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## Purplewashing and its Analogues as a Strategy of Marketing Manipulation: How Brands Use Feminism for Promotional Purposes

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**Purplewashing and its Analogues as a Strategy of  
Marketing Manipulation:  
How Brands Use Feminism for Promotional Purposes**

Sous la direction du Professeur Marie Herbillon

Mémoire présenté par Perrine MELEN-LAMALLE  
en vue de l'obtention du grade de Master en Communication Multilingue,  
à finalité spécialisée en communication interculturelle et des organisations internationales

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to determine how brands use feminism for promotional purposes in their marketing strategy and how to recognise it on the basis of key notions and concepts. With the rise of the MeToo movement, the perception that some people (including brands, lobbies, think-tanks and all sorts of groups) have of women has changed dramatically and tends to be more attentive to the gap that still exists between men and women. Although this movement has benefitted and will benefit feminism and women in general, some companies have not hesitated to use this movement as a marketing strategy to attract clients. This is what will lead to purplewashing, which consists of using feminist values, in this case for marketing purposes. When we look closer at some companies' strategies, we find that their line of action does not match their behaviour, as we will see in this dissertation. As this is still a fairly new topic, this work is qualitative research with an empirico-inductive approach rather than a deductive one. In this thesis being focused on feminism and women in general, my essay can sometimes take a heteronormative view of the subject. Still, my vision of women does not reject trans, non-binary or any other persons from the LGBTQIA+ community. I will try as much as possible to use neutral terms and to use the singular "they" when necessary. When I talk about authors, I will use their pronouns according to the gender they identify with. Gender pronouns will not be excluded in this case.

## **Keywords**

*Purplewashing; feminism; femvertising; gender equality; branding*





## Introduction

For some years now, the society that we can define as patriarchal has been tending to change towards parity between men and women, as well as towards gender minorities. However, it is important to remember that this change in mentality is far from complete and does not yet convince everyone. This awareness began with the uprising of these stigmatised groups who are now making their voices heard and trying to educate people about the socio-economic inequalities that exist on the basis of gender. This dissertation will not focus on the case of gender minorities but on the social place of women who, although not to be considered as a minority, are also subject to socio-economic pressures. More specifically, I will focus on companies' responses to these new movements and how they are trying to remain an economic force by taking advantage of them, which they do by claiming them. While it is important for companies to support these causes in order to increase their impact, many are insincere and use feminism as a selling point. After the use of greenwashing by many brands to make them feel less guilty about their extremely polluting impact and convince their customers to remain loyal to them, it is now the turn of purplewashing to be a marketing and communication tool for brands.

In the opening sentence of this introduction, I suggested that we live in a patriarchal society. Here are the reasons why: based on its definition, a patriarchy “a society in which the oldest male is the leader of the family, or a society controlled by men in which they use their power to their own advantage”.<sup>1</sup> For centuries, power has been in the hands of men in the political, social and other spheres of society. Even if women tend to have more power than before, it is still a man's world based on numerous examples. In many respects, women are “below” men from a societal point of view. If they want to have children, they may not be chosen for a job. In the political sphere, men still dominate.<sup>2</sup> There are fewer women at the head of an organisation's or state's power than men.<sup>3</sup> From a security point of view, feminicides are frequent and rapes are most often perpetrated by men on women. According to the website *RAINN*, whose collected data is based on the National Crime Victimization Survey of the

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<sup>1</sup> “Patriarchy.” *Cambridge Dictionary*. [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/patriarchy](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/patriarchy). Accessed 10 Aug. 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Van Enis, Nicole. « Le patriarcat, une idéologie socialement et historiquement construite ». *Centre d'Action Laïque de la Province de Liège*, 2020. Accessed March 8, 2023. [www.calliege.be/salut-fraternite/109/le-patriarcat-une-ideologie-socialement-et-historiquement-construite/](http://www.calliege.be/salut-fraternite/109/le-patriarcat-une-ideologie-socialement-et-historiquement-construite/)

<sup>3</sup> “Women in power in 2023: New data shows progress but wide regional gaps”. *UN Women*, 7 Mar 2023. [www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/03/women-in-power-in-2023-new-data-shows-progress-but-wide-regional-gaps](https://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/03/women-in-power-in-2023-new-data-shows-progress-but-wide-regional-gaps).

*Department of Justice* of 1998, nine out of ten victims of rape are female in America.<sup>4</sup> This survey being already 25 years old, *RAINN* claims that “Because the U.S. population has increased substantially since then, it is probable that the number of victims has as well.”<sup>5</sup> Other sources and figures will be briefly discussed in this dissertation to support my points.

Feminism is a growing movement in our society, and one that is making increasing inroads into various institutional sectors, particularly marketing and communications. Feminist themes can be found in the media, on television, on networks and in advertising. Brands do not hesitate to use feminism to sell their products, to attract customers and to give themselves a good image, even though these same brands do not really share the values of feminism. This leads to the notion of purplewashing.<sup>6</sup>

In order to determine whether a brand is using feminism for purely marketing purposes while not having a line of conduct that corresponds to feminist values, I am going to analyse the brand’s image and *ethos*, i.e. the image it projects to its audience. To do this, I will use the approach taken by Ruth Amossy in her book *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*, in which the author uses a rhetorical approach as well as a sociological one, while also analysing the field of discourse analysis. This information will enable me, in addition to the characteristics of purplewashing, to put forward my hypotheses of brands doing purplewashing.

Before delving into the analysis of brands and advertisements, I would first like to put feminism in its historical context over the last two centuries. In order to understand the feminism we find ourselves in today, it is important to understand the movement’s past and what has changed and shaped it over time. We will also see that feminism is not a single, clear-cut movement. I will then look at the origins of purplewashing, the main source of my analysis. As well as understanding its meaning and origin, I will look at terms derived from or similar to purplewashing. This term is fairly recent and not yet used in many media. The other terms I will develop will help me to extend my research to a wider range of analytical possibilities.

Indeed, purplewashing is one of the most recent of the aforementioned terms. I discovered this term when a scandal broke out at the beginning of 2022 around the Camaïeu brand’s advertising campaign on domestic violence. I will come back to this campaign in my analysis. When I researched the term further, I learned that it was used in particular against the

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<sup>4</sup> “Scope of the Problem: Statistics.” *RAINN*, 2021. [www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem](http://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem). Accessed 8 March 2023.

<sup>5</sup> “Female Victims of Sexual Violence”, *Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics*, 1994-2010 (2013).

<sup>6</sup> Maret, Virginie. « Purplewashing: Quand Le Féminisme Fait Vendre ». *Le Temps*, 8 Mar. 2020. [www.letemps.ch/videos/decryptages/1199572](http://www.letemps.ch/videos/decryptages/1199572).

Israeli government, which is trying to justify the Zionist movement through propaganda about women's rights.<sup>7</sup> Although it is a very important subject, I do not want to focus on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in my research in order to stay in the advertising field. What is more, I do not feel legitimate talking about a subject I do not know enough about. That is why I have decided to use the term purplewashing in its most general version and from a purely social and marketing point of view. It is also why I have decided to extend my research to other terms closely related to purplewashing, to complete my research if necessary. In fact, some media and texts do not use the term purplewashing but rather analogues such as feminism washing or woman-washing. Nevertheless, purplewashing remains a more than useful term in my research.

While doing my research, I have noticed that there have been more scandals around the use of feminism for marketing purposes in recent years. This has a lot to do with the history of feminism and its growing popularity, thanks in particular to social networking and the #MeToo movement. With feminism now being inclusive, intersectional, increasingly linked to the LGBTQIA+ community and minorities, and no longer simply a white feminist movement, advertising also has to adapt very quickly to these changes. The ads of the 20th century are not the same as they are now. To demonstrate this, I will sometimes compare several advertisements produced by the same brand on the same subject years apart to show the difference in tone and image that the brand wishes to reflect depending on the period.

As this subject has not yet really been called out by the mainstream media, my essay is based on personal research and analysis using the methodological and theoretical tools I have chosen to use. The theoretical concepts and the historical context in which the advertisements were created will enable me to identify the brands that are likely to engage in purplewashing. As this is a subject that is still little covered in the media, I think it would be interesting to look into this issue in an attempt to advance the data on this subject. The analysis of advertising could enable more in-depth and more developed research into more brands and point out inconsistencies in their communication, identify them and even avoid them.

In the campaigns I have analysed in my dissertation, the aim is to attract mainly women or people in general that share feminist values. In a world that is constantly changing, both ethically and socially, brands have also had to adapt quickly. Sometimes this sudden change leads us to question the sincerity of these companies in changing their point of view. As we shall see here, many of them still do not fully understand what feminism and its values are.

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<sup>7</sup> Students for Justice in Palestine at UCLA. "Purple-Washing: Israel's Faux Feminism through the Lens of Medical Apartheid." *FEM Newsmagazine*, 22 Mar. 2022. [femmagazine.com/purple-washing-israels-faux-feminism-through-the-lens-of-medical-apartheid/](https://femmagazine.com/purple-washing-israels-faux-feminism-through-the-lens-of-medical-apartheid/).

Brands sometimes make clumsy use of this movement, which they have no control over, in an attempt to maintain a brand image in tune with the times for commercial purposes.

# **Chapter 1: Historical Context of Feminism**

This chapter looks at the history of feminism in order to understand how it has evolved over time and to explain the current stage of feminism. Before attempting to analyse marketing strategies based on concepts such as purplewashing, pinkwashing, femvertising and many other notions that I will develop further in my thesis, it is important to contextualise the place of feminism in today's society, as well as its roots and evolution through the ages. Feminism is more than two centuries of movements that have shaped the society we live in today.

## **1. Origins of the terms “feminism” and “feminist”**

The term ‘feminism’ comes from the French language, but the exact date and author of this word remain unclear. There is, therefore, no real consensus on the exact origin of the term. Its creation is often attributed to the thinker Charles Fourier, who created numerous neologisms and was interested in the emancipation of women.<sup>8</sup> This word was presumably first found in his book *Théorie des Quatres Mouvements*, but in terms of timespan, its origin varies from 1808 to 1841. Yet Dr Karen Offen, in her history review « Sur l'origine des mots “féminisme” et “féministe” », claims that the term does not appear on the page indicated in Fourier's book. She also points out that major dictionaries such as the *Larousse* (1964) and *Robert* (1960), give the original date as 1837 and cite Fourier. However, this date corresponds to the death of the author, who would not have published much that year.<sup>9</sup> Another author named Caroline Fayolle explains in her book *Le féminisme : histoire et actualité* (2018) that the term appeared in French in the 1870s to describe a medical condition that feminised men's bodies.<sup>10</sup> In general, people will say that the term emerged in the mid-19th century in French and in the 1890s in English, to replace the word “womanism”.<sup>11</sup>

On the other hand, the term “feminist”'s first use is attributed to Alexandre Dumas Junior. Dumas used the term for the first time in his book *L'Homme-femme* in 1872 to describe the men who support women's rights. However, Dumas employed the term pejoratively to “emasculate” those men and called it a “neologism”, which might imply that he did not invent

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<sup>8</sup> Offen, Karen. « Sur l'origine des mots “féminisme” et “féministe” ». Dans: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, tome 34 N°3, Juillet-septembre 1987, pp. 492 - 493.

<sup>9</sup> Offen. « Sur l'origine des mots “féminisme” et “féministe” », p. 493.

<sup>10</sup> Fayolle, Caroline. *Le féminisme : histoire et actualité*. Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2018, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Smith, B.G., & Robinson, N. (Eds.). *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2022, p. 9.

the word himself.<sup>12</sup> The word reappeared in 1882 under the pen of Hubertine Auclert, who fought for women's eligibility and right to vote. In a letter to the Prefect of the Seine, she objected to restrictions on civil marriages and used the word 'feminist' as a claim.<sup>13</sup> The suffragettes therefore reappropriated the term in their fight for gender equality.

However, it was not until the end of the 19th century that these two terms were used in the public sphere. The term "feminist" was first used in French-speaking countries (France, Switzerland and Belgium), before appearing in the *Daily News* on 12 October 1894. The word "feminism" appeared in a literary review in 1895. This was followed by the creation of feminist movements and magazines, and even an "International Feminist Congress" in Paris in April 1896. The terms then take on more and more space and evolve, even becoming categories that compete with each other.<sup>14</sup> Not all feminists share the same basic principles, as we will see in the section dedicated to the three phases of feminism. It is not a unified movement, and at the moment we are talking about feminist movements in the plural. However, for the sake of clarity, I will refer to feminism in the singular, as my analysis does not focus on one or more movements but on the main values of feminism in general.

## **2. The pioneers of feminism**

Although the term itself appeared at the end of the 19th century, feminist movements can already be traced back to ancient civilisations and periods of time. However, most movements developed particularly during the Enlightenment.<sup>15</sup> The Middle Ages and Antiquity also saw women who could be described as feminists in their time, but there is very little written on the subject. The 17th and 18th centuries saw the emergence of thought that criticised gender inequality and its prejudices. In 1673, French philosopher François Poullain de La Barre denounced the nonsense of female inferiority in his work *De l'égalité des deux sexes, discours physique et moral où l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des préjugés*. English theologian and philosopher Mary Astelle denounced the exclusion of half of humanity from the social contract and the paradoxical nature of the philosophy of natural rights. These thoughts became more widespread in the 18th century, although they were still in the minority.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Offen, Karen. « Sur l'origine des mots "féminisme" et "féministe" ». Dans: *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, tome 34 N°3, Juillet-septembre 1987, p. 494.

<sup>13</sup> Offen. « Sur l'origine des mots "féminisme" et "féministe" », p. 494.

<sup>14</sup> Offen. pp. 495-496.

<sup>15</sup> Smith, B.G., & Robinson, N. (Eds.). *The Routledge Global History of Feminism*. 1st ed. Taylor and Francis, 2022, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Fayolle, Caroline. *Le féminisme : histoire et actualité*. Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2018, pp. 9-10.

The Enlightenment is known as a period of progress, especially in terms of human equality in Europe, particularly with the French Revolution of 1789. Although history mostly records the great men who took part in this Revolution, women also played an important role. For example, they took part in the Women's March on Versailles on 5 October 1789 to protest against bread and flour shortages. More than 8,000 women took part that day. The well-known French motto « *liberté, égalité, fraternité* » (liberty, equality, fraternity), although it called for the equality of all people, was directed exclusively at men, since fraternity means brotherhood.<sup>17</sup> The equality sought has had the opposite effect on women. This inconsistency in the very concept of equality was what feminists of the time pointed to from the outset. Two emblematic figures from this period stood out: Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges. Both women pioneered the beginning of feminism by fighting for women's freedom and liberty.

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-1797) was an English teacher and writer who wrote a book in 1790 on human rights. She then travelled to Paris in 1792 to witness the consequences of the French Revolution, where she discovered the inequality women were increasingly facing. She wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) in which she was one of the first to denounce the fact that women were being taught to remain dependent on men. One of her most important and interesting ideas, in my opinion, and one that continues to resonate today, is that the differences between men and women are created by society and not by their nature.<sup>18</sup> Her feminist ideas were widespread from Great-Britain to America. Wollstonecraft is often viewed as “the ‘founder’ of Anglophone feminist thought”.<sup>19</sup>

Olympe de Gouges, whose real name is Marie Gouze (1748-1793), was a French artist and human rights activist. In 1791, she wrote the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*, a critical response to the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* that was set by the French National Assembly after the French Revolution. In her text, she criticised the fact that women were not equal to men in the *Declaration*. She became a major figure of the Revolution-inspired French feminism.<sup>20</sup> Because of her writings and her political criticism of the French reform, she was condemned and executed by guillotine in 1793.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Schrupp, Antje, and Patu. *A Brief History of Feminism*. Illustrated by Patu, MIT Press, 2017, p. 13.

<sup>18</sup> Schrupp and Patu. *A Brief History of Feminism*. p. 16.

<sup>19</sup> Merriga, Tara Wanda. “How Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges Argued for Equality In Proto-Feminist Pamphlets.” *Medium*, 22 July 2019. <https://medium.com/@twmerrigan/feminism-mary-wollstonecraft-olymp-degouges-french-revolution-f77fd19bedc>.

<sup>20</sup> Merriga. “How Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges Argued for Equality.” 2019.

<sup>21</sup> Schrupp and Patu. *A Brief History of Feminism*. Illustrated by Patu, MIT Press, 2017, pp. 17-18.



The beginnings of feminism were therefore neither simple nor without danger for its activists. There are many other cases worth mentioning, notably the early socialist feminists of the 19th century such as Claire Démar, Jeanne Deroin and Flora Tristan.<sup>22</sup> As this is a brief summary of the history of Feminism, it is time to move on to the main part of this chapter, which looks at the different waves of feminism, from the second half of the 19th century to the present day.

### **3. The three waves of feminism**

Feminism is generally categorised into three waves, occurring mainly in Europe, particularly in France and the United Kingdom, and in North America. It is important to note that the history of feminism as we know it is often based on a Western view. The three waves of feminism I am going to present now are mainly based on historical facts in the West. For my historical research, I have concentrated on the history of feminism in Europe and more specifically in France. The main reason for this is that my analysis will focus mainly on French-language advertisements or on English-language advertisements that are also broadcast in France and Belgium, and a summary of feminism in every country would take up many pages. It would therefore be difficult to give a complete and qualitative summary of the complexity of this history that has spanned the ages. Feminism and feminist movements have developed and adapted in different cultural, religious and political contexts. These same non-Western feminist movements are fighting to challenge traditional norms and defend women's rights. This is something I think is important to remember, and something that would take an entire work on the subject to explain its complexity. *The Routledge Global History of Feminism* (2022) provides a very comprehensive overview of the multifaceted nature of feminism by exploring various cultural perspectives. In the next sections (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3), which expounds the three waves of feminism, I am relying mainly on the work of Caroline Fayolle *Le féminisme : histoire et actualité* (2018).

#### **3.1. The first wave**

The first wave of feminism represents the institutionalisation of the movement. It was no longer an isolated movement, but a united one: activists were grouping together and forming associations. Most of them were not seeking to radically transform society, but rather to reform it so that women could obtain the right to vote. This is what is known as the suffragette era.

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<sup>22</sup> Schrupp and Patu. *A Brief History of Feminism*. pp. 19-24.

The British suffragist movement emerged in the second half of the 19th century, driven by John Stuart Mill and his wife Harriet Taylor Mill, who called for gender equality, and Millicent Fawcett, who demanded the right to vote for women. There is a distinction between the terms suffragist and suffragette: the former represents a group using legalistic methods, the latter a more radical group. The suffragettes came together in 1898 under the Women's Social and Political Union, founded by Emmeline Pankhurst. They used more radical methods such as hunger strikes or even violence to make their voices heard: arson, explosives, etc.

In France, the question of women's right to vote arose with the introduction of "universal" suffrage under the Third Republic. The Republicans in power at the time were opposed to this question. The first major suffragist meeting was held in Paris on 11 March 1910, bringing together various women's rights associations. Hubertine Auclert, whom I introduced earlier, took part in this meeting. She became an emblematic figure of the movement by being the first to claim to be a feminist, taking her inspiration from the English suffragettes but in a non-violent way to attract the attention of the public and the press. For example, she organised demonstrations and encouraged a tax strike: since women had to pay tax like men, she wondered why they should not also be able to vote on how this public money is used. The freethinker and socialist Maria Vérone continued this fight after her. She also denounced the condition of Algerian women and colonisation in a book entitled *Les Femmes arabes* (1900). The President of the French Council of Ministers, René Viviani, joined their cause and the suffragettes' victory was close at hand. But the outbreak of the First World War put the issue of women's suffrage on hold. Unlike British women, who obtained the right to vote in 1918 for women over 30 and in 1928 for all women over 21, and American women in 1920, French women had to wait until 1944. This first wave of feminism was also characterised by the creation of trade unions to defend the interests of working women. As the typography profession was reserved for men, the theatre actress Marguerite Durand created the newspaper *La Fronde*, produced entirely by women. The « *Syndicat des Femmes Typographes* » (SFT) was created as a result of this newspaper.

A more radical, even anarchist, feminism was also emerging at this time. Madeleine Pelletier, the first female asylum resident, was one of the pillars of this movement. She was committed not only to women's political rights, but also to their right to abortion, to work and to self-defence. She went so far as to dress in a man's suit, questioning the difference between the sexes. In a text entitled *L'éducation féministe des filles* (Feminist education of girls), she even went so far as to encourage mothers to make their daughters masculine in order to escape the norms she considered alienating. Another type of radical feminism, promoted by Céline

Renooz in particular, claimed the spiritual superiority of women and made motherhood sacred. In other words, there is clearly a split between reformist feminists and radical feminists. One debate that raged in particular between these two groups was the issues of abortion and prostitution. As the reformers were rather religious, they strongly repressed abortion and contraception. The anarchists, on the other hand, denounced these laws as oppressive to women and advocated sexual freedom. The second wave of feminism focused more on these issues. This demand for free sexuality led in the 1920s to the *garçonne* fashion, in which women wore their hair short and homosexuality began to take hold.

The rise of Nazism and fascist ideas in Europe gave rise to the current of anti-feminism. The outbreak of the Second World War put an end to feminist newspapers and associations. Marshal Pétain reinstated the hierarchy of the sexes in the family and society, and it was not until the end of the war that the second wave of feminism appeared.

### 3.2. The second wave

Although women won the right to vote, their social situation did not really improve. In 1949, French philosopher, essayist and novelist Simone de Beauvoir published her book *Le Deuxième Sexe* (The Second Sex), which quickly became a success and caused controversy. The essay tells the intimate story of a woman and her sexuality, which was a scandalous subject at the time. Although she was not a militant feminist, Beauvoir became the embodiment of the feminist movement. There is even talk of the “Beauvoir years”. The fight is not just about rights: in her book, she explores how the roles of men and women are defined not only in legislation, but also in literature, morals and everyday life. What she wanted from a political point of view was for women to be freed from their social role as mothers so that they could concentrate on their professional or political careers. According to Beauvoir, the concept of gender is a social and cultural construct, not defined by “the nature of things”.<sup>23</sup> Her influence even crossed the Atlantic: the American feminist Betty Friedman drew inspiration from Beauvoir’s work to write her *The Feminine Mystique* (1963).

The issue of birth-control came up in the 1950s, when abortion and anti-conception propaganda were still banned. The United States was the first country to introduce the contraceptive pill. In France, this took much longer. The association « *La Maternité Heureuse* » (Happy Motherhood) was founded in 1956 and became the French family planning movement in 1960, giving women access to psychologists, sexologists and gynaecologists.

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<sup>23</sup> Schrupp, Antje, and Patu. *A Brief History of Feminism*. MIT Press, 2017, pp. 43-44.

Centres sprang up all over France in those years. It was not until the 1965 presidential campaign, when Socialist candidate François Mitterand spoke out in favour of the pill, that the debate on it was revived. His opponents argued that the pill poses a danger to women's health and encourages them to be unfaithful to their husbands. For others, it is a way of strengthening couples. In 1967, the Neuwirth law (named after its creator) authorised the sale and distribution of contraceptives. Despite the liberalisation of contraception, many women did not take the plunge, mainly because of their husbands. What is more, the right to abortion was still strictly forbidden.

May 68 is often remembered as a period of liberalisation, but we often forget that it had little impact on women's condition. Women activists at the time did not play important roles and were often relegated to the background. Some feminists of the time tried to make their voices heard, without really achieving the success they had hoped for. It was not until the 1970s that the right to abortion was again discussed, with the creation of the « *Mouvement de Libération des Femmes* » (Women's Liberation Movement), whose main battle was to make abortion a feminist cause. On 5 April 1971, the MLF published a manifesto in the press named « *Le Manifeste des 343* » (Manifesto of the 343) in which 343 women, including leading women such as Simone de Beauvoir, declared that they had already had an abortion. This manifesto caused a stir, both good and bad. As the signatories of this manifesto were at risk of criminal prosecution, since abortion was still illegal, the « *Choisir* » (Choose) association was set up by feminist lawyer Gisèle Halimi to defend them. This was followed by the highly emblematic “Bobigny trial”: a mother named Ms Chevalier contacted the association to defend her daughter Marie-Claire, a young girl who had been raped by her boyfriend at the age of 16 and had become pregnant. The young girl underwent an illegal abortion, which led to complications and high financial costs. Her rapist, arrested not for the rape but for stealing a car, decided to report the clandestine abortion to plead his case. Mrs Chevalier and her daughter were then charged. Gisèle Halimi defended the young girl at the trial and Simone de Beauvoir testified. During the trial, the lawyer denounced the ban on abortion as an 'expression of male domination'. The juries were all men, which reinforced Halimi's point. In her strategy, she called on important male scientists and doctors, which was not appreciated by all MLF activists. However, his strategy worked, as Marie-Claire was exonerated. Mrs Chevalier still had to pay a fine.

During the same period, militant doctors also decided to support abortion by publishing a manifesto in which 331 doctors declared that they had performed illegal abortions. In the wake of this manifesto, the « *Mouvement pour la liberté de l'avortement et de la contraception* »

» (Movement for the Freedom of Abortion and Contraception) was created. The MLAC then set up small local groups of activists to carry out clandestine abortions. The aim was also to teach women about their bodies by, for example, protecting their private parts.

These various struggles and protests eventually bore fruit: Health Minister Simone Veil defended the “Veil Law” authorising abortion. At the opening of her defence at the Assembly, Simone Veil said: “I would like to share with you a conviction held by women. I apologise for doing so before an Assembly made up almost exclusively of men: no woman has recourse to abortion out of the goodness of her heart”. [My translation]<sup>24</sup> Despite a stormy battle and violent criticism from the mainly male Assembly, the law was finally passed, a huge victory for the feminist cause in France.

Despite this central battle over abortion, there were nevertheless conflicts within the MLF. Initially a revolutionary movement, the MLF gradually became a classic and less spontaneous organisation. This led to a division within the organisation itself between the revolutionaries and the differentialists, i.e. those who claimed a fundamental difference between men and women. There are also tensions because lesbian women see the MLF as too heteronormative. All these tensions and oppositions led to a backlash against the movement in the 1980s.

### 3.3. The third wave and the beginning of postmodern feminism

The 1980s were a period of transition, from the second to the third wave. The third wave gradually emerged in the 1980s, then took root in the 1990s in the United States with a new generation of feminists born after the struggles of the 1970s. This feminism is often referred to as postmodern feminism, because it is different from the second wave on many political and social levels, even though the second wave created the institutions needed for the third wave.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the new feminist struggles were in part a continuation of those of the second wave, denouncing in particular gender inequality in the home and in careers. These same feminists also realised that certain rights they thought they had acquired, such as the right to abortion and contraception, could be denied overnight. With what is currently happening in the United States, where the right to abortion has been banned in some states, it is clear that these concerns

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<sup>24</sup> « *Je voudrais vous faire partager une conviction de femmes. Je m'excuse de le faire devant une Assemblée constituée quasi exclusivement d'hommes: aucune femme ne recourt de gaieté de cœur à l'avortement* ». Piquemal, Marie et Noémie Destelle. « La Bataille De Simone Veil Pour Le Droit À L'avortement ». *Libération*, 26 Nov. 2014. [www.liberation.fr/societe/2014/11/26/la-bataille-de-simone-veil-pour-le-droit-a-l-avortement\\_1149560](http://www.liberation.fr/societe/2014/11/26/la-bataille-de-simone-veil-pour-le-droit-a-l-avortement_1149560).

<sup>25</sup> Lamoureux, Diane. « Y a-t-il une troisième vague féministe ? », *Cahiers du Genre*, vol. s1, no. 3, 2006, p. 57.

are still well-founded. What distinguishes this wave from the previous one is, among other things, the questioning of gender, sex and religion. Questions that are still being debated within the feminist movements and beyond.

The 1980s saw the beginnings of this third wave. In France, it began with the election of President François Mitterrand and Yvette Roudy as Minister for Women's Rights from 1981 to 1986. She was one of the first to become involved in the fight for parity, one of the struggles that characterise postmodern feminism and seek gender equality, particularly at political level. This debate led to the idea that only parity would make it possible to reverse male political domination, which resulted in parity laws in the political sphere in 1999 and 2000. Despite these laws, women are still very much in the minority in many places of power. In order to highlight these inequalities, the feminist association « *La Barbe* » (The Beard) was formed in 2008, which does not hesitate to enter places of power wearing a beard to denounce the lack of women's presence. According to the website *women.org*, here is the current data for women in power in 2023:

As of 1 January 2023, 11.3 percent of countries have women Heads of State (17 out of 151 countries, monarchy-based systems excluded), and 9.8 per cent have women Heads of Government (19 out of 193). This is an increase compared to a decade ago when figures stood at 5.3 per cent and 7.3 per cent, respectively. Of all the regions, Europe continues to have the highest number of countries led by women.<sup>26</sup>

These figures are certainly rising, but they also show that there are major disparities between countries, and that the fight is far from over.

The new generation of feminists described as the “third wave of feminism” are also critical of pay inequality and the confinement of women to specific and sometimes insecure occupations. Violence against women is also a very important battle: in the book to which I mainly refer in these sections, *Le féminisme: histoire et actualité* (2018), it is said that in France in the course of a year, 225,000 women are victims of violence by their partner or ex-partner, 84,000 women are victims of rape or attempted rape. The key figures on violence against women in France are available on the website *arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr*. The data is regularly updated and speaks for itself. In 2019:

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<sup>26</sup> “Women in power in 2023: New data shows progress but wide regional gaps”. *UN Women*, 7 Mar 2023. [www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/03/women-in-power-in-2023-new-data-shows-progress-but-wide-regional-gaps](http://www.unwomen.org/en/news-stories/press-release/2023/03/women-in-power-in-2023-new-data-shows-progress-but-wide-regional-gaps).

