



Beauty in Women's Marketing: Using Simone de Beauvoir's Ideas for Sustainable Campaigns

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Abstract

Background and Aim: Beauty marketing has traditionally promoted narrow beauty standards, which can negatively affect women's self-esteem. These campaigns often reinforce unrealistic ideals, making it difficult for many women to feel represented. This study explores how Simone de Beauvoir's feminist philosophy can help marketers create sustainable beauty campaigns. The goal is to show how marketing can move beyond traditional beauty ideals to promote diversity and empowerment.

Materials and Methods: The study uses a theoretical analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's ideas and applies them to marketing strategies. It reviews past research on beauty stereotypes, marketing ethics, and sustainable advertising. Additionally, it examines real-world beauty campaigns to understand how brands can adopt more inclusive practices.

Results: Findings suggest that applying feminist philosophy to beauty marketing can help brands create ethical and sustainable campaigns. Campaigns that embrace diversity, authenticity, and empowerment are more effective in building consumer trust and brand loyalty. Brands that challenge narrow beauty ideals contribute to positive social change by encouraging self-expression and fair representation.

Conclusion: Using Simone de Beauvoir's ideas in marketing can help brands promote fairness, self-expression, and sustainability. Ethical beauty campaigns should celebrate all forms of beauty and encourage women to define beauty on their terms. Future research should explore how inclusive beauty marketing influences consumer behavior across different cultural contexts.

Keywords: Beauty Marketing; Simone de Beauvoir; Sustainable Campaigns; Feminist Philosophy; Consumer Trust

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a growing demand among consumers for ethical and sustainable marketing practices (Kamkankaew et.al., 2025). This shift reflects a deeper awareness of environmental and social issues, driving individuals to favor brands that align with their values. Marketing campaigns, once primarily focused on maximizing profit, now face increasing pressure to incorporate sustainability and ethics into their strategies (Okiyi et.al., 2020). This trend has led businesses to reevaluate their communication approaches, ensuring that their messages resonate with consumers who care about the planet and society. Among these efforts, the concept of beauty in women's marketing communications has come under significant scrutiny, as traditional representations often perpetuate harmful stereotypes and fail to consider broader social responsibilities (Oniku & Joaquim, 2022). Addressing these concerns requires marketers to explore new frameworks that align with sustainability and ethical values.

One promising approach to redefining beauty in marketing communications is grounded in philosophical perspectives, such as those proposed by Simone de Beauvoir. By examining beauty through a lens that considers women's autonomy, individuality, and societal impact, marketers can create campaigns that are both empowering and sustainable (Inhorn et.al., 2022). Incorporating de Beauvoir's ideas can help challenge outdated ideals of beauty, encouraging representations that celebrate diversity and promote inclusivity. Such efforts are crucial not only for meeting consumer expectations but also for contributing to broader societal change. By blending ethical principles with sustainability in marketing, businesses can enhance their brand image, build stronger connections with consumers, and foster long-term loyalty in an era where values-driven marketing is becoming the norm (Alam, Aliyu & Shahriar, 2019).

Women's marketing communications have long relied on persistent stereotypes and narrow definitions of beauty (Dauhgerty, 2014). Many campaigns promote an idealized image of beauty,



emphasizing specific physical features, such as fair skin, slim bodies, and youthful appearances (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2005). These standards often exclude diverse representations of women and ignore the unique qualities that make individuals beautiful. The reliance on such stereotypes has shaped consumer perceptions, creating unrealistic expectations and reinforcing societal pressures (Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2018). As a result, many women feel compelled to conform to these narrow ideals, often at the expense of their self-esteem and well-being. These traditional approaches to beauty in marketing not only limit inclusivity but also fail to reflect the diverse realities of modern consumers.

The continued use of these stereotypes poses challenges for brands seeking to connect with today's values-driven audience (Kamkankaew, Meesubthong & Sawang, 2023). Consumers are increasingly critical of messaging that promotes unattainable beauty standards, as it clashes with their growing demand for authenticity, diversity, and ethical representation (Cambier & Poncin, 2020). Narrow definitions of beauty also contradict broader movements for gender equality and social inclusion, making such campaigns outdated and less effective in the current social climate (Koc, 2002). To address these issues, marketers must break away from restrictive norms and embrace a more inclusive, empowering approach to beauty. Philosophical frameworks, such as those by Simone de Beauvoir, offer valuable insights into understanding and reshaping these narratives (Simons, 2001). By applying her ideas, marketing campaigns can move beyond stereotypes, offering representations that align with both societal progress and sustainable marketing goals.

The need for a feminist philosophical grounding in women's marketing communications has become increasingly important in today's socially conscious world (Simons, 1983). Traditional marketing approaches often portray women in ways that reinforce outdated stereotypes and undermine individuality (Eagle et.al., 2020). To create meaningful and inclusive campaigns, marketers must move beyond surface-level diversity and adopt deeper frameworks that address the root causes of these issues. Feminist philosophy, particularly the existential-feminist insights of Simone de Beauvoir, offers a powerful foundation for achieving this transformation (De Beauvoir, 2014). Her ideas challenge societal constructs of femininity and beauty, advocating for the liberation of women from restrictive roles and representations. By grounding marketing practices in these principles, campaigns can promote a more authentic and empowering image of beauty that resonates with modern consumers.

Integrating de Beauvoir's philosophy into sustainability marketing offers a unique opportunity to connect ethical principles with practical strategies (De Beauvoir, 2023). Her existentialist framework encourages marketers to consider beauty not as a fixed standard but as a dynamic and personal experience shaped by freedom, choice, and individuality. This perspective aligns with the goals of sustainable marketing, which seeks to prioritize social and environmental well-being over superficial consumerism. By using de Beauvoir's insights, brands can create campaigns that reflect diverse experiences of beauty, challenge societal norms, and foster inclusivity (Milichovský, 2013). This approach not only meets the demands of a values-driven audience but also contributes to long-term social change, ensuring that marketing practices are both ethical and sustainable. In this way, feminist philosophy becomes a critical tool for redefining beauty and promoting equity in marketing communications.

Key Existential-Feminist Concepts of Simone de Beauvoir: Relevance to Marketing and Consumer Behavior

Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy provides important ideas for understanding how women are represented in marketing. Her concept of "the Other" explains how society often defines women about men, limiting their roles and independence. By integrating Beauvoir's ideas, it becomes evident that marketing not only reinforces beauty standards and traditional gender roles but also possesses the potential to foster inclusivity and empowerment.

