Decoding the Male Gaze

A Thematic Analysis and MCDA of Instagram Ads Targeting Women in the Luxury Perfume
Industry

Student Name: Marta Fernández Gallardo
Student Number: 650855

Supervisor: Dr. Khanh Nguyen

Media Studies – Media and Business
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

Master Thesis
June 2023

Word Count: *19004*

ABSTRACT

In advertising, especially on Instagram, the concept of the male gaze is prevalent, impacting how women are portrayed and how society perceives femininity. The main research question of this study was "How does the male gaze manifest in marketing materials targeted at women in the context of Instagram and luxury perfume brands?". By using a qualitative mixed-method approach, thematic analysis was used in a sample of 150 advertisements from 10 different luxury perfume brands, and MCDA was employed in a subset of 10 images from luxury perfume brands to get a more in-depth understanding of the meaning behind the symbols in the ads. The results showed distinctive patterns which revealed how gender representation, power relations, and beauty ideals interact in intricate ways. The thematic analysis made it clear that physical appearances are indicators of sexualization, femininity is portrayed as a gender norm, Western standards support racial misrepresentation, and submission reinforces power dynamics. The MCDA further reinforced the male gaze, which revealed patterns of objectification and sexualization, gender stereotypes and traditional roles, exoticization and othering, beauty and body ideals, and empowerment and agency. The research of these ads strongly implies that the male gaze manifests in a variety of ways in the luxury perfume industry on Instagram. The male gaze persists, perpetuating objectification, traditional gender roles, and unattainable beauty standards despite a few transgressor elements in the data. Further, these findings contribute to the impact of the male gaze on ads and how women are depicted. This study highlights the need for a more diverse and empowering approach to marketing materials in the luxury perfume industry and beyond by critically investigating the manifestation of the male gaze. Promoting a society that values gender equality, diversity, and empowerment requires acknowledging and overcoming the male gaze.

KEYWORDS: *Instagram, Luxury Perfume Brands, Male Gaze, Advertisement, Gender Representation*

Table of Contents

Table of Figures

Acknowledgments

I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to all the wonderful people who have helped me along the way. This study would not have been possible without their support, affection, and constant faith in me.

I want to thank my family first and foremost, especially my sister, mother, abuela, and partner. Your never-ending support, kindness, and motivation have been my pillar of strength every step of the way. You have been my cheerleaders, giving me confidence and reassuring me of my worth and strengths even in the most difficult of times. I will always be appreciative of your faith in me.

My wonderful friends, I am grateful for having found you and having your unconditional love and support. You have given me the strength and inspiration to keep going. This trip has been made more pleasurable and meaningful by your side, with the long-day study sessions and shared laughs.

To everyone who has played a role in this trip, either big or small, during this journey and has supported me: *thank you from the bottom of my heart*.

1. Introduction

The multibillion-dollar luxury perfume industry has long been linked to femininity, beauty, and exclusivity (Roux et al., 2017). This sector has been employing social media channels, especially Instagram, to advertise its products and reach its target audience (Vazifedoost & Farzi, 2015). Vazifedoost and Farzi (2015) suggest that social media is not just a platform for entertainment but also a crucial component of marketing strategies for businesses. Nonetheless, there are concerns that the male gaze will continue to dominate because of how women are portrayed in marketing practices on social media platforms like Instagram.

The male gaze, as defined by feminist film critic Laura Mulvey (2003), refers to how women are portrayed in media and other cultural materials through the eyes of a heterosexual man. This term has been widely disputed and researched in media and cultural studies (Cooper, 2000; Mulvey, 2014; Oliver, 2017; Snow, 1989), particularly emphasizing how the male gaze impacts individuals' perceptions and knowledge of femininity and gender norms (King, 2020). The role of the male gaze in marketing materials aimed at women has received more attention recently, especially in the luxury perfume sector (Tuna & Freitas, 2012). Since there are increasingly more perfume ads in all forms of media, it is becoming a key component of their marketing strategy.

Perfume advertisements are a distinct type of marketing material that frequently relies significantly on gender and sexuality to sell goods (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008), with female models as a recurrent theme for the representation of women (Tuna & Freitas, 2012). Objectifying and sexualizing imagery is one way the male gaze may emerge in this context (Gill, 2014). Specifically, perfume ads for women may aim to appeal to a male audience rather than the perfume's intended one: women (Cortese, 2004). While these advertisements might be aesthetically pleasing and even alluring, it is critical to consider how they construct and portray femininity and cater to the male gaze (Mulvey, 2014).

Additionally, this sector relies greatly on big investments in advertising to promote perfumes and draw customers into stores (DeFanti et al., 2012). According to Vinerean and Opreana (2019), Instagram is now a vital platform for luxury perfume firms to market and promote their products. Instagram's more than 1 billion active users give businesses with little exposure an opportunity to a highly engaged audience (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019). Essentially because Instagram is so effective at connecting with niche audiences, several

luxury perfume companies now allocate a sizeable portion of their marketing budget to this platform (Stephen, 2020).

Further, business paradigms are shifting because of the enormous upheaval brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic and ongoing ecological, monetary, and political challenges worldwide. And one of the main factors influencing new perfume trends is these fluctuations (Chee, 2022). A lot of businesses in the luxury sector are competing for market dominance and increasing their benefits and sells. According to recent estimates, the global perfume industry was valued at over $50.85 billion in 2022 (Grand View Research, 2022), with the luxury market accounting for a sizeable portion of this revenue. Given the sum of funds invested in this specific sector, comprehending the marketing strategies used by these companies to engage consumers and create a sense of exclusivity and attractiveness surrounding their products is essential.

1.1. Societal relevance

The societal relevance of this study is to understand the influence of the male gaze on the portrayal of women in marketing materials, particularly in the luxury perfume industry, since it can negatively affect how women are represented and perceived in society, and perpetuate harming stereotypes. The brands from the luxury perfume industry that will be analyzed in this paper are Christian Dior, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent (YSL), Guerlain, Prada, Marc Jacobs, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Tom Ford. This research will be able to provide insights into the ways in which these gender stereotypes and objectification of women are perpetuated through advertising. Hence, these insights can have relevant implications for self-esteem, mental health, and overall well-being of women.

1.2. Academic relevance

As for academic relevance, this study addresses the convergence of marketing advertisements, the male gaze, and social media. There is an existing literature gap on the male gaze in luxury perfume advertisements on Instagram, since past research has studied traditional perfume advertisements and the portrayal of gender (Cortese, 2004; Kim, 2020; Petersson McIntyre, 2013; Tuna, 2004; Zhang, 2019) or focused on luxury perfume ads and social media in a broader sense (Bazi et al., 2020; Stephen, 2020; Sundaram et al., 2020). Hence, this study contributes to the existing literature on the male gaze and its manifestations in marketing practices on social media and, additionally, fills the existing gap of the

convergence of these three. This is greatly relevant since the use of social media for marketing practices by companies has rapidly increased (Vazifedoost & Farzi, 2015).

Investigating the luxury perfume industry on Instagram can also help comprehend how social media fits into marketing and consumer culture. Since Instagram has grown to be a powerful tool for influencing consumer opinions and conduct, luxury perfume companies' Instagram marketing strategies may reveal wider trends in advertising and marketing. Additionally, studying the luxury perfume industry on Instagram can help understand how social media may be having an impact on issues like the perseverance of the male gaze in marketing and the adverse impacts of consumerism on psychological wellness.

By better understanding these dynamics, it is possible to shed light on how gender is built and depicted in advertising (Timke & O'Barr, 2017) and potentially move towards more equitable and empowering portrayals of women (Gill, 2014). This is particularly relevant since ads can shape society's attitudes and perceptions about gender (Arsel et al., 2015; Kilbourne, 2012). With the above-mentioned information, the following research question is proposed: *How does the male gaze manifest in marketing materials on Instagram targeting women in the luxury perfume industry?*

The remnants of this thesis will be divided into four additional chapters. *Chapter two* will examine in-depth previous research and discuss theories related to the male gaze, gender stereotypes and construction, social media, mental health, and the role of Instagram in this sector, which will aid in addressing this research question. Next, *chapter three* will discuss the combination of methods used to collect and analyze data in the analysis. *Chapter four* will cover the main findings and discussion from both analyses, as well as its implications and evaluation in relation to previous research and theories discussed in chapter two. These findings will be outlined systematically in the main themes that arose from the analysis. Lastly, *chapter five* presents the final conclusions of this research and responds to the research question. The research's limitations and further research will be also addressed.

2. Literature Framework

In recent years, there has been increased criticism over the perpetuation of the male gaze in advertising on social media platforms such as Instagram. For decades, feminism and media studies have debated the idea of the male gaze. The concept, introduced by British feminist film theorist Laura Mulvey (2003), alludes to how media frequently depicts women from a heterosexual male perspective, objectifying and sexualizing them for the male gaze. This phenomenon is not exclusive to film and television, yet is also apparent in advertising, media, and many other types of visual communication (Dang, 2022).

Instagram, as one of the most popular social media platforms, has evolved into a significant marketing and advertising medium (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019). Many skeptics, however, claim that the site's advertising content reinforces damaging gender stereotypes and objectifies women (Nkem et al., 2020). Hence, this chapter is designed to provide a comprehensive overview of existing research on the topics of the male gaze, gender representation and construction, the role of Instagram in this sector, and intersectionality and mental health and luxury perfume brands. Thus, a nuanced and multidimensional understanding of the ways in which the male gaze manifests in marketing practices on Instagram targeting women in the luxury industry will be offered.

2.1. The male gaze and objectification theory

According to Fredrickson and Roberts (1997), the objectification theory claims that women are commonly limited to their body and sexuality, and as a result, they may develop a third-party view of their physical appearance and begin to participate in self-objectification. Self-objectification, consequently, has been associated with negative psychological repercussions for women, such as "body shame, appearance, anxiety, decreased flow (i.e., ability to engage in pleasurable activities), and decreased internal awareness of bodily and emotional states" (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997, as cited in Watson et al., 2019, p. 282). These effects were expected to merge, leading to similar psychological difficulties across women, such as disordered eating, depression, and diminished psychosexual performance.

The notion of the male gaze, which refers to how media is structured to appeal to a male spectator and show the world from a male perspective, has received much attention in media and cultural studies (Gill, 2014; Mulvey, 2014). Mulvey points out, in her famous article "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" (2003), that traditional film is founded on a

limited gender stereotyping that grants men an active part in the story while leaving women as passive objects of the male gaze.

This concept can manifest itself in a variety of ways in the context of marketing. For instance, studies have shown that advertising frequently uses objectifying and sexualizing imagery to sell products (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008), in addition to the reinforcement of established gender norms and stereotypes (Bauer, 2020). Oliver's (2017) study argues that, in film narratives, individuals tend to identify themselves with the active persona (male) while desiring the passive object of one's gaze, the female. Mulvey (2003) and Kilbourne (2000) already discussed this in their essays: women are forced to identify with the passive object that is being observed. Oliver (2017) concludes that "all agents and identities are male and all objects to be desired are female" (p.451). Thus, identity cannot co-exist alongside feminine behavior. This suggests that there is a patriarchal perspective in film, which can be linked to the male gaze and the way women are portrayed in social media marketing ads.

Another example in the film narrative world is Manoel de Oliveira, a Portuguese filmmaker who deliberately adopts a strict and stereotyped view of women, who are depicted from a male gaze and presented as the origin of men's problems and dissatisfaction (Lewis & Sever Globan, 2020). This representation has received criticism from several scholars, such as Da Costa (2008), who emphasized Oliveira's problematic representation of women as seductive objects, enigmatic creatures, and bearers of evil and guilt.

However, as mentioned above, this concept is not restricted to the film industry and can manifest in other contexts, such as marketing and advertising (Dang, 2022). As mentioned by Dang (2022), media consumers started to embrace hegemonic notions as societal norms because of their everyday exposure to hegemonic concepts embedded in conventional and contemporary media. Research has shown that advertisements frequently represent women in submissive or passive roles and utilize language that highlights their appearance or attractiveness rather than their capabilities (Gill, 2014). Further, studies have also demonstrated that the use of gendered language in advertising can reinforce damaging stereotypes and traditional gender roles (Chafai, 2008). Advertisements aimed at women are more likely to use adjectives like "beautiful" or "delicate," whereas ads aimed at men are more likely to use terms like "strong" or "powerful" (Jha et al., 2017). This terminology not only reinforces the assumption that women should prioritize appearance over abilities (Wangshu, 2020), but also reinforces the idea that men should be dominating, and women

should be submissive. According to Jha et al. (2017), women are more typically displayed as sex objects in magazine advertising than men.

"The image is artificial and can only be achieved artificially" (Kilbourne, 2000, p. 184). Many women will put a lot of effort into altering their appearances to fit into an ideal and unrealistic standard (Dang, 2022). The media, especially advertising, teaches the young many beliefs regarding sexual beliefs and gender stereotypes (Kilbourne, 2000). Despite previous advancements, these new images of women promote a "myth of progress" (Kilbourne, 2000, p. 185) rather than genuine progress. According to Lewis and Sever Globan (2020), the cinema industry, and generally, the media sector, play an important part in building a culture's system of values and creating conventions of "femininity, morality, and beauty" (p. 130).

In line with the above-mentioned, the effects of the male gaze on women's self-esteem, body image, and mental health has been extensively researched, and studies have revealed that exposure to media that preserves and reinforces the male gaze can have negative effects on women's overall well-being (Sokolova et al., 2022). This is especially relevant in the luxury perfume industry on Instagram, where marketing materials often perpetuate specific body and beauty standards and tend to show a depiction of women in objectified and sexualized scenarios (Jha et al., 2017). For instance, in the research of Krayer et al. (2008) involving college women, they discovered a strong correlation between comparing oneself to others and having greater levels of body dissatisfaction while looking at different body pictures.

By examining the ways in which the male gaze operates in luxury perfume marketing on Instagram, it is feasible to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ways in which media and marketing contribute to harmful gender norms and power dynamics. Additionally, developing more ethical and responsible marketing practices that prioritize inclusivity, diversity, and empowerment will be attainable.

2.2. Gender construction and representation in the luxury perfume industry

The luxury perfume industry is an interesting case for examining the role of the male gaze and gender construction in advertising on Instagram. To sell their products, luxury perfume brands frequently utilize visually appealing images, which can contain sexualized and objectified portrayals of women (Gill, 2014). Furthermore, many luxury perfume brands have been criticized for reinforcing obsolete gender conventions and stereotypes in their

marketing campaigns (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020). Rodrigues Jorge Facca (2020) suggests that still nowadays women are sexualized and objectified in different forms of media and, specifically, in advertising. Further, women were seen to be represented as "powerless, weak, and decorative" (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020, p. 78).

There is an existing growing body of research on how women are portrayed in the media that has come to akin findings. Baker (2005) discovered that women are commonly objectified in magazines, that femininity is linked with submission and dependency, and that beauty is typically linked with being white. According to Belknap and Leonard (1991), the depiction of women in media promotes the dominance of men. Similarly, Gill (2014) alleges that women are portrayed as less intellectual than males. Women in the media are presented as flawless, with clear skin, wrinkle-free, slim bodies, and gleaming hair (Eisend, 2010).

Regarding the portrayal of women in advertising, it is necessary to mention that the luxury perfume industry is a highly gendered market (Shen & Wu, 2022), with many fragrances targeting either men or women. Gendered marketing has the potential to strengthen gender norms and stereotypes (Tuna & Freitas, 2012), potentially contributing to the perpetuation of the male gaze in advertising. Recognizing the significance of the male gaze in the luxury perfume sector on Instagram is a crucial step toward future ethical and responsible marketing strategies.

However, what is now commonly known as the male gaze is greatly linked to the notion of gender and other relevant previous feminist studies. There are some key theories and concepts that have studied and analyzed the construction and representation of gender, such as postmodernism and Michel Foucault's theory of power (1975), Simone de Beauvoir's idea of the "other" (1949), Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1990), and Laura Mulvey's concept of the male gaze (2003).

The vast and multifaceted movement known as postmodernism first appeared in the middle of the 20th century, mostly in opposition to modernism, which was defined by a belief in reason, progress, and the ability of people to influence and create their environment (Foucault, 1975). Contrarily, postmodernism rejects the notion of universal truths and objective realities in favor of highlighting the construction and variability of knowledge and meaning. French philosopher and social theorist Michel Foucault (1975) had a significant role in the growth of postmodern philosophy, notably regarding knowledge and power. He argued that power is diffuse and functions via discourses and practices that generate and manage

knowledge and truth, challenging the idea that power is something that is owned by people or organizations.

Another key player in the growth of feminist theory and gender studies was the French existentialist philosopher, Simone de Beauvoir. She argued that gender is a social construction that is forced on individuals from birth in her pioneering book "The Second Sex", which was released in 1949. It disputed the notion that gender is a natural and important component of human identity. Gender, in Beauvoir's view, is produced and maintained by a set of cultural and historical practices rather than anything that is inherent in people or their bodies. Thus, gender is a social construct rather than a label an individual is born with.

The idea of gender performativity was developed by American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler by building on the ideas of Foucault and Beauvoir. Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (Butler, 1990) is especially pertinent to the marketing methods of the luxury perfume business since it proposes that gender is not an inherent or natural characteristic, but rather something that is performed and reinforced by daily acts and behaviors. In her book "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1990), she mentions that "gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed" (Butler, 1990, p. 527). Thus, Butler claimed that gender is not a permanent or stable identity but rather a repeated and performative act that is continuously formed and reinforced by social practices and conventions. Butler argues that gender refers to what people do or perform rather than something they have or possess.

Concerning this theory, Laura Mulvey (2014) created the concept of the male gaze to explain how visual media perpetuates patriarchal power systems by presenting women as passive objects of male desire and to describe how films and other media are constructed from the point of view and interests of heterosexual men. Mulvey maintained that the male gaze is a major mechanism through which patriarchal authority is perpetuated and reinforced. In the context of luxury perfume advertising, the male gaze is constructed through pictures of women that accentuate their physical attractiveness and sex appeal, perpetuating traditional gender norms and promoting damaging preconceptions about femininity.

