics industry because these industries have traditionally mainly included stereotypical female gender portrayals with idealised, unattainable beauty standards, which could significantly influence people's social norms and standards for women in society (Ringrow, 2016). The "critical" in CDA therefore aims to denaturalise and study discourses by considering how authors utilise language to create meaning and represent reality in a particular way (Dennis et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012).

Various scholars have nevertheless criticised critical discourse analysis as they argue that discourses are multimodal in nature, meaning that they include a variety of modes, such as visuals, sounds, gestures, or layouts, instead of solely verbal communication (Berger, 2016; Dennis et al., 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Jewitt et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Since this thesis focuses on analysing luxury fragrance advertisements that include multiple modes, namely visual, audio, and verbal modes, utilising critical discourse analysis as a method and thus solely analysing verbal communication would result in a considerable loss of meaning. Therefore, this thesis utilised the method of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) in order to uncover and analyse feminist ideology in luxury perfume advertisements. Critical multimodal discourse analysis aims to analyse the ways in which the combination of modes, or the so-called multimodal ensemble, can communicate particular ideologies and construct certain versions of social reality by serving dominant interests and marginalising others (Berger, 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Jewitt et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Hall et al., 2013). Here, discourse is defined as a social practice which consists of diverse communicative forms - such as written text, visual imagery, or sound - that together contribute to a shared understanding of the world and establish a distinct set of beliefs and practices (Berger, 2016; Fairclough, 2001; Jancsary et al., 2016; Ringrow, 2016; Van Dijk, 2006, 2011).

As explained by Jewitt et al. (2016) and Wong (2019), MCDA is rooted in the theory of social semiotics, which aims to understand the social dimensions of meaning-making by focussing on the social context in which meaning is created and the agency of the meaning-maker. Hall et al. (2013) explain that social semiotics refers meaning-making as sign-making in which a sign communicates or expresses an idea or ideology. Here, a sign consists of two elements, namely the signifier, which is the chosen form or mode for conveying meaning such as visuals, sounds, or text, and the signified, which is the intended meaning or idea communicated by the signifier (Hall et al., 2013; Machin & Mayr, 2012). To give an illustration, Becker-Herby (2016) argues that commodity feminism could for instance portray women in suits – the signifier – in order to communicate and the feminist values of independence and self-control – the signified. One crucial aspect of social semiotics is the notion of multimodality which acknowledges that meaning-making involves a variety of modes, or so-called semiotic resources, which all offer distinct potentialities and limitations to the production of the multimodal ensemble or whole (Jancsary et al., 2016; Jewitt et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012; Wong, 2019). In this way, social semiotics suggests that to study the meaning of discourse, one must examine how each distinct mode contributes to the meaning of the multimodal ensemble and how the different modes interact and support each other in the meaning-making process (Jewitt et al., 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Wong, 2019). Therefore, to research luxury fragrance advertisements, this study analysed and cross-compared three different modes, namely the visual, verbal, and audio modes. In addition, another key aspect of social semiotics is the acknowledgement that meaning-making is influenced by the socio-cultural context (Jewitt et al., 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Wong, 2019). According to Jewitt et al. (2016), the socio-cultural context of meaning-making influences the

availability of modes in a given situation, the different choices of modes and underlying motivations of people using them, how these choices are shaped and realised by ideology and power, and differences in meaning according to these contexts. This notion of meaning-making being a social process is crucial for this thesis as it helps to acknowledge that the meaning of the advertisements depends on the specific time, environment, and feminist ideology with which the advertisements are made.

The final critical aspect of social semiotics is the emphasis on the agency of the meaning-maker (Jancsary et al., 2016; Wong, 2019). According to Wong (2019), social semiotics is built upon the assumption that when creating meaning, individuals critically consider the available semiotic resources and purposefully select the mode that suits their interests. In this way, social semiotics furthermore helps to highlight the nature and target of commodity feminism as these luxury fragrance advertisements are made with the motivation to attract female customers. By utilising the social semiotic approach, the method of MCDA thus acknowledges that power is communicated through different modes and considers how multimodal discourse is created, what is communicated, and who is granted a voice by a particular mode (Berger, 2016; Jancsary et al., 2016; Jewitt et al., 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). The method of MCDA is therefore crucial for this thesis as it helps to uncover and analyse how the various modes in the luxury fragrance advertisements can together communicate feminist ideology, and to critically consider how this meaning is shaped by the intentions of the advertisers and the socio-cultural context of the specific periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s with regard to the different waves of feminism.

3.3 Data analysis

To uncover and analyse how feminist ideology is incorporated in luxury fragrance advertisements, I utilised the frameworks for multimodal critical discourse analysis from both Machin (2016) and Machin and Mayr (2012). Here, Machin's (2016) framework for MCDA is an extension of Machin and Mayr's (2012) framework for MCDA as it includes more detailed explanations of the tools for analysis. These frameworks are built upon Roland Barthes' theory of semiotics which analyses signs by dividing semiology into two levels of signification, namely denotation and connotation (Machin & Mayr, 2012). As explained by Machin and Mayr (2012), denotation focuses on describing what and who is exactly depicted in visual images. This level of signification mainly focuses on the objects and people in media texts – signifiers – and our mental concept of them – signified – which together make a sign (Machin, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Connotation on the other hand examines the ideas and values that are communicated through the distinct representation of these objects or humans (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

The analysis of the sample was conducted manually through an identical procedure; per advertisement, the level of denotation was firstly analysed per mode in the order of visual mode, verbal mode, and audio mode and afterwards the level of connotation was analysed. Here, the modes

were divided into a visual mode, which included all imagery in the ads, a verbal mode, which included statements by actors, lyrics, and written text in the advertisements, and lastly an audio mode, which included sound effects or melodies in the adverts. All modes were transcribed through transcribing the verbal mode verbatim, the visual mode by carefully describing the imagery in the advertisements, and the audio mode by describing the different sound effects and melodies in a detailed manner. The analysis was structured by dividing each advertisement into different scenes which were determined by the change in environment or perspective in the advertisement. To structure the analysis and organise all data, the table as presented in Appendix B was utilised.