Overview of The Second Sex and the notion of "the Other"

Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, is an important work in feminist philosophy (De Beauvoir, 2014; 2023). She examines how women's identity has been shaped by history and culture. In her book, she argues that society has always defined women about men instead of seeing

them as independent individuals. Women have been placed in a lower position, with limited freedom and choices. This book challenges traditional ideas about femininity and encourages a new way of thinking about women's roles. De Beauvoir's ideas help explain how gender inequality continues through cultural messages, making them useful for studying how women are represented in marketing.

One key idea in *The Second Sex* is the concept of "the Other" (De Beauvoir, 2014; 2023). De Beauvoir explains that men have always been seen as the main figure, while women are considered secondary. This means that women's worth is often judged by their relationship with men instead of their achievements. As a result, women are frequently reduced to their appearance or family roles, limiting their independence. This idea is especially relevant in marketing, where women are often shown in ways that reinforce their status as "the Other." Advertisements usually focus on beauty and domestic roles instead of women's skills or intelligence. De Beauvoir's insights show why it is important to challenge these stereotypes and create more empowering messages in marketing.

Justification for Using de Beauvoir's Lens

Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy helps us understand how beauty standards are socially constructed rather than natural. These standards often push women to follow unrealistic ideals, reinforced by marketing that prioritizes appearance over other qualities. Using Beauvoir's lens, we can examine how marketing can either restrict women or empower them through more inclusive and ethical representations.

Addressing deeper societal structures that influence beauty messaging

Simone de Beauvoir argued (De Beauvoir, 2014; 2023) that societal beauty standards are not natural but created through repeated cultural representations. These standards often promote unattainable ideals, pressuring women to conform to unrealistic expectations. Marketing communications frequently reinforce this by focusing on physical appearance over qualities like intelligence or kindness (Rábová, 2015). Beauvoir's ideas reveal how these beauty standards are tools of control, maintaining power over women. By recognizing this, marketers can create campaigns that empower women through diverse and inclusive representations of beauty. Central to Beauvoir's philosophy is the importance of freedom and choice, urging women to define their own identity rather than conforming to imposed standards (Kamkankaew et.al., 2024). Marketing that aligns with this principle can promote self-expression and authenticity, helping to dismantle societal constraints on beauty. Additionally, Beauvoir's insights emphasize the need to address how beauty standards intersect with race, class, and age, as marketing often excludes marginalized groups (Moi, 2002). By challenging these exclusions and drawing on Beauvoir's critique, brands can create more inclusive campaigns and contribute to meaningful social change (Kumari & Shivani, 2014). Applying her philosophy to marketing offers a pathway to more ethical and sustainable practices, benefiting both individuals and society.

Aligning feminist philosophy with sustainable marketing strategies

Beauvoir's philosophy aligns with sustainable marketing, which balances consumer engagement with ethical practices that benefit society and the environment. By adopting her perspective, marketing campaigns can promote authentic representations of women, fostering deeper audience connections (Kim, Lehto & Morrison, 2007). Beauvoir's rejection of objectification and her emphasis on freedom of choice encourage moving away from exploitative strategies. Campaigns that celebrate diversity, inclusivity, and empowerment, rather than narrow beauty ideals, resonate with feminist values and meet consumer demand for ethical branding. (Barletta, 2003) Additionally, Beauvoir's critique of "immanence" versus "transcendence" highlights how women are often confined to limiting roles, a pattern reinforced in media. Marketers can counter this by portraying women as active participants in shaping their futures, showcasing leadership, achievements, and empowerment. This aligns with sustainability goals like gender equality and social inclusion. By challenging outdated beauty norms and promoting inclusive messages, brands contribute to societal progress while building consumer trust (Taubenheim et.al., 2008). Such campaigns foster meaningful relationships with audiences who value authenticity and ethics, helping brands achieve business goals while supporting a more equitable world.

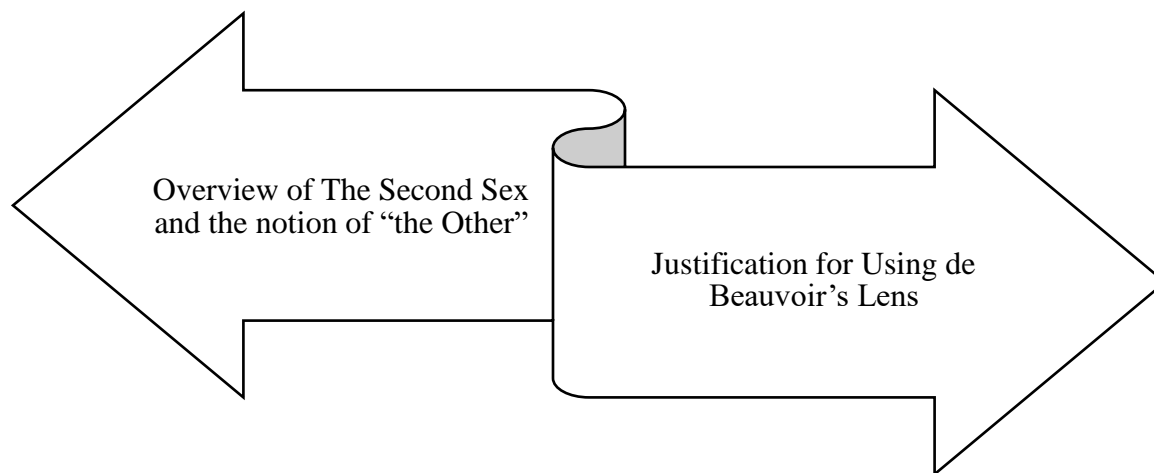


Figure 1 Key Existential-Feminist Concepts of Simone de Beauvoir on to Marketing and Consumer Behavior

In conclusion, applying Beauvoir’s ideas to marketing encourages brands to challenge narrow beauty ideals and promote self-expression. Her philosophy supports sustainable marketing by fostering inclusivity and rejecting exploitative strategies. When brands embrace diverse representations of beauty, they build trust and connect with audiences who value authenticity. This approach benefits both businesses and society, creating a more ethical and equitable world.

Overview of Beauty in Women’s Marketing Communications

Beauty standards in women’s marketing have changed over time, but have often focused on unrealistic ideals. Traditional advertising promoted narrow beauty definitions, while digital media continues to shape how women see themselves. Understanding the history of beauty marketing helps reveal its impact on society and the need for more inclusive representations.

Historical Evolution

Traditional advertising tropes and beauty standards

Traditional advertising has often shown beauty through a limited and uniform standard. These standards focus on physical features like a slim body, smooth skin, and a youthful look (Zatwarnicka-Madura et.al., 2019). These ideas have been shaped by culture and repeated in advertisements for many years. They create an idealized version of beauty that most women cannot achieve. This approach simplifies beauty by reducing it to appearance alone. As a result, many women are left out, and unrealistic beauty expectations are reinforced. Advertisements rarely show diverse women, making it difficult for many to see themselves represented in media.

