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What affects the success of woke advertising?

An analysis of factors influencing woke advertising in regard to femvertising

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Abstract

Purpose – Woke advertising is a young concept with limited research regarding the subject. As woke advertising is becoming increasingly popular in the marketing field and has shown to be able to either greatly benefit or damage brands, this study aims to contribute to current research by studying what affects the success of woke advertising by analyzing consumer reactions to two different woke commercials.

Design/methodology/approach – Content analysis categorizes and compares YouTube comments for an Always commercial published in 2014 and an Audi commercial published in 2017, both promoting gender equality.

Findings – From the results of the comment categorization we found that the most frequent positive comments for both commercials support the cause the brand is promoting, while the most common negative comments for both commercials are disagreeing with the message/facts of the ad. In general, the comments are more concerned with the message of the commercial than the relationship the ad has to the brand. Always is seen as more appropriate in its marketing than Audi, while Audi is seen as more authentic than Always.

Research limitations/implications – Research is limited as only two commercials using woke advertising are analyzed and only by using the feedback found on YouTube. Usually people with strong opinions leave more comments, hence our results may reflect extremities. Still, the findings in positive/negative comments may be representative of the majority of people's views considering the consistency with the dislike/like ratio on the videos.

Originality/value – This study expands the understanding of advertising using social and political issues by addressing the factors affecting the success of woke advertising. It emphasizes the relationship between femvertising and consumer responses, which can contribute to better knowledge in the gender equality aspect of woke advertising.

Keywords Woke advertising, Femvertising, Brand activism, Boycotting, Buycotting, Emotional marketing, Always, Audi.

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Today, brands are required to have a positive impact on society in addition to delivering quality products (Hertz, 2001), in order to avoid the risk of being perceived as cruel (Kozinets & Handelman, 2004). In the last decade, the concept of woke advertising has arisen within brand activism. Woke advertising refers to advertising that is aware of racial and social discrimination and injustice in the world, and that raises attention to these issues through advertising (Simmonds, 2018; Turner & Horton, 2017). Large brands such as Pepsi, Nike and Gillette have started using social issues such as racism, inequality and LGBT rights in their advertising to position themselves with important social issues. Nike has several ads that are considered as woke, but the most known is perhaps their anniversary ad for “Just Do It” which is starring former NFL player Colin Kaepernick. Kaepernick protested against racial injustice and police brutality by kneeling during the national anthem before a game (McCarthy, 2018; Tyler, 2018). The Nike ad features the slogan “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything” across a black and white portrait of Kaepernick. This is clearly a reference to the massive criticism he got from people with right-sided political opinions after kneeling during the national anthem (Joseph & Anderson, 2018). What is interesting about this form of advertising is that the consumer reactions differ widely. The audience seems to either love or hate the concept (Simmonds, 2018), which is exactly the outcome for Nike; some loved it while others hated it. Woke advertising is worth researching because, as we will explain in our theory section, it engages its stakeholders in the brand and could financially benefit a brand if it is done correctly but have fatal consequences for a brand’s reputation and finances if done poorly.

This research will focus on various factors affecting woke commercials that are successful and the ones that are not. We begin by clarifying relevant terms and discussing previous research on woke advertising. Next, we use content analysis to compare the results of our cases to what has been found on woke advertising in advance. We study the reactions of two commercials with different outcomes, one from Audi and one from Always, who both address the same social cause, gender equality, sometimes referred to as “femvertising”. Finally, we categorize and analyze comments and circumstances for both commercials to discuss and conclude potential factors of success and failure in woke advertising.

Literature review

Woke advertising is a term within the more established concept brand activism. Brand activism is defined as a brand aiming to have an impact on social, economical, environmental or political problems. Brands choose to engage in and support a cause because it aligns with their core values and the company's vision, and/or to increase publicity. Furthermore, businesses can make public announcements, lobby, donate money, volunteer, or make a statement through their advertising and marketing campaigns (Hodge, 2020). To "stay woke" is to be aware of racial or social discrimination and injustice happening throughout the world (Simmonds, 2018; Turner & Horton, 2017). "Wokeness" started as an African American slang for being politically "well informed" and "up-to-date" (Guobadia, 2018). Further, the term "woke" was broadly used during the Black Lives Matter movement, promoting people to "stay woke" to racial issues (Turner & Horton, 2017), before it became a term used in regard to companies and their role in being aware of general injustice happening in the world. In 2017 "woke" became an Oxford English Dictionary entry (Sobande, 2019). Thus, being a woke brand means displaying awareness and raising attention to specific issues experienced by some groups in society. Lately, several of the large and global companies have started using woke advertising as a part of their marketing strategies. Woke advertising displays corporate commitment in controversial social or political issues that usually are missing a direct relevance to the company itself (Austin, Gaither & Gaither, 2019, p. 4).

When studying the concept of woke advertising, we found that two commonly used social political issues are race and gender inequality. Within gender inequality there are several commercials focusing on femvertising (female empowerment advertising). Femvertising as a term started gaining acceptance in 2014 and was used as a way to question the traditional female gender stereotypes that are often used in advertising. The focus on female stereotypes can occur in regard to their physical characteristics, like the Dove Real Beauty campaign did when focusing on body size, or it can focus on stereotypes related to personality traits, roles and occupations as Always does in their campaign #LikeAGirl. Thus, femvertising is striving to break the stereotypical female portrayals we often find in advertising (Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017, p. 796). Femvertising has shown to positively affect commercials and brand attitudes among female consumers, as they feel less forced into acting in a certain way. The concept of femvertising has grown substantially over the past years, implying that it is seen as a successful strategy for targeting female audiences and that there are potential benefits in

reevaluating the female portrayals used in commercials (Åkestam, Rosengren & Dahlen, 2017, p. 795-796).