Per advertisement, the researcher first analysed the level of denotation per visual, verbal, and audio mode, and afterwards examined the level of connotation by considering which feminist values are communicated through each mode and their interaction. The researcher started by studying the visual mode of the luxury fragrance advertisements by utilising the four tools for visual analysis provided by Machin (2016) and Machin and Mayr (2012), including people, attributes, setting, and salience. Firstly, the people in the advertisements were analysed by examining their appearances in terms of race, ethnicity, age, body type, hair, clothing, and make-up in order to detect whether the portrayal and choice of certain people conveyed certain stereotypes or feminist ideals. In addition, if the advertisement utilised celebrities, their profession and personality were noted down as these celebrities could add to the meaning created in the advertisement. For instance, the analysis revealed that in the Joy advertisement the actress Jennifer Lawrence might add to the signification of the feminist ideal of being free to show your personality as she is considered to be a relatable person with a funny personality (Snow, 2019). Furthermore, people were additionally analysed for their expressions, poses, distance to the camera, and the angle at which they were filmed, corresponding with Machin's (2016) and Machin and Mayr's (2012) tools for visual analysis. Here, I for instance examined the distance of the camera to the people as, according to Machin (2016), a "face-to-face" shot in which people looked directly at the camera can better convey emotions and make direct contact with the viewer, whereas a long shot could instead create a more distant, remote relationship with the viewer. I additionally analysed the angle at which people were filmed since a low-angle shot could for instance make people appear bigger and more powerful whereas a high-angle shot could instead make them appear smaller and weak (Machin, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Lastly, in this category, animals were additionally included by analysing how certain animals signalled feminist values or female traits. For instance, the analysis showed that in the Idôle advertisement a big horse may communicate the woman's fearlessness as she is riding this big horse, but also it might symbolise that she is a knight on a battle horse (Stanton, 2021).

Second, the attributes in the visual mode were analysed which included various objects such as perfume bottles (Machin, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Here, the researcher focused on how certain objects could create meaning and help to emphasize certain feminist ideals to communicate feminist ideology. In addition, special attention was paid to the design of the perfume bottles as they

often reflected the meanings and feminist ideologies communicated in the advertisements. To give an example, the Perfect fragrance by Marc Jacobs signals the feminist value of inclusivity by including various objects on the perfume bottle which might represent different interests, such as running shoes or a handbag. Furthermore, the settings were studied by focusing on how a setting is utilised to communicate certain ideas or meanings (Machin, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). For instance, the analysis revealed that in the Daisy advertisement by Marc Jacobs a meadow of daisies could directly refer to the perfume but additionally might emphasize the innocent, natural, and girly appearance of the women. In this way, it helped to communicate the feminist ideal of celebrating femininity through girliness as explained by Lazar (2009). Finally, salience was examined by studying which aspects in the advertisement were given more emphasis to draw people's attention (Machin, 2016; Machin & Mayr, 2012). Here, Machin and Mayr's (2012) seven sub-elements in which salience can be realised were studied, including cultural symbols (i.e., certain symbols or objects that hold cultural meaning), size (i.e., the ranking of importance of certain elements, ranging from largest to smallest), colour (i.e., the utilisation of stroking colours), tone (i.e., the use of brightness to draw attention to certain elements), focus (i.e., the usage of composition levels to draw attention to specific aspects), foregrounding (i.e., the placement of certain elements in the front to create importance), and overlapping (i.e., the placement of certain elements in front of others to create importance).

After analysing the denotation and connotation of the visual mode, the researcher studied the verbal mode in the advertisement with the verbal tools provided by Machin (2016) and Machin & Mayr (2012) by mainly studying word connotations. Word connotations were examined by studying word choice or absence and the repetition of words and what this might connote (Machin & Mayr, 2012). For instance, the analysis revealed that advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s often utilised words such as "unstoppable" or "I'm ready to face it all" which could describe women's mental strength and might empower women in the sense that they feel self-confident and motivated to show their own strength. In addition, the name of the perfume was studied to understand how the name communicated certain feminist values and added to the meaning of the advertisement. During the analysis, it was decided to not utilise the textual tools of overlexicalization (i.e., the overemphasis of certain words) or structural oppositions (i.e., the utilisation of opposing concepts or words), as these were not evident in any advertisement.

Afterwards, the audio mode was studied by utilising Hirvonen and Tiittula's (2010) tools for analysing audio in MCDA. Here, the sound effects were examined to understand how they communicated or emphasized certain meanings in the advertisements. In addition, the melody of advertisements was studied in order to understand how certain melodies accentuated the meanings communicated by the visual or verbal modes (Hirvonen & Tiittula, 2010). Here, the exact instruments were described as well as their tempo, loudness, and the height of their notes. To give an example, the analysis revealed that in the Idôle ad by Lancôme a melody of loud, high-tempo, low drum notes and one long, low piano note seemed to create dramatic, battle-like music which helps to focus on the

mental strength and determination of the woman whereas the J'adore advert by Dior utilises loud, high-tempo, high electric guitar notes to create an exciting, tense melody which might emphasize on the sexual tension of the woman to indulge herself in luxury.

3.4 Reliability & Validity

For the purpose of this study, it is crucial to reflect on the reliability and validity of the research. One main disadvantage of MCDA which greatly influences the reliability of the study is the reliance on the interpretation of the data by the researchers themselves (Bryman, 2016; Matthews & Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2013). In this way, the background of the researcher plays a big role in the interpretation of the data and the results which could lead to undesirable biases (Bryman, 2016; Matthews & Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2013). One way to reflect on reliability is by being transparent about the researcher's position on this study's topic in order for the readers of this paper and other researchers to understand how the researcher's interpretation of the data (Silverman, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to clarify that my interest in this topic originates from my interest in feminism and being a feminist myself from my early teenage years on. I have always been fascinated by luxury brands such as Chanel, Dior, and Yves Saint Laurent, and their high-budget commercials. My inspiration for this study however truly developed when I first watched the Idôle advertisement by Lancôme which showed Zendaya fearlessly riding a horse through the streets of Los Angeles and finding out that she was the light and thus Idôle, or idol, she was searching for all along. This inspiring and empowering message which, in my eyes, told women to be their own idols and self-confident of their own mental strength made me realise that the advertisements utilised parts of fourth-wave feminist ideology, namely the female empowerment element. I found myself watching YouTube videos and reading articles which discussed the evolution of feminism in luxury fragrance advertisements, which made me not only become increasingly interested in the incorporation of feminism in luxury fragrance advertising but also question the advertisers' motivation behind these advertisements. Therefore, through this study, I intended to find out in what ways feminist ideology was actually incorporated in luxury fragrance advertising and how this has changed throughout the 1990s until now.

Besides providing transparency through the research's position in the study, the reliability of this study can be ensured by providing transparency on the research process, which includes providing a detailed description of my data gathering, method, and analysis which is supported by multiple research articles, by entailing an overview of the final dataset in Appendix A, and by providing the complete data analysis scheme in the Appendix (Bryman, 2016; Creswell & Miller, 2000; Matthews & Ross, 2010; Silverman, 2013). In this way, it provides readers with a way to examine the luxury fragrance advertisements themselves and understand how the researcher came to certain findings but also to question the analysis critically. Furthermore, reliability is ensured by providing examples of the luxury fragrance advertisements in the discussion, as this helps readers to understand and critically consider the findings of the researcher and it gives the opportunity to replicate the study themselves.

To ensure the credibility of this study, the researcher analysed the sample twice by firstly coding half of the sample, receiving feedback from her academic supervisor, adjusting her coding scheme and ways of coding accordingly, and then recoding the first half of the sample and the whole sample. In addition, to establish credibility of the study, the research considered the context of the luxury fragrance advertisements as well, since it is a requirement of MCDA. To validate this study, the tool of analytic induction was utilised by repeatedly comparing research data with each other and comparing the findings from the analysis with previous research and theories as provided in my theoretical framework (Silverman, 2013). In addition, the tool of deviant-case analysis was utilised with which the researcher compared the findings with the existing literature and studies in order to find deviant cases. Lastly, comprehensive data treatment by inspecting and analysing all visual images in a detailed manner until no new findings occur and thus the point of saturation was reached (Silverman, 2013).

