



NYX



Presented by :  
Megi Savoyan

# Mermaids as Symbols of Desire and Illusion in Marketing

## Impact on Consumer Behavior and Decision-Making



# Table of Contents

|         |                                           |
|---------|-------------------------------------------|
| Page 1  | : Research Overview                       |
| Page 2  | : Problem Statement                       |
| Page 3  | : Research Questions                      |
| Page 4  | : Literature Review                       |
| Page 5  | : Conceptual Framework                    |
| Page 6  | : Operational Definitions & Impact Levels |
| Page 7  | : Methodology, Research Design & Sample   |
| Page 8  | : Expected Findings                       |
| Page 9  | : Ethical Considerations                  |
| Page 10 | : Appendix: Survey Questionnaire          |
| Page 11 | : Conclusion & Significance               |
| Page 12 | : References                              |



# RESEARCH OVERVIEW

---



## 01 Topic

How mermaid imagery in marketing influences consumer emotion, brand perception, and purchasing behavior

## 02 Approach

No empirical study has tested behavioral effects of mermaid imagery using a controlled experimental design

## 03 Research Gap

Mixed-methods: quantitative survey experiment (n=200) + qualitative interviews (n=6–8)

# Problem Statement

---

## The Commercial Reality

A global coffee brand's mermaid logo — one of the world's most emotionally resonant brand symbols

Urban Decay, NYX: dedicated mermaid-themed collections

Mermaid motifs recur in fashion and beauty advertising

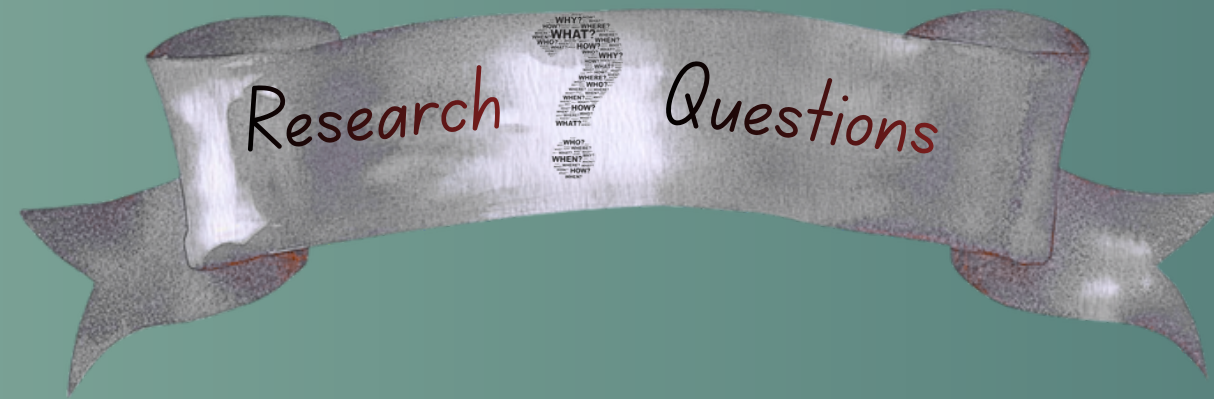


## The Research Gap

Cultural & semiotic analyses exist

(Kolosova 2018; Kozinets et al. 2021)

But NO study has empirically tested the direct behavioral and attitudinal effects of mermaid imagery using a controlled research design.



**Central RQ: How do mermaids as symbols of desire and illusion in marketing influence consumer behavior and decision-making?**

**SQ1**

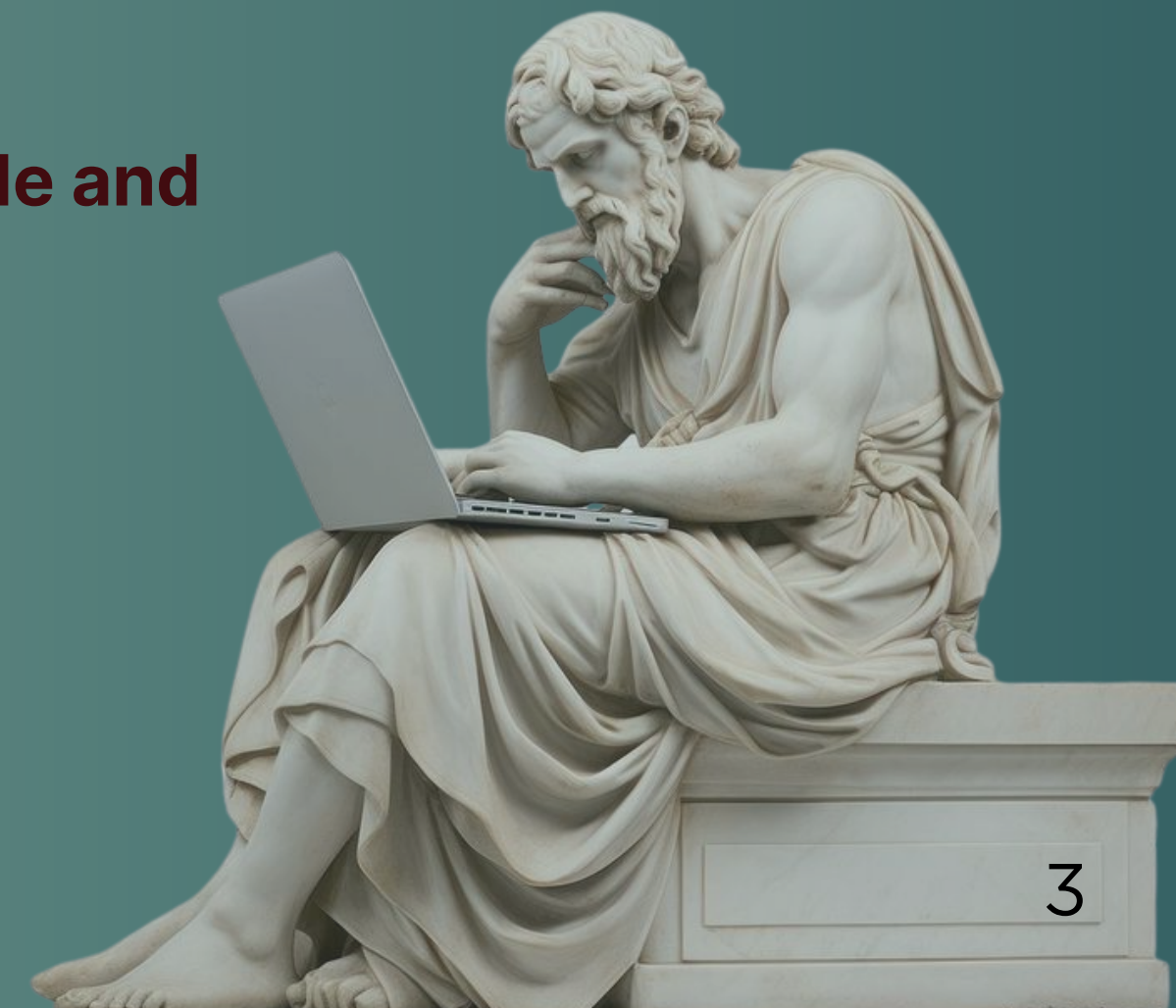
**How do consumers emotionally respond to mermaid imagery in advertising, and what specific feelings does it evoke?**

**SQ2**

**To what extent does mermaid symbolism influence brand attitude and purchase intention vs. advertising without such imagery?**

**SQ3**

**What role do perceived desire and illusion play in mediating the relationship between mermaid imagery and consumer decision-making?**



# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Kozinets et al. (2021)

Fantasy figures generate genuine economic value from consumer imagination — mermaid imagery is a deliberate mainstream strategy.

**Focused on niche markets; limited generalizability to mainstream advertising.**



## Kolosova (2018)

Core symbolic registers: beauty, seduction, mystery, boundary between human and fantastical — strategically invoked to shape emotional response.

**Interpretive only — no empirical behavioral evidence.**



## Zhang & Li (2022)

Cultural symbols generate emotional value that statistically mediates the link between symbolic perception and purchase intention.

**Provides the core mediation model applicable to this study.**



## Schroeder (2005)

Visual/mythological symbols communicate aspiration, luxury, and identity — shaping brand attitude beyond rational product evaluation.

**Provides broader branding theory context.**

# Conceptual Framework

*Theoretical basis:  
Symbolic Consumption  
Theory (Kozinets et al.  
2021; Schroeder 2005) +  
Zhang & Li (2022)  
mediation model*

Mermaid  
Imagery

Independent Variable

Emotional  
Response

Mediator  
(desire, fantasy,  
excitement, mystery)

Brand Attitude  
& Purchase Intent

Dependent  
Variables

### **Emotional response (Mediator)**

Self-reported feelings activated by the advertisement, measured on a 4-item, 7-point Likert scale assessing excitement, fantasy, desire, and mystery immediately after stimulus exposure.

### **Brand attitude (DV1)**

Consumer's overall evaluative response to the brand, measured via a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale: overall evaluation, perceived appeal, and perceived quality.

### **Mermaid imagery (IV)**

Presence vs. absence of mermaid imagery in an advertisement.  
Operationalized as a binary manipulation: experimental group sees an ad featuring mermaid imagery prominently; control group sees the same ad with mermaid imagery replaced by a neutral design element.

### **Purchase intention (DV2)**

Consumer's self-reported likelihood of buying from the brand, measured via a 3-item, 7-point Likert scale: likelihood of purchase, intent to buy soon, willingness to recommend.

**Operational  
Definitions Impact  
Levels**

# Methodology, Research Design & Sample

Design: Mixed-methods | Quantitative: between-subjects experimental design | Qualitative: phenomenological interview study | Integration: quant tests mediation; qual explains the emotional meanings

## Quantitative strand (n = 200)

- Between-subjects experiment, random assignment
- Experimental: advertisement featuring prominent mermaid imagery
- Control: identical ad with mermaid imagery replaced by neutral element
- 7-point Likert scales for all measures
- Analysis: independent t-tests + PROCESS macro Model 4 mediation

### Sample

- Adults aged 18–45, diverse in gender & education
- Adults aged 18–45, diverse in gender & education
- Inclusion: purchased coffee in past 3 months

## Qualitative strand (n = 6–8)

- Semi-structured interviews
- Focus: mermaid imagery interpretation, emotional associations, brand perception
- Audio recorded, transcribed, thematic analysis

### Sample

- Regular customers of a mermaid-branded product (at least once a week)
- Recruited via purposive sampling
- Diverse in age and gender



# Expected Findings

## Higher emotional response

Participants exposed to mermaid imagery will report significantly greater feelings of desire, fantasy, excitement, and mystery.

## More favorable brand attitudes & purchase intent

Experimental group expected to show stronger brand attitudes and purchase intentions than the control group.

## Emotional response as mediator

Emotional response will significantly mediate the effect of mermaid imagery on brand attitude and purchase intention — the key theoretical contribution.

## Qualitative: luxury & aspiration associations

Consumers will associate mermaid imagery with luxury, mystery, and an elevated everyday experience — aligning with the brand's premium positioning.



## Informed consent

All participants will provide written informed consent before taking part. They will be told the study involves viewing an advertisement and answering questions about it, without being told which condition they are assigned to (to prevent demand effects).

## Full debriefing

After completing all measures, participants will receive a full debrief explaining the true purpose of the study and the experimental manipulation used.

## Minimal risk

The study presents no more than minimal risk. Participants are only exposed to a commercial advertisement and asked to complete a short survey. No sensitive, distressing, or personal questions are asked beyond standard demographics.

# Ethical Considerations

## Right to withdraw

Participants may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or explanation. Any data collected from a withdrawn participant will be deleted immediately.

## Informed consent

The study presents no more than minimal risk. Participants are only exposed to a commercial advertisement and asked to complete a short survey. No sensitive, distressing, or personal questions are asked beyond standard demographics.

## Interview confidentiality

Interview recordings will be accessible only to the researcher. Transcripts will be anonymised using pseudonyms. Participants may review and approve their transcript before it is used in analysis.

# Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

## Section A Demographics

Q1. Age Q2. Gender Q3. Highest level of education

## 33Section B Emotional Response.7

Q4. This advertisement makes me feel excited.

Q5. This advertisement evokes a sense of fantasy or magic.

Q6. This advertisement makes me feel a sense of desire.

Q7. This advertisement creates a feeling of mystery.

## Section C Brand Attitude

Q8. My overall attitude toward this brand is: [Very Negative → Very Positive]

Q9. I think this brand is appealing.

Q10. I consider this brand to be high quality.

## Section D Purchase Intention

Q11. I would consider purchasing a product from this brand.

Q12. I am likely to buy from this brand in the near future.

Q13. I would recommend this brand to others.

7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)

7-point Likert scale (1 = Very Negative, 7 = Very Positive)

7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 7 = Strongly Agree)



Conclusion & Significance

# Conclusion & Significance

---

Mermaid symbolism is commercially real and psychologically meaningful — not peripheral to modern marketing,

This study bridges the semiotic/cultural literature and quantitative consumer research for the first time.

Findings will confirm (or challenge) whether fantasy-based symbols shape behavior through emotional activation.

Implications extend to all brands using mythological or fantastical imagery in advertising.

---



# References

Kolosova, V. (2018). The mermaid as a symbolic image of charm and mystery in contemporary culture. Conference Proceedings in Media and Communication Studies.

Kozinets, R. V., Patterson, A., & Ashman, R. (2021). The marketization of myth: Professional mermaids and the commodification of fantasy. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 21(4), 1–19.

Schroeder, J. E. (2005). The artist and the brand: European brand culture and the role of visual imagery. *European Journal of Marketing*, 39(11/12), 1291–1318.

Zhang, Y., & Li, X. (2022). Cultural symbols, emotional value, and consumer purchase intention: An empirical study.