



Women-centric marketing: A model for pink branding in sports equipment

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ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this article is to present a paradigm model for pink marketing and branding in sports equipment. This research has a "qualitative approach" and uses the grounded theory method. Since the review of previous researches showed that no exactly similar research has been done in this field; Therefore, the application of this theory with the method of [Strauss and Corbin \(1990\)](#) is justified. Theorizing in 3 states is open coding, central coding and selective coding. causal factors include social freedom, becoming an influencer in social media and women's spontaneity; Background factors include the launch of social media marketing campaigns and increasing the power of influence and purchase of women; Intervening factors include social norms and women's self-branding and strategic factors including pink product (fit with women's taste and taste), pink price (ethical prices), pink advertisement (focusing on emotions in advertising) and pink distribution (external and internal design). Finally, by using the strategic factors of pink branding in sports equipment, we will witness social and cultural identification, targeted marketing and high acceptance. while it's common to find a product in multiple colors, pink is specifically used in gender marketing to make products available in a single version for women, providing marketers with added value.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today, branding is considered an increasingly important area in marketing management, especially as organizations direct their marketing efforts towards conveying intangible and complex messages (Mousavi et al., 2019). Experts believe that building and maintaining a strong brand is vital for the growth, sustainability, and longevity of an industry in today's competitive and complex environments (Greenberg et al., 2018). In mature markets like the United States, there are many consumers who prefer companies with a positive social and cultural impact. Eighty-five percent of American consumers have a positive image of companies that support social causes and objectives. Accordingly, the current concept of marketing has evolved and transformed into pink branding. Likely more than any other color, success or failure in pink depends on the message you wish to convey and your audience (Pinardo, 2020). The color of a product that guides the consumer towards purchase can significantly impact the achievement of your business goals. Emotionally, pink is associated with empathy, love, and affection. Pink is soft and youthful. It also represents love and compassion (Massoudi, 2020). The increasing prominence of pink in today's markets has established its position as an important symbol in consumer products and popular culture, especially among female consumers (Ma & Wang, 2024). This trend is evident in the widespread introduction of products with a pink theme, particularly in categories such as sports equipment and other daily essentials targeting women. Empirical studies illustrate women's significant preference for these pink items, suggesting that this color is not only aesthetically pleasing but also influences purchasing behavior (Mileti et al., 2022).

According to the International Marketing Glossary, the branding process generally involves the following actions: stages of gathering and analyzing market information, analyzing competitors, introducing the brand and creating a noticeable difference, conveying the brand and its

identity to the audience, creating a brand culture within the company, evaluating and controlling the brand, and repositioning the brand (Choobandiyan, 2021). Derbaix & Grégory (2004) identified four persuasion gates for the brand—conceptual levers that advertisers can utilize to change consumer attitudes and behaviors through persuasive communication: 1) “Logic Gate,” related to cognitive learning; 2) “Imitation Gate,” referring to interpersonal relationships; 3) “Emotions and Feelings Gate;” and 4) “Automation Gate,” related to consumer conditioning (Collin-Lachaud & Vanheems, 2016). Pink branding employs all of these levers simultaneously: it is an almost universally recognized symbol of femininity; it spreads through tradition and fashion; girls are conditioned from childhood—through toys, media, and more—to associate pink with femininity; and it is quite difficult to relate it to anything other than women and femininity (Bideaux, 2021). Branding, as a name, phrase, term, sign, symbol (such as a logo or packaging design), or a combination of these, aims to introduce a product or service in a way that is suitable for women. Just like commercial markets, the “brand” serves as a shortcut for informed decision-making because the brand moves ahead of the commercial market itself. Organizations ambiguously address women with their marketing messages, as this approach is formed by a pattern that no longer applies to women. Therefore, marketing messages need to demonstrate understanding and alignment with the nature and needs of women (Massoudi, 2020). Pink marketing is a marketing effort aimed at meeting the needs and desires of women by collecting marketing information tailored to their tendencies and tastes (Zarei & Ebrahimi Kharajo, 2022).

It is worth mentioning that pink branding not only introduces products to women but also helps in the expansion of such products. It sends signals or suggestions that impact women and persuade them to purchase these products (Massoudi, 2020). Therefore, the significant influence of women in

purchasing decisions calls for both experts and marketing professionals to develop new marketing methods and techniques that align with their nature, needs, desires, mindset, and purchasing motivations. These marketing tactics for women are referred to as pink marketing, which emerged in the twenty-first century and encompasses all marketing efforts targeted at women. As women's behaviors differ fundamentally from men's in many aspects, understanding the needs of women as customers—who play a role in the decision-making process of buying and consuming—or as marketers who possess skills in executing their marketing tasks becomes increasingly essential (Zarei & Ebrahimi Kharajo, 2022). Accordingly, organizations worldwide are focusing on identifying the needs and wants of women as a target market segment, striving to fulfill these needs and studying the marketing factors that influence their purchasing decisions to achieve their satisfaction and gain their loyalty (Kraft & Weber, 2012).