3.5 Summary

In short, sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements were analysed from eight different fragrance brands of which one fragrance ad originated from the period of 1990s to 2000s and the other fragrance originated from the period of 2010s to 2020s. The advertisements were analysed through the method of multimodal critical discourse analysis with which the researcher analysed how the visual, verbal, and audio modes in the luxury fragrance advertisements communicated feminist ideology and critically considered how this meaning is shaped by the intentions of the advertisers and the socio-cultural context of the specific periods of the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s with regard to the different waves of feminism. This analysis resulted in six critical themes which will be discussed in the next chapter.

4. Results & Discussion

In this chapter, the findings from the multimodal critical discourse analysis will be presented and discussed. Firstly, the key themes from luxury fragrance advertisements of the 1990s to 2000s will be discussed, namely the depiction of women as temptresses, emphasizing girliness, and showing women who prioritise their desires. Afterwards, the key themes from the analysis of advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s will be presented which include the inclusion of a diverse variety of women, emphasizing women's strength, and advocating for women's freedom. Lastly, the different periods of luxury fragrance advertising will be compared by focussing on the changes in the incorporation of feminist ideology.

4.1 Commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s

The multimodal critical discourse analysis of luxury fragrance advertisements from the 1990s and 2000s revealed three themes, namely the depiction of women as temptresses, highlighting girliness, and showing women who prioritise their desires. These themes are in line with existing literature on commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s as they reveal the characteristic of celebrating femininity through embracing one's sexuality and reflecting on girlhood, and the characteristic of emphasizing women's entitlement to prioritise their own needs and desires over others (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019).

4.1.1 The depiction of women as temptresses

One overarching theme that was present in five out of eight luxury fragrance advertisements of the 1990s and 2000s was the depiction of women as temptresses, meaning that they are portrayed in a sexually attractive manner and intend to seduce men or the viewer. In these advertisements, women utilised seduction to gain control over men, mislead men, or to convince men to give in to women's desires. To illustrate, the Hypnôse advertisement by Lancôme depicts model Daria Werbowy as a temptress by depicting her in a revealing, V-neckline dress and heels (Figure 1).



Figure 1

To accentuate her attractive appearance, the advertisement utilises salience by shining bright lights on only her and by always placing her in the front, making her literally the centre of attention. Besides her attractive appearance, her depiction as a temptress is additionally highlighted by her seductive gaze towards the man whilst he chases her with a mesmerized expression. Here, the name of the fragrance, Hypnôse, highlights this seduction as it might suggest that the woman is hypnotising the man with her seductive appearance and expression. This hypnotisation of the man is accentuated by the utilisation of mirrors in the room as setting, since this multiplies her seductive expression, not allowing him to escape her hypnosis (Figure 2).



Figure 2

Furthermore, by showing that Daria Werbowy is smirking whilst the man follows her, the advertisement further emphasizes her depiction as a temptress as she seems to enjoy hypnotising and seducing the man. This enjoyment of hypnotising people is further emphasized in the advertisement as the model not only hypnotises the man but also tries to hypnotise the viewer by looking directly and seductively into the camera which, according to Machin and Mayr (2012), helps to interact with the viewer. Besides the visual mode, the verbal mode emphasizes her seductive, luring behaviour as she sighs “Come here one day, on a sunny day.” and “I’ll show you someday”, which may signal that she is luring him by for instance promising him to show her body. By depicting the man as blindly following her and referring to her seduction as hypnosis, the advertisement thus might indicate that Daria can control the man with her sexy appearance and behaviour.

An advertisement that is highly similar to the Hypnôse advertisement is the Cinéma ad by Yves Saint Laurent in which model Michelle Alves utilises her appearance to make men go on their knees for her as they stare longingly at her (Figure 3).



Figure 3

In this advertisement, Michelle Alves is depicted in an elegant, long dress with heels, old-Hollywood hair, and red lipstick. This appearance could refer to the appearances of old-Hollywood actresses, such as Marilyn Monroe or Jane Russell, which were considered to be sex symbols and temptresses as well (Eldridge, 2022). In this way, Michelle Alves’ appearance could support her depiction as temptress. Furthermore, similar to the Hypnôse ad, the visual mode accentuates her appearance through salience by shining bright lights only on her which makes her the focus of all shots, but also through the setting as the model sits in the middle of a podium which makes her literally the centre of attention. Moreover, her depiction as a temptress is further emphasized by her

enjoyment of seducing men as she smirks whilst the men kneel for her, corresponding with the Hypnôse advertisement.

The Hypnôse and Cinéma fragrance advertisements are considerably similar in the sense that they both seem to portray women as having control over men through seduction since men kneel for them or blindly follow them. In this way, men appear to not think for themselves, which could signal the reversal of traditional power relations of women being subordinate to men since men are instead portrayed as passive objects who are controlled by assertive women, reflecting general feminist ideology with regard to challenging traditional power relations (Gray & Boddy, 2010). However, the advertisements also reflect Gill's (2007) critique on commodity feminism of the 1990s and 2000s as they seem to indirectly suggest that women need to sexualise themselves to obtain control over men, which minimizes their power to solely their bodies and in turn sexualises them. This critique is especially apparent in the Cinéma advertisement as Michelle Alves only needs her appearance to seduce men rather than engaging in seductive behaviour. In this way, the Cinéma advertisement thus specifically corresponds with Gill's (2007) and Goldman et al.'s (1991) notion of self-fetishization as it reveals that women remain depicted in sexual ways by sexualising themselves.

Whereas the Cinéma and Hypnôse advertisements seem to depict women controlling men, the Coco Mademoiselle advertisement by Chanel appears to depict Keira Knightley as a celebrity who utilises seduction to play with and distract men to fulfil her desire to escape her guards' supervision. Here, Keira Knightley's appearance is highlighted by her glamorous look as she wears a long dress, diamond jewellery, and heels and has styled hair combined with heavy make-up (Figure 4).



Figure 4

In addition, her depiction as a temptress is supported by the utilisation of red colours for her dress and lipstick as they not only signify femininity and sexuality according to Lazar (2009) but also

could help to symbolize the dangerousness of the temptress and her seduction (Jay, n.d.). Moreover, the advertisement further depicts her as a temptress by showing that she knows exactly how to distract men through seduction. To give an illustration, in one scene Keira pretends that she is going to kiss a man as seen in Figure 5, however, instead of kissing him she backs away, smears perfume on him, and laughs.