Beauty standards in advertising are also linked to consumerism. The beauty industry encourages women to buy products to achieve a certain look. Advertisements suggest that makeup, skincare, and fashion are necessary to meet these beauty ideals (Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). This creates a cycle where women feel the need to keep buying products to improve their appearance. Many ads use insecurities to promote sales, making women feel incomplete without beauty products. This focus on appearance often ignores important qualities like confidence, intelligence, and personality. However, in recent years, there

has been a push for more inclusive and diverse representations of beauty (Kamkankaew, Meesubthong & Sawang, 2023). The body positivity movement and consumer demand for authenticity have challenged brands to change. By embracing diversity and realistic beauty standards, businesses can create deeper connections with their audiences and promote positive social change.

Emergence of “ideal body” narratives from print to digital media

The idea of the “ideal body” has changed over time, influenced by culture, society, and the economy (de Valle et.al., 2021). In women’s marketing, beauty has often been linked to physical standards that are difficult to achieve. Early print media, such as magazines and advertisements, promoted the image of thin, fair-skinned women as the highest standard of beauty. This image reflected the beliefs of the time, where appearance was connected to social status and success. These advertisements did more than sell products; they sold a way of life and set a narrow standard for women to follow.

As print media grew, so did the influence of beauty standards. In the 20th century, women’s magazines became major sources of beauty ideals. Advertisers worked closely with magazine editors to ensure that their products matched the beauty trends of the time (Roberts et.al., 2022). For example, ads for makeup and clothing often featured models with specific looks that were seen as fashionable. This created a cycle where beauty products became tools to reach the “ideal body.” However, these beauty standards were often unrealistic and excluded many women based on body shape, size, and ethnicity. The shift to digital media has changed how beauty is promoted, but it has not removed the pressure to conform. Social media platforms allow influencers and celebrities to share highly edited images, continuing to reinforce narrow beauty ideals. Photo-editing apps and filters have made these images even harder to achieve, increasing pressure on women to fit into unrealistic beauty standards.

Despite the challenges, the digital era has also opened opportunities for more inclusive representations of beauty (Ganson et.al., 2025). Social media campaigns that promote body positivity and diversity are gaining traction. These campaigns challenge traditional beauty norms and encourage brands to adopt more inclusive marketing strategies. However, the legacy of the “ideal body” remains strong, and its impact is deeply ingrained in marketing communications. To move toward sustainable marketing campaigns, it is crucial to critically examine these narratives and work toward reshaping them. Drawing from Simone de Beauvoir’s philosophy, marketers can reframe beauty as a concept that celebrates individuality and authenticity rather than conformity to unattainable ideals.

Contemporary Perspectives

Shift toward more inclusive representations.

Beauty standards in women’s marketing have changed over time. In the past, beauty was often defined by a thin body, fair skin, and Eurocentric features (Gurrieri, 2021). These narrow ideals excluded many women and ignored the natural diversity of human appearance. However, society has become more aware of issues like representation, fairness, and inclusion. As a result, marketing has started to focus on showing a wider range of beauty. More brands now understand that beauty comes in many forms and that all women should see themselves represented in media and advertising.

One major change in beauty marketing is the inclusion of different body shapes and sizes (Roberts et al., 2022). Campaigns now feature women with curvier, athletic, or plus-sized bodies instead of only showing thin models. This helps reduce body shaming and unrealistic beauty standards. Ethnic diversity has also improved, with more brands including women of different skin tones, hair textures, and facial features. While these changes are positive, some brands only use diversity as a trend without true commitment (Kamkankaew et.al., 2022). To create real change, brands must fully integrate inclusive values into their business. Simone de Beauvoir’s ideas encourage marketers to move beyond fixed beauty standards and promote freedom and individuality. This approach leads to more ethical and sustainable marketing that empowers all women.

Impact of social media influencers and user-generated content

Social media influencers have transformed the way beauty is portrayed in marketing communications. They play a significant role in shaping beauty standards and consumer perceptions. Influencers often present a curated and idealized image of beauty that is widely consumed by their followers

(Bakalo, A., & Amantie, 2023). Their content reflects not only personal preferences but also trends set by the beauty industry. As a result, brands increasingly collaborate with influencers to promote their products. This partnership allows companies to connect with consumers in a more relatable way. However, this also reinforces specific beauty standards that can impact women's self-image.

User-generated content (UGC) is another powerful tool in shaping beauty perceptions. User-generated content (UGC) includes photos, videos, and reviews shared by everyday consumers on social media (Nguyen & Tong, 2022). This type of content is often perceived as more authentic than traditional advertisements. Women are more likely to trust beauty recommendations from their peers than from brands. UGC provides an inclusive platform where diverse representations of beauty can emerge (Yamagishi et.al., 2024). However, it can also contribute to unrealistic expectations, as many users edit their images before posting. This dual impact of User-generated content (UGC) makes it both an opportunity and a challenge for marketers aiming for sustainability.

The combined influence of influencers and User-generated content (UGC) has changed how women interact with beauty brands. Social media allows women to engage with content, ask questions, and share their experiences (Wolf & Madlberger, 2025). This interaction gives brands valuable insights into consumer behavior and preferences. At the same time, it creates a feedback loop where consumers influence each other. The rise of beauty communities on platforms like Instagram and TikTok has fostered conversations about inclusivity and natural beauty. These movements challenge traditional beauty standards and push brands to adopt more sustainable and ethical practices.

Marketers must consider the ethical implications of leveraging influencers and User-generated content (UGC) (Ettrich et.al., 2024). Promoting diverse and realistic beauty ideals can help brands build trust and loyalty. Campaigns that focus on sustainability should highlight natural beauty and self-confidence. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy emphasizes breaking free from societal constraints and embracing individuality. This perspective can guide brands to create marketing campaigns that empower women. By using influencers and User-generated content (UGC) responsibly, marketers can contribute to a more inclusive and sustainable beauty industry.

In conclusion, the rise of digital media and social influencers has changed how beauty is presented in marketing. While some brands have embraced diversity, many still reinforce narrow beauty ideals. To create real change, brands must move beyond trends and commit to true inclusivity. By applying Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, marketers can promote freedom, self-expression, and more ethical beauty standards.

Critical Beauty Stereotypes and Consumer Well-Being

Beauty stereotypes in marketing influence how women see themselves and affect their well-being. Many advertisements promote unrealistic beauty ideals, leading to self-doubt, anxiety, and pressure to conform. Understanding the impact of these stereotypes helps brands create more ethical marketing strategies that support consumer well-being.