On average, the number of women aged between 18 and 75 who, in the course of a year, are victims of physical and/or sexual violence committed by their spouse or ex-spouse, is estimated at 213,000 women. The perpetrator of this violence is the husband, cohabitee, partner or boyfriend, past or present, cohabiting or not. 7 out of 10 female victims say they have suffered repeated violence. 8 out of 10 female victims say they have also been subjected to psychological or verbal abuse. [My translation] <sup>27</sup>

For Belgium, it is more difficult to access recent data. The *Institut pour l'égalité des femmes et des hommes* last carried out a survey in 2010, which produced equally alarming figures, with one woman in seven having experienced at least one act of violence committed by her (ex-)partner in the previous 12 months. Domestic violence claimed 162 lives in 2013.<sup>28</sup> A survey carried out by *Amnesty International* in 2014 revealed that 24.9% of women who responded to the survey had been forced to have sex by their partner. It is important to note, however, that this survey should be treated with caution and may vary, as it does not reflect all women in Belgium.

The fight against violence against women is one of the most important in this third wave. In 2013, a manifesto entitled « *Le Manifeste des 313* » (Manifesto of the 313) was published, in which 313 women declared that they had been raped. This manifesto has begun to lift the veil on the social taboo surrounding rape. The Harvey Weinstein affair and the French hashtag *#balancetonporc*, which is equivalent to the English hashtag *#MeToo*, helped launch the movement, which is still going strong today.

Despite these common struggles, feminist movements remain divided on a number of issues. The issue of pornography and prostitution divides different groups: abolitionists say that prostitution undermines gender equality, while others believe that prostitutes' choices should be supported and their rights asserted. Porn is seen by some as the objectification of women, while others encourage alternative porn that is more feminist. These debates have also been raging in the USA since the 1980s: Catharine MacKinnon, a radical lawyer and jurist, is opposed to the so-called “pro-sex” feminist movement. The latter rejects moralising concepts

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<sup>27</sup> « En moyenne, le nombre de femmes âgées de 18 à 75 ans qui, au cours d'une année, sont victimes de violences physiques et/ou sexuelles commises par leur conjoint ou ex-conjoint, est estimé à 213 000 femmes. L'auteur de ces violences est le mari, le concubin, le pacsé, le petit-ami, ancien ou actuel, cohabitant ou non. 7 femmes victimes sur 10 déclarent avoir subi des faits répétés. 8 femmes victimes sur 10 déclarent avoir également été soumises à des atteintes psychologiques ou des agressions verbales ». « Les chiffres de référence sur les violences faites aux femmes | Gouvernement ». [arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr](https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/), 2020. [arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/je-suis-professionnel/chiffres-de-reference-violences-faites-aux-femmes](https://arretonslesviolences.gouv.fr/je-suis-professionnel/chiffres-de-reference-violences-faites-aux-femmes). Accessed 21 June 2023.

<sup>28</sup> « Violence entre partenaires ». *Institut Pour L'égalité Des Femmes Et Des Hommes*. [igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/recherches/violence](https://igvm-iefh.belgium.be/fr/recherches/violence). Accessed 21 June 2023.

of sexuality and believes that the sexual practices of the LGBTQIA+ community in particular constitute a means of resistance. The debate surrounding the veil is also a source of conflict: with Islamophobia rife in Europe, and particularly in France, some feminists are against the wearing of the veil in public space, seeing it as a means of alienating women. Other feminists support women who choose to wear the veil and oppose laws banning the veil, which they consider racist. There is even an Islamic feminism, led by women seeking a decolonial feminism that advocates equality in Islam. This Islamic feminism led to the creation of purple washing, which I will address in more detail in the next chapter. The issue of the veil raises the question of whether religions are a brake on feminism and a tool of patriarchy, or whether it is possible to combine religion and feminism.

The question of gender is also very important. The word “gender” was traditionally used to differentiate biologically men from women. It became a medical term during the mid-20th century to designate people born intersex. The term was used by the American psychiatrist Robert Stoller to distinguish between biological sex and sexual identity. In the 1970s, feminist theorists including the British sociologist Ann Oakley used this term to describe “social” sex or “gender”, which refers to the roles associated with each of the two sexes in society. This helps to explain that gender roles are not innate, but socially and historically constructed. It also means that these roles can evolve according to social and educational practices. The term is spreading, particularly in homosexual and feminist circles, as well as in the social sciences and history. It developed first in the United States, then a little later in France. In 1990, Judith Butler published her book *Gender Trouble*, in which she explains that gender is a role-playing game and that the body is a “social” product of heterosexual culture. Her book had a huge impact and Butler was considered to be the pioneer of queer theory, a new feminist movement. The word “queer”, which initially had a pejorative connotation, was reappropriated by homosexuals and led to “queer theory”, which questions the links between gender and sexuality. She denounces heteronormativity, binarity and the social norms of the heterosexual social system. Here again, the theory divides feminists, some of whom feel that it negates the notion of “gender class” and male domination. Today, although the theory is still debated, many feminists are trying to link up with the queer movement.

Racism within feminism is also present: in the USA in the 1970s, Black Feminism denounced the feminism of the time as an implicitly white subject. As well as suffering the sexism that white women endure, women of colour suffer the racism inherited from the colonial and slave-owning past. Feminism then becomes intersectional: as well as fighting against gender domination, it also fights against race and class domination.



#### 4. A fourth-wave of feminism?

The complexity of the debates in recent years around gender, beliefs and the desire to extend feminism to other groups such as people of colour and the LGBTQIA+ community led to the theory of a fourth wave of feminism, which began in the late 2000s and early 2010s and continues today. This wave is nevertheless difficult to define, as there is no real consensus on the subject. Some believe that feminism today is simply a continuation of the third wave.<sup>29</sup> As the period from the 2010's to the present day is the one I will be focusing on most in my dissertation, I will be referring to a fourth wave to define this specific period.

This period particularly represents the emergence of the internet and women's voices, including in particular the #MeToo movement I mentioned earlier. While this hashtag went viral in 2017, launched by American actress Alyssa Milano who opened up about the sexual violence she has suffered in her career, the origins of the movement go back a decade. It was Tarana Burke who, in 2006, set up the Me Too association to combat the sexual violence inflicted on little black girls from working-class neighbourhoods. For Tarana, her erasure from her own movement is explained by her skin colour and the social class targeted. According to her, the victims who posted the hashtag were privileged and mostly white women.<sup>30</sup> The intersectionality that has been claimed since the third wave has still not been fully achieved. This is also what this fourth wave denounces, daring to accuse the system that allows aggressors to go unpunished and criticising feminism, which is still a privileged middle-class feminism. This wave also denounces sexism and the trivialisation of sex in culture, especially with regard to women who are often hypersexualised and the glamourisation of porn which is often misogynistic and phallogocentric.<sup>31</sup> These denunciations in the media also have an impact on marketing.

This fourth wave is subject to new marketing techniques, which began to appear at the start of the third wave. In the 1990s, companies quickly realised that it was possible to make profits and open up the market to new opportunities by spreading the idea of female empowerment. Postmodern feminism has brought postmodern marketing in its wake.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Pruitt, Sarah. "What Are the Four Waves of Feminism?" *HISTORY*, Mar. 2022.  
<https://www.history.com/news/feminism-four-waves>

<sup>30</sup> Murhula, Christelle. « Tarana Burke, La Lanceuse Méconnue De #Metoo ». *Le Monde.fr*, 7 Oct. 2022.  
[https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2022/10/05/tarana-burke-la-lanceuse-meconnue-de-metoo\\_6144424\\_4500055.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/m-le-mag/article/2022/10/05/tarana-burke-la-lanceuse-meconnue-de-metoo_6144424_4500055.html).

<sup>31</sup> Maclaran, Pauline. "Feminism's Fourth Wave: a Research Agenda for Marketing and Consumer Research." *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 31, no. 15-16, 2015, pp. 1735-36.

<sup>32</sup> Maclaran. "Feminism's Fourth Wave." p. 1733.

However, the advertising of recent decades is nevertheless very different from that of the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The problem of a lack of representation is forcing brands to change the way they advertise to be more intersectional.<sup>33</sup> We are moving from gendered marketing to feminist marketing. Gender marketing consists of segmenting products aimed at men and those aimed at women. Communications for sanitary protection, for example, are aimed primarily at women. This type of marketing, which has been used for decades, is now often seen as sexist and clichéd. If we take the example of sanitary protection, gendered marketing rejects trans men who still have their lies from its communications. To take a broader and less specific example, the categorisation of toys for girls and boys is currently the subject of much criticism. There is a stereotypical categorisation of toys on the basis of gender: boys play with cars while little girls play with dinettes and look after their dolls. As a result, children are confronted with these gender differences from a very early age. Growing up with such games, children will tend to imitate what they have learnt, and this creates a distinction between men and women that is sometimes unnecessary. These stereotypes then help to encourage them into adulthood.<sup>34</sup>

Sexism is also something that brands need to pay increasing attention to. Indeed, marketers are also responsible for the sexualisation of women, not least in music, but also in TV programmes and fashion. Even today, various media and companies continue to propagate the image of the objectified woman. In the age of social networking, brands that publish sexist content are directly denounced or even boycotted. All these changes in mentality have pushed brands to renew themselves by rejecting gendered marketing in favour of feminist marketing. This marketing consists of using feminist codes in their communication, such as gender equality, women's empowerment and body positivity, in order to achieve a positive image. However, certain brands that reappropriate the feminist movement without really sharing its values are denounced, through purplewashing and other notions that I will develop in the next chapter.<sup>35</sup>

Full of complexity, multiple and intersectional, feminism is not just one movement, but several that come together and sometimes clash. However, when we talk about feminism in the singular, here is the definition given by *Cambridge Dictionary*: “the belief that women should

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<sup>33</sup> Maclaran. p. 1735.

<sup>34</sup> Margenetre, Nina. *Le féminisme et le marketing : quand les marques se rangent du côté des femmes*. Gestion et management, 2020. pp. 15-16.

<sup>35</sup> Margenetre. *Le féminisme et le marketing*. pp. 16-17.

be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “Feminism”. *Cambridge Dictionary*. [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/feminism). Accessed 21 June 2023.

## **Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework**

As the term purplewashing used for my research is fairly new and not widely known, it is important to explain this term and all those that are closely or remotely related to it, as well as other terms that are more distant and less useful to my research but important for contextualisation. To do this, they must first be defined, before attempting to take a closer look at them. Although my research began on the basis of purplewashing, the other terms I am going to define did not necessarily appear after purplewashing. All these terms are analogues, sometimes derivatives, and are all related to using a cause to whitewash one's image. Some of these concepts will be used in the chapter devoted to analysing advertising, even if it is purplewashing that remains the main focus of my research.

### **1. Purplewashing and its analogues**

#### **1.1. Purplewashing**

According to *Wordsense.eu*, the term “purplewashing” is “a blend of the word ‘purple’ and ‘whitewashing’”. “Purple” refers to the colour of the feminist movement.<sup>37</sup> This reference to feminism is not new: a perfect example is the book *The Color Purple* (1983) by Alice Walker. This book is considered feminist because it is about the abuse and violence suffered by Afro-Americans and their difficulties in becoming independent in the early 20th century American South. While this novel focuses specifically on the cause of black women, it is nonetheless a perfect example of the feminist cause and the status of women that still resonates 40 years after its publication. Even today, many women still find it difficult to emancipate themselves.<sup>38</sup> “Washing” refers to the word “whitewashing”, which means in this context “the effacement of errors or bad actions”.<sup>39</sup> Another general definition of the word “whitewashing”, which applies to all terms ending with this word in this section, is as follows: according to Corinne E. Blackmer, “whitewashing” means “to hide crimes and vices, or to exonerate through biased presentation of evidence”.<sup>40</sup> The *WordSense Online Dictionary* also gives a definition of the term purplewashing:

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<sup>37</sup> “Purplewashing” (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/purplewashing/](http://www.wordsense.eu/purplewashing/). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>38</sup> Maclaran, Pauline. “Feminism’s Fourth Wave: a Research Agenda for Marketing and Consumer Research.” *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 31, no. 15-16, 2015, p. 1736.

<sup>39</sup> “Whitewashing” (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/whitewashing/](http://www.wordsense.eu/whitewashing/). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>40</sup> Blackmer, Corinne E. “Pinkwashing.” *Israel Studies* (Bloomington, Ind.), vol. 24, no. 2, 2019, p. 171.

The practice of presenting something as feminist, particularly a political action, in order to soften or downplay aspects of its reputation considered negative or as a justification for economic, political, xenophobic or racist goals.<sup>41</sup>

The term was coined in 2014 by writer and activist Brigitte Vasalo, author of the novel *Pornoburka* (2013), in which she analyses the relation between racism and misogyny. She is a member of the group *Red Musulmanas*, a group of women who work for the dissemination of Islamic feminism and against prejudice towards Muslim women. In an interview with *El Confidencial*, she explains what purplewashing means:

It is the process of instrumentalizing feminist struggles in order to legitimise policies of exclusion against minority populations, usually of a racist nature. The paradox is that these minority populations also include women. It is a term that I derive from pinkwashing, widely developed by Jasbir Puar or Dean Spade, and which points to the instrumentalisation of the rights of lesbian, gay, trans and bisexual (LGTBI) populations, while generating a nationalist identity around the (supposed) respect for these rights. I derived the term in 2014 because of the need to specifically name the instrumentalisation of women's rights, which pinkwashing does not necessarily address. [My translation] <sup>42</sup>

According to Vasalo, purplewashing also legitimises Islamophobia by excluding Muslim women from feminism. From the perspective of purplewashing, Muslim women, as Muslims, are not women. Extreme right-wing parties also tend to accuse refugees of being rapists. In doing so, they create an image in the collective psyche of the refugee as the rapist and the raped women as a white one.<sup>43</sup> Vasalo explains:

The extreme right, well known for its constituent chauvinism, was able to unleash unrestrained racism to persecute these “other men” rapists, ignoring that rape is a tool of a patriarchy

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<sup>41</sup> “Purplewashing” (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/purplewashing/](http://www.wordsense.eu/purplewashing/). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>42</sup> “*Es el proceso de instrumentalización de las luchas feministas con la finalidad de legitimar políticas de exclusión contra poblaciones minorizadas, habitualmente de corte racista. La paradoja es que estas poblaciones minorizadas también incluyen mujeres. Es un término que hago derivar del pinkwashing, ampliamente desarrollado por Jasbir Puar o Dean Spade, y que señala la instrumentalización bélica de los derechos de las poblaciones lesbianas, gays, trans y bisexuales (LGTBI), al tiempo que genera una identidad nacionalista en torno al (supuesto) respeto a esos derechos. Derivé el término en 2014 ante la necesidad de nombrar específicamente la instrumentalización de los derechos de las mujeres, algo que no estudia necesariamente el pinkwashing.*”

Lenore, Víctor. “Del pornoburka al purplewashing, los trucos más sucios contra el feminismo”. *El Confidencial*, 3 Apr. 2016.

[www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2016-04-03/del-pornoburka-al-purplewashing-los-trucos-mas-sucios-contra-el-feminismo\\_1170764/](http://www.elconfidencial.com/cultura/2016-04-03/del-pornoburka-al-purplewashing-los-trucos-mas-sucios-contra-el-feminismo_1170764/).

<sup>43</sup> Lenore. “Del pornoburka al purplewashing” 2016.

defended and promoted by the extreme right, ignoring that it is an endemic problem in Europe that has nothing to do with the arrival of anyone, making invisible the colossal amount of sexual assaults that take place in Europe by white men, and creating a discursive space in which “other women” are part of the assailants, when it is they who are assaulted as women and as refugees, migrants, etcetera. [My translation] <sup>44</sup>

Rejecting a group of women based on their ethnicity, colour or beliefs is racist. Not to consider them as victims in cases of sexual assault and then to accuse them of being part of the assailants is extremely problematic. If we follow purplewashing’s point of view, only white women have the right to be feminist and fight for their rights. Only they can be considered as victims. The feminist movement is not supposed to reject any woman, regardless of her religion or beliefs.

Although the term was initially based on Islamophobia, it has since been extended to other spheres and has become more widespread. Feminism is used as a disguise to soften harmful practices in various areas of society, including the one we are interested in here: the sphere of marketing communication. Purplewashing can be broadly described as “the act of presenting something as feminist or using feminist ideology in an attempt to clean up the image of an institution, practice, or person”.<sup>45</sup> It is not only a problem of greed but also a reflection of a society that does not yet understand all the ins and outs of feminism and uses it clumsily. That is what purplewashing is all about.

There are two other synonymous terms to describe the use of feminism for commercial purposes: “feminism-washing” and “womanwashing”. Both terms mean “when a company promotes positive messages about women and makes a commitment to the feminist cause, but for purely economic reasons and without putting into practice what they advocate internally”. [My translation]<sup>46</sup> I have chosen not to develop them further, as they are both similar to purplewashing. When I develop the reasons why a brand is accused of purplewashing, I take

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<sup>44</sup> “*La extrema derecha, bien conocida por su machismo constituyente, pudo dar rienda suelta a un racismo sin cortapisas para perseguir a esos “otros hombres” violadores, obviando que la violación es una herramienta de un patriarcado defendido y promovido por la extrema derecha, obviando que es un problema endémico en Europa que nada tiene que ver con la llegada de nadie, invisibilizando la cantidad descomunal de asaltos sexuales que se producen en Europa por parte de hombres blancos, y creando un espacio discursivo en el que las “otras mujeres” forman parte de los asaltantes, cuando son ellas las asaltadas en tanto que mujeres y en tanto que refugiadas, migrantes, etcétera.*”

Lenore. “Del pornoburka al purplewashing”. 2016.

<sup>45</sup> Hoban, Dairíne. *Bad Bunny’s Purplewashing as Gender Violence in Reggaeton: A Feminist Analysis of SOLO DE MI and YO PERREO SOLA*. University of South Florida, 2021, p. 10.

<sup>46</sup> « [...] est le fait, pour une entreprise, de promouvoir des messages valorisant à propos des femmes et de s’engager pour la cause féministe mais dans un objectif purement économique et sans mettre en pratique ce qu’ils prônent à l’interne ».

« Feminism-washing: pourquoi il ne faut pas surfer sur le féminisme ». *map.ch*, 5 Mar. 2021. [www.map.ch/actualite-communication/feminismwashing](http://www.map.ch/actualite-communication/feminismwashing).

these two terms into account in my analysis. Some media also use these terms instead of purplewashing. As purplewashing is still a little-used concept, it is possible that these other terms will be used, as well as femvertising, which I will also develop in this chapter. For ease of understanding, I will only use the term purplewashing and will only use the other two terms anecdotally if necessary. What is more, purplewashing is a broader notion of the concept, as it includes a political and racial dimension, according to the definition given by its creator Brigitte Vasalo.

## 1.2. Pinkwashing

As explained above, purplewashing is inspired by the term “pinkwashing”, which focuses more on LGBTQIA+ rights.<sup>47</sup> Here, the *WordSense Online Dictionary* suggests three possible definitions:

1. The practice of a company using support of breast cancer-related charities to promote itself and its products or services.
2. (*LGBT*) The practice of presenting something, particularly a state, as gay-friendly in order to soften or downplay aspects of its reputation considered negative.
3. The practice of making a toy pink to signal that the manufacturer expects girls to play with it.<sup>48</sup>

As the definitions indicate, pinkwashing has several meanings. The colour pink also has a history: during World War II, the Nazis made male homosexuals in concentration camps wear an inverted pink triangle, representing their “inverted” gender identification, pink being considered a feminine colour at the time. This symbol was therefore discriminatory and intended to humiliate them. Thereafter, the LGBTQIA+ community reappropriated the sign as a sign of resistance to homophobia.<sup>49</sup>

It was not until the 1980s that the colour pink took on a different meaning, with the pink ribbon representing support for breast cancer survivors. This well-known logo is still used today to promote and sell products. It was at this point that the term “pinkwashing” emerged, coined by the organisation Breast Cancer Action, accusing brands of appropriating this cause for profits. And with good reason: research has revealed that many of the products sold by these

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<sup>47</sup> Spade, Dean. *Pinkwashing Exposed*. [www.deanspade.net/projects/pinkwashing-exposed/](http://www.deanspade.net/projects/pinkwashing-exposed/). Accessed 21 July 2023.

<sup>48</sup> “Pinkwashing”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/pinkwashing/](http://www.wordsense.eu/pinkwashing/). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>49</sup> Blackmer, Corinne E. “Pinkwashing.” *Israel Studies* (Bloomington, Ind.), vol. 24, no. 2, 2019, p. 171.

brands have been found to be carcinogenic, which is a bit rich for the cause they are supposedly defending. What is more, the campaigns focus mainly on getting mammograms, even though the women most affected by this cancer are those who may not have the financial means to do so.<sup>50</sup>

Pinkwashing also refers to countries that violate the human rights of people in the LGBTQIA+ community. In this particular case, the term appeared in Israel in 2001 with the creation of the Black Laundry Group, a group organised by left-wing homosexual activists to protest against the Israeli Defence Forces' repression of Palestinians. Israel has been accused of pinkwashing because the Israeli government claims to be gay-friendly and democratic, while supporting international organisations (notably in the United States) that discriminate against members of the LGBTQIA+ community.<sup>51</sup> Even today, Israel is accused of pinkwashing and purplewashing in an attempt to improve the image of its government and justify the Zionist movement, which is the national movement to create a Jewish state in Palestine.<sup>52</sup> However, according to Corinne E. Blackmer in her article "Pinkwashing", accusing Israel of pinkwashing is not alleged. Compared to its neighbouring countries, Israel has made progress on the rights of LGBTQIA+ people. She also believes that pinkwashing is a Western viewpoint biased by fear of Muslims since 9/11 and a lack of understanding of Israel's history and politics. However, she points out that this does not mean that the LGBTQIA+ community does not suffer discrimination there.<sup>53</sup> The political conflicts in Israel also play a role in these accusations. It is not just a marketing problem. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a complex issue and I do not think it is possible to have a clear-cut opinion on it.

*WordSense's* third definition, that pinkwashing refers to making toys pink for girls, does not seem to have any well-founded sources. I prefer to not look further into this one. Furthermore, this meaning of pinkwashing is not interesting for my analysis. When we look at other sources such as the *Urban Dictionary*, it only gives us the definition of pinkwashing in relation to breast cancer: "The act of using breast cancer to guilt consumers into buying a product which, if it had not been for the advent of aiding the cure for cancer, they would not have bought".<sup>54</sup> As the term "pinkwashing" has several meanings and muddies the waters, the

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<sup>50</sup> Blackmer, "Pinkwashing." pp. 171-172.

<sup>51</sup> Blackmer, p. 172.

<sup>52</sup> Students for Justice in Palestine at UCLA. "Purple-Washing: Israel's Faux Feminism through the Lens of Medical Apartheid." *FEM Newsmagazine*, 22 Mar. 2022. femmagazine.com/purple-washing-israels-faux-feminism-through-the-lens-of-medical-apartheid/.

<sup>53</sup> Blackmer, Corinne E. "Pinkwashing." *Israel Studies* (Bloomington, Ind.), vol. 24, no. 2, 2019, pp. 173-174.

<sup>54</sup> "Pinkwashing". (n.d.). *Urban Dictionary*, 17 Apr. 2010. [www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Pinkwashing](http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Pinkwashing). Accessed 23 July 2023.



term “rainbow-washing” has been created. This term will be defined in section 2.2. along with other related terms, as rainbow-washing is not necessarily what might be called an analogue of purplewashing.

### 1.3. Femvertising

“Femvertising” is a term used to describe institutions that promote gender equality through “femvertisements”, which are “advertisements that communicate about issues related to female empowerment”.<sup>55</sup> The definition given by the *WordSense Online Dictionary* is very similar: “The use of feminist messages to advertise products to women”.<sup>56</sup> The term was first coined in 2014 during a debate at the New York Adweek, an event dedicated to business and companies.<sup>57</sup> It is a contraction of the words “feminism” and “advertising” and is a communication strategy particularly used in this fourth-wave feminism.<sup>58</sup> According to the website *eosmarketing.it*:

Femvertising leverages female empowerment, resourcefulness, strength and independence of modern women and seeks to convey inclusive messages, which enhance different ethnicities and beauties, overcoming the gender-gap and the patriarchal vision of the past.<sup>59</sup>

Contrary to the terms used above, femvertising is not initially something negative, but a desire to change the way advertising is done. In the 2000s, advertising only showed women with almost unattainable standards of beauty, constant hypersexualisation and gender clichés. From the 2010s onwards, with the arrival of the fourth wave of feminism, body positivity and the fight for gender equality became central. The media also had to adapt and create more inclusive advertising, and that is how femvertising came about. It became so important that in 2015, the Femvertising Award was created to reward the best advertising representing the values of today’s society.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Sterbenk, Yvette, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2022, p. 492.

<sup>56</sup> “Femvertising”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/femvertising/#English](http://www.wordsense.eu/femvertising/#English). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>57</sup> “AWNewYork 2023 | Advertising Week New York 2023.” *Advertising Week*. [advertisingweek.com/event/awnewyork-2023](http://advertisingweek.com/event/awnewyork-2023). Accessed 24 July 2023.

<sup>58</sup> Ilaria. “Femvertising: The Evolution of Women in Advertising.” *EOS Mktg&Communication*, 22 June 2023. [eosmarketing.it/en/femvertising-the-evolution-of-women-in-advertising/#:~:text=The%20expression%20Femvertising%20was%20coined,media%20to%20convey%20pro%20female](http://eosmarketing.it/en/femvertising-the-evolution-of-women-in-advertising/#:~:text=The%20expression%20Femvertising%20was%20coined,media%20to%20convey%20pro%20female). Accessed 24 June 2023.

<sup>59</sup> Ilaria. “Femvertising: The Evolution of Women in Advertising.” 2023.

<sup>60</sup> Ilaria.

While this is a promising development, femvertising also has its critics. The issue remains the same: whether these companies are really committed to these social struggles, in this case gender equality. In their paper “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality”, the authors explain how companies misuse their corporate social responsibility (CSR), which is a commitment’s company to one or more causes such as gender equality. They state that “companies whose pro-social advertisements are inconsistent with their corporate actions are engaging in *CSR-washing*”<sup>61</sup>, which can be defined as “the successful use of a false CSR claim to improve a company’s competitive standing”.<sup>62</sup> Femvertising can therefore be considered as an influential tool for creating a form of CSR-washing based on feminism like purplewashing and pinkwashing. The best-known form of CSR-washing is greenwashing, which I will explain in more detail in section 2.1.

Femvertising emerged because most consumers want gender equality in today’s society and therefore want the companies they support to be gender equal. The problem is that if these companies are accused of CSR-washing, they lose the trust of their consumers and come in for heavy criticism, as we shall see in the analysis chapter. Brands that have won the Femvertising Award have been criticised thereafter because the values espoused in their advertising were not reflected in their own companies: accusations of sexism in the workplace, a lack of women in the management of the company, etc.<sup>63</sup> Femvertising ended up generating something negative in spite of itself. However, the research set out in the paper “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing?” showed that award-winning companies tended to make more internal efforts for gender equality than others.<sup>64</sup>

#### 1.4. Femonationalism

“Femonationalism” is a blend of the words “feminism” and “nationalism”, with the “o” referring to another term called “homonationalism”. Another way of spelling it is “feminationalism”. The *WorldSense Online Dictionary* defines it as follows: “(*neologism*) The association between a nationalist ideology and some feminist ideas, specially when having xenophobic motivations”.<sup>65</sup> For the term “homonationalism”, the definition is almost the same:

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<sup>61</sup> Sterbenk, Yvette, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2022, p. 491.

<sup>62</sup> Pope, Shawn, and Arild Wæraas. “CSR-Washing Is Rare: A Conceptual Framework, Literature Review, and Critique.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 137, no. 1, 2016, p. 175.

<sup>63</sup> Sterbenk, Yvette, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2022, pp. 491-492.

<sup>64</sup> Sterbenk, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing?” p. 501.

<sup>65</sup> “Femonationalism”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/femonationalism/#English](http://www.wordsense.eu/femonationalism/#English). Accessed 19 May 2023.

“(neologism) The favourable association of LGBTI people and/or LGBTI rights with a nationalist ideology”.<sup>66</sup>

The term “femonationalism” was coined by Sara R. Farris, a sociologist specialising in migration, gender and the political economy of care and social reproduction. Her research focuses on “the role that migrant and racialised workers play within economies of care and social reproduction; the financialisation and corporatisation of care and the racialisation of sexism”.<sup>67</sup> She also points to the mobilisation of feminist themes by nationalist parties as part of anti-immigration campaigns, in other words, femonationalism. She wrote a book on the subject in 2017 entitled *In the Name of Women’s Rights: The Rise of Femonationalism*.<sup>68</sup> According to Farris, femonationalism means “the attempts by European right-wing parties (among others) to incorporate feminist ideals into anti-immigrant and anti-Islam campaigns.” [My translation]<sup>69</sup> This term also brings to mind purplewashing and the definition given by its creator Brigitte Vasalo. The difference lies in the fact that femonationalism is mainly directed at far-right parties and has a political dimension, whereas purplewashing also has a social and marketing dimension. A concrete example of femonationalism is Marine Le Pen, former president of the Rassemblement National (RN), a far-right political party in France. She has already declared that Turkey's entry into Europe, which she describes as a “Muslim” country, is a danger for European women. Geert Wilders, Dutch politician and leader of the “*Partij voor de Vrijheid*” political party, does not hesitate to depict Islam as an evil and misogynistic religion. Their aim was to get feminists to rally to their cause, which worked because it divided feminist activists on the issue. As Islam is seen as opposed to the emancipation of women, this has reinforced the idea that Islam is sexist and misogynist. For others, reducing Islam to just this is not only wrong but also hypocritical: these parties, which are supposedly concerned about the fate of Muslim women, are in fact only using these arguments to reinforce the Islamophobia that is already very present in Europe.<sup>70</sup> In this context, using femonationalism to win votes can be seen as advertising, in a sense. But this dimension will not be addressed in

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<sup>66</sup> “Homonalism”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/homonalism/](http://www.wordsense.eu/homonalism/). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>67</sup> “Sara R Farris.” *Goldsmiths, University of London*, [www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/staff/farris-sara](http://www.gold.ac.uk/sociology/staff/farris-sara). Accessed 26 July 2023.