With access to news 24/7, more information than ever before is shared and consumed daily, and it is easier to stay updated on world news. As a result, people are increasingly interested in social causes and supporting brands whose values align with their own (Simmonds, 2018). In the past, the only concern of brands was creating and marketing their products or services. Now, with the corporate political shift, brands position themselves by taking a stand on political issues, even controversial ones, without the aim of increasing direct sales of products or services. Global companies have to make social, political and human decisions and statements to keep their customers happy and to attract new customers (Simmonds, 2018). Woke advertising can be good for business when done correctly, as it provides the brand with media cover and helps it stand out in the crowd. A study done by Shetty, Venkataramaiah and Anand (2019) shows that millennials (people born between 1981 and 1996) of all income categories and genders prefer to buy from companies who support a cause and purpose. Younger generations expect global firms to take a stand on important social issues, and boycott brands who behave unethically. Edelman (2018) found in a study that 69% of all millennials are driven by beliefs and values when purchasing, meaning that both the products and principles are equally important for their decisions to buy (Bernard, 2019). In 2018 Nike released a campaign celebrating the 30th anniversary of “Just Do It” starring the former NFL player Colin Kaepernick with the slogan “Believe in something, even if it means sacrificing everything.” Kaepernick was the first NFL player to kneel during the national anthem before a game to protest against racial injustice and police brutality (McCarthy, 2018; Tyler, 2018). In Nike’s case the campaign resulted in massive criticism and people threatening to boycott the brand. Some even went as far as burning their Nike shoes and documenting it online (Reints, 2018; Tyler, 2018). Still, Nike received support and captured the hearts of many consumers. Nike and the campaign were top trending on Twitter and the media exposure was massive and with the campaign being on point for the target customers Nike’s stock went all-time high (Reints, 2018; Green, 2018).

As corporate ethics and sustainability are two increasingly prioritized aspects of the strategic management of public and private organizations, corporate social responsibility (CSR), public affairs management and related training programs, among other things, are experiencing a boom. There is an old saying “Brands want to be people and people want to be

brands” (Simmonds, 2018). Brands today are being judged as people for the actions they take to stand up for or against different issues in the world. Thus, brands are encouraged and rewarded for showing their customers who they really are and what values they align with (Simmonds, 2018). Roy (2010) researched the impact of congruence (i.e. fit) between a brand and cause in marketing campaigns. These brand-cause linkages can be characterized as either logical or strategic. Logical links have an obvious connection between the brand and the cause (e.g., Always supporting girl empowerment and education for girls) while strategic links occur when the target market of the brand and cause share characteristics. Brand-cause congruence can also be established in correlation of values between the brand and cause. Roy (2010) stress the fact that the brands walk a fine line between the motivations to “do the right thing” and the motivations of earning revenues or enhancing brand image. Thus, the communication of the cause including the tone, intent, and frequency of the commercials must be thoughtfully executed, otherwise the target audience can see the brand-cause linkage as solely a sales tactic (Roy, 2010).

Furthermore, woke advertising can help brands attract talent and investment, improve relations with stakeholders, and implement new sustainable marketing strategies for differentiation. Even though woke advertising contradicts the traditional way where companies avoid taking public stands on controversial issues (Korschun, Aggarwal, Rafieian & Swain, 2016), statistics from Cone Communications shows that 92% of consumers have a more positive image of a company when this company supports social or environmental issues (Simmonds, 2018). Using woke advertising is a long-term strategy, and the companies may have to be patient and confident that the strategy will pay off. They might lose some consumers but could also build a broad base of loyal long-term consumers (Riley, 2020). Fritz Heider’s balance theory was created to show how people establish relationships with people and things in their surroundings. Balance theory claims that if a set of cognitive elements are seen as being in a system, people will prefer to maintain a balanced state within these elements. Hence, if we think we are out of balance, then we want to reestablish the balance (Changing Minds, 2020). Therefore, by looking at balance theory, we can see how woke advertising can be effective in changing the attitude of someone who might not like the brand. A person might not like Nike apparel or shoes but because they support diversity and black lives matter with their Kaepernick ad, a woke cause which this person supports, he/she might desire to like Nike more to create cognitive balance.

Although little can yet be found on the concept of woke advertisement in regard to empirical studies, it is a highly discussed phenomenon online. Being a woke brand is risky, the support received is usually divided, some people hate it and see it as controversial, others love it (Simmonds, 2018). One disadvantage with woke advertising addressing social and political issues is the contradicting information about these issues as well as limited proof to support issues like the gender wage gap. There are plenty of reports of the gender wage gap online, usually claiming that women are paid around 20% less than men. However, there are several factors that affect the wage that are not taken into account when comparing the total wage paid to men and women. When looking into factors such as profession, qualifications, seniority, hours worked and so on, the gender wage gap decrease tremendously (Gerstmann, 2019). Another criticism directed at woke advertising is whether they are undermining or demeaning the causes they support by using a complex and serious cause as a marketing tool for their brand. Nike, for example, was questioned on whether there is a relationship between social justice and equality and training shoes, that is, the appropriateness of the woke advertising theme (Manfredi-Sánchez, 2019, p. 346). Also, Victoria Secret was criticized in 2016 for claiming themselves as woke for changing their female models to more racially different women, when the idea of sexualizing women to sell bras itself goes against feminism according to the US author Jill Filipovic (Manavis, 2018). It seemed as Victoria's Secret saw addressing trendy social issues like feminism, body positivity and diversity as a solution to bad press and decreasing profits (Manavis, 2018). Research findings suggest that people are more trusting of what is socially perceived as attractive people, ads will most likely do better with attractive models (Eckl & Wilson, 2006). This implies that when brands use “normal” people, as Dove did, the ad can be ineffective once the originality wears off.

Interestingly, even when supporting certain social and political causes that are seen as appropriate for a brand to address, the marketing campaign can still be perceived as inauthentic. The 2018 article on *The Conversation* by four marketing lecturers (Vredenburg, Spry, Kemper, Kapitan) discusses the consequences of situations where corporate practices do not match their marketing message. In the article, the authors explain that the factor of appropriateness and whether the brand is seen as authentic portraying these issues are very important for the way consumers react to woke advertising. Consumers nowadays expect brands to take a stand on social and political issues, but taking a stand is no longer enough, brands are also expected to take action that supports the stand of the issue. The more a brand participates in corporate social activism, the more their motives for it will be studied by