Beauty Stereotypes and Consumer Well-Being

Psychological outcomes

Beauty stereotypes strongly influence how women see themselves, especially through marketing. These stereotypes often promote a narrow idea of beauty, such as being thin, young, or flawless. Women who do not fit these ideals may feel insecure and unhappy with their appearance, which can harm their body image. Over time, this can lead to low self-esteem, anxiety, or even depression (Correia et.al., 2023). Social media makes this worse by constantly showing edited and filtered images, creating a cycle of comparison and self-doubt. Some women may try to change their appearance through extreme dieting, excessive exercise, or cosmetic surgery, often harming their mental health. Beauty stereotypes can also affect social interactions, making women withdraw from opportunities where they feel judged on their looks (Lim, Chock & Golan, 2020). To reduce these negative effects, marketing campaigns should promote diverse and realistic images of women. When brands embrace different body types, ages, and ethnicities, they send a message of acceptance and empowerment. This approach supports sustainable marketing by focusing on

consumer well-being rather than unrealistic beauty ideals, helping to create a healthier and more inclusive society.

Role of marketing in reinforcing or challenging harmful norms

Beauty stereotypes are common in marketing and often show unrealistic ideals, such as perfect skin, slim bodies, and youthful looks. These messages create pressure for women to fit into narrow beauty standards that are hard to achieve. Constant exposure to these stereotypes can harm self-esteem and lead to anxiety or depression. Many industries, including cosmetics, fashion, and wellness, focus on external appearance rather than overall well-being, encouraging women to buy products to "fix" their looks (McMahan, Hovland & McMillan, 2009). This reinforces the idea that beauty leads to success and acceptance while excluding those who do not fit these ideals. However, marketing can also promote positive change by embracing diversity and showing different body types, skin tones, ages, and abilities. Featuring real women in advertisements helps normalize natural beauty and improves self-perception (Robertson & Davidson, 2013). To create lasting change, marketers should prioritize consumer well-being and challenge harmful norms. Using Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, brands can move away from superficial beauty standards and instead empower women to embrace their uniqueness. This approach not only fosters inclusivity but also builds trust and long-term loyalty among consumers.

Intersectionality in Beauty Campaigns

Representation of race, age, ability, and other identities in Beauty Campaigns

Beauty campaigns have traditionally focused on narrow stereotypes, often portraying beauty as young, white, and able-bodied (Filo & Funk, 2005). This limited view excludes women of different races, ages, and abilities, reinforcing unrealistic beauty standards. As a result, many consumers feel excluded when they do not see themselves represented. Racial diversity in beauty marketing has been a long-standing issue, with many advertisements favoring Eurocentric ideals and often featuring women of color in tokenistic ways. Similarly, the exclusion of older women suggests that aging is undesirable, creating pressure to maintain a youthful appearance. Women with disabilities are also rarely included in beauty campaigns, and when they are, their representation is often framed as inspirational rather than normalized (Lyu et.al., 2022). These patterns highlight the need for change in the beauty industry. By embracing diversity in race, age, and ability, brands can challenge stereotypes and promote a more inclusive definition of beauty that supports consumer well-being and fairness.

Critiques of tokenism vs. genuine inclusivity in Beauty Campaigns

Tokenism in beauty campaigns happens when brands include diverse models but do not challenge traditional beauty standards (Munsch, 2021). This approach can seem superficial if the brand's overall message still promotes narrow ideals of beauty. Tokenism gives the appearance of diversity without real inclusivity, making some consumers feel exploited instead of valued. True inclusivity means representing diversity in a meaningful way, from model selection to storytelling. Brands that show people of different races, sizes, and abilities in authentic ways help redefine beauty standards (Scott et.al., 2008). The key difference between tokenism and real inclusivity is consistency. Brands that only feature diversity in certain campaigns but ignore it elsewhere appear insincere. Genuine inclusivity requires long-term efforts, like hiring diverse teams and creating products for underrepresented groups. When brands commit to inclusivity, they build trust with consumers and promote self-acceptance. Tokenism can reinforce stereotypes, while real inclusivity helps consumers see themselves positively in marketing. Moving from tokenism to true inclusivity creates a fairer and sustainable beauty industry.

Brand Ethics and Social Responsibility

Greenwashing vs. authenticity in sustainable campaigns of Brand Ethics and Social Responsibility

Greenwashing in beauty marketing is a growing problem. Many brands claim to support sustainability and inclusivity, but still promote narrow beauty standards (Nesterenko, Miskiewicz, & Abazov, 2023). For example, they may highlight natural ingredients while using models who fit unrealistic beauty ideals. This creates a contradiction that makes consumers skeptical and reduces trust. Authentic marketing, however, focuses on real commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. Brands that show diverse beauty, such as different ages, skin tones, and body types, build stronger emotional

connections with consumers (Mitchell, 2020). Campaigns that reinforce traditional beauty ideals can harm self-esteem and mental health, while inclusive campaigns support confidence and well-being. To avoid greenwashing, brands must align their marketing with ethical values and empower women rather than define them by beauty standards. Using Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, brands can see women as individuals with diverse identities, promoting both aesthetics and ethics in their campaigns.

Consumer trust and brand loyalty of Brand Ethics and Social Responsibility

Beauty stereotypes have played a major role in marketing to women, often promoting unrealistic ideals such as flawless skin, slim body shapes, and youthful looks (Lyu et.al., 2022). While these portrayals may attract certain consumers, they can also harm self-esteem and create dissatisfaction among those who do not fit these narrow standards. Brands that continue to use such stereotypes may struggle to maintain consumer trust. Ethical marketing, which focuses on inclusivity and social responsibility, can help brands connect better with their audience by promoting diverse and realistic representations of beauty. Consumers are more likely to trust brands that celebrate different ages, body types, and ethnicities rather than reinforcing limiting beauty norms (Nesterenko, Miskiewicz, & Abazov, 2023). This trust builds long-term brand loyalty as consumers feel more connected to brands that align with their values. Today, consumers expect companies to take a stand on social issues, and brands that challenge beauty stereotypes show a commitment to positive change. By adopting ethical marketing strategies, brands can strengthen their credibility and contribute to a cultural shift toward diversity and inclusivity. This approach not only improves their reputation but also attracts socially conscious consumers. Over time, these efforts help brands build emotional connections with their audience, leading to stronger loyalty and long-term success.

In conclusion, marketing can either reinforce harmful beauty standards or challenge them to promote self-acceptance. Many brands use token diversity without addressing deeper beauty stereotypes, which can feel insincere to consumers. True inclusivity means consistently representing different races, ages, and abilities in meaningful ways. Ethical marketing builds trust by promoting realistic beauty ideals and supporting consumer well-being. By applying Simone de Beauvoir's ideas, brands can move beyond superficial beauty norms and create campaigns that empower women and foster a more inclusive industry.