<sup>68</sup> “Sara R Farris.” *Goldsmiths, University of London*.

<sup>69</sup> « [...] les tentatives des partis européens de droite (entre autres) d’intégrer les idéaux féministes dans des campagnes anti-immigrés et anti-Islam ».

Farris, Sara R. « Les fondements politico-économiques du fémonationalisme ». *Contretemps: Revue de Critique Communiste*, 17 July 2013. [www.contretemps.eu/les-fondements-politico-economiques-du-femonationalisme/](http://www.contretemps.eu/les-fondements-politico-economiques-du-femonationalisme/).

<sup>70</sup> Farris. « Les fondements politico-économiques du fémonationalisme ».

my analysis, which focuses mainly on brands that sell products and therefore use feminism for purely marketing rather than political purposes.

## 2. Other related terms

The terms below are not directly related to feminism but are part of the same CSR-washing family and worth remembering for general contextualisation.

### 2.1. Greenwashing

One of the best-known forms of CSR-washing is greenwashing, which refers to false environment practices.<sup>71</sup> The term “greenwashing” was first coined in the 1980’s in the United States and is a blend of the words “whitewashing” and “green”. The colour green represents the environment, because it is a colour that brings nature to mind.<sup>72</sup> It is defined as “a false or misleading picture of environmental friendliness used to conceal or obscure damaging activities.”<sup>73</sup> A company is accused of greenwashing when it claims to be “eco-friendly”, i.e. when it gives a positive ecological responsibility of its company in advertisements to satisfy its consumers, when in reality the advertising claims are not backed up by concrete environmental actions and therefore mislead their consumers as to the company's environmental responsibility. Most greenwashed advertisements are nothing more than vague statements that use symbolic images (such as trees, plants, flowers) or colours to suggest a positive association between environment and a brand.<sup>74</sup>

One great example of greenwashing that we often hear about is the fast fashion industry, a highly polluting sector of our society. According to the *FastCompany* website, the fashion industry is responsible for 10% of the world’s carbon emissions and 20% of all waste water. This industry also sends half a million tonnes of microplastics into the oceans and generates a lot of waste.<sup>75</sup> Brands have therefore decided to sell a more eco-friendly image, such as H&M, which in 2011 launched its “Conscious” collection featuring clothes made from more so-called environmentally-friendly materials. However, it is difficult to find information about the

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<sup>71</sup> Sterbenk, Yvette, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2022, p. 493.

<sup>72</sup> Ragobert, Ilona. « Greenwashing : 5 exemples des pires pratiques en la matière ». *HelloCarbo*, Juin 2023. [www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples](http://www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples).

<sup>73</sup> “Greenwashing”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/greenwashing/#English](http://www.wordsense.eu/greenwashing/#English). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>74</sup> Sterbenk, Yvette, et al. “Is Femvertising the New Greenwashing? Examining Corporate Commitment to Gender Equality.” *Journal of Business Ethics*, vol. 177, no. 3, 2022, pp. 494-501.

<sup>75</sup> Segran, Elizabeth. “H&M is One of the Fashion’s Biggest polluters. Now its foundation is on a \$100 quest to save the planet.” *FastCompany.com*, 27 Jan. 2021. [www.fastcompany.com/90596456/hm-is-one-of-fashions-biggest-polluters-now-its-on-a-100-million-quest-to-save-the-planet](http://www.fastcompany.com/90596456/hm-is-one-of-fashions-biggest-polluters-now-its-on-a-100-million-quest-to-save-the-planet).

composition of the products in this collection. For example, customers cannot find out how much of their jeans are actually recycled.<sup>76</sup> What is more, H&M is one of the biggest polluters in the industry. Their desire to be eco-friendly is above all a marketing strategy to attract young consumers who care about the environment.<sup>77</sup> The brand is once again causing a stir with its “Let’s close the loop” campaign. In 2013, H&M launched their Garment Collecting Program, a scheme to encourage consumers to bring unwanted clothes back to the shop to be recycled. In exchange, donors receive a thank-you voucher to use in H&M shops.<sup>78</sup> This encourages consumption, since instead of simply recycling, consumers are encouraged to buy a new garment from the brand. But that is not all: the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* decided to investigate and placed Airtags, small trackers that can be used to locate objects, on ten garments in perfect condition and took them to H&M’s recycling points. Here is what their investigation revealed:

1. Each one of the ten garments that were equipped with Airtags are whole and clean, without stains or damage. Still, none of them has remained in Sweden. All have been transported by truck over 1 000 kilometers just for the first sorting, at three facilities in Germany.
2. H&M promises that all clothes collected are being taken care of in an environmentally friendly and responsible way. Nevertheless, three of the garments will be shipped to third world countries with large and known problems with textile dumping and waste.
3. One of the garments ends up in Benin, an African country that receives huge amounts of used clothes and where a large part of the imports are dumped and burned directly. The importer who bought the garment admits that it might later be smuggled into Nigeria, undermining the restrictions the country has imposed to protect itself against second-hand clothing.
4. Another garment ends up in the city of Panipat in India. Here, too, the problems with textile waste are great. In addition, child labour in the textile industry is widespread.
5. Two of the garments are shipped to Romania, after a total road and sea transport of 3 730 kilometers.
6. Two of the garments are ground down to fibers, despite H&M’s promise that clothes that can be worn again should be. One of these clothes, a grey sweater, was almost unused.
7. Together, the ten garments travel almost one and a half laps around the earth, using fossile [sic!] fuel-dependent means of transport such as trucks and ships.

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<sup>76</sup> Ragobert, Ilona. « Greenwashing : 5 exemples des pires pratiques en la matière ». *HelloCarbo*, Juin 2023. [www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples](http://www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples).

<sup>77</sup> Segran, Elizabeth. “H&M is One of the Fashion’s Biggest polluters. Now its foundation is on a \$100 quest to save the planet.” *FastCompany.com*, 27 Jan. 2021.

<sup>78</sup> “Let’s Close the Loop.” *H&M*, [www2.hm.com/en\\_ca/sustainability-at-hm/our-work/close-the-loop.html](http://www2.hm.com/en_ca/sustainability-at-hm/our-work/close-the-loop.html). Accessed 29 July 2023.

8. In Ghana in Africa, used clothes have created an unprecedented environmental disaster. H&M is one of the five most common garments that end up here.

9. By using customs data, we can reveal that H&M's three German sorting partners have shipped at least one million garments to Ghana since January 1 2023.<sup>79</sup>

The awaited response from H&M was vague: “The H&M group is categorically against clothes becoming waste and it goes completely against our work to create a more circular fashion industry”.<sup>80</sup> This whole recycling campaign and programme is a pretty obvious example of greenwashing.

There are many examples of greenwashing, and H&M is not alone. Greenwashing has become so widespread that laws have been passed to penalise brands that engage in deceptive commercial practices. Since April 2021, France has banned advertising for the marketing and promotion of fossil fuels, and tightened sanctions against greenwashing. The aim is to discourage companies from using this type of practice.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps in a few years' time, these sanctions will apply to the other terms described above.

## 2.2. Rainbow-Washing

As I mentioned in the previous section, the term “rainbow-washing” was created in reference to the LGBTQIA+ community and refers to the term “pinkwashing”. Just as pinkwashing already refers to breast cancer, rainbow-washing has been created by Justice Audre to talk exclusively about LGBTQIA+ community.<sup>82</sup> Here, the *Urban Dictionary* gives this definition:

The act of using or adding rainbow colors and/or imagery to advertising, apparel, accessories, landmarks, et cetera, in order to indicate progressive support for LGBTQ equality (and earn consumer credibility)—but with a minimum of effort or pragmatic result. (Akin to “greenwashing” with environmental issues and “pinkwashing” with breast cancer.)<sup>83</sup>

The word “rainbow” refers to the rainbow flag of the LGBTQIA+ community. The rainbow flag was created by drag performer Gilbert Baker in 1978 in San Francisco and was meant to

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<sup>79</sup> Lindberg, Staffan. “Aftonbladet’s Investigation Into H&M’s Recycling in 9 Points.” *Aftonbladet*, 13 June 2023. [www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/jlME1e/aftonbladet-investigation-into-h-m-s-recycling-airtags-in-items](http://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/jlME1e/aftonbladet-investigation-into-h-m-s-recycling-airtags-in-items).

<sup>80</sup> Lindberg. “Aftonbladet’s Investigation”

<sup>81</sup> Ragobert, Ilona. « Greenwashing : 5 exemples des pires pratiques en la matière ». *HelloCarbo*, Juin 2023. [www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples](http://www.hellocarbo.com/blog/communaute/greenwashing-exemples).

<sup>82</sup> Pennington, Hannah. “Rainbow Washing.” *www.linkedin.com*, [www.linkedin.com/pulse/rainbow-washing-hannah-pennington](https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/rainbow-washing-hannah-pennington). Accessed 26 July 2023.

<sup>83</sup> “Rainbow-washing”. (n.d.). *Urban Dictionary*, 26 June 2015. <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Rainbow-washing>. Accessed 23 July 2023.

reunite the LGBT community under the same sign.<sup>84</sup> Initially, the flag represented only the LGBT community, but the flag has since been recreated to include the QIA+ people. The colours of the flag have a very specific meaning, as Thaddeus Morgan explains:

The different colours within the flag were meant to represent togetherness [sic!], since LGBT people come in all races, ages and genders, and rainbows are natural and beautiful. The original flag featured eight colors, each having a different meaning. At the top was hot pink, which represented sex, red for life, orange for healing, yellow signifying sunlight, green for nature, turquoise to represent art, indigo for harmony, and finally violet at the bottom for spirit.<sup>85</sup>

Therefore, this flag has a very important meaning because it represents an entire community. However, it is very often used by brands to sell their products and give themselves a good image, which is where rainbow-washing comes in.

This flag is particularly displayed during Pride Month in June, a month dedicated to people from the LGBTQIA+ community and the commemoration of the 1969 Stonewall riots that led to the first Pride March in New York the same year.<sup>86</sup> These celebratory marches have also become commercial marches, as brands use the symbols of the LGBTQIA+ community for commercial purposes. Author Michaela Rusch calls this ambivalence “Pride and Money”, which means “selling/distributing products from, for and by the LGBTQ+ community and thereby partially (or fully) commercialising the celebration of identity”.<sup>87</sup> Nevertheless, Rusch points out that showing the rainbow flag for commercial purposes is not necessarily negative, as it creates a safe space for people from the LGBTQIA+ community by letting them know they are welcome and accepted. It also promotes diversity and encourages the destigmatization of this long-ignored community. The problem lies in the fact that some of these companies do not put their money where their mouth is, and do not put anything concrete in place to truly embrace this community. For example, if a company upholds traditional values and does not create a safe space for their workers and customers from this community, then their action is not sincere, and that is a perfect example of rainbow-washing.<sup>88</sup> Brands focus solely on the commercial and marketing aspect, forgetting that this flag is first and foremost a political symbol. This undermines their credibility, and makes people question their real desire to form

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<sup>84</sup> Morgan, Thaddeus. “How Did the Rainbow Flag Become an LGBT Symbol”, *History.com*, 2019. [www.history.com/news/how-did-the-rainbow-flag-become-an-lgbt-symbol](http://www.history.com/news/how-did-the-rainbow-flag-become-an-lgbt-symbol).

<sup>85</sup> Morgan. “How Did the Rainbow Flag Become an LGBT Symbol”.

<sup>86</sup> Rusch, Michaela. “True Colours or Rainbow-Washing Exposed!? – Company Pride in and through Digital and Social Media Reviewed.” *ILCEA*, no. 51, 12 June 2023, p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Rusch, Michaela. “True Colours or Rainbow-Washing Exposed!?” p. 2.

<sup>88</sup> Rusch. pp. 2-4.

an alliance with the LGBTQIA+ community. As Rusch concludes: “Repeatedly, the question must be posed if companies understand the importance and take the matter seriously or if ‘Pride’ is merely another marketing option”.<sup>89</sup>

### 2.3. Redwashing

Another example of CSR-washing is redwashing. It is depicted as “the practice of a state, organisation, political party or company presenting itself as progressive and concerned about social equality and justice, in order to use this perception for public relations or economic gain”.<sup>90</sup> The colour red is historically associated with left-wing politics. Accusations of redwashing are linked in particular to the Indigenous community in Canada. Canadian banks and companies offer financial support for education, culture, sport and the arts. Clayton Thomas-Müller, a Cree activist and member of the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, denounces these sponsorships. As a speaker and writer on Indigenous rights and environmental and economic justice, he defines redwashing as follows:

Redwashing is an attempt by a corporation to paint itself as “benevolent” — a good neighbour — through sponsorship schemes for Indigenous education, art and culture. It is the process of covering up the detrimental effects of corporate initiatives with friendly slogans and lump sum donations to Indigenous communities.<sup>91</sup>

According to Thomas-Müller, the companies sponsoring the Mathias Colomb Cree Nation and other indigenous communities are in fact trying to restore their image by making these donations. It is these same companies, particularly those in the “extractive sector”, i.e. the oil, gas and mining industries, that are engaged in activities that damage local ecosystems and violate indigenous land rights.<sup>92</sup> Their harmful practices also have a social impact on indigenous communities. For example, the Imperial Oil company was investigated for industrial pollution in 2018 at the request of residents of the Aamjiwnaang First Nation in Ontario. The oil company was also fined \$185,000 in 2011 by the Territorial Court of the Northwest Territories for discharging a deleterious substance into fishing waters.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Rusch, pp. 21.

<sup>90</sup> “Redwashing”. (n.d.). *WordSense Online Dictionary*. [www.wordsense.eu/redwashing/#English](http://www.wordsense.eu/redwashing/#English). Accessed 19 May 2023.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas-Müller, Clayton. “We Need to Start Calling Out Corporate ‘redwashing.’” *CBC*, 20 Mar. 2017. [www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/corporate-redwashing-1.4030443](http://www.cbc.ca/news/opinion/corporate-redwashing-1.4030443).

<sup>92</sup> Millington, Rob, et al. “‘Calling Out’ Corporate Redwashing: The Extractives Industry, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sport for Development in Indigenous Communities in Canada.” *Sport in Society*, vol. 22, no. 12, 2019, p. 2123.

<sup>93</sup> Millington, Rob, et al. “‘Calling Out’ Corporate Redwashing” p. 2126.



Multinational mining group Rio Tinto has also been the subject of legal action by aboriginal groups. They are suing Rio Tinto's Iron Ore Company of Canada for \$900 million in damages, claiming that the company “displaced people from their land, destroyed the environment and, unlike other resource companies in the area, did not provide financial compensation.”<sup>94</sup> In another lawsuit, aboriginal communities are demanding that Rio Tinto restore the flow of the Nechako River, which was diverted when a hydroelectric dam was built in the early 1950s, and that damages be paid to compensate for damage to their traditional fishery. In the wake of these scandals, and in order to retain their social licence to operate, extractive companies have had to find strategies to win over indigenous communities. Offering sports programmes is one such strategy.<sup>95</sup>

The context in which these sponsorships take place is also important: Canada's colonial history and the ongoing struggles over aboriginal rights to self-determination play a role in making aboriginal people question the real desire of these corporations to help them. Indeed, the extractive industry's CSR campaigns in Aboriginal communities are a reminder of the long history of colonialism, and the Canadian government turns a blind eye to the environmental, ethical and social practices of extractive industries nationwide.<sup>96</sup>

### **3. Relevance of these terms in analysing advertisements**

The terms I have just explained are not all well known to the general public. Greenwashing is a concept that many people are familiar with, being one of the oldest but also one of the most highlighted in the press and on social media. Other terms are still used timidly, although they are gaining increasing prominence in the media and in academic articles. Having an idea of what they mean gives you an overview of the subject of this dissertation and an idea of its scope and complexity. These terms are all part of CSR-washing, with the exception of “femonationalism”, which is still important for contextualisation as the term is also linked to the use of feminism, but in a political context. These marketing processes show how companies use social, environmental, political and cultural movements to make a profit. This helps to draw the line between marketing and the desire to make a real contribution to these social,

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<sup>94</sup> Van der Linde, D. “Quebec Innu Win Latest Court Battle in \$900 Million Lawsuit against Rio Tinto’s Iron Ore Company of Canada.” *Financial Post*, 26 Oct. 2016. [business.financialpost.com/commodities/mining/quebec-innu-win-latest-court-battle-in-900-million-lawsuit-against-rio-tintos-iron-ore-company-of-canada](https://business.financialpost.com/commodities/mining/quebec-innu-win-latest-court-battle-in-900-million-lawsuit-against-rio-tintos-iron-ore-company-of-canada).

<sup>95</sup> Millington, Rob, et al. “‘Calling Out’ Corporate Redwashing: The Extractives Industry, Corporate Social Responsibility and Sport for Development in Indigenous Communities in Canada.” *Sport in Society*, vol. 22, no. 12, 2019, pp. 2125-26.

<sup>96</sup> Millington, Rob, et al. “‘Calling Out’ Corporate Redwashing” p. 2124

environmental and other issues. Today, the finger is increasingly pointed at institutions that use CSR-washing. In future, this may help to limit abuses and misleading advertising. Other terms are also appearing for other sectors or social issues, such as “technowashing”, i.e. the way in which marketers, while trying to feign concepts such as trust and loyalty, conceal processes aimed at creating digital dependency.<sup>97</sup> However, it would take more than a dissertation to develop each term that emerges from CSR-washing. The primary aim here was to contextualise and understand the basic concepts derived from CSR-Washing, including concepts closely or remotely related to feminism. Some of these terms that I have just developed will be used as a tool to analyse the ads selected in my analysis section. They will be useful when analysing advertisements to determine what form of CSR-washing we are dealing with. Purplewashing remains the basic concept for my research. In addition to these theoretical tools of analysis, I will also use rhetorical and sociological concepts to define the brand image of the companies I have analysed and to understand why their advertisements provoke debate. These rhetorical concepts used in my analysis will be explained in the next chapter of my dissertation.

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<sup>97</sup> Perakslis, Christine. “Exposing Technowashing: To Mitigate Technosocial Inequalities [Last Word].” *IEEE Technology & Society Magazine*, vol. 39, no. 1, 2020, p. 88.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

To develop my methodology, I will draw on rhetorical and sociological fields to analyse the image of brands and what they try to reflect to their audience in their advertising. To analyse brand image, in addition to the theoretical notions above, I base my analysis primarily on the notion of *ethos* and its development over time. In short, *ethos* is the image that a speaker wants to project to his audience. In the field of marketing and communication, *ethos* represents the brand image. It is this same image that defines the public's vision of brands and defines the type of consumer targeted by these companies. To develop the notion of *ethos*, I will mainly rely on the work of Ruth Amossy *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale* (2010) to develop my methodology. Another equally important concept in the book is “self-presentation”, borrowed from sociology. *Ethos* also takes a linguistic turn in discourse analysis.<sup>98</sup>

### **1. Aristotelian rhetoric: *ethos*, *pathos*, *logos***

*Ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* were coined by Aristotle in his book *Rhetoric* and are the three categories of Aristotelian rhetoric used by the Ancient Greeks as a practice of influence. In his work, Aristotle teaches orators his “artistic proofs”, which are the methods of persuasion that a speaker has to create in order to persuade their audience. According to Aristotle, there are three main artistic proofs: the ethical, emotional and rational appeals of rhetoric, namely *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. Aristotelian rhetoric bases its theory on the relationship between the speaker and the audience. The speaker must use these three artistic proofs to impress and therefore persuade the public. To convince them, they need valid arguments using logic (*logos*), emotion (*pathos*) and ethics (*ethos*).<sup>99</sup> It is based on the fact that the orators have to be credible beforehand if they want their audience to buy into their ideas.<sup>100</sup>

*Logos* is therefore “the pole of discourse”. This category appeals to using logic or reason to convince an audience. To support their arguments, the speaker has to cite facts and statistics, by using historical examples, analogies, evidence, claims, data, logic, warrants and justifications.<sup>101</sup> This is what we can define as rational persuasion: the audience is persuaded

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<sup>98</sup> Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*. Presses universitaires de France, 2010, p.6.

<sup>99</sup> Rubinelli, Sara. “*Logos and Pathos in Aristotle’s Rhetoric. A Journey into the Role of Emotions in Rational Persuasion in Rhetoric.*” *Revue internationale de philosophie*, vol. 286, no. 4, 2018, p. 361.

<sup>100</sup> Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*. Presses universitaires de France, 2010, pp. 15-16.

<sup>101</sup> Higgins, Colin, and Robyn Walker. “Ethos, Logos, Pathos: Strategies of Persuasion in Social/environmental Reports.” *Accounting Forum*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2012, p. 198.

by logical and rational arguments. For Aristotle, argumentation plays a very important role in persuading someone.<sup>102</sup>

The orators also have to touch their audience's feelings (*pathos*), i.e. "the auditorium pole". The speaker appeals to their audience's emotions to elicit their sympathy. They can also use *pathos* to appeal to other emotions, such as anger or pity. The speaker must succeed in generating emotions in their audience by choosing the right words. They direct their speech so as to elicit specific emotions from their audience. To make them feel angry, for example, they can highlight a person's negative traits and actions to persuade them that they are bad.<sup>103</sup> One of the most relevant persuasive techniques in the *pathos* category is the use of metaphors. Using references that the audience relies on is also a good way of winning their sympathy. The speaker can develop their *pathos* by "using meaningful language, emotional tone, emotion evoking examples, stories of emotional events, and implied meanings".<sup>104</sup>

Finally, the orators need to present a self-image that inspires confidence. This last pole is "the speaker's pole" and represents the *ethos*. According to Aristotle, this pole is one of the most important. In order for the audience to listen to what the speaker has to say, they must first prove that they are credible and worth listening to.<sup>105</sup> According to Christopher Carey in his work "Rhetorical means of persuasion", there is a close link between *ethos* and *pathos*, because if the ethical appeal is successful, it produces a feeling of goodwill in the audience that can have an emotional impact.<sup>106</sup>

These three concepts are interconnected and necessary in Aristotle's rhetoric to persuade an audience through a discourse. However, his rhetoric will be reinterpreted and even linked to other forms of rhetoric throughout time. For example, the speaker referred to by Aristotle has also evolved over time: in my chapter on analysing advertising, the speaker is not a person as such but a brand, an institution. The speaker can therefore take many forms: an individual, a brand, a political party, etc.

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<sup>102</sup> Rubinelli, Sara. "Logos and Pathos in Aristotle's Rhetoric. A Journey into the Role of Emotions in Rational Persuasion in Rhetoric." *Revue internationale de philosophie*, vol. 286, no. 4, 2018, pp. 363-364.

<sup>103</sup> Rubinelli. "Logos and Pathos in Aristotle's Rhetoric." p. 367.

<sup>104</sup> "Ethos, Pathos, and Logos Definitions and Examples." *PathosEthosLogos.com*. Accessed 28 July 2023.

<sup>105</sup> Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*. Presses universitaires de France, 2010, pp. 15-17.

<sup>106</sup> Carey, C. (1994). "Rhetorical means of persuasion". In: Worthington, I. *Persuasion. Greek rhetoric in action*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 26-45.

### 1.1. Aristotle's legacy to modern rhetoric

Aristotle's three paradigms have given rise to various interpretations of his theory. Aristotle's rhetoric implies that a successful *ethos* means showing oneself in a certain way. In the review *Communications* published in 1970, Roland Barthes defined what *ethos* is. According to Barthes, the aim of *ethos* is to act like something you want to show off. *Ethos* is built on what the speaker says, not on what they are. It is a notion based on appearances; it is the effect that the speaker produces on their audience that is important, and this effect has to be good.<sup>107</sup>

Many of Aristotle's successors have questioned the place of *ethos* in speech, because it means that appearances might be more important than the speaker's virtue. There is even talk of manipulating the audience, commonly known as "the art of persuasion". This means that instead of highlighting their real abilities, the speaker must also succeed in attributing qualities to themselves that they do not possess in order to please their audience. The risk is that they will be discredited for lacking credibility.<sup>108</sup> This is what happens with the ads analysed in the next chapter: brands, in trying to create an image with values that they sometimes do not have, find themselves caught in their own trap when their audience does not take the bait. Instead of gaining the public's trust, they are discredited and sometimes even boycotted. This may also be due to the brand's past actions. Chaim Perelman, philosopher and theorist, drew inspiration from Aristotle's rhetoric to create his « nouvelle rhétorique » (new rhetoric). In his view, the task of rhetoric is to seek verisimilitude, not truth. What is often perceived as a weakness of rhetoric is in fact its strength: since human affairs cannot only be based on certainty, the main aim is to create plausible agreement. In the Aristotelian tradition, establishing agreement does not depend on *logos* alone. You also need to win the trust of the audience, who must be able to believe the speaker. This is why *logos* alone is not enough, and why *ethos* is essential: the image of the speaker is based on criteria of logical validity but does not seek absolute truth. The *ethos* can influence the audience's opinion if it is effective.<sup>109</sup>

Rhetoric as it developed before Aristotle took a different view of the intrinsic force that speech was supposed to have. Isocrates, one of Aristotle's predecessors, claimed that a speaker's reputation was important. In this case, it means that *ethos* is based on the esteem in which the speaker is held by their listeners on the basis of their past actions, therefore the speaker's *ethos* is defined by this. Here, the difference with Aristotle's perspective lies in the

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<sup>107</sup> Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*. Presses universitaires de France, 2010, pp. 22-23.

<sup>108</sup> Amossy. *La présentation de soi*. p. 23

<sup>109</sup> Amossy. p. 18.

fact that it is not how the speaker expresses themselves that is important, but what we already know about them.<sup>110</sup> A brand like H&M, for example, which claims to be more eco-responsible, has a harder time gaining credibility with its consumers given its past (and present), which is full of evidence of its harmful actions for the environment and accusations of deceiving the public. This also refers here to the « *ethos préalable* » (prior *ethos*) developed by Ruth Amossy in her book *La présentation de soi: Ethos et identité verbale* (2010). In the section dedicated to the « *ethos préalable* », Amossy explains how certain individuals, such as politicians, try to rework their previous image in order to change the public's view of them. When a person's reputation works against them, reworking their pre-existing *ethos* can change their image and make it more positive. Amossy gives us the example of Jacques Chirac who, after two highly criticised terms in office, decided to give a televised speech in which he presented a more flattering image of himself. In his speech, he presented himself as a man of integrity and devotion to his people. His *pathos* was based on the pride he said he had in himself and his people, using the pronoun “we” to include the French in his actions. In so doing, he sought to erase his prior negative *ethos*, which he had in spite of himself. It is his actions (or inactions) as President of the Republic that have created a less glorious *ethos* for him. In other words, his « *ethos préalable* » was built by the French people on the basis of his decisions as the President at the time. Changing his former *ethos* may be successful in attracting a larger number of voters, but it can also have the opposite effect if the target audience is too opposed to the President's past *ethos*. Indeed, his opponents were quick to criticise his speech at the time.<sup>111</sup> The notion of « *ethos préalable* » will also be an analytical tool for defining the past image of some of the brands analysed in the next chapter and why sometimes their change of *ethos* does not work because their audience has been too influenced by the past *ethos* shown by the brand. A brand with a history of misogynistic comments or staff members accused of sexual violence, for example, will find it much harder to claim a feminist image if the brand's past and that of its workers are public knowledge.

The notion of *ethos* has even moved completely away from the rhetorical tradition by taking on a new form in sociology, called “self-presentation” coined by the sociologist and linguist Erving Goffman. Although Goffman never referred to the rhetorical tradition in his work on self-presentation, Ruth Amossy sees a clear link between Goffman and Aristotle's theories. According to Amossy, Goffman crossed the rhetorical notion of *ethos* and redirected

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<sup>110</sup> Amossy. p. 19.

<sup>111</sup> Amossy. pp. 89-91.

it into a more modern version, namely self-presentation. For Goffman, presentation can no longer be defined as an art of persuasion or a technique that can be mastered. How we present ourselves depends on our actions in society and social life. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman proposed a theory according to which each individual necessarily makes a presentation of themselves in any circumstance of their life. This self-presentation is voluntary or involuntary and is appropriate depending on the interaction in which it is engaged. A doctor talking to a patient will not behave in the same way as if he were talking to a friend in a bar. This is where we see that Goffman's self-presentation is close to the Aristotelian notion of *ethos*: it is an image construction that takes place within a specific social exchange, which it largely helps to regulate. The difference lies in the fact that Goffman did not focus his study solely on speech. He studied all the elements that make up social behaviour: gestures, facial expressions, the way people dress, and so on. All this reflects the staging of a person outside the field of language.<sup>112</sup> With this sociological approach, Goffman's self-image is based on social interaction and the construction of identity. His analysis focuses on face-to-face interaction, i.e. the way in which events unfold in a specific situation. For Goffman, identity is a dynamic process that is not constructed beforehand but during the interaction itself. A person's identity is not based on what they think of themselves or what their audience thinks, but on the image they project in a given situation, whether spontaneous or prepared in advance. Goffman goes so far as to talk about representation: each person plays their part to give an impression of themselves to others and produce the desired effect. Interaction thus becomes a theatrical production.<sup>113</sup> The person playing the role may not be aware of it because they are following the social rules inculcated by the society in which they live. In every social interaction, people try to control how they present themselves, whether in the way they speak or dress, etc. This is what Goffman calls "impression management".<sup>114</sup> To sum up Goffman's theory, self-presentation is based on the management of impressions, whether reflexive or not, and the staging of an individual within an interactional framework. This self-presentation can, however, be confronted with the preconceived image that people have of the individual presenting themselves. This refers to the term explained in the previous paragraph on « *ethos préalable* »: here, the image presented by an individual could be put into perspective with their initial reputation to see if their image corresponds to what is expected of them. What links Goffman's theory to that of Aristotle is the fact that Goffman insists on the importance of

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<sup>112</sup> Amossy. pp. 25-26.