These ideas have influenced how gender is seen and portrayed in numerous socio-cultural situations, including the luxury perfume market. It is possible to better comprehend how gender is represented and formed in the luxury perfume business and how this

representation may affect people's self-perception, body image, and mental health by acknowledging the constructed and performative nature of gender as well as the ways in which power and knowledge are generated and controlled through discourses and practices. Since individuals frequently and repeatedly interact with the dominant ideologies generated by mass media, people's opinions and ideas about society and the wider world are defined and guided by hegemonies (Dang, 2022).

According to the research conducted by Roux et al. (2017), "luxury is not simply a feminine thing" (p. 110). Consumers of both sexes have a particular connection with luxury companies, and depending on several attributes such as their roles, gender, and beliefs, they have different luxury ideals and motivations. The study confirmed the idea that gender is a construct developed through interactions in which people assert their own self or identity through attributes and behaviors. Each gender's consumption of luxury brands follows this sex-based split, with women being far more preoccupied with their beauty. This may result in objectification and the reinforcement of the social order.

Not only do these theories and studies help understand how gender is produced and portrayed in marketing in this industry but they also propose ways to challenge and subvert these portrayals through alternative marketing practices that promote more varied and inclusive depictions of gender and sexuality. Ultimately, the male gaze and its significance to the luxury perfume sector on Instagram is an essential field of investigation with far-reaching consequences for the knowledge of advertising and gender representation in media. It is possible to obtain insights into how the male gaze functions in modern advertising by evaluating the advertising material of luxury perfume companies on Instagram, and building strategies for developing more inclusive and empowering images of women in media.

2.3. Intersectionality, mental health, and luxury perfume brands on Instagram

Studies in psychology, gender studies, and media studies have examined the effects of the male gaze on women's self-esteem, body image, and mental health (Calogero, 2004; Ponterotto, 2016; Wood, 2004). The concept of the male gaze has been broadened to encompass various media and advertising, such as social media sites like Instagram. Kimberlé Crenshaw used the word "intersectionality" to describe how different social identities, including gender, race, class, and sexual orientation, overlap and interact to influence people's experiences and social structures (Crenshaw, 2017).

An intersectional approach that considers the convergence of different aspects, such as race, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, and its possible influence on mental health (Seng et al., 2012), is necessary to understand the impact of luxury perfume marketing practices on Instagram. Intersectionality acknowledges that people are not limited by a single identity and that many social and cultural elements influence how they view the world (De Silva, 2020). The targeting and perception of advertisements for luxury perfume on Instagram may differ based on the intersection of the viewers' identities. Hence, a method that considers the intersection of identities is necessary to comprehend how these behaviors affect mental health.

Furthermore, Instagram luxury perfume advertising is affected by intersectionality as well as other aspects of identity including race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identity. The damaging effects of the male gaze on mental health might be made worse by these intersections (Vendemia et al., 2022). Research by Fardouly et al. (2015) indicated that women's body dissatisfaction and self-esteem might increase because of exposure to social media images that promote thinness and beauty ideals. According to Perloff's (2014) research, seeing sexualized media content can impact mental health outcomes including anxiety and depression while also contributing to negative body image; whereas Greenfield (2018) found that portrayals of ideal beauty in advertisements can cause negative effects on women's body image, self-esteem, mental health, as well as a sense of unworthiness and inferiority.

For women who already experience marginalization and discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, or financial ability, these negative effects are exacerbated. Consequently, researching how luxury perfume advertising affects these women's mental health is crucial for providing effective remedies. Women of color, for instance, could feel more pressure to meet Eurocentric beauty standards (Watson et al., 2019)**,** while LGBTQ+ women might feel marginalized or fetishized by media that focus on the gaze of the heterosexual male gaze (Filice et al., 2020). These identity crossings may result in complicated and multidimensional experiences of marginalization and objectification.

The research conducted by Watson et al. (2019), found Black women experienced unique body image stressors due to the societal pressure to conform to both White and Black standards of beauty, such as media portrayals that represent the "perfect Black woman". Women with lighter skin tones felt guilty for meeting this ideal, while participants stated a variety of opinions about their bodies, with some desiring to lose weight while others wishing

to be curvier. They also emphasize the significance of recognizing how White supremacy has formed conventional beauty standards and how this may unwittingly impact research developed regarding Black women's body image issues, concluding with the need for measures specifically for Black women. Hence, a multifaceted strategy is needed to promote mental health and well-being in response to Instagram advertisements for luxury perfume. This strategy would include promoting various portrayals of beauty and femininity in advertising and leveraging social media in a more positive and empowering way (Kemp et al., 2020). These practices can be successful in boosting mental health and well-being.

Instagram's luxury perfume industry is not exempted from the detrimental impacts of the male gaze and its perpetuation. Luxury perfume companies may contribute to the reinforcement of limited notions of beauty and objectification of women by presenting images of pretty, slender, and conventionally appealing women (Mills et al., 2017). Women's mental health, body image, and self-esteem may be significantly impacted by this. By considering how the male gaze on Instagram affects the mental health and well-being of women, it is possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the ways that media and advertising support the maintenance of damaging gender stereotypes and power structures. It is also feasible to start to create more moral and responsible marketing strategies that position inclusion, diversity, and empowerment first.

2.4. The role of Instagram in the luxury perfume industry

Day after day, billions of individuals use social media to engage, communicate, create content, exchange information, entertain themselves, and stay up to date. Social media is becoming a crucial resource for companies, especially those in the luxury sector, for advertising and marketing (Stephen, 2020). It also presents the opportunity to interact with customers online in numerous ways. Because of this, marketers have put a lot of effort into creating social media strategies that will help them attract, keep, and grow their consumer base (McGruer, 2020). Additionally, the interest of researchers has increased globally due to its relevance and growth in the past years (Ko et al., 2019). However, according to Ko et al. (2019), while research on the marketing of luxury goods and services has increased recently, they have historically gotten little attention in academic literature.

The luxury products market is "significant" (Fionda & Moore, 2009, p. 347), not merely because of the market value – the worldwide revenue in 2022 was more than 62 billion US dollars, according to Statista (2023) – but also because of its growth rate.

However, the "experience of luxury changes with time and differs between cultural contexts" (Stewart & Carey, 2020, p. 13). According to Ko et al. (2019), a unique and global definition of luxury does not currently exist, partly due to the constantly changing meaning of the concept. Brun and Castelli (2013) add that luxury is a concept that has diverse meanings for different people. Hence, although there are some values and attributes that are common in the luxury sector, it is still a relative concept that depends on perceptions and other cultural dimensions.

However, in this research, the definition provided by Heine will be considered where "Luxury is anything that is desirable and more than necessary and ordinary" (Heine, 2012, p. 42) and luxury brands are "associated with consumer perception of a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity, extraordinariness, and a high degree of non-functional associations" (Heine, 2012, as cited in Ko et al., 2019, p. 407). As for luxury products, Kim et al. (2019) offer the following definition: "products and services that possess higher levels of quality, taste, and aspiration than other goods in the category but are not so expensive as to be out of reach" (p. 278).

The luxury industry is divided into different sectors such as fashion, cosmetics, fragrances, jewelry, vehicles, and more. However, those consumers who cannot afford no-accessible luxury goods can enter the realm luxury market through products like fragrances, eyeglasses, or cosmetics (Cabigiosu, 2020). Further, luxury branded scents are a component of this "small pleasures" sector, and they provide customers with the hedonistic pleasure of luxury goods without the cost of more expensive things (Stewart & Carey, 2020). Women utilize these products to boost their attractiveness and have a better attitude regarding luxury items, making them a desirable target for this business since they are more likely than men to demonstrate concern about their looks (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020).

On another note, the luxury perfume industry has undergone a significant transformation in recent years due to the process of digitization (Cabigiosu, 2020). Traditionally, luxury perfumes were promoted mostly through traditional advertising tactics such as print and television advertisements. However, with the growth of social media sites such as Instagram, these companies have had to adjust their marketing techniques to attract younger, digitally-savvy customers and stay afloat. While traditional marketing tends to focus mainly on values, social media marketing focuses more on "hedonic values reached through indirect brand experience" (Ko et al., 2019, p. 411)

The luxury perfume industry's digitization has created both opportunities and drawbacks. On one side, social media platforms provide luxury perfume companies with unparalleled visibility and reach, enabling them to engage with consumers located worldwide, and to increase interaction, trust, and sales (Sundaram et al., 2020). Instagram, specifically, has emerged as a go-to medium for luxury perfume businesses to exhibit their items, communicate with customers, and increase brand awareness (Vinerean & Opreana, 2019). On the other hand, the digitization of the luxury perfume sector has brought new hurdles. With so many luxury perfume companies competing for attention on social media, brands may find it challenging to differentiate themselves and distinguish (Wihardja, 2021). Hence, the fast-paced social media landscape can make it difficult for luxury perfume companies to manage to keep their brand image and messaging consistent.

In addition, several fluctuations have forced this industry to make several changes, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, political and social issues, and other global events. With fewer people traveling and attending social events, the demand for luxury perfumes decreased, prompting many brands to shift their marketing strategies toward online sales (Achille & Zipser, 2020). Moreover, luxury perfume companies are increasingly targeting younger audiences via social media influencers and celebrity endorsements, indicating a shift toward digital marketing and a desire to reach a wider market (Nylund, 2020; Vinerea & Opreana, 2019). Considering these obstacles, the luxury perfume sector has thrived in the online world (Nylund, 2020). Luxury perfume brands have been able to develop strong online communities, communicate with customers in new and unique ways, and boost sales by using the power of social media. Yet, as the industry evolves, luxury perfume businesses will need to stay up to date with the digital trends and modify their marketing strategies accordingly.

Hence, a new form of marketing has emerged in response to the proliferation of social media platforms (Bauer, 2020). Luxury perfume brands have incorporated Instagram to attract a younger, more diversified audience and convey exclusivity and luxury in their products. As a result, the use of visual content for these companies on Instagram has increased. This imagery has been demonstrated in the literature to reinforce the male gaze and perpetuate traditional gender roles and stereotypes. Thus, it is important to critically examine women's representation in advertisements and consider the impact on the exposed consumers.

Moreover, the usage of Instagram for marketing has raised concerns about women's portrayal and the possibility of the male gaze manifesting in these materials (Bauer, 2020). Previous studies have found that these brands frequently rely on objectifying and sexualizing

imagery on Instagram (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008), alongside language and messages that perpetuate traditional gender roles (Bauer, 2020). For instance, in Zimmerman and Dahlberg's (2008) study, the respondents agreed that females tend to be portrayed as sexual objects in advertisements. Similarly, Timke and O'Barr (2017) found that advertisement portrayals of femininity and masculinity thrive in preserving predefined common gender stereotypes.

The employment of specific visual conventions on Instagram may also contribute to the manifestation of the male gaze. According to research, Instagram users, particularly influencers, frequently display an idealized version of their life on the platform (Wangshu, 2020). This may involve the use of filters and editing tools to provide a refined, flawless appearance. While such visual conventions may be perceived as aspirational and appealing, they can also reinforce beauty standards and contribute to women's objectification (Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Additionally, studies suggest that Instagram tends to negatively affect women's self-esteem, as it was stated in the previous sub-chapter (Chang et al., 2019; Chansiri & Wongphothiphan, 2021; Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019).

Instagram has over one billion monthly active users (Newberry, 2023), making it a crucial channel for businesses to reach their target audience. Females account for 51.6% of all Instagram users, making it the second-most popular social media network among women (Statista, 2022). This makes it an ideal medium for researching marketing materials targeted at women in the luxury perfume industry. Further, the platform's visual aspect allows for a full analysis of the images, in addition to how they are constructed and used to convey meanings and ideas.

One of the marketing practices used by most of these luxury perfume companies is storytelling. Luxury is not a need but a "desire" that goes beyond that (Heine, 2012). Perfume is seen as an individual commodity, with customers developing strong ties to their preferred aroma. "When a woman buys perfume, she buys much, much more than simply fragrant fluids" (Cant et al., 2009, as cited in Stewart & Carey, 2020, p. 147). As a result, brand attachment is critical for every branded perfume business (Stewart & Carey, 2020, p. 147). A story shows how and why life evolves and is often structured with chronology and causality. According to Escalas (1998, as cited in Cabigiosu, 2020, p. 51), successful storytelling involves a main character participating in endeavors that accomplish goals, and the story engages viewers by offering information about the protagonist's aspirations, thoughts, and emotions, as well as their progress and transformation. As exposed in Cabigiosu (2020), both

examples of the perfumes of Allure, Chanel, and Envy, Gucci, evoke the well-known myth of the siren, who portrays "attraction" and the danger of chaos and ruin.

Hence, given the growing relevance of Instagram as a marketing tool, as well as the possibility for the male gaze to emerge in these materials, it is critical to investigate how it may be present in marketing materials since understanding this has the potential to advance to more inclusive and empowering advertising tactics, while also raising awareness about the negative effects of the male gaze on women's self-perception and media representation.

2.5. Summary

As previously stated, the concept of the male gaze is a prevalent phenomenon in the representation of women in a variety of media. It has been established that, in advertising, the male gaze objectifies and sexualizes women, portraying them as passive objects of desire for the male observer. This study aims to delve deeper into how the male gaze manifests in marketing materials targeting women in the luxury perfume industry on Instagram while attempting to contribute to the increasing body of literature on the subject. This research can contribute to a better understanding of how gender depiction in advertising influences society's attitudes and perceptions about gender roles and expectations. Further, Juster et al. (2016) suggest that traditional gender roles and societal expectations can impact both mental health and physical health, outlining the necessity of a more nuanced understanding of the gender-health relationship.

3. Method

This chapter provides a thorough explanation of the study methods used to examine how the male gaze manifests in marketing materials on Instagram targeting women in the luxury perfume industry. To explain the interpretations and demonstrate the validity of the study, a thorough and comprehensive description of the taken steps, and actions conducted throughout the research is necessary (Brennen, 2012). Thus, an explanation of the research design used, sample and data collection, operationalization, sensitizing concepts, data analysis, and validity and reliability of the study will be provided.

3.1. Research design

To address the above-mentioned research question, a qualitative mixed methods design was followed by combining thematic analysis and multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA). Since the aim of this study was to gain in-depth insights into the use of marketing strategies on Instagram concerning a certain phenomenon, a qualitative approach – rather than a quantitative one– was followed. In Brennen's (2021) book "Qualitative Research Methods for Media Studies and Communication", qualitative methods are defined as "research methods that emphasize understanding of social phenomena through direct observation, communication with individuals, participation in their lives, or analyses of texts, artifacts, and other cultural products" (p. 1). Brennen (2021) adds that qualitative research involves examining all aspects of human experience to build different understandings of phenomena. Qualitative methods are frequently employed in the study of social sciences and might include methods such as in-depth interviews, focus groups, textual analysis, and others.

In this study, the thematic analysis of visual imagery will disclose the themes and patterns, while the MCDA will reveal the symbols and signs employed to depict these themes. By employing both methods, this study will explore the issue more in-depth, improve the robustness of the research, and extend the scope of the findings (O'Reilly et al., 2021). The MCDA will function as a "supplementary component" to the results of the "core component", the thematic analysis (Morse, 2009). This paper will be able to not only identify patterns but also grasp the symbolism and meaning behind them, due to the supplemental method.

Hence, thematic analysis is a popular method for examining qualitative data and detecting patterns and themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006), enables a thorough assessment of the data, and gives an in-depth and nuanced knowledge of the subject under investigation. As for the MCDA, it examines visual techniques, semiotics, and linguistic choices in media in-

depth, offering insight into how they impact the manifestation of the male gaze (Atalay, 2015). It enables an in-depth investigation of the signs and symbols, as well as how they relate to the socio-cultural context in which they are created and consumed.

3.1.1. Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and in this research, this method will be used to explore and study the issue at hand. It is particularly suitable for identifying and interpreting patterns and themes in visual data, such as Instagram posts. Given the focus of the research question focuses on the representation of women and the manifestation of the male gaze in this area, the thematic analysis will help identify and comprehend common or shared meanings and experiences (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It provides an in-depth examination of the data and nuanced understanding of this phenomenon (Saldaña, 2016). According to Walters (2016), thematic analysis is a useful technique for examining media text, including social media materials that mix both text and visual aspects.

There are two possible approaches in qualitative thematic analysis: inductive or deductive –or even a combination of both–. The inductive analysis refers to the cases where no prior research on the issue exists and, consequently, coded themes are created from the data; whereas the deductive analysis is followed either when the overall purpose of the analysis is to put an existing idea to be examined in a new scenario, or to contrast groups at distinct times (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). This study followed an inductive approach as the researcher intended to create the codes straight out of the data; however, a group of sensitizing concepts from prior researchers was used to guide the initial creation of the codebook, even though it further evolved during the reviewing phase.

3.1.2. MCDA

MCDA is frequently examined regarding the investigation of diverse semiotic resources, such as language, images, and other forms of communication. The interconnection of multiple modes and their purpose to generate meaning, power relations, and ideological representations is acknowledged by MCDA (Machin & Mayr, 2012).

While thematic analysis can provide valuable insights into the overall themes and messages within the ads, MCDA can capture their full complexity and nuance. Thus, a MCDA was conducted on a subset (*N*=10) of images to delve more deeply into the meanings

and cultural significance of the ads. "Language is a system of signs that express ideas […]" (De Saussure, 1966, as cited in Berger, 2013, p. 69). Thus, this analysis will involve interpreting the symbols, signs, and meanings embodied in the Instagram posts, with a focus on how they construct and reinforce gendered power relations and identity.

Hence, MCDA is a useful method for interpreting the meaning and messages communicated through images (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996). It will enable a thorough assessment of the data and provide comprehensive and nuanced knowledge of this subject (Chandler, 2022). Machin and Mayr (2012) claim that items and symbols can only convey a message when they are connected to the ideas and principles they represent. Since every aspect of the picture must be considered to comprehend the ideas in the advertisements and body discourses, this method was chosen as a complementary approach. To demonstrate how objects and symbols may function ideologically and disguise inequality, political disputes, and social conflicts, as may be the case with the male gaze manifestation in advertisements, MCDA is an appropriate way to analyze this kind of imagery (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020).