stakeholders. If the brand does not come across as authentic in regard to the cause it supports, they can lose both consumers who agree and disagree with the cause. Consumers who care about the cause and agree with the brand's message, may see the brand as inauthentic and cynical due to the use of such an important cause to market itself and increase profits. On the other hand, consumers who disagree with the cause/meaning of the commercial might take distance to brands supposedly supporting this cause. Furthermore, addressing a trendy issue which is already spoken for by many brands can make the company seem inauthentic and opportunistic, trying to take advantage of the situation (Vredenburg, Spry, Kemper & Kapitan, 2018). For the case of Victoria's Secret, the brand did in many people's opinion come across as inauthentic in addition to inappropriate, because of historical events that did not align with their new empowering feminism message. For example, the fact that a reporter was not allowed to ask models about issues related to feminism (Manavis, 2018). Manavis (2018) also argues that Victoria's Secret exaggerated how diverse their models actually were, since they still remained mainly white and slim. What is important in order to come across as authentic is having corporate practices that match the marketing message. In cases where this is not the case, the brands can be perceived as "woke washing", that is, using woke as a marketing communication tool and not aligning practices with message. (Vredenburg, Spry, Kemper & Kapitan, 2018). Alan Jope, the CEO of Unilever, has also warned that "brand campaigns promising to improve the world but failing to take real action - is "undermining the advertising industry's credibility and trust" (Checkout, 2019). Further, he claims that brands should focus their woke advertising on issues that are important for the target group at the time, but continuous commitment and dedication over time also gives brands credibility. Furthermore, being among the first brands fronting an issue makes the brand seem more genuine as they are not merely capitalizing on a trend for monetary gain (Flinchpaugh, 2020).

A marketing campaign can impact consumers' feelings toward a brand and at the extreme affect them directly to boycott or buycott a brand. What may be seen as a company taking a stand for an important cause for one consumer, may be seen as woke-washing to another, which creates a potential minefield for brands (Checkout, 2019). Boycott is a method of punishing a brand based on either social, political or ethical considerations by stopping all consumption of the brand's products. Buycott, on the other hand, is a way of rewarding a brand by starting to consume the brand's products. Boycotting can lead to economic losses for a company by reducing sales, cash flow and stock prices, and may also harm the brand's

reputation. Boycotting can have the opposite effect, and these possible outcomes of a marketing campaign are important for a brand to consider (Hong, 2018).

Hong (2018) researched the connections between consumer responses to brand activism which showed that boycotters and buycotters differ in emotions, and that both boycotting and buycotting can allow consumers to express their attitudes and emotions. Logically, positive emotions are generally associated with buycotting and negative with boycotting behavior. What most notably motivate consumers to boycott or buycott a brand are their (both self-conscious and non-self-conscious) consumer perceptions, cognitions and attitudes, as well as personality traits. Further, Hong (2018) lays great importance on the impact of public support on consumer behavior which comes into play regarding expressing one's opinion in public, for example on social media. He expresses that people tend to not violate social consensus due to the fear of being isolated, with the result that when the majority of consumers hold an opposite view from oneself, being in a minority, one tends to remain silent. There could also be an opposite result from the shared opinion of many similar opinions, people who also share this opinion may not see the need to take action as so many others do it for them, and thereby “free ride”. It could also increase the impact of emotions and attitude-consistency to see that many share one's opinion (Hong, 2018).

Consumer perceptions towards a brand can impact consumer boycotting and buycotting behaviors. The feeling that a firm has behaved strikingly inappropriately will lead to negative and possibly harmful consequences among various stakeholders. On the other hand, gratitude against brands for taking action has shown to be very powerful in the matter of brand attitude and behavior intentions (Hong, 2018). Interestingly, even though people like the idea of being ethical and supporting brands who act the “right” way, many still fail to follow through and actually purchase according to ethics (Riley, 2020). It is also the case that Brands pursuing woke advertising are not acting the right way in everyone’s opinion. Most often woke ads are driven by liberal political views (Quart, 2017), and in the US only 24% identifies as liberals, 37% as conservative and 35% as moderate in 2019 (Saad, 2020). So, even though younger generations are more liberal than older ones, the US residents are in majority on the right or center side of politics. Liberalists may see woke advertising as a way brands can contribute to making the world a better place, while conservatives may not see the change as an improvement at all. It can also be argued that the engagement can be viewed as suspicious, as there is often no connection to structural change. Another questionable factor around woke

advertising is the fact that economic inequality, that burdens many in the US, is not mentioned in woke advertising. Woke advertising may lose its credibility if it is the case that the issues fronted need to be shined as “opportunity” or “female empowerment” to increase spending, ignoring large sociopolitical issues (Quart, 2017).

As previously mentioned, consumers' emotions are highly connected to their purchasing behavior in regard to boycotting and buycotting. Hong (2018) argues that it is important to monitor conversations and emotions expressed by consumers on social media. These public opinions can be harmful for a brand if they are negative and empower the brands long-term relationships if they are positive. Gratitude emotion increases loyalty among consumers and woke advertising can in this way attract profitable long-term consumers if it is done right. Hong (2018) also found that when companies show their sociopolitical stances, they will most likely be boycotted by some and buycotted by others. Therefore, it is important that they have their target group in mind when choosing what issues to publicly support. Consumers who have attitudes consistent with the company's sociopolitical stands can get a more positive brand attitude and a higher likelihood of buycotting when experiencing that the brand supports issues that are important to them. Even though being woke is risky, brands also risk being boycotted if they choose *not* to take a stand on a political issue. Brands should stay updated on the issues important to their target groups to be able to support the stance that are important to their preferred customers (Hong, 2018).

In what ways are brands (mis)using sociopolitical issues to promote themselves? How does consumers respond to ads promoting liberal causes, and what consequences can it provide the brand? This paper is motivated by such research questions and strives to answer them by analyzing two cases of woke advertising in the field of femvertising.

Method

Search method

As mentioned, there is very little research on the concept of woke advertising. We have searched through the six databases accessed by the University of Stavanger that we found relevant in the field of economics and marketing: Web of Science, SAGE, Emerald, Hospitality & Tourism, Academic Search Premier and Business Source Complete. For woke advertising, we have searched for “woke advertisement”, “woke advertising”, “woke marketing” and “woke washing” to find the theoretical background that could be relevant for us. When doing this, we received in total only seven relevant search results. We did not search for “woke” in itself as this results in an overload of results that has nothing to do with woke advertising.