<sup>113</sup> Amossy. pp. 26-27.

<sup>114</sup> Amossy. p. 29.

a person's performance in a situation. This refers back to Aristotle's rhetoric, which states that the speaker wishes to show off themselves in a verbal exchange. However, in Aristotle's case, his theory was based on what the speaker says, not on what their words reflect about their persona. Another difference is that for Goffman, every interaction, even the simplest, is subject to self-presentation. The construction of the image is not calculated to convince an audience, whereas for Aristotle the *ethos* is there to do just that. The *ethos* is no longer there just to convince but refers to any type of exchange and plays a part in its smooth running.<sup>115</sup>

In his rhetoric, Aristotle relied solely on oral discourse between a speaker and an audience. This link between speaker and audience has developed according to other criteria. As we saw with Goffman, Aristotle's theory was developed in sociology, but not only. The Aristotelian tradition and Goffman's work also led to research in the language sciences. Linguists have studied how individuals construct an image of themselves in their speech. This led to the study of discourse analysis introduced by French linguist Dominique Maingueneau. He used the *ethos* borrowed from rhetoric and developed it in his own linguistic theory, without limiting the notion of *ethos* to public speaking. Maingueneau draws a distinction between the "said" *ethos* and the "shown" *ethos*: the speaker not only says what they claim to be, they show it through the way they express themselves.<sup>116</sup> However, Maingueneau does not limit the analysis of discourse to the spoken word, as Ruth Amossy explains: "Henceforth, it is no longer intrinsically linked to orality and, above all (in the wake of Goffmanian thought), it is no longer limited to the field of argumentation". [My translation]<sup>117</sup> It means that Maingueneau does not confine *ethos* to the art of oratory. In the age of the internet and social networks, the spoken word is not just spoken, but also written. When a speaker addresses an audience that is physically present, the speaker's facial expressions, voice and gestures are important for building *ethos*. But when the speech is transposed into writing, the self-image is also modified. It is not a "face-to-face" as presented by Goffman. Everything that is concretely built up in the spoken word disappears in the written word. The speaker must then adapt their speech to the written form. However, Maingueneau maintains that this does not mean that tone and physicality no longer played a role in written discourse. This oral rhetorical dimension was transposed to the written word, through what is known as "tone of voice". According to

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<sup>115</sup> Amossy. pp. 30-31.

<sup>116</sup> Amossy. pp. 34-35.

<sup>117</sup> As the English version of this book does not seem to exist, or at least cannot be found, this is my own translation. « *Désormais, elle n'est plus intrinsèquement liée à l'oralité et, surtout (dans le sillage de la pensée goffmanienne), elle ne se limite plus au champ de l'argumentation* ». Amossy. p. 35.



Maingueneau, each statement has its own “voice”. As an example of a tone of voice in a text, he compares two newspapers, *Le Figaro* and *Libération*, which have differences of opinion and therefore differences of tone that have a considerable impact on the reader. The tone is therefore based on a “character”, a set of dispositions such as the level of language, rhythm, humour, use of expressions, choice of words, and so on.<sup>118</sup> This tone of voice explained by Maingueneau applies to brands which, in order to build their *ethos*, use a specific tone of voice depending on what they wish to reflect. I will come back to this in the next section.

Maingueneau does not limit discourse analysis to the fact that *ethos* is no longer just oral but also written. He generalises its use to all types of discourse. Like Goffman, Maingueneau believes that the speaker constructs an image in every interaction, whether this is intentional or not. Discourse analysis takes into account both persuasive and non-persuasive discourse. The *ethos* is not necessarily conscious and programmed and it appears in a variety of situations. Like Goffman, discourse analysis also takes into account the social frameworks that form an integral part of the self-image. Maingueneau speaks of verbal activity as a scene divided into two: the “encompassing scene” and the “generic scene”.<sup>119</sup> The “encompassing scene” represents the imposed frameworks of specific modes of self-presentation, such as political, religious, philosophical or advertising discourse. Amossy gives the example of a politician who will not project the same image as a philosopher or a bishop. Here, the advertising discourse is what will interest me in my analysis. The “generic scene”, on the other hand, represents the genre to which an institution is attached: in the religious sphere this might be a sermon, a campaign speech in the political sphere, and so on. This means that “the self-image is conditioned by pre-existing social and institutional frameworks into whose logic it fits”.<sup>120</sup> When brands speak to their customers, they do so in a specific context: on television, on channels broadcasting their official pages, etc. Although they can set themselves apart by adopting a less serious attitude in order to feel closer to their customers, brands are still subject to unspoken social rules. For example, a brand will not respond to a negative comment by insulting the person. The person behind the brand’s Facebook account will not use their personal account to contact a customer. All these things demonstrate what Maingueneau means by “scene”. In order to modulate their image, the speaker in Maingueneau’s theory selects what he calls a “scenography”. This is a scenario that the speaker chooses, enabling them to modulate

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<sup>118</sup> Amossy. pp. 35-36.

<sup>119</sup> Amossy. pp. 36-37.

<sup>120</sup> « *l'image de soi est conditionnée par des cadres sociaux et institutionnels préexistants dans la logique desquels elle s'inscrit* ». Amossy. p.37.

their image and work on their legitimisation. Amossy gives the example of a head of state who, when addressing their citizens on television, might use the scenario of the benevolent parent addressing their children. This type of scenario can reflect an affectionate loving image of the head of state towards their people, whom they consider to be their family. The self-image is therefore a circular movement: the scenography shows the work of legitimation that takes place through it, and the image legitimised by the discursive framework legitimises it in turn.<sup>121</sup> The role played by the speaker in their chosen scenario is part of a pre-existing socio-cultural framework. Their role is based on collective social representation. The self-image is therefore determined by two things: by the rules of discursive institutions and by a social imaginary. This is where we see the difference between the rhetorical *ethos* and the *ethos* in discourse analysis: the *ethos* is not created here by the speaker's words, but in the way the orator integrates themselves into the social conditions in which they have to construct their identity. *Ethos* does not therefore have an intentional persuasive purpose but is conditioned by its social and ideological environment. However, Maingueneau maintains that *ethos* still seeks "adherence". This acceptance is conditioned by the audience the speaker is addressing. In our case, we could think of a brand claiming to be feminist in order to adhere to the sociological ideas of its consumers. Even if this is not a deliberate choice on the part of the brand, it has to be done to fit in with its environment. Maingueneau takes up the rhetorical notion of *ethos*, but modifies it to make the discursive nature of the self-image central, and emphasises the importance of social and institutional frameworks.<sup>122</sup> Maingueneau's notions of "scene" will not be analysed further in my analysis, but they do help to explain the social and cultural context in which brands play a role. Brands that use feminism to sell use social codes to modulate their image and adhere to the values of their consumers.

The *ethos* as presented by Aristotle in his rhetoric has therefore evolved considerably, and in some cases has even gone beyond the realm of rhetoric. The notion of *ethos* as presented by Aristotle is therefore not literally the one I use as an analytical tool. If that were the case, I could only base my analysis on oral sources. My analysis does not only use the *ethos* created by Aristotle, but also how it was developed and interpreted by other rhetoricians who were able to develop this notion to a wider field of communication. Communication between a speaker and an audience is no longer just oral; it also has to meet other requirements, such as the tone to be used, the behaviour to be adopted, the words to be used, etc. Although *ethos* is my main

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<sup>121</sup> Amossy. pp.37-38.

<sup>122</sup> Amossy. pp. 39-40.

analysis tool alongside the CSR-washing notions, *logos* and *pathos* will also be useful because, as Aristotle explained, you need to combine all three categories to persuade someone. If a brand has not managed to convince its audience, it is sometimes because their *pathos* or *logos* were not in line with their *ethos*.

## 1.2. *Ethos* as a strategy of persuasion in the marketing field

The use of Aristotle's three paradigms has evolved over time, and their use has been extended to other sectors, including marketing. The concept of marketing emerged after the economic crisis of 1929. From 1930 to 1950, companies struggled to sell off their stock for a number of reasons: fierce competition, the consequences of the crisis and the war, and supply outstripping demand. In order to boost their sales, companies were obliged to carry out market research and advertising to attract customers. This is where marketing comes in. The concept of marketing was made official in 1950, marking the start of a new era, known as the "marketing age". During this period, companies developed marketing techniques, including television advertising, to reach as many people as possible. Companies focused their strategies on satisfying market needs. In its early days, the aim of marketing was above all to enable capitalist companies to sell more and establish profitable relationships with customers.

This type of marketing was known as "mass marketing" because their communications were not personalised but were designed to reach as many people as possible. This marketing focused solely on the product. Marketing then evolved into "segmented marketing", i.e. personalised marketing for a certain type of person, leading to "personalised marketing", where communication is tailored to each individual. This marketing 2.0 focused on the customer experience. Today, we are talking about "marketing 3.0", commonly known as "digital marketing" or "engagement marketing".<sup>123</sup> This type of marketing, born of the rise of the digital world, focuses on the values advocated by consumers and which they would like to see advocated by brands. Brands must no longer simply satisfy their customers or meet a specific need; they must share common values. Brands need to play on the emotional and the intellectual to appeal to consumers and sell their products. These values can take many forms: family, ecological, moral, etc. Brands can no longer just focus on the customer, they have to become more human. This communication is even more personalised than the previous one, because

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<sup>123</sup> « L'histoire du marketing: les origines ». *Quotidien Marketing*, 3 Sep. 2020. [quotidienmarketing.com/histoire-marketing-origines/](http://quotidienmarketing.com/histoire-marketing-origines/).

brands have to prove that their products are in line with their customers' values.<sup>124</sup> As Sarah Faress explains in her article on marketing 3.0:

Companies therefore need to embark on their 3.0 strategy and communicate their values, while retaining the main characteristics of 2.0 marketing, i.e. personalisation, humanisation and sharing. Not only will brands that make this shift in time reinvigorate their brand, they will also build up an army of ambassadors, who will be happy to promote the brand to their friends and family who share the same values as them. [My translation]<sup>125</sup>

This is also why brands want to share feminist values and try to reflect them in their advertising. As explained in the section dedicated to the fourth wave of feminism, the movement gained momentum with social networks and the various hashtags created to denounce the sexism and sexual abuse suffered by women. As feminism has taken on a major role in the media and in public opinion, more and more brands are claiming to be feminists and are trying to show this in their advertising.

This is where *ethos* plays its role in brand communication. In this era of marketing 3.0, brands need to create or rebuild an image and therefore an *ethos* in line with current values. Many brands that have been around for decades are changing their « *ethos préalable* » in order to erase the image they may have had in the past, which would now be considered sexist, for example. But this marketing strategy does not stop there: it can also be used to prevent a company going bankrupt. In his article “Ethos as Market Maker: The Creative Role of Technical Marketing Communication in an Aviation Start-Up”, Andrew Mara examines how an aviation start-up named Eclipse Aviation (EA) managed to recover from the failure of one of their innovations by changing their *ethos*. The jet company's plan was to market a jet aircraft engine, presented as a technological feat. However, the innovation did not work as planned and the project had to be abandoned. This loss of their main innovation risked leading to their downfall, in the knowledge that the stakeholders, i.e. the investors, customers and public bodies that subsidised their development, were likely to abandon them.<sup>126</sup> The company then decided

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<sup>124</sup> Faress, Sarah. « Marketing 3.0 : L'humain au cœur de la stratégie ». *www.markentive.com*, 6 Nov. 2014. [www.markentive.com/fr/blog/marketing-3-0-lhumain-au-coeur-de-la-strategie](http://www.markentive.com/fr/blog/marketing-3-0-lhumain-au-coeur-de-la-strategie).

<sup>125</sup> « Il est donc nécessaire que les entreprises enclenchent leur stratégie 3.0 et communiquent sur leurs valeurs, tout en conservant les principales caractéristiques du marketing 2.0, c'est-à-dire la personnalisation, l'humanisation et le partage. Non seulement les marques qui prendront ce virage à temps redynamiseront leur marque, mais elles se constituent une armée d'ambassadeurs, qui se feront un plaisir de promouvoir la marque auprès de leurs amis et de leurs familles qui partagent les même [sic!] valeurs qu'eux ».

Faress. « Marketing 3.0 ».

<sup>126</sup> Mara, Andrew. “Ethos as Market Maker: The Creative Role of Technical Marketing Communication in an Aviation Start-Up.” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2008, pp. 429–430. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1050651908320379>.

to change its marketing strategy, moving from a spin-off to an innovative company, using rhetorical tools such as the “cyborg discourse”.<sup>127</sup> Andrew Mara explains:

The strategy to change rhetorical appeals from closed-world calls to trust an unexplained, centralized technology array into invitations to view, measure, and even participate in the commercialization process through an incremental and uneven emergence proved effective in retaining customer deposits, attracting further investments, and ultimately helping the company survive what was widely believed (by both company employees and the aviation press) to be a fatal mistake.<sup>128</sup>

In simpler terms, the company has moved from a communications strategy based on trust in technology without any explanation to a strategy that invites stakeholders to participate in their projects. EA has changed its rhetoric, moving from an *ethos* based on singularly superior technology to a more human and transparent *ethos*, in order to connect properly with its audience. By switching to this cyborg *ethos*, the company has managed to recover from its failure and regain the trust of its stakeholders.<sup>129</sup> *Ethos* is therefore a well-established marketing strategy that does not stop at advertising.

In this age of digitisation and social networking, the tone of voice described by Dominique Maingueneau has also had to adapt to new distribution channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. Television advertising, which is already older, has also been impacted by the tone of voice that needs to be chosen to define a brand image. A brand’s tone of voice is the manner and style it uses to address its audience. The aim of the tone of voice is to stand out from other brands and build brand loyalty. The tone of voice is supposed to represent a brand’s values and personality. In other words, the tone of voice is a brand’s verbal identity. To determine its tone of voice, a brand needs to decide on its target audience, determine its identity and the language style it wishes to use (humorous, serious, formal or informal, etc). Vocabulary and grammar are also important.<sup>130</sup> If the tone of voice is not consistent with a brand’s stated values, this could lead to an accusation of CSR-washing, for example. A brand that wishes to support the LGBTQIA+ community but does not use gender-neutral pronouns in its publications could be accused of rainbow-washing. A brand that

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<sup>127</sup> Mara. “Ethos as Market Maker” p. 429.

<sup>128</sup> Mara. p. 431.

<sup>129</sup> Mara. p. 451.

<sup>130</sup> « Qu'est-ce que le tone of voice d'une marque et comment bien le choisir ? » *GoDaddy*, 23 Dec. 2020. [fr.godaddy.com/blog/tone-of-voice/](https://fr.godaddy.com/blog/tone-of-voice/).

claims to be feminist but creates sexist slogans can be accused of purplewashing. The tone of voice is therefore very important and must be logical to avoid this.

If we bring Aristotelian rhetoric up to date, the speaker is represented by the brand and the audience by the consumers. The verbal exchange between the speaker and the audience is not a direct speech but an exchange through advertising, which can be a TV advert but also a video or a publication on social networks, a page on a website, etc. Through these advertisements, brands are deliberately presenting themselves in a way that is in line with the values of their consumers. If we refer to Goffman, this self-presentation also depends on the actions carried out by the brands. For example, if they try to project a feminist image while carrying out sexist actions in the background, the brand's image is tainted and accusations of purplewashing may surface. This section demonstrates and proves that *ethos* has become an indispensable tool in corporate communication. If a brand wants to develop in the current period, it must reflect an image that consumers evaluate positively. This image is no longer a reflection of what a brand sells, but of what it stands for. The brand's moral and ethical values are a cornerstone of its business. A poor *ethos* can lead to a company's downfall.

## **2. Ruth Amossy's self-presentation: *ethos* and verbal identity**

In order to understand the concept of *ethos* and its use over time, I based myself on the book I have already presented by Ruth Amossy, *La présentation de soi: Ethos et identité verbale* (2010). In this book, Amossy combines two concepts: *ethos*, borrowed from rhetoric and discourse analysis, and "self-presentation", borrowed from sociology. According to Ruth Amossy, *ethos* is "an integral dimension of discourse".<sup>131</sup> Ruth Amossy presents three approaches that I have already developed in the previous section: those of Aristotle, Erving Goffman and Dominique Maingueneau. Although they propose quite different conceptions of *ethos* and its role, she nevertheless manages to use each approach and to develop certain concepts. Taking Aristotle's theory as a starting point, Amossy draws on the Goffmanian and Maingueneau approaches to set out working hypotheses which I will use for my analysis. In these three approaches to *ethos* and self-presentation, some specific notions will be more useful to me than others. As some concepts have already been covered, such as « *ethos préalable* », "tone of voice", "said" *ethos* and the "shown" *ethos*, this section will focus on other concepts that I have not yet developed.

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<sup>131</sup> Amossy, Ruth. pp. 6-7.

## 2.1. The stereotyping of *ethos* and the link with « *ethos préalable* »

The construction of a self-image, whether individual or collective, is based on a social imagination. As Goffman explained, what we reflect is based on social interactions. In her book, Ruth Amossy explains that an individual's behaviour is necessarily the result of socialisation. Although an individual can give a personal touch to their person, it is always based on the social representations of which they are a member. A university professor or a mother will behave in a certain way in society. If a person's behaviour seems inconsistent with their role, their staging will not have the desired effect. Amossy develops the need to appropriate a stereotyped image of a social category in order to construct an identity that will be effective in terms of communication. Amossy defines a stereotype as "a fixed collective representation, a cultural model that circulates in discourse and texts". [My translation]<sup>132</sup> The individual *ethos* would then be built on pre-existing images, fixed collective representations that would be imposed in a conventional way. Individuals who want to create their own image will do so on the basis of a pre-established cultural model.<sup>133</sup> According to Amossy, stereotyping is an inevitable process in building an identity and is necessary for good communication. In society, each social group forms an idea of itself that it compares or even contrasts with other groups. An individual may find themselves in a certain category depending on their place in a nation, a profession, a community or a social class. People unconsciously or deliberately mould their *ethos* on the basis of these social models. A very rich star will not behave in the same way as an average middle-class worker. The social group with which a person identifies will also affect their legitimacy: a scientist will feel more legitimate in explaining a scientific concept than someone who has no connection with the subject.<sup>134</sup>

The stereotyping of *ethos* has a social and political function. It enables the speaker to forge links with the group they wish to reach. Distinctive signs that bring certain people together and reject others have a grouping effect, while rejecting those who do not have the same social signs. It is often involuntarily that the speaker conforms to a pre-existing model that Amossy defines as "labelling". The way the speaker expresses himself will unconsciously project a certain image of himself: if the speaker is addressing young people from the suburbs, for example, he will use street vocabulary. Whereas in a bourgeois circle, the language will be more formal. Amossy goes on to explain that we can even categorise a person without even

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<sup>132</sup> « [...] *une représentation collective figée, un modèle culturel qui circule dans les discours et dans les textes* ». Amossy. pp. 45-46.

<sup>133</sup> Amossy. p. 52.

<sup>134</sup> Amossy. pp. 46-47.

seeing or hearing them speak. She gives the example of online forums where people post messages under a pseudonym. Some posts clearly show the political leanings of some of these Internet users. If an Internet user expresses disgust with capitalism and supports the complaints of the people, they can be categorised as a left-wing anti-capitalist. Someone who posts racist comments about migrants can be categorised as extreme right-wing. If there is a debate, there will be those who support the person who published it and those who oppose it. Separate groups are then created.<sup>135</sup> Amossy concludes her observation with this: “At the same time as reinforcing a social group that recognises itself in the same representations, stereotyping also serves to mark the difference between the self and the other”. [My translation]<sup>136</sup> Stereotyping is therefore an effective identity tool that consolidates the differences and similarities between each individual. For example, when brands use feminism in their advertising, they hope to bring feminists into their circle.

However, Amossy points out that stereotyping is not without its flaws. She explains that the stereotype is made up of a thematic core and is accompanied by a series of attributes, not all of which are present at the same time. If we simply reproduce all the attributes of the same stereotype, it becomes a caricature. A stereotyped image is not fixed and can therefore be updated.<sup>137</sup> This brings us to the next point: the place of the stereotype in advertising and the de-stereotyping of brands in recent decades. If we transpose this notion of stereotyping to advertising, we can talk, for example, about the stereotypes of men and women shown on screen for many years: the strong, virile man who drinks beer, watches sports and plays video games while his gentle, helpful woman does the washing and the dishes.<sup>138</sup> A simple and effective example is the slogan of the famous Belgian beer brand Jupiler “Men know why”, which implicitly means that the beer is aimed at men and that only they are true connoisseurs of good beer.



Meanwhile, women are relegated to the role of housewives looking after their families. This stereotype is not new. Take this Schiltz beer ad

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<sup>135</sup> Amossy. pp. 63-65.

<sup>136</sup> « *En même temps qu'il renforce un groupe social qui se reconnaît dans les mêmes représentations, le stéréotypage sert aussi à marquer la différence entre le moi et l'autre* ». Amossy. p. 66.

<sup>137</sup> Amossy. p. 47.

<sup>138</sup> Kelleher, Sarah. “Stereotypes in Advertising: A Help or a Hindrance.” *Comscore, Inc.*, [www.comscore.com/Insights/Blog/Stereotypes-in-Advertising-A-help-or-a-hindrance](http://www.comscore.com/Insights/Blog/Stereotypes-in-Advertising-A-help-or-a-hindrance). Accessed 6 Aug. 2023.



from 1952, for example: the image shows a tearful woman, probably sad that she has burnt the meal for her husband. He does not mind, as long as his beer is safe and sound.



Schlitz ad, 1952.

Brought up to date, this advert shocks us. Yet in the 1950s, they were commonplace. As explained above, the third and fourth waves of feminism have changed brand communication and marketing strategies. The emphasis is no longer on these stereotypes, but on the strong, independent woman and the husband or father who becomes aware of his role and decides to take part in household chores. Although today's advertisements have evolved, some still encourage these stereotypes. In the end, if we compare it with the Jupiler slogan, although it is more subtle, the stereotype of the man with the beer is still very much present.

There are many gender stereotypes in advertising, which is why brands that 40 years ago also participated in these stereotypes are now creating ads that “break the codes” in order to break these stereotypes. Amossy explains the origin of this effect: when an individual wishes to move away from the stereotypical image they represent, the stereotype is subject to an actualisation effect. The pre-existing model can be overturned by a new model to create a new image. To do this, this new image must reject the stereotype to which it was initially attached. Amossy gives the example of the father associated with the authoritarian figure of the patriarchal model: to oppose this model, the father can, for example, present himself as a friend to his children in order to lose the sign of the authority figure. But in the end, this image, which contrasts with the old one, also becomes a stereotype: that of the father of the new generation, cool and relaxed.<sup>139</sup> This is also what happens with brands: by trying to free themselves from a prior sexist image by using feminist codes, they create a new stereotype of the modern 2.0 brand. The « *ethos préalable* » can be linked to the stereotyping of the self-image. The stereotypes to which brands are linked have created a perception of these brands among their

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<sup>139</sup>Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi : Ethos et identité verbale*. Presses universitaires de France, 2010, p. 47.

audience, a perception which today may seem old-fashioned and sexist. The « *ethos préalable* » that consumers form about a brand based on its past statements, status and actions can influence the effectiveness of the brand's self-presentation. If the reshaping of the « *ethos préalable* » is not effective, the *ethos* hoped for by the brand will be different from that perceived by its audience.<sup>140</sup>

Amossy defines the stereotype as a reading construction, which means that it only exists if the addressee (in this case the audience) identifies the constituents of the stereotype and assembles them into a group. If there is a misinterpretation of the stereotype, this leads to the attribution of undesirable identities and can make the presentation of oneself inappropriate or even shocking. We shall see that this was the case with the Camaïeu brand, which, in trying to position itself as a support for battered women, found itself categorised as a brand taking advantage of feminism to promote itself. Conflicts of interpretation can also arise from the fact that the pre-existing *ethos* was based on values that the modern reader does not share. As explained above, a brand with a history of sexist statements suddenly offering feminist content can lead to a misinterpretation of the *ethos* it was trying to achieve. Instead of seeing the brand as progressive and feminist, the public may perceive this as a misleading use of feminism to improve its image. What is more, the discrepancy between the image the speaker hopes to project and the one the audience deciphers may also be caused by an opposition in the present. If the new stereotyping is not in line with the values of the audience, then it has only a pejorative connotation. The *ethos* that the brand was trying to create turns against it.<sup>141</sup>

## 2.2. Collective *ethos*

Another concept that has not yet been addressed is that of the collective *ethos*. The *ethos* developed by Aristotle is based on a speaker. Here, the speaker is not an individual but a brand. The speaker who writes or speaks on behalf of the brand is not only projecting their own image (in the case of a spokesperson, for example), but is also projecting the image of the group (in this case the brand) to which they belong and on whose behalf they are speaking. Amossy talks about a collective speaker, which she describes as individuals with a common goal to achieve. It is therefore a plural self-image with collective modes of enunciation. For example, the brand name is used at the start of a sentence to declare something: “Camaïeu is offering 15% off your next order”.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup>Amossy, Ruth. *La présentation de soi*. p. 72.

<sup>141</sup> Amossy. pp. 60-61.

<sup>142</sup> Amossy. pp. 156-157.

The use of the pronoun “we” is an integral part of the collective *ethos*. Amossy devotes an entire chapter to the use of “we” in different situations: political, journalistic, legal, etc. I am going to concentrate mainly on the use of the collective *ethos* in its most general sense, that of bringing people together. As well as representing a collective, in this case a brand, the “we” makes it possible to reinforce this collective by including in this “we” the audience to which it is addressed. Amossy gives the example of an early feminist who wants to bring women together in the same group. By creating a verbal identity for herself, a feminist “we”, she succeeds in imposing this identity on the public sphere. In so doing, she seeks to persuade women to adhere to her vision of a collective image.<sup>143</sup>

Amossy divides the “we” into three categories. The first is the “we” that brings together two or more speakers who agree to present their discourse together. The second “we” is the grouping of the speaker with those with whom they are interacting verbally. The third “we” is where the speaker associates with someone without that person being specifically aware of it. In other terms, the speaker is speaking on behalf of themselves and someone else. The “we” is therefore not simply an addition of individuals but an enlargement of the initial nucleus in order to build a new entity. The “we” *ethos* shows how the self-image becomes a group image. When it comes to commercial communication, the collective *ethos* helps to build the self-image that a company wishes to project in order to promote itself favourably. The collective *ethos* is not only what a brand wants to represent about itself, but also the way in which its image needs to adapt to its audience in order to communicate effectively.<sup>144</sup> This is what Aristotle calls *endoxa*: a strategy for employing ideas that are shared by most of the public, so that the content appears logical to them. By adapting to the *endoxa* of their audience, brands can attract new people to their message. The speaker must familiarise themselves with the content that is acceptable to their audience. An argument that may seem valid at first glance may be rejected because the public does not consider it appropriate or acceptable.<sup>145</sup> This strategy, which is part of the *logos*, enables the speaker to find out what their audience accepts socially in order to make their argument logical. A brand with a feminist image hopes to attract to its group customers who espouse feminist values.

All these notions developed above will enable me to spot the flaws in the *ethos* of brands, to analyse what they wanted to show and what the audience interpreted in their

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<sup>143</sup> Amossy. p. 158.

<sup>144</sup> Amossy. pp. 158-159.

<sup>145</sup> Rubinelli, Sara. “*Logos and Pathos in Aristotle’s Rhetoric. A Journey into the Role of Emotions in Rational Persuasion in Rhetoric.*” *Revue internationale de philosophie*, vol. 286, no. 4, 2018, p. 365.

advertising, but also to see when a brand has a successful *ethos* while still using feminism for promotional purposes. Because although some brands are genuinely committed to changing attitudes and values, their main aim is still to sell.

## **Chapter 4 : Analysis of advertisements**

In order to identify which advertisements are likely to be purplewashing, I have used the concepts I developed earlier to identify elements that might indicate whether or not a brand was purplewashing. Firstly, I looked at whether the companies I selected were presenting an image that was committed to the feminist cause through feminist images and messages, such as: gender equality, inclusivity, body positivity, breaking down gender stereotypes, the fight against gender violence, toxic masculinity, etc. This type of content tells me when a brand wants to give itself a feminist value and is therefore femvertising. Next, I need to define how this resembles purplewashing. This is where the notion of *ethos* is useful: the contrast between what a brand presents and its past, its actions and its values as a company will enable me to identify whether the *ethos* is in line with the values stated in their advertising.

As many brands use femvertising, I also had to make a selection from the adverts I found. I tried to choose brands from different backgrounds that didn't sell the same thing: a women's clothing brand, a beauty and hygiene products brand, a men's brand and a sanitary protection brand. Finally, I chose a menstrual protection brand which, in contrast to the other brands presented, is not guilty of purplewashing according to my analysis. The aim was to see the differences and similarities despite the difference in target audience, product sold and brand history. Since I am focusing on the fourth wave of feminism, I have chosen ads from the period between 2010 and today. I will compare these ads with older ones to refer to the old marketing strategies used before the advent of femvertising. I also observed whether one or more advertisements had had any negative media impact. I looked to see if the press had mentioned any brand being accused of purplewashing. As I explained earlier, purplewashing is a term that is not yet widely used. Although I have sometimes managed to find articles that talk about purplewashing or feminism-washing, the media impact is not yet significant enough to base myself solely on that. I have also narrowed down my search to brands present in Europe. As the primary source of my work is the Camaïeu brand, a company that is best known in France although the brand has expanded internationally, it seemed wiser not to look at brands that were only advertised in the United States, for example. In addition, I have chosen to develop the history of feminism mainly in Europe. It is therefore a good idea to base my search criteria on brands present in Europe. That does not mean I cannot present an American brand, since many international brands are also sold in Europe. I decided to develop the brands that, in my opinion, corresponded most closely to my analysis criteria. I also looked at the *femvertisingawards.com* website to see if any of the brands that had been voted for or nominated could meet my

expectations for my analysis. The theoretical concepts and the historical context in which the ads were created that I developed in the previous chapters will enable me to identify the brands that are engaged in femvertising and likely to be engaged in purplewashing. It is important to specify that, as my dissertation is qualitative research, I am interpreting the concepts discussed above and using them to develop my hypothesis that a brand could use purplewashing and other derivatives to sell its products.