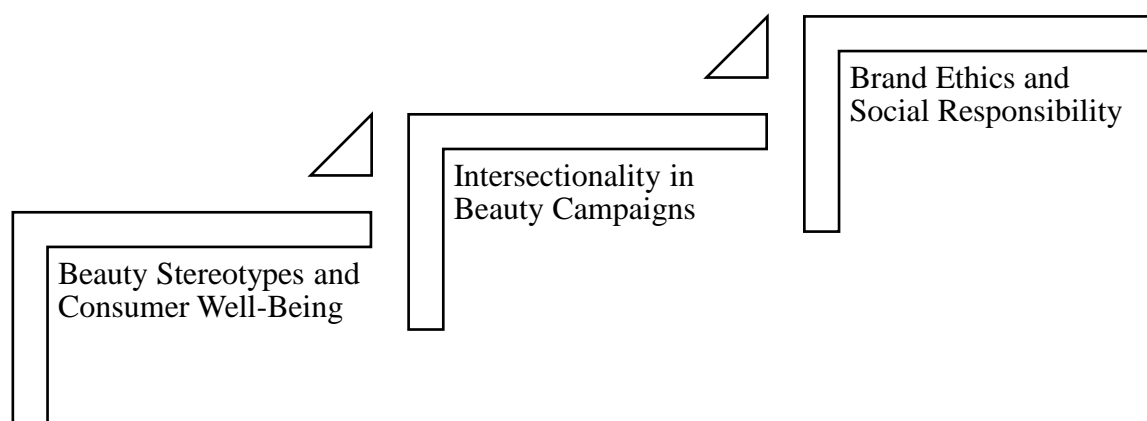


Figure 2 Critical Beauty Stereotypes and Consumer Well-Being

Applying Simone de Beauvoir to Sustainable Marketing: Building a Step-by-Step Approach

Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy emphasizes freedom, individuality, and the rejection of imposed ideals. These principles can guide marketers in shifting from traditional beauty standards to co-created narratives of beauty. The following six steps outline a practical approach to integrating her ideas into sustainable marketing campaigns (Barletta, 2003; De Beauvoir, 2014, 2023; Borgerson, & Schroeder, 2005; Robertson & Davidson, 2013; Zatwarnicka-Madura, 2018; Kapoor & Munjal, 2019; Gurrieri, 2021; Munsch, 2021; Kamkankaew et al., 2022).

Step 1: Recognize and Question Imposed Beauty Ideals

The first step in creating sustainable beauty narratives is to recognize the imposed ideals of beauty that dominate marketing communications. For decades, beauty campaigns have relied on narrow and often unrealistic standards, such as flawless skin, specific body shapes, or idealized facial features. These standards are not only limiting but also exclude a significant portion of women who do not fit these representations. Imposed beauty ideals often reflect historical, cultural, or societal biases that are perpetuated through media and advertising. By continuing to promote these ideals, marketers contribute to a cycle of exclusion and unattainable expectations, which can harm women's self-esteem and mental health.

To move forward, marketers must critically question these imposed ideals and their relevance in today's society. This involves analyzing whether current beauty representations align with the values of diversity, inclusion, and authenticity that consumers increasingly demand. Marketers should ask: Who defines beauty in our campaigns? Whose voices and experiences are missing? These questions are essential to uncover the biases inherent in traditional beauty messaging. Recognizing and questioning these ideals lays the foundation for reshaping beauty communications in ways that celebrate individuality and foster sustainability in marketing practices. This step challenges marketers to move beyond traditional norms and embrace a broader, more inclusive vision of beauty.

Step 2: Engage with Diverse Voices

The second step in transforming beauty narratives involves actively engaging with diverse voices. Traditional beauty marketing often relies on a limited set of perspectives, typically shaped by dominant cultural norms. These narrow viewpoints fail to represent the full spectrum of women's experiences and identities. To create inclusive and sustainable beauty campaigns, marketers must reach out to individuals from various cultural, social, and personal backgrounds. This engagement can take many forms, such as conducting focus groups, interviews, or surveys to better understand how different women define and experience beauty. By listening to these voices, marketers can uncover a more authentic and varied understanding of what beauty truly means.

Engaging with diverse voices also helps brands build trust and credibility among their audiences. When women see their realities and identities reflected in marketing campaigns, they are more likely to feel valued and respected. This process goes beyond representation—it fosters collaboration. By inviting women to share their stories and contribute to the creation of beauty narratives, marketers shift the focus from imposed ideals to co-created definitions of beauty. This approach not only aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's emphasis on individuality and freedom but also strengthens the ethical foundation of marketing practices. It ensures that campaigns resonate with a wider audience while promoting sustainability through inclusivity and authenticity.

Step 3: Foster Open Dialogue

The third step in moving from imposed beauty ideals to co-created narratives is fostering open dialogue with consumers. Traditional marketing campaigns often communicate a one-sided message, where brands define and project their version of beauty without input from their audience. To create sustainable beauty campaigns, marketers must shift from this top-down approach to one that encourages conversation and collaboration. Open dialogue involves creating spaces—both physical and digital—where women can share their views, experiences, and ideas about beauty. These spaces could include social media platforms, interactive brand events, or dedicated forums where diverse voices can freely express their opinions.

Encouraging open dialogue also helps marketers uncover deeper insights into how beauty is experienced in real life. When women are allowed to discuss their unique perspectives, it becomes clear

that beauty is not a singular concept but a fluid and personal experience. These discussions help brands identify themes, values, and aspirations that resonate with their audience. Furthermore, open dialogue empowers consumers to take an active role in shaping beauty narratives. This aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's focus on freedom and individuality, as it allows women to redefine beauty on their terms. By fostering open dialogue, marketers can build campaigns that are not only inclusive but also authentic, contributing to a more ethical and sustainable approach to beauty marketing.

Step 4: Redefine Beauty Through Co-Creation

The fourth step in creating sustainable beauty narratives is to redefine beauty through co-creation with consumers. Co-creation shifts the role of marketers from dictating beauty standards to collaborating with their audience to shape these ideals. This process involves inviting women to actively participate in designing beauty campaigns, ensuring their voices, experiences, and perspectives are reflected. For example, user-generated content, crowdsourced ideas, or collaborative projects with real consumers can help redefine beauty in ways that celebrate individuality and diversity. Co-creation allows marketers to develop beauty narratives that are not imposed but instead rooted in the lived experiences of their audience.

