



Panorama of Female Representation in Spanish Advertising After 20 Years of LOVG (2004) and Facebook

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Abstract: Introduction: In 2004, two key events shaped social and legislative developments: Facebook's launch on February 4, marking a paradigm shift in online and advertising communication. The enactment of Spain's Organic Law 1/2004 on December 28, Europe's first comprehensive legislation addressing gender violence and sexist advertising, and explicitly defining it as an offence for the first time. It set a critical precedent in combating sexist advertising. In the meantime, Facebook, with its bidirectional communication, revolutionized sociological dynamics, giving everyone a voice and transforming advertising practices. In this study, we attempted to intersect the roles played by the LOVG of 2004 with its appearance and social impact, and to see if its principles also extended to Facebook due to their temporal coincidence. Methodology: To achieve this, following a retrospective review of female representation in advertisements, a critical discourse analysis with a feminist perspective was employed on selected examples of sexist advertising in the Spanish landscape between 2004-2024. Findings and analysis: This study examines how the 2004 Organic Law on Gender Violence (LOVG) and the rise of Facebook, and other social media platforms have influenced the representation of women in advertising. LOVG explicitly prohibited illicit advertising and marked progress toward challenging three stereotypical portrayals of women: as youthful and perfect according to societal beauty standards, as homemakers confined to domestic roles, and as sexual objects. While the law fostered a positive shift toward more inclusive gender representation, social media introduced mixed effects. Platforms like Facebook amplified public voices and enabled swift backlash against controversial campaigns, leading to their rapid removal. However, these platforms also accelerated the spread of sexist content, as discriminatory taunts often gained attention and triggered reactions. Contribution/ originality of the contribution. The study highlights the dual impact of legal frameworks and social media, providing a critical perspective on designing ads that balance legal boundaries and the new possibilities offered by online platforms.

Keywords: Illegal advertising; sexist advertising; Facebook; stereotypes; equality; social networks; femvertising.

[es] Panorama de la representación femenina en la publicidad española tras 20 años de LOVG (2004) y Facebook

Resumen: Introducción: El año 2004, se caracterizó por dos novedades en el panorama español: El lanzamiento de Facebook el 4 de febrero, que transformó la comunicación en línea y publicitaria, y la promulgación de la Ley Orgánica 1/2004 en España el 28 de diciembre, la primera legislación integral en Europa contra la violencia de género y la publicidad sexista y define expresamente por primera vez como una ofensa, siendo un hito en la lucha contra ella. Paralelamente, Facebook revolucionó la dinámica social al dar voz a todos/as y cambiar la forma en que se comunicaba y se publicitaba. Este estudio analiza cómo ambas influyeron en la representación de las mujeres en publicidad, considerando su coincidencia temporal. Metodología: Se realizó una revisión retrospectiva de la representación femenina en la publicidad española entre 2004 y 2024. Se empleó un análisis crítico del discurso desde una perspectiva feminista, examinando ejemplos de publicidad sexista. Resultados y análisis: La LOVG de 2004 prohibió explícitamente la publicidad ilícita y marcó un avance al desafiar tres estereotipos de género: las mujeres como jóvenes perfectas según estándares de belleza, como amas de casa confinadas al hogar y como objetos sexuales. Aunque promovió una representación más inclusiva, las redes sociales generaron efectos mixtos. Facebook amplificó las voces públicas y facilitó reacciones rápidas contra campañas polémicas, logrando su eliminación. Sin embargo, también aceleró la difusión de contenido sexista, donde insultos discriminatorios

ganaron atención y fomentaron reacciones. Contribución/originalidad de la contribución: El estudio subraya el impacto dual de la legislación y las redes sociales, aportando una perspectiva crítica sobre cómo diseñar publicidad que equilibre las limitaciones legales con las nuevas posibilidades digitales.

Palabras clave: Publicidad ilícita, publicidad sexista, Facebook, estereotipos, igualdad, redes sociales, femvertising.

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1. Introduction

In 2004, two key developments shaped Spanish advertising and female representation: the launch of Facebook and the enactment of Organic Law 1/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence (LOVG 2004).

The LOVG 2004, effective January 2005, extensively aims to prevent sexist aggressions through various areas of application, such as advertising, considering it as an important agent of socialization that can have a great influence on the population (Navarro and Martín, 2012, 248). Article 10 of the LOVG 2004 establishes that advertising that uses the image of women in a derogatory or discriminatory manner is considered illicit advertising.

LEGISLATION	PROVISIONS
Law 16/1983, of October 24th, establishing the Autonomous Institute for Women, as amended by Law 11/2020, of December 30th, on the General State Budget for the year 2021	Article 3, subsections g and h.
Law 34/1988, of November 11th, General Advertising Law, as amended by Organic Law 10/2022, of September 6th, on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom	Article 3, subsection a and Article 6.
Organic Law 1/2004, of December 28th, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence	Articles 13.1 and 14.
Organic Law 3/2007, of March 22nd, for the Effective Equality of Women and Men	Article 41.
Organic Law 8/2021, of June 4th, on Comprehensive Protection of Children and Adolescents Against Violence	Final Provision Five: Modification of General Advertising Law, 34/1988, of November 11th.
Organic Law 1/2023, of February 28th, amending Organic Law 2/2010, of March 3rd, on Sexual and Reproductive Health and the Voluntary Termination of Pregnancy.	Article 10, Article 33 and Final Provisions One and Two.
Law 13/2022, of July 7th, General Audiovisual Communication Law.	Article 4, sections 2 and 4, Article 6.1, Article 122.2: prohibits "audiovisual commercial communication that uses the image of women in a derogatory or discriminatory manner" and Article 157.
Organic Law 10/2022, of September 6th, on the Comprehensive Guarantee of Sexual Freedom.	Article 11.

Figure 1.1. A timeline of the relevant legislation in Spain.

Meanwhile, Facebook was founded in February 2004, initially limited to select universities, later expanded globally, reshaping online communication and becoming a dominant advertising platform. Its bidirectional nature allowed audiences, including women, to challenge sexist representations, but its algorithms often reinforced stereotypes by prioritizing advertisers' goals and hypertargeting users based on sensitive data. It should be noted that Facebook's predecessor, the platform called FaceMash, was controversial from its inception, as it allowed users to compare photographs of their university classmates, and choose the most attractive ones.

This study explores how these two developments influenced female representation in Spanish advertising over 20 years. While the law aimed to control stereotypes, social media's rise introduced both opportunities for dialogue and risks of perpetuating discriminatory narratives (Sapiezynski et al., 2022). By analysing traditional and online advertising campaigns, the study examines how these campaigns portray gender roles, depict female representation, and elicit public reactions. Building on previous research (Arda & Fernandez, 2012; Arda, 2011), we establish a framework for evaluating sexist advertisements, their societal impact, and the influence of social media dialogues on this critical issue.

The analysis highlights a tension between the objectives of social media platforms and the goals of the Organic Law 1/2004. While social media campaigns prioritize performance metrics such as engagement, traffic, and revenue, the Organic Law seeks to reduce the use of stereotypes and degrading images of women. Social media enables brands to amplify their campaigns but also provides a platform for public criticism. However, algorithms designed to maximize advertiser profits may inadvertently perpetuate stereotypes, as they prioritize audience engagement over ethical concerns.

This paper raises critical questions: Can online networks effectively challenge sexism in advertising, or do sexist depictions remain a tool for generating publicity? Do such advertisements merely exploit outrage to create social media buzz for brands? As part of a broader research project, this preliminary study lays the groundwork for addressing these questions. Future phases will analyse selected online campaigns, focusing on the content and scale of the social media buzz they generate through quantitative evaluation of engagement metrics.

1.1. Methodology

This research employs a multi-faceted methodology, using qualitative and quantitative methods, to explore the regulation and evolution of sexist advertising in Spain. The study begins by analysing the development of Spanish legislation in the introductory section, particularly the Organic Law 1/2004 on Gender Violence, to identify key assumptions constituting advertising misconduct. Although not numerous, Spanish judicial rulings on illicit advertising and their implications for the portrayal of women are also examined. To contextualize these legal frameworks, the study reviews prominent sexist advertising campaigns from 2004 to 2024, followed by instances of Femvertising – ads promoting female empowerment – to understand the broader and actual landscape of female representation in advertising.

In the second section of the article, the evolution of the Spanish society is investigated together with a retrospective of the legislation and the advertising panorama to provide the background for the analysis that follows. This section is illustrated with a selection of sexist ads, identified through their legal definition as such, and yet that have survived in public memory.