Figure 5

By showing that she laughs after misleading the man into thinking that she is going to kiss him, the advertisement further highlights her depiction as a temptress as she seems to enjoy seducing and distracting men. This enjoyment of seducing people is emphasized in another scene as well by showing that the actress sexually teases the viewer by sensually touching her arm and then confronting the viewer for staring at her by staring smilingly back at the camera and thus, as explained by Machin and Mayr (2012), staring back at the viewer. Lastly, the verbal mode accentuates the seductive behaviour of Keira Knightley by utilising lyrics from the song L-O-V-E by Nat King Cole like “Love is more than just a game for two” which could suggest that she is playing a game with the man. After she distracts the man, Keira Knightley runs through a large event to escape the building whilst she is followed by male guards and clips of her play on big screens, confirming her celebrity status. Here, the advertisement thus portrays Keira Knightley as a woman who confidently utilises seduction to distract and rebel against men, reflecting the name of the Coco Mademoiselle fragrance which, according to Chanel (n.d.), is intended to reveal the seductive and elegant yet rebellious side of women.

Whilst the *Hypnôse*, *Cinéma*, and *Coco Mademoiselle* are highly similar with regard to women sexualising themselves to seduce men, the power relations in the *Coco Mademoiselle*

advertisement appear different since Keira Knightley seems to still be controlled and supervised by men instead of controlling men herself. This finding is highly interesting as, on the one hand, the advertisement thus reflects (post-)feminist ideology as it could encourage women to embrace their sexuality by depicting her as a temptress, but also contradicts postfeminist ideology as it seems to suggest that gender inequality still exists (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009). In addition, because Keira Knightley is required to mislead or manipulate men in order to gain her desire of escaping from her guards, the advertisements may recreate the traditional negative tradition female stereotype of the manipulative, untrustworthy temptresses, which goes directly against (post-)feminists attempts of banishing the negative female stereotypes (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010).

4.1.2 Emphasizing girliness

Another way in which commodity feminism from the 1990s to 2000s celebrated femininity, according to Lazar (2009) and Windsels et al. (2019), was by highlighting women's girlhood and young female stereotypes, or the so-called girliness of women. This aspect of commodity feminism was present in two out of eight luxury fragrance advertisements from the 1990s to 2000s. As explained by Windsels et al. (2019), one way to highlight girliness is through accentuating women's juvenile traits such as purity and innocence. This aspect is reflected in the Daisy advertisement by Marc Jacobs in which models Frida Gustavsson, Sophie Srej, and Hannah Holman are dressed in white dresses and wear pink, dramatic blush and lip gloss which, as explained by Lazar (2009), makes them appear more innocent and younger (Figure 6).



Figure 6

In addition, another aspect in this advertisement that reflects girliness as well as the common beauty ideal for women during that period is the slender appearance of women which, as explained by

Lazar (2009), makes them appear younger. Furthermore, the setting might represent young feminine traits of being natural and gentle, as proposed by Rose et al. (2012), since the women are laying or standing in a meadow full of delicate flowers, namely daisies. Here, daisies, representing the name of the perfume, might additionally help to communicate young feminine traits and thus girliness as they often symbolize innocence, purity and youthfulness due to their association with childbirth and spring (Moulton, 2022).

According to Windsels et al. (2019), another way in which commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s emphasized girliness is by portraying women in ways that resemble young girls' fantasies. This was clearly evident in the Angel advertisement by Mugler in which actress Naomi Watts seems to be depicted in a big, princess-like dress and glittery heels (Figure 7).



Figure 7

The setting of the advertisement reflects this girly fantasy as well by filming Naomi Watts as she wanders in what appears to be castle high in the sky, which may suggest that she is the Angel which the name of the perfume refers to. By depicting the actress as an angel, the advertisement additionally emphasizes girliness as angels often symbolize stereotypical young feminine traits of innocence and purity since they are considered to be morally upright (Jay, n.d.). Furthermore, the narrative of the advertisement seems to depict this young girl fantasy by showing that the actress is on a quest to find the missing star in the sky by having her search through a big vault filled with glittery perfumes. This fantasy is accentuated by utilising a melody that consists of slow violins, triangles, and harps which together create a melody that may sound as if it belongs in a fairy-tale.

In short, the advertisements reflect postfeminist and third-wave feminist ideology by celebrating femininity through emphasizing girliness and embracing (young) female stereotypes by depicting women in juvenile ways or by depicting women in young girls' fantasies, which make these

findings in line with Lazar's (2009) and Windsels et al.'s (2019) observations of commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s.

4.1.3 Depicting women prioritising their own desires

Lastly, another theme present in three out of eight luxury fragrance advertisements from the 1990s and 2000s is the depiction of women prioritising their own desires, corresponding with Gill (2007) and Lazar (2009). The analysis of the J'adore advertisement by Dior revealed one specific way in which women prioritise their desires, namely through indulgence in luxury products. In this advertisement, model Carmen Kass indulges herself in a pool of golden liquid which could represent the luxury product of J'adore fragrance. By stating "I cannot. I cannot resist.", the model may suggest that she should resist her desire for the luxury product, symbolising indulgence in luxury products as a sin. However, because Carmen Kass questions "Is it bad to get what you want?" and states "Life isn't black and white. It's gold.", the advertisement could communicate that women are allowed to sin. This aspect is specifically highlighted in the advertisement by showing how rewarding it is to give in to indulgence, or in this case the luxury of the Dior fragrance, because as the model touches the golden liquid, she seems to experience an orgasmic feeling which is shown by her relieved, enjoying expression and by playing a moaning sound effect and sensual melody, which appears to portray that the indulgence in luxury products is as great as sexual pleasure (Figure 8).



Figure 8

By depicting women's desires and indulgence as a sin, the advertisement contradicts existing literature on commodity feminism prevalent in the 1990s and 2000s as the advertisement does not advocate for women's entitlement to pleasure and prioritising their own needs and desires,

contradicting postfeminist ideology with regard to their belief that women should “have it all” (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009).

Another way in which advertisements depict women who prioritise their desires is through depicting women following their dreams, corresponding with existing literature (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). To give an illustration, in the 212 advertisement by Carolina Herrera, model Simone Van Baal is discussing her dream to move to New York with a man. By saying “it’s up to you” to the man, the advertisement appears to suggest that she is going to New York and fulfilling her dreams either with or without the man. This notion of prioritising your own desires is additionally depicted by showing that when the man calls her to say that he will join her, he calls a New York number, which could indicate that she has already moved to New York alone. Furthermore, by showing snippets of New York city, the advertisement accentuates the notion of following your dreams as New York is often a cultural symbol for hopes and dreams (Scott, 2019). In this advertisement, however, Simone Van Baal seems to be required to manipulate the man into joining her dream of moving to New York as she wears a revealing nightgown and utilises sexual acts such as kissing, lying naked together, and kissing his neck, as demonstrated in Figure 9.



Figure 9

During the sexual acts, the woman is sighing words such as “Come on. Come stay with me.” or “You know we’re gonna make it just about anywhere.”, which makes it seem as if she is trying to convince him with these sexual acts. Therefore, when the man states that he wants to join her, it seems as if she has manipulated him into joining her dream.