This step also fosters a sense of ownership and empowerment among consumers. When women contribute to the creation of beauty campaigns, they feel represented and valued. This participatory approach aligns with Simone de Beauvoir's emphasis on freedom and authenticity, as it rejects the passive acceptance of external beauty ideals. Instead, it encourages women to define beauty on their terms and share their stories. By embracing co-creation, marketers can create campaigns that not only resonate more deeply with their audience but also promote sustainability. This is because co-created narratives reflect real diversity and inclusivity, moving away from the narrow, homogeneous ideals of traditional marketing practices.

Step 5: Promote Empowerment and Freedom

The fifth step in building sustainable beauty narratives is promoting empowerment and freedom in marketing communications. Traditional beauty campaigns often impose restrictive ideals, making women feel pressured to conform to certain standards. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy emphasizes the importance of freedom and self-expression, which can inspire marketing practices that empower women to define beauty on their terms. Marketing messages should celebrate individuality, diversity, and self-confidence, rather than promoting unattainable ideals. For example, campaigns that highlight personal stories, real-life experiences, and unique expressions of beauty can help foster a sense of empowerment among women.

Promoting empowerment and freedom also strengthens the emotional connection between brands and their audiences. When women feel that a brand respects and celebrates their individuality, they are more likely to develop trust and loyalty. This approach encourages women to see beauty as a form of self-expression rather than a set of imposed expectations. By prioritizing empowerment and freedom, marketers can align their practices with sustainable and ethical principles. This not only enhances the authenticity of their campaigns but also contributes to a broader cultural shift toward inclusivity and respect for individual identities in beauty marketing.

Step 6: Commit to Continuous Reflection

The sixth step in transforming beauty narratives for sustainable marketing is committing to continuous reflection. Marketing campaigns that focus on beauty must evolve to meet changing societal norms and consumer expectations. Regularly revisiting and evaluating campaigns allows marketers to ensure they remain inclusive, diverse, and aligned with co-created narratives. Feedback from consumers is a critical tool in this process. Marketers can use surveys, focus groups, and social media interactions to understand how audiences perceive their campaigns. These insights help brands identify areas for improvement, ensuring that their messages reflect current values and address any unintended biases.

Continuous reflection also involves an ongoing commitment to learning and adaptation. As societal ideas of beauty shift, marketers must stay informed about emerging cultural trends and consumer perspectives. This requires a willingness to question long-standing practices and adapt strategies to align with the principles of authenticity, empowerment, and inclusion. Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy

underscores the importance of self-awareness and the rejection of imposed norms. Similarly, marketers must regularly reassess their campaigns to challenge outdated beauty ideals and foster more ethical and sustainable representations. By committing to continuous reflection, brands can maintain relevance and build stronger connections with their audiences while promoting a more inclusive vision of beauty.

In conclusion, transforming beauty marketing requires brands to recognize and question imposed beauty standards. Engaging with diverse voices ensures that different experiences and perspectives are included. Open dialogue helps marketers understand how beauty is perceived and how to challenge harmful stereotypes. Co-creating beauty narratives allows consumers to play an active role in shaping brand messages. Promoting empowerment and freedom ensures that beauty is defined by individuals, not imposed ideals. Continuous reflection helps brands adapt to societal changes and maintain ethical marketing practices. By applying these steps, marketers can create more inclusive, sustainable, and meaningful beauty campaigns.

Table 1 Applying Simone de Beauvoir to Sustainable Marketing b A Six-Step Approach

Step	Action	Description
Step 1: Recognize and Question Imposed Beauty Ideals	Identify and analyze imposed beauty standards.	Marketers should examine traditional beauty narratives that reinforce exclusionary ideals. Question who defines beauty in campaigns and whose voices are missing. This step establishes the foundation for a more inclusive approach.
Step 2: Engage with Diverse Voices	Incorporate perspectives from diverse backgrounds	Conduct interviews, focus groups, or surveys to understand how different individuals define beauty. Listening to diverse voices fosters trust, credibility, and a broader representation of beauty standards.
Step 3: Foster Open Dialogue	Create spaces for consumer participation	Develop interactive platforms (social media, brand events, forums) where women can share their perspectives on beauty. This enables marketers to understand evolving beauty perceptions and reinforce co-created narratives.
Step 4: Redefine Beauty Through Co-Creation	Involve consumers in shaping beauty narratives.	Encourage user-generated content, crowdsourced ideas, and collaborations with real consumers. Shift from imposed ideals to authentic, participatory representations of beauty.
Step 5: Promote Empowerment and Freedom	Shift from beauty conformity to self-expression	Develop campaigns that celebrate individuality and self-confidence. Showcase real stories and diverse expressions of beauty to promote empowerment and authenticity.
Step 6: Commit to Continuous Reflection	Regularly reassess and adapt marketing strategies	Monitor consumer feedback through surveys and social media insights. Stay informed on cultural shifts and societal norms to ensure ongoing inclusivity, ethical practices, and relevance.

Implications for Marketing Practice and Policy

Marketing plays a key role in shaping beauty standards and influencing consumer well-being. To create positive change, brands must adopt inclusive messaging, challenge unrealistic beauty ideals, and promote sustainability. This section explores practical recommendations, policy guidelines, and measurement strategies to help brands align with ethical and sustainable marketing practices.

Recommendations for Practitioners

Guidelines for inclusive and sustainable messaging

Marketing communications influence how society views beauty. To support inclusivity and sustainability, brands should use messages that embrace diversity and challenge stereotypes. Advertisements should feature women of different backgrounds, body types, ages, and abilities. This approach reflects the real world and connects with a wider audience, building trust and brand loyalty. By promoting diverse representations, brands can move beyond narrow beauty standards and create a culture that values acceptance and respect. This shift not only benefits consumers but also strengthens the brand's reputation in a socially aware market.

For long-term success, marketing campaigns should focus on ethical values and sustainability. Brands can highlight eco-friendly materials, fair labor practices, and community support initiatives. By linking beauty to sustainability, they can encourage responsible consumer choices that benefit both people and the planet. Inclusive and ethical marketing also requires cooperation with policymakers to prevent harmful stereotypes and ensure transparency about environmental and social impacts. Brands should regularly review their campaigns, gather feedback, and make necessary changes. By applying Simone de Beauvoir's ideas to marketing, brands can help create a world where women are empowered, diversity is celebrated, and sustainability is a priority.