To determine whether or not a brand is adopting a purplewashing strategy, I am going to contrast the feminist values that can be gleaned from their ads with the line of conduct of the companies behind them. Given the young age of the subject and the absence of clear criteria established by an official body to define purplewashing in advertising, I would like to ask the following question: are the advertisements with feminist values presented by brands in line with their *ethos*? If there is a discrepancy or inconsistency between the feminist content and the attitude, *ethos* or history of the brand, then we can consider it to be purplewashing.

## **1. Camaïeu 2022 Campaign: Violence Against Women**

The first brand I chose to develop was Camaïeu. Camaïeu was a French women's ready-to-wear brand selling clothing, accessories, shoes and jewellery in its network in over 900 shops worldwide, including 650 in France. The brand has been using femvertising for several years, breaking down stereotypes and sending out messages of inclusivity, gender equality and the fight against gender-based violence. As I explained earlier, it was this brand that introduced me to purplewashing, because the media impact of the campaign accused of purplewashing was quite considerable in France and Belgium. Despite a fairly positive brand image, as we shall see, the brand has been accused by the media and its consumers of purplewashing in 2022. It is therefore interesting to try and understand how a brand that started out with good values and a good track record ended up with a scandal. I will start by introducing the brand in this way, and then I will give some examples of advertising and their evolution up to the problematic advertising campaign.

### **1.1. History**

Founded in 1984, the company at one stage also dressed men and children, before finally refocusing on its core market in the mid-1990s.<sup>146</sup> Camaïeu specialised in clothing for women aged between twenty and sixty. In the beginning, the brand was only located in France, but it

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<sup>146</sup> « Camaïeu : tout savoir sur cette marque ». *Bible-marques.fr*. [www.bible-marques.fr/camaieu.html](http://www.bible-marques.fr/camaieu.html). Accessed 12 July 2023.

went from strength to strength. Following its success in France, the company expanded internationally and opened a number of boutiques in Europe in the 2000s. In 2015, Camaïeu was the leader on the French market and was even considered “the favourite brand of French women” according to the *Bible des marques* website.<sup>147</sup> With the textile market in decline, Camaïeu decided to redefine its entire design and brand image with the help of an advertising agency in 2017. In 2020, the Covid crisis hit the brand hard. In the same year, the brand found itself in receivership, while receiving the award for best women’s ready-to-wear chain.<sup>148</sup> Camaïeu’s financial worries lead to the closure of its shops in 2022, notably because of the Covid crisis, but also as a result of numerous restructuring operations within the company.<sup>149</sup> The brand was wound up in September 2022 after almost forty years. Its website has been closed and its social networks are still active but without content, except for Facebook.

## 1.2. Brand image, commitments and values

Camaïeu’s brand image emphasised its French origin and liked to highlight its longevity on the market. Articles about the brand often use the terms “French company” and “market leader” to describe the brand.<sup>150</sup> A search of the brand’s advertising archives revealed that the only publications still available date back to 2019 on Facebook. As the brand has deleted its website, my oldest source dates back to 2013. I am then starting my observation of its communications at this date.

As its target audience was women aged between twenty and sixty, the brand offered a dynamic, urban campaign in 2013 called « *Camaïeu en Mood* ». On display, colourful visuals featuring different “moods”: rock, glam, fun, candy and pop.<sup>151</sup> The aim of these different styles was to encourage new customers to buy Camaïeu clothes that can match their style, whether classic or not. The model in the images is a slim white woman who looks to be in her thirties.

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<sup>147</sup> Vautard, Céline. « Camaïeu : 30 ans et toujours leader sur le marché français ». *FashionUnited*. 11 Mar. 2021. [fashionunited.fr/actualite/retail/camai-eu-30-ans-et-toujours-leader-sur-le-marche-francais/201504139290](https://fashionunited.fr/actualite/retail/camai-eu-30-ans-et-toujours-leader-sur-le-marche-francais/201504139290).

<sup>148</sup> « Camaïeu : tout savoir sur cette marque ». *Bible-marques.fr*. [www.bible-marques.fr/camaieu.html](http://www.bible-marques.fr/camaieu.html).

<sup>149</sup> « L’enseigne de vêtements Camaïeu en redressement judiciaire ». *ladepeche.fr*, 26 Mai 2020. [www.ladepeche.fr/2020/05/26/lenseigne-de-vetements-camaieu-en-redressement-judiciaire,8904054.php](https://www.ladepeche.fr/2020/05/26/lenseigne-de-vetements-camaieu-en-redressement-judiciaire,8904054.php).

<sup>150</sup> Vautard, Céline. « Camaïeu : 30 ans et toujours leader sur le marché français ». *FashionUnited*. 11 Mar. 2021. [fashionunited.fr/actualite/retail/camai-eu-30-ans-et-toujours-leader-sur-le-marche-francais/201504139290](https://fashionunited.fr/actualite/retail/camai-eu-30-ans-et-toujours-leader-sur-le-marche-francais/201504139290).

<sup>151</sup> Seiler, Nelly. « A chacune son humeur chez Camaïeu ! » *Actus, Médias & Co*, Sept. 2013. [www.actusmediasandco.com/chacune-son-humeur-chez-camaieu](http://www.actusmediasandco.com/chacune-son-humeur-chez-camaieu).



Images of the « *Camaïeu en Mood* » campaign

The brand decided to overhaul its image in 2017 with the help of the Workshop agency. Camaïeu had a rather regular image and wanted to give itself some personality. This involved a new website and better management of the brand's social networks. Camaïeu also wanted to take a stronger stance in terms of its values: "Camaïeu wants to rewrite its brand platform. The aim is to develop a more emotional relationship with customers and not just a transactional one" [My translation]<sup>152</sup> explained the brand's marketing and digital director Emmanuelle Bach Donnard. Here we can see Camaïeu's move towards 3.0 marketing. As a reminder, today's marketing is committed to sharing the values of its consumers. We will see that Camaïeu did just that. Before redesigning its image with the help of an agency, the brand had already begun to create an image of a more human and supportive brand: in 2015, the brand launched an operation called « *Tissons la solidarité* » (Building/weaving solidarity) to collect "forgotten" clothes, with the aim of helping women in precarious situations to find work. The brand also offered customers the chance to round up their till receipts and make a donation to a charity.<sup>153</sup> Here, the brand could have been accused of redwashing. Although this concept is mainly used in the context of indigenous tribes in Canada, the definition indicates that redwashing is, among other things, the practice of a company that cares about social equality and justice and uses it to make profits and improve its public image. Although no one has accused the brand of redwashing, it is an interesting point to make. The fact that a brand has not been publicly accused of a form of CRS-washing does not mean that it is not worth mentioning. Redwashing is still a little-known concept, so this may have been a factor. The fact that the brand was

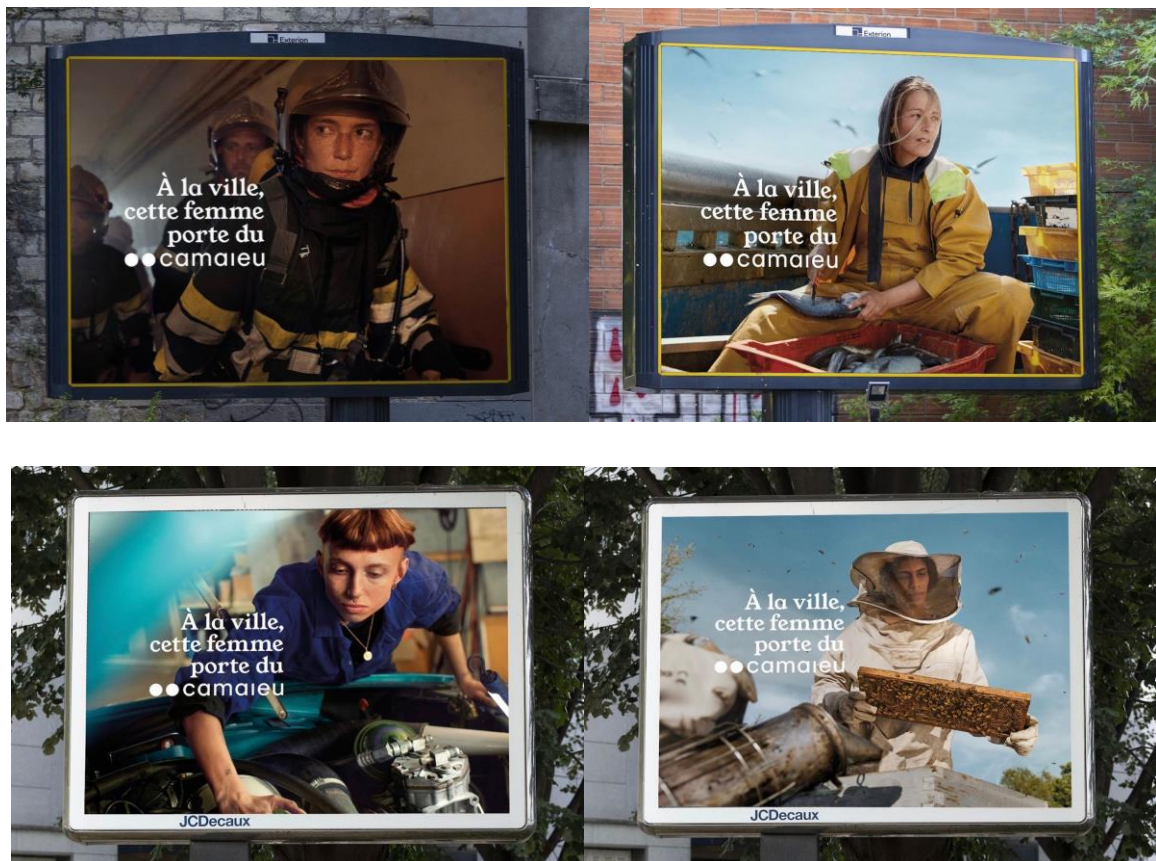
<sup>152</sup> « *Camaïeu veut réécrire sa plateforme de marque. Le but est de développer une relation plus émotionnelle avec les clientes et plus seulement transactionnelle* ». Gavard, Emmanuel. « Camaïeu en Workshop sur ses fondamentaux ». 24 Avr. 2017. [www.strategies.fr/actualites/marques/1062899W/camaieu-en-workshop-sur-ses-fondamentaux.html](http://www.strategies.fr/actualites/marques/1062899W/camaieu-en-workshop-sur-ses-fondamentaux.html).

<sup>153</sup> Leboucq, Valérie. « Camaïeu affiche son engagement solidaire ». *Les Echos*, 20 Mar. 2017. [www.lesechos.fr/2017/03/camaieu-affiche-son-engagement-solidaire-164632](http://www.lesechos.fr/2017/03/camaieu-affiche-son-engagement-solidaire-164632).



already positively appreciated by its public, and therefore had a good *ethos*, made its action seem sincere.

Camaïeu then began to focus its communications on feminism. In 2021, the brand launched its new campaign « *À la ville, cette femme porte du Camaïeu* » (In town, this woman wears Camaïeu)<sup>154</sup>, created with the Buzzman agency. A video shows women in different professions: doctor, lawyer, fisherwoman, firefighter, pilot, etc. The video begins with each woman getting ready for work and putting on her “uniform”. Then we see them at work. The video ends with smiling women strolling through town.<sup>155</sup> The first thing we notice is that the emphasis is on the courage of these women and not on the clothes. At no point is any of the brand’s clothing in evidence. Secondly, most of the women featured have jobs that we tend to associate with men. In addition to this video, Camaïeu also created posters showing women at work.



Posters for the « *À la ville, cette femme porte du Camaïeu* » campaign

<sup>154</sup> It seems that the brand has changed the way it spells its name: the “r” in Camaïeu has become an “i”. I will continue to use the old brand name in my dissertation, except to cite the sources that use the new spelling.

<sup>155</sup> « *À La Ville, Cette Femme Porte Du Camaïeu* ». *YouTube*, uploaded by Camaïeu, 20 Sept. 2021. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ5d8p\\_yuzA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MQ5d8p_yuzA). Accessed 9 Aug. 2023.

The brand’s marketing strategy was based on breaking codes: instead of selling the dream and doing standard advertising with models, the brand decided to present everyday women. Here we can clearly see the brand’s desire to promote women in its communications rather than its clothes. When compared with its 2013 campaign, the difference is glaring: the 2013 campaign is very colourful, while the model is rather classic. Here, women from different cultural and social backgrounds are presented. This is a typical example of successful femvertising. The brand is becoming more inclusive and intersectional, even if it is not yet perfect. On the posters, the women depicted are almost all white and slim, although one person of colour is also represented. But it is still a good ad, which does not overdo the cliché by featuring a woman of each origin, and which presents women in ways other than their beauty and physique.



Image of the 2013 campaign vs. image of the 2021 campaign.

As the comments under the video have been removed, it is difficult to know what the public reaction to this campaign was. However, the articles about the 2021 campaign are quite positive and congratulate the brand on its campaign, which is judged to be “creative”. The brand has therefore succeeded in presenting an *ethos* that is in line with the values of its consumers and has managed to convince its audience. So far, the brand seems to be successfully balancing its *ethos* with femvertising, which is not considered excessive.

### 1.3. 2022 campaign: violence against women

However, Camaïeu’s last campaign was not as well received as the previous one. In January 2022, the brand released a new campaign, in collaboration with the agency Buzzman and the SOLFA association helping women in difficulty. Camaïeu published, on its social media photos, of models wearing make-up with bruises on their faces. Beneath the photos, the brand published the following message: “1 in 10 women is a victim of violence”. [My translation]<sup>156</sup>

<sup>156</sup> « 1 femme sur 10 est victime de violences ». Screenshot taken from @MatildeMeslin. Twitter, 27 Jan. 2022, 1:51 pm.

☰ Categories

Doudounes

Manteaux Longs



1 femme sur 10 est victime de violences.

39 19 victime ou témoin composez le 3919.


CARE



Manteau graphique femme

-50% 29€<sup>39</sup> 59€<sup>40</sup>
Screenshot from *Twitter*

These posters were also displayed in shops. Buzzman also published a tweet saying: “By calling 3919, @Camaieu\_France can help you find out about violence against women while you are shopping”. [My translation]<sup>157</sup> 3919 is a French telephone helpline providing information and guidance to victims of gender-based and sexual violence, available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.<sup>158</sup>

<sup>157</sup> « Avec le 3919, @Camaieu\_France vous interpelle contre les violences faites aux femmes pendant votre shopping ». @Buzzman\_Time. *Twitter*, 25 Jan. 2022, 2:19 pm. [twitter.com/BUZZMAN\\_TIME/status/1485965527772188673](https://twitter.com/BUZZMAN_TIME/status/1485965527772188673).

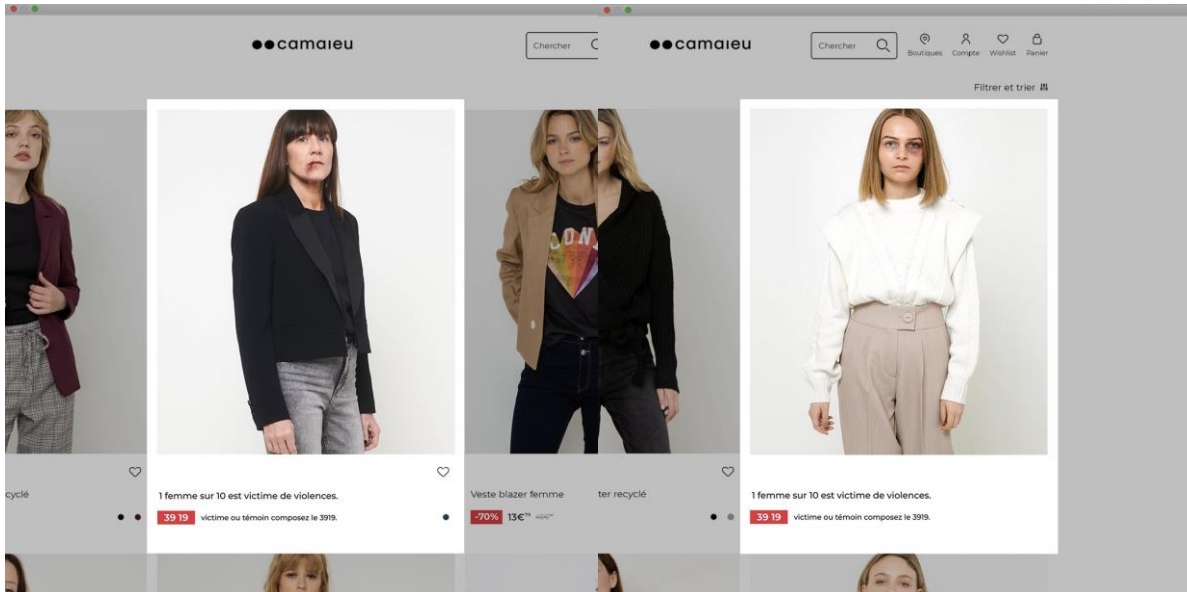
<sup>158</sup> « Violences sexistes et sexuelles : le 3919 désormais disponible à toute heure ». *Gouvernement.fr*. [www.gouvernement.fr/actualite/violences-sexistes-et-sexuelles-le-3919-desormais-disponible-a-toute-heure](https://www.gouvernement.fr/actualite/violences-sexistes-et-sexuelles-le-3919-desormais-disponible-a-toute-heure).



BUZZMAN\_TIME  
@BUZZMAN\_TIME



Avec le 3919, @Camaïeu\_France vous interpelle contre les violences faites aux femmes pendant votre shopping.



Screenshot from *Twitter*

The effect hoped for by the brand did not work: many Internet users were outraged by this campaign and did not hesitate to make their views known, notably on Twitter. The press also reported on the campaign, accusing the brand of purplewashing. How could a brand that had always managed to balance its image with its values by having a fairly ordinary and uneventful history be accused of purplewashing? Let us see if its values were still in line with its *ethos*.

#### 1.4. Analysis of the campaign and brand *ethos*

In this section, I will try to explain why Camaïeu's advertising was poorly received by the public and the media. First of all, the target audience was poorly chosen. As Camaïeu's customers are mainly women, it seems strange that they should be questioned about the violence they, and not their attackers, may suffer. The campaign would have made more sense with a more male audience, to prevent them from using violence on their partners, for example. However, that is not the only problem with this kind of advertising: publishing such images without warning can affect people who come across this type of content, which can be perceived as violent, especially if they are victims of this kind of violence. The bruised models pose next to the classic models. Anyone could visit the site and come across these images,

which were not listed in a specific tab on the site. The photos are mixed in with the others. Women who simply want to go shopping are confronted with shocking images that may remind them of traumatic experiences. If the aim was to encourage women who were victims of violence to call the number, there was no need to shock them by showing something they were already used to.

The second problem is make-up: turning a person into someone with blows can look very cartoonish. The blows inflicted on the victims are generally done in less visible places so as not to arouse suspicion. The simple fact of putting make-up on a model in this way and having her pose in photos to sell clothes is also problematic. This is where we come to the concept of purplewashing. Purplewashing consists, among other things, in appearing to be concerned about defending women's rights and equality between women and men, but without actually doing anything about it. Here, the company was using the fight against violence against women to sell its clothes. Although a victim support telephone number was given, it is still not enough to justify such publicity. However, this was not the only "concrete" thing the brand had put in place: Camaïeu put on sale a t-shirt displaying the number 3919, with 100% of the profits going to the SOLFA association, which takes in women who are victims of violence. Store employees also wore the t-shirt during the month of January, and the brand also offered to make donations at the checkout in aid of the association.<sup>159</sup> Unfortunately, with the scandal surrounding the campaign having taken over, this information made much less of a splash than had been hoped. Very few articles mention this information, while many focus on the scandal based mainly on Twitter.

Let us now look at the image of the brand and its *ethos*. Its brand image was already very good, as it was considered to be one of France's favourite brands and had already won an award for best women's ready-to-wear chain. This is not the first time that the brand has taken up the cause of women, as its 2021 campaign was well received. Camaïeu had also launched an operation to help women in precarious situations. Despite a good « *ethos préalable* », the brand failed to persuade its audience for several reasons. Although it was not the first time the brand talked about women in its communication, the subject of battered women is more delicate and sensitive than an advert about courageous women going to work. The brand did not specialise in this type of content and above all had no connection with the subject.

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<sup>159</sup> « Camaïeu : la campagne contre les violences faites aux femmes fait polémique sur les réseaux ». *CNEWS*, 27 Jan. 2022. [www.cnews.fr/france/2022-01-27/camaieu-la-campagne-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-fait-polemique-sur-les](http://www.cnews.fr/france/2022-01-27/camaieu-la-campagne-contre-les-violences-faites-aux-femmes-fait-polemique-sur-les).

Collaboration with an association was not enough to make its image credible in the eyes of the public. Credibility is essential to a brand's image. Without it, it loses the trust of its consumers. Although the brand had already taken solidarity actions in the past, this was not enough, and the lack of information on the subject of violence and the emotional impact of such advertising was not taken into account. We can speak here of an imbalance between *pathos* and *logos*: as far as *logos* is concerned, Camaïeu had not succeeded in adapting to the *endoxa* of its public. As a reminder, *endoxa* is a strategy that involves using content that most people approve of. If a piece of content is deemed unsuitable, no matter how logical the argument, it will still be rejected. That is exactly what happened here: despite a seemingly valid argument, that of helping battered women, the content proposed to get this message across was deemed inappropriate by consumers. From a social point of view, the audience did not accept models posing as battered women. Camaïeu probably thought that its audience would be in favour of an advert against violence against women. But the brand did not take its audience's emotions into account, which leads us to *pathos*.

There is almost a total absence of *pathos* here. The brand decided not to play on emotions and to send a short, clear and precise message, with no frills. But this gives an impression of coldness, even though the subject is a sensitive one. The tone used may also have played a part: very short and direct, with no warning. The campaign, which was surely intended to convey a sense of urgency and create a certain amount of shock, did so, but failed to achieve the desired effect. Instead of convincing victims to lodge complaints and seek help, it had merely shocked the public, who did not understand what the company was trying to achieve or why it was targeting them. This lack of logic and emotion meant that the *ethos* could not be balanced. From a rhetorical point of view, the *ethos* was not in line with the *pathos* and *logos* of the brand, which created an imbalance and failed to persuade the audience. Although Aristotle considers *ethos* to be one of the most important paradigms, it is essential that the three paradigms balance each other for the discourse to work.

We are also dealing with a stereotyped *ethos*. The models portrayed as battered women all have blows to the face. As I said earlier, the make-up is also a problem because it is clichéd. The blows a battered woman has are often hidden so as not to arouse suspicion. Another problem is that the make-up is "aesthetic": the models are not disfigured by the blows, it is discreet, they are beautiful and meet beauty standards. You could almost see it as a way of romanticising the beatings that real victims receive. There is also an imbalance between the said *ethos* and the shown *ethos*: through its various campaigns and actions, Camaïeu demonstrated a supportive and feminist *ethos*. But that changes with this campaign. The said

*ethos* here is that Camaïeu once again supports women and wants to help combat the violence they suffer. But the shown *ethos* that the public interprets is a false and negative *ethos*, a brand that rides the wave of feminism to make a profit, a brand that does purplewashing. The brand, which had a positive, well-constructed *ethos* beforehand, found itself swept aside by this error in marketing strategy.

As the campaign had a media impact, Camaïeu also responded to the scandal. The brand chose the defensive method: Véronique Bacquet, brand director, spoke to the newspaper *Le Parisien*, expressing her disappointment that this controversy had displaced the main debate. In her opinion, as Camaïeu's audience is essentially made up of women, it was logical that its campaign should target women:

Some people have told us that we should target men, but our audience is female: we owe it to them to inform them of this telephone number [...] At Camaïeu, the majority of our customers are women... As a women's company, we could not just sell clothes.”[My translation]<sup>160</sup>

The campaign ran until the end of January and the brand did not change its position. As the director explained, we could see that the brand really wanted to emphasise the place of women in its communications and also its values. But the brand has not been able to maintain its image, despite a previously positive *ethos* and a history considered to be positive. In this particular case, the reactions in the press and from the public were significant enough to tarnish the brand's image. In this case, it is not the brand's past or its past actions that are the problem, but its failed message as interpreted by its audience.

As Ruth Amossy explains in her book, a speaker must present an appropriate self-image for communication to be effective. The stereotype presented here by Camaïeu was not interpreted in the way the brand would have wished. Camaïeu therefore ended up with an identity that it did not want to have in the first place: that of a brand that uses feminism for profit.

When you look at the brand's identity, its values and its past actions, the brand did not seem at first sight to want to use feminism for profit, although it is still femvertising. Perhaps this campaign was not necessarily made with the idea of making money by surfing the feminist

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<sup>160</sup> « Des gens nous ont dit qu'il fallait viser les hommes, mais notre audience est féminine : on se doit de les informer de ce numéro de téléphone [...] On est majoritairement des femmes chez Camaïeu, nos clientes sont des femmes... Comme entreprise de femmes, on ne pouvait pas se contenter de vendre des vêtements ». Mabilon, Léa. « Camaïeu dérange avec cette campagne contre les violences faites aux Femmes sur sa boutique en ligne ». *Madame Figaro*, 27 Jan. 2022. [madame.lefigaro.fr/societe/cette-campagne-de-sensibilisation-de-camaieu-contre-la-violence-qui-derange-270122-210576](https://madame.lefigaro.fr/societe/cette-campagne-de-sensibilisation-de-camaieu-contre-la-violence-qui-derange-270122-210576).

fashion wave, since Camaïeu had already shown its support for the cause in the past, but the campaign was badly executed. Despite a previously positive *ethos*, the brand failed to maintain an image of itself in line with its values and those of its consumers.

## **2. Dove 2017 Campaign: Body Positivity**

The second brand I have decided to analyse is Dove, a very popular brand of hygiene products. Considered a pioneering brand in femvertising, Dove also received a Femvertising Award in 2015 for its “Speak Beautiful” campaign in the social impact category, which showed the impact of what we say on social networks.<sup>161</sup> I chose this brand precisely because it won a Femvertising Award, which means that Dove is supposed to be a brand that stands up for feminist values. Dove is a brand that can also be found in Europe and is very widespread worldwide, with a great historical background. The campaign I am going to focus on dates from 2017 and is therefore part of the period I am interested in. There has also been a media impact in relation to this campaign, but also to others. Dove is a fairly large international brand, it is therefore not possible for me to analyse every campaign it runs. I am going to concentrate on the brand’s highlights to give an overview of its image over time.

### **2.1. History**

Dove was created in 1957 in the United States and is part of the Unilever multinational. Unilever was originally called Lever Brothers and was a British company specialising in margarine and soap. In 1929, Lever Brothers joined forces with United Margarine to form Unilever. Today, this multinational owns more than 400 brands, including Dove.<sup>162</sup> To return to this particular brand, Dove began in 1957 in the US by selling just one product for women: its famous cleansing “beauty bar”. At the time, this soap was revolutionary, not only as a cleanser but also as a moisturiser that left the skin soft. The brand quickly became a well-known and inexpensive brand, often recommended by dermatologists. Aiming to become a leading brand, Dove developed a series of new products in the 2000s: its line also expanded to include skin and hair care, deodorants, body lotions and many other toiletry products. In 2007, the brand became the world's number one cleaning brand in the health and beauty sector.<sup>163</sup> After years of focusing mainly on products for women, in 2010 Dove developed its “Men+Care”

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<sup>161</sup> “SheKnows Media Announces Winners of the #Femvertising Awards and The Pitch at #BlogHer15: Experts Among Us.” *Businesswire*, 21 July 2015. [www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150721005752/en/SheKnows-Media-Announces-Winners-of-the-Femvertising-Awards-and-The-Pitch-at-BlogHer15-Experts-Among-Us](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150721005752/en/SheKnows-Media-Announces-Winners-of-the-Femvertising-Awards-and-The-Pitch-at-BlogHer15-Experts-Among-Us).

<sup>162</sup> “History and Archives.” *Unilever*, Feb. 2023. [www.unilever.com/our-company/our-history-and-archives/](http://www.unilever.com/our-company/our-history-and-archives/).