Therefore, these findings suggest that postfeminist ideology is incorporated in a controversial and paradoxical manner; whilst advertisements do depict women who prioritise their desires, which corresponds with postfeminist ideology in regard to their belief that women should ‘have it all’, the advertisements contradict postfeminist ideology as they appear to indirectly suggest that women are

not entitled to their desires as these are portrayed as a sin or as something that cannot be reached without manipulating men, contradicting existing literature on commodity feminism of the 1990s and 2000s (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gill, 2007; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009).

4.2 Commodity feminism in the 2010s and 2020s

The multimodal critical discourse analysis of luxury fragrance advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s identified three key themes, namely the inclusion of a diverse variety of women; emphasizing women's strength; and advocating for women's freedom. Whereas the theme "the inclusion of a diverse variety of women" is line with the characteristic of challenging stereotypical ideals for women in femvertising, the themes "emphasizing women's strength" and "advocating for women's freedom" correspond with the characteristic of empowering women in femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

4.2.1 The inclusion of a diverse variety of women

One theme revealed by the analysis of luxury fragrance advertisements of the 2010s and 2020s is the inclusion of a wide variety of women by presenting women with different skin tones, ethnicities, body types, hair, and styles in terms of clothing and make-up. To give an illustration, the Womanity advertisement by Mugler depicts two distinct women; a white woman who often stares into the camera with a serious expression and who wears an armoured helmet and a black woman who is dressed in colourful clothing, a colourful feathered mask, and often smiles and dances in the advertisement (Figure 10).



Figure 10

As a consequence, the Womanity advertisement not only seems to include diverse women with regard to their skin tones and style but also in terms of their personalities as the white woman might signify a strong, determined warrior whilst the black woman could signify an elegant, happy dancer. The audio mode in the advertisements further highlights these two different women and personalities by utilising a combination of a fast electric guitar melody and a slower guitar melody. This finding corresponds with previous literature on femvertising as the advertisement includes more diverse women in terms of skin tones and personalities (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018). However, the advertisement additionally reflects Case's (2019) critique on femvertising for supplementing stereotypes instead of replacing them, because the Womanity advertisement still represents traditional beauty ideals for women, namely to be skinny and young, and includes a stereotypical depiction of black women, namely a passionate, happy woman who wears colourful clothing and loves to dance (Cheers, 2019).

In addition, the analysis revealed that, besides emphasizing diversity, the Womanity advertisement might emphasize inclusivity through highlighting women's bond through womanhood or so-called "Womanity" by for instance stating "womanity, a connection" whilst showing the models and Womanity fragrance. This finding supports Varghese and Kumar's (2020) findings on emphasizing inclusivity in femvertising as the advertisement seems to suggest that the fragrance is inclusive to a diverse variety of women, creating a sense of inclusivity and community.

One advertisement that depicts a wider variety of women is the Perfect advertisement by Marc Jacobs as it portrays women with different skin tones, ethnicities, body types, hairstyles, and styles in terms of clothing and make-up (Figure 11).



Figure 11

A possible explanation for the difference in the diversity of women is the publication year of the advertisements; whereas the 2010 Womanity advertisement reflects the skinny ideal and

stereotypes of that period as discussed by Becker-Herby (2016), the 2020 Perfect advertisement could be inspired by the increasing popularity of movements such as body positivity, which celebrate different body types, or other movements like Black Lives Matter which instigated the advertising industry to increasingly include people of colour (Varghese and Kumar, 2020). In addition, whereas the Womanity advertisement solely depicts a variety of women, the Perfect advertisement additionally appears to celebrate diversity between women through the fragrance's name Perfect, which is repeated by all women in the advertisement, suggesting that every included skin tone, ethnicity, body type, hairstyle, and styles in terms of clothing and make-up is perfect, corresponding with existing literature on femvertising and the celebration of diversity (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018). Lastly, similar to the Womanity advertisement, the Perfect advertisement seems to highlight inclusivity through presenting multiple objects on the fragrance bottle which all represent different archetypes, namely work-out shoes for sporty women or a purse for fashionable women (Figure 11).

To summarize, these findings correspond with existing literature on femvertising as the advertisements challenge female stereotypes and traditional beauty ideals through including (and celebrating) a wide variety of women with regard to their appearances and personalities, which reflects third-wave and fourth-wave feminist ideology in terms of their notion of intersectionality as they include diverse women and their value of inclusivity (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Snyder, 2008; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). This phenomenon of including a variety of women could however also be explained by tokenism as adverts might also include diverse women to merely gain a positive image, which corresponds with the exploitative nature of commodity feminism as they only include parts of the value intersectionality (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991). The advertisements did not however represent every woman since they for instance did not include women from different age groups. This could be explained by the advertisements' target group, which might be younger women.

4.2.2 Emphasizing women's strength

The second theme present in three out of eight luxury fragrance advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s is the emphasis on women's strength through showing them performing mentally and physically challenging tasks. To give an illustration, in the Gabrielle advertisement by Chanel, actress Kristen Steward seems to be escaping from her past self as she states "I ain't runnin', runnin', runnin'. I am not running from myself no more.". In this advertisement, her strength is symbolized by not only going through the mental challenge of escaping her past self with determination and fearless as she states "I am ready to face it all" but also by facing psychical challenges which are required to escape this past self. For instance, in one scene she is ripping off white fabrics, which could represent shedding her old self as seen in Figure 12, and in another scene she knocks down a wall with her fist in order to finally escape as shown in Figure 13.



Figure 12



Figure 13

Furthermore, the visual mode highlights her strongness by utilising dramatic colours and lighting. In one scene, for instance, red lights are utilised which could indicate the dangerous battle of running away from her past self as red often symbolizes danger (Wolchover & Dutfield, 2022). By utilising actress Kristen Steward, this element of strength is additionally highlighted as she has also struggled to reinvent herself as an actress and break free from her past career in *Twilight* (Hayes, 2016). Besides the visual and verbal modes, the audio mode could accentuate this dramatic battle and her strength by playing a dramatic, rapid melody which consists of up-tempo drums. With this, the advertisement reflects the purpose of the Gabrielle perfume, which is to encourage women to free themselves of their past selves and become the woman they want to be (Chanel, n.d.).

Another example of emphasizing women's strength is the *Idôle* advertisement by Lancôme in which actress Zendaya is following a bright light that is guiding her whilst riding a big horse through

the streets of Los Angeles. Here, the advertisement represents her physical strength through her riding a big horse at a rapid pace as well as her mental strength as she solely wears a spaghetti-sleeved dress and boots and is not equipped with the appropriate gear for riding this horse, like a saddle or harness, which communicates fearlessness and courage (Figure 14).