Women are the main actors in the economy, marketing, and any activity in life (Sutter et al, 2016). Women not only act as consumers but also as effective players (Okazaki et al, 2013). At the macro level of marketing, researchers need to consider what this means. The marketing literature has a real need to address two key questions on this topic. First, to what extent do men and women differ from a marketing perspective? Second, does marketing theory require a specific branch that focuses on this issue: how to market to women or by women? The modern concept of marketing is broader than just selling or transferring ownership of goods (Babcock et al, 2017). Therefore, marketing must include a necessary specialization that covers how to engage with women and how marketing is conducted by women. Moreover, marketing to women is not just about profit transactions; it encompasses all communications, including non-profit dealings. Women play multiple roles in market transactions: as consumers, marketers, and direct/indirect influencers on marketing decisions (Rohrer-Vanzo et al, 2016).

The sports industry is a driving and active element in the formation of a competitive market (Salimi, Tayibi, Khodaparast, 2019). The importance and necessity of sports branding arise from the fact that sports brands are all-encompassing; the sports industry has created a unique market due to its general and social applications. Among these, sporting goods are one of the important elements in this industry (Fekrat & Jaber, 2023). On the other hand, in a competitive market, especially in the sports equipment sector, each product has numerous brand names, and every company strives to increase its market share; therefore, producers of sporting goods need to improve their product processes to enhance competitiveness and attract customer attention (Mohammadi et al., 2024). In this context, branding is considered one of the important tools aimed at influencing potential buyers and serves as a vital communication and promotional instrument. A sports brand, as a complete collection of diverse elements, represents a unique and identifiable symbol of a sports organization that sets it apart from its competitors. Branding leads to customer loyalty (Calder, Hollebeek & Malthouse, 2018). Branding for women reveals essential ideas for successfully marketing products and services in the women's market; when institutions understand and meet women's needs, they can succeed in developing and increasing their market share (Massoudi, 2020). It is noteworthy that each color impacts individuals in its own way, and all colors have a specific framework for influencing the human mind. In this regard, by emphasizing previous studies and based on summarizing the findings of researchers, some of the conducted studies will be referenced.

Atkinson, Meadows, and Sumnall (2024) presented a study titled "Just One Color? Examining Women's Relationship with Pink Brand Alcohol Marketing in Their Femininity Identity." This research was conducted to gain insight into their attitudes towards the use of pink in the design of alcoholic products and marketing content, and how

this issue intersects with their feminine identity. The results indicate that both women and marketers view the color schemes of products and marketing as the most prominent form of targeted female marketing, and women's relationship with feminism affects their attitudes towards marketing like pink and the likelihood of consuming such products. [Ma & Wang \(2024\)](#) explore the impact of pink in marketing in their study titled "Beyond Gender: The Evolving Importance of Pink in Marketing," focusing on its influence on female consumer behavior, particularly in light of the recent popularity of the Barbie movie. They analyze the psychological and historical significance of the color pink and its economic implications in marketing strategies. [Ameer et al \(2022\)](#), in their research titled "The Impact of Pink Marketing on Product Image Stabilization," study the extent of the influence and contribution of pink marketing and its dimensions in enhancing the product image for customers at Al-Khouk Commercial Complex to determine the nature of that relationship. This research recommends intensifying marketing efforts directed towards women, adopting pink marketing mechanisms in this complex, and emphasizing the need to utilize a pink marketing mix to influence women, stabilize the product image, and increase customer loyalty. [Anmar & Hussein \(2022\)](#) in a study titled "The Impact of Pink Marketing on Product Image Stabilization: An Exploratory Study of the Opinions of a Sample of Female Customers at Al-Khouk Commercial Complex," state that marketing efforts aimed at women, the adoption of pink marketing mechanisms in this complex, and the emphasis on the necessity of employing a pink marketing mix to influence women, stabilize the product image, and enhance customer loyalty are all increased.

[Massoudi \(2020\)](#) in a study titled "The Vital Role of Pink Marketing in Creating Women's Loyalty" emphasizes the critical role of pink marketing in fostering women's loyalty. The research findings indicate that the pink marketing mix has a positive relationship with loyalty. Pink products, pink pricing, pink advertising, and pink placement all

show a medium to weak correlation with loyalty. [Khalifa \(2019\)](#) in a study titled "The Impact of Pink Marketing on Women's Buying Behavior" conducted a field study on the cosmetics market in Damascus, highlighting the important role women play in the marketing process. To complement the study, the two elements of personal selling and advertising were used as independent and dependent variables, respectively, in relation to women's buying behavior. Using a descriptive approach, a sample of 400 items was utilized. The study population included women consumers in the cosmetics market in Damascus. The research results are as follows: 1. A statistically significant impact of personal selling on women's buying behavior. 2. A statistically significant impact of advertising on women's buying behavior. This research recommends paying attention to the forces of sales and advertising provided due to their influence on women's buying behavior. In the studied sample, the choice to focus only on two pink marketing elements for the study was unique. [Givi & Eidi \(2022\)](#) in a study titled "Branding Women's Football at the Asian Level and Providing a Model" argues that 11 effect categories can be considered as indicators for branding women's football in Asia. These 11 categories encompass 35 concepts and 176 open factors or codes. Based on the findings of this research, we conclude that managers and officials should take necessary actions to develop and advance women's football in light of the identified indicators and to address the prevailing challenges and issues.

In a study titled "The Application of Color Psychology in Marketing Fitness and Aerobic Clubs," [Beik & SaatChian \(2019\)](#) found that marketing and customer attraction are of great importance for clubs, particularly with regard to the psychology of color. Understanding the factors that influence the design of sporting spaces and facilities is crucial. Recognizing colors and considering their impact on individuals can be utilized as a new marketing strategy to attract customers. Furthermore, by advertising and creating psychological attitudes toward color, a calm and

attractive environment suitable for the sport can be established in these clubs.