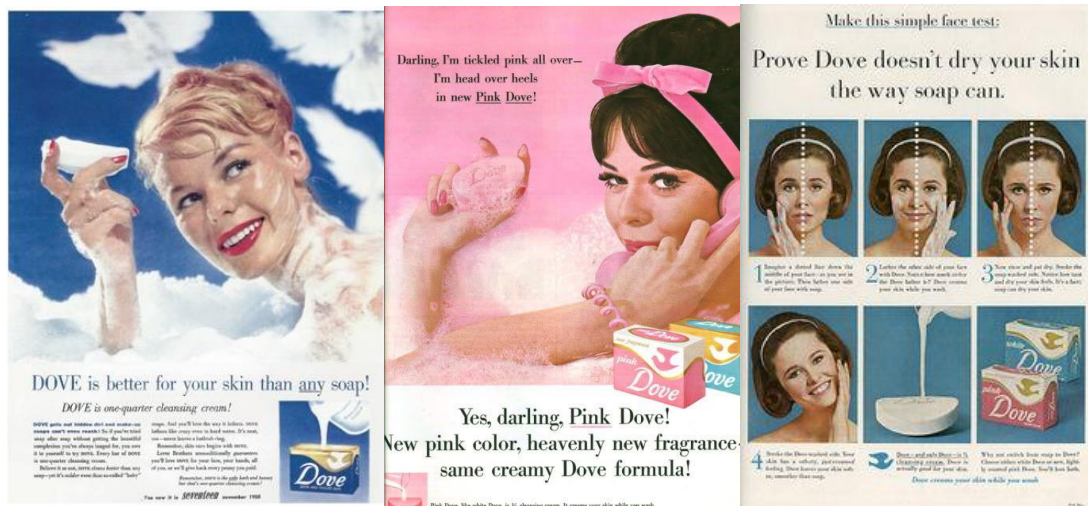
<sup>163</sup> Deighton, John. *Dove: Evolution of a Brand*. Harvard Business School, 25 Mar. 2008, pp. 1-2.



range to attract male consumers.<sup>164</sup> The brand also started to offer products for children and even a range for babies. More than sixty years after its first launch, Dove is still selling its beauty bar, alongside a wide range of hygiene products in more than 150 countries.

## 2.2. Brand image, commitments and values

Initially, Dove’s targets were only women. More specifically, white women, if we look at the posters from the 1960’s. The models are the smiling, made-up beauties of their time.



Dove vintage ads

Concerning its logo, its origin is not official, but the most plausible theory is that it represents the bird often associated with grace, romance, peace and goodwill.<sup>165</sup> Dove continued to use beauty standard models until the 2000s.



In 2004 Dove started to change its brand image with its “Campaign for Real Beauty”. The soap company is often credited with the start of femvertising thanks to this campaign, which had a huge impact.<sup>166</sup> The idea for this campaign began in 2002, when Dove conducted a worldwide survey asking women how beautiful they felt. The result was that 2% of the women questioned thought they were beautiful. Instead of using standard slim white models, the brand decided to create a campaign with “ordinary” people posing as models.<sup>167</sup> The

<sup>164</sup> Miziolek, John. “How Dove Reinvented Its Brand for Men.” *Fast Company*, 14 Mar. 2012. [www.fastcompany.com/1824772/how-dove-reinvented-its-brand-men](http://www.fastcompany.com/1824772/how-dove-reinvented-its-brand-men).

<sup>165</sup> Wordsmith, Lily. “The History of and Story Behind the Dove Logo.” *Money Inc*, 11 Nov. 2021. [moneyinc.com/dove-logo/](http://moneyinc.com/dove-logo/).

<sup>166</sup> Dan, Avi. “Dove Invented ‘Femvertising’ but Its Latest Stunt Didn’t Wash With Consumers.” *Forbes*, 11 May 2017. [www.forbes.com/sites/avidan/2017/05/11/dove-invented-femvertising-but-its-latest-stunt-didnt-wash-with-consumers](http://www.forbes.com/sites/avidan/2017/05/11/dove-invented-femvertising-but-its-latest-stunt-didnt-wash-with-consumers).

<sup>167</sup> Deighton, John. *Dove: Evolution of a Brand*. Harvard Business School, 25 Mar. 2008, p.3.

campaign began with billboards featuring images of women who did not fit the standard mannequin. Dove's message was: do not compare yourself to unattainable beauty goals. The campaign as a whole was successful but also met with criticism.

 Real women. Real beauty



Dove Real Beauty campaign image

On the positive side, this campaign introduced the issue of beauty standards. By using ordinary people, Dove aimed to challenge beauty stereotypes. The campaign received numerous awards and positive reviews for daring to break the code. And it worked very well from a marketing point of view too:

Evidence that the campaign has increased brand loyalty includes the fact that in 2006, two-thirds of Dove's sales were generated by people who bought more than one Dove product, double the number from 2003, before the start of the campaign.<sup>168</sup>

Dove succeeded in convincing its public. But when you dig a little deeper, a number of problems and inconsistencies surface. Firstly, the slogan on the poster "Real women. Real beauty" suggests that there are "fake" women among the real ones. Based on this slogan, women of model size seem to be rejected. But body positivity is not about rejecting thin people in order to highlight other body types, but about accepting and recognising all existing body types.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, Dove is expressing its desire to challenge the dominant standards of

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<sup>168</sup> Celebre, Angela and Ashley Waggoner Denton. "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly of the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty." *Magazine Issue*, vol. 2, 2014. [www.in-mind.org/article/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-of-the-dove-campaign-for-real-beauty](http://www.in-mind.org/article/the-good-the-bad-and-the-ugly-of-the-dove-campaign-for-real-beauty).

<sup>169</sup> Duchemin, Dorothee. « Body positive : origine, signification et détournement de ce mouvement ». *Le Journal des Femmes*, 29 Mar. 2021. [www.journaldesfemmes.fr/societe/guide-pratique/2705943-body-positif/](http://www.journaldesfemmes.fr/societe/guide-pratique/2705943-body-positif/).

beauty, but is using models who, in the end, still strongly resemble these ideals. The models in the image have no scars, stretch marks or cellulite. There are also no disabled people or people suffering from an illness, although these people could also have featured on the poster if Dove really wanted to break away from the standard models. The models also all have fairly standard sizes, which we can assume to be between 34 and 38/40 in French sizes. People over and under this size are not represented. We can already suggest a difference between the said *ethos* and the shown *ethos*, but I will come back to this in the next section.

The Real Beauty campaign lasted several years, with posters featuring these models, as well as videos. One in particular posted in 2013 was successful: it featured an artist drawing women based on their own description, followed by another drawing of the same woman but described by a stranger. The sketch created from an outsider's opinion was always more flattering. Dove's message for this video was: "You're more beautiful than you think".<sup>170</sup> What we can already deduce from these images and videos is that Dove wants to share these values: self-acceptance, acceptance of all bodies and self-confidence.

Let us take a look at the Dove website and its owner Unilever. When you look at their official websites, their values are explicitly stated. Take the description given by Unilever when you search for the Dove brand on its site:

For over 17 years, we've been working to make beauty a source of confidence, not anxiety. Beauty is not defined by shape, size or colour – it's authentic. Unique. Real. We invite all women to experience beauty on their own terms by engaging them with products that deliver superior care.<sup>171</sup>

Above this description is an image of women of different ages and ethnicities. Next to this is the Dove logo with the phrase "Our mission is to make a positive experience of beauty accessible to all women". There is also the Dove logo with the slogan "Let's Change Beauty".

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<sup>170</sup> Link to the video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpaOjMXyJGk).

<sup>171</sup> "Dove." *Unilever*. [www.unilever.com/brands/beauty-wellbeing/dove/](http://www.unilever.com/brands/beauty-wellbeing/dove/).



Home image of Dove on the Unilever website

The target audience is clearly female, as can be seen from the words “We care about all women, female-identifying and non-binary people” published on the same page. A questionable choice of phrasing, given that the brand has extended its product ranges to men and that hygiene products should not be gendered if the brand is truly in line with feminist values. What is more, this sentence implies that the brand is open to non-binary people and therefore to the LGBTQIA+ community, which includes non-binary people. However, the brand does not mention the other members of the community who may use their products. If their aim is to attract a female audience, transgender women should also be included. This could be seen as a form of pinkwashing or rainbow-washing, as the phrase seems to want to include the LGBTQIA+ community while excluding it at the same time. Looking at the Unilever website in more general terms, the company says it is concerned about the place of women in society. There is a page dedicated to the place of women in the workplace, entitled “Gender equality and women’s empowerment”, in which the company explains its commitment to gender equality in the workplace.<sup>172</sup> However, when we look at the management positions, it is surprising to see that of the twelve Unilever Leadership Executives, only two are women. In the Unilever Board team, four of the twelve members are women. This gives a total of six women out of 24 in the leadership team, i.e. 25% women in senior positions compared with 75% men.<sup>173</sup> Concerning Dove’s management team, this information is not available on its website. I was able to find this information on *Comparably.com*. It would appear that the executive team is made up of seven men and no women.<sup>174</sup> We can already see a form of purplewashing here, as it shows a lack of internal change: Unilever publishes public statements

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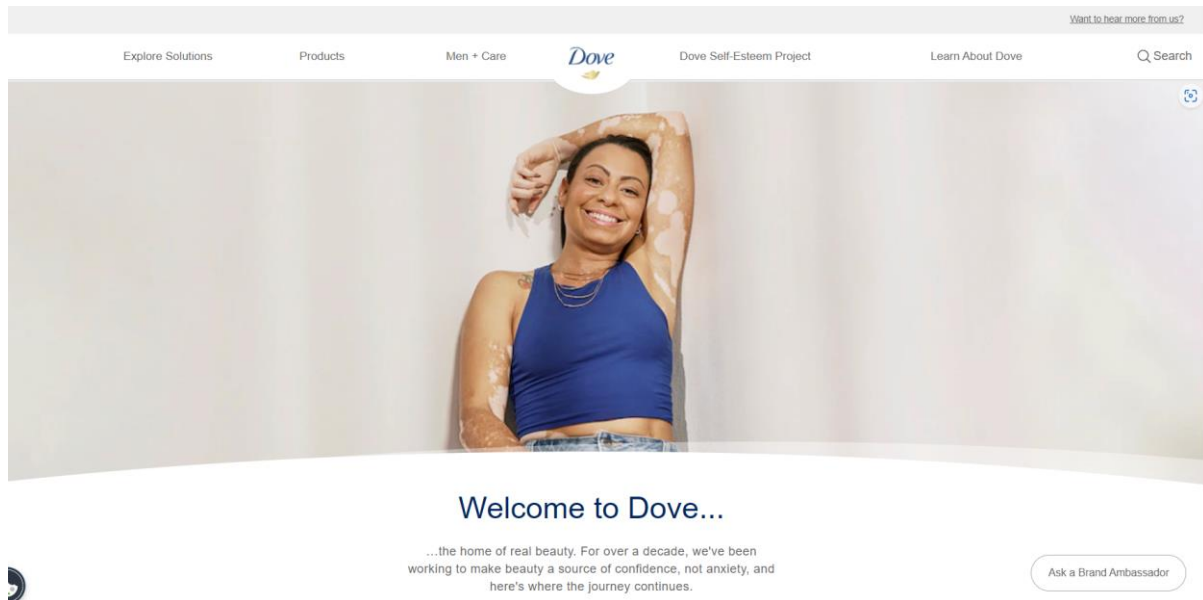
<sup>172</sup> “Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment.” *Unilever*. [www.unilever.com/planet-and-society/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment](http://www.unilever.com/planet-and-society/equity-diversity-and-inclusion/gender-equality-and-womens-empowerment).

<sup>173</sup> “Our Leadership.” *Unilever*. [www.unilever.com/our-company/our-leadership](http://www.unilever.com/our-company/our-leadership).

<sup>174</sup> “Dove Executive Team.” *Comparably*. [www.comparably.com/companies/dove/executive-team](http://www.comparably.com/companies/dove/executive-team).

about gender equality in the workplace, yet there are barely 1/4 of them in the top positions of their companies. The said *ethos* is again different from the one shown.

When you look at the Dove website, the emphasis is clearly on the values advocated by the brand: self-esteem and body positivity. The brand puts forward numerous campaigns on topical subjects, showing models with hair under their arms, women with skin problems, curvy women, etc. The subject of toxic masculinity is also addressed in the “Men+Care” category. It is a step up from their older ads, because there is a lot more body diversity.



Dove home page

The values promoted by Dove and therefore Unilever are clearly feminist. Femvertising is clearly part of their marketing strategy. However, in the light of what has been observed, we will see that it tends towards purplewashing in several respects, some of which have already been discussed in this section. Their websites are full of articles and campaigns that demonstrate their commitment to feminist values. Given the size of these two sites, I am going to focus on one ad in particular that has also sparked debate. This campaign went against one of the brand’s strongest values, which is the body positive. It is also an ad that has received a lot of criticism from consumers and the press. The advertisement in question is not very consistent with the brand’s general line of conduct or the image it claims to have.

### 2.3. 2017 campaign: “Celebrate the many shapes and sizes of beauty”

In 2017, Dove launched its campaign “Celebrate the many shapes and sizes of beauty” in which limited editions of body soap bottles were presented. What made them special? The bottles had different shapes, to bring to mind women’s bodies. The video begins with what

appears to be a manufacturing machine and the phrase “There is no one perfect shape”. Then, there are several scenes showing the creation of the bottles. The video ends with an overview of the bottles and the slogan “Beauty comes in all shapes and sizes”.<sup>175</sup> In description, the brand wrote:

“Now an iconic Dove product comes in all shapes and sizes too. Discover how we reaffirmed our commitment to beauty confidence with 6 exclusive bottles, that celebrate bodies of all shapes and sizes”.<sup>176</sup>

On their website, there is still a page dedicated to the campaign, explaining its aim:

We’ve championed this version of beauty for the past 60 years, and celebrated diverse women in our groundbreaking real beauty campaigns. But we wanted to bring this to life through our products, too. That’s why we’ve created a limited edition range of Dove Body Washes, designed as a reminder that beauty is diverse and diversity is beautiful.<sup>177</sup>

The six bottles produced by the brand were supposed to represent different body types: slim, round, slender, etc.



Screenshot from the commercial on *Youtube*

With these bottles, the brand wanted to show that all women are beautiful. Dove went on to explain that “one in two women feels social media puts pressure on them to look a certain way”.<sup>178</sup> The brand ended by explaining that they wanted to spread confidence and beauty

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<sup>175</sup> Dove UK. “Celebrate the Many Shapes and Sizes of Beauty | Dove.” *YouTube*, 26 Apr. 2017. [https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX\\_U](https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX_U).

<sup>176</sup> Dove UK. [https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX\\_U](https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX_U).

<sup>177</sup> “Limited Editions to Celebrate Beauty Diversity – Dove.” *Dove*. [www.dove.com/uk/stories/campaigns/dove-beauty-diversity.html](http://www.dove.com/uk/stories/campaigns/dove-beauty-diversity.html). Accessed 10 Aug. 2023.

<sup>178</sup> “Limited Editions to Celebrate Beauty Diversity – Dove.”

through their influence in the media. Reactions to the video had been rather mixed. Some praised the originality of the ad, while others strongly criticised it.



@OneBagTravel il y a 6 ans

Dove is just playing the game. A clever marketing team taking advantage of body positive hysteria on social media and the like. If I need reassurance about my body through the shape of a bottle I purchase, than it's time to seek some form of mental therapy. A soap company isn't going to help you.



138



Répondre

Screenshot of the video comments section

The few media outlets that spoke on the subject were not very complimentary either.

#### 2.4. Analysis of the campaign and brand *ethos*

Here, the brand uses body positivity to sell its products in the most literal sense. It encourages you to buy a bottle according to your body type, which is rather simplistic. Another rather simplistic approach is to encourage women to see themselves only in terms of their shape. *Forbes* magazine, which published an article on the subject, describes the campaign as disingenuous and far removed from the values advocated by the brand.<sup>179</sup> What's more, it objectifies women by comparing them to bottles, which is inconsistent with the values of feminism, which aims to combat this very thing.

When you look at the brand's « *ethos préalable* », it is not a very good one. Back in the 1960's, the ads only showed white, prim women. However, we can see that the brand has done its utmost to break away from this *ethos* and create a more modern one, which is what Dove has been presenting since the 2000s. But even when you look at the 2004 campaign, there are still inconsistencies because this campaign did not represent the true diversity of bodies. However, we can admit that the brand has greatly improved its *ethos* in this respect, offering much more diversity in these years.

Let us turn now to one of the most important points: the said *ethos* and the shown *ethos*. The brand's declared *ethos* is one of body diversity and body positivity. It demonstrates this by showing diverse bodies in its current campaigns, on its website and on its networks. However, this is not enough to prove that this *ethos* is sincere. When we look at the group to which Dove belongs, Unilever, something strikes us: the multinational, which owns numerous brands, also owns Axe. Axe is a brand of cosmetic products, mainly deodorants, with an essentially male

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<sup>179</sup> Dan, Avi. "Dove Invented 'Femvertising' but Its Latest Stunt Didn't Wash With Consumers." *Forbes*, 11 May 2017. [www.forbes.com/sites/avidan/2017/05/11/dove-invented-femvertising-but-its-latest-stunt-didnt-wash-with-consumers](http://www.forbes.com/sites/avidan/2017/05/11/dove-invented-femvertising-but-its-latest-stunt-didnt-wash-with-consumers).

target audience. The brand has on many occasions been accused of sexism, notably in its ads where a man wearing Axe can be seen attracting all the women to his feet. It is quite contradictory to advocate feminist values when, on the other hand, Unilever also promotes sexist clichés and beauty standards in its Axe ads. As I have already stated, Unilever is in favour of equality between men and women in the workplace, even though only 25% of women have a significant role in their company. Knowing, moreover, that Dove is run solely by men, makes the gulf between the said *ethos* and the shown *ethos* even deeper. As a result, the Dove brand is losing credibility. By losing credibility, it also loses persuasiveness and its *ethos* is very much weakened.

Stereotyping is also poorly executed. As a reminder, stereotyping is not necessarily a negative thing, as Amossy explains that it is necessary in communication. However, there is a fine line between successful stereotyping and caricature. When you look at the Dove website, the feminist stereotyping is quite successful: the brand presents committed campaigns, a variety of models, breaks the codes by showing armpit hair, for example, and shows people with imperfect skin. Its goal is clearly to attract women customers thanks to its progressive views on women. The site has all the attributes of a feminist stereotype, but without becoming a caricature. We can already see that before moving to this stereotype, the brand had moved away from its basic stereotype, which was that of the clichés of beauty standards. It was the 2004 campaign that heralded this change, moving from one stereotype to another that was more modern and in tune with the times. The brand has deliberately created its new stereotyping based on the social models of 3.0 marketing. Dove, like many other brands, has also moved towards more committed marketing, concerned with the values of its customers. It is the updating effect Amossy was talking about: Dove went from an old model to a new, modern, feminist image. Dove rejected its old model but nevertheless became a new stereotype, that of femvertising. The problem of stereotyping is particularly apparent in its 2017 advertising. The shapes of the bottles are a clumsy and very clichéd way of reminding us of women's bodies, reduced to soap bottles. The stereotype is a construct that can only be read if the audience to whom the stereotype is addressed interprets it in the right way. In this case, the stereotyping was poorly done, so consumers saw it as a caricature rather than a video advocating body positivity. Instead of being seen as a committed brand, it was perceived as using feminism for promotional purposes. The connotation of the campaign had become pejorative. There was also a conflict of interpretation: the pre-existing *ethos* of the brand, which was linked to that of other brands such as Axe, found itself at odds with the values of its consumers. This led to a misinterpretation of what the brand wanted to convey.



If we look at *logos* and *pathos*, there is a problem there too. As far as the *pathos* is concerned, when you look at the page dedicated to this advertising campaign, the tone seems rather serious. However, people who have seen the advert have found it amusing, even ridiculous. The music used is very rhythmic and has a burlesque feel. The video is very theatrical.<sup>180</sup> This contrasts with the message conveyed by the brand on its website. The *logos*, as with Camaïeu, is not effective because Dove has not succeeded in adapting to the *endoxa* of its public. The majority of its audience did not approve of the idea of using bottles of different shapes, and the ad was therefore rejected. It doesn't matter if the message behind it makes sense, as the *endoxa* was not respected, valid arguments are not considered as such.

Taking into account all the criteria I have just explained, we can therefore categorise Dove as a brand that engages in purplewashing. The past of the brand and of the multinational that owns it, the inconsistency between its stated *ethos* and the one shown, the caricatural stereotyping and the imbalance of the three paradigms *ethos pathos logos* lead us to this conclusion. The 2017 advert is a typical example of purplewashing, but even if the media or the public do not take offence at the brand's other ads, the fact remains that Dove is engaging in widespread purplewashing. The gap between the brand's stated values and what is shown, particularly in its internal management of the company, does not make their approach sincere.

### **3. Gillette 2019 Campaign: Toxic Masculinity**

The third brand I am going to analyse is Gillette, an American brand specialised in safety razors, shaving supplies and other personal care products. It is very interesting to analyse this brand because, unlike the others I have just analysed, this one has a more masculine audience. The question of femvertising in more masculine brands is worth thinking about. What is more, the brand tried a form of femvertising and the media and economic repercussions were quite significant. Although Gillette has not been explicitly accused of purplewashing, we will see that it has nonetheless capitalised on feminism to sell. In the press, the brand has mainly been accused of capitalising on the subject of male toxicity while at the same time engaging in sexist marketing. The brand is also well known in Europe, and the campaign in question was also presented in European countries.

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<sup>180</sup> Dove UK. "Celebrate the Many Shapes and Sizes of Beauty | Dove." *YouTube*, 26 Apr. 2017. [https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX\\_U](https://youtu.be/CRiv2lgaX_U).

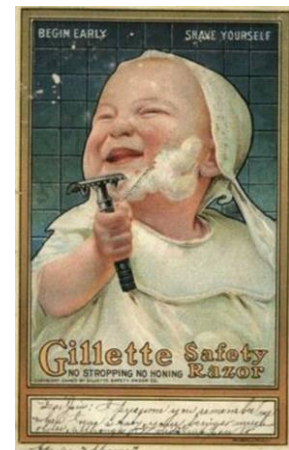
### 3.1. History

The first Gillette razor was created in the late 1800s by King Camp Gillette, an American businessman who wanted to create a cheap, easily replaceable razor. He brought out his very first prototype razor with disposable blades in 1901.<sup>181</sup> With his project partners, King C. Gillette founded The American Safety Razor Company, which became the Gillette Safety Razor Company in 1904, giving it the name of the brand we know today.<sup>182</sup> At the time, this type of razor was revolutionary because men had to go to the barber or use a straight, old-fashioned razor, which was quite dangerous. Gillette's razor was a great success: by the end of 1904, 90,000 razors and 12,400,000 blades had been produced.<sup>183</sup> The company has grown over the years, offering new models up to its latest in 2019, a heated shaver. The brand has also launched a range for women, called Milady Décolleté Gillette. Gillette currently offers two ranges for women: the Venus range and the Daisy range. In 2005, the Gillette Company was merged with Procter & Gamble<sup>184</sup>, an American multinational that owns brands in the following sectors: beauty, grooming, health care, fabric and home care, and care for babies, women and families.<sup>185</sup>

### 3.2. Brand image, commitments and values

As with Dove, Gillette is a very well-known brand and part of a multinational corporation, therefore I am going to take a look at the brand as well as The Procter & Gamble Company (P&G).

When you look at the vintage posters, you can see that Gillette liked to use different approaches: humour, prestige, family. The 1905 advert showing a baby shaving, makes you smile, even if it is a little ridiculous. It was a creative and humorous way of saying that, thanks to its razors, men could regain their baby skin. It could have also been a way to emphasise the increased safety offered by the product. Back in the 1910s and 1920s, Gillette relied on the fact that men shaved to



<sup>181</sup> "Our History." *Gillette*. [gillette.com/en-us/about/our-story](https://www.gillette.com/en-us/about/our-story). Accessed 11 Aug. 2023.

<sup>182</sup> Gillette, King Camp. "Origin of the Gillette Razor." *The Gillette Blade*. Boston: Gillette Safety Razor Company 1918.

<sup>183</sup> Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "King Camp Gillette." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 5 Jul. 2023. <https://www.britannica.com/biography/King-Camp-Gillette>.

<sup>184</sup> "Procter and Gamble Acquires Gillette." *CBS News*, 28 Jan. 2005. [www.cbsnews.com/news/procter-gamble-acquires-gillette](http://www.cbsnews.com/news/procter-gamble-acquires-gillette).

<sup>185</sup> "Brands | P&G." *Procter & Gamble United Kingdom*. [www.pg.co.uk/brands](http://www.pg.co.uk/brands).



fathers. The music is also important, having been created especially for the advert, with a background of electric guitar and sung by a man. Here Gillette presents the traditional man and the stereotype of masculinity. Gillette's message: to support men in their daily lives.<sup>187</sup> In 1993, Gillette launched a new ad, similar to the previous one. The video showed moments in the lives of married men, fathers and sportsmen. We notice a slight change in the 2000s, with the third video being more focused on technology: we see a muscular white man shaving, followed by images of military aircraft. At the end, a woman in a nightie strokes the pilot's cheeks.<sup>188</sup> It still represents the "typical" man, but with a touch of advanced technology, comparing aerospace with the new razor. In 2010, Gillette released a new ad showing a young man hesitating to talk to a woman. He shaves and then feels confident enough to talk to her.<sup>189</sup> Gillette therefore maintains the same image of the traditional man who shaves to gain confidence and look presentable. In 2019 the brand drastically changed its image, creating certain reactions. Gillette released a video informing consumers of a change in its slogan: it is no longer "The Best a Man Can Get" but "The Best Men Can Be". This change of slogan is not insignificant: the old slogan focused on the fact that Gillette's razors were the best innovation men could have. The new slogan has a deeper meaning: it refers to men's behaviour and what society expects of them, to their relationship with masculinity. The video, which I will develop in more detail in the next section, talks about toxic masculinity.<sup>190</sup> Toxic masculinity refers to the caricatured idea of what a "real" man is: someone who never cries, who is physically strong and heterosexual. The kind of man you would see in the old Gillette ads. Toxic masculinity has consequences: having mental health problems is seen as being a "weak" man. Some men suffering from depression, for example, will not seek help. Taking care of oneself is seen as something feminine. These people reject everything that can be considered feminine, including emotions. Toxic masculinity also has an impact on feminism and the LGBTQIA community: boys considered too "feminine" are subject to harassment at school.<sup>191</sup> Feminism is diametrically opposed to toxic masculinity, in terms of values that are not at all the same. Given its ideas, toxic masculinity is not in favour of gender equality. Since men's emotions are not to be taken into account in the same way as women's, those in favour of this type of masculinity do not

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<sup>187</sup> malemodelretro. "Gillette, the Best a Man Can Get." *YouTube*, 4 Oct. 2010. [youtu.be/OAkVDCqVY6w](https://youtu.be/OAkVDCqVY6w).

<sup>188</sup> OnTheTelly. "Gillette Mach 3 Razors 2000 Commercial." *YouTube*, 11 Jan. 2018. [youtu.be/Xom8K9-od48](https://youtu.be/Xom8K9-od48).

<sup>189</sup> Have a Break TV Ads. "Gillette Ad 2010." *YouTube*, 28 May 2020. [youtu.be/Ngz4R7eIUBM](https://youtu.be/Ngz4R7eIUBM).

<sup>190</sup> Guardian News. "Gillette's 'We Believe: The Best Men Can Be' Razors Commercial Takes on Toxic Masculinity." *Youtube*, 15 Jan. 2019. [youtu.be/UYaY2Kb\\_PKI](https://youtu.be/UYaY2Kb_PKI).

<sup>191</sup> Lcsw, Amy Morin. "What Is Toxic Masculinity?" *Verywell Mind*, 14 Nov. 2022. [www.verywellmind.com/what-is-toxic-masculinity-5075107](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-toxic-masculinity-5075107).

understand some of the battles being fought by feminists. The subject of masculinity is very vast and even more complex than that, but we can remember the following:

The major problem that must be addressed is the stigma around male vulnerability that discourages men from voicing their stress and challenges. If it is recognized that male populations are dealing with those dilemmas or difficulties just as women are, only covertly, then the argument that women are naturally unfit for work due to their biological difference from men can be easily dismissed. Thus, the social norm of honoring some gender characteristics and denigrating others collapses and gender inequality reduces as feminist traits in the male population are normalized.<sup>192</sup>

With this video on the subject, we can see that Gillette is moving towards more feminist values, denouncing men's inappropriate behaviour and breaking the stereotype of the handsome, strong and emotionless man who lives only by his virility and his perfect shave. The same year, the brand released a video showing a father and his transgender son. The video shows the father teaching his son how to shave.<sup>193</sup> It also received mixed reviews: some saw it as a positive and caring message, others accused the brand of “wokeism”, a term that has become a pejorative meaning. The *Cambridge Dictionary* gives a definition of “wokery”, synonym for “wokeism”: “a way of referring to the acts and opinions of people who are especially aware of social problems such as racism and inequality, used by people who do not approve these acts and opinions.”<sup>194</sup> These accusations will be explained by analysing the *ethos* of the brand and its target audience.

Another thing that upset some people was Gillette's hypocrisy. In this advert, the brand denounced toxic masculinity, while maintaining a form of sexism with what is known as the pink tax. The pink tax is the tendency to charge more for a product marketed to women than for the same product marketed to men. Pink refers to the colour very often associated with women in marketing products. For example, a pink razor for women will be more expensive than a blue one for men. According to a study carried out in the United States on almost 100 brands, 13% of products aimed at women were



<sup>192</sup> Huang, Sharon. “To Succeed, the Feminist Movement Must Address Toxic Masculine Social Norms.” *Grow Constantly; Think Critically*, 9 May 2021. [mypathtowardsmindfulness.org/2021/05/08/to-succeed-the-feminist-movement-must-address-toxic-masculine-social-norms](https://mypathtowardsmindfulness.org/2021/05/08/to-succeed-the-feminist-movement-must-address-toxic-masculine-social-norms).

<sup>193</sup> Link to the video: [https://youtu.be/AR-JkiNQ\\_Ro](https://youtu.be/AR-JkiNQ_Ro)

<sup>194</sup> “Wokery” *Cambridge Dictionary*. [dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wokery](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/wokery). Accessed 11 Aug. 2023.

more expensive than similar products for men. Other research in the UK revealed that deodorants for women were on average 8.9% more expensive than those for men.<sup>195</sup> The Gillette brand is also accused of “pink taxing” its products: in 2019, the *pink.tax* website published an article comparing the prices of men’s and women’s razors in a New York drugstore. Here is what it found:

The photos below evidence per-cartridge “unit prices” (in orange) for Gillette men’s razors at \$2.62, \$2.06, \$3.12, \$2.75, \$3.75, \$2.80, and \$3.00. Disturbingly, the “unit prices” for comparable women’s (hello Venus!) razor cartridges are \$4.67, \$5.50, \$6.25, \$5.00, \$4.17, and \$5.00.<sup>196</sup>



Screenshot from the website *pink.tax*

Following the publication of its campaign against toxic masculinity, some people were quick to denounce this hypocrisy on the internet.

<sup>195</sup> “What Is the ‘Pink Tax’ and How Does It Hinder Women?” *World Economic Forum*, 12 Sept. 2022. [www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/what-is-the-pink-tax-and-how-does-it-hinder-women/](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/what-is-the-pink-tax-and-how-does-it-hinder-women/).

<sup>196</sup> “Gillette Capitalizes on Toxic Masculinity to Sell Pink Razors.” *pink.tax*. [pink.tax/news/gillette-ad-toxic-masculinity-pink-tax-razors](http://pink.tax/news/gillette-ad-toxic-masculinity-pink-tax-razors).



**Lisa Torres**  
@Lucky13Lisa



So wait, ppl are mad about @Gillette ad but not about how they put the pink tax on the women razors? You know, the ones that are marked deliberately towards women. Or are we just going to ignore that? 😞

[Traduire le Tweet](#)

7:56 AM · 16 janv. 2019



**Stephanie Pelley**  
@StephaniePelley



If @Gillette would just go ahead and remove the pink tax from their products, then they might be taken seriously about the treatment of women. #TheBestMenCanBe #pinktax

[Traduire le Tweet](#)

7:34 PM · 15 janv. 2019

Screenshots from *Twitter*

According to the *World Economic Forum*, the pink tax imposes an economic barrier on women, who continue to earn less than men:

The World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2022, released this week, found that when it comes to wage equality for similar work, only five out of the 146 countries analysed achieved scores higher than 0.80. (A score of 1.0 would mean full wage parity). Moreover, 129 countries this year reported a reduction of women's labour-force participation relative to men's. The gender pay gap, the report found, is one of the most salient factors contributing to the overall gender-based wealth inequality.<sup>197</sup>

The pink tax widens the gap between men and women and the path towards gender equality and Gillette contributes to these inequalities.

When you visit the official Gillette website, the focus is on their products. Alongside a tab on the history of the brand, Gillette has a blog with articles giving advice for your shaving routine. A section entitled "For Her" explains in a series of articles to women how to shave their private parts or remove peach fuzz from their face.<sup>198</sup> The articles dedicated to men talk

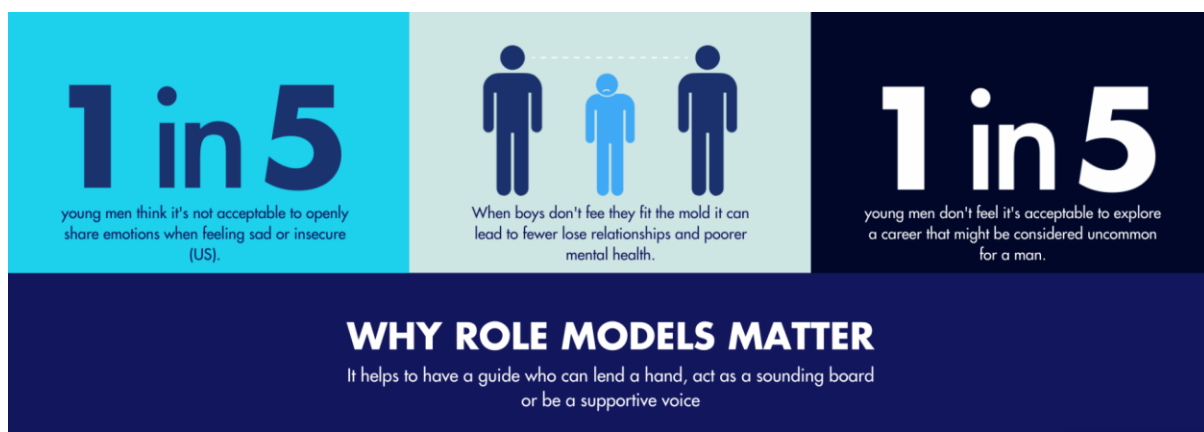
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<sup>197</sup> "What Is the 'Pink Tax' and How Does It Hinder Women?" *World Economic Forum*, 12 Sept. 2022. [www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/what-is-the-pink-tax-and-how-does-it-hinder-women/](http://www.weforum.org/agenda/2022/07/what-is-the-pink-tax-and-how-does-it-hinder-women/).

<sup>198</sup> "For Her Archives | Gillette." *Gillette*, [www.gillette.co.uk/blog/for-her](http://www.gillette.co.uk/blog/for-her).

about how to look after your beard and protect it from the sun.<sup>199</sup> There is a difference to be noted here: the articles about women do not talk about leg hair, but focus mainly on their bikini line. Men do not have this kind of article. We can make a link here with the perception of hair in our society: for men, hair is a symbol of virility. Women are dictated to remove it because it is perceived as something unhygienic.<sup>200</sup> It is rather strange that Gillette talks about toxic masculinity while at the same time running articles encouraging women to shave their bikini line, while men can keep their hair, but trim it properly. The brand claims to have feminist values, but here it contributes to gender inequality by perpetuating the message that the management of body hair must differ from one gender to another.

The brand also has a page dedicated to “Gillette Corporate Responsibility” on which the brand shares these data:



Screenshot from *Gillette* website

The page goes on to talk about emotions, self-confidence and being a role model for young boys. At the end, a series of products for “young men” are suggested.<sup>201</sup> It is a little hard to understand the link between teenage education and the brand’s shaving products. Unlike previous brands, Gillette does not separate products from values. Camaïeu, for example, created a campaign featuring women without showing a single product. On its website, Dove dedicates an entire section to women’s well-being, without offering a single product.

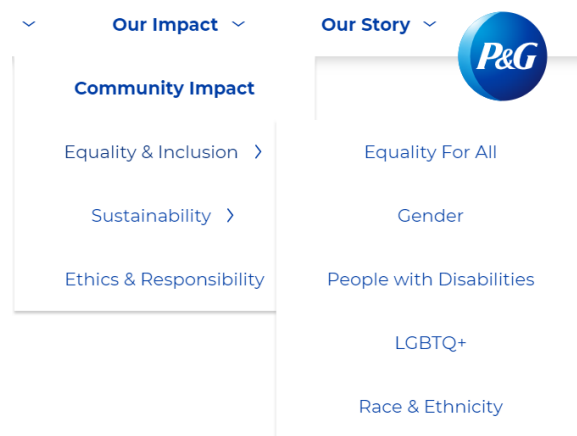
The website of the multinational P&G has more scope. Alongside its history and its owned brands, we can find a tab entitled “Our impact” in which we can find different subjects, including “gender” and “equality for all”.

<sup>199</sup> “Gillette Blog | Shaving, Skin Care, Grooming, and Style.” *Gillette*, 27 June 2023. [www.gillette.co.uk/blog](http://www.gillette.co.uk/blog).

<sup>200</sup> Klein, Gavi. “Tools of the Patriarchy: The Weaponization of Hair - Ms. Magazine.” *Ms. Magazine*, 10 Jan. 2023. [msmagazine.com/2020/07/01/tools-of-the-patriarchy-the-the-weaponization-of-hair](https://msmagazine.com/2020/07/01/tools-of-the-patriarchy-the-the-weaponization-of-hair).

<sup>201</sup> “Gillette Corporate responsibility” *Gillette UK*, [www.gillette.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility.list](http://www.gillette.co.uk/corporate-social-responsibility.list).





Screenshot from P&G website

In its section dedicated to equality, the company begins with the title “#EqualityForAll: P&G partners with equality activist Vee Katihvu to celebrate Diversity, Equality and Inclusion”. P&G goes on explaining its “five key pillars”: Gender Equality, Racial Equality, People with Disabilities (PwD), LGBTQ+ Inclusion and Social Mobility.<sup>202</sup> At the end of the page, there is a link to a section devoted entirely to gender equality. On this page, P&G explains that it wants a world that is “free from gender bias”.<sup>203</sup> Here is a passage that will interest us:

At P&G, we're focused on three areas where we can have the greatest impact. First, we're leveraging our significant voice in advertising and media to tackle gender bias. We're also removing barriers to education for girls and economic opportunities for women through corporate and brand programmes and policy advocacy. And we're creating an inclusive, gender-equal environment within P&G, while advocating for gender and intersectional equality in workplaces everywhere, so that everyone can contribute to their full potential.

Screenshot from P&G website

The company is clearly committed to gender equality in the workplace. When we look at its leadership team, there are eleven women and 23 men, giving us a total of around 32% women in senior positions.<sup>204</sup> This is still a long way from the claimed equality, although the results are already more balanced than those of Dove. Concerning Gillette, it was difficult to find this information. The website *Zippia.com* gives these data:

Based on our data team’s research, Sundar G. Raman is the Gillette’s CEO. Gillette has 101,000 employees, of which 56 are in a leadership position. Here are further demographic highlights of the leadership team:

<sup>202</sup> “#EqualityForAll | P&G.” *Procter & Gamble United Kingdom*, [www.pg.co.uk/equalityforall](http://www.pg.co.uk/equalityforall).

<sup>203</sup> “Gender Equality in P&G.” *Procter & Gamble United Kingdom*, [www.pg.co.uk/gender-equality](http://www.pg.co.uk/gender-equality).

<sup>204</sup> “P&G Leadership Team | About P&G.” *Procter & Gamble*, Aug. 2023, [us.pg.com/leadership-team](http://us.pg.com/leadership-team).

- The Gillette executive team is 55% female and 45% male.
- 55% of the management team is White.
- 15% of Gillette management is Hispanic or Latino.
- 9% of the management team is Black or African American.<sup>205</sup>

However, this information should be taken with a grain of salt, as the data is incomplete, with 21% having no defined origin. The site also shows nine people in senior positions at Gillette, only two of whom are women. If this information is true, Gillette, like P&G, is not very egalitarian in terms of gender.

The list of points to note could still be extended, but this information already gives us an idea of the values advocated by Gillette and P&G. Gillette primarily targets a male audience and teenagers, sharing feminist values by countering toxic masculinity. As P&G offers different brands, this one puts more emphasis on other values such as gender equality, the importance of the LGBTQIA+ community and so on. However, both companies are inconsistent when you take a closer look at their sites and content.

### 3.3. 2019 campaign: “The Best Men Can Be”

To mark the thirtieth anniversary of its slogan “The Best a Man Can Get”, Gillette began a new marketing campaign “The Best Men Can Be” in 2019. To mark the occasion, Gillette released a video entitled “We Believe: The Best Men Can Be”. The video begins with men looking pensively at themselves in the mirror, with words and phrases like “bullying, the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment, toxic masculinity” playing in the background. A voiceover then asks the question “Is it the best a man can get?”. We then see images of the old adverts with commercial music created by the brand. The advert is then torn up by young people running around. This is followed by various shots showing a crying child, a cartoon with a sexualised woman, a man on TV pretending to touch a woman’s bottom... The ad shows different scenarios depicting toxic masculinity in the daily lives of men, women and children. We can also see two boys fighting while men stare at them saying “Boys will be boys”, implying that this is normal male behaviour and that there is nothing they can do about it. The voice-over then talks about change: TV clips are shown talking about sexual harassment. The voice goes on to say “Because we, we believe in the best in men”. The following shots show harassment situations where men defend women harassed by other men. Back to the shot of

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<sup>205</sup> “Gillette CEO and Leadership: Executives and Demographics.” *Zippia*, 18 Nov. 2022. [www.zippia.com/gillette-co-careers-1132409/executives](http://www.zippia.com/gillette-co-careers-1132409/executives).

the two boys fighting, a father decides to take action and separate them, explaining that it's not normal to treat each other like that. The voiceover continues “Because the boys who watch today will be the men of tomorrow”, implying here that fathers and men in general must set an example to prevent children from perpetuating this toxic masculinity. Various little boys of different ethnicities stare seriously into the camera. The music is moving. The video ends with the phrases “It's only by challenging ourselves to do more that we can get closer to our best. We are taking actions at thebestmancanbe.org. Join us”.<sup>206</sup> The link takes us to the “Gillette Corporate Responsibility” page mentioned above. The video, at first sight very touching and moving, caused a lot of controversy among its consumers and in the media. Critics can be divided into two distinct camps: those who say the brand is hypocritical because it is sexist, and those who disagree with the feminist values the brand claims to uphold.



@xenon7522 il y a 4 ans

Gillette, if you believe so strongly in fighting the patriarchy, why do you still charge more for women's razors than men's?

👍 1,8 k 🗨️ Répondre



@jackfennell4207 il y a 7 mois (modifié)

"Wow this commercial made me realize that I'm a misogynist! I'm going to buy more Gillette!"  
Said no sane person ever lol

👍 1,3 k 🗨️ Répondre

^ 7 réponses



@ldman906 il y a 4 mois

Okay this is funny way you put it I love it I love it

👍 18 🗨️ Répondre



@ldman906 il y a 4 mois

Maybe it was intended to make feminist want the product and replace men

👍 12 🗨️ Répondre

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<sup>206</sup> Guardian News. “Gillette’s ‘We Believe: The Best Men Can Be’ Razors Commercial Takes on Toxic Masculinity.” *Youtube*, 15 Jan. 2019. [youtu.be/UYaY2Kb\\_PKI](https://youtu.be/UYaY2Kb_PKI). Accessed 11 Aug. 2023.



@creperanch8968 il y a 4 mois

Like so many others have said below, i threw out my Gillette products immediately, went and found non-P&G products and never went back. Even now i would never, ever, consider buying Gillette/ P&G again in my life.

👍 154 🗨 Répondre

Screenshots from the video on *Youtube*

How do you explain such a backlash? I am going to analyse the *ethos* and image that the brand failed to convey.

### 3.4. Analysis of the campaign and brand *ethos*

Despite a stereotype that may seem successful at first glance, it failed to convince its audience. The reason is quite simple: Gillette's target audience is basically not in tune with feminist values. According to a global study carried out by Glocalities, Gillette buyers most often belong to a conservative category that is not in favour of gender equality:

Male Gillette buyers (women buy less than 25% of Gillette products) more often belong to the more culturally conservative values segments in Western society (Achievers and Conservatives). 'National pride' and 'family time' are the most distinctive trends among male Gillette buyers that set them apart from men who do not buy Gillette. On the contrary 'gender role flexibility' is among the most distinctive trends that set male Gillette buyers negatively apart from other men.<sup>207</sup>

The backlash Gillette received would therefore have been predictable. Gillette has always maintained the image of the classic, virile man, so it has attracted an audience in line with this. Its audience saw their perceptions of men as far too generalised. As stereotyping is an interpretation of the target audience, if the audience has not validated it because it is not in line with their values, then this stereotyping is also a caricature. According to the *Washington Examiner*, Gillette lost a lot of money and consumers as a result of this campaign. According to Gillette's CEO, the aim of the advert was to attract millennials, i.e. all people born between the beginning of the 1980s and the end of the 1990s, a category of customer that Gillette was unable to convince.<sup>208</sup> As a result of this bias, Gillette has strayed far from its core audience. One watch brand has even decided to respond to Gillette with a video entitled "What is a man?"

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<sup>207</sup> Karaca, Melis. "The Predictable Backlash on Gillette's 'Toxic Masculinity' Campaign." *Glocalities*, glocalities.com/news/gillette-ad.

<sup>208</sup> Gage, John. "Gillette CEO: Losing customers over #MeToo campaign is 'price worth paying.'" *Washington Examiner*, 5 Aug. 2019. www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/gillette-ceo-losing-customers-over-metoo-campaign-is-price-worth-paying

A response to Gillette” in which brave and courageous men save lives by being firemen, soldiers or good family men. The video also gives statistics explaining why many more men die in combat, live on the street, etc.<sup>209</sup> The comments below the video are unanimously positive. This reinforces the fact that Gillette has clearly not gone the way of its public. Since Gillette’s core audience is not in tune with Gillette’s new values, their stereotyping, *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* could have been good but the brand would still never have been able to convince its consumers. All this might have worked if Gillette’s core audience had had feminist values, but that is not the case. Now we need to understand why the public that Gillette was hoping to attract did not take the bait either.

Firstly, the « *ethos préalable* » of the brand was clearly opposed to feminist values. The brand’s advertising has always depicted the same type of man and the same type of woman. Advertisements in the past have often been clichéd and sometimes sexist, showing women in skimpy outfits all the time. The reworking of the brand’s *ethos* did not convince its audience, because its « *ethos préalable* » was far too entrenched and too different from the new values advocated by Gillette.

The shown *ethos* and the said *ethos* were also too different. Gillette says it wants to break codes by combating toxic masculinity and the sexism that goes with it. Yet the brand continues to perpetuate sexist values with its pink tax and its blog dedicated to women, which only talks about their bikini hair. A number of commentators and the media have pointed out Gillette’s inconsistency in trying to combat sexism by always using pink tax. The multinational P&G has the same problem: the company devotes entire articles to gender equality and the place of women in their company, yet their management is essentially made up of men.

Gillette also tried a collective *ethos* that did not work. In the campaign video, there are several moments where you can read and hear: “Because **we**, **we** believe in the best in men” and “It’s only by challenging ourselves to do more that **we** can get closer to our best. **We** are taking actions at thebestmancanbe.org. **Join us**”.<sup>210</sup> Here, the use of the collective “we” was intended to encompass all the men, especially the fathers, to make them feel responsible for their sons’ future. Gillette was trying to project a masculine group image and the “we” was intended to reinforce this feeling of belonging to a group and to include its audience in it. Amossy explains, in commercial communication, the collective *ethos* is used to help build a

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<sup>209</sup> Egard Watches. “What Is a Man? A Response to Gillette.” *YouTube*, 16 Jan. 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x\\_HL0wiK4Zc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_HL0wiK4Zc).

<sup>210</sup> Guardian News. “Gillette’s ‘We Believe: The Best Men Can Be’ Razors Commercial Takes on Toxic Masculinity.” *Youtube*, 15 Jan. 2019. [youtu.be/UYaY2Kb\\_PKI](https://youtu.be/UYaY2Kb_PKI).

brand image in order to promote oneself. But Gillette's mistake was to take into account only the image it wished to project and not what its public validated as its values. Logically, the public's *endoxa* was not respected by Gillette. As a result, no matter how hard Gillette tried to convey a logical message, that of combating toxic masculinity, its audience would not accept it. The *logos* did not work here. As the *logos* was not valid, *ethos* and *pathos* could not be balanced either.

The video had so many negative consequences that the brand deleted it, and the video with the transgender boy, from its own networks. However, the CEO at the time said that this change of tone was necessary, despite the negativity.<sup>211</sup> When we look at Gillette's current ads, they have become more classical. This has also disappointed some consumers, as it reinforces the idea that Gillette is simply riding the #MeToo wave. The brand also lost credibility because it did not take responsibility for its stance. This is clearly a form of purplewashing, since as well as being at odds with the values advocated in this ad, Gillette has decided to delete this attempt, probably in order to win back customers. Gillette has capitalised on feminism while selling more expensive razors for women and continuing to perpetuate sexist clichés.

#### **4. Always 2014 Campaign: The Perfect Femvertising?**

The fourth brand I decided to analyse was Always, an American feminine hygiene brand. Unlike the previous brands, Always was not at all accused of purplewashing or criticised by the media or its consumers as a result of the advertising I am about to analyse. However, it is still interesting to analyse how a brand has managed to convince its public of its sincerity despite a past and actions that are at odds with some of its stated values. Like Dove in 2015, the brand won a Femvertising Award for its #LikeAGirl campaign<sup>212</sup>, which I will explain in more detail below. Let us take a look at this brand's seemingly unshakeable marketing strategy.

##### **4.1. History**

The brand was first introduced in the United States in 1983. Just like Gillette, Always is owned by the Procter & Gamble Company. The brand specialises in menstrual products such as menstrual pads and cleansing wipes. When the brand appeared, it shook up the American

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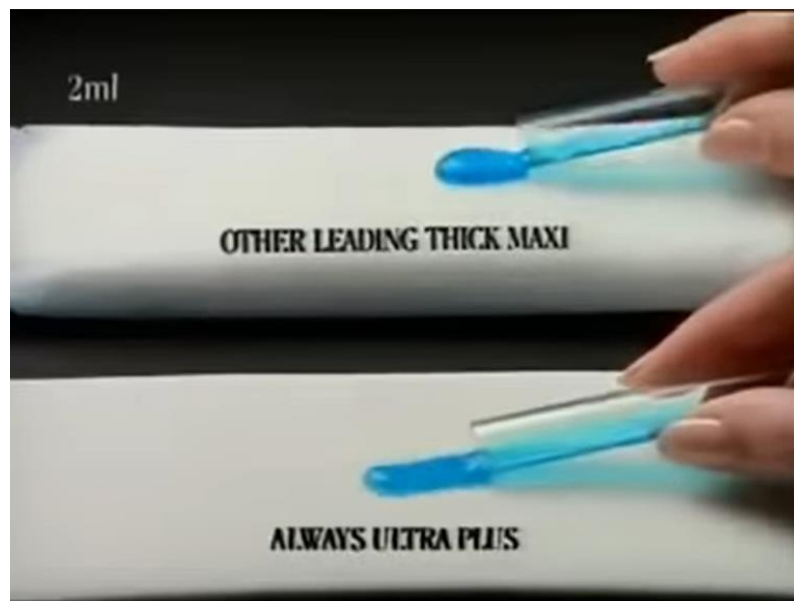
<sup>211</sup> Gage, John. "Gillette CEO: Losing customers over #MeToo campaign is 'price worth paying.'" *Washington Examiner*, 5 Aug. 2019. [www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/gillette-ceo-losing-customers-over-metoo-campaign-is-price-worth-paying](http://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/gillette-ceo-losing-customers-over-metoo-campaign-is-price-worth-paying)

<sup>212</sup> "SheKnows Media Announces Winners of the #Femvertising Awards and The Pitch at #BlogHer15: Experts Among Us." *Businesswire*, 21 July 2015. [www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150721005752/en/SheKnows-Media-Announces-Winners-of-the-Femvertising-Awards-and-The-Pitch-at-BlogHer15-Experts-Among-Us](http://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20150721005752/en/SheKnows-Media-Announces-Winners-of-the-Femvertising-Awards-and-The-Pitch-at-BlogHer15-Experts-Among-Us).

market. The pads were a real revolution for women.<sup>213</sup> The brand's success quickly led to growth.<sup>214</sup> By 1985, it had already become the market leader in sanitary towels. Today, Always products rank number one in sales among competing companies, and the brand has an international presence.<sup>215</sup>

#### 4.2. Brand image, commitments and values

The brand quickly gained a positive image: prior to its launch, women had access to uncomfortable sanitary protection. Always immediately won over its customers by offering them a “revolutionary” pad with a protective film that kept them cool and dry.<sup>216</sup> From a marketing point of view, the brand also made a strong impact: the adverts show the effectiveness of the product by testing the towels with a blue liquid to show how highly absorbent they are.<sup>217</sup>



Screenshot from a 1980's commercial on *Youtube*

This technique of using blue liquid to represent menstrual blood will continue to be used for decades to come. The ads of the 1990s and 2000's were in the same spirit, always with a smiling woman extolling the virtues of her more absorbent towel than the competition, with this blue

<sup>213</sup> As the brand's target audience is women, I am going to focus primarily on menstruating women rather than menstruating people in general in some parts of my brand analysis.

<sup>214</sup> « Always ». *Marque préférée des français*, 22 July 2021. [marqueprefereedesfrancais.fr/marque-livre/always](http://marqueprefereedesfrancais.fr/marque-livre/always).

<sup>215</sup> « Always logo et symbole, sens, histoire, PNG, marque ». 19 May 2023. [logos-marques.com/always-logo](http://logos-marques.com/always-logo).

<sup>216</sup> « Always ». *Marque préférée des français*, 22 July 2021. [marqueprefereedesfrancais.fr/marque-livre/always](http://marqueprefereedesfrancais.fr/marque-livre/always).

<sup>217</sup> classiccommercial. “1980's Commercials P&G Always Ultra Plus Maxi Pads,.” *YouTube*, 20 Jan. 2012. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=btzNJYzW-kU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=btzNJYzW-kU).

liquid to prove it.<sup>218</sup> The women in the adverts are often white women in their thirties. A slight difference can be seen in this advert from 2010, in which the focus is not on blue blood, but on the flexibility of a woman who manages to put on a show with her towel in an immaculate white outfit.<sup>219</sup> A more amusing but also very stereotypical way of showing the menstruating woman who does not suffer and is not afraid to wear white.



Screenshot from a 1990's commercial on *Youtube*

This representation of red blood suddenly turning blue is a subject that was denounced during the fourth wave of feminism. Portraying menstruation in this colour on television implicitly suggests that menstruation is something to be ashamed of and something women should hide. This sense of shame has an impact on young girls:

In the UK, for example, a survey of young women revealed that 46% had refused to go to sports class when they were menstruating. Of these, 39% admitted that their worst fear was seeing a red stain appear on their outfit. [My translation]<sup>220</sup>

Menstruation has always been a taboo subject, particularly in certain cultures. Young girls find themselves panicking when they see red blood, whereas they are comfortable thinking of it as

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<sup>218</sup> Scott Sailer. "1990 Always Ultra Plus Commercial." *YouTube*, 8 Feb. 2020.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_\\_GP6bRCaA](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M__GP6bRCaA).

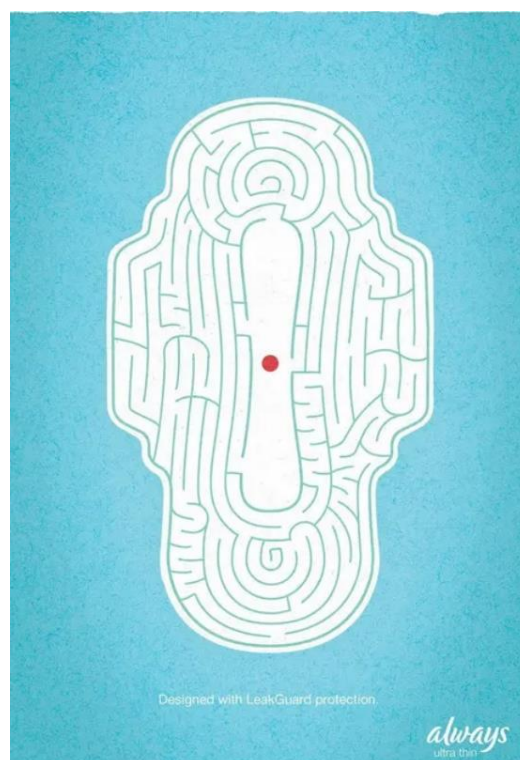
<sup>219</sup> Sam's VHS Vault 27. "2010 Always Infinity Pads Commercial." *YouTube*, 19 Aug. 2021.

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv2qRcH5-LU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xv2qRcH5-LU).

<sup>220</sup> « Ainsi, au Royaume-Uni, une étude menée auprès de jeunes femmes révélait que 46 % d'entre elles avaient déjà refusé de se rendre en cours de sport lorsqu'elles avaient leurs règles. Parmi elles, 39 % avouaient que leur hantise était de voir apparaître une tache rouge sur leur tenue ». Théo. « Règles : pourquoi le sang est-il bleu dans les pubs? » *Docteur Tamalou*, Sept. 2020. [docteurtamalou.fr/regles-pourquoi-le-sang-est-il-bleu-dans-les-pubs](http://docteurtamalou.fr/regles-pourquoi-le-sang-est-il-bleu-dans-les-pubs).



blue, like in advertising. But sometimes the consequences are even worse: menstruating people are seen as impure, have to leave their homes and cannot touch food. The stigma surrounding menstruation contributes to the discrimination and exclusion of menstruating people in society. Not to mention the cost of menstrual protection, which is not accessible to all. This is known as menstrual insecurity.<sup>221</sup> Coming back to the Always brand, but also to all the brands of sanitary protection that show blue blood in their advertising, these brands have contributed to the period taboos and, ultimately, to gender inequality. It was not until 2011 that Always released an ad featuring a small “drop” of red blood. And although this was seen as a step forward, it was still a long way from reality.



Always ad 2011

We will have to wait until 2017 to see adverts showing the reality of menstruations. Some brands launched their first adverts featuring red blood. These adverts were widely criticised and even censored in some cases, such as the French Nana advert released in 2018. The ad was not shown on television because it was deemed too shocking. Proof that this taboo still applies. One after another, other brands followed suit and began to represent blood in the right colour.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>221</sup> “Break Taboo Around Menstruation, Act to End ‘Disempowering’ Discrimination, Say UN Experts.” *UN News*, 10 Mar. 2019. [news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1034131](https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/03/1034131).

<sup>222</sup> « Une pub pour des serviettes hygiéniques montrant du sang provoque 600 plaintes en Australie ». *Le Monde.fr*, 20 Sept. 2019. [www.lemonde.fr/big-browser/article/2019/09/20/une-pub-pour-des-serviettes-hygeniques-montrant-du-sang-provoque-600-plaintes-en-australie\\_6012467\\_4832693.html](http://www.lemonde.fr/big-browser/article/2019/09/20/une-pub-pour-des-serviettes-hygeniques-montrant-du-sang-provoque-600-plaintes-en-australie_6012467_4832693.html).

While this is a positive thing, it is also a kind of femvertising, as the aim here is to advocate the empowerment of women. For brands like Always, which for decades have represented blood in blue, to change at the right moment to avoid criticism is in itself a form of purplewashing.