Figure 14

In addition, her strength might be signalled through utilising the horse as a cultural symbol which might symbolise that she is a knight on a battle horse since she is on a search quest for the light (Stanton, 2021). Furthermore, by utilising Zendaya, the ad communicates strength as Zendaya is known for fighting for movements such as Black Lives Matter and feminism by participating in protests and has a general powerful, inspiring reputation (Grady, 2019). The actress is additionally often filmed from a low angle which, according to Machin and Mayr (2012) helps to her to appear taller and thus physically stronger, and almost always has a determined expression on her face which shows mental strength. Besides the visual mode, strength is additionally emphasized through the verbal mode as the advertisement utilises lyrics such as “I am invincible.” and repeats the words “I am unstoppable.”, which might signal her mental and physical strength. The audio mode adds to this strength by adding a dramatic melody of drums which seems to sound like battle music. In the end, Zendaya holds the perfume bottle of Idôle up in the sky as it shines bright light. This makes it clear that she was her own guidance all along, making her the Idôle or idol she looks up to. Therefore, the advertisement could communicate that the perfume helps women to realise that they should be their own Idôle or idol and trust their own strength.

In short, the Gabrielle and Idôle advertisements thus both highlight women’s sentiment of strength by depicting women in a powerful, strong way through showing them go through mentally and physically demanding tasks, corresponding with existing literature on femvertising as they empower and inspire women through pro-female messaging (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu,

2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). These advertisements therefore primarily reflect fourth-wave feminist ideology as, similar to fourth-wavers' focus on women empowerment, they focus on empowering women to find their strength and take on challenges to discover themselves (Parry et al., 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). In these advertisement, the aspect of commodity feminism remains evident but is less exploitative of feminist ideology since the advertisements appear to suggest that the fragrances help to encourage women's sentiment of strength rather than suggesting that the sentiment of strength does not exist if women do not buy the fragrance (Goldman et al., 1991).

Whereas the Idôle and Gabrielle advertisements focus on mental and physical strength, the Good Girl advertisement by Carolina Herrera focusses on a different type of strength, namely supernatural strength. In this advertisement, model Karlie Kloss is portrayed as a "Good Girl" which, according to Carolina Herrera (n.d.), is an elegant woman as revealed by her long, black gala dress and heels (Figure 15), but who is also rebellious and powerful which is shown by every time the model hits her heel on the street, she causes chaos such as a traffic accident, thunder, or intense wind which blows magazines or even a man away as seen in Figure 16.



Figure 15



Figure 16

By echoing the sound of her heel touching the street, the audio mode emphasizes her supernatural strength as it seems as if her strength is so extreme that it echoes through the streets. In addition, the audio mode additionally utilises a dramatic melody consisting of an electric guitar and drums which could further highlight the chaos that she is causing. One aspect that makes the emphasis on women's strength in the Good Girl advertisements different from other advertisements, however, is that Karlie Kloss actually seems to abuse her power to cause chaos instead of utilising it to improve herself. This element of abuse is further emphasized by depicting that she actually enjoys abusing her power as she smiles whilst causing chaos and by stating "It's so good to be bad.". By focussing on the abuse of power, portraying her as a sophisticated yet powerful and rebellious woman, and utilising the name "good girl", the advertisement seems to challenge the patriarchal stereotype of a good girl who follows men's rules and behaves well by constructing the stereotype of a powerful, rebellious woman, reflecting general feminist ideology on challenging and rejecting traditional, patriarchal female stereotypes (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010).

One similarity that is nevertheless shared by all advertisements is the unrealistic depiction of strength. In all advertisements, women are depicted in either abstract settings, like the Gabrielle advertisement, scenarios which don't happen in reality, such as the Idôle or Good Girl advertisements. A possible explanation for these unrealistic scenarios could be that advertisements mainly want to inspire and empower women, rather than actually displaying real-life situation, as this helps to better sell a fantasy that is their perfume, corresponding with the economic nature of commodity feminism as explained by Goldman et al. (1991).

4.2.3 Advocating for women's freedom

The last theme revealed by the analysis of luxury fragrance advertisements of the 2010s and 2020s is the advocacy for women's freedom, specifically for the freedom to be whoever and to do

whatever they want. To give an illustration, the Libre advertisement by Yves Saint Laurent seemed to advocate for freedom, as reflected by the name Libre or freedom, by depicting singer Dua Lipa in a variety of places such as a sky-high apartment or in the sea as demonstrated in Figure 17, which may suggest that women should feel free whenever and wherever they are.



Figure 17

Here, the setting thus contributes to communicating that the woman is free as it communicates that she is free in multiple places, but also by depicting her in open spaces which makes her free to move around. In addition, the advertisement emphasizes freedom by utilising symbols of freedom, such as an eagle or wind. An interesting aspect of this advertisement is that Dua Lipa seems to confidently take her freedom as she sings the lyrics “Cause I’m free. To do what I want. Any old time” of the song I’m Free by The Soup Dragons. Her confidence is additionally reflected by her appearance and expressions as she is wearing black clothing which helps her to stand out and often has a confident expression. Furthermore, Dua Lipa herself is often associated with confidence and freedom since she fled from Albania as a child, and she often openly speaks about various movements such as feminism and the LGBTQ+ movement, and sings confidence-boosting songs (Wang, 2022). The advertisement further highlights her confidence by depicting her in slightly dangerous activities, such as standing in a rough sea, or by utilising symbols of power such as fire or an eagle. In this way, the advertisement thus communicates that women should not be afraid to claim their freedom and that the Libre fragrance will help women to confidently own this freedom.

Another advertisement which is similar to the Libre ad is the Joy advertisement by Dior in which actress Jennifer Lawrence is engaging in various funny or weird activities around a private swimming pool, such as playing with water by spitting it out towards the camera, sunning at the pool in heels, or swimming in the pool with luxurious clothing as seen in Figure 18, to show that she is free to show her personality.



Figure 18

Here, actress Jennifer Lawrence plays a big role in communicating this type of freedom as she is considered to be an open person whom is not afraid to show her funny, rebellious personality (Gay, 2017). This bright personality is additionally highlighted through the verbal mode by utilising lyrics such as “she comes in colours everywhere” or “she’s like a rainbow” from the song She’s A Rainbow by The Rolling Stones which could suggest that she has a colourful and thus strong personality. In this way, the advertisement thus communicates that women should not be afraid to show their personality. The name of the perfume, Joy, could then also refer to their joyous personalities. Furthermore, to symbolise freedom, the advertisement often utilises settings of air and water to communicate the feeling of letting go of control as Jennifer often floats in the water or air (Jay, 2021). As a consequence, the advertisement thus communicates that women should not control their personalities but rather let their personalities be free in order to enjoy life.

In this way, one similar aspect between the Libre and Joy advertisements is their focus on freedom in the sense that women should be free at any moment and place to be whoever they want to be. In this way, the advertisements reflect general feminist ideology as it advocates for women’s freedom (Becker-Herby, 2016; Snyder, 2008; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). In addition, these findings correspond with previous research on femvertising since the advertisements include motivational, inspiring messaging about that women should own their freedom at any moment or place or through enjoying their life the way they want to (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). However, by solely focussing on women’s entitlement to freedom, these advertisements additionally disregard and suppress factors that could limit this freedom, such as societal, economic, political, and other factors which depend on the environment in which women live. Therefore, the advertisements mainly sell a fantasy to their customers, which corresponds to

Ringrow's (2016) and Goldman et al.'s (1991) critique on commodity feminism about that they only sell feminist fantasies to increase advertising sales rather than actually advocating for change.