Pink marketing, or marketing targeted at women, is a strategy that focuses on women in product marketing, employing techniques that are more effective for women than men, as the psychological nature of women differs from the subjective viewpoints of men. This means that the motivations for purchasing among women differ from those of men (Freihat et al., 2024). Consequently, women's purchasing behavior differs from men's purchasing behavior. Female branding, often referred to in foreign literature as pink branding, does not merely target women as customers or buyers but also addresses the role of women in serving the field of marketing as a whole, whether they serve young girls as customers or leverage marketing ideas and issues for the broader market (Massoudi, 2020). In fact, marketing specialists in the sports field believe that sports marketing has overlooked the reality that customers are the most effective channel to fulfill the primary task of marketing (Poursoltani Zarandi, 2024).

The sports industry has recently witnessed the emergence of a number of brands that prominently reflect the color pink in various elements such as clothing (Ma & Wang, 2024). These advertisements have had a profound impact on female audiences, indicating that the visual display of the color pink may influence their consumption behaviors. Given the significance of women in the marketing sector, not just as buyers and sellers, but also as major influencers in family and professional decision-making, their role is critical. Additionally, women hold a substantial share of global wealth. Women's purchasing accounts for 85% of all purchases worldwide, including sports and personal care products, hygiene items, as well as cars and equipment. Women's spending represents 58% of

total online payments, which amounts to about \$20 trillion annually (Ezzat & Rady, 2021; Massoudi, 2020; Shehata & Fayyad, 2020; Lbasir, 2018). This has made the topic of marketing in this area important and necessary. This study analyzes the image of the color pink in branding and examines whether these images stimulate female viewers' desire to purchase pink-themed products. The goal of this study, focusing on pink marketing, is to clarify how they can shape and influence the consumption choices of female audiences. Therefore, this article analyzes pink branding, using the color pink as a thematic color for marketing, with a special focus on the effectiveness of the color pink in influencing women's buying behaviors in contemporary society, to show how women empathize with pink brands on a social level.

Despite the growing body of literature in color psychology and marketing, there remains a significant gap in understanding how specific colors, such as pink, can influence consumer behavior, particularly in the context of gender norms and consumer demographics. Consequently, this study elucidates the role of the color pink in promoting women's purchasing behaviors towards more pink-themed products. It further demonstrates that the color pink has a considerable impact on women's willingness to buy products with a pink aesthetic. Therefore, considering the importance of family structure and the role of women within it, as well as the diversity of consumer decision-making styles and the role of pink marketing as an activity directed at women, particularly regarding pink branding in sports equipment, the primary research question examines the symbolic meaning of the color pink within the framework of gender differentiation, its impact, and the implementation of pink marketing concepts in the sports equipment market.

2. Methodology

This research, due to the exploratory nature of the topic, utilized a qualitative grounded theory

approach as outlined by Strauss & Corbin (1998) through semi-structured interviews. The statistical

population of this study consisted of specialists and experts in the fields of marketing and sports, including customers and sellers of sports equipment (notable brands such as Nike, Adidas, Puma, Reebok, etc.) as well as individuals with higher education (faculty members) who sell various sports items and equipment from diverse brands. For sampling, a purposive judgment method was employed with criteria (having academic qualifications relevant to the research topic, over one year of work experience in reputable stores, being a specialized expert in marketing, and being interested in contributing and sharing views and experiences). To collect data, library resources were utilized and 13 semi-structured interviews were conducted, where no new codes emerged from participants 10 and 11, and the interviews with participant 13 reached theoretical saturation.

All interviews in the first stage were coded line-by-line. At the end of the open coding process, 148 concepts were identified. The process then continued, and these codes were reviewed and refined based on their frequency and meaning, resulting in a final count of 125 open codes or identified concepts. The steps of the grounded theory method, based on the approach presented by [Strauss & Corbin \(1998\)](#), are explained in detail in the three stages below.

Step One

The purpose of open coding is to break down the collected dataset into the smallest possible

conceptual components. The researcher examines the main idea contained in each sentence or paragraph, meticulously reading each line of text and identifying the underlying semantic unit in that sentence. Labels are then chosen for each sentence. The data are further fragmented into separate pieces and carefully re-examined. They are compared with one another based on similarities and differences and categorized into groups that include ideas and actions in terms of concept and nature, forming what are referred to as categories. An example of the data analysis method is presented in Table 2.

Step Two

Axial coding is the second stage of data analysis in grounded theory. The aim of this phase is to establish relationships among the categories generated during open coding. Table 3 presents the axial coding of the research data.