In the third section, ads and campaigns defined as sexist and amplified by the use of social media are examined. Four campaigns, in this section, were selected according to their identification by the Federación de Asociaciones de Consumidores y Usuarios de Andalucía (FACUA) as “worst ads of the year” for their discriminatory or sexist content. FACUA, an independent consumer advocacy organization founded in 1981, has highlighted problematic ads annually since 2010, often promoting its campaign through social media hashtags like #ElAnuncioMasMachista.

This selection of controversial advertisements, particularly those from 2010 to 2024, was evaluated to discern patterns of evading legal constraints and leveraging social media for dissemination. Special attention was paid to how these campaigns used online platforms to generate buzz – both positive and negative – through audience engagement. To observe and evaluate the patterns in the awarded ads, the analysis was limited to the years 2010-2024. These campaigns were analysed in detail to understand their sleight in dodging/avoiding the confines of the law, as well as the extent to which social media was provided for their dissemination. As in recent decades, controversial advertisements have been disseminated on online social networks to create a “buzz”, even when the backlash is negative.

And finally, in the fourth section, five advertising campaigns that were considered as “femvertising” were selected due to their positive reception on social media and were analysed using the same criteria defined in the third section.

2. Background of the Portrayal of Women in Spanish Advertising

Advertising employs various techniques to turn the promoted object into an object of desire for its target audience, utilizing different commercial techniques and strategies. It is a well-established fact that advertising contributes to the normalization of behaviour, which in the case of the portrayal of women has helped establish stereotypes and sexist situations. As indicated by González Ortiz, “television, cinema, and advertising are becoming, with the family's permission, the main protagonists in the construction of new social coexistence models” (2007).

Thus, the function of advertising goes beyond merely informing about the characteristics of the product or service; it also serves to perpetuate values and behavioural patterns to follow.

Regarding stereotypes, they are widely used in advertising because they emphasize and reinforce social meanings, being simplifications of meanings we have about something or someone and which have an extended and shared significance with our social counterparts. Therefore, their use can emphasize and reinforce social meanings that may perpetuate inequalities. Stereotypes are based on preconceived ideas that distort reality.

The main female stereotypes addressed in advertising are: 1) Pre-established beauty standards, featuring a perfect and young body according to socially predefined parameters, 2) woman as a housewife, linking her to the domestic sphere and household chores and 3) woman as a sexual object. On the other hand, sexist advertising is that which treats men and women differently merely because of their gender.

In this section, we will quickly review the situation of women's roles in advertising before the Organic Law for the Effective Equality of Women and Men of 2004, differentiating two periods within this stage based on the advent of democracy. For this, we will rely on the classification of women's roles in advertising by Dr. Elosegui (1998), who analysed television advertisements from the 1960s to the late 1990s and classified them into three stages (López and Bernad, 2007, 218): 1) Subordination to men, 2) woman equal to man, and 3) shared responsibility of the roles between man and woman.

2.1. Women in Advertising Before the Spanish Constitution, the General Law of Advertising of 1988 and Examples

In the second half of the 20th century, television became the most influential medium for the population due to its entertainment capacity. It also provided us with the opportunity to learn about places and experiences. Advertising, being aware of the power of entertainment but also of socialization, education, and, above all, information transmission, has used this medium to convey its messages.



Figure 2.1 Examples of stereotypes in advertisement. The Spanish brand of pop soda, La Casera says “We have already launched the sales of our delicious product.” While “La Casera” means home-made, in the image we see the mother figure serving the soda to her children. The Danone ad promotes “the happiness of home – every day with Danone” again with an image of a mother eating Danone around a table with her children. The images suggest that the male members of the family don’t have much to do with the “homeliness” of a home, or even with eating.

Following Elosegui’s classification, in the first stage, “Subordination to men,” women are depicted engaged in domestic tasks, taking care of their offspring, and economically dependent on their husbands, who are the centre of the household. Legislation, euphemistically, seemed to protect women, masking situations of inequality (such as dismissals due to pregnancy disguised with compensation, which today would be considered unjustified, among other examples). As for jobs in the public sphere, women were associated with three professions: Education, nursing, and secretarial work.



Figure 2.2. Various examples of Spanish advertisements, showing the women in domestic, subordinate positions. While La Lechera, Practic and Dixan ads position the woman as the homemaker, Parera and Parera ads define the woman as a sexual object, underlining her role as seducing and serving the men.

This first stage coincides with the last decades of Franco's regime, during which there was no specific legislation protecting against sexism in advertising. While women were treated with respect, they were always under the responsibility of men. Until the Law of May 2, women could not have money of their own; they were under the guardianship of their husbands, fathers, or guardians (except for widows). This law addressed various issues, particularly those related to women's legal capacity. All these legal and social issues were reflected in advertising from that time period.

2.2. Women in Advertising After the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and the Enactment of the LGP of 1988 and Examples

2.2.1. Women in advertising after the Spanish Constitution of 1978

During this period, which spans from the advent of democracy and the Spanish Constitution of 1978 to the promulgation of the LOVG of 2004, preceded by the LGP of 1988, we encounter two fundamental moments. These coincide with the second stage outlined by Elosegui's classification (1998).

The second stage, "Woman equal to man," aligns with the feminist demands of the 1970s. In advertisements, women are depicted undertaking roles previously considered masculine, such as riding motorcycles, smoking, drinking, wearing masculine clothing, displaying physical strength, etc. However, perhaps due to societal resistance to change and men's fear of losing their dominance in public life, feminist demands are scarcely reflected in advertisements. This may also be attributed to the fact that advertising was predominantly controlled by men. Nevertheless, changes occurred in legislation, leading to the disappearance of protective laws from the previous stage. By denying the difference between men and women, women were portrayed as superwomen, assuming a double workload both at home and outside.

The Spanish Constitution of 1978 pays little attention to issues related to women's portrayal, it establishes some guidelines in specific provisions, like Article 1.1, addressing the values of equality and freedom. Equality, as a constitutional superior value, requires a modification of the patriarchal society, and freedom cannot be established in a society that portrays women as objects devoid of their humanity as individuals.

Furthermore, Article 10 of the Constitution enshrines the dignity of the individual and the free development of personality. Article 9.2 obligates public authorities to remove obstacles to ensure the real and effective fulfilment of equality and freedom. Article 14 specifies equality as a fundamental right directly enforceable by judges and courts, and Article 20 guarantees freedom of expression. Finally, Article 18 recognizes the right to honour, personal and family privacy, and one's own image, but these rights are recognized as individual rights. So initially, it would not be appropriate to speak of the right to women's portrayal from a constitutional perspective.

As indicated by Balaguer (2008), from a more social perspective, we could conclude that within the right to honour and the right to image, protection of women against indiscriminate use of their image is feasible. This allows them to invoke this fundamental right to their dignity as women so that advertising cannot deprive them of it through objectification and presentation as an erotic consumer object of a brand.



Figure 2.3. Examples of using the female body and sexual suggestions to sell anything to men. Nonetheless, in this era, women also appear in roles that were previously considered masculine, such as driving motorcycles or drinking alcohol.

2.2.2. Women in Advertising After the Enactment of the LGP 1988

According to Elosegui's classification (1998), the third stage is "the shared responsibility of roles between men and women," both in private and public spaces, with men and women appearing for the first time-sharing jobs and household tasks. Legislation also reflects this shared responsibility of both sexes, with norms promoting it. However, in this stage, a new way of subordinating women to men through advertising emerges, by objectifying them and treating them as consumer objects, using their image as a sexual commodity.

During this period, for the first time, specific regulations, such as Law 34/1988 of November 11, General Advertising (Official State Gazette, number 274, dated 11/15/1988), in its Article 3, define illicit advertising as that which undermines the dignity of the person and the rights recognized in the Constitution. Especially concerning childhood, youth, and women. Although it does not explicitly mention sexist advertising, it represents progress as the first law to combat discriminatory advertising against women. Previously, the Advertising Statute of 1964 did not address the illegality of discriminatory advertising against women. However, according to the Intervention Guide on Sexist Advertising by the Women's Institute (2008), this article demonstrates the legislator's interest in prohibiting advertising modalities that violate women's rights and allows discriminatory advertising to be classified as illicit.

Furthermore, the LGP of 1988 establishes, for the first time, a judicial procedure to resolve controversies arising from advertising activities, whereas with the Advertising Statute, this competence lay with an administrative body, the Central Advertising Jury (Balaguer, 2008).