Strategies to combat "perfect beauty" myths

Marketing has played a major role in spreading the myth of "perfect beauty" by promoting unrealistic standards that harm women's self-esteem. To challenge these harmful ideals, marketers should adopt strategies that promote realistic beauty standards. One effective method is using disclaimers in advertisements. Brands can include clear messages stating that images have been digitally altered or enhanced. This transparency helps consumers understand that beauty in media is often constructed, reducing the pressure to conform to false expectations. Another important approach is featuring real models in marketing campaigns. These models should represent different body types, skin tones, ages, and abilities to reflect the true diversity of women. By showcasing authentic beauty, brands can help shift societal perceptions and encourage women to embrace their natural appearance.

Storytelling is another powerful tool in breaking the "perfect beauty" myth. Instead of focusing only on physical appearance, marketing campaigns can highlight women's achievements, confidence, and personal growth. Stories that emphasize strength and individuality create deeper emotional connections with audiences, fostering long-term brand loyalty. Policymakers can also support these efforts by introducing regulations that promote truthful advertising, such as requiring disclaimers or limiting extreme retouching in ads targeted at young people. Collaboration between brands and regulators can ensure ethical marketing practices that prioritize consumer well-being. These combined efforts can reshape how beauty is perceived, empowering women and encouraging a more inclusive and authentic culture in marketing communications.

Policy and Advocacy

Future roles of consumer protection agencies and advertising authorities

Consumer protection agencies and advertising authorities play an important role in shaping the future of women's marketing. These organizations must ensure that beauty in advertisements is shown in an honest, inclusive, and respectful way. By creating clear rules, they can help reduce the negative effects of unrealistic beauty standards on consumers. This is especially important in marketing that promotes sustainability, where fairness and ethics should be a priority. Agencies should guide marketers to create messages that support diversity, self-acceptance, and social well-being.

A major responsibility of these agencies is to monitor the language and images used in advertisements. Many ads still rely on outdated or harmful stereotypes, which can lower self-esteem and harm mental health. Advertising authorities should set rules that prevent misleading claims and unrealistic beauty ideals. For example, they can require brands to label digitally edited images or promote body positivity in their campaigns. Agencies can also promote education for both marketers and consumers. Marketers should learn to create ethical and sustainable campaigns, while consumers should be taught to critically evaluate advertising messages. Collaboration between policymakers, agencies, and advertisers is essential for long-term solutions. By working together, they can ensure that marketing reflects sustainable values and supports a fairer and healthier society.

Possible industry-wide commitments

The beauty industry has the power to change how beauty is shown in marketing. When brands work together through shared commitments, they can promote fairness and honesty. Creating industry-wide groups, such as beauty brand consortia, can help set ethical standards. These groups can encourage brands to avoid unrealistic beauty ideals and misleading advertising. By working together, beauty companies can ensure that their marketing practices support inclusivity and fairness. This approach helps create a shared responsibility for promoting healthier and more sustainable beauty messages.

Being open and honest is an important part of these efforts. Beauty brands can share information about their products, including ingredients and environmental impact. They can also be transparent about how images are edited and use diverse models to show different body types, ages, and ethnicities. These actions build trust with consumers and align with the values of authenticity and inclusivity. Sustainability should also be a key focus, with brands working together to reduce waste and use ethical sourcing. When

the beauty industry prioritizes honesty, diversity, and sustainability, it not only improves its reputation but also sets an example for other industries to follow.

Measuring Impact

Metrics for tracking changes in consumer attitudes and brand sustainability performance

The idea of beauty strongly influences how consumers think and act. In sustainability-focused marketing, brands need to measure how consumer views on beauty align with their values. Using tools like consumer surveys, social media sentiment analysis, and engagement tracking can help brands understand if their messages are effective. These metrics show whether consumers connect with the brand's vision of beauty and sustainability. Tracking these data points allows companies to adjust their marketing strategies to better match consumer expectations and promote positive change.

To improve marketing practices, brands should set clear key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the success of sustainability campaigns. Metrics like consumer awareness of sustainability efforts and changes in purchasing behavior can indicate whether campaigns are working. Other important factors include brand trust and loyalty, which show if consumers feel a stronger connection to the brand's sustainable values. At the policy level, industry standards for measuring sustainability in beauty marketing should be established. Governments and organizations can require brands to report specific data, such as reductions in environmental impact and diverse beauty representation. Standardized metrics ensure transparency and help consumers make informed choices. Including consumer feedback in metric development can also improve measurement accuracy. Surveys that ask about inclusivity, authenticity, and sustainability in beauty marketing can give brands valuable insights. By focusing on social and environmental progress, brands can ensure that beauty marketing supports both business success and broader sustainability goals.

KPIs for the long-term effectiveness of campaigns

Measuring the long-term success of sustainability marketing campaigns requires clear and useful indicators. These indicators should show how campaigns affect consumer attitudes, brand loyalty, and sustainable habits over time. For example, businesses can track changes in consumer awareness of sustainability after seeing a campaign. They can also measure repeat purchases and the growth of sustainable product sales to see if the campaign keeps consumers engaged.

For marketing success, these indicators must match both campaign goals and overall brand objectives. Tracking consumer opinions through social media and surveys can help businesses understand if their message is effective. Long-term indicators, such as customer loyalty and lifetime value, are also important in measuring lasting impact. These measures help businesses see if their campaigns build strong relationships with consumers or just bring short-term gains. By using both financial and non-financial indicators, brands can ensure their sustainability efforts are meaningful and effective.

Future Research Directions

Future research on the image of beauty in women's marketing communications and its role in sustainability campaigns should adopt interdisciplinary approaches. Combining insights from marketing, ethics, feminist theory, and consumer psychology can provide a more complete understanding of the issue. Marketing studies can explore how beauty campaigns shape consumer behavior, while ethics can evaluate their moral and social impact. Feminist theory offers critical perspectives on how beauty standards reinforce or challenge societal norms, and consumer psychology can examine how individuals respond emotionally and cognitively to these campaigns. By integrating these fields, researchers can uncover deeper insights into how beauty images influence sustainability and consumer attitudes.

Longitudinal studies are another important area for future research. Examining the evolution of beauty campaigns over time can reveal how consumer perceptions and brand strategies change in response to cultural, social, and environmental shifts. For example, researchers could track how beauty campaigns adapt to growing awareness of sustainability and inclusivity. These studies would provide valuable insights into trends, helping brands understand the long-term effects of their marketing efforts on consumer loyalty, brand image, and sustainability outcomes. Such research is crucial for identifying which approaches create lasting change and foster positive consumer engagement.

Research should also investigate how the intersection of beauty marketing and sustainability evolves across different cultural contexts. By conducting cross-cultural longitudinal studies, researchers can examine how diverse cultural norms shape the reception and effectiveness of beauty campaigns. This would help marketers design strategies that respect local values while promoting global sustainability goals. Comparing findings across regions can offer insights into how universal principles of sustainability can be adapted to specific cultural contexts.