3.2. Sampling and data collection

The unit of analysis in this study is Instagram posts. These images are ads from the following luxury perfume companies on Instagram: Christian Dior, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, YSL, Guerlain, Prada, Marc Jacobs, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Tom Ford. These brands were chosen due to their international background, recognition, and luxurious status. Most of these brands own a specific account for their cosmetics and beauty products, which facilitated the search and data gathering of the sample.

This research was focused on Instagram advertisements due to 1) the increasing relevance of social media (Ko et al., 2019), 2) the importance of social media channels in the field of marketing and advertising (McGruer, 2020), 3) the capability of using the male gaze in the marketing materials in the luxury perfume industry (Gill, 2014); and 4) the great number of people using this platform in a daily basis. Advertisements in the form of posts between 2020 and 2023 were accessed digitally through the popular social media platform Instagram. Thus, a period of three years was stated to ensure that this research delivered the most relevant and latest findings. Brands are continually encouraged to adapt to shifting times and adjust their approach to gender communication (Grau & Zotos, 2016).

3.2.1. Sample and data collection: Thematic analysis

A sample of 150 (*N*=150) images was gathered by purposely selecting posts that followed specific criteria in each of the luxury perfume brand accounts. This data collection was conducted by searching for accounts from this industry and identifying relevant posts with a specific criterion: 1) the posts belong to luxury brands that sell perfumes with an Instagram account, 2) the posts are targeted at women, 3) the posts were posted in the last 3 years, 4) the posts are images, and 5) the posts are in English. Hence, criterion sampling was followed. If any of the defined criteria were not met, the advertisement was excluded from this study.

The posts were gathered from previously stated perfume brands to provide a diverse, representative, and feasible range of materials. These luxury perfume brands are well-known in this sector and have an accurate representation of the topic at hand, which will translate into higher reliability, generalization, and validity of the study. The data collection took place in March. Further, purposive sampling is a method that finds and selects data or "respondents that are most likely to yield appropriate and useful information" (Kelly, 2010, as cited in Campbell et al., 2020, pp. 653-654). Purposive sampling is used to align the sample more precisely to the research's goals, enhancing the study's rigor and the reliability of the data and outcomes (Campbell et al., 2020). To reduce the possible biases due to the nature of the purposive sampling, the previously mentioned criteria was established.

Lastly, the researcher scrolled down each of the profile's feeds and screenshotted and saved the advertisements that adjusted to the criteria, as well as their respective captions, in a Google Drive folder to be able to access it at any time during the research. The researcher attempted to gather publications from the last year only; however, this was not possible due to the different post frequency and visibility that perfumes receive on Instagram from each brand. Thus, a period of three years was established. The brands' accounts are open and can be accessed by anyone, thus there are no ethical constraints or privacy issues.

3.2.2. Sample and data collection: MCDA

A subset of 10 images was selected from the overall sample for the MCDA. A mixture of deductive and inductive procedures was employed to carry out this analysis. Firstly, a deductive framework based on the idea of the male gaze and its related visual codes and symbols was used. The inductive investigation followed by going on to examine the specific meanings and implications of the visual aspects in each image. This analysis sought to identify and analyze the images' dominant and alternative interpretations and investigate the

consequences of the depiction of women and gender norms in luxury perfume marketing on Instagram.

For the data collection, images were selected manually from the overall sample used in the thematic analysis. The criterion used for this selection was the relevance to the research question and the potential to reveal insights into the ways in which the male gaze operates in luxury perfume marketing on Instagram. The images chosen belonged to larger and more well-known companies, namely Dior, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, YSL, Prada, Marc Jacobs, and Jean Paul Gaultier, as they were deemed to be more likely to portray the male gaze. This decision relied on the capacity of influence from these brands on shaping societal norms and expectations, and thus, analyzing their use of the male gaze can provide valuable insights into the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in media. These specific images were selected as they had the potential to provide more meaningful insights into the research question. These images have been previously screenshotted and saved. The number and variety of open codes from the images, as well as the visual elements of each image, such as the composition, color palette, typography, and models, were considered for the selection of the images.

3.3. Operationalization

The core focus of this research was to examine the male gaze as it pertains to 150 Instagram ads from luxury perfume brands targeting women. To operationalize the male gaze, a thematic analysis was conducted of these advertisements and objectively categorized various aspects, including body language, facial expressions, posture, setting, clothing, nakedness, color, and camera angle, which were likely to reflect the male gaze in the ads. Additionally, the thematic analysis was further complemented with MCDA to gain a more nuanced understanding of the visuals and symbols that contribute to the male gaze. Overall, this approach allowed the researcher to systematically investigate the extent and nature of the male gaze in these advertisements and its potential implications for women's perceptions of themselves and their relationship with luxury perfume brands.

3.4. Sensitizing concepts

An inductive approach was used for the thematic analysis, meaning that the themes were created from the data instead of specific questions or previous literature. Hence, this data-driven approach aims to "produce codes that are solely reflective of the content of the data, free from any preconceived theory or conceptual framework" (Byrne, 2022, p. 1396). Nevertheless, the relevant literature framework explored was used to build the sensitizing

concepts around the male gaze. These concepts are defined by Braun and Clarke (2006) as notions that provide a basis for the analysis of data and explain the research's general issue. Meanwhile, the examiner maintains a willingness to look for data-driven themes that fall outside these sensitizing concepts.

Mulvey (2014) and Snow (1989) use relevant concepts related to the notion of the male gaze in their research and are regularly mentioned by other researchers as well. Thus, the following sensitizing concepts are inspired by the previous authors and used in this study.

Objectification. This describes how, in lieu of treating people as intricate individual with ideas, emotions, and power, they are treated as mere things. In this case, since it entails subjecting women to their looks and exploiting their physiques to gratify male desire, objectification is frequently associated with the male gaze (Mulvey, 2003).

Sexualization. This alludes to the objectification and reduction of a person to their physical appearance when they are presented as sexually attractive. To draw male spectators and perpetuate gender norms and power relations, this concept is frequently utilized in advertising (Kilbourne, 2012).

Gender. The socio-cultural norms and roles that are attributed to people depending on their sex are discussed in this complicated and varied notion. Male and female biological distinctions as well as how these distinctions are viewed, appreciated, and perpetuated by society are all included in the concept of gender, which is a social construct (Butler, 1990).

Representation. This relates to the representation and interpretation of individuals, things, and notions in media and culture. The employment of specific visual signs and codes to express ideas about gender, power, and desire is one example of this concept in the setting of the male gaze in advertising (Mulvey, 2003).

When coding the images, consideration was given to the sensitive concepts. Special attention was paid to the skin tones, clothing, and posture of the women portrayed in the images. The coding phases are addressed more in-depth hereunder.

3.5. Data analysis
3.5.1. Data analysis: Thematic analysis

This data analysis "proceeds by first identifying codes, then themes and eventually patterns" (Puppis, 2019, p. 388), and is related to the representation of women and the manifestation of the male gaze in ads. As above-mentioned, this study adopted an inductive approach but also considered the sensitizing concepts in the codebook-building process. The

analysis followed the six steps proposed by Braun and Clark (2012), which are 1) familiarization with the data, which was done while checking each brand's Instagram account, reading the textual images, and going through every post of the last three years; 2) generating initial codes, which were created using an inductive approach by describing the images; 3) generating themes, finally they were reviews to better comprehend the data at hand; 4) reviewing potential themes, 5) defining, and 6) naming themes, and producing the report. However, the analysis was not linear and required repetition and moving back and forth throughout the phases, if necessary, until saturation was reached.

Thus, open coding was used to identify the main themes and sub-themes of the analysis (Saldaña, 2016) which were organized into categories, refined, and named, resulting in the identification of patterns. A review of the themes and sub-themes was conducted several times to ensure that they accurately reflect the data and that they are distinct and non-overlapping (Creswell & Creswell, 2017).

3.5.2. Data analysis: MCDA

During the MCDA, ads were examined using the model provided by Machin and Mayr (2012). Denotation, connotation, context, and salience were the four crucial components that were identified and examined in each image. While denotation refers to the precise description of the visual elements, connotation delves into the implicit meanings and symbolic connections made (Berger, 2004). For instance, the codes of wealth and luxury might be used in an advertisement with a woman in a wealthy environment. The background or surroundings in which an image is displayed are considered the setting and offer contextual cues. Salience is the term for the composition's visual impact or elements that attract the viewers' attention. The researcher also considered the broader context of each brand, as well as Barthes' (1972) concept of "myth" to understand the underlying cultural messages and narratives that were being communicated.

By employing this comprehensive framework, a nuanced examination of the advertisements' visual and contextual elements was conducted, enabling a deeper understanding of their intended meanings and potential implications. Further, the analysis was informed by relevant theories and frameworks from the field of cultural studies, including the concept of the male gaze developed by Mulvey (2003). The findings were further integrated with those of the thematic analysis to provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the topic and contrast the patterns and themes identified in each analysis.

3.6. Validity and reliability

Several steps were taken to verify the findings' validity or whether the measurements used to collect data are reliable and allow to measure what they were designed to (Golafshani, 2003). To begin, the researcher did a thorough examination of the literature to guarantee that their study was supported by prior studies. The researcher followed a strict coding and theme development approach that included numerous rounds of coding and theme revision until the validity of the themes was considered to ""accurately" reflects the meanings evident in the data set as a whole" (Braun & Clark, 2006, p. 21). This also guaranteed the consistency and reproducibility of the analysis (Joppe, 2000) and thus, the reliability of the study.

A peer-review method was also used by the researcher, in which three different master students assessed the coding and themes to guarantee the accuracy and reliability of the findings by lowering the possibility of researcher bias and boosting the impartiality of the study. Additionally, the researchers employed a wide sample of luxury perfume ads from various brands and regions, which boosts its generalizability in this industry. Finally, the researchers offered extensive explanations of their approach and findings, allowing for replication, and increasing the dependability of the results (Joppe, 2000). Overall, the transparency and rigorousness of the researcher increased the validity and trustworthiness of this analysis.

MCDA is commonly used to analyze signs and symbols in media due to its capacity to determine the construction of meaning and how people interpret them (Machine & Mayr, 2012). However, the subjectivity and possible biases of the researcher may affect its validity. Thus, to higher the validity of the study, a systematic and precise approach must be used with specific criteria to recognize signs, reliable coding, and reliable interpretation of methods. During this analysis, the researcher tried to strip off any preconceptions and beliefs to be as objective and impartial as possible. Even though the researcher's interpretation may be included in the findings, this qualitative approach might not pose a reliability issue, according to Keane (2018). The ability of people to interpret signs and symbols is a core component of this ideology (Keane, 2018).

In conclusion, the research's ethical elements are significant and relevant in identifying an outstanding study. Thus, to perform his research ethically, several steps were taken to reduce the potential biases, and conflicts of interest, and remain objective and transparent such as formulating specific goals, completing a thorough literature framework, and implementing trustworthy and reliable research techniques and theories. Any potential

biases were identified and addressed by critical reflection and open conversation with other researchers, which helped ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the study while upholding ethical standards and principles.

4. Results and Discussion

The present study aimed to examine how the male gaze manifests in Instagram posts targeting women in the luxury perfume industry through thematic analysis and MCDA. In this chapter, the results of both analyses will be presented and discussed. The integration of the results of MCDA within each theme of the thematic analysis will offer a more thorough comprehension of the analyzed advertising and a more in-depth examination of the multimodal elements and discursive components that contribute to the development and reinforcement of the themes. A broader perspective on how visual and textual components interact to express various meanings and beliefs inside the discourse of advertising by integrating these two approaches will be provided. It will also create a continuous narrative flow, allowing for an examination of the intricate relationship in the data.

This study selected a total of 150 Instagram posts from 10 different luxury perfume brands: Christian Dior, Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, YSL, Guerlain, Prada, Marc Jacobs, Jean Paul Gaultier, and Tom Ford. The themes that emerged from the thematic analysis include physical appearance as an indicator of sexualization, femininity as a portrayal of gender norms, Western standards as a racial (mis)representation, and submission as a power dynamic, which will be explained and discussed in this section. The full codebook with the description of the themes can be found in Appendix A.

As for the MCDA, 10 images from the overall sample were chosen. Denotation, connotation, context, and salience are the four components that Machin and Mayr (2012) identified and were used to analyze the ads in this study. Further, each image's context and Barthes' (1972) idea of "myth" were also examined. The significance of interpreting and diving into the signs and symbols of the images is to underlie the cultural messages and narratives being communicated through their meanings. The findings revealed four main themes: objectification and sexualization, gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles, exoticization and othering, and empowerment and agency. These results are corroborated by previous studies that found marketing strategies, particularly on Instagram, displaying the male gaze (Dang, 2022; Nkem et al., 2020). See Appendix B for an example of MCDA.

4.1. Physical appearance as an indicator of sexualization

Physical appearance as an indicator of sexualization is the first theme extracted and it refers to the objectification and sexualization of the female body. This theme appears in all the analyzed images (*N*=150), making it the most repetitive, as every image tended to sexualize women through their physical appearance, clothes, facial expressions, or postures.

However, Dolce & Gabbana, Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent, and Jean Paul Gaultier came out to possess the most sexualized imagery. This indicates that these brands tend to display objectifying and sexualized elements in their ads, reinforcing damaging gender stereotypes (Tuna & Freitas, 2012) and objectifying women's bodies for commercialization (Mills et al., 2017).

4.1.1. Sexualization

Sexualization is a sub-theme that incorporates aspects such as revealing skin, noticeable makeup, styled hair, provocative clothes and/or postures, and facial expressions that include parted lips and eyes half-closed. Women were frequently positioned in provocative stances with suggestive clothes, accentuating their sexual appeal such as in Figure 1.
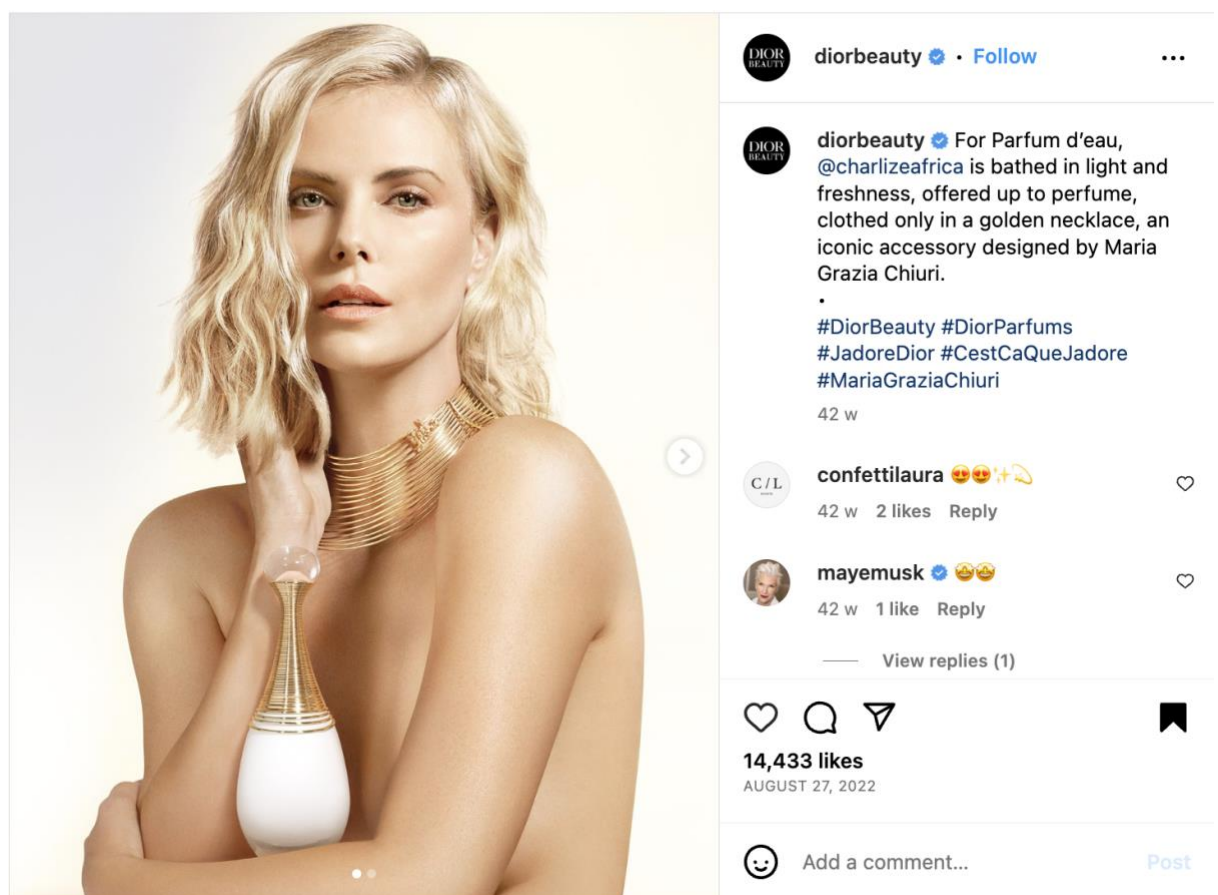

Figure 1. *@diorbeauty on March 11th, 2022*

In Figure 1, a celebrity is seen wearing nothing but a golden necklace, radiating a goddess-like aura accentuated by different elements (i.e., lighting, color palette, or

accessories), and parted lips while clutching the perfume, all of which enhances her sexual appeal. Various research (Jha et al., 2017; Kilbourne, 2000; Mulvey, 2003) have discussed the notion that women exist mainly for male pleasure and desire, and these factors emphasized the sexualization of women in advertising. Further, the caption says that "@charlizeafrica embodies J'adore Parfum d'eau in a delicate suspended moment of pure indulgence" which suggests delicacy and indulgence –a term that evokes pleasure, sensuality, and desire–, implying an enhanced experience that relates to sexualized imagery since it highlights the notion that the physical appearance of the woman –what is being shown– tends to incite both desire and fascination –what is being mentioned–. All the images from the analysis possessed at least one code belonging to this sub-theme, making it the most prominent.