Figure 2.4. Women portrayed as objects, as sexual commodities and in service, or for pleasure of men.

On March 3, 1992, the Court of First Instance and Instruction of Ibi (Alicante) condemned the toy company FEBER S.A. for broadcasting messages that differentiated between those aimed at girls, offering exclusively dolls and household and kitchen utensils. Those aimed at boys. This included a broader range of offerings related to the outside world and professions. The sentence also stated that these advertisements reinforced in their recipients, roles and limiting stereotypes for people, creating two separate worlds based on sex, supposedly complementary and in most cases antagonistic; a sexist conception of society that leads to a view of women as inferior and dependent on men.

The sentence was groundbreaking for referring to discriminatory stereotyping and for invoking the constitutional mandate to resort to legal sources. With it, discriminatory advertising against women was condemned for the first time in our country.



Figure 2.5. Feber Toys advertisements with limited narratives and stereotypes for girls and boys.

To conclude, according to the Women's Institute (2016), in its last three decades, the social pressure stemming from women's liberation movements and the advent of a more critical society has shattered previously accepted principles. It points out that advertising has become one of the most scrutinized and regulated social discourses by institutions and society itself, understanding that it must evolve responsibly towards new, more equitable, inclusive, and responsible narratives. This reflection is entirely relevant and coincides with the treatment that has been given to the portrayal of women in advertising in Spain, protecting them both in the discourse present in current advertisements and in the treatment they receive in legislation and media.

2.3. Influence of the Enactment of the LOVG of 2004 on the Definition of Sexist Advertising and Examples

The Organic Law 1/2004 of December 28, on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence (Official State Gazette, number 313, dated 12/29/2004), was the first comprehensive law on gender violence in Europe. This law, the first to adopt a gender perspective in its articles, was pioneering in the introduction of specialized courts for violence against women and also introduced a Special Delegation of the government against violence against women.

The law represented progress by recognizing the violence exerted against women solely because of their gender, restoring to them the rights of freedom, respect, and decision-making often curtailed by the aggressors. The comprehensive system created by this norm was based on prevention, protection, and recovery of the victim, as well as the prosecution of the crime. It was a transversal law that involved seven ministries at the time due to its various areas of action.

The law addresses advertising in its second chapter, titled "In the field of advertising and the media". Specifically, in Article 10, the norm states that "In accordance with the provisions of Law 34/1988, of November 11, General Advertising, advertising that uses the image of women in a derogatory or discriminatory manner shall be considered illicit".

But in addition to defining advertising against women as illicit, the law in its articles 11 and 14 addresses the responsibility of the media and public administrations in treating women correctly and avoiding inequalities and violence in their treatment.

In particular, Article 11 states that “The public body responsible for ensuring that the audiovisual media fulfil their obligations shall take the necessary measures to ensure that women are treated in accordance with constitutional principles and values, without prejudice to possible actions by other entities”, while Article 14 states that “The media shall promote the protection and safeguarding of equality between men and women, avoiding all discrimination between them. The dissemination of information relating to violence against women shall ensure, with the corresponding informative objectivity, the defence of human rights, freedom, and dignity of women victims of violence and their children. In particular, special care shall be taken in the graphic treatment of information”.



Figure 2.6. The use of a woman's body or part of it, disconnected from the object that is intended to be promoted, is to objectify her by representing women in a derogatory or discriminatory way.

But above all, this law, in its Sixth Additional Provision, modified the General Advertising Law of 1988, explicitly indicating: “It is illicit advertising that undermines the dignity of the person or violates the values and rights recognized in the Constitution, especially advertisements that present women hastily, either by using their body or parts thereof as a mere object detached from the product being promoted, or their image associated with stereotyped behaviours that violate the foundations of our legal system.”

According to García and Lema, the major innovation introduced by the LOVG 2004 was to classify a specific case in which advertising, by definition, undermines the dignity of the person and is therefore illegal (2008, 74). This occurs when advertisements present women in a derogatory manner.

Nevertheless, as indicated by Martín Casado (2016, 197), with the Sixth Additional Provision of the LOVG that modified Article 3 of the LGP of 1988, the meaning of derogatory or discriminatory was further specified. Although it did not indicate who sets the stereotype, i.e., who should perceive the image and incorporate it into the concept of women, thus lacking clear regulation and specific agreements on gender equality in the media. Especially in advertising.

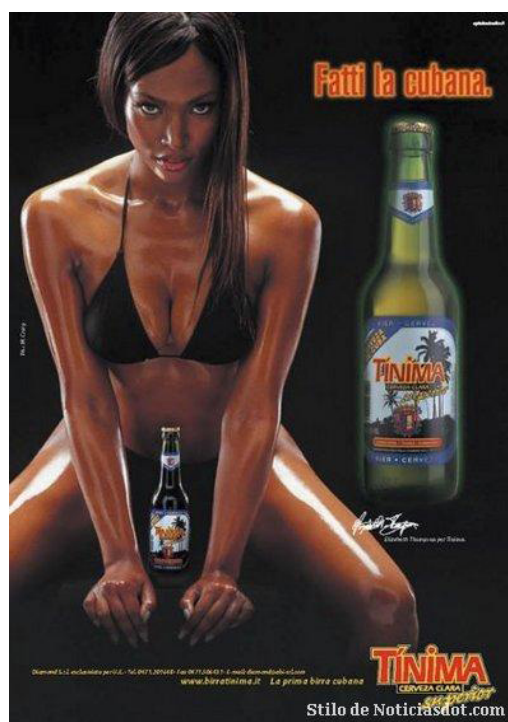


Figure 2.7. Use of the female body completely disconnected what is sold and clearly sexualized.

In this regard, the Administrative Court (1st Section) of the National Court on November 26, 2011, resolved an administrative appeal, sanctioning the audiovisual authority (then SETSI), the television operator Sogecable, SA, and Telecinco for broadcasting the sexist advertising of the Seat León (Figure 2.8). This was for Illicit Advertising as defined by Article 3.1(a) of the Advertising Law.



Figure 2.8. In the sanctioned Seat León ad, a car race is shown. One shot reveals a woman from the waist down, with her miniskirt lifted, exposing her buttocks – a shot that has nothing to do with what is being advertised.

Indeed, although Spain had the most advanced legislation on sexist advertising at that time, few cases of this type of advertising were brought to court. Even though it was known through the Institute of Women and other entities that there were more than one case of sexist advertising per month. This lack of action was due, on the one hand, to the excessively long deadlines of the courts. This meant that trying to stop a supposedly sexist campaign, if the preliminary hearing took place after six months, would usually mean that the campaign had already ended by then. For this reason, it was argued that taking legal action in the field of advertising contributed very little because the court's decision, not being swift, hardly affected the interested parties.

For this reason, advertising self-regulation and Advertising Observatories represent an important support in eradicating these sexist advertisements by intervening more quickly and promoting self-control. In this regard, the media have established internal rules and self-discipline. The rulings issued by the Advertising Self-Regulation Jury bind all members, and their complaints are typically resolved promptly. Thus, an analysis carried out in 2012 on 51 advertising self-control resolutions on sexist campaigns showed that a clear change was perceived between the 28 campaigns analysed before the LOVG and the 23 campaigns analysed after it (Ortiz and del Arco, 2012, 272).

Thus, it can be observed that the resolutions before the LOVG regarding advertisements featuring the female body or its parts unrelated to the product intended for promotion were evaluated under the criterion of good taste, as per Rule 8 of the Autocontrol Advertising Code of Conduct, which stated, "Advertising must not include content that violates the prevailing criteria of good taste and social decorum, as well as good customs" (Autocontrol, 1996). Nevertheless, the ads analyzed after the LOVG are already deemed discriminatory by applying Rule 10 of the Advertising Code of Conduct: "Discriminatory advertising: Advertising will not suggest circumstances of discrimination, whether on the basis of race, nationality, religion, sex or sexual orientation, nor will it violate the dignity of the person. In particular, advertisements that may be humiliating or discriminatory towards women will be avoided" (Autocontrol, 1996).

On the other hand, both the State and regional Gender Observatories play an important role, although with different levels of effectiveness, but all of them work to eradicate the stereotyped image of women in advertising. Their functions are more within the framework of awareness-raising, consciousness-raising, and intellectual development of female iconography.

Despite the significant modifications of the General Advertising Law benefiting women brought about by the enactment of the Comprehensive Law on Gender Violence Protection, a study conducted by Navarro and Martín (2012), reveals that this law has not been entirely effective. In 2012, they concluded, after analysing different advertising spots from the five years before the law and the five years after, that the same degree of sexism existed in Spanish advertising.