About Audi/Always and commercials

To answer the question of what affects the success of woke advertising and how, we chose to analyze the differences between one commercial who by first glance and according to the like/dislike ratio seems to have failed, by Audi, and one who has experienced success, by Always. We chose these two commercials because they are both Super Bowl ads, they support the same cause (gender equality) and both have gotten a lot of attention, but one seems to have been better received by the audience than the other. Audi’s original commercial video on YouTube, which was deleted, had on the 6th of February 2017 49 thousand likes and 60 thousand dislikes, while the one still on YouTube has 357 likes and 600 dislikes. Contrastingly, Always’ campaign video on YouTube has 324 thousand likes and 36 thousand dislikes. The #LikeAGirl campaign of Always was launched in 2014, with the goal, according to Always, to “make sure that girls everywhere keep their confidence through puberty and beyond by tackling the societal limitations that stand in their way” (Always, 2020a). In this paper we discuss the first advertisement in this movement, showing girls responding differently to doing something “like a girl” based on their age. Younger girls do the tasks asked as best they can, while older girls who have reached puberty are clearly affected by gender roles, and purposely do a bad job when asked to do something physical “like a girl”. The point of the commercial is to stop using “like a girl” as an insult because doing so impact the self-confidence of young girls. The results were successful on the #LikeAGirl campaign for Always. The campaign had in 2015 over 90 million total views and went viral. It also had over 1100 earned-media placements in the first three months. The Twitter followers tripled in the first three months, and Always YouTube Channel’s

subscribers grew with 4339%. In these three months there was also 177 000 tweets using #LikeAGirl, this includes many celebrities. Always claims that the purchase intent also grew with more than 50% among their target group. The video changed the perception of the phrase “like a girl” for 70% of women and 60% of men according to a study conducted in December 2014 (Campaign, 2015).

The commercial “Daughter” by Audi was launched in 2017 with the message of equal pay in the workplace. Audi states that they are devoted to support equal pay, inclusivity as well as the growth and development of the employees. “Daughter” tells the story of a young girl who is competing in a race with her father watching. As she races, her father worries whether the worth of his daughter is measured by her gender in the society. When she wins the race, he gets hope for equality in her future, and the commercial ends with the message “equal pay for equal work” and that “progress is for everyone.” The commercial also features the hashtag #DriveProgress, which will be used in future initiatives by Audi (Audi, 2017). On Audi’s website they write that progress never takes a day off and that they constantly strive to make a positive impact on their communities and in the world (Audi, 2020). The result of Audi’s campaign Daughter was harder to find concrete numbers on than that of Always. When the campaign was pre-released, Audi received a lot of negative critique on social media. The media research firm Network Insights found that 25% of the comments on social media about this campaign were negative in advance of the Super Bowl. Some of the negative comments were people believing that Audi did not practice what they preached in the campaign. Audi’s general manager of communications, Miranda Harper expressed that the response seen on YouTube did not align with the general conversation on Facebook and Twitter. She also said before the game that she expected a more positive response once the ad aired, which was also the case. Celebrities and other highly profiled people gave their support to the campaign (Rath, 2017b). The campaign resulted in a 40% positive sentiment (Ispot.tv, 2017a). Audi have also made their video on YouTube private which is probably due to the response. Even if the response was mixed, the ad Daughter was one of the most engaged pre-released ads and this continued once the ad was released. With 5.35% Digital Share of Voice, it was the 6th most digitally engaged ad (Ispot.tv, 2017b).

Content analyses

In this paper we use content analyses to analyze the audience's responses and feelings towards the woke advertisement of the two large brands Always and Audi. Content analysis "is a phase of information-processing in which communications content is transformed through objective and systematic application of categorization rules, into data that can be summarized and compared" (Kassarjian, 1977, p.8-9). We chose content analysis as our method because it can potentially make the analysis less biased than a survey or experiment since the comments are posted voluntarily and anonymously. Thus, the audience can post their true opinion on political causes and brands addressing them without any consequences. Further, as earlier discussed, monitoring conversations and emotions expressed online can be very valuable, since they can affect the further success of the ad by influencing and convincing comment readers (Hong, 2018). In the process of content analysis, we began by collecting relevant information for each commercial. It seemed the most logical to analyze YouTube comments for each commercial. Even though the commercials are mentioned in other social media than YouTube, these comments are harder to analyze correctly as they are so spread out and may reflect several actions of the brand and not just the commercial. The YouTube comments are often written as a direct response after viewing the commercial for the first time, either on YouTube, tv or Super Bowl. Both commercials have been mentioned in various articles online, but mostly as objective examples of woke advertising and brand activism, not as an opinionated article.

As previously mentioned, the original commercial video for Audi has been removed from YouTube, probably as a consequence of the bad response. Still, there are some copies of the video on YouTube, where we analyzed the comments of the most viewed and commented video. We also found the first 3229 comments on Audi's original video saved online. In doing so, we were able to process the first thousands of comments the video received, as well as some newer comments after the original video was deleted. In this process we went through 3400 comments that resulted in 812 relevant comments to include in the analysis. In the archives we processed, there were some comments posted several times. To avoid this being a source of error in our analysis, we have controlled that no comments in our data are equal unless they are posted by different authors and at different times.

Always has two versions of their commercial on their YouTube page that are still on YouTube. We chose the full version that was uploaded first, and also has the most audience

response with its approximately 41 563 comments. To include the historical changes in the comments, we analyzed comments both in the beginning, middle and end of the comment sections. This resulted in 401 old comments which came right after the video was released in 2014, 204 in 2016/2017, and 201 that was published in 2020, a total of 806.

In the process of selecting comments for our analysis, we went through and discussed all comments together. We took a pre-test of comments to find what kind of comments each video had and found that both commercials have many comments that cannot be used in our analysis either because they are unserious, does not state an opinion on the commercial or are not possible to interpret with certainty. Therefore, we have only included the comments that fulfill the following criteria; a) It must be a comment directed at the ad or brand, that is - not answering other comments and not a comment discussing things that are completely irrelevant to the commercial. b) The comment must include an opinion (positive, neutral or negative) directed at the commercial. c) It must be clear what the message of the comment is, without containing irony or conflicting arguments. If we had different opinions about what the commenter was trying to express, or saw that it is possible to misinterpret its message, the comment was excluded. In the process of collecting comments there were some disputes regarding the categorization of the comments of Audi, as it was difficult to separate the comments disagreeing with facts and the ones disagreeing with the message of the ad. We solved this by merging the two categories into one and went through them again to quality check. Other than for this category, there was no dispute and it was clear for the both of us which category the comments belonged to. After collecting all the relevant comments, we began dividing the them into categories to be able to analyze the frequency of the opinions. We created categories for each new relevant opinion until there were no new opinions occurring. See the following table for a summary of comment criteria and search results. The table also includes the categories which will be further explained in the result section.