4.1.2. Seductiveness

Seductiveness arose as a sub-theme where women were presented as passive and sexually accessible, with seductive facial expressions, suggestive positions, and revealing attire that exposes skin. Figure 1 is also a good illustration of seductiveness. Nevertheless, while sexualization is the explicit objectification and hypersexualization of women's bodies, emphasizing provocative poses, clothing, and body features typically linked to sexuality, seductiveness is a broader concept that goes beyond explicit sexual objectification, highlighting the power of suggestion and establishing an enticing environment through subtle hints, gestures, and expression (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). Both sub-themes contribute to the sexualization and objectification of women although their methods and degree of explicitness might differ.

4.1.3. Objectification

Objectification was identified as another sub-theme, which was presented through aspects such as passive stances through serious expressions, revealing clothing, skin exposure, and the setting of the advertisement, such as a bedroom or a party. These elements were used to objectify women's bodies and emphasize their sexual appeal. This theme portrays women as mere objects while neglecting their individuality, agency, and autonomy (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020). It regards women as passive vessels for visual pleasure (Mulvey, 2014), emphasizing mainly how they look rather than their complex personalities and attributes, an idea that is in line with the findings of Wangshu (2020).

While sexualization and seductiveness can contribute to objectification, they are distinct in their methods and intent. As stated by Cortese (2004), objectification tends to reduce women to mere objects, while sexualization and seductiveness focus specifically on sex appeal and allure. Thus, the use of provocative poses, the revealed skin, and seductive facial expressions all served to objectify and sexualize the female body, which is consistent with previous research that has identified the objectification of women's bodies in media (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Kilbourne, 2000). In addition, objectifying imagery of women tends to portray men in positions of power and women in subordination stands, as stated by previous studies (Mulvey, 2013; Gill, 2014; Jha et al., 2017). This can be seen in the images from the sample where women are portrayed alongside men [N= 3], and while the former is always in a position of inferiority through her stance, height, or position in the frame, the man tends to be related to power and dominance through the way he grabs the woman, the stance and position in the frame, or elements such as a crown or gold accessories -– this notion will be further discussed in the last theme–.

Figure 2. *@dolcegabbana_beauty on February 3rd, 2023*

In Figure 2 it is possible to view a close-up image of a couple. The man wears gold rings and a crown on his head – endowing him with superiority –. The woman glances up and allows him to rest his lips on her neck, behaving as a mere vessel of pleasure for the man – one of the main indicators of the previous sub-themes –. This contraposition is highlighted also in the caption where the initials "K&Q" appear, referring to the king and queen which, again, predetermines the roles and expectations of each individual. The hashtag "#OwnYourCrown" emphasizes the power and authority of the man, since he is the one wearing the crown in the image, which also reinforces this idea of the superiority of the man as opposed to the submission of women.

Moreover, her lips are parted as if seduced by him in an ecstasy moment, and both their eyes are closed. Her hands are positioned on his neck and shoulder while he grabs her head. She wears a black top that reveals skin, while he is shirtless. Although it is blurred, the scene seems to be a desert, which is often linked to adventure and exclusivity (Adebeshin, 2015). Further, the caption mentions "a wild ride in the desert", where the concept of wilderness is further related to the scenario of the image, reinforcing this idea. The combination of these aspects shows the man's controlling and dominating figure, as opposed to the woman's subordinate stance and her role as a vessel of pleasure and sexualization, and the final hint regarding the use of a crown and gold details that accentuate this notion.

The MCDA of this image revealed several interesting symbols and interpretations of the image that were grouped in a theme labeled *objectification and sexualization*, a pattern that has been seen in the entirety of the MCDA sample. The elements of this post highlight specific features associated with sex appeals, such as legs and cleavage, the use of lighting and camera angle, skin exposure, and seductive poses and expressions to increase the sexualization of the images. This conclusion is consistent with previous literature that has already discussed how women are portrayed in ads, emphasizing the perpetuation of limited beauty standards and objectification of women for the male gaze (Jha et al., 2017; Kilbourne, 2000; Perloff, 2014; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Further, the depiction of women as sexual objects encourages relations of power in society and aids to maintain gender inequality (McKenzie et al., 2018; Tsichla, 2020).

Figure 2 is an example of this pattern. The physical contact, skimpy attire, and passionate emotions in the image symbolize the role of women as objects of desire and their relegation to their sex appeal (Wangshu, 2020), which is implied by this portrayal. Further, this embrace can also symbolize the man's dominance over the woman and the reinforcement

of conventional gender roles in which males are seen as powerful and women as submissive and objectified (Gill, 2014). This can be seen through the way the man holds the woman, forcefully grabbing her head and shoulder while placing his lips on her neck in a possessive manner. Whereas through the facial expression and position of the woman, with a cocked head and the way she holds the man, a symbol of voluntary submission and surrender in a moment of pure ecstasy can be interpreted. This power dynamic combined with the idea that women exist for the mere purpose of men's pleasure and consumption (Kilbourne, 2000; Mulvey, 2003; Olivier, 2017) further the idea of female objectification (Gill, 2014). According to previous literature, such objectification also has detrimental consequences on women's mental health and self-esteem (Perloff, 2014; Sokolova et al., 2022).

The crown resting upon the man's head is another symbol present in the ad, which can be interpreted as one more patriarchal symbol and the reinforcement of the previously mentioned power dynamics – with men in dominant positions and women in inferior and objectified stances (Mulvey, 2003). The setting is another important element since a desert can be linked to adventure and exclusivity (Adebeshin, 2015), which evokes a seductive and enigmatic atmosphere where intimacy and sensual embrace takes place.

Hence, Figure 2 demonstrates the objectification and sexualization of women, which is consistent with previous studies (Dang, 2022; Gill, 2014; Jha et al., 2017; Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008). Advertising that depicts women as sexual objects encourages detrimental gender dynamics and societal norms that emphasize the male gaze while also perpetuating the idea a woman's worth is mainly determined by their sex appeal rather than their capabilities (Gill, 2014) which can harm women's mental health and self-esteem (Greenfield, 2018; Perloff, 2014; Sokolova et al., 2022). Moreover, various research (McKenzie et al., 2018; Tsichla, 2020) have shown that objectification and sexualization of women in ads contribute to the perpetuation of gender inequality. Tsichla (2020), who claims that ads contribute to gender inequality by promoting sexism and false ideas of what is acceptable and normal beauty, supports this idea. Further, these ads contribute to the marginalization and subordination of women in society by portraying them largely as objects of desire (Vendemia et al., 2022). The study's findings demonstrate the urgent need for more inclusive, varied, and powerful images that steer clear of objectifying women, question traditional gender roles, encourage positive body image, and advance gender equality. Thus, advertisers can aid in creating a more just and empowering society.

4.1.4. Heteronormative beauty and body stereotypes

The sub-theme of *heteronormative beauty and body stereotypes* developed through aspects such as natural makeup, certain facial traits such as full lips, narrow nose, thin eyebrows, hairstyle, perfect skin, and normative bodies with slim but curvy figures. This sub-theme refers to the societal expectations and standards imposed on women's bodies, a preconception in line with the study of Eisend (2010) which indicates that women are portrayed as faultless, with smooth skin, wrinkle-free, thin bodies, and shiny hair. It establishes a narrow and constrained ideal of attractiveness founded on traditional gender roles and heterosexual desires, perpetuating the belief that women must conform to specified body sizes and characteristics to be deemed beautiful and desirable (Calogero et al., 2007). This can be exemplified in Figure 3.
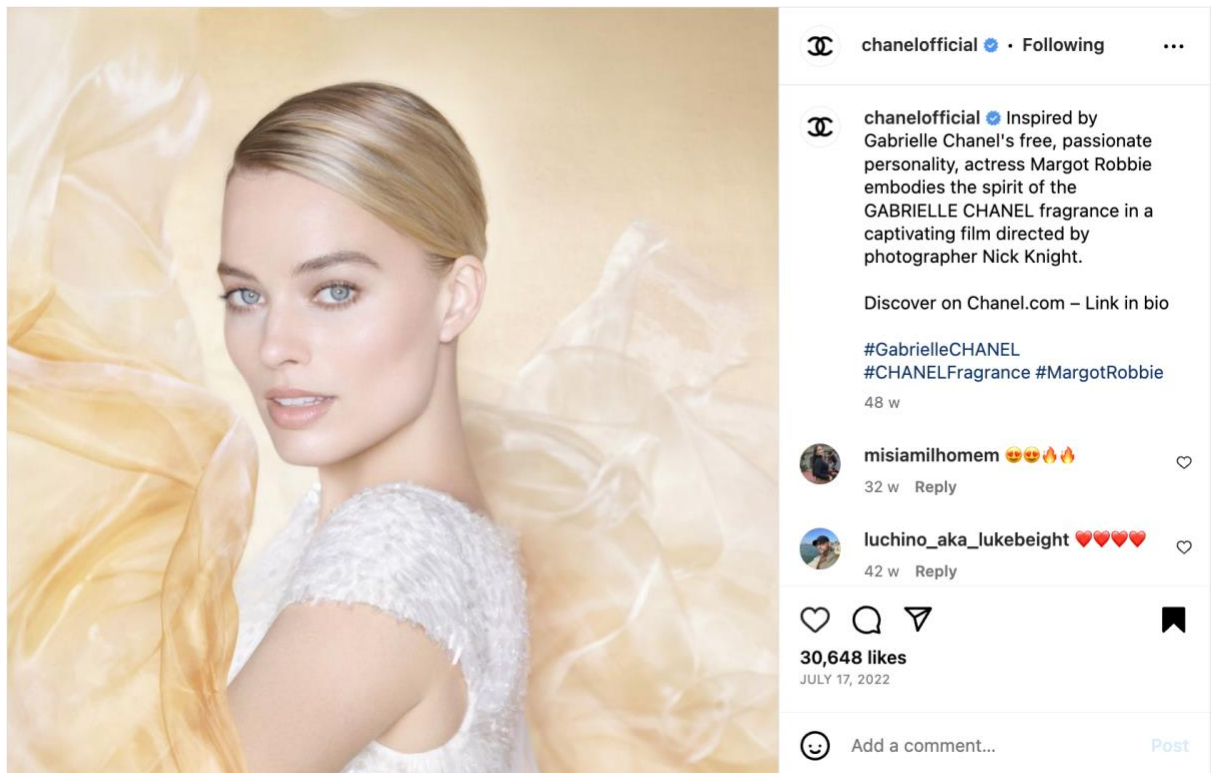
Figure 3. *@chanelofficial on July 17th, 2022*

Figure 3 features a close-up shot of celebrity Margot Robbie. Her head is tilted towards the camera, and her serious face shows sensuous, tempting parted lips in a "captivating" stance that draws the attention of the viewer towards her –as intended and mentioned in the caption. She is dressed in a short-sleeved, tight-fitting white gown with beads embroidered on it. Her complexion is white, her hair is blond, her nose is small, her

lips are big, and she looks to have a thin physique, all of which are compatible with the typical heteronormative attributes of women described above. These physical aspects are accompanied by her "free and passionate personality", as described in the caption. This implies contradictory ideas since the image portrays a woman that conforms to beauty stereotypes while the caption challenges these norms and talks about independence and embracing one's passions.

Tsichla (2020) claims that despite recent improvements, preconceptions of female roles continue to exist, albeit occasionally in subtle ways, demonstrating that they are still visible in society –as can be observed through the images. According to previous studies (Jha et al., 2017; Tsichla, 2020; Watson et al., 2019; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008), feminist perspectives emphasize that advertising in mainstream media serves a major part in fostering disparities in gender by supporting sexism and portraying distorted beauty standards as acceptable and appealing.

4.1.5. Nakedness

Nakedness was the final sub-theme, and it was expressed by the absence of clothing or revealing one, as well as close-up shots of certain body parts. Women's bodies were objectified and reduced to sexual objects, accentuating their physical features while reinforcing traditional gender roles and beauty standards. Every image in the sample displays skin exposure; although, these are the naked body parts that were shown the most: wrist [N=96], neck [N=90], cleavage [N=65], and legs [N=27] (Figure 4 and 5). This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Kilbourne (2012) which imply that advertisements tend to depict different body features of women, such as legs, breasts, or torsos, with the intention of sexualizing and objectifying women.

Figure 4. *@chanelofficial on October 16th, 2022*

Figure 5. *@yslbeauty on January 30th, 2022*

As a result, since it pertains to various degrees of bodily exposure, the sub-theme of nakedness provides another layer of intricacy to this topic. It frequently overlaps with sexualization, seductiveness, and objectification themes. Nakedness is regularly employed in media advertising to draw attention and elicit desire (Lombardot, 2017). Overall, luxury perfume companies, as previously stated in Chapter 2, may contribute to the reinforcement of narrow ideals of beauty and the objectification of women by displaying images of (conventionally) attractive women (Mills et al., 2017). Nevertheless, it has the potential to perpetuate women's objectification by establishing unattainable beauty standards and supporting the perception that women's bodies are mainly intended for visual consumption and objectification (Dang, 2022; Mills et al., 2017). In addition to having a negative impact on women's mental health and self-esteem, maintaining archaic standards and ideas of beauty can also cause body dissatisfaction, low self-esteem, low self-worth, and negative body image, as previously stated in the literature (Chang et al., 2019; Chansiri & Wongphothiphan, 2021; Fardouly et al., 2015; Greenfield, 2018; Martinez-Pecino & Garcia-Gavilán, 2019).

The MCDA of the images revealed a second pattern: *empowerment and agency*, which can be linked to this theme since even though celebrity Dua Lipa is exposing skin in different parts of her body (see Figure 5), which can be interpreted as a way to sexualize a woman's body, it can also symbolize a call for confidence, assertiveness and empowerment of one's body and decisions through symbols and ideology present in the image. Hence, Figure 5 is an example of this theme which showcases the importance of empowering representations of women in advertising, as discussed in previous literature (Tsai et al., 2021; Windels et al., 2020). Further, the caption suggests that "@dualipa knows how to play by her own rules" which implies – and reinforces – a sense of autonomy and independence from the celebrity since she is the ruler of her own decisions and is not confined to any expectations or norms. Numerous studies have emphasized the significance of representing women as active agents who are independent, self-assured, and capable of making their own decisions (Tsai et al., 2021).

Her strong posture standing tall, confident, and unbothered by looking away from the camera with parted lips, and having open body language, conveys that sense of self-assurance and confidence, which can be translated into power. Her facial expression connotes mystery, seductiveness, and intrigue, which pulls the viewers' attention toward the image. Further, the choice of clothing through an oversized blazer with nothing underneath connotes a sense of confidence, boldness, and empowerment of one's body but at the same time, the exposure of

skin connotes sensuality and body positivity. The woman is the central figure of the image in contrast with the simple and neutral background. A final symbol is the perfume *Libre* ("free" in English), which by holding it between her hands, connotes a sense of ownership, representing the freedom, liberation, and empowerment of women. Overall, this depiction of the celebrity symbolized attributes such as confidence, empowerment, sensuality, and sophistication. Her bold appearance together with the idea of liberation and empowerment reinforces the myth of embracing oneself and breaking traditional norms and beauty ideals. It emphasized the current movement of body positivity and the idea of diverse beauty while challenging traditional notions of what is feminine and what women are capable of achieving. These interpretations help advocate for gender equality.

In summary, the theme of *physical appearance as an indicator of sexualization* sheds light on how women's appearance is used to convey and reinforce sexualized messages in social media (Jha et al., 2017). The sub-themes revealed the prevalent use of certain elements described above to portray women as objects of –male– desire (Mulvey, 2014) which contributes to the hypersexualization of women's bodies, perpetuates power imbalances, and reinforces traditional gender roles (Chafai, 2008). By challenging and deconstructing these narrow beauty ideals and promoting more inclusive and empowering portrayals of women, it is possible to work towards dismantling the harmful effects of the sexualization of women in society.

4.2. Femininity as a portrayal of gender norms

The second theme that emerged from the analysis was *femininity as a portrayal of gender norms*. In this theme, women tended to be depicted mainly through expressions, postures, and aspects that highlighted how feminine, submissive, vulnerable, and innocent they looked. These portrayals, as Baker (2005) discussed, aim to showcase a norm of how women should look or behave to be considered desirable or sophisticated in the eyes of these luxury perfume brands. This theme is consistent with previous research that has identified the reinforcement of gender stereotypes by the media (Bauer, 2020; Chafai, 2008; Nkem et al., 2020; Timke & O'Barr, 2017). It is important to note that this theme appears in 147 images of the sample through different open codes and aspects, but is especially prominent in the brands Guerlain, Chanel, Marc Jacobs, Prada, Dolce & Gabbana, Gucci, and Dior. Even though some of the images try to break through these femininity stereotypes, there are still elements rooted in traditional gender norms. Luxury perfume brands have a long history of promoting

traditional gender roles and femininity in their advertising and marketing campaigns (Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020), and their images reflect these values.

4.2.1. Innocent or childlike behavior

Innocent or childlike behavior was the first sub-theme that emerged where women are seen wearing minimum or no makeup, clothes that conceal their curves, and smiling in an innocent and sweet manner. Numerous studies are in line with this representation of women (Goffman, 1979; Jha et al., 2017), which note that women frequently dress in children's attire and appear fragile, innocent, and playful. This sub-theme gives the topic of social expectations for women a unique viewpoint because it draws attention to the ongoing demand for women to exhibit characteristics of innocence and youth that uphold traditional gender roles and power relations. (Kilbourne, 2012). Findings from Kilbourne (2012) indicate that women are even frequently infantilized in advertisements. One of the images from the sample includes celebrity Anjelica Huston, who was born in 1951 and is depicted with no wrinkles nor signs of aging, with perfect skin.