However, as we have indicated above, other authors believe that during this time there has been an improvement in the advertising treatment of the image of women, especially by large companies. This is by assuming the social changes in the situation of women. Therefore, they have perceived that the most degrading campaigns are generally broadcast by small local advertisers and through media with a smaller reach. (Ortiz and del Arco, 2012, 272). A perception that is currently shared, since after 20 years of the implementation of this law, we can appreciate the change that has been reflected during these years, both in society and in the advertising sector. Although we still find illegal sexist advertising acts, we observe how new perspectives are appearing in the advertising treatment of women, such as femvertising. The seed planted by the LOVG has had something to do with this.

2.4. Definition of Sexist Advertising after the Enactment of the LOI in 2007

In 2007, the Organic Law 3/2007, of March 22, for Effective Equality between Women and Men («BOE» núm. 71, of 23/03/2007), came into force. This law understands equality as the active and balanced participation of men and women in all areas of life, both public and private. This norm aims to eliminate existing inequalities through the promotion of a change in cultural and labour behaviours in Spain, which are the ones that truly prevent real and effective equality.

The LOI refers to equality in its Title III “Equality and Media” In Article 36, it guarantees that social media, whose ownership is public, will ensure an “egalitarian, plural, and non-stereotyped” image. Regarding private media, it indicates that self-regulation agreements will be promoted.

Article 41 “Equality and Advertising” indicates that “Advertising that involves discriminatory behaviour according to this law will be considered illicit advertising, in accordance with the provisions of general advertising and institutional communication legislation”.

This Law again refers to Article 3a of the LGP, modified by the LOVG of 2004 as mentioned earlier. However, despite the good disposition of its precepts, it is inferred that compliance will continue to depend on the initiative of public authorities and awareness of the discrimination suffered by women.

In 2014, the Institute of Women and the Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit against the cement company Cementos La Unión S.A. for using the sexualized image of a woman unrelated to the product offered in its corporate communication. It presented female figures on cement bags. This was dismissed by the Commercial Court No. 2 of Valencia and upheld by the Provincial Court of Valencia on appeal. Finally, the advertising was declared illicit and unfair.



Figure 2.9. Sexualized image of women for the cement company, Cementos La Union campaign.

In 2013, the Women’s Institute (OIM) took the airline company Ryanair to court for promoting, on its website, the sale of airplane tickets using images of flight attendants in bikinis, with the title ‘Hot fares and the crew!’ in a direct allusion to flight attendants. Also, on the website, a 2013 charity calendar was offered featuring the images of six flight attendants in bikinis, labeled “The girls of Ryanair” emphasizing its charitable nature (“cabin crew charity calendar”). The judgment of the Commercial Court No. 2 of Malaga on December 5th stated that in the commercial communication content in question (advertisements and calendar), the female body was used as a captivating part of the advertising, as a mere object with “poses in clear sexual invitation,” and in absolute disconnect between the image used and the product being promoted (sale of airplane tickets)).

The judgment was appealed by Ryanair to the Provincial Court of Malaga, which on December 22, 2016, ruled recognizing the advertising campaign as sexist and degrading to the image of women.

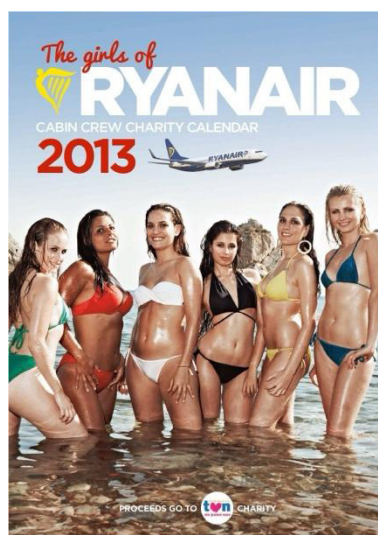


Figure 2.10. Promoting flights on the Ryanair website using images of flight attendants in bikinis.

In 2016, the Association of Communication Users filed a lawsuit in the Commercial Court of Barcelona, Section 4, against CNCE Innovación S.L for illicit advertising and unfair competition. The advertisement in question was for VR6 shampoo, published in print media, featuring the image of a naked woman with the slogan “Don’t obsess with her, you can have it just like her... the hair, of course!” (Figure 2.11) The court ruled that this advertisement was illicit as it violated the General Advertising Law by using the female body directly and specifically as a mere object unrelated to the product being promoted.



Figure 2.11. The use of a female figure as a mere object unrelated to the promoted product to advertise shampoo.

In 2016, the Institut Balear de la Dona filed a lawsuit in the Commercial Court of Palma against a barber-shop named Syndicate for a sign displayed at the entrance of the establishment prohibiting women from entering. The lawsuit requested the barber to remove the controversial sign. The court ruling ordered the immediate removal of the sign and imposed costs on the defendant.

In 2019, AUC filed an appeal before the Provincial Court of Ciudad Real against the transport company Transportes Benavent S.L. for the sexist nature of the depiction of a naked woman on the side of the cabin of a fleet of trucks dedicated to transportation, considering that such image has a humiliating, discriminatory, and stereotypical content and objectifies women. The judgment declared the illegality of the advertised publicity because the photograph represented women as mere objects, with no connection to the advertiser's activity.



Figure 2.12. Benavent Transport's objectification of women: a female body decorating the truck cabin.

In the latest case of a sentence for sexist advertising, the gym chain McFit filed an appeal in 2017 with the Provincial Court of Madrid, Section 28, against the OIM.

The OIM initially filed a lawsuit against the gym chain McFit for the dissemination of a video on YouTube entitled "Proud to be McFit", which used the female body as a lure. Also, against the image included in advertising banners installed on buildings and on the company's website.

The lawsuit was admitted, and in a judgment in January 2020, all the claims of the lawsuit were upheld. The judgment stated that the requirement of "the use of the female body, or parts thereof, with erotic connotations and as a captivating part of the advertising" served to determine the degree of direct connection between the image of the woman and the promoted product. It was considered that representing the female body as a mere object, without playing any active role in the advertising action or being connected to the advertising argument, was illegal.

In April 2022, the Provincial Civil Court of Madrid ruled on appeal to dismiss the appeal filed by McFit. Furthermore, the defendant was ordered to publish the judgment, at its expense, in the digital media, website, or social networks where this illicit advertising had been carried out.

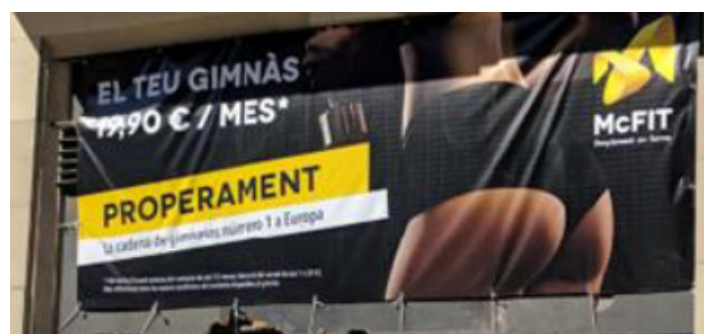


Figure 2.13. Advertising McFit Gym with a representation of the female body as a mere object.

3. Sexist Advertisements and Facebook: Selected Campaigns

In a recent documentary by RTVE on Femvertising, David Corominas, a brand strategy and communication consultant, discusses that advertising should not be asked to “do things that are beyond its logic.” We should accept it as a commercial medium and not an educational one, limiting our expectations from it. It need not give any messages that empower women (RTVE, 2019). However, his perspective contradicts with years and volumes of research on the content and the effects of advertising: Advertising not only promotes products but also conveys values and cultural ideals, such as notions of success and sexuality (Kilbourne, 2000, 21; Cortese, 2007, 57). Jean Kilbourne argues that advertising perpetuates restrictive stereotypes of femininity and masculinity, hindering individuals’ ability to express their true selves, whether consciously acknowledged or not (Kilbourne, 2000, 177). In the past, when mass media mainly represented the interests of a privileged few, this might have been more prevalent. However, with the rise of social media, there is potential for change in how women are portrayed in advertising, as social media platforms allow for diverse voices to be heard.

The subsequent phase of the research will delve deeper into the possibilities created by social media for femvertising, nevertheless, first we will follow the counterargument. Social media measures campaign success with numbers: Likes, followers, shares, views, and comments construct the buzz created online. Using sexist advertisements to attract attention and generating controversy around brands could mean social media success in this sense, and the damage on the female myth and image could be considered as collateral. Despite ongoing feminist critique of gendered advertising, some brands prioritize gaining social media followers over ethical responsibility.