Step Three

Selective coding is the process of selecting a main category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating these relationships, and completing categories that require further refinement and development. At this stage, the main categories have been identified, which include causal factors, contextual factors, intervening factors, strategies, and outcomes. You can see an example of this process in Table 3. A description of the characteristics of the research participants, such as education, area of activity, and field of expertise, is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewees

field Activity	Education	Date & Tim	Age	Gender	Row
Marathon store salesperson	Bachelor	1403/05/17 - 12:00	36	Male	1
Sport land store salesperson	Bachelor	1403/05/18 - 18:30	40	Male	2
Novin Sport Store Salesperson	Bachelor	1403/06/02 - 16:20	44	Female	3
Hoshyar store salesperson	Masters	1403/05/22 - 18:00	38	Male	4
Behgym store salesperson	Bachelor	1403/05/28 - 18:00	45	Male	5
Pink sporting goods customer	Bachelor	1403/06/05 - 17:30	39	Female	6
Pink sporting goods customer	Masters	1403/06/05 - 14:00	41	Female	7
Pink sporting goods customer	Bachelor	1403/06/07 - 17:00	27	Female	8
Pink sporting goods customer	Bachelor	1403/06/05 - 19:00	31	Female	9
Academic Member	P.H.D	1403/06/10 - 10:00	55	Male	10
Academic Member	P.H.D	1403/06/11 - 09:45	40	Female	11
Academic Member	P.H.D	1403/06/12 - 11:30	38	Female	12
Academic Member	P.H.D	1403/06/13 - 10:00	47	Female	13

The interview protocol included predetermined open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to assess and clarify topics during the interview. The interviews were conducted as a data collection tool in the qualitative section, with questions designed to last between 40 to 60 minutes and carried out in two rounds (once for data collection and a second time for weighting and prioritizing the data). The semi-structured interview questions posed in the research were as follows: What is your definition of women-centered marketing in sports equipment? In your opinion, what characteristics does pink branding in sports equipment include? What factors do you think influence pink marketing in sports equipment advertising? What are your views on the results and

implications of using the color pink in sports equipment? All interviews were recorded using a recording device, and after being transcribed, the researcher returned them to the interviewees for confirmation. Subsequently, MAXQDA 24.7 software was utilized for data analysis. The Shannon entropy method was then employed in the following five steps to extract the weight and significance of the criteria:

The first step of the entropy method involves creating a decision-making table.

The second step of the entropy method is normalizing or scaling the decision-making table, which is done using the following formula.

$$E_j = \frac{E_j}{\sum_{j=1}^n E_j}, (j = 1, 2, \dots, n)$$

The third step is to calculate the entropy of each indicator with the following formula,

$$k = \frac{1}{\ln(a)}; a = \text{Number of options}$$

$$E_j = -k \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} n_{ij} \ln(n_{ij})$$

The fourth step is to calculate the distance of each indicator from its entropy,

$$d_j = 1 - E_j$$

The fifth step was to calculate the weight of each indicator using the following equation.

$$W_j = \frac{d_j}{\sum_i^{\infty} d_j}$$

To enhance the validity of the research, the data collection tool was first presented to several professors and experts in the field before designing it. After receiving their feedback and making the necessary adjustments, the interview questions were formulated, and both content and face validity were confirmed. During the interview phase, the researcher adhered to all essential and important points throughout the data collection process,

following a thorough study and acquiring necessary knowledge regarding the principles of conducting interviews. In the final stage, after recording and transcribing the interviews, member checking and triangulation were employed to determine the credibility and validity of the findings. According to [Hooman \(2006\)](#), member checking is one of the key strategies for ensuring trustworthiness and assessing validity in qualitative research. According to this

method, the findings of the conducted interviews were shared with the participants to express their opinions on the accuracy and precision of the results.

To estimate the reliability of the interviews using an intra-coder agreement method or dual coder (evaluator), an expert well-versed in the topic of this

research was requested to participate as a research collaborator (coder); subsequently, the researcher, along with this collaborator, coded three interviews, and the percentage of intra-coder agreement, which serves as an index of reliability for the research, was calculated using the following formula:

$$\frac{2 \times \text{Number agreements}}{\text{Total number of codes}} \times 100\% = \text{Percentage of intra-subject agreement}$$

The total number of codes recorded by the researcher and research collaborator is 52 and the total number of agreements between codes is 25. The inter-coder reliability for the interviews conducted in this study using the aforementioned formula is 79 percent. Given that the reliability rate is more than 60 percent, the reliability of the coding was confirmed and it can be claimed that the reliability rate of the current interview analysis is

appropriate. In order to ensure the validity of the research, an attempt was made to include the statistical sample of people who have the necessary knowledge and expertise in the research context, to minimize the researchers' intervention in the research, and to refer the coding results to a number of experts for their final approval regarding the extracted framework.

3. Findings of the Research

The main findings of the research, or the main and subcategories that form the data-based theory, are summarized in Figure 3. At the end of the basic coding stage, the initial concepts were reviewed, analyzed, and categorized to identify subcategories. Accordingly, 30 subcategories were ultimately extracted from 125 basic codes. In the following, the formation of the data-based theory was followed by coding concepts, and key and central concepts were

identified to identify subcategories using inductive comparison and reference to the research literature. At the end of the central coding stage, 14 main categories were identified. These categories formed the basis of the final model of women-centered marketing: for pink branding in sports equipment. Table 2 presents the main and subcategories resulting from the coding.

Table 2. Example of initial coding

Extracted codes	Interview transcript
Positioning women in social media advertising	Today, more women are generally used in advertising than in the past to achieve greater impact and appeal. Using women in sports advertisements requires special care, and the status and dignity of women must be taken into account.
Cultural barriers and norms	The importance of advertising in the development of business and the growth of sports is obvious to everyone, but the possible ideological consequences arising from the content of advertising should not be overlooked.
Inspiration	One of the important issues that should be mentioned in the discussion of pink bell advertising is the issue of the portrayal of women in advertisements and commercials.
Strong presence of women in lifestyle change	The color pink in sports branding and advertising can direct women's thinking and promote a certain lifestyle among its audience.
High interactions women	Media messages, especially advertisements, can have significant effects on the social, economic, cultural, and political situation in the field of sports by presenting a decent image of women. Women have greater influence and social connections than men.
The power of women's influence	

At this stage, the relationship between the categories generated in the open coding stage has

been established. Table 3 presents the axial coding of the research data.