4.2.2. Delicacy

Delicacy emerged as a sub-theme by depicting women as delicate and fragile through their posture and gestures. This idea is discussed in several studies that mention that women tend to be portrayed as submissive, dependent, and in need of protection (Cortese, 2004; Sharm & Bumb, 2021). Women often had natural makeup in pink and nude tones, manicured nails, and delicate accessories and postures. An example of this sub-theme is Figure 6, where a closeup shot shows celebrity Angelina Jolie with closed eyes, nude and pink makeup tones, pales, and perfect skin exposure that proves her fragility and vulnerability, and classical and minimalist jewelry is shown.

Figure 6. *@guerlain on March 7th, 2020*

According to Kilbourne (2012), delicacy is yet another gender stereotype that supports the notion that women are fragile individuals who require protection. In fact, three of the images' captions use the word "delicate" in different variations. Society limits women's strength and independence by valuing delicacy as a desirable feminine trait, which reinforces conventional gender roles and power dynamics (Kilbourne, 2012). On the other hand, the caption of Figure 6, "Mon Guerlain is pursuing its exploration of the many facets of femininity showcasing passion" suggests an idea of going beyond the traditional qualities of fragile and delicate and introduces the word "passion" which suggests that there is more beyond these traditional norms. The contradiction of both words functions as a limit of this discovery of "diverse facets of femininity". The caption implies that to be feminine, women must be both delicate and passionate, perpetuating the social expectations constructed – and expected to be conformed – for women.

4.2.3. Feminine clothing

Feminine clothing emerged as a sub-theme that depicts women in clothing that is considered feminine, in a ladylike or classical style, and in a pink and nude color palette. This sub-theme also features lady-like accessories like handbags, jewelry, and shoes. This portrayal of femininity emphasizes the significance of attire in shaping and reinforcing gender identities (Goodman et al., 2007). The women included in this sub-theme are also dressed in apparel frequently linked with femininity, such as dresses, skirts, and chic outfits. In the late 1800s, "dress was the practice of gender, not merely the depiction of it; dress was one of the places where gender was created" (Schorman, as cited in Goodman et al., 2007, p. 104). Out of the overall images of the sample where the entirety of the body is displayed in the frame, only seven images show women wearing pants or trousers – a clothing piece that also in the 1800s used to relate to males and low socioeconomic classes (Goodman et al., 2007). The use of feminine apparel aims to represent and reinforce social norms around how women ought to behave. It reflects societal expectations and standards for what constitutes proper clothing for women, frequently highlighting qualities such as gentleness, elegance, delicacy, and innocence (Kilbourne, 2012).

4.2.4. Classical and natural settings

The next extracted sub-theme was *classical and natural settings*, often featuring classical furniture, flowery scenarios, or other natural features. For instance, 35 ads in the sample had flowers in the setting of the image and 14 captions mentioned the word "flower". These environments are linked to classic and timeless aesthetics that relate to femininity, including picturesque scenery or peaceful nature surroundings. The sub-theme promotes the idea of elegance, poise, and sophistication by placing women in these contexts. To invoke feelings of harmony and purity, it draws on traditional beauty standards and natural components to advance an image of femininity founded in tradition and cultural norms.

4.2.5. Traditional gender stereotypes

Traditional gender stereotypes was the last sub-theme that emerged, which includes the depiction of women in feminine clothing, with delicate postures and specific makeup and hairstyles associated with this gender. These representations reinforce traditional gender stereotypes that promote the concept that women should be passive and subservient (Cortese, 2004) and that femininity is associated with being dainty, soft, and sweet (Sharma & Bumb, 2021). Advertising and marketing materials, according to Cortese (2004), tend to establish

stereotypes by outlining what is acceptable or expected conduct from both sexes. The following image is an example of how this sub-theme is displayed in Figure 7.

Figure 7. *@guerlain on August 5th, 2020*

Figure 7 shows a woman with long blonde hair and blue eyes, who is turned away but looks over her shoulder at the camera. The background is a lush green plant, and she is resting the perfume on her shoulder. She is dressed in a white shirt that exposes her back, but no body curves or women's attributes are shown. With pink lipstick and blush, her makeup looks delicate and feminine, heightened by her innocent and sweet smile. These visual signals promote traditional gender assumptions of femininity, sweetness, and delicateness, an idea that is reinforced by the caption, "Sweet and playful, unexpected and daring, sparkling and seductive". While "sweet and playful" are both attributes of the stereotyped idea of femininity where women are gentle and innocent, the "unexpected and daring, sparkling and seductive" part of the caption implies a challenge to these traditional norms, where women are expected to be more assertive and alluring, qualities that are, nevertheless, still impregnated as an

expected behavior while reinforcing objectification and putting more pressure in societal expectations of women.

Figure 8. *@diorbeauty on February 12th, 2023*

The portrayal of women as delicate, submissive, and nurturing is reinforced through various visual cues such as clothing, facial expressions, and posture. For instance, in Figure 8, celebrity Natalie Portman is depicted in a white summer dress while sitting in a field of flowers, emphasizing her femininity, delicacy, and sweetness. The overall elements of the image, such as her posture, soft facial expression while looking down and away from the camera, and the attire and flowery setting, give an innocent sense, aligning with the gender stereotype of women being delicate, innocent, and feminine. However, these three attributes are contradicted by the caption, where "strong femininity" and "liberated life" are present terms that highlight a tension between what is expected and the desire for "liberation" and the current challenge of deconstructing preconceptions and ideas of femininity. Once again, this juxtaposition of notions can be interpreted as a desire from brands to manifest progress and

transgressor stereotypes through text while still showing an image rooted in traditional gender ideas.

By incorporating the results of the MCDA in this theme, a more in-depth comprehension of the multimodal aspects of what is understood as femininity and how women tend to be portrayed can be grasped and lead to a broader understanding of the interaction of the different elements in the image. Hence, another pattern that arose from the MCDA was *gender stereotypes* which has been seen in a variety of ways, including women's postures and clothing choices which highlighted their bodies; or their facial expressions and body language, depicting them as vulnerable, seductive, and submissive through closed eyes, parted lips, or tilted heads; or the setting, such as a private bedroom or a field of flowers. The result is consistent with the previous literature regarding how gender is represented in advertising, which emphasizes how societal standards and expectations of femininity and masculinity are perpetuated (Baker, 2005; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Goffman, 1979). Traditional gender hierarchies and patriarchal ideas are reinforced when women are portrayed as docile, dependent, and subservient, while males are portrayed as authoritative and powerful (Baker, 2005; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Gill, 2014).

This can be seen in Figure 8, where certain elements can be interpreted in several ways. This image portrays a clear gender stereotype where the woman is depicted as sweet, seductive, and innocent in what is considered a feminine position. This idea is supported by the flower surrounding her, which symbolizes and reinforces the idea of femininity, along with gentleness and being docile. Flowers are a common symbol in perfume ads targeted at women (Moeran, 2011). Her facial expression, with her eyes looking down, adds to the reinforcement of gender stereotypes and the idea of subordination and docility, a power dynamic mentioned in the previous theme. Hence, this image restricts women's freedom and strengthens the idea that their value is largely determined by their external looks and capacity to comply with societal beauty standards (Gill, 2014). The subordination idea is further reinforced by the angle of the camera – from up –, which puts the viewer in a position of power while leaving the women in a position of "weakness" and "smallness" (Berger, 2004, p. 34).

The advertising encourages conventional gender norms and the marginalization of women by maintaining these gender stereotypes. In addition, they perpetuate gender inequality (McKenzie et al., 2018; Tsichla, 2020) and reinforce the idea that women should conform to societal conventions and prioritize the desires of society – and men – before their

own, which can harm women's mental health, well-being, and self-esteem (Sokolova et al., 2022). In the socio-cultural context of contemporary movements such as body positivity, women's equality, and the disruption of societal expectations and stereotypes of women, it is necessary to acknowledge the negative impact of these movements (McKenzie et al., 2018; Tsichla, 2020) and promote inclusivity, empowerment, as well as diverse images of beauty in advertising.

In general, the study's second theme emphasizes how gender stereotypes are ubiquitous in the media and how they continue to support the conventional gender roles for women (Bauer, 2020; Chafai, 2008; Nkem et al., 2020). These images imply that despite recent strides in challenging gender conventions, there is still a long way to go in terms of achieving a more inclusive and varied depiction of women in the media. These representations may lower women's self-esteem and may also restrict their possibilities and options (Sokolova et al., 2022). To build a society that is fairer and more inclusive, it is crucial to be aware of these representations and to oppose them.

4.3. Western idealization as a racial (mis)representation

The *Western idealization as a racial (mis)representation* was the third theme that came to light during the analysis. Women of color are portrayed as conforming to Western beauty standards using Western-inspired makeup, hairstyles, other ethnic features (i.e., skin color or facial features), and clothing from Western brands that highlights Western traits (i.e., slim figures but curvy). This topic is in line with earlier studies that have shown how whiteness is idealized in the media (Hall, 2013). It is significant to notice that this pattern was evident in most of the ads examined when women have a racial background other than Caucasian or white [*N*=38], with Chanel, Dolce & Gabbana, and Gucci standing out as particularly strong examples. This subject draws attention to the persistent problem of racial misrepresentation in the media and supports the myth that only individuals who meet Western standards of beauty are seen as attractive (Mbure & Aubrey, 2017).

4.3.1. Facial features

Facial features was a prominent sub-theme through depictions of women with large eyes, narrow noses, elongated shape of faces, and full lips, frequently portrayed in a more Western ideal. Most of the women in the pictures also lacked facial hair and skin imperfections including spots, scars, or wrinkles. Figure 9 shows a woman who conforms to

these facial features with a narrow nose, full lips, and flawless complexion aiming for an idealized and Westernized view of women's attractiveness and perfection.

Figure 9. *@jeanpaulgaultier on September 4, 2022*

4.3.2. Race

Race was also a notable sub-theme, with images featuring women of Asian, Black, and White racial backgrounds. However, all these women were depicted as conforming to Western beauty standards such as lighter shades of dark skin, narrow noses, or slim figures. In line with the discussed literature, Watson et al. (2019) concluded that Black women experience unique body image stressors due to the societal pressure of beauty standards, such as the preference for lighter-skinned black sold by the media as the "perfect Black woman". All the figures in this theme are examples of this beauty idealization for Black women.

4.3.3. Skin tone

Another sub-theme that developed was *skin tone*, where pictures tended to show women with black skin, light brown skin, and light-skinned complexions. Nevertheless, these women were portrayed as meeting Western beauty standards regardless of their skin tones.

For example, out of the 25 Black women in the ads, 10 had dark skin (40%) while the others were shown in lighter-skinned tones of black as if they were attempting to fit in Western beauty ideals.

4.3.4. Body shape

The final sub-theme was *body shape*, which included pictures of women with slim figures, hairstyles in a Western-style, and Westernized body shapes. By contributing to the erasure of proper representation of Black women's bodies, which enforces restricted body standards while weakening their visibility, body shape incorporates the same ideas and challenges as the preceding sub-theme. This idea is supported by the research of Loft (2020), which contends that despite significant improvements in racial quality and fair representation made by advertisers and marketers, there are still widespread, persistent preconceptions about Black women that have penetrated Western culture for many years and are still in place. These sub-themes can be seen in Figures 10 and 11.
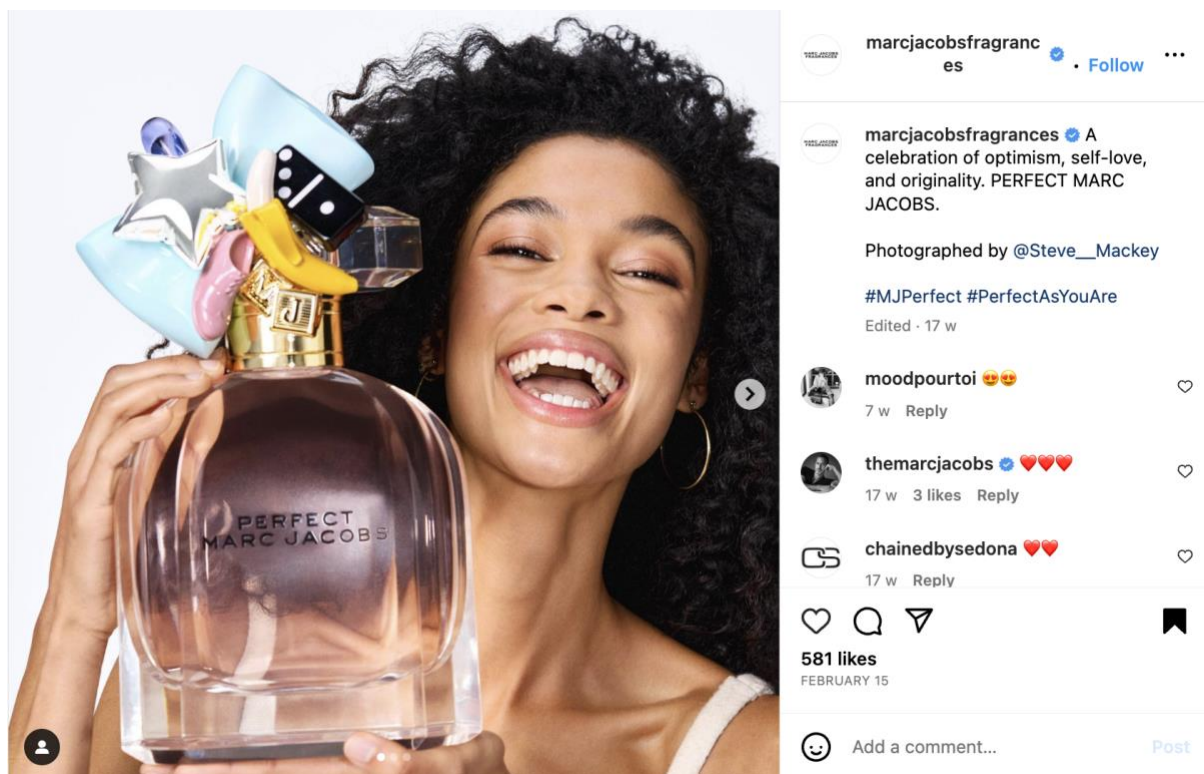

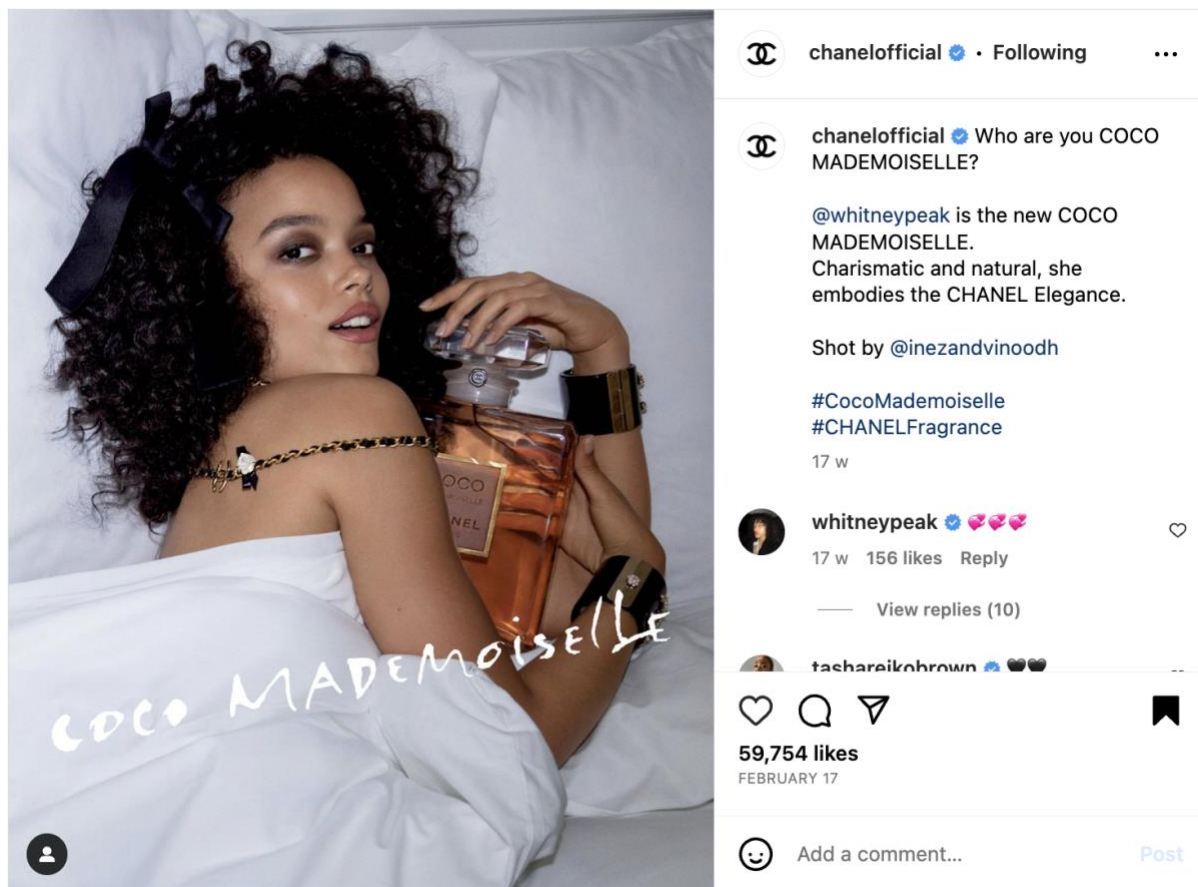Figure 10. *@marcjacobsfragances on February 15th, 2023*

Figure 11. @chaneloficial on February 17th, 2023

Despite portraying Black women, the images uphold Eurocentric beauty standards by giving them features that conform to Western standards. The lighter-skinned black tone, big lips, and narrow nose are attempts to meet Westernized ideas of beauty. The unique attractiveness of people from different racial backgrounds is marginalized and erased by this depiction, which supports the idea that only particular racial qualities are seen as attractive or desirable (Caton & Santos, 2009). Shankar (2020), who claims that advertising is failing to portray diversity while reinstalling the gaze of whiteness, supports this assertion. Akinro and Mbunyuza-Memani (2019) argue that the diversity of body types, skin tones, and hairstyles that are typical of African women are not adequately represented in African magazines and the beauty ideal that is promoted by these publications is based on white, Western, and Eurocentric norms.