4.2.4 A deviant case

The analysis did however reveal a deviant case in this sample, namely the Olympéa advertisement by Paco Rabanne, as this ad has more resemblance with luxury fragrance advertising from the 1990s and 2000s. Here, model Luma Grothe is depicted as a goddess who is walking through the city of Olympus towards a pool to become the upper goddess. The model is portrayed as a rebel who goes against the established system as she for instance arrives in a fast car with wings, instead of the traditional representation of Pegasus. In addition, the audio mode accentuates this innovative, powerful image of the woman by playing the lyrics of Kanye West's song Power "I'm living in that 21st century. Doing something mean to it. Do it better than anybody you ever seen do it". However, to grasp this power, she is controlling all gods and statues of gods by distracting them with her beautiful appearance (Figure 19).



Figure 19

However, this indirectly communicates that in order to gain their desires, which in this case is power, the woman relies on her beautiful appearance to control men. As a consequence, this finding reveals that the Olympéa advertisement has more resemblance with the 1990s and 2000s advertisements, instead of femvertising, as women need to be seductive or beautiful in order to control men (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009). Therefore, it reveals that not all luxury fragrance brands have yet changed their nature of advertising as this type of advertising still focusses on women's bodies as their sole source of power, corresponding with Gill's (2007) criticism on commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s.

4.3 Comparing feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising

One interesting finding revealed by comparing luxury fragrance advertisements from both the 1990s to 2000s and 2010s to 2020s is the continuation of promoting stereotypical beauty ideals for women. For the main character(s), fifteen out of sixteen advertisements included (extremely) skinny models, fourteen out of sixteen advertisements only presented white women, and all advertisements solely presented younger women. Consequently, these findings suggest that luxury fragrance advertising mostly did not change in terms of representing a greater variety of women, but instead promote similar beauty ideals which were prevalent in commodity feminism of the 1990s and 2000s (Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Lazar, 2009). This directly contradicts existing literature on femvertising, as scholars argue that this type of advertising actually tries to challenge these specific stereotypes by including diverse women in advertisements (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). One possible explanation for this finding could be the utilisation of actresses, models, or singers in all ads, since celebrities often reflect popular beauty ideals of these periods. In addition, this finding could additionally be explained by this study's focus on heritage brands and their long history of fragrance advertising; since the industry has been promoting a specific stereotypical ideal for women and other traditional ideals for so long, change in this stereotypical depiction might just come slowly as the luxury fragrance industry are just starting to catch up with new trends such as body positivity. Furthermore, another possible explanation for this finding could be the target audience of luxury fragrance advertising as luxury fragrance advertisements could mainly be targeting wealthy, high-class women who often value these traditional stereotypes and ideals. The analysis did however show that, similar to Case's (2019) findings, the feminist ideal of intersectionality was included in a couple of newer advertisements as for instance the Perfect advertisement by Marc Jacobs does include a wide variety of women in terms of race, ethnicities, body types, and more, and the Idôle advertisement by Lancôme, Womanity advertisement by Mugler, and Perfect advertisement by Marc Jacobs do utilise black or mixed-race models.

Another significant finding revealed by the analysis of luxury fragrance advertisements is the change from an external focus to a more internal focus; whereas advertisements from the 1990s to 2000s mainly focused on the appearance of women, advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s were primarily centred around women's personalities and capabilities. In fifteen out of sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements of the 1990s and 2000s, the advertisement's key message mainly revolved around women's appearances as they advocated for women embracing their sexuality through depicting women as temptresses and reflected on girlhood by portraying women in a girly, juvenile women. In luxury fragrance advertisements of the 2010s and 2020s, on the other hand, mainly focused on women's personalities and capabilities by highlighting their mental (and physical) strength and by advocating that women should not restrict their personalities. This finding in turn confirms Becker-Herby's (2016) and Hsu's (2018) findings on the decreasing sexualisation of women in femvertising as portraying women in a sexualised manner is not the advertisements' prime concern. In

this way, this finding reflects the change from the incorporation of mainly postfeminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising in the 1990s and 2000s which focused on reclaiming femininity through women's appearances and relation to men, to the incorporation of third-wave and fourth-wave feminism in luxury fragrance advertising in the 2010s and 2020s which focuses more on the belief of individuality by recognising and celebrating that all women are different in terms of personalities and appearances and empowering them to fight to truly be themselves (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2007; Parry et al., 2018; Snyder, 2008; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

5. Conclusion

This chapter will present an overall conclusion to this thesis by answering the research question and by discussing the limitations and recommendations for future research. Although existing literature has addressed feminism in cosmetics advertising from the 1990s until now, the incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising remains understudied. Therefore, to address this gap in literature, this thesis conducted a Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis to answer the following question: How is feminist ideology incorporated in luxury fragrance advertising in the periods of the 1990s to 2000s and 2010s to 2020s? To answer this question, this study analysed sixteen luxury fragrance advertisements collected from eight luxury brands from which one advertisement originates from the period of the 1990s to 2000s and one advertisement from the 2010s to 2020s.

What can be concluded from the analysis is that luxury fragrance advertising from the 1990s to 2000s primarily incorporate postfeminist ideology with regard to reclaiming femininity by focussing on embracing feminine identity and sexuality and by reclaiming female stereotypes, corresponding with existing literature on 1990s and 2000s commodity feminism (Gill, 2007; Lazar, 2009; Windsels et al., 2019). Firstly, in line with Gill (2007) and Lazar (2009), various advertisements highlight women's femininity and sexuality by depicting women as temptresses who confidently embrace and utilise their appearance and sexual behaviour to gain control, mislead, or manipulate men. However, by depicting women as solely being able to assert control over men through their appearances and sexual behaviour, this study revealed that luxury fragrance advertisements contrast feminist ideology as well by minimising their power to solely their sexy bodies and thus objectifying women, reflecting Gill's (2007) criticism on commodity feminism in the 1990s and 2000s.

Secondly, corresponding with existing literature and beauty ideals of that period, various luxury fragrance advertisements reflected postfeminists' attempt to reclaim female stereotypes through highlighting women's girlhood by portraying women in a juvenile manner or by depicting them in young-girl fantasies (Becker-Herby, 2016; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009). Although reclaiming (young) female stereotypes may help to reject second-wavers' masculine reputation, it nevertheless might contradict feminist ideology as Lazar (2009) explains that portraying women as girls could form a means for society to view and treat women of all ages as girls, which consequently could disregard their power and reinforce the exact traditional gender roles that feminists want to distance themselves from (Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009).