Table 3. Core and optional categories

Number of concepts	Concept markers	Open code	Pivotal code	Selected code
8	P4, P12, P7, P6, P13, P1, P3, P11	Warm glow, Participation in purchasing, Decision-making authority	Social freedom	Causal conditions
11	P12, P11, P1, P4, P7, P12, P6, P13, P3, P9, P8	High interaction power, Customer persuasion potential, Effective close communication	Becoming an influencer on social media	
7	P1, P7, P9, P5, P6, P8, P12	Self-efficacy, Self-esteem	Women's spontaneity	
13	P12, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P13, P1, P5, P11, P13, P4, P12	Women's Knowledge Management, Awareness Raising	Launching social media marketing campaigns	Background conditions
12	P1, P6, P12, P9, P14, P3, P11, P7, P9, P10, P2, P8	Income Potential, Financial Independence, Risk Tolerance	Increasing women's influence and purchasing power	
10	P11, P13, P4, P6, P9, P12, P10, P4, P7, P2	Reinforcing gender stereotypes, Failure to provide advertising, tailored to women's needs	Social norms	Intervening conditions
11	P6, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P3, P9, P2, P13, P5	Exploitation of women in advertising, Artificial aesthetics	Women's self-branding	
6	P3, P5, P8, P11, P13, P12	Pink Products, Different and Diverse Products, Different Packaging	Pink product (suitable for women's tastes)	Strategies
5	P2, P4, P10, P12, P13	Price-quality ratio, Psychological pricing	Pink price (ethical prices)	
7	P13, P2, P5, P7, P3, P6, P8	Word of mouth advertising, Emotional temptations	Pink advertising (focusing on emotions in advertising)	
7	P2, P7, P9, P11, P4, P10, P3	Physical elements of stores, Quality of distribution media	Pink distribution (exterior and interior design)	
10	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P13, P12, P9, P7	The Psychological Nature of Women, Improving Women's Self-Awareness	Social and cultural identification	Consequences
8	P3, P6, P13, P12, P2, P9, P10, P1	Word of mouth advertising	Targeted marketing	
11	P12, P11, P1, P9, P8, P3, P5, P7, P13, P4, P2	Brand loyalty, Passion and interest in buying	Gaining high acceptance	

Based on the aforementioned analysis, as shown in the table below, it can be seen that according to the experts, the most emphasis was placed on the four main components of social

freedom, social norms, social and cultural identification, and women's spontaneity, and the remaining components were placed in subsequent priorities.

Table 4. Determining the importance coefficient of the researcher's proposed components

Rank	Importance factor (Wj)	Uncertainty (Ej)	$\sum_{i=1}^{23} P_{ij} \times L_n P_{ij}$	Frequency	Components
1	0/09	0/92	-2/89	18	Social freedom
3	0/07	0/66	-2/08	8	Becoming an influencer on social media
1	0/09	0/66	-2/08	8	Women's spontaneity
2	0/08	0/66	-2/08	8	Launching social media marketing campaigns
2	0/08	0/79	-2/48	12	Increasing women's influence and purchasing power
1	0/09	0/92	-2/89	18	Social norms
2	0/08	0/79	-2/48	12	Women's self-branding
7	0/04	0/22	-0/69	2	Pink product (suitable for women's tastes)
5	0/05	0/86	-2/71	15	Pink price (ethical prices)
3	0/07	0/70	-2/20	9	Pink advertising (focusing on emotions in advertising)
6	0/04	0/35	-1/10	3	Pink distribution (exterior and interior design)
1	0/09	0/82	-2/56	13	Social and cultural identification
4	0/06	0/62	-1/95	7	Targeted marketing
3	0/07	0/51	-1/61	5	Gaining high acceptance
	1	9/51	Total		

The output of MaxQuda-24.7 software at this stage includes the extraction of axial codes and selected codes as shown in Figure 1.