The MCDA extracted a final pattern, *exoticization and othering*, which can provide a more in-depth comprehension of the multimodal comprehension of this theme. This trend is consistent with previous literature and research findings that emphasize the broad impact of power dynamics, stereotypes (Nkem et al., 2020), and cultural appropriation in advertising

(Maiorescu-Murphy, 2021). This pattern has been identified through multiple elements in the images. The use of exotic locations, such as deserts or blurry vistas, adds to the feeling of otherness and unfamiliarity (Zirra, 2019). These environments place women as being outside of the parameters of mainstream culture, highlighting their exotic persona. Furthering the idea that these women are distinct, the physical characteristics and racial representation presented in the images support prejudices connected to certain ethnic groups. The images' depictions of power relationships also significantly contribute to the idea of exoticization and othering. Due to the way in which they are depicted as the passive objects of the viewer's gaze (Mulvey, 2003), the power dynamic serves to perpetuate existing power disparities and further their objectification. When taken as a whole, these components show how the pictures support the exoticization and othering of women. They bring up significant issues with the stereotyping of other cultures and their depiction in media and society at large, with Figure 11 as an example of this pattern.

This image exemplifies the exoticization and othering of non-Western cultures in this analysis. This theme aligns with studies conducted by scholars such as Caton and Santos (2009) and Hall (1989), who have extensively explored the portrayal of "the other" in media and its implications for cultural identity and power dynamics. According to Mannarini et al. (2020), media plays an important role in creating these stereotypes and the concept of "otherness". The depiction of the woman lying in a bed, naked with her naturally curly hair along with her seductive and alluring expression, and the way she is holding the perfume bottle and looking at the camera, reinforce gender stereotypes and perpetuate the notion of Western superiority (Caton & Santos, 2009), ultimately objectifying and fetishizing other cultures for the pleasure of the male gaze. The setting of the bedroom and the faint lighting adds to the exoticization, creating an atmosphere of unfamiliarity. It implies a sense of escapism and intimacy as if the viewer is transported to a distant and exotic land. Further, the context of the brand Chanel adds another layer to the pattern of exoticization and othering. As a luxury fashion brand, Chanel has been accused and criticized in the past for cultural appropriation in their campaigns (Blair, 2017). This context suggests that the brand may be leveraging exoticized representations for commercial purposes, further perpetuating harmful stereotypes.

Advertising's manner of exoticizing and othering individuals has significant social repercussions. It strengthens the current power systems that marginalize and exoticize specific communities by reducing various cultures to simple aesthetics and reinforcing

stereotypes (Hallam & Street, 2013). As a result, it contributes to cultural appropriation and the obliteration of cultural complexity (Chatterjee, 2020), as well as detrimental narratives that portray non-Western cultures as exotic and attractive (Hallam & Street, 2013). This not only affects perceptions and prejudices of various cultures (Mannarini et al., 2020) but also strengthens the male gaze's predominance in determining how women are – or should be – portrayed. Contemporary movements are already trying to fight for the recognition and respect of different cultural identities and the elimination of harmful stereotypes and prejudices against non-Western cultures. Further, the intersection of feminism, which encompasses different kinds of discrimination, aims to deconstruct and dismantle power disparities based on several aspects such as race, gender, status, and other identities.

The implications of this pattern are also particularly important for the study issue since they highlight how women are depicted and treated as an object in advertising. Women from non-Western cultures are ostracized and othered, which exacerbates gender stereotypes and traditional gender roles in addition to objectifying them (Canton & Santos, 2009). According to Kilbourne (2000), Mulvey (2014), and Oliver (2017), the power relations in the images portray women as submissive and under the control of men. This reinforces the idea that women exist mainly for men's pleasure and gaze. Another consequence of this pattern is that it may influence women's mental health. According to Vendemia et al. (2022), the male gaze's manifestation in ads, together with aspects including race and ethnicity, can have a negative impact on people's mental health, especially those who belong to oppressed or disadvantaged groups. This idea is supported by Sherrel (2021), who emphasizes that these intersections, especially in women, can lead to feelings of inadequacy, sadness, and anxiety. Increased anxiety, low self-esteem, and depression could result from this. In line with this, Watson et al. (2019) concluded that Black women experience unique body image stressors due to the societal pressure of beauty standards, such as the preference for lighter-skinned black sold by the media as the "perfect Black woman".

By critically analyzing and debating this pattern, it can highlight the troubling nature of women's depiction in advertising and highlight issues with the objectification and commodification of other cultures. Promoting cultural awareness, respect, and representation beyond superficial exoticism is vital. It asks for a more complex and inclusive strategy that dispels preconceptions, celebrates cultural variety, and advances gender equality. According to previous research (Bauer, 2020; Tuna & Freitas, 2012), advertising can have a significant impact on how society perceives and upholds social standards. While the portrayal of non-

Western cultures as exotic and the power relations within the picture contribute to the transmission of damaging stereotypes, this pattern promotes power inequalities and supports cultural appropriation (Hallam & Street, 2013). Recognizing these problems and promoting more fair and inclusive portrayals in advertising helps promote a more equal and diverse society.

In general, Western idealization as a topic of racial misrepresentation can be seen in these photos, which also indicate how whiteness is idealized in the media and how Black women are portrayed as conforming to Western beauty standards (Loft, 2020). These sub-themes aim to promote the Western cultural idea of what is deemed attractive and to exclude those who do not meet these criteria. According to Watson et al. (2019), this idealization may cause Black women to feel more pressure to adhere to Eurocentric beauty standards, which may harm their mental health and cause them to feel marginalized and objectified. According to Vendemia et al. (2022), the intersection of race, ethnicity, class, and sexual identity exacerbates the negative impacts of the male gaze on mental health.

4.4. Submission as a power dynamic

The final theme to arise from the analysis was the use of *submission as a power dynamic* where women were portrayed as passive and submissive to male desire, sustaining patriarchal power dynamics (Cortese, 2004). This theme, which was significant in a few brands including Gucci, Dolce & Gabbana, and Guerlain, is consistent with other studies that found media reinforces male dominance while portraying women in subordinate positions (Cortese, 2004; Kilbourne, 2000; Mulvey, 2003). Hence, gender inequities in society are perpetuated and persist because of the hierarchy of gender representation in advertising.

4.4.1. Power imbalance

In terms of *power imbalance*, men tended to be linked with the notion of power and superiority while women were frequently shown as being subjected to unequal power dynamics (Tsichla, 2020).
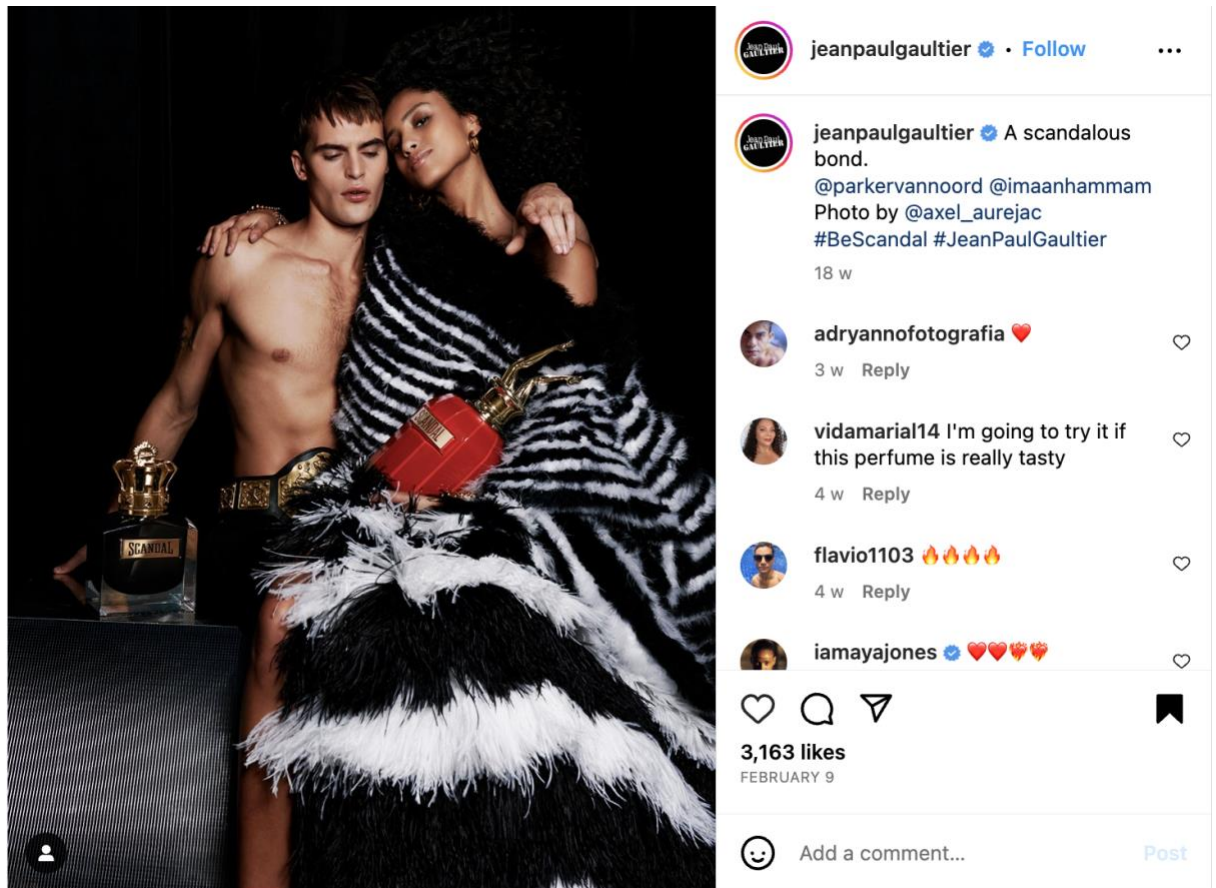
Figure 12. *@jeanpaulgaultier on February 9th, 2023*

In Figure 12, a couple is shown in a dark setting, where the woman is sitting on the lap of the man, which is the first indicator of their power relation where he stands to look dominant while she remains subordinate to him through her stance and position in the frame. Further, while the cap of her perfume bottle is the silhouette of legs, he has a crown, reinforcing the power dynamic between them – the man holds the power while the woman subordinates to him (Gill, 2014). This image possesses codes from the sub-themes mentioned: sexualization, seductiveness, and objectification. Through the skin exposure in the image, the facial expression (him with an aura of superiority, looking away from the camera or her; while she has a sweet smile and looks straight at the camera); or their position (she is leaning on him while sitting on his lap) the objectification and submission of the woman is shown.

Thus, as previously stated in the first theme, this sub-theme also reinforces the idea that men are dominant and powerful, while women are dependent and submissive (Gill, 2014; Mulvey, 2003; Tsichla, 2020) through a variety of visual cues, including the subject's position in the frame, lighting, clothing details like a crown or chokers, and facial expressions like a downward or away-looking gaze. In 1979, Goffman looked at the idea of subordination in

advertising and found that women were frequently portrayed as weak, helpless, and subservient. This finding indicates that advertising often and persistently portrays women in subordinate roles. As a result, media portrayals of women frequently serve to reinforce cultural expectations that they should submit and be objectified (Baker, 2005; Rodrigues Jorge Facca, 2020).

Therefore, this sub-theme contributes to the main topic by highlighting the ways in which media depictions of gender roles and societal standards perpetuate a negative power dynamic between men and women (Chafai, 2008; Foucault, 1975; Mulvey, 2003; Nkem et al., 2020). Women are more frequently portrayed as sex objects in ads for magazines than males, claim Jha et al. (2017). This reinforces conventional gender roles and power relations, maintaining the presumption that males should be dominating and women should be submissive (Baker, 2005; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Wangshu, 2020). According to Mulvey (2003), the concept that women exist exclusively for men's pleasure and gaze is maintained when women are shown in advertisements as submissive. Media and advertising impede the advancement of gender equality by maintaining this power dynamic and marginalizing and subordinating women (Vendemia et al., 2022). This study emphasizes the need for images of women that are more equal and empowering, challenge these established ideas of authority, and advance toward an inclusive and egalitarian society.

4.4.2. Submissive position and elements

The sub-theme of *submissive position and elements* is closely related to the preceding one and covers several aspects, including the use of jewelry and crowns, the positioning of the women in the image, their angle and proximity to the camera, their height, facial expression, and the setting components. The concept of gendered power relations was reinforced by the frequent depictions of women in subordinate situations (Baker, 2005; Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Timke & O'Barr, 2017; Wangshu, 2020).

Figure 13. *@guccibeauty on February 8th, 2022*

In addition, women were frequently shown with their mouths and eyes closed, or gazing down, all of which highlighted their passivity, such as in Figure 13. The submissive role of women is further emphasized through objects like chains or chockers alongside facial expressions and body language (Figure 14). These portrayals reinforce traditional power dynamics that place women in a submissive position to men (Gill, 2014; Timke & O'Barr, 2017). According to Jha et al. (2017), women are frequently shown in advertisements touching themselves, stroking items, and striking vulnerable and alluring attitudes that encourage submissiveness and vulnerability. The authors claim that these images support the belief that women should prioritize beauty and sex appeal, with submission being a key component to make them desirable. Further, they state that this idea perpetuates armful power dynamics and marginalizes and objectifies women. Hence, advertising perpetuates these cultural conventions that impede the full advancement of gender equality by enticing women to adhere to constricting beauty ideals and associating their appearance with submissiveness. Despite the few images that displayed this sub-theme, the prior and following images are a clear representation of submissiveness.

Figure 14. *@guccibeauty on November 3rd, 2022*

Figure 14 by Gucci featured a close-up shot of a woman with a masculine look wearing a choker, blue eyeshadows, and nail polish, hair pulled back in a wet-like effect while dressed in a navy-blue blazer and shirt. She held the bottle next to her face while keeping a serious expression. The ambiance was blue, which is a color typically associated with the male sex. Her serious facial expression and elements such as the choker, which is "a type of sex toy, mostly worn by women as subjected to submission" (Sinha, 2022, p. 39), reinforced the sub-themes of power imbalance and submissive position.

In summary, the exposed findings demonstrate a constant image of women as subordinate to the male desire in perfume ads, reinforcing patriarchal power relations (Mulvey, 2014). These results are in line with other studies that have found that the media portrays women as inferior and in submissive roles as opposed to male dominance (Belknap & Leonard, 1991; Gill, 2014; Greenfield, 2018; Mulvey, 2014). This power relationship not only upholds traditional gender stereotypes but also reinforces patriarchal notions (Nkem et

al., 2020). It is crucial that advertisers assess how they are using these overall ideas and try to undermine patriarchal power structures.

5. Conclusion and Limitations

This chapter presents the conclusions of this study, which aimed to explore the manifestation of the male gaze in marketing materials on Instagram in the luxury perfume industry. Through a combined approach of thematic analysis and MCDA, several key themes and patterns emerged, shedding light on the ways in which gender, power dynamics, and societal ideals of femininity are portrayed and perpetuated in the online advertising landscape. The research question *How does the male gaze manifest in marketing materials on Instagram targeting women in the luxury perfume industry?* was addressed, revealing that the male gaze is a prevalent and significant component in these advertisements, supporting gender stereotypes and objectifying women.

5.1. Main findings

The thematic analysis of the 150 luxury perfume brand advertisements on Instagram contributed to the existing literature on the male gaze and the representation of women in Instagram advertisements. This analysis revealed that marketing materials from these brands are still reinforcing the creation of ads from the perspective of the heterosexual masculine gaze and thus, indicating that their marketing materials on Instagram are made for the visual pleasure of men. Four prominent themes through which these brands manifest the male gaze. The physical appearance of women in the ads served as an indicator of sexualization, with emphasis on provocative poses and seductive gazes. Femininity was portrayed within the confines of traditional gender norms, reinforcing stereotypical expectations of how women should behave and look. The ads exhibited Western standards of beauty, leading to misrepresentation and underrepresentation of racial diversity. Lastly, a power dynamic was evident, with the portrayal of women in submissive positions, suggesting a reinforcement of gender inequality.

The role of MCDA was crucial in uncovering the underlying meanings and symbols within luxury perfume brand advertisements, providing a deeper understanding of the representation of women and the influence of the male gaze. The MCDA revealed four significant patterns that emerged as themes. *Objectification and sexualization* was a prevalent theme, with women being portrayed as objects of desire. *Gender stereotypes and traditional roles* was reinforced through the depiction of women as sweet, seductive, and submissive. *Exoticization and othering* was observed by using cultural symbols and references, often perpetuating stereotypes. Lastly, elements of *empowerment and agency* were a few times

present, highlighting moments where women were portrayed as confident and independent individuals through different symbols and elements.

By examining the themes derived from the thematic analysis and the patterns identified through the MCDA, it becomes evident that both analyses follow a coherent line of inquiry and respond to the overarching research question concerning the manifestation of the male gaze in luxury perfume brand advertisements. These themes and patterns are intrinsically linked to the male gaze and collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of how women are depicted and represented in these advertisements. These findings align with existing literature on gender representation in advertising (Eisend, 2010; Shen & Wu, 2022), highlighting the need for critical awareness and change.

For instance, scholars have argued that the male gaze in advertising contributes to the objectification and marginalization of women (Baker, 2005; Greenfield, 2018). The sexualization of women in advertisements perpetuates beauty ideals that can have repercussions on the self-esteem, well-being, and mental health of women (Fardouly et al., 2015; Greenfield, 2018; Mills et al., 2017;). Additionally, the reinforcement of gender stereotypes through portrayals of women in traditional roles reinforces societal expectations and limits the potential for diverse and empowered representations, as contemplated in previous studies (Chafai, 2008; Tuna & Freitas, 2012;). Moreover, the identified themes and patterns also shed light on power dynamics within the advertisements, where women are often depicted in submissive positions, reinforcing gender inequality (Baker, 2005; Gill, 2014; Jha et al., 2017). Hence, these representations have implications not only for the perception of women but also for the broader social constructs and expectations placed upon them. Recognizing and critically analyzing them is essential for promoting more inclusive, empowering, and equitable representations of women in advertising.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the male gaze is evident in the marketing materials of luxury perfume brands on Instagram. The identified themes and patterns reflect a portrayal of women that often aligns with objectification, sexualization, traditional gender norms, and unattainable ideals of beauty. However, there are also glimpses of empowerment and agency, and diversity, though the male gaze is still prevalent in those advertisements. These findings highlight the importance of critically examining and challenging societal norms and expectations within the realm of marketing and advertising, ultimately aiming for more equitable and inclusive representations of women.