Lastly, future research should explore how consumers themselves influence the evolution of beauty campaigns. Social media and other digital platforms have given consumers a powerful voice in shaping brand narratives. Longitudinal studies could track how consumer-generated content, feedback, and activism impact the portrayal of beauty in marketing. These findings could guide brands in co-creating campaigns with their audience, ensuring that beauty images reflect evolving consumer values and contribute to sustainability in meaningful ways.

Table 2 Implications for Marketing Practice and Policy

Implications	Key Implications	Actionable Strategies
Recommendations for Practitioners	Inclusive and Sustainable Messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feature diverse models (body types, ages, ethnicities, abilities).• Avoid stereotypes in beauty advertising.• Highlight eco-friendly products, ethical sourcing, and fair labor practices.• Cooperate with policymakers to prevent misleading claims.• Regularly review campaigns and gather consumer feedback.• Use disclaimers for digitally altered images.• Feature real models representing authentic beauty.
	Combating the "Perfect Beauty" Myth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Shift focus from appearance to personal achievements and confidence.• Introduce policies limiting extreme retouching in ads targeted at youth.• Encourage collaboration between brands and regulators to ensure ethical marketing.
Policy and Advocacy	Role of Consumer Protection Agencies and Advertising Authorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish guidelines for honest, inclusive, and ethical beauty marketing.• Monitor advertising content for misleading claims and harmful stereotypes.• Require disclaimers for digitally enhanced images.• Promote media literacy programs for consumers and marketers.• Foster collaboration among brands, policymakers, and advertising authorities.• Form industry groups to set ethical advertising standards.
	Industry-wide Commitments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage transparency in product ingredients and sustainability claims.• Ensure diversity in marketing materials.• Prioritize sustainability efforts such as reducing waste and ethical sourcing.• Promote collective responsibility for fair and inclusive marketing.
Measuring Impact	Tracking Consumer Attitudes and Brand Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Conduct consumer surveys and social media sentiment analysis.• Track engagement metrics to assess marketing effectiveness.• Set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for brand trust, sustainability awareness, and purchasing behavior.• Standardize industry-wide reporting on inclusivity and sustainability impact.• Use consumer feedback to refine marketing messages.



Implications	Key Implications	Actionable Strategies
	Long-term Effectiveness of Campaigns	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Measure changes in sustainability awareness and repeat purchases.• Track long-term brand loyalty and customer lifetime value.• Assess consumer perception through ongoing surveys and feedback mechanisms.• Balance financial and non-financial KPIs for evaluating success.
Future Research Directions	Interdisciplinary Studies on Beauty Marketing and Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Combine marketing, ethics, feminist theory, and consumer psychology to analyze beauty narratives.• Conduct longitudinal studies on the evolution of beauty campaigns and consumer perceptions.• Explore cross-cultural differences in beauty marketing and sustainability efforts.• Investigate consumer-driven changes in beauty advertising through social media activism.• Develop frameworks for brands to co-create ethical campaigns with their audience.

New Knowledge for the Marketing Academic

Contemporary marketing is transforming as consumers increasingly demand that brands adhere to ethical principles and adopt sustainable practices. One important area in marketing is how beauty is shown in advertisements, especially for women. Many brands have followed unrealistic beauty standards that make women feel pressured to look a certain way. These standards have promoted one type of beauty while ignoring diversity. However, research shows that marketing can be a powerful tool for change if it focuses on inclusivity and fairness. Ethical marketing means showing different body types, skin tones, ages, and abilities in advertisements. This approach helps consumers feel valued and respected, leading to stronger brand loyalty. Social media and technology have also changed marketing, giving consumers more power to share their opinions. Now, brands must listen and respond to consumer expectations for authenticity. Marketing research must focus on understanding these consumer expectations and creating new strategies that balance profit with ethical responsibility. By following these principles, businesses can build trust and long-term relationships with their customers while supporting positive change in society. Marketing should not only sell products but also promote messages that improve consumer confidence, well-being, and sustainability. This new way of thinking helps brands connect with modern consumers and ensures that marketing remains a force for good in the future.

Conclusion

The paper highlights the role of beauty in women's marketing communications and its impact on sustainability campaigns. Traditional beauty standards have long influenced consumer perceptions, often reinforcing unrealistic ideals that affect self-esteem and inclusivity. By integrating Simone de Beauvoir's feminist philosophy, marketing can shift toward a more ethical and sustainable approach. Brands that challenge outdated beauty norms and embrace diversity can create stronger connections with their audience. Sustainable marketing requires a commitment to inclusivity, freedom of choice, and authenticity in beauty narratives. Ethical advertising should promote positive representations that reflect real consumer experiences rather than imposed ideals. Consumer trust and loyalty grow when brands prioritize honesty and social responsibility. Future marketing strategies should focus on co-created beauty narratives that empower women and redefine standards beyond traditional stereotypes. This approach not only benefits businesses but also contributes to broader societal change. Further research should explore the evolving relationship between beauty marketing, consumer perceptions, and sustainability across cultural contexts. In conclusion, applying de Beauvoir's ideas in marketing helps brands create campaigns that align with ethical values, build consumer trust, and promote fairness in beauty representation.



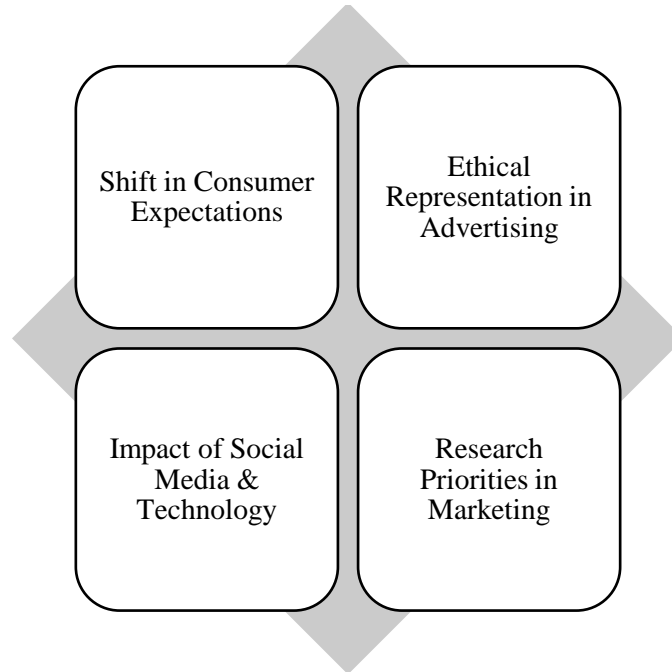


Figure 3 New Knowledge for the Marketing Academic

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