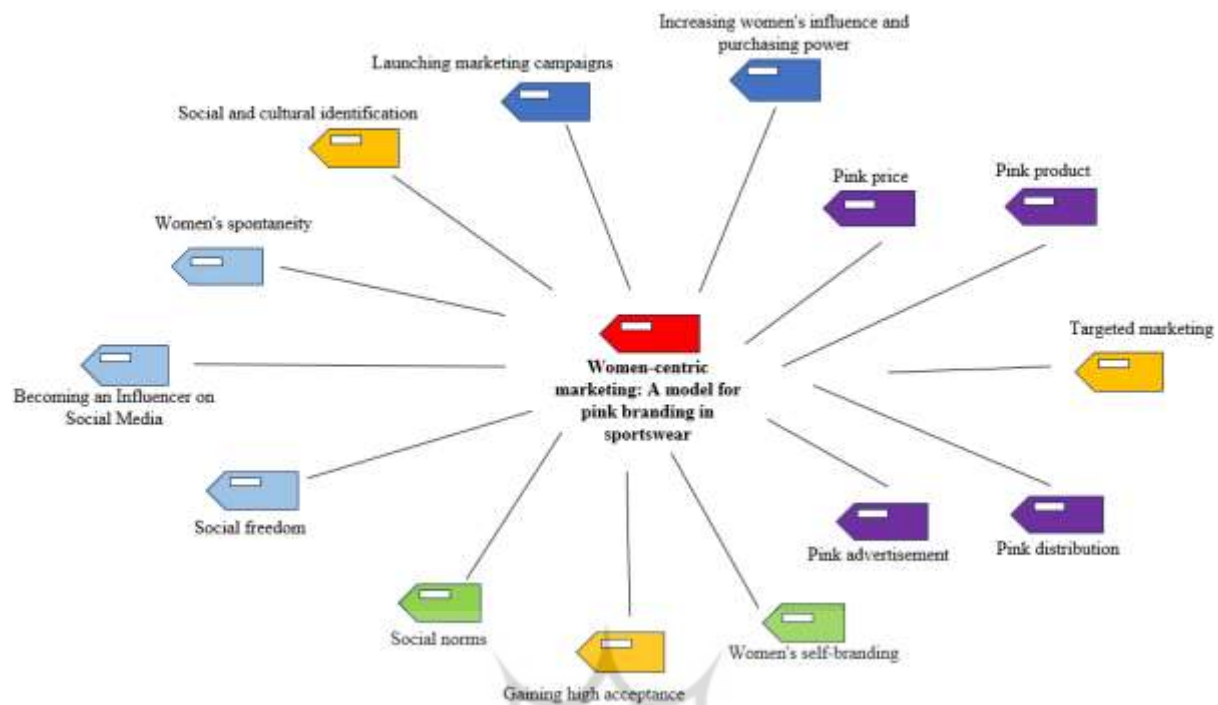


Figure 1. The output of the MaxQDA-24-7 software

At this stage, the theory is almost solidified and the researcher, after making some possible theoretical corrections, deals with a few categories. At this stage, the central category is systematically related to other categories and those relationships are presented in the form of a clear narrative. At this stage, an attempt is made to create a narrative based on the theory of women-centered marketing: pink

branding in sports equipment by putting the categories together around the central category as a main theme. Then, based on the categories obtained, the final paradigm of the women-centered marketing process: a model for pink branding in sports equipment was drawn according to Figure (2).

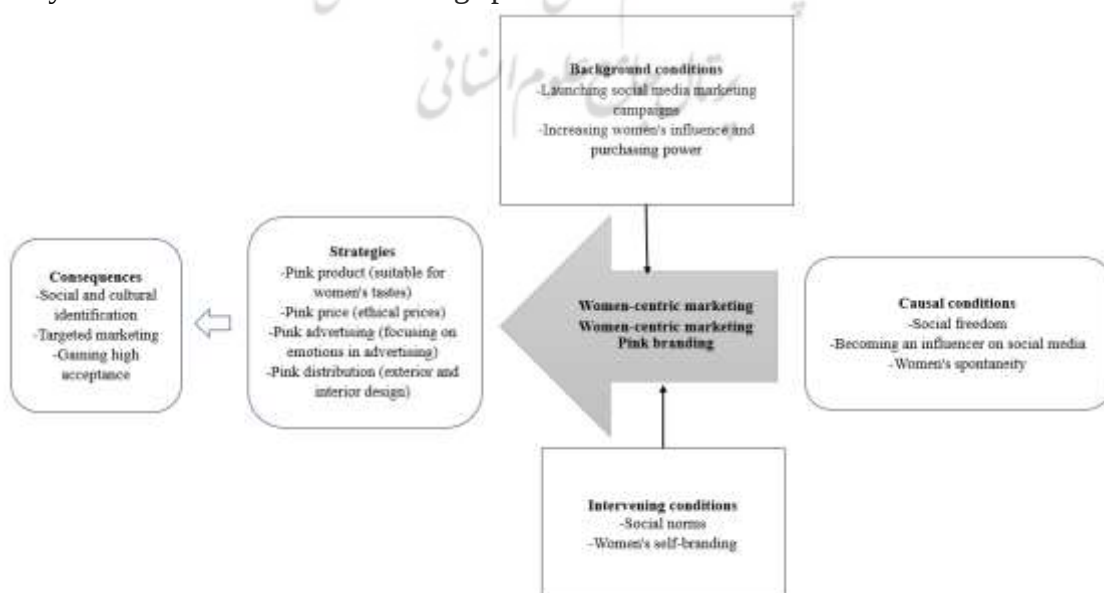


Figure 2. Women-centric marketing: A model for pink branding in sports equipment

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The color pink constitutes a strategy through which the sports industry links its products to consumers' feminine identities. This research shows that the way women use such products and incorporate them into their performance of femininity is complex, nuanced, and intersecting, with some claiming that pink is "just a color." Pink products and marketing content are associated with and appealing to a number of feminine identities. Accordingly, this study attempted to conduct a study of related research and using the paradigmatic model of women-centered marketing: pink branding in sportswear. In this study, 13 in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with salespeople and marketing experts in sporting goods stores and their opinions on pink marketing and branding in sportswear were collected. A total of 14 core codes were obtained from the participants' opinions, divided into 6 selected codes.