5.2. Societal and academic implications

By contrasting the results with previous research, this study adds to the current literature by giving tangible proof of the manifestation of the male gaze in the luxury perfume sector on Instagram. These findings have implications for a wide range of stakeholders, including academics, marketers, and consumers.

Other studies have come to akin findings as this study. Baker (2005) discovered that women tend to be portrayed as submissive and objectified, and beauty is typically linked with being white. While Belknap and Leonard (1991) argue that men tend to be in dominant positions, Eisend (2010) discusses the unrealistic beauty standards for women in the media. These results are in line with the conclusion of this study on gender representation, beauty ideals, power dynamics, and Westernized idealization. Additionally, these results build on research regarding how the male gaze can trigger negative effects on the mental health and well-being of women (Krayer et al., 2008; Sokolova et al., 2022). While certain data may feature challenging aspects – such as disruptive beauty and body standards, gender stereotypes, or text –, most depictions reveal the male gaze's presence and impact, a conclusion that is in line with and contributes to previous studies (Gill, 2014; Mulvey, 2014). These consequences need critical thought on the portrayal of women in advertising, particularly in a sociocultural context that is increasingly fighting for feminism, gender equality, and empowerment.

Hence, these findings contribute to previous gender studies (Bauer, 2020; Chafai, 2008; Dang, 2022; Gill, 2014; Jha et al., 2017; Zimmerman & Dahlberg, 2008) and fill the specific academic gap of the manifestation of the male gaze of luxury perfume brands on Instagram. Due to the qualitative mixed method approach, academics can benefit from an in-depth study that also uncovers the symbols and meanings behind the visual imagery. Further, this study emphasizes the need for a critical analysis of media practices as well as for representations that are more inclusive and empowering and that question conventional gender norms. Among other effects, according to studies (Al-Qahtani et al., 2021; Unroe et al., 2016), empowering portrayals of women can boost female viewers' self-esteem, self-efficacy, and sense of empowerment.

Moreover, these results also have implications for marketers. On one hand, it is essential that marketers consider the manifestation of the male gaze in their advertising on Instagram since they perpetuate harmful stereotypes and gender norms for women, a conclusion that is in line with previous research (Calogero, 2004; Fardouly et al., 2015;

Greenfield, 2018; Perloff, 2014; Ponterotto, 2016; Wood, 2004). Predominant patterns such as sexualization, reinforcement of traditional gender norms and expectations for women, or the portrayal of power dynamics where women are shown as submissive not only can have negative effects on mental health and well-being but also contribute to the objectification of women. On the other hand, even though there are challenging elements in imagery and – mainly – text, still marketers should take these transgressor elements and listen to the demands of society, especially women, in areas such as feminism, equality, and empowerment depictions of women. Hence, brands should align their values with these societal demands in their marketing materials. Doing so will contribute to a more inclusive and empowering representation of women. According to Dang (2022), media consumers started to embrace hegemonic notions as societal norms because of their everyday exposure to these concepts embedded in conventional and contemporary media advertising on social media. Thus, the media has the power of creating and influencing perceptions of gender roles and the mental health of women.

As for the implications for consumers, being aware of how the male gaze can manifest and its possible consequences can help and teach the viewer to critically look at these advertisements and develop a different perspective of this imagery. By doing so, consumers can mitigate the negative effects on their mental health and learn to discern different elements in the images. As previously mentioned, consumers also have the power, through their demands, to change brand strategies and approaches to more conscious and inclusive ones.

Hence, this study offers an in-depth comprehension of the visual and symbolic aspects of portraying women by combining MCDA and thematic analyses. The discussion of media representation gains complexity and nuance by including issues like sexualization, seduction, objectification, and power dynamics. These findings offer insightful information about the intricate interactions between media, gender, and power, and they support feminist media studies, cultural studies, and visual communication studies.

5.3. Limitations and future research

Even though both analyses provided meaningful data, significant limitations appeared throughout the investigation. It is important to note the relatively small sample size of 150 Instagram advertisements. Because the findings are exclusive to the luxury industry, they may not be applicable to all perfume brands or other sectors. This industry has specific attributes that distinguish it from other brands. On this basis, a larger sample size that covers different

sectors with different criteria would be beneficial to gain a more thorough knowledge of how the male gaze emerges in marketing materials on Instagram and to grasp the differences among sectors. As a result, future research could investigate a larger and more diverse sample to increase the generalizability of the results.

Another limitation is the subjective nature of MCDA since the interpretation of signs and symbols in images can be influenced by the researcher's background and perspective (Low & Pandya, 2019). Different researchers' interpretations may differ, resulting in possible bias. However, steps were taken towards ensuring rigor and accuracy in this methodology, such as leaving behind previous beliefs, or through an extensive examination of previous literature. In addition, numerous rounds of coding were carried out and the paper was peer-reviewed by three master students with diverse cultural backgrounds and points of view.

On top of that, this study attempted to investigate how the male gaze manifests and women are depicted in marketing materials. Nevertheless, the analysis did not focus on the depiction of men or non-binary individuals, nor did it investigate how the male gaze functioned in different gender categories (Collins & Bilge, 2020). As a result, future research should follow this study line and provide an in-depth examination of gender representation and power relations in ads.

Regardless of these limitations, this study aspires to highlight the relevance of the male gaze in luxury perfume marketing materials targeted at women on Instagram. The findings highlight the significance of critically assessing gendered advertising methods and contribute to the knowledge of how women are depicted on social media. Based on these findings, future studies might investigate strategies that are challenging and subvert traditional gender preconceptions in marketing communications.

6. References

Achille, A., & Zipser, D. (2020). A perspective for the luxury-goods industry during—and after—coronavirus. *McKinsey & Company, 1*. https://www.mckinsey.de/~/media/McKinsey/Industries/Retail/Our%20Insights/A%20perspective%20for%20the%20luxury%20goods%20industry%20during%20and%20after%20coronavirus/A-perspective-for-the-luxury-goods-industry-during-and-after-coronavirus.pdf

Adebeshin, K. (2015). *Exploring Symbolism in Masstige Brand Advertising Within The Discursive Context of Luxury: A Semiotic Anallysis* [Thesis, Auckland University of Technology]. Tuwhera Open Acces. http://orapp.aut.ac.nz/bitstream/handle/10292/9226/AdebeshinK.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y

Akinro, N., & Mbunyuza-Memani, L. (2019). Black is not beautiful: Persistent messages and the globalization of "white" beauty in African women's magazines. *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication, 12*(4), 308-324. https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2019.1580380

Al-Qahtani, A. M., Ibrahim, H. A., Elgzar, W. T., El Sayed, H. A., & Essa, R. M. (2021). The role of self-esteem and self-efficacy in women empowerment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia: A cross-sectional study. *African Journal of Reproductive Health, 25*(1), 69-78. http://doi.org/10.29063/ajrh2021/v25i1s.7

Arsel, Z., Eräranta, K., & Moisander, J. (2015). Introduction: Theorising gender and gendering theory in marketing and consumer research. *Journal of Marketing Management, 31*(15-16), 1553-1558. https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2015.1078396

Atalay, G. E. (2015). Use of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis in Media Studies. *The Online Journal of Communication and Media, 1*(3), 40-43. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/327885258_USE_OF_MULTIMODAL_CRITICAL_DISCOUSE_ANALYSIS_IN_MEDIA_STUDIES

Baker, C. N. (2005). Images of Women's Sexuality in Advertisements: A Content Analysis of Black- and White-Oriented Women's and Men's Magazines. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 52*(1-2), 13–27. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-1190-

Barthes, R. (1972). *Mythologies*. Hill & Wang.

Bauer, J. K. (2020). *The Effects of Instagram Influencers and Appearance Comparisons on Body Appreciation, Internalization of Beauty Ideals and Self Esteem in Women* [Thesis]. Portland State University. https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.929

Bazi, S., Filieri, R., & Gorton, M. (2020). Customers' motivation to engage with luxury brands on social media. *Journal of Business Research, 112*, 223-235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.02.032

Beauvoir, S. D. (1949). *The second sex.* Knopf.

Belknap, P., & Leonard, W. M. (1991). A conceptual replication and extension of Erving Goffman's study of gender advertisements. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 25*(3-4), 103–118. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289848

Berger, A. A. (2004). Semiotic analysis. *Media analysis techniques, 3*(3). https://uk.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/5171_Berger_Final_Pages_Chapter_1.pdf

Berger, A.A. (2013). The Semiotics of Myth. In: *Media, Myth, and Society* (pp. 67-89) Palgrave Pivot, New York. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137301673_5

Blair, O. (2017, May 16). Chanel accused of cultural appropriation over $2,000 boomerang. *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/chanel-accused-cultural-appropriation-boomerang-2000-dollars-indigenous-australian-culture-criticism-a7738496.html

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology, 3*(2), 77-101. http://dx.doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). *Thematic analysis*. American Psychological Association. https://doi.org/10.1037/13620-004

Brennen, B. S. (2021). *Qualitative research methods for media studies*. Routledge.

Butler, J. (1990). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory. In S. Case (Ed.), *Performing feminisms: Feminist critical theory and theatre* (pp. 519-531). Johns Hopkins University Press. http://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf

Byrne, D. (2022). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & quantity, 56*(3), 1391-1412. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Cabigiosu, A. (2020). An overview of the luxury fashion industry. In *Digitalization in the Luxury Fashion Industry: Strategic Branding for Millennial Consumers* (9-31). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-48810-9

Calogero, R. M. (2004). A test of objectification theory: The effect of the male gaze on appearance concerns in college women. *Psychology of women quarterly, 28*(1), 16-21. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.2004.00118.x

Calogero, R. M., Boroughs, M., & Thompson, J. K. (2007). The impact of Western beauty ideals on the lives of women: A sociocultural perspective. *The body beautiful: Evolutionary and sociocultural perspectives*, 259-298. http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230596887_13

Campbell, S., Greenwood, M., Prior, S., Shearer, T., Walkem, K., Young, S., ... & Walker, K. (2020). Purposive sampling: complex or simple? Research case examples. *Journal of research in Nursing, 25*(8), 652-661. https://doi.org/10.1177/1744987120927206

Caton, K., & Santos, C. A. (2009). Images of the other: Selling study abroad in a postcolonial world. *Journal of Travel Research, 48*(2), 191-204. http://doi.org/10.1177/0047287509332309

Chafai, H. (2008). *Gender and the language of advertising: A sociolinguistic analysis of women's representation in British and Moroccan Magazine Advertisements* [Doctoral dissertation, Universidade do Minho]. RepositóriUM. https://repositorium.sdum.uminho.pt/handle/1822/7921

Chandler, D. (2022). *Semiotics: the basics*. Routledge. https://books.google.nl/books?hl=es&lr=&id=Yx1tEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PT12&dq=chandler+semiotics&ots=_zf6ovfLT7&sig=ME2VQl5XjO1pFXYVSJFo7p5X59s&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=chandler%20semiotics&f=false

Chang L, Li P, Loh RSM, et al. (2019) A study of Singapore adolescent girls' selfie practices, peer appearance comparisons, and body esteem on Instagram. *Body Image 29*, 90–99. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.03.005

Chansiri, K., & Wongphothiphan, T. (2021). The indirect effects of Instagram images on women's self-esteem: The moderating roles of BMI and perceived weight. *New Media & Society*. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211029975

Charmaz, K. (2014). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. Sage publications.

Chatterjee, D. (2020). Cultural appropriation: Yours, mine, theirs or a new intercultural?. *Studies in Costume & Performance, 5*(1), 53-71. https://doi.org/10.1386/scp_00013_1

Chee, C. (2022, September 22). *Perfume Industry Statistics & Trends – 2022 and Beyond.* Truly Experiences Blog. https://trulyexperiences.com/blog/perfume-industry-statistics-trends/

Collins, P. H., & Bilge, S. (2020). *Intersectionality*. John Wiley & Sons.

Cooper, B. (2000). "Chick flicks" as feminist texts: The appropriation of the male gaze in Thelma & Louise. *Women's Studies in Communication, 23*(3), 277-306. https://doi.org/10.1080/07491409.2000.11735771

Cortese, A.J. (2004). *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising*. Rowman & Littlefield.

Crenshaw, K. W. (2017). *On intersectionality: Essential writings*. The New Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage publications.

Da Costa, J. B. (2008). The Touchstone: The So-Called Eternal Feminine in Manoel de Oliveira. In: Carolin Overhoff Ferreira (ed.), *Dekalog: On Manoel de Oliveira*, (9–48). London: Wallflower Press.

Dang, Y. (2022, July). The Hegemonic Male Gaze in the Media Culture. In *2022 3rd International Conference on Mental Health, Education and Human Development* (MHEHD 2022) (pp. 1042-1048). Atlantis Press.

De Saussure, F. (2011). *Course in general linguistics*. Columbia University Press.

De Silva, M. (2020). Intersectionality. In A.L. Kobayashi (Ed.), *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, (2nd Ed., pp. 397–401). https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-08-102295-5.10197-0

DeFanti, M., Bird, D., & Caldwell, H. (2012). Consumer Perception of Luxury Fragrance Brand Advertising: Measuring the Relative Impact of Brand and Sub-Brand. In *Competition Forum*, *10*(2) 130. American Society for Competitiveness. https://www.proquest.com/3ea02e82bd5c79b2576fd98d829a8126/

Eisend, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 38*, 418–440. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0181-x

Fardouly, J., Diedrichs, P. C., Vartanian, L. R., & Halliwell, E. (2015). Social comparisons on social media: The impact of Facebook on young women's body image concerns and mood. *Body image, 13*, 38-45. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2014.12.002

Filice, E., Raffoul, A., Meyer, S. B., & Neiterman, E. (2020). The impact of social media on body image perceptions and bodily practices among gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men: A critical review of the literature and extension of theory. *Sex Roles, 82*, 387-410. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-019-01063-7

Fionda, A. M., & Moore, C. M. (2009). The anatomy of the luxury fashion brand. *Journal of brand Management, 16*, 347-363. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2008.45

Foucault, M. (1975). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison.* Vintage Books.

Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T.-A. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 21*(2), 173–206. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1997.tb00108.x

Gill, R. (2014). *Gender and the media.* Cambridge University Press.

Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender advertisements*. Harper & Row.

Golafshani, N. (2003). Understanding reliability and validity in qualitative research. *The qualitative report, 8*(4), 597-607. http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR8-4/golafshani.pdf

Goodman, J., Knotts, G., & Jackson, J. (2007). Doing dress and the construction of women's gender identity. *Journal of Occupational Science, 14*(2), 100-107. https://doi.org/10.1080/14427591.2007.9686590

Grand View Research. (2022, December). *Perfume Market Size, Share & Trends Analysis Report By Product (Mass, Premium), By End-user (Men, Women), By Distribution Channel (Offline, Online), By Region (Europe, APAC), And Segment Forecasts, 2023 - 2030*. Report Linker. https://www.grandviewresearch.com/industry-analysis/perfume-market#:~:text=The%20global%20perfume%20market%20size,5.9%25%20from%202023%20to%202030.

Grau, S. L., & Zotos, Y. C. (2016). Gender stereotypes in advertising: a review of current research. *International Journal of Advertising, 35*(5), 761–770. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2016.1203556

Greenfield, S. (2018). *When beauty is the beast: The effects of beauty propaganda on female consumers*. [Master's Thesis, University of Nebraska at Omaha]. DigitalCommons@UNO. https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/university_honors_program/20/

Hall, R. E. (2013). The idealization of light skin as vehicle of social pathogen vis-à-vis bleaching syndrome: implications of globalization for human behavior. *Journal of human behavior in the social environment, 23*(4), 552-560. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/10911359.2013.765820

Hall, S. (1989). Cultural identity and cinematic representation. Framework: *The Journal of Cinema and Media*, (36), 68-81. https://www.jstor.org/stable/44111666

Hallam, E., & Street, B. (Eds.). (2013). *Cultural encounters: Representing otherness*. Routledge.

Heine, K. (2012). *The Concept of Luxury Brands* (2nd ed.). https://upmarkit.com/sites/default/files/content/20130403_Heine_The_Concept_of_Luxury_Brands.pdf

Jha, A. K., Raj, A., & Gangwar, R. (2017). A semiotic analysis of portraying gender in magazine advertisements. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, *22*(5), 1-8. http://doi.org/10.9790/0837-2205110108

Joppe, M. (2000). The research process. *Uoguelph*. https://www.academia.edu/930161/The_research_process

Juster, R. P., Pruessner, J. C., Desrochers, A. B., Bourdon, O., Durand, N., Wan, N., ... & Lupien, S. J. (2016). Sex and gender roles in relation to mental health and allostatic load. *Psychosomatic Medicine, 78*(7), 788-804. https://doi.org/10.1097/PSY.0000000000000351

Keane, W. (2018). On semiotic ideology. *Signs and Society, 6*(1), 64-87. http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/695387

Kemp, E., Cowart, K., & Bui, M. M. (2020). Promoting consumer well-being: Examining emotion regulation strategies in social advertising messages. *Journal of Business Research, 112*, 200-209. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.03.010

Kilbourne, J. (2000). Beauty and the beast of advertising. *Women in culture: An intersectional anthology for gender and women's studies*, (pp. 183-186). Wiley-Blackwell.

Kilbourne, J. (2012). *Can't buy my love: How advertising changes the way we think and feel*. Simon and Schuster.