In this section, four different campaigns from such brands, in the period 2004-2024, were selected and examined in detail. The criteria for the selection and analysis of the ads included: 1) The relevancy of the product/ campaign, 2) The level of attention that the campaign has attracted and the concerns/ reactions raised by the ad. 3) Whether the campaign has created revenue for the brand that has launched it, 4) Whether the buzz created around the brand was positive or negative with respect to its effect on the female representation in media. 5) Whether the relevant authorities denounced the campaign. Even though some selected campaigns combine traditional and digital mediums for their dissemination, they mostly benefited from the use of social media. Facebook is one of the most prominent platforms in this period for the dissemination of their message. So, they were considered as part of the online discourse.

3.1. Ryanair: “Tarifas al rojo vivo ¡Y la tripulación!” [Red Hot Fares! and Crew!] (2007-2014)



Figure 3.1. The covers of all the “Girls of Ryanair” Calendars from 2008-2014.

In 2007, Ryanair created a campaign based on a “sexy” 2008 calendar for charity, that included photographs of its female cabin crew in bikinis, underwear and suggestive poses. The campaign was made public with the slogans “Red hot fares and crew”, “Fares on fire! And the crew!” The calendar was sold from ryanair.com, on board Ryanair flights, and from Debra’s Irish and Spanish charity shops. While it raised substantial amounts of funds for different charities from 2008-2014, it also caused controversy for the company on social media.

The Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) of U.K. launched a formal investigation after it received ten complaints asking for the airline to drop the calendar (Sweeney, 2011). The calendar had received 8,610 public complaints on social media and the petition that was started by “cabin crew against sexism” on change.org that accused the airline of using the female cabin crew to sell tickets with their campaign received 11,302 signatures. A spokesperson for Ryanair was reported as having said: “This proves only that there are 7,000 prudes, but thankfully there are 10,000 charitable people that have bought the calendar each year, raising €500,000 for charity” (Kimberley, 2011). The following year, Ryanair’s Stephen McNamara said: “The PC quacks at the ASA received just 17 complaints about ads for the 2012 Ryanair calendar, and every year 10,000 people buy a copy of our calendar to help raise €100,000 to change the lives of those who need help the most, and for this reason Ryanair will continue to produce, promote and advertise our charity calendars” (Boyce, 2012).

[Start a petition](#)
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[Petition details](#)
[Comments](#)

stop selling your staff

Confirmed victory

This petition made change with 11,302 supporters!

[Send a message via WhatsApp](#)

stop selling your staff

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Send an email to friends](#)

[Tweet to your followers](#)

[Copy link](#)

Started November 21, 2011
 Petition to [Ryanair](#) and [1 other](#)

Why this petition matters

Started by [Cabin crew against sexism](#)

Figure 3.2: Petition on change.org, urging Ryanair to “stop selling its staff,” signed by 11,302 supporters.

In Spain, the campaign was denounced by the FACUA on December 11th, 2007. FACUA is the acronym for La Federación de Asociaciones de Consumidores y Usuarios de Andalucía [Federation of Consumer and User Associations of Andalucía], is a nongovernmental, independent organization founded in 1981 that has 243,536 members as of March 2024. In its 43 years of action, the FACUA has tended to meet the demands of consumers in Spain, and the number of cases only in the last year has reached 42,887. Since 1998, the FACUA has also selected and “awarded” the “worst advertiser” and the “worst advertisement” of the year. FACUA fomented a tradition of announcing candidates for the worst ad award on March 8th, International Women’s Day, and starting in 2017. They promoted the award with the hashtag #ElAnuncioMasMachista on social media. This hashtag translates as “the most sexist/chauvinist ad.”

In the case of Ryanair, the demand by FACUA for the withdrawal of the campaign and the calendar made the news all around the world, raising awareness on the sexist, illegal, and discriminatory use of the female body in advertising on one hand. It also increased the social media buzz created for and by Ryanair substantially (FACUA, 2007).

In February 2012 the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) announced that they were banning the sexist Ryanair advert promoting “Red hot fares and crew” (Hiscott, 2012). As was explained in the previous section as well, Commercial Court #2 of Malaga has identified this campaign as illegal and perfidious, condemned and sentenced Ryanair on two occasions on December 5th, 2013, and on February 20th, 2017 (IOM, 2017). The judge noted that the flight attendants that appeared in the campaigns were “in sexually suggestive poses,” and that the company was using the female body to promote ticket sales and disseminating discriminatory treatment of women (McTeirnan, 2014). Regarding the calendar, the magistrate argued that although it had charitable purposes, it was obvious that it “masked” a marketing campaign with commercial gains, it was not a non-profit activity. The judge pointed out that she was not judging, in the 21st century, any moral concept about nudity or the use of bikinis, but the existence of discriminatory treatment and objectification, which is a crime.

The sentence forced the airline to cease both promotions and refrain from repeating them in the future. The airline appealed this sentence, and however the Provincial Court of Malaga confirmed the previous ruling, dismissing the appeal. The sentence reads: “It is a sexist advertisement that uses women as objects of attraction with a clear sexual, discriminatory, and derogatory connotation” (Marketing Actual, 2017). The calendar “The Girls of Ryanair” was discontinued in 2015 (Paris, 2014).

3.2. Lancia Musa: “Desde cuando a alguien le importa si eres bella por dentro?” [When did anyone care if you’re beautiful on the inside?] (2007)

The campaign was launched in France in December 2006 and in Spain in January 2007. Carla Bruni was the image of “perfection” as she played the guitar and sang “Bang Bang,” showing off her legs inside a Lancia Musa car (Figure 3.3). While the magazine ads showed Bruni’s face together with the question “When did anyone care if you’re beautiful on the inside,” on Facebook, viewers of the spot were mostly concentrating on how gorgeous she looked. Even on websites that specialized on cars, the video was usually shared with sexist

comments like “Mamma mia, who cares about the car, we’d let this femme fatale burn our motor anytime, anywhere...” (Carscoop, 2008). With this campaign, Carla Bruni, reinforces the female stereotype of a woman as an object of desire glamorously, with her perfect figure, graceful attitude and soft, whisper-like tone of voice singing softly. These stereotypes serve to narrow down the possible narratives for women and cause the majority of women to feel out of place, and be perceived as such, in most societies on earth.

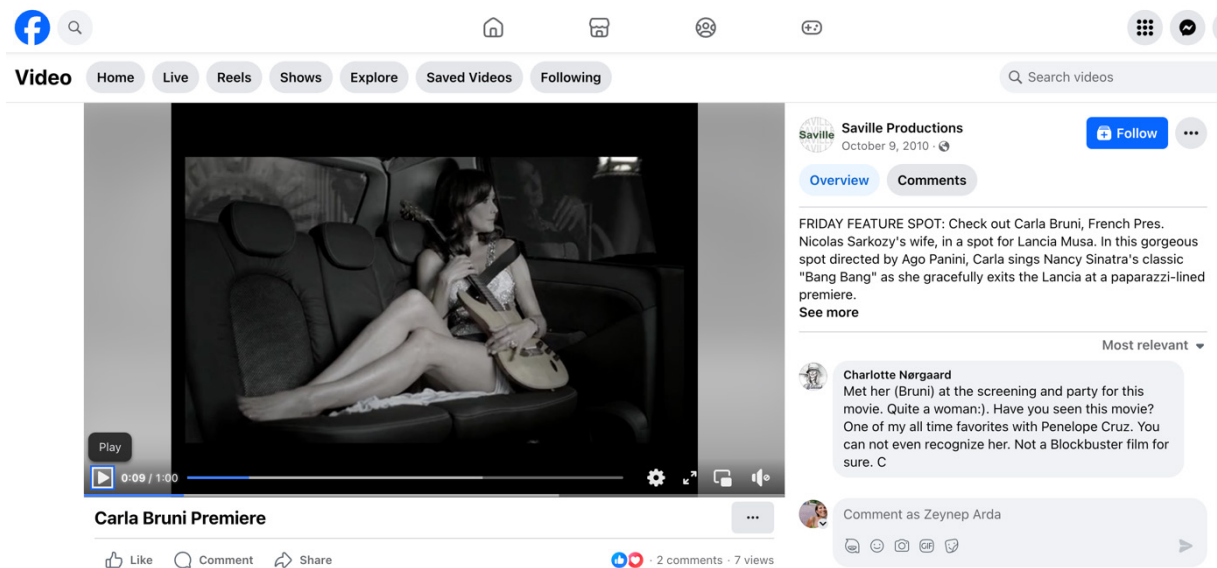


Figure 3.3. Carla Bruni, showing off her perfect figure in a Lancia Musa.