Thirdly, the analysis revealed that although some luxury fragrance advertisements from the 2010s and 2020s do highlight women's desires through for instance indulgence in luxury products or following one's dreams, the advertisements do not emphasize women's entitlement to these desires as they depicted indulgence as a sin or as something that cannot be reached without having to manipulate a men, contrasting with Gill's (2007) and Lazar's (2009) findings on commodity feminism of the

1990s to 2000s. In this way, advertisements contrasted postfeminist ideology since postfeminists emphasize women's entitlement to prioritising their own desires rather than it being a sin or unreachable without a man (Gill, 2007; Goldman et al., 1991; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Lazar, 2009). In short, this study showed that luxury fragrance advertising from the 1990s to 2000s incorporated feminist ideology in a rather contradictory manner as it both advocated for postfeminist and third-wave feminist ideals such as embracing femininity and women's sexual agency whilst additionally communicating non-feminist beliefs by for instance sexualising women and reinforcing negative traditional female stereotypes, reflecting Gill's (2007) critique on commodity feminism in the 1990s to 2000s.

In addition, what can be concluded from this study is that luxury fragrance advertising from the 2010s and 2020s incorporated third-wave, fourth-wave, and general feminist ideology by primarily focussing on female empowerment, women's freedom, and the inclusion of a wide variety of women, corresponding with existing literature on femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). First of all, some advertisements reflect the feminist ideal of female empowerment and individualism by including pro-female, inspiring messaging about women's mental and physical strength by showing women who face mentally and physically demanding challenges in order to discover their true selves, which is similar to Case's (2019) and Hsu's (2018) findings on femvertising. In addition, a couple of luxury fragrance advertisements incorporate general feminist ideology with regard to advocating for women's freedom by signalling that women should be free at any moment and place to be whoever they want to be, corresponding with existing literature on commodity feminism (Becker-Herby, 2016; Goldman et al., 1991; Snyder, 2008; Varghese & Kumar, 2020).

Furthermore, another important finding of this study is that a few luxury fragrance advertisements from the 2010s to 2020s did reflect third-wave and fourth-wave feminist ideology with regard to the acceptance of all women by including more diverse women in terms of skin colours, body types, ethnicities, and more, corresponding with existing literature on increasing model diversity in femvertising (Becker-Herby, 2016; Case, 2019; Gray & Boddy, 2010; Hsu, 2018; Varghese & Kumar, 2020). This part of feminist ideology however remains underrepresented in advertising from the 2010s and 2020s since the majority of advertisements still depicted traditional beauty ideals, such as being skinny, white, and young, confirming Case's (2019) and Varghese and Kumar's (2020) findings on femvertising.

All in all, one could conclude that luxury fragrance advertising did change considering the shift from primarily incorporating postfeminism to mainly reflecting third-wave and fourth-wave feminism, however, that on the other hand the incorporation of feminist ideology did not change as the majority of the 2010s and 2020s luxury fragrance advertisements continued promoting stereotypical beauty ideals for women which was portrayed by luxury fragrance advertisements of the 1990s and 2000s which do not suit the third-wave and fourth-wave feminist ideal of intersectionality.

One possible explanation for this finding is this study's focus on heritage luxury fragrance brands since they often have a long history of promoting these beauty ideals, which makes changing this stereotypical depiction a slow process in contrast to newer brands. In addition, one could conclude that luxury fragrance advertising of the 1990s until now did not reflect one specific feminist ideology, but rather an amalgamation of different aspects of various feminist ideologies that appeared to create a feminist fantasy as women were often presented in unrealistic scenarios and advertisements did not actually advocate for change. This finding could nevertheless be explained by the core motivation behind commodity feminism, as explained by Goldman et al. (1991), namely to utilise and appropriated only specific elements of (post-)feminist ideology that fit, emphasize, and therefore help to sell a particular fantasy which in this case is luxury fragrances.

5.1 Limitations and recommendations for future research

This study had several limitations that require discussion. Firstly, one major limitation of this study is that it solely provides one particular insight into the international fragrance market, namely the luxury fragrance market. As aforementioned, the luxury fragrance market is well-known for portraying traditional female stereotypes, presenting narrow beauty ideals for women and mainly focussing on a certain glamorous, high-fashion aesthetic, which is confirmed by this study (Goldman et al., 1991; Ringrow, 2016). This could be explained by the fact that luxury fragrance advertising primarily targets wealthier, high-class people which often value this type of luxury and traditional ideals and norms (Goldman, 1987; Payne, 2020). In this way, the scope of this study was limited in the sense that it only explores and analyses the incorporation of feminist ideology in this type of fragrance advertising. Therefore, it might be interesting for future research to research how the market of affordable or middle-class fragrances differ in the incorporation of feminist ideology in advertisements since recent research has revealed that non-luxury brands utilise femvertising to a greater extent compared to luxury brands (Michaelidou et al., 2022).

Secondly, the scope of this study was additionally limited in the sense that it mainly includes heritage brands (Goldman, 1987). Whereas primarily focussing on heritage brands did enable this study to analyse fragrances that were both top-selling in the 1990s to 2000s and the 2010s to 2020s, this study lacks the representation of newer luxury fragrance brands such as Jo Malone or Replica which, according to Jackson (2007), might have the opportunity to more easily adapt to newer trends and beauty ideals than heritage brands whom have presented similar stereotypes and beauty ideals for decades. For this reason, future studies should be undertaken to explore the difference in the incorporation of feminist ideology, or trends in general, between heritage brands and newer luxury fragrance brands from the 1990s until now. Another shortcoming of this study which is closely related to this limitation is that this study did not include much advertisements from the 2020s, yet the study showed that these ads include more third-wave and fourth-wave feminist ideology and characteristics of femvertising than advertisements from the 2010s. Therefore, it would be interesting for future

studies to explore the differences between 2010s and 2020s luxury fragrance advertising, especially because of recently popular movements such as the LGBTQ+ or Black Lives Matter movement and trends like body positivity.

Thirdly, by focussing on solely the luxury fragrance market for women, this study lacks the analysis of the incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising that specifically target male consumers. Hence, future research is required to understand whether luxury fragrance advertisements for men incorporate feminist ideology, in which ways they incorporate feminist ideology, and how this incorporation of feminist ideology changes throughout the 1990s until now. In addition, since this study only studied the intended meaning of luxury fragrance brands by the research themselves, it could also be insightful to conduct interviews or focus groups to research the perception of the meaning of luxury fragrance advertisements by female consumers, like other studies on reactions on femvertising (Akestam et al., 2017; Drake, 2017). Lastly, whilst this study discovered that the majority of luxury fragrance advertisements did change in terms of the incorporation of feminist ideology, some advertisements like the Olympéa advertisement showed that not necessarily every luxury brand changed in terms of adopting more modern feminist ideologies. Therefore, future research is required with a larger number of luxury fragrance brands and advertisements of the 2010s and 2020s to explore the true scope of change in the incorporation of feminist ideology in luxury fragrance advertising.

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Appendix A: List of analysed luxury fragrance advertisements

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Appendix B: Coding scheme

Brand Name **Name of the Perfume (Year of Launch)**

	time – time		Denotation	Connotation
Visual Mode		People		
		Attributes		
		Setting		
		Saliency		
Verbal Mode				
Audio Mode				