Kim, J. E., Lloyd, S., Adebeshin, K., & Kang, J. Y. M. (2019). Decoding fashion advertising symbolism in masstige and luxury brands. *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management: An International Journal, 23*(2), 277-295. https://doi.org/10.1108/JFMM-04-2018-0047

Kim, J. H. (2020). Luxury brands in the digital age: perceived quality and gender difference. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research, 30*(1), 68-85. https://doi.org/10.1080/09593969.2019.1651379

King, C. S. (2020). The Male Gaze in Visual Culture. In *The Routledge Handbook of Gender and Communication* (pp. 120–132). Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429448317-10

Ko, E., Costello, J. P., & Taylor, C. R. (2019). What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. *Journal of Business Research, 99*, 405-413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.023

Krayer, A., Ingledew, D., & Iphofen, R. (2008). Social comparison and body image in adolescence: a grounded theory approach. *Health Education Research, 23*(5), 892–903. https://doi.org/10.1093/her/cym076

Kress, G. R., & Van Leeuwen, T. (1996). *Reading images: The grammar of visual design*. Psychology Press.

Lewis, I., & Sever Globan, I. (2020). The New/Old Patriarchal Auteurism: Manoel de Oliveira, the Male Gaze and Women's Representation. In: Lewis, I., Canning, L. (eds) *European Cinema in the Twenty-First Century,* (129-147). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33436-9_8

Loft, M. (2020). *Syrup, Stereotypes, and Sexualization: A Historicial Analysis of the Hyper-Sexualization of the Black Female Body and the Predominating Stereotypes of Black Women* [Thesis, University of Portland]. https://pilotscholars.up.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1030&context=hst_studpubs

Lombardot, É. (2007). Nudity in advertising: what influence on attention-getting and brand recall?. *Recherche et applications en marketing (English Edition), 22*(4), 23-41. https://doi.org/10.1177/205157070702200401

Low, D. A., & Pandya, J. Z. (2019). Issues of Validity, Subjectivity, and Reflexivity in Multimodal Literacy Research and Analysis. *Journal of Language and Literacy Education, 15*(1). http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1212455.pdf

Machin, D. & Mayr, A. (2012). *How to do critical discourse analysis: A multimodal introduction*. Sage Publications.

Maiorescu-Murphy, R. D. (2021). "We are the land:" An analysis of cultural appropriation and moral outrage in response to Christian Dior's Sauvage scandal. *Public Relations Review, 47*(4), 102058. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102058

Mannarini, T., Salvatore, S., & Veltri, G. (2020). Identity, Otherness, and Psycho-Cultural Dynamics. In *Culture in policy making* (pp. 1–16). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-36099-3_1

Martinez-Pecino, R., & Garcia-Gavilán, M. (2019). Likes and problematic Instagram use: the moderating role of self-esteem. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 22*(6), 412-416. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2018.0701

Mbure, W. G., & Aubrey, J. S. (2017). A Transnational analysis of skin tone ideals in cosmetic advertisements in women's lifestyle magazines. *Howard Journal of Communications, 28*(4), 339-355. https://doi.org/10.1080/10646175.2017.1300964

McGruer, D. (2020). *Dynamic digital marketing: Master the world of online and social media marketing to grow your business.* John Wiley & Sons.

McKenzie, M., Bugden, M., Webster, A., & Barr, M. (2018). Advertising (in) equrality: The impacts of sexist advertising on women's health and wellbeing. *Women's Health Issues Paper, 14*. http://doi.org/0.3316/135672368547541

Mills, J. S., Shannon, A., & Hogue, J. (2017). Beauty, body image, and the media. *Perception of beauty*, 145-157. http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.68944

Moeran, B. (2011). The Colours of Smell: Perfume Advertising and the Senses. *The American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting 2011, Canada.* https://research.cbs.dk/en/publications/the-colours-of-smell-perfume-advertising-and-the-senses

Morse, J. M. (2009). Mixing qualitative methods. *Qualitative Health Research, 19*(11), 1523-1524. http://doi.org/10.1177/1049732309349360

Mulvey, L. (2003). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. In *The Feminism and Visual Culture Reader* (pp. 803-817). Routledge: London and New York.

Mulvey, L. (2014). Visual pleasure and narrative cinema (UK, 1975). In *Film Manifestos and Global Cinema Cultures* (pp. 359-370). University of California Press. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520957411-103

Newberry, C. (2023, January 24). 34 Instagram Stats Marketers Need to Know in 2023. *Hootsuite*. https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-statistics/

Nkem, F. U., Chima, O. A., Martins, O. P., Ifeanyi, A. L., & Fiona, O. N. (2020). Portrayal of women in advertising on Facebook and Instagram. *RAIS Conference Proceedings*, *18*, 149-158. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4006048 http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4006048

Nylund, S. M. (2020). *Influencing luxury fragrance brand image with celebrity endorsement: Case study Miss Dior.* [Doctoral dissertation, Metropolia University of Applied Sciences]. Theseus. https://urn.fi/URN:NBN:fi:amk-2020060416875

O'Reilly, M., Kiyimba, N., & Drewett, A. (2021). Mixing qualitative methods versus methodologies: A critical reflection on communication and power in inpatient care. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research, 21*(1), 66-76. https://doi.org/10.1002/capr.12365

Oliver, K. (2017). The male gaze is more relevant, and more dangerous, than ever. *New Review of Film and Television Studies, 15*(4), 451-455. https://doi.org/10.1080/17400309.2017.1377937

Perloff, R. M. (2014). Social media effects on young women's body image concerns: Theoretical perspectives and an agenda for research. *Sex roles, 71*(11-12), 363-377. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-014-0384-6

Petersson McIntyre, M. (2013). Perfume packaging, seduction and gender. Culture unbound: *Journal of current cultural research, 5*(2), 291-311. http://dx.doi.org/10.25595/1477

Ponterotto, D. (2016). Resisting the male gaze: feminist responses to the "normatization" of the female body in Western culture. Journal of international women's studies, 17(1), 133-151. https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol17/iss1/10

Puppis, M. (2019). Analyzing talk and text I: Qualitative content analysis. In *The Palgrave handbook of methods for media policy research* (pp. 367-384). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-16065-4_21

Rodrigues Jorge Facca, A. C. (2020). *A woman in Chanel is still a woman: A qualitative study on the portrayal of women in adverts for luxury brands in Vogue* [Master's Thesis, Erasmus University Rotterdam]. Erasmus University Thesis Repository. http://hdl.handle.net/2105/55364

Roux, E., Tafani, E., & Vigneron, F. (2017). Values associated with luxury brand consumption and the role of gender. *Journal of Business Research, 71*, 102-113. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.10.012

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers.* Sage publications.

Seng, J. S., Lopez, W. D., Sperlich, M., Hamama, L., & Meldrum, C. D. R. (2012). Marginalized identities, discrimination burden, and mental health: Empirical exploration of an interpersonal-level approach to modeling intersectionality. *Social science & medicine, 75*(12), 2437-2445. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2012.09.023

Shankar, S. (2020). Nothing Sells like Whiteness: Race, Ontology, and American Advertising. *American Anthropologist, 122(*1), 112-119. https://doi.org/10.1111/aman.13354

Sharma, S., & Bumb, A. (2021). Role Portrayal of Women in Advertising: An Empirical Study. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 22*(9), 236-255. https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol22/iss9/16/

Shen, Y., & Wu. (2022). *Exploring gender element in european perfume advertising*. ASSSD 2022. https://www.clausiuspress.com/conferences/AETP/ASSSD%202022/Y1322.pdf

Sinha, S. (2025). A*n Analysis of Stereotypical Roles in Advertisements Through Women's Magazine* [Master's Thesis, REVA University]. REVA University. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Smrity-Sinha-3/publication/368389099_An_Analysis_of_Stereotypical_Roles_in_Advertisements_Through_Women's_Magazine/links/63e5290fdea61217579750e8/An-Analysis-of-Stereotypical-Roles-in-Advertisements-Through-Womens-Magazine.pdf

Snow, E. (1989). Theorizing the male gaze: Some problems. *Representations, 25*, 30-41. https://doi.org/10.2307/2928465

Sokolova, K., Kefi, H., & Dutot, V. (2022). Beyond the shallows of physical attractiveness: Perfection and objectifying gaze on Instagram. *International Journal of Information Management, 67*, 102546. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2022.102546

Statista Research Department. (2023, March 6). *By country revenue of prestige cosmetics and fragrances market worldwide in 2022*. Statista. https://www.statista.com/forecasts/1238727/country-revenue-of-prestige-cosmetics-and-fragrances-market-worldwide

Statista. (2022, August 2). Instagram: distribution of global audiences 2022, by gender. *Statista*. https://www.statista.com/statistics/802776/distribution-of-users-on-instagram-worldwide-gender/

Stephen, A. T. (2020). Social media and luxury. In *Research handbook on luxury branding* (pp. 248-263). Edward Elgar Publishing.

Stewart, A., & Carey, L. (2020). Luxury perfume brands and millenial consumers. In: Cantista, I., Sádaba, T. (Eds), *Understanding Luxury Fashion* (147-173). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-25654-8_7

Sundaram, R., Sharma, D., & Shakya, D. (2020). Power of digital marketing in building brands: A review of social media advertisement. *International Journal of Management, 11*(4). https://ssrn.com/abstract=3600866

Timke, E., & O'Barr, W. M. (2017). Representations of masculinity and femininity in advertising. *Advertising & Society Review*, *17*(3). https://doi.org/10.1353/asr.2017.0004

Tsai, W. H. S., Shata, A., & Tian, S. (2021). En-gendering power and empowerment in advertising: a content analysis. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising, 42*(1), 19-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2019.1687057

Tsichla, E. (2020). The Changing Roles of Gender in Advertising: Past, Present, and Future. *Contemporary Southeastern Europe, 7*(2), 28-44. http://dx.doi.org/10.25364/02.7:2020.2.3

Tuna, S. (2004). *Advertising in translation: the translation of cosmetics and perfume advertisements into Portuguese* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Warwick]. EThOS. http://go.warwick.ac.uk/wrap/1225

Tuna, S., & Freitas, E. (2012). Gendered adverts: an analysis of female and male images in contemporary perfume ads. *Comunicação E Sociedade*, *21*, 95–108. https://doi.org/10.17231/comsoc.21(2012).702

Unroe, T., Barnett, R. V., & Payne-Purvis, C. (2016). An examination of self-esteem and empowerment of African American female youth in an after school program. *Journal of youth development, 11*(3), 26-41.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & health sciences, 15*(3), 398-405. https://doi.org/10.1111/nhs.12048

Vazifedoost, H., & Farzi, M. (2015). The impact of social media on firm performance as a new marketing strategy tool in Iran High-Tech and fragrance industry. Scholarly *Research Exchange, 4*(3), 291-304. http://www.srej.wc.lt/

Vendemia, M. A., Brathwaite, K. N., & DeAndrea, D. C. (2022). An intersectional approach to evaluating the effectiveness of women's sexualized body-positive imagery on Instagram. *New Media & Society,* 146144482211433. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221143345

Vinerean, S., & Opreana, A. (2019). Social Media Marketing Efforts of Luxury Brands on Instagram. *Expert Journal of Marketing, 7*(2), pp.144-152. https://marketing.expertjournals.com/23446773-714/

Walters, T. (2016). Using Thematic Analysis in Tourism Research. *Tourism Analysis, 21*(1), 107-116. https://doi.org/10.3727/108354216X14537459509017

Wangshu, G. (2020). *How Influencers Marketing Motivates Consumers' Buying Behaviour: A focus group investigation of the impulse buying behaviour via Chinese millennials' lens* [Master thesis, Jönköping University]. Jönköping University. urn:nbn:se:hj:diva-48682

Watson, L. B., Lewis, J. A., & Moody, A. T. (2019). A sociocultural examination of body image among Black women. *Body Image, 31*, 280-287. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bodyim.2019.03.008

Wihardja, E. M. (2021). *Comparative Analysis of LVMH Group in Luxury Goods Industry* [Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Atma Jaya Yogyakarta]. UAJY's Library. http://e-journal.uajy.ac.id/id/eprint/26068

Windels, K., Champlin, S., Shelton, S., Sterbenk, Y., & Poteet, M. (2020). Selling feminism: How female empowerment campaigns employ postfeminist discourses. *Journal of Advertising, 49*(1), 18-33. https://doi.org/10.1080/00913367.2019.1681035

Wood, M. J. (2004). The gay male gaze: Body image disturbance and gender oppression among gay men. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 17*(2), 43-62. https://doi.org/10.1300/J041v17n02_03

Zhang, Y. (2019). A Semiotic Study on Print Advertisements of Luxury Perfume Brands for Women. *Asian Journal of Social Science Studies, 4*(1), 15. https://doi.org/10.20849/ajsss.v4i1.540

Zimmerman, A., & Dahlberg, J. (2008). The Sexual Objectification of Women in Advertising: A Contemporary Cultural Perspective. *Journal of Advertising Research*, *48*(1), 71–79. https://doi.org/10.2501/s0021849908080094

Zirra, M. I. (2019). *Visual Poetic Memory : Ekphrasis and Image-Text in Seamus Heaney, Derek Walcott and Wopko Jensma*. [PhD Dissertation, Stockholm University]. UGent Biblio https://biblio.ugent.be/publication/8630971

Appendices

Appendix A – Thematic map

Codebook from the Thematic Analysis (*N*=150)

THEME	SUB-THEME	OPEN CODES
Physical appearance as an indicator of sexualization	Sexualization	Revealed skin, suggestive clothing and posture, facial features (i.e., parted lips), makeup and hairstyle.
	Seductiveness	Facial expression, seductive posture, skin exposure.
	Objectification	Complements (i.e., a crown on the man's head), setting (i.e., bedroom or party), revealing clothing and skin exposure
	Heteronormative beauty and body stereotypes	Natural makeup, facial features (i.e., full lips, narrow nose, thin eyebrows), youthfulness, and normative bodies.
	Nakedness	No clothing, revealing clothing, emphasize on naked body parts.
Feminity as a portrayal of gender norms	Innocent or childlike behavior	Natural makeup, clothing that hides curves, childlike behavior, and innocent facial expression.
	Delicacy	Delicate posture and gestures, pink and nude tones, sweet facial expressions.

	Feminine clothing	Ladylike or classical clothing and accessories, and pink or nude color palette.
	Classical and nature setting	Classical elements, flowery settings, natural elements (i.e., desert or water).
	Traditional gender stereotypes	Delicate postures, pink, feminine elements.
Western beauty standards has an impact on racial (mis)representation	Facial features	Freckles, narrow nose, full lips, (no) facial hair, no imperfections (i.e., spots, wrinkles, scarring)
	Race	White, Black, Latino, Asian, or undefined.
	Skin color	Dark-skinned, light brown skin, or light-skinned
	Body shape	Skinniness, curves, slimness, Westernized hairstyle.
Submission as a power dynamic	Power imbalance	Dominant male figure, subjugation of women, unequal power dynamics,
	Submissive position and elements	Complements (i.e., crown on man, chocker), position in the image, closeness and angle of the camera, height, setting elements, submissive facial expression (i.e., closed eyes or looking down or away).

Appendix B – MCDA of Dior's image

MCDA of the Dior post from the overall sample (*N*=10) with the denotation (in **bold**) and connotation (in *italics*) of the elements and symbols in the image.
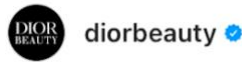
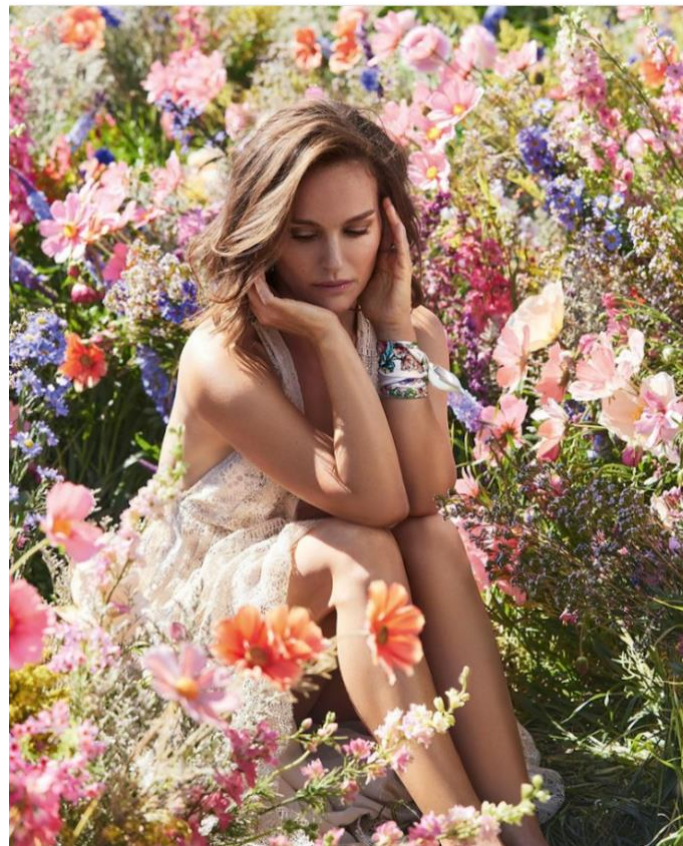

Flowers in a natural and romantic setting – *Femininity, delicacy, beauty, sensuality innocence, romance.*

White laced dress – *Femininity, innocent, sensuality, attractiveness*

Skin exposure – *Sex appeal, objectification, sensuality, seductiveness.*

Posture: knees up, arms resting in her knees and hands bracing her face – *Delicacy, femininity, seductive, submission, vulnerability, and intimacy.*

Facial expression: looking down, seriousness, parted lips – *Submission, seductive, submission, vulnerability, and intimacy. The celebrity conforms to western beauty ideals.*

The angle from the camera from up – *Makes the viewer take a dominant and powerful position, while leaving the woman in the image as weak and submissive*

The lighting – *Helps draw the viewer's attention to specific body parts (shoulder and leg). This in addition to these parts are naked emphasizes the sexual and objectified character of the woman in the image, as well as the beauty idealization.*