The Lancia Musa campaign was one that “naturalized” the stereotypes, and the campaign was never denounced by any of the organizations defending feminist or consumer rights. Instead, the campaign was crowned with the “Interactive Key Award” for “Best Online Ad,” and Lancia was recognized for its “innovative communication strategy” (Interfuture, 2007).



Figure 3.4: The format of the magazine ad for Lancia Musa, further elevates the tone of objectification, as Carla Bruni's beauty is bisected in to pieces and framed as close-ups of pieces of her body.

3.3. Axe: Feliz Fin del Mundo [Happy End of the World] (2012)

Unilever's Axe, the very well-known brand of men's deodorant and antiperspirant products, is almost equally well-known for the development of his advertising strategy and discourse around sexist provocation (Marketing Directo, 2005; Europa Press, 2007; CNMI, 2009; Mujeresyca, 2009; Peñas, 2022; Comesaña and Martín, 2022). Axe's campaign in 2012, under the theme of “the end of the world,” once again reinforces the existing stereotypes in the society. In the TV and social media spot, a man is seen building Noah's

Ark, and when he sprays the Axe deodorant on his body, hundreds of women are attracted and lured towards the ark (Figure 3.5). The female body as a “consumable” object is one of the two roles that these claustrophobic stereotypes place women in the society: Either an object of desire or a mother/housewife. The campaign also enhances the male stereotype, as it places men as a superior, for whom any woman would feel submissive attraction.

Reactions to this advertisement were unified in to the social media movement #NiUnaMenos in the Spanish society, that sought to confront misogyny, not only “in the streets, families, workplaces, friend groups, universities, but also in advertising; where it achieves great impact due to its viral nature and the reach it has in society” (Gutiérrez, 2017).



Figure 3.5. The Philippines version of the campaign “Happy End of the World” by Axe was launched with the explanatory text “the world is about to end, so collect as many babes as you can, quick! Summon those sirens with a cool citrus scent blended with metallic notes and sensual woods. Spray on the sexy and end the world with a bang...or two...or more!” on Facebook, while in Spain “Noah” luring in all the females into the ark that he built was using only the slogan “Feliz fin del mundo.”

3.4. Dove: La Belleza Viene en Todas Las Formas y Tamaños [Beauty Comes in All Shapes and Sizes] (2017)



Figure 3.6. A reminder to women from Dove of how their bodies are not “ideal.”

And then, there are campaigns that are doing their best to be inclusive and gender-positive, but as is in the case of Dove’s new bottles, they may end up contributing to and enforcing the mainstream discourse of advertising. The idea for the brand was to launch new bottles for Dove products with different shapes, alluding to how women’s bodies are equally diverse. There were flat bottles, others more robust, and others pear-shaped. However, women were quick to reject this advertising, as they felt that the bottles were a reminder of how their bodies are not “ideal” according to the current cultural perception. It was something they neither wanted nor needed – especially not when they are taking a shower.

Female critics argued that it was a move too unnecessary for a brand of creams and soaps. In the tendency of working towards a world that is more inclusive and diverse, it makes more sense to avoid planning advertising campaigns that involve criticizing women’s bodies, or anyone else’s, under any circumstances. It is much more likely that something will go wrong before something goes right (CNNEspañol, 2017).

Following decades of advertising that confined women into the very limited gender roles to sell products, the combined efforts of legal regulations, social media helping voice differences and disseminate messages, the paradigm started to shift slowly. It gave way to “Femvertising” or “Ad-her-tising” targeting female audiences with more empowering messages instead.

4. Femvertising as an Advertising Strategy

In recent years, a noticeable shift has occurred in the landscape of advertising, reflecting changing societal norms and consumer expectations. This evolution has given rise to a phenomenon known as “Femvertising.” While traditional advertising was often been criticized for perpetuating unrealistic beauty standards and gender stereotypes, “Femvertising” took a different approach. It involved the creation of advertising campaigns that empower and celebrate women, challenge traditional gender roles, construct and disseminate more positive images of women. In roles of contribution to the society, and advocate for issues relevant to women’s rights and equality.

Rather than focusing solely on product promotion, Femvertising aims to connect with consumers on a deeper level by aligning with their values and aspirations. Though some professionals disagree, and others doubt the sincerity of this movement, Concha Wert, Director of the Club de Creativos/as sees advertising as “a good medium for giving better messages about women, because it has a lot of visibility” (RTVE, 2019). And considering the great impact that advertising has in cultural and social terms, Femvertising could be expected to create a positive impact on consumers, shaping the future of advertising. In this section, following an introduction of the concept, five campaigns that have been launched in Spain in the past decade will be analysed and evaluated.

In a recent research reviewing the role of gender stereotypes in advertising, Grau and Zotos discuss the “mirror” and “mold” arguments and suggest that they form a continuum, rather than an opposition (Grau and Zotos, 2016). According to the “mirror” perspective on advertising, ad images magnify, yet they reflect social phenomena that exist and dominate the society. This approach, does not consider the impact of advertising as significant. The “mold” perspective, on the other hand, follows the cultivation theory to recommend that the media shapes how people perceive social reality (Gerbner and Gross, 1976). Similar to what happens with social media images and identities in the past two decades (Arda, 2011; Arda and Bernad, 2016), a concept of reality that tends to match the advertised images is created by the viewers. This viewpoint proposes that the advertising campaigns “invoke gender identity, drawing their imagery primarily from the stereotyped iconography of masculinity and femininity” (Schroeder and Zwick, 2007).

In line with the third wave of feminism, the terms “Ad-her-tising” and “Femvertising” were coined to define advertising mainly addressed to women that exhibits qualities of empowering women and equality. However, some theorists contend that companies creating advertisements promoting female empowerment vary in their levels of dedication to equality and, in some instances, they aim to manipulate consumers for increased profits by presenting faux activism (Rodríguez and Gutiérrez, 2017). Attempts to understand the impact of Femvertising have reported that it reduces ad reactance and enhances ad and brand attitudes among female audiences, hence “marketers have much to gain from adopting a more proactive and mindful approach to the female portrayals they use in their ads” (Åkestam et al, 2017).



Figure 4.1. Deutsche Welle Spain, prepared a dossier on the changing perspective on advertising in December 2022. A new code was enacted to discourage sexist stereotypes in advertisements for children’s toys, and to promote an image of pluralism and equality.

The impact of Femvertising was amplified with the digital platforms, and social media has a crucial role in disseminating its empowering messages. Some scholars have analysed the ways in which brands use social media to engage with consumers and promote feminist ideals through advertising (Singh and Banet-Weiser, 2022).

The examples analysed in this section were selected and evaluated on 1) The relevancy of the product/campaign, 2) The female empowerment messages they deliver, 3) The level of attention that the campaign has attracted on social media. The support received by the ad. 4) Whether the buzz created around the brand was positive or negative with respect to its effect on the female representation in media. Even in the cases that the campaign is initiated by a TV spot, these spots were also disseminated through Facebook, YouTube, and other online platforms, thereby underlining the role of social media for reinforcing the messages of empowerment. The cases include early international examples and the Spanish campaigns developed in the past decade.

4.1. GoldieBlox: Princess Machine (2013)



Figure 4.2. GoldieBlox came up with its Princess Machine at a time when no other companies designed toys to specifically teach engineering and stem skills to girls.

The GoldieBlox ad is one of the forerunners of Femvertising in the toy sector. In the ad, we see three girls watching TV and being bored by the little princesses in pink that they see on the television screen. So they build a contraption that runs around the house and goes outdoors, with all their toys that glitter, changing the paradigm from “playing house” to building OK Go’s famous Rube Goldberg machine. The slogan that runs at the end of the commercial reads: “Toys for Future Engineers,” thereby pointing out to empowering girls to dream of and engage in tasks that are traditionally considered for boys. The campaign was not scheduled to appear on TV, and it premiered on YouTube, where it reached 7.8 million views (Miller, 2013).

The company, founded by Debbie Sterling, who is a Stanford engineer, defines itself “a disruptive children’s media company challenging gender stereotypes with the world’s first girl engineer character” (GoldieBlox, 2013). Sterling had decided that “girls need more choices than the pink aisle has to offer” and developed GoldieBlox, an interactive book series and a construction set starring Goldie, the kid inventor who loves to build (Martinson, 2013). On an interview with the New York Times, she said: “It’s O.K. to be a princess, we just think girls can build their own castles too” (Miller, 2013).

Being one of the pioneers for the Femvertising strategy, the ad has created a big buzz. It turned GoldieBlox into one of the best-selling toy companies that Christmas, while some raised an eyebrow about whether these ads would really work to challenge the gender stereotypes. SheKnows Media, a digital women’s lifestyle media company, that created the Femvertising Awards, also investigated with a survey whether these ads were effective when it comes to moving products. The findings indicated that they can give a powerful financial boost to a company. SheKnows Media confirmed that these brands “can challenge gender norms through advertising,” and added “They can sell products while also selling good ideas and good values and socially empowering women and girls” (Wallace, 2015).

4.2. Always #Like a Girl: Rewrite the Rules (2014)

Always, is an American brand of menstrual hygiene products, by Procter & Gamble. Following a history of thirty years in the sector, the brand started a global campaign in 2014, under the slogan #LikeAGirl, to tackle the things society were doing that could harm a young girl’s confidence at puberty. Six iterations later, #LikeAGirl had gone from a simple phrase to an empowering movement (Always, 2024).

The fourth commercial, that came out in June 2014, featured a total of five individuals: Three adult women, one adult man, and a young boy, who are asked questions related to “doing something like a girl.” Initially, they are asked, “How do you run like a girl?” The adult women, adult man, and young boy exhibit a running style that

deviates from what would be considered “normal” due to the societal derogatory connotations associated with running “like a girl.” For example, when an adult woman runs “like a girl,” her expression of “My hair, oh my God” reflects a stereotype implying that being “like a girl” requires being delicate. Similarly, when they are asked “How do you throw like a girl?” again, ridiculous throws are displayed.

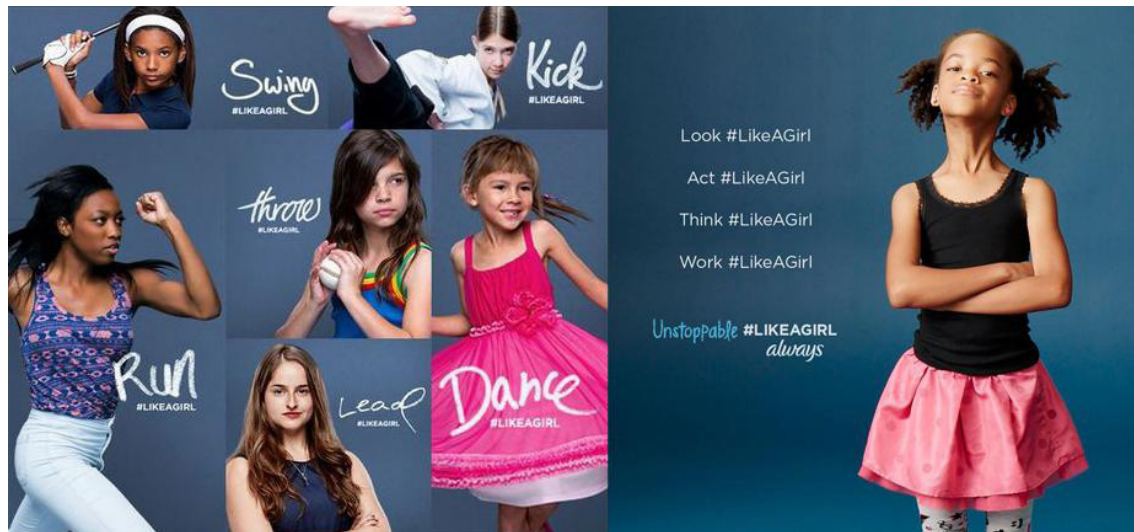


Figure 4.3. Always #LikeAGirl, the participants say “like myself” at the end of the 4th ad of the campaign.

In the second part of the commercial, the same questions about “doing something like a girl” are directed at young girls. The young girls, unaware of societal stereotypes, give their best effort in running, throwing, and fighting. When the director asks one of the young girls, “What do you think ‘running like a girl’ means?” she responds, “It means to run as fast as you can.” This reflects the main message of the advertisement, which highlights that the term “like a girl” is often used hastily by the society, but it doesn’t have to be that way, and positive meanings can be associated with it.

In the final section of the advertisement, participants who were initially asked to act like girls are now asked, “Would you do it differently if you could do it again, how would you do it?” The response received is “like myself.” The advertisement emphasizes empowerment and aims to achieve gender equality, and it closes with the Always logo, and the message, “rewrite the rules.”

The commercial was the winner of one of the Femvertising Awards given by SheKnows Media in 2015, for the first time (Wallace, 2015). In 2015, the campaign turned in to “Unstoppable LikeAGirl” and according to data provided on the Always website, “through powerful imagery, Always showed girls knocking down the biases society holds against them, tackling the perception that girls can’t be brave, or strong, or smart,” Always increased the positive association the girls have with the phrase “like a girl” three times: Increased from 19% to 76% in 2015. 94% agreed that the campaign made girls feel more confident (Always, 2024).

4.3. Audi: “Cambiemos el Juego” [Let’s Change the Game] (2016)



Figure 4.4. Filmstills from Audi’s “Cambiemos el Juego”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-siux-rWQM>.

Just before Christmas in 2016, Audi launched its “Let’s Change the Game” campaign in Spain, in an attempt to eradicate gender-based choices on toys: We can give cars to girls as gifts, and boys can play with dolls as well. “Playing, like driving, shouldn’t be gendered” proclaimed the original animated video, telling the story of a brave doll, that abandons its pink carriage to drive a flashy Audi R8 sports car instead, enjoying a fun night of adventures in a department store. All the toys come to life as she drives around the store, until it’s time to open its doors to the public.

The campaign was also supported by the academic views of José Luis Linaza Iglesias, professor of Developmental and Educational Psychology, who presented five reasons why it is important to avoid gender-stereotyped choices when buying toys. The reasons were listed on the website that Audi created

specifically for this campaign: 1) Because toys play a key role in the development of skills, and these should be developed equally in boys and girls. 2) Because the toys we choose can influence the future interests or vocations that we develop from a young age. 3) Because, in early childhood, boys and girls are free from gender stereotypes, and play should not promote the creation of them. 4) Because toys like cars help develop visuo-motor coordination, problem anticipation, and originality in responses, while dolls contribute to the development of empathic abilities, social relationships, and language. 5) Because changing the rules of the game depends on whether more women will be interested in sciences, mathematics, and engineering in the future (La Vanguardia, 2016).

4.4. Campofrio: “Deliciosa Calma” [Delicious Calm] (2016)

“This campaign is an example of how advertising can help change the gender stereotypes” comments Rosa Urbon Izquierdo on Campofrio’s campaign, director of Spain’s Institution of Women. The ad was launched in May 2016, featuring the famous Spanish actresses Carmen Maura, María Barranco, and Rossy de Palma. The “Delicious Calm,” was Pavofrio’s stress-free restaurant for women, shedding a light on the tensions and pressures faced by women in Spain. This initiative called for reflection on the origins of these burdens and ways to liberate oneself from this social pressure, doing what they desire and being who they want to be.

According to the Nielsen report “The Woman of Tomorrow,” over 66% of Spanish women suffer from stress, both in the workplace and personally (Campofrio, 2016). The restaurant offers a safe, stress-free haven where women will transform their daily burdens into dishes such as “I didn’t go to the gym because I didn’t feel like it... with black truffle sauce,” “Today, I won’t pick up my kids from school with a slice of turkey... with a side of their father can pick them up,” or “I’m still single and I don’t care, on an avocado and blueberry base.” By adding a touch of humour, the campaign would like to highlight how burdened women can feel under all the gender-based expectations of the society (Figure 4.5).

Pavofrio’s Deliciosa Calma initiative also included a collaboration between Campofrio and the Ana Bella Foundation through its Social School for Women’s Empowerment, created in 2011. Its objective was to provide resources to women from socially excluded populations (especially those who have experienced gender-based violence) to highlight their strengths and capacities, so that they can regain confidence and start a new positive life. The school’s work, with which Campofrio collaborated, focuses on personal coaching, social workshops, professional training, and job opportunities.