Table 1: Content analysis

CRITERIA		The comment must be directed towards the commercial or brand, that is - not answering other comments and not a comment on things that are completely irrelevant to the commercial.	
		The comment must include an opinion (positive, neutral or negative) directed at the commercial.	
		The message of the comment must be clear, without containing irony or conflicting arguments.	
Brand		AUDI	ALWAYS
Search		3400	1900
Relevant		812	806
CATEGORIES	Positive	Support the cause	Support the cause
		Thankful to brand	Thankful to brand
		Proud to represent	Eye-opening
		Motivated to buy	Emotional
		Like without specific reason	Like without specific reason
	Negative	Disagree with facts/message	Disagree with message
		Boycott	Responds with male problems
		Not appropriate	Not appropriate
		Not authentic	Not authentic
		Dislike without specific reason	Not relevant anymore
		Neutral	Dislike without specific reason

Researchers agree that a content analysis should be objective, systematic, and quantitative (Kassarjian, 1977). To make sure that our content analysis is as objective as possible, we made sure to define the categories precisely in advance of going through the comments and dividing them into the different categories. Then, after two months we went through the same comments again to see that we would still place them in the same categories as before. To

meet the requirement of systematization we have included all the relevant content and not only chosen the content that would better fit our perceptions. We have also made criteria to keep the comments that were used relevant and to make sure the comments can be generalized into different categories, quantified and analyzed. The main point of content analysis is measuring the extent of emphasis or the omission of the given category, which has been done in this paper to analyze how the consumer responds to the two different ads (Kassarjian, 1977).

Results

The results from the content analysis are presented in table 2 and table 3. These tables show how many comments were included in the analysis, as well as how many of those comments are positive, negative, neutral and how many are both positive and negative. Because there are some comments including both positive and negative aspects of the commercial, the number of “positive” and “negative” noted on the horizontal axes are higher than those on the vertical axes, which solely include the comments who are exclusively positive or negative. Further, the tables show how many comments that were included in each category. The information in the tables are presented both in numbers and percentages. In the following section we will discuss the results according to the frequency each category is used, where we will start with the results of Always’ ad #LikeAGirl before we move on to the ad Daughter made by Audi. With Always ad #LikeAGirl, 54,7% of the comments were positive while 44,4% were negative and 0,9% were both positive and negative. Audi’s ad Daughter on the other hand had 21,1% positive comments, 77,0% negative comments, 1,0% neutral and 1,0% comments that were both positive and negative. In the following we will present the results of the content analysis for Always and Audi separately.

Content analysis results: Always

Within the comments there were seven comments that were both positive and negative. All seven of these comments said that they supported the cause, but they had different reasons for also being negative. One of the comments questioned the authenticity of Always, while another felt that it is not appropriate for Always to use this cause for promoting the brand. Two of the comments disagreed with the message and another comment responded with male problems as well as noted that it is not relevant anymore. This comment was also supported by two different comments, one who also responded with male problems and another who questioned if the issue was still relevant. Further, there were 6,7% of the total comments that

had content fitting in either multiple positive or negative categories. 27,7% of these comments were positive and fell within the two categories “support the cause” and “thankful to brand”. 20,3% were negative and in the categories “respond with male problems” and “disagree with message”. 16,7% said that they support the cause and that the ad was eye-opening.

Table 2: Results of Always

	n	Comments	Positive	Negative
<i>n</i>	806	806	448	365
Positive	441	54,7%	98,4%	0,0%
Negative	358	44,4%	0,0%	98,1%
Both positive and negative	7	0,9%	1,6%	1,9%
<i>Positive:</i>				
Support the cause	326	40,4%	72,8%	1,9%
Thankful to brand	26	3,2%	5,8%	0,0%
Eye-opening	20	2,5%	4,5%	0,0%
Emotional	30	3,7%	6,7%	0,0%
Like without specific reason	80	9,9%	17,9%	0,0%
<i>Negative:</i>				
Disagree with message	258	32,0%	0,4%	70,7%
Responds with male problems	40	5,0%	0,4%	11,0%
Not appropriate	11	1,4%	0,2%	3,0%
Not authentic	22	2,7%	0,2%	6,0%
Not relevant anymore	9	1,1%	0,4%	2,5%
Dislike without specific reason	43	5,3%	0,0%	11,8%

Positive results

The most common category of positive response to Always’ ad was that they support the cause being promoted. 72,8% of the positive comments wrote that they support the cause that Always promotes through the ad. In addition 1,9% of the people who criticized the ad still supported the cause. This was also the most common category in total as 40,4% of all comments included something supporting of the cause, reflected in the following comments:

This video shows how much girls are stereotyped. Girls can do amazing things, but people always say that they can't. Girls lose a lot of self confidence just because people say you do it like a girl. It is sad, girls can do amazing things.

*I fight like a girl I kick like a girl I throw like a girl I scream like a girl I am a girl.
And I'm proud*

The second most common positive category, excluding those who liked the ad without giving a specific reason (17,9%), was the emotional response with 6,7% of the positive comments and 3,7% in total. By emotional we mean that they get moved by the ad, tear up and so on, as is illustrated with the following:

Wow, I found this researching a job, and now I'm almost crying. Great campaign.

This made me tear up its so beautiful

The third most common positive category response was thankfulness among readers towards Always as a brand for making this ad and focusing on these issues. 5,8% of the positive comments and 3,2% in total included a thankfulness to Always for enlightening this cause. An example from this category is reflected in the following comment:

This is so great and so so important. Thank you Always for using your position in media for a good cause. #likeagirl

The ad being eye-opening was the fourth most common positive category response, with 4,5% (2,5% in total) saying this ad made them see things differently or understand that saying "like a girl" can be insulting. There were 20 comments in this category and one example is shown in the following:

This actually makes me think about it differently now. I normally thought "like a Girl" was meant to be an insult towards boys. And have never taken it as an insult against myself as a girl. give a 4 year old a ball both genders will throw the same ... This situation is no different that telling a boy to "be a man"" Be yourself" but even after that as a society we still going to search for the defining factors of what it means to be a Boy or a Girl?

Negative results

The most common negative category response was that they disagree with the message that Always is giving in the ad. 70,7% of the negative comments disagreed with the message while in total there were 32% disagreeing. Within this category there were two different types of comments which were recurring. The first type of comment that was repeated was that “like a girl” is only said to and by boys. The second type focused on the fact that there are physical differences between boys and girls, like boys being stronger than girls. The two types of comments recurring in this category are represented with the following comments:

It only happens with boys. Only boys will say that to other boys.