The final model of this research shows that one of the necessities for the development of using pink marketing and branding in sports equipment to achieve marketing goals, social freedom, becoming an influencer on social media and women's spontaneity are categorized as causal factors. Accordingly, as consumption patterns change, marketing practices are evolving to engage customers differently. Depending on the presence of brand competence cues, subtle gender cues in the background of print advertising can make a difference in how a brand is perceived, which leads to a subsequent impact on the likelihood of purchase. Kraft & Weber (2012) in a study conducted at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, USA, shows that 70% of advertising content on social media remains in the minds of women and is influenced. Freihat et al (2021) also argue that one of the most influential elements of women's advertising mix is social media on the internet, where women spend most of their time on social media, as nearly 89% of women have social media accounts. Rahimi & Akbari arbatan (2023) state in their study that being a social media influencer gives

women a platform where they can express their opinions and share information, without being limited by nature, imagination, or geography.

Kartat (2021) states that women are consumers, buyers, decision makers and influencers. When she uses products for women, she is a consumer and when she buys products for her children, she is a buyer. She makes purchasing decisions and influences her husband or children when she influences them and advises them to buy certain products. This is due to the importance of women in the field of marketing, not only because they are buyers or sellers, because they participate and make multiple purchasing decisions, the role of women is also in serving the marketing fields, whether the customers are of the same gender or they serve marketing plans and issues for the entire market. It also states that the consumer spending that women spend is higher and this gives them more social freedom. Therefore, the findings of this section are consistent with these studies (Freihat et al., 2021; Rahimi & Akbari arbatan, 2023; Kartat, 2021; Kraft & Weber, 2012). Therefore, face branding that aims to attract female customers can either help women feel free and spontaneous, show women the right to diverse choices, or create a better sense of superiority in them by showing successful and independent women in advertising. Women also attach great importance to positive and social experiences. Advertisements and campaigns that share positive experiences and social communities can have a greater impact on women's presence on social media.

In terms of background conditions, managers should recognize the power and influence of women on the current society and have the prediction that the general public is more inclined towards social media than traditional media. In fact, the attractive content of the pink marketing campaign makes them research more about the product, the content of the pink marketing campaign with innovative ideas is spreading rapidly among girls, and their loyalty to the product in the pink marketing campaign leads

women to promote it. Hence, the concept of launching social media marketing campaigns is in line with the research of [Freihat et al \(2021\)](#) who states that pink marketing is not limited to selling products to women, but also extends to products sent to men, because women influence men's purchasing decisions. This means that companies should target women in marketing campaigns because they influence purchasing decision-makers, and this requires using marketing campaigns for products sent to men, children, and family, by sending signals or offers that influence women. [Rahimi & Akbari arbatan \(2023\)](#) argue that women have a great influence on their followers and in a way, followers consider them as their friends. The image that these women portray of their lives is an influential image of women; In a way, social marketing campaigns, due to the less control they have, have provided a new space for audiences, especially women, whose behaviors have historically been controlled by social factors. And these findings are confirmed by researchers ([Freihat et al., 2021](#); [Rahimi & Akbari arbatan, 2023](#)). Accordingly, women are actors in the economy, marketing, and every activity in life, and they have power and influence in purchasing because they play an important role in shopping journey decisions. This power guides and indicates the path that marketers must take to achieve success.

The intervening factors section addresses two concepts of social norms and women's self-branding regarding the color pink. In the case of pink, we are faced with an emotional rejection by many women, and growing criticism from academics and feminist associations about its use for gendered marketing purposes, which they see as reinforcing gender stereotypes. The social media environment has changed the way consumers respond to marketing messages, allowing each consumer to act as a personal brand, allowing them to enter their own narratives and divert followers from the main target by using personal perspectives or with fake accounts and changes in content algorithms. Self-branding is related to the concept

of "extended self" developed by [Bideaux \(2021\)](#). Humans symbolically invest objects as extensions of themselves. Ownership defines not only what is "mine", but also "me", which implies a definition of identities through objects and their consumption. Thus, pink objects are visible and measurable signs of femininity. Having something pink means being pink, and what it symbolizes – being feminine. Thus, pink in gendered marketing is a paradox: it means femininity to meet the "natural" needs of women and, at the same time, it refers femininity to an artificial aesthetic process that is consumed. [Kartat \(2021\)](#) shows in her study that social norms may provide greater constraints for female marketers to deal with men and women, while it may sometimes be difficult for male marketers to deal with female customers. Thus, the findings of the intervening factors are confirmed by ([Bideaux, 2021](#); [Kartat, 2021](#)).

Pink marketing is also defined as all marketing activities and efforts aimed at female customers, including: product, price, distribution and promotion in a way that is suitable for women. It is a mistake for companies to apply pink marketing by following a rosy approach when addressing women with their marketing messages, because this approach is characterized by a stereotype that no longer applies to women. What is needed today is marketing messages that understand and match the psyche and needs of women and is defined as the use of marketing mix elements (product, price, promotion and distribution) in a way that is appropriate and compatible with the psyche and lifestyle of women to meet their needs and wants in an optimal way. Marketers strive to meet women's needs and wants in terms of goods and services by collecting marketing information that is consistent with women's attitudes and tastes. In the strategy section, it should also be noted that when the company targets its products to the female consumer segment, it adjusts all its marketing strategies to suit women and their way of thinking to meet their demands and needs. Marketing is for women. Pink is undoubtedly the color of femininity,

which has led marketing experts and specialists to use it as a sign for marketing aimed at women and to be suitable for women in terms of product, price, distribution and advertising. These factors have also been emphasized in the research of (Kadhim et al., 2016; Freihat et al., 2021; Zarei & Kharajo, 2022; Omar, 2022).

The results of the study by Obaidi (2017), which discussed the role of ethical behavior in the adoption of pink marketing: an exploratory study of the opinions of a sample of workers in a number of large shopping malls in Najaf province, showed that 64% of women ask their friends about their evaluation of the product they have tried before making a purchase, which shows the importance of word-of-mouth advertising in pink marketing. Women are highly influenced by communication content and it is necessary to choose a combination of advertising that addresses their desires and emotions while showing the logical aspects of the quality and value of the product. It also showed that the term pink marketing has been used to refer to targeted marketing to women, pink is undoubtedly a feminine color, and this is what has led marketing scholars and experts to use it as an indication of marketing directed towards women. On the other hand, products directed towards women can be in pink or any other color that is suitable for women. Kearney (2010) shows in her study that possessions have meanings beyond their intended functions: the cultural significance of consumption is projected from the world of cultural values and symbols onto consumer goods. Thus, the subject of consumption is also a social marker that participates in social and cultural identities. Thus, pink objects produced by marketers can be considered a way for some women to express their femininity through the consumption of these objects, or more precisely, a way to demonstrate their conformity to a model of femininity. The consumption of "pink accessories" can then be seen as a way to express femininity and construct social and cultural identities.

The implications of this research include social and cultural identification, targeted marketing, and gaining high brand acceptance. According to color

psychology, the cultural associations of pink are as interesting as its symbolic meanings. The colors chosen for your brand reflect the personality of the brand. And it's not just initial impressions. How you present your brand personality through color will, over time, influence how you build long-term relationships with your customers. The participation of women in the marketing process, whether existing or targeted, makes us think about the role and relationship of women to marketing activity and its goals, especially customer satisfaction and loyalty. Women can perform marketing functions and influence differently than men. Most organizations have found that their success and sustainability depend on their ability to identify and define customer needs and wants, and their ability to satisfy them. Massoudi (2020) concluded, based on a questionnaire distributed to 125 female consumers in local shopping malls in Erbil Governorate, Iraq, that there was a high acceptance of the independent variable (pink marketing) among the research sample. The acceptance rate of the pink product and pink distribution was also high. Therefore, these factors have also been emphasized in the studies (Obaidi, 2017; Kearney, 2010; Massoudi, 2020). Considering that socio-cultural identification in pink marketing means presenting an accurate, realistic and respectful image of women in advertising and marketing communications, taking into account their values, culture and social roles. In other words, this approach attempts to transform pink marketing from a purely commercial tool to a tool for empowering women, promoting gender equality and creating positive changes in society, so it can act as a targeted marketing and increase the likelihood of accepting pink marketing. Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Causal: Support women-owned businesses and create opportunities for them to grow and expand.

- Partner with popular female fitness and sports influencers to promote your products and build brand awareness.

- Create educational campaigns that empower women in a variety of areas, including financial skills, leadership, and technology.

2. Contextual: Use platforms like Instagram and Pinterest to showcase products with strong visual impact and partner with female fitness and sports influencers to promote your products.

- In-depth market research: Conduct extensive market research to understand the role of women in purchasing decisions across product and service categories, the extent to which women participate in decision-making, the factors that influence their choices, and the extent to which they influence other family members.

3. Intervening: Create a concise and compelling brand statement that summarizes your values, skills, and target audience.

- Produce diverse, high-quality content, such as articles, videos, podcasts, and social media posts. Your content should be relevant to your area of expertise and provide added value to your audience.

- Avoid gender stereotypes in your advertising and show women as complex, multifaceted individuals with diverse interests and talents.

4. Based on strategies

- Provide the possibility of customizing products and services so that women can adapt them to their needs and tastes.

- Design functional and high-quality products that meet women's practical needs and are of high quality.

- Use colors suitable for women in products and advertisements, such as using pink or red and avoiding colors that are suitable for men, such as blue.

- Create a user-friendly and attractive online store that allows women to shop easily and confidently.

5. Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

6. Financing

The article has no financial sponsor or research funding, nor is it derived from a research project.

5. Based on consequences

- Instead of focusing on logical appeals in advertising, they should focus on emotional temptations and introduce women as sales representatives in persuasion. Therefore, a passionate woman is better off convincing by influencing her emotions, and influencing emotions does not mean cheating or ignoring the logical aspects of the product such as quality and price. However, this means focusing more on emotional issues.

- Target women more with social media marketing campaigns, as women spend more time on social media than their male counterparts.

- Clearly define the goals of your pink marketing. Do you want to help empower women? Support a social cause? Or simply increase your sales? The clearer you are, the more likely your message will be received.

In terms of limitations, this article is no exception to this rule. As previously stated, pink marketing is a new and fresh concept in the field of marketing, so it is difficult to find scientific resources, at least domestically, in this field, which is also clear from reviewing previous domestic studies. Considering that foreign scientific articles published in Arabic, Spanish, or even Chinese limited access to interesting scientific resources for analysis, the lack of available scientific resources was one of the limitations of this research. In addition, access to experts and experts in the field of pink branding is another limitation of this research. For future research, it is suggested to examine new trends in pink marketing and their impact on brand choice by women. Other issues such as the role of word-of-mouth advertising in activating pink marketing and the challenges of implementing pink marketing are raised as topics for future studies..

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