With this campaign, Campofrio saw an increase of %12,4 in its sales, compared to the months prior to the launch of the ad (IPMark, 2016). The visibility of the brand also increased 14 points. “Deliciosa Calma” Reached 13.5 million views, and according to a study conducted by the consulting firm Milward Brown, 76% of the people reached with the ad claim to have greatly enjoyed watching the piece. 61% expressing that the content was very interesting and valuable to them. Additionally, the same study highlighted that the brand managed to improve its image in all its attributes. With over 5.5 million views just on Google’s online video platform, Pavofrio also won a place on the YouTube Ads Leaderboard for May 2016 (IPMark, 2016).



Figure 4.5. Campofrio: Restaurant with zero stress. “Alimentando otro modelo de mujer,” meaning, nurturing another type of woman.

4.5. Nike: Dream Crazy (2019)

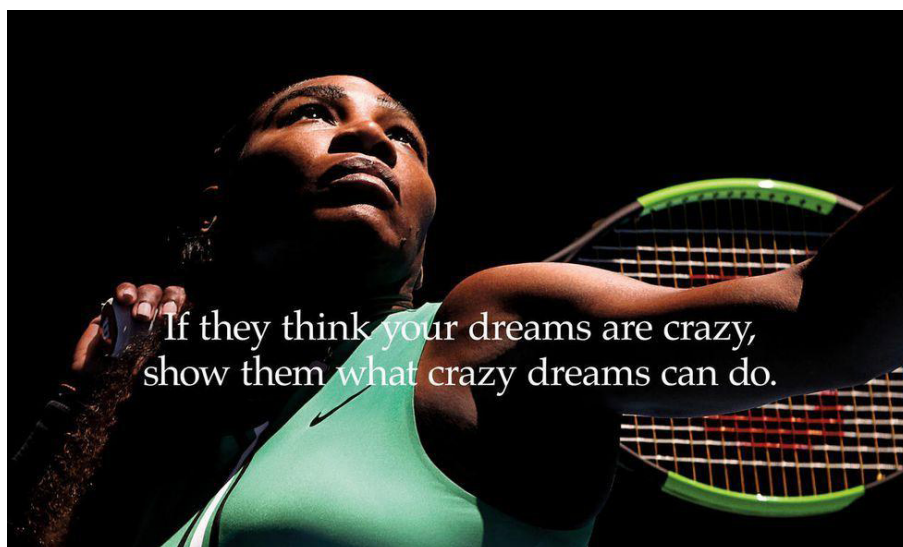


Figure 4.6. Nike and Serena Williams. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zWfX5jeF6k4>.

With a similar feminist nod, Nike's "Dream Crazy" campaign shined a spotlight on female athletes who have broken barriers, brought people together through their performance and inspired generations of athletes to chase after their dreams. Watched by millions on various online platforms, Nike's message, through Serena Williams' voice was clear: "If having dreams is crazy, make them a reality." In this ad, the brand denounces the use of women by "others" using stereotypes in which women are portrayed as objects of desire, in which their aspirations and needs seem to be disregarded.

This campaign was part of Nike's effort to create a campaign that was not just about promoting its products, but about making a significant impact on people. Launched at the 91st Academy Awards, in February 2019, the spot paired with the nomination of Best Documentary for RBG. This tells the story of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg and her fight for women's rights, even in the face of adversity (Binlot, 2019). Serena Williams began the commercial by listing stereotypes against women: "If we show emotion, we're called dramatic," she said. "If we want to play against men, we're nuts. And if we dream of equal opportunity, we're delusional. When we stand for something, we're unhinged. When we're too good, there's something wrong with us. And if we get angry, we're hysterical, irrational, or just plain crazy." Williams goes on to conclude with pride: "So if they want to call you crazy? Fine. Show them what crazy can do."

5. Conclusion

In Spain, the LOVG of 2004 represented the first European law to implement comprehensive measures against discriminatory treatment of women. This law allowed for the definition of illicit advertising due to gender discrimination, establishing the prohibition of demeaning behaviours against women, as well as those behaviours and references to gender stereotypes. The law also led to the reform of the provision on illicit advertising of the Spanish LGP of 1988, thereby preventing discriminatory behaviours and avoiding or stopping advertisements or campaigns due to raised awareness. Complaints from bodies such as advertising observatories also helped educate the society on respectful and inclusive representation. Despite this, social media platforms like Facebook have contributed to the spread of discriminatory behaviours despite legislation and social awareness, as in many cases, this type of sexist advertising can attract attention more easily and is therefore used online.

Advertising as a psychologically intrusive form of communication aims to make people want a particular product, while it also creates a second relationship between advertising and identity: The exploitation of desirable identities (Arda, 2011). In the society of consumption, together with the process of creating brands, advertisers market their products less and less on the basis of the product's merits, and more and more by associating a "dream identity" with the possession of a given product. The suggestion is that the possession of a particular brand of car, cigarette, or jeans would furnish you with the identity of a successful, attractive, worthy person.

The message is very clear: Accumulating things is the new effective means of achieving identity and actualizing one's potential. Through the discriminatory and empowering examples scrutinized in this research, the evolution of advertising from limiting women to certain roles to femvertising was examined. An analysis of the impact of these campaigns, in light of supportive sociological movements like #metoo or #mybody-mychoice, suggest a margin for more inclusive narratives to be written. The media has become a powerful factor in socialization, and in this sense, advertising and Facebook, as platforms plagued with female imagery, have a direct impact on the advancement – and sometimes the regression – of real equality. The "algorithmic discrimination" that Facebook employs has been proven and sentenced in various cases, including the Samantha Liapes case in California (Tecno, 2023).

Henri Tajfel defines the limiting impact of stereotypes as “a process of categorization and order, where there is complexity and variation. Categorization implies simplification, tending to exaggerate differences among different classes and groups” (1982). As such, the form advertising takes today and what femvertising is trying to achieve “is not an idealization of the female image, actually it is an attempt of introducing a bigger slice of truth about women, there is much more truth to the image that Femvertising is projecting when compared to what sexist advertising was emitting until now” (Wert in RTVE, 2019).

In Spain, the legislation addressing the issue of sexist advertising, as well as social networks and specifically Facebook, has had and continues to have a direct impact on the representation of women and their sexist portrayal. In this sense, the 2004 Organic Law on Comprehensive Protection Against Gender Violence (LOVG) was the first European law to implement comprehensive measures against discriminatory treatment of women, which also impacted the advertising landscape. At the same time, Facebook and other social networks were becoming more prominent, serving as amplifiers of behaviors that sometimes go against legislation and social awareness.

The specific achievements of the LOVG are: 1) Explicitly defining, for the first time, discriminatory advertising against women as illegal. 2) Addressing the responsibilities of media outlets and public administrations in ensuring the proper treatment of women and preventing inequalities and violence in their portrayal. 3) Amending the 1988 General Advertising Law (LGP), specifying a concrete case in which advertising violates a person's dignity and is considered illegal, particularly advertisements that portray women in a hasty manner by objectifying them and by associating them with stereotypical behaviors.

However, despite the progress brought by this law, there was still a lack of clear regulation on gender equality in advertising. The few judicial rulings and self-regulatory decisions in advertising have helped clarify these issues to some extent. The lengthy judicial processes, incompatible with the speed and fleeting nature of advertising campaigns, have resulted in few actions being brought before Spanish courts. Nevertheless, the self-regulation mechanisms of advertising and advertising observatories, due to their rapid response in handling complaints, have provided strong support in eradicating sexist advertisements.

On the other hand, as we have observed from the analysis of the campaigns carried out, social networks like Facebook have contributed to the spread of discriminatory behaviours despite legislation and social awareness. In many cases, such sexist advertising can more easily capture attention and is therefore used in online spaces. In this regard, we have observed how the emergence of Facebook and the LOVG has led to an increase in complaints and reports filed with the Women's Observatory (OIM) regarding the mistreatment of women on the internet. Between 1994 and 1999, there were 11 complaints, which rose to 77 between 2000 and 2005. However, after the LOVG and up until 2012, the internet became the second most reported medium, with 178 complaints. By 2018, the internet and digital platforms became the most reported medium for sexist advertising, accounting for 42.46% of all complaints filed (OIM, 2018).

To date, the tracking of the evolution of complaints submitted to the OIM seems to reflect two different situations regarding sexist advertising. On one hand, advertising – particularly from major brands that invest the most – has become more careful over time, influenced by legislation on sexist advertising and the sociological changes happening in recent years. Many brands now opt for campaigns from the perspective of “femvertising.” On the other hand, the public has become much more critical in their view of advertising. Thus, from the analysis of judicial rulings as well as the campaigns reviewed in this study, a positive evolution has been demonstrated in the treatment of women's representation in advertising.

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