Fact. Females are not as physically strong as males. There is no need to get defensive about this fact.

Responding with the fact that males also have problems was the second most common negative category response, excluding those who disliked the ad without giving a specific reason (11,8%), with 11,0% of the negative comments and 5,0% of the total comments. These comments focused on the fact that Always only promoted the problems girls experience from hearing the phrase “like a girl”. They wanted Always and others to also address the problems boys may experience from hearing that they do something “like a girl” or that they need to man up and so on. This category is illustrated with these two comments:

Well considering girls out perform boy at school + the vast majority of primary school teachers are female, then why no focus on helping boys with confidence?

Now they should make a video about people telling boys to man up and how much it can lower boys self esteem

The third most common negative category response was that the ad is not authentic to what Always is actually doing. 6,0% of the negative comments and 2,7% in total questioned whether Always is authentic in forms of if they actually try to do something about the problem they address. These commenters did not think it was enough to enlighten the problem but demanded the brand to actively make a difference. This is reflected by the following comments:

People are so sensitive. This isn't serious at all. This is just armchair social justice at its finest, people hashtagging lame phrases then posting it on twitter, YouTube, Facebook, etc. while acting like they made a difference with little to no effort at all.

Using 'like a girl' as an insult? How about using it like a marketing scheme? Wait, what?

Arguing that this issue is not appropriate for Always to use as advertising was the fourth most common negative category response with 3,0% (1,4% in total). These comments focused on the fact that Always is making an ad that is not relevant for their products, and that brands should focus on advertising their products and not political and social issues. This category is reflected in the following examples:

why is this a commercial? This should be a political campaign.

I love it when adverts are also propaganda. Always obviously didnt learn from Gillette that people dont like it when big companies try to be moral arbiters.

Finally, the least common negative category response was the fact that people did not find the issue relevant anymore, with 2,5% of the negative comments and 1,1% of the total comments. These comments claimed that the phrase “like a girl” is no longer used, represented in this example:

who actually uses the insult "like a girl" anymore? What is this the 80's?

Content analysis results: Audi

Within the comments for Audi’s ad there were eight comments that were both positive and negative. The positive category for all eight was that they supported the cause and one of these also said that they were thankful to brand. The negative categories differ for the comments. Four of the comments said that it is not appropriate for Audi to advertise using this issue. Two of the comments disagreed with facts/message, one thought that Audi is not authentic, and one disliked the ad even though the comment said that he/she supported the cause. Further, there were 36,5% of the total comments that had content fitting in either multiple positive or negative categories. 49,8% of these comments were negative and categorizes as “dislike with no reason” and “boycott”. 18,5% were positive and in both the

category “support the cause” and “thankful to brand”. 15,5% said that they disagreed with facts/message and that they would boycott Audi.

Table 3: Results of Audi

	n	Comments	Positive	Negative
<i>n</i>	812	812	179	633
Positive	171	21,1%	95,5%	0,0%
Negative	625	77,0%	0,0%	98,7%
Neutral	8	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%
Both positive and negative	8	1,0%	4,5%	1,3%
<i>Positive:</i>				
Support the cause	131	16,1%	73,2%	1,1%
Thankful to brand	78	9,6%	43,6%	0,2%
Proud to represent	6	0,7%	3,4%	0,0%
Motivated to buy	4	0,5%	2,2%	0,0%
Like without specific reason	24	3,0%	13,4%	0,0%
<i>Negative:</i>				
Disagree with facts/message	292	36,0%	1,12%	46,1%
Boycott	204	25,1%	0,0%	32,2%
Not appropriate	79	9,7%	2,2%	12,5%
Not authentic	20	2,5%	0,6%	3,2%
Dislike without specific reason	278	34,2%	0,6%	43,9%
<i>Neutral</i>	8	1,0%	0,0%	0,0%

Positive results

The majority of the positive comments with 73,2% were from people who supported the cause Audi was promoting, in total 16,1% of the comments wrote something supportive of the cause. Some of these stated that the wage gap is real and need to be addressed, or that the cause Audi fronts is important and relevant. Two examples of this are provided in the following:

Touching... gets right to the heart of the issue! Yes - with the support of big corporations, and men, we will be able to tell our daughters that with hard work, they can achieve what they want!!

Love the message. Equal pay is the minimum. It's also about who you hire, and who you promote.

The second most common positive response to the commercial was people writing that they were thankful to Audi for taking a stand on the issue. 43,6% of the positive comments and 9,6% of the total number of comments expressed gratitude in their comment. Two examples of this are illustrated by the following:

LOVE this ad. Thank you @AUDI for being a leader in your industry and in the world!

Close to 50% of the viewership is female. Many of the men who watch are fathers. Perfect time to show this great ad. Thank you Audi for allowing your ad to be the vehicle for this message.

A few comments, only 0,7% of the comments, and 3,4% of the positive comments were from Audi owners who wrote that they felt proud to own an Audi after watching this commercial. Underlying this statement is of course also that the commenters do support the cause Audi is fronting. A representation of these comments is:

Way to go, Audi! Now, even more proud to be an Audi owner.

The smallest category within the positive comments belonged to comments stating that they were more motivated to buy an Audi after watching the commercial. Among the positive comments, 2,2% wrote that they wanted to buy an Audi, while among total comments the amount was 0,5%. In total there were only four comments within this category, one being represented here:

Can't wait to get an Audi now!

Negative results

For Audi, in contrast to Always, the majority of the comments, as many as 77%, were negative. Of these, the highest percentage, 46%, belonged to commenters who disagreed with

the facts or message in the commercial. Many of these questioned the existence of the wage gap, others seemed not to understand the message of the commercial and did not comment on the message itself, but said that it is unrealistic, and that a father would never say to his daughter that she is less worthy than a man. In total 36% of the comments are categorized as disagreeing with the facts and/or message of the ad. Two examples from this category are reflected in the following comments:

The wage gap does not exist. there is no company that pays a woman less then a man for the same job

As a woman I'm annoyed by the implication that this father believes the lie that his daughter isn't valued. Children internalize what their parents believe about them. And if he believes it then shes likely to. Apparently he didn't believe in her until she proved him wrong. Ads are meant to convince people to buy your product. Wasn't planning on an Audi before. But it's not even making the long list now. Oy.