When you take another look at the Always website, it is clearly aimed at young girls. The site has several tabs devoted to the subject of menstruation, but not only: advice on menstruation, premenstrual syndrome, vaginal discharge, pregnancy, and so on. The brand also offers a program for young people called “Puberty Education Programme”.<sup>223</sup> The scrolling images depict women of different origins and with different body types, and there is also an image of a towel with blood on it. It is clear that the company wants to be modern, uninhibited and more inclusive. However, Always does not include people from the LGBTQIA+ community who may be menstruating without being associated with the female gender. We can therefore assume that the brand’s feminism is not entirely inclusive. The brand’s values are clearly body positive, self-confidence and female empowerment.

An interesting page on the site is dedicated to their solidarity projects around the world: in the United Kingdom, Syria and several African countries. I am going to focus particularly on Africa because a scandal broke in 2019 linked to the brand. The part dedicated to Africa on its website talks about helping young girls to go to school.<sup>224</sup> As explained earlier, some young girls find themselves isolated during their periods because of the stigma surrounding menstruation.

In sub-Saharan Africa, many girls miss school during their period and might even drop out. Research shows that providing education on puberty and menstrual hygiene, giving access to period products and discussing taboos around menstruation can alleviate this issue.

Together with governments and local associations we work hard to make sure schools have proper sanitary facilities and have the tools to educate girls on feminine hygiene.

Since it started in 2006, the “Always Keeping Girls in School programme” helped 170 000 girls and donated 11 million pads to keep them in school.

Screenshot from the *Always* website

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<sup>223</sup> “Always Feminine Products for Every Day of Your Cycle.” *Always*. [www.always.co.uk/en-gb/](http://www.always.co.uk/en-gb/).

<sup>224</sup> “Helping Girls Across the World.” *Always*. [www.always.co.uk/en-gb/about-us/campaigns-and-initiatives/girl-empowerment-throughout-the-world](http://www.always.co.uk/en-gb/about-us/campaigns-and-initiatives/girl-empowerment-throughout-the-world).

The brand is therefore committed to real action. However, in 2019, a scandal broke out in Kenya and spread to several African countries, notably on Twitter with the hashtag #MyAlwaysExperience. Feminist activist Scheaffer Okore sent out a tweet accusing the multinational P&G of offering sub-standard products in Africa. The reason? Many women were complaining of itching and burning with Always sanitary pads. Many people shared their experiences via this hashtag. Always denied these accusations and defended itself by saying: “Different women have had experiences with our products”.<sup>225</sup> The website *The Star* has denounced the exploitation of Africa by multinationals such as Procter & Gamble. The factories would therefore produce better quality products for Western countries, while African countries would receive lower quality products.

Relevant and current studies report the dumping of substandard products in the global south by foreign industries. Products used by Africans are manufactured in the European Union as long as they are exported. In most cases, these products are not approved for human use in their country of origin. To put it succinctly, ‘African quality/standard’ products are not fit for the global north humans. The atrocious practice of exporting highly substandard and poisonous products to Africa is symbolic of big business the world over: where profit is god and human life is rendered incidental.<sup>226</sup>

This could be called redwashing, since the multinational, while showing its solidarity actions, is said to be the cause of other problems in the countries it wishes to help. Although these accusations have not been confirmed, it is nevertheless worrying to see the reaction the brand has had to this problem. The brand’s response to *Teen Vogue* was as follows:

Irritation can be a result of many factors; some that are related to pad use include infrequent pad changes and not choosing the right type of pad for your individual needs. For example, some women with more sensitive skin may benefit from a pad with a softer top sheet.<sup>227</sup>

Always’ response implies that it is normal to have itching. The toxicity of menstrual products has also been denounced in recent years. We are talking about chemical substances that can

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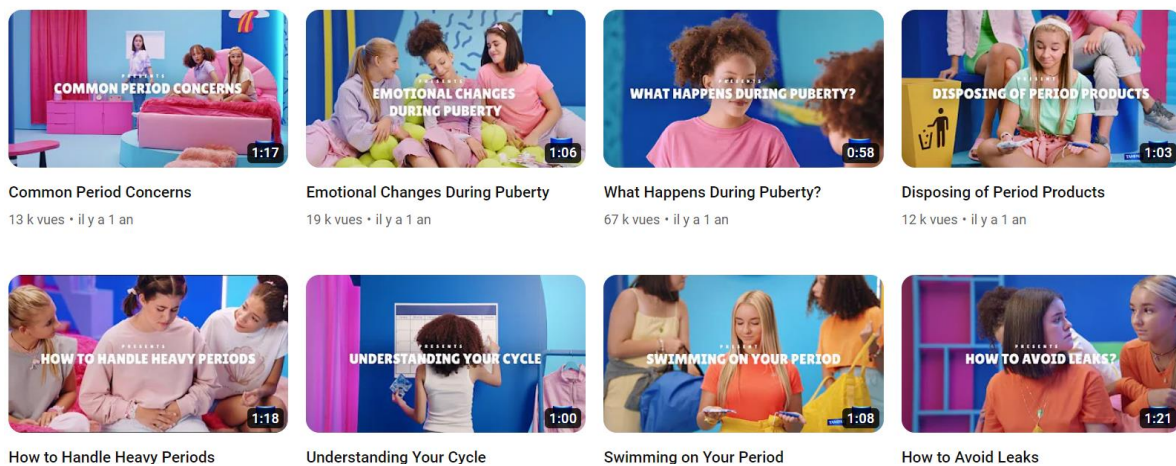
<sup>225</sup> Oketch, Angela, and Verah Okeyo. “Women Call for Boycott of Always Sanitary Pads.” *Nation*, 28 June 2020. [nation.africa/kenya/news/women-call-for-boycott-of-always-sanitary-pads-148390](https://nation.africa/kenya/news/women-call-for-boycott-of-always-sanitary-pads-148390).

<sup>226</sup> Mwende, Yvonne. “Exploitation of Africans by Multinationals.” *The Star*, 31 Mar. 2019. [www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/columnists/2019-04-01-exploitation-of-africans-by-multinationals](https://www.the-star.co.ke/opinion/columnists/2019-04-01-exploitation-of-africans-by-multinationals).

<sup>227</sup> McNamara, Brittney. “People in Africa Are Using #MyAlwaysExperience Talk About Rashes They Think Were Caused by Always Pads.” *Teen Vogue*, 23 Oct. 2019. [www.teenvogue.com/story/myalwaysexperience-allege-rashes-apparently-caused-by-always-products#:~:text=Using%20%23MyAlwaysExperience%2C%20women%20in%20parts%20of%20Africa%20are,%E2%80%94an%20allegation%20the%20Always%20Kenya%20has%20denied](https://www.teenvogue.com/story/myalwaysexperience-allege-rashes-apparently-caused-by-always-products#:~:text=Using%20%23MyAlwaysExperience%2C%20women%20in%20parts%20of%20Africa%20are,%E2%80%94an%20allegation%20the%20Always%20Kenya%20has%20denied).

damage your health. Research has shown that in the case of sanitary towels, phthalates and volatile organic compounds have been found in all brands. These substances are used, among other things, to absorb liquids, and unfortunately this entails a risk: “They can be absorbed through the skin and are associated with cancer, asthma, and menstrual irregularities, as well as disrupting the cardiovascular, reproductive, and endocrine systems”.<sup>228</sup> To advocate values such as women’s well-being and ensuring that they are well protected during their periods, while at the same time selling products that can be harmful to their health, is quite simply incoherent. To return to the analysis of its site, Always does not present its management team. Nor was I able to find this information elsewhere. There is a certain lack of transparency here. As for its multinational, it has a different *ethos* to the one shown, since P&G does not respect gender equality in the workplace.

Finally, I noticed that the brand’s YouTube account removed all of its adverts prior to 2013. The videos on Youtube offer educational videos on menstruation and are aimed at an audience of teenage girls.<sup>229</sup> A clear desire on the part of the brand to get rid of its previous *ethos* and present a more modern image.



Screenshot from *Youtube*

It is now time to analyse the 2014 campaign, which generated a great deal of positive reaction from the public and the media.

<sup>228</sup> Baggaley, Kate. “Period Underwear May Contain Troubling Chemicals—but the Real Problem Is Much Bigger.” *Popular Science*, Jan. 2020. [www.popsci.com/story/health/pfas-period-underwear-toxic-chemicals/#:~:text=The%20chemicals%20may%20have%20been%20released%20from%20synthetic,as%20disrupting%20the%20cardiovascular%2C%20reproductive%2C%20and%20endocrine%20systems.](http://www.popsci.com/story/health/pfas-period-underwear-toxic-chemicals/#:~:text=The%20chemicals%20may%20have%20been%20released%20from%20synthetic,as%20disrupting%20the%20cardiovascular%2C%20reproductive%2C%20and%20endocrine%20systems.)

<sup>229</sup> Always Account. *Youtube*. [www.youtube.com/@AlwaysBrand/videos](http://www.youtube.com/@AlwaysBrand/videos). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

#### 4.3. 2014 campaign: “#LikeAGirl”

To mark the launch of its new “#LikeAGirl” campaign, Always released a social experiment in video format. The video began with this question: “What does it mean to do something ‘Like a girl’?” Then several people have to do things they would do “like a girl”: run, fight, throw. Each person gives a rather clichéd version of a little girl: weak, running in a strange way, complaining... Then the brand asks little girls the same question. These imitate the same actions but in a completely normal way and without exaggerating the expressions. One of the girls is asked: “What does it mean to you when I say run like a girl?” and the child replies “It means run as fast as you can”. In the rest of the video, the former candidates reflect on the pejorative way in which they imitated these actions. This time they do it again, to the best of their ability. The video ends with the sentence “Let’s make #LikeAGirl means amazing things”.<sup>230</sup>

The aim of the campaign is to break down the pejorative image associated with the expression “like a girl”. Always clearly emphasises the breaking of codes and the self-confidence that the brand wants to bring to young girls. The brand did not stop with its video and went on to publish others featuring girls playing football, actresses talking about self-confidence on their channel, and so on.

Both the public and the press have given this ad a huge thumbs-up. As well as a Femvertising Award, Always has also received numerous awards, including an Emmy Award. The short version of the video was also shown at the Super Bowl in 2015. Even today, the hashtag #LikeAGirl is used and the video has been viewed millions of times in over 150 countries.<sup>231</sup> The campaign boosted sales of Always.<sup>232</sup>

The brand has clearly moved away from its « *ethos préalable* » of blue rulers and smiling women in white outfits. By breaking down gender stereotypes and encouraging the empowerment of women and girls, the brand is clearly expressing its desire to share feminist values. The marketing strategy here seems infallible if we base it solely on public opinion. But as explained above, we need to look at whether the brand’s *ethos* is consistent with its actions and its past, and whether the values advocated by the brand are actually put into practice. It is

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<sup>230</sup> Longarina. “Always #Like a Girl.” *YouTube*, 27 June 2014, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxd\\_DKsITXo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxd_DKsITXo).

<sup>231</sup> Houston, Amy. “World’s Best Ads Ever #18: Always’ ‘Like a Girl’ Turns an Insult Into a Compliment.” *The Drum*, 14 June 2022. [www.thedrum.com/news/2022/06/14/world-s-best-ads-ever-18-always-girl-turns-insult-compliment](http://www.thedrum.com/news/2022/06/14/world-s-best-ads-ever-18-always-girl-turns-insult-compliment).

<sup>232</sup> “Social Media Campaign Case Study: Always #LikeAGirl”. *Public Relations Methods*. 19 Nov. 2015. [sites.psu.edu/prmethods15/2015/11/19/social-media-campaign-case-study-always-likeagirl/#:~:text=Following%20the%20ads%2C%20girls%20%28and%20some%20boys%29%20were,a%20%26AD%20%E2%80%9CBlack%20Pencil%E2%80%9D%20for%20%E2%80%9CCreativity%20for%20Good%E2%80%9D](http://sites.psu.edu/prmethods15/2015/11/19/social-media-campaign-case-study-always-likeagirl/#:~:text=Following%20the%20ads%2C%20girls%20%28and%20some%20boys%29%20were,a%20%26AD%20%E2%80%9CBlack%20Pencil%E2%80%9D%20for%20%E2%80%9CCreativity%20for%20Good%E2%80%9D).

also interesting to understand why, despite a shaky « *ethos préalable* », Always managed to erase this image and win over its audience.

#### 4.4. Analysis of the campaign and brand *ethos*

From the point of view of Aristotelian theory, the *ethos* is validated. Always has succeeded in persuading its audience, not least with a very strong *pathos*. The brand touched the hearts of its customers, who found the advertising ingenious and touching. The brand also put its finger on a glaring problem: the stereotyping of an expression. The target audience chosen is in line with the values promoted by the brand. Always has succeeded in adapting to the *endoxa* of its audience, and so its logos are a success. The brand also uses the collective *ethos* by including all women and young girls in its group. Its website and networks are entirely dedicated to young girls. The collective “we” is not necessarily represented in this ad, but Always uses it in other ads, such as the one for its “Always Platinum” range. In its French-language advert, the brand begins by saying « *Nous les femmes, nous méritons zéro* » (**We** women deserve zero).<sup>233</sup> The brand claims to be a woman and wants to include women in its group. How can we deduce that the brand is purplewashing if its *ethos* seems good? Because if we move away from public opinion and look deeper, the sincerity of the brand's approach can be strongly questioned.

Firstly, the brand's « *ethos préalable* ». Although Always has succeeded in erasing its past image and modernising it, the still fairly recent adverts show us that the brand has contributed to the menstrual taboo, which is then detrimental to women's empowerment. The said *ethos* and the shown *ethos* are also not always consistent. The brand is also linked to one of the multinationals that claims gender equality without having this equality in the top positions of its company. P&G owns brands that are not in line with Always' values, as we saw with Gillette, which has clearly surfed on feminism. Always' approach therefore seems less credible and sincere. Accusations linked to Always and its products in Africa should also raise more questions. Finally, the toxicity of menstrual products, for which Always is also responsible, is totally at odds with the well-being and self-confidence that the brand wishes to instil in its consumers. It does not make sense to offer products that can be harmful to their bodies, while telling them how to look after them in a healthy way. A final point that I feel is important to clarify is Always' target audience. This is clearly made up of women and young girls. In fourth-wave feminism, the emphasis is on intersectionality and inclusivity. Therefore, the inclusion of members of the LGBTQIA+ community is also part of this feminism. Always

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<sup>233</sup> PubTélé. « Always Platinum ‘Nous Les Femmes Méritons Zéro’ ‘Changez Les Règles Du Jeu’ Pub 30s ». *YouTube*, 5 June 2020. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLr30Up\\_\\_3Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLr30Up__3Q).

does not take into account menstruating people who are not female, and is therefore not entirely intersectional.

An analysis of this brand shows that, despite a controlled *ethos* in the eyes of its public, purplewashing can still be present. If we dig a little deeper, we can see that there are inconsistencies between the values advocated by the brand and some of its actions. However, this analysis is more difficult to make if public opinion validates what the brand is proposing, which is why I decided that the next brand would also be a brand of menstrual products, but this time without purplewashing. This will enable me to highlight the differences between a multinational and a brand with an *ethos* and a line of conduct that could be described as irreproachable.

## 5. Pantys: The Counterexample to Purplewashing

To conclude my analysis, I wanted to choose a brand that could be taken as a counter-example to those seen above. A brand without a « *ethos préalable* » that would taint the brand, with a shown *ethos* and said *ethos* to be coherent and a line of conduct consistent with the feminist values advocated. I chose a Brazilian brand that is also sold in Europe and was created rather recently: Pantys. Pantys is a brand of inclusive menstrual panties for all menstruating women. The brand also offers panties for incontinence. Very present on social networks, it is a brand much appreciated by the younger generations, and the brand is very well seen in the media.

### 5.1. History

As the brand is still fairly young and more local, its history is rather short to develop. The brand was created in 2017 in Brazil by engineer and chemist Emily Ewell. She wanted to use her knowledge of the lingerie industry and materials to create a committed underwear brand. Pantys knickers have been designed using a patented technology based on layers of microfibres.<sup>234</sup> It is the first menstrual lingerie brand that has been gynecologically, clinically and dermatologically tested.<sup>235</sup> Another point that sets it apart from many of its competitors is that it offers both panties and menstrual briefs, to suit every individual. Sizes range from XS to XXXL in French sizes. It also offsets its carbon emissions 100%.<sup>236</sup> The brand is followed by over 492,000 people on Instagram.

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<sup>234</sup> « Pantys, la culotte menstruelle saine et inclusive ». *L'Exception*. [www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys](http://www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

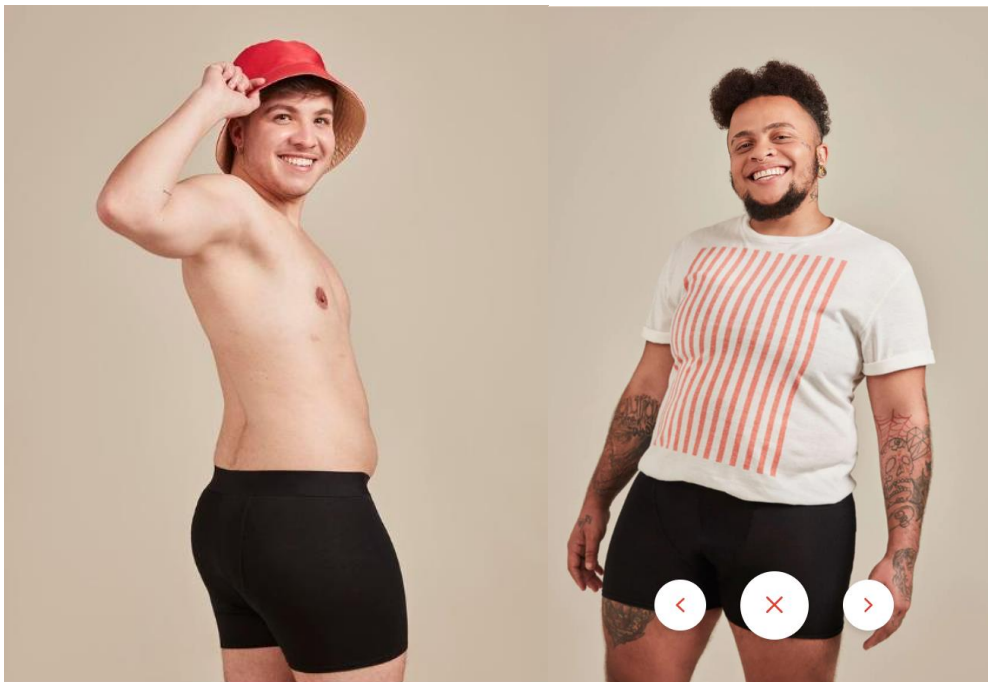
<sup>235</sup> « Pantys femme ». *L'Exception*. [www.lexception.com/fr-fr/pantys/femme](http://www.lexception.com/fr-fr/pantys/femme). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

<sup>236</sup> Maes, Juliette. « 7 marques de vêtements inclusives à découvrir absolument ». *ELLE.be*, Nov. 2022. [www.elle.be/fr/338613-6-marques-de-vetements-inclusives-a-decouvrir-absolument.html](http://www.elle.be/fr/338613-6-marques-de-vetements-inclusives-a-decouvrir-absolument.html).

## 5.2. Brand image, commitments and values

The brand shares many of the values associated with feminism: inclusivity, intersectionality, body positivity, self-empowerment, etc. Pantys says its mission is to break the taboo surrounding menstruation and make this time more comfortable for menstruating people. To do this, the brand is adopting a colourful approach, with a variety of panties and colours. From the outset, the brand has used visuals featuring red blood. The brand is also fighting against menstrual precariousness and adopting an eco-responsible approach. Let us take a look at whether what the brand claims can be verified and, above all, whether this information is true.

In terms of inclusivity, the brand also produces menstrual boxer shorts. It recently partnered with a community of transgender men to introduce this product. These boxer shorts are genderless and can be used by anyone.<sup>237</sup>



Screenshot from Pantys website

The brand also highlights different bodies and does not touch up skin imperfections. There are models of different origins, sizes and ages.

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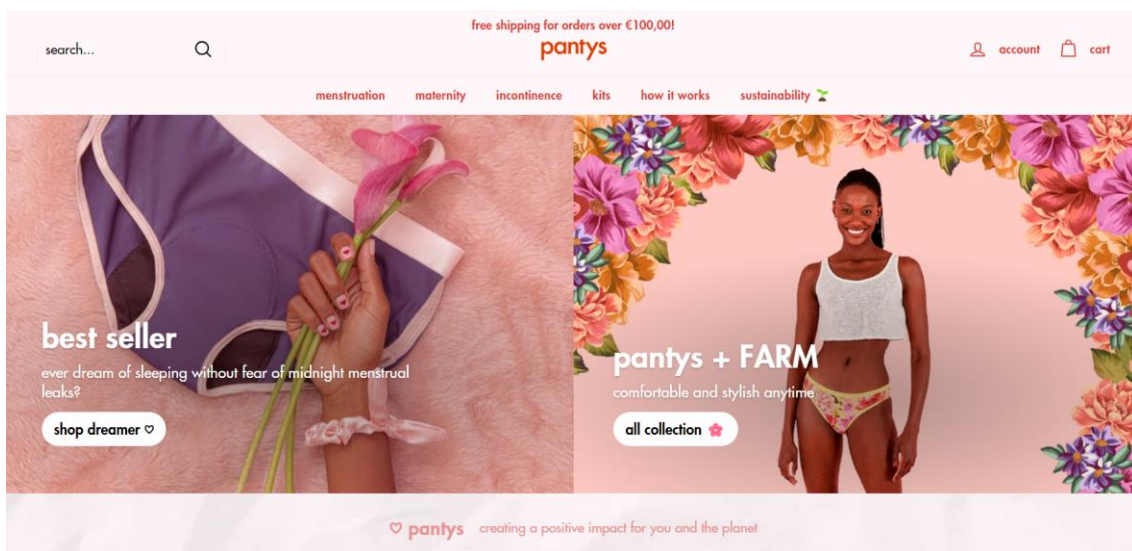
<sup>237</sup> “Boxer.” *Pantys*, [pantys.com/collections/boxer/products/boxer](https://pantys.com/collections/boxer/products/boxer).





Screenshot from Pantys *Instagram*

When we go on the site, we can find all the brand's products by category. There is also a tab dedicated to product instructions and the materials used and another tab dedicated to the brand's sustainability.



Screenshot of the Pantys home page

The brand uses materials that respect both the body and the environment: the knickers are made from 100% natural beech bark called modal. For transparency, the brand indicates on each of its products the carbon impact of its production and is committed to offsetting this through

various projects, notably in Brazil. Pantys is working to regenerate the Amazon rainforest, promote renewable energies and reduce methane emissions from landfill sites in Brazil.<sup>238</sup> Thanks to its commitment to the environment, the brand has ECO X CEPTION certification, which is awarded to brands that meet at least 75% of environmental criteria.<sup>239</sup> The brand is also Corporation B certified, a certification assessed by a nonprofit network that groups together companies that meet criteria such as inclusion, and economic, social and environmental responsibility.<sup>240</sup>

In terms of actions taken by the brand, Pantys organised an online demonstration on 28 May, World Intimate Hygiene Day, to protest against menstrual insecurity. The brand also works with a number of associations, including one in France called "Règle Elementaire", for which it collected donations of sanitary pads in 2021.<sup>241</sup>

### 5.3. General analysis of the brand and its *ethos*

I am not going to analyse a particular campaign here, as I do not think the brand uses purplewashing. I am going to move straight on to analysing the brand image and the values it conveys.

First of all, the brand has no « *ethos préalable* » to worry about, as it was born right in the middle of the fourth feminist wave. Pantys uses a consistent feminist stereotype without becoming caricatural. The values claimed by the brand are in line with its actions: it is inclusive, and the products used are respectful of the environment and the body. The brand is taking concrete action against menstrual insecurity. Pantys demonstrates its body positivity with models of all sizes and with imperfections. The said *ethos* is in line with the shown *ethos*. The target audience is clearly a generation of feminists who want to include the LGBTQIA+ community. The brand has correctly understood the *endoxa* of its audience. The *pathos* is based on the joy and pride of having one's period, which refers to the notion of empowerment.

If we take the Always brand, we can clearly see the difference between the two brands, even though they target virtually the same audience with similar products. Put side by side, the second brand seems more credible and sincere in its approach. This is still femvertising,

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<sup>238</sup> « Pantys, la culotte menstruelle saine et inclusive ». *L'Exception*. [www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys](http://www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

<sup>239</sup> « Au Sujet De Nos Critères ECO-X-CEPTION ». *L'Exception*. [www.lexception.com/fr-fr/eco-x-ception](http://www.lexception.com/fr-fr/eco-x-ception).

<sup>240</sup> "B Lab Global Site." *B Corporation*. [www.bcorporation.net/en-us](http://www.bcorporation.net/en-us). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

<sup>241</sup> « Pantys, la culotte menstruelle saine et inclusive ». *L'Exception*. [www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys](http://www.lexception.com/fr-fr/magazine/pantys). Accessed 13 Aug. 2023.

because the aim is of course to sell its products, but the Pantys brand does not fall into the trap of purplewashing. The brand has an ethos in line with its feminist values and image.

# Conclusion

## 1. Reflections and further discussions

On the basis of these few brands analysed, I noticed that most of the time the brand's « *ethos préalable* » was too out of step with its current *ethos*. However, in some cases, such as Always, the brand managed to detach itself from its old image and create a stereotype that was sufficiently appreciated by its audience. In the case of the Pantys brand, the « *ethos préalable* » is almost non-existent because the brand was born in 2017 and was created on the basis of feminist values. As a result, the brand did not need to erase any past image that might have damaged its current image.

Generally, the stereotyping is often poorly executed and caricatured, which prevents the brand's *ethos* from being validated. The particular case of Camaïeu is interesting because, despite having a correct *ethos* beforehand, the brand managed to alienate its customers by failing to control either its stereotyping or its *ethos pathos logos* construction. Despite a said *ethos* that could have matched the shown *ethos*, the public received Camaïeu's advertising very badly, creating an imbalance between the two *ethos*. There is often an imbalance between the *pathos* of *logos* and the *ethos* of brands. In some cases, such as Camaïeu, the tone of voice leads to poor management of *pathos*. In the case of Gillette, the *pathos* is mastered, but the brand is too far removed from its target audience and is therefore unable to adapt to their *endoxa*. The *ethos* said and shown is, in my opinion, the biggest problem for these brands, because they claim feminist values such as gender equality and insist on equality at work, whereas the strong positions in their companies are almost entirely made up of men. This is also the case with Dove and the multinational that owns the Unilever brand, which have very few, if any, women in Dove's senior management. This directly leads to a loss of credibility and sincerity.

When a brand uses the collective *ethos*, the target audience is crucial. Gillette, by distancing itself too much from its audience, did not succeed in attracting its customers into its community, despite the use of the collective “we”. In the case of Always, we can see that it worked.

The use of *ethos* is an interesting tool for understanding a brand's image and the negative or positive reactions of the media and the public. Other tools could be used in addition to *ethos*, such as further study of Critical Discourse Analysis. In the case of the analysis provided in this essay, this may allow the start of further research by creating a larger scale

analysis bringing together various brands from several sectors. This would make it possible to see and differentiate between brands and give an indicator of whether the brand analysed, on the basis of its ethos, is sincere in its approach or is engaged in purplewashing. This dissertation does not claim to be a fully developed work on the subject of purplewashing in communication, but it is an initial proposal for work on the subject that will help to identify criteria that may relate to purplewashing.

Marketing 3.0 is committed marketing, so brands need to be genuinely committed to their actions and not just show them off through advertising or posters. However, it is important to point out that these brands are obliged to change their image if they want to survive this 3.0 marketing. Changing these ads and modernising them with current values is to be encouraged. Breaking away from an ethos previously considered too stereotypical is no easy task. However, sometimes claiming loud and clear to be a brand that wants women to feel good, while at the same time creating situations internally that are harmful to their integrity or health, should be avoided. There is a balance to be struck between modernising advertising and proclaiming values that a brand does not really possess.

## **2. Conclusion**

We live in a time when feminism is used for capitalist ends: in advertising, in film, in literature and so on. Feminism has become almost compulsory marketing for brands to avoid boycotts. It has almost become a strategy like any other. While it is necessary for brands to break codes and taboos, using feminism for marketing purposes generally remains something of a problem. Feminism is no longer a revolutionary movement, but a trend adopted by capitalist society to make a profit. Although the will of these institutions may be sincere and legitimate, the fact remains that their main aim is to sell. But we must not forget that feminism is not just about showing that women can be as strong as men or that men know how to do the dishes. Feminism is also a fight: a fight against femicide, a fight against rape, sexual mutilation, violence in Iran against women who remove their headscarf by choice, to name but a few examples. To reduce feminism to a marketing value is to forget the people who fight behind the scenes for the real causes that feminism defends. It is important that brands, the media and consumers alike become aware of this and other forms of CSR-washing, so as not to contribute to a strategy that is detrimental to the movement. Governments also need to be aware of these strategies and, where necessary, punish brands that use feminism for purely marketing purposes without really applying its values. This is already the case in some countries for greenwashing, so it is not impossible that it will happen in the next few years for purplewashing. As Pauline Maclaran

puts it so well in her article “Feminism’s Fourth Wave: a Research Agenda for Marketing and Consumer Research”: “A new sexism seems to be stalking us, and there is an urgent need to understand more about marketing’s role in this, unpicking these processes at both individual and institutional levels”.<sup>242</sup>

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<sup>242</sup> Maclaran, Pauline. “Feminism’s Fourth Wave: a Research Agenda for Marketing and Consumer Research.” *Journal of Marketing Management*, vol. 31, no. 15-16, 2015, p. 1736.

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