25,1% of the total number of comments said that they would not buy an Audi in the future, either solely or partly because of this commercial. Within the negative comments, 32,2% stated this. Many did write that they would never buy an Audi, but there are also many commenting on the fact that they would never buy a German car in general, encouraging others to buy American. The comments were either focused on the commercial's message being politically left-sided or the fact that a brand that makes cars should stay out of the discussion of wage gap. These comments were often connected to either of the other negative categories, but most often they wrote that they disagreed with the message or facts of the ad or did not include a specific reason. Two comments in this category are represented in the following:

I would never purchase an Audi just because of this commercial. Just another low life Social Justice Warrior, Feminist, man hating, politically driven, gob of propaganda.

Was going to buy an Audi in the near future definitely not going to now! Morons!!!

The third most common response with a reason within the negative was that it is not appropriate for Audi to represent this issue in their marketing campaign. This category was reflected in 12,5% of the negative comments and 9,7% of the comments in general. Reasons for the inappropriateness differed and were not always included in the comment. Some

thought that the problem was brands discussing political issues in general, while others thought it was fine that Audi wanted to address important issues but that equality rights was not the correct focus for them. Two examples of this are illustrated in the following:

I think it's pretty sad that Audi uses a political commercial to sell me an Audi.....I would have liked to have seen something about their car to inspire me to buy one.....now, I will be sure NOT to buy one! Companies and Entertainers need to stay OUT of politics....

I guess Audi doesn't understand that the point of a commercial is to sell cars not to upset the people watching them. This is complete nonsense. What a terrible commercial. I am guessing the ad firm that did this will be getting fired today. All these types of commercials do is create more divisiveness. such a waste because Audi does make some really nice cars.

The least common negative category for Audi was from people who thought that Audi was not authentic when issuing the wage gap between women and men. These comments varied from questioning what the brand actually do to better the situation, to stating that their cars are most likely solely made by men and that the wage gap is also present in Audi. In total, 2,5% of the comments questioned the authenticity of Audi and 3,2% of the negative comments. This category is illustrated with the following comments:

I love the use of a national stage and the spirit of commercial BUT - what are you doing to help the cause? Are you donating to a cause to help level the playing field? Are you ensuring equal pay for equal work top down at Audi? Or are you paying lip service and capitalizing on a moment in the feminist movement to sell cars while patting yourselves on the back to do...nothing?

Only 2 females on the Audi USA Executive team yet there are 12 males. I think there might be a big wage gap there. Misogynists. All feminists should boycott Audi.

Audi: neutral results:

A few comments, 1% of the comments in total are categorized as neutral in our analysis. These are comments who expressed an opinion about the commercial but cannot be classified as positive or negative in our analysis. This is reflected in the following:

*This doesn't bother me. This is not a Liberal thing, stop throwing that term around.
It's just a commercial.*

Discussion

There are some potential limitations to our chosen method. First, we have chosen to only analyze two commercials, one who seems to have failed at first glance, and one who seems to have succeeded. Even though the two ads can help us distinguish what makes woke advertising successful, the analysis would be more accurate in measuring woke advertising in general if we had the capacity to analyze more than only these two ads. This would increase the diversity in industries, brands, time periods and situations and limit other factors affecting the results. Second, we have focused on the feedback in forms of comments on YouTube. There is a lot of feedback and comments on other social platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter, where people give their opinion on the ads and the brands as well. Audi's general manager of communications said that the response found on YouTube did not correspond with the response on Facebook and Twitter. Third, when people read other comments on YouTube this could affect their comment, increase their feelings if they are similar to the others and change their opinion if not. This can affect the result of the content analysis. Finally, the comments on YouTube are often written by people with strong opinions and do not necessarily portray the target groups opinions. Thus, most of the comments reflected in our analysis are mostly from people who either agree or disagree very intensely, so that it makes them actively leave a comment. Yet the findings in percentage and numbers of positive and negative comments reflect well with the like/dislike ratios on the videos on YouTube and suggest that this sample of comments can represent the opinions of the public considering it requires less effort to click a like or dislike button. Thus, it is more likely for people to show their support/disapproval this way than to leave a comment. Further, the possibility to closely analyze anonymous comments gives the research more nuanced results as people are more likely to share honest opinions, leads to less biased results and provides a deep understanding of public beliefs (Olson, 2018).

Our results clearly confirm the initial perception that Always' commercial is more successful than that of Audi, when considering the difference in positive and negative feedback. 55,7% of the comments of Always are positive, compared to only 21,1% for Audi. Focusing on the positive comments, it is interesting to note that the percentage of the positive comments who

support the cause is similar for the two brands, with 72,8% for always and 73,2% for Audi, while the thankfulness is actually much higher for Audi with 43,6%. Gratitude was shown to be one of the most important factors motivating people to boycott a brand in the studies of Hong (2018), which is an advantage for Audi. Connected to this is also the “motivated to buy” category we found for Audi with 2,2% of the positive comments, whereas no comment mentioned anything about starting to buy Always products based on the commercial. The ad of Always seems to have had a greater impact on consumers’ feelings, as 6,7% of the positive comments were classified as “emotional” and 4,5% as “eye-opening”. There were no comments like this for Audi, but there was a category for “proud to represent” with 3,4% which is also a positive emotional reaction. This might have something to do with the way the commercials are built. Although there were some comments on the Always commercial reminding others that the ad is set up with actors, the commercial might still come across as more real for many viewers at first sight since its shot as a casting.

For the negative categories, there were more comments disagreeing with the facts or message for Always than for Audi, but it is likely that many of the boycotters of Audi also disagreed with facts/message even when not specifying it. The most noteworthy in our analysis is the fact that almost 1/3 of the negative comments for Audi wrote that they would boycott the brand because of the commercial. This can be a risk to the sponsor considering that only four comments included that they were motivated to buy an Audi after this commercial while there were numerous claiming they would boycott Audi with 204 comments. Still, we suspect that the number of people considering buying an Audi after seeing the commercial is higher than what is shown in our result. Saying that you will never buy an Audi is a strong reaction to the ad, and when reacting this way seeing the commercial it is easy to leave a comment saying this. On the other hand, people who see this as positive may not directly think about buying an Audi but may be open to the idea of buying an Audi in the future. This is not an equally strong reaction and therefore they might not include this in their comment. As boycotting is a very negative reaction that can harm the firm financially, we also looked into what reasons the boycotters had. 72,5% of them didn’t write a reason, and the remaining reasons differ between disagreeing with message/facts (22,6%) and finding the ad inauthentic (2%) or inappropriate (7,8%). Boycotting and buycotting are two terms that are more relevant for Audi than Always, as there were no comments stating to boycott Always. A reason for this could be that there are less diversity in brands representing these hygiene products, at least people do not take notice of it the way they do with a car producer brand. Always

produces more essential daily-life products and people do not care as much about what brand they buy in the store as they do when investing in a new, expensive car. It could also be that it is less clear in the Always commercial that it is actually trying to promote the brand than for Audi. Always is an American brand while Audi is German, we did notice many of the comments encouraging others to buy American, and the comments are mostly from Americans as the commercial was shown on Super Bowl. The reactions to the commercial of Audi are likely to have been affected by the time period it was released. After Trump was elected as president in the US just a few months earlier, people might have reacted stronger towards woke advertisements that are more left-side driven.

In general, a much higher percentage sees the Audi ad as inappropriate (12,2%) than the one of Always (3%), while the results are opposite in the inauthentic category (6% for Always and 3,2% for Audi). Both brands are issuing gender equality focusing on empowering women, but Always is actually directed to females in its wholeness, while the Audi one has a customer target group consisting of both men and women. In the US, men are shown to be more conservative in their political stand, while women are more divided between the left- and right side (Saad, 2020). This is likely to be a reason for the fact that viewers see this issue as less appropriate for Audi to approach than for Always, as the consumers in the target audience of Always are probably more liberal in their political view and more likely to support the cause. Further, as Always is a brand targeting women and Audi targets both men and women, it would not make sense for Always to support men issues, but for Audi it would, and they chose not to. Based on this, it is interesting to note that it was Always we had to make a category for commenters responding with male problems that need to be addressed. This might imply that it is not clear for viewers that it is Always that is behind the ad, just by showing their logo in the end of the commercial. The lack of supporting male issues might have provoked men in Audi's target audience without them specifying it, just making them comment on the cause or boycotting.

In sum our findings support what we discussed in the theory section about woke advertising working better for a brand when the cause fits the brand and its target group. It further suggests that a more homogeneous target market may be beneficial when choosing a cause to support that fits the consumers (i.e. all female). Our theory states that being one of the first actors issuing a new cause can make the brand seem more authentic, which does not align with our findings in this case, since Always issued the cause three years before Audi. Still,

this might be one of the reasons why Always gets more positive feedback on its woke advertising than Audi does. People may have gotten more used to and skeptical of brands using sociopolitical issues in advertising.

It is clear in both commercials that many see the commercials as woke-washing, and that many others praise them for taking responsibility. Earlier research on woke advertising emphasize the importance of corporate practices that match its marketing message. In regard to Audi releasing their ad “Daughter” they received criticism for allegedly not practicing what they preach in the ad. 2,5% of the people commenting on Audi’s video perceived them as inauthentic. As a response to these allegations they answered “When we account for all the various factors that go into pay, women at Audi are on par with their male counterparts” (Rath, 2017a). The American executive team consists of 12 men, and only two women, and on Audi’s Management Board there are no women (Rath, 2017a). In December 2016 Audi promised to analyze their pay policies and signed the White House equal pay pledge. Even though they have promised to employ more women, only 14,8% of the overall staff are female, and only 8,9% of Audi managers are women. The male dominance that Audi experiences can be partly explained by the broad employment choices for young people. The car manufacturer is hiring many engineers, a profession where within the graduates there are only 10% female. Thus, changing this will not be an easy task (Storbeck, 2017). The car company has a graduate internship program where half of the candidates must be female (Rath, 2017a). After Audi publicly promised to support and work for equal pay for women in the ad “Daughter” in 2017 they included a report on gender equality and equal pay with the other annual reports. The report shows an increase in the number of women employed in Audi compared to men from 2016 to 2017, but the report stops there, and there are still almost 85% men employed in 2017 (Audi, 2018).

The criticism for Always on the other hand issued whether Always actually makes a difference, if they take action or settle with shedding light on the problem. 2,7% of the comments were about Always not being authentic. When visiting Always’ website, one can find much information about the various campaigns they have for girl empowerment and helping girls across the world. Always has been fighting for girls’ and women’s confidence for over 35 years. They have done this through education within puberty & confidence, by providing access to period products for those in need and driving social change (Always, 2020b). Always has many different programs for helping girls all around the world. One

program focuses on providing feminine hygiene products for girls in countries where this is not available, another program is focusing on keeping girls from dropping out of school due to their period and lack of products and education around periods (Always, 2020c). Always is a part of the P&G family, where the board composition consists of five women and seven men (P&G, 2020). Thus, the campaign #LikeAGirl can be viewed as authentic to the brand considering that the board consists of an almost equal number of women and men, showing that girls/women can have leader roles just as boys/men can.

Based on the comments, we argue that Always is seen as being slightly more inauthentic than Audi with 2,7% in this category compared to Audi's 2,5%. However, it seems like Always has done a better job at matching their corporate practices to their marketing message through their programs for women than Audi has with their work for equal pay and hiring more women. This fact is not reflected in the YouTube comments in our analysis. For Always, it does not seem like the commenters are aware of the effort Always make for the cause, as there are no comments addressing it. There are comments claiming that Always does not take action on the cause they are facing, but these are often shallow and without further argumentation. Regarding Audi, there are more comments reflecting the fact that there are few female employees in the Audi executive team and management board. No comments discuss what Audi does to support the cause other than enlightening it. Neither of the commercials have a noticeable difference in the sophistication between pro and anti comments. The comments range between fact-based and less fact-based in both the positive and negative for both commercials, and thus the sophistication of the comments cannot be used to implicate the results in this paper.

Conclusion

In this paper we have researched the differences between two commercials that use femvertising as a marketing tool, to enlighten which and how factors can impact the successfulness in woke advertising. It is clear from previous research, and supported by our results, that in order to succeed in woke advertising, brands should do their homework in order to choose what social causes to support. As most of the comments for both brands commented on the cause itself instead of the relationship the brand has to the cause, it is very important that the brand choose to support a cause that is important to its target group. As the trend of woke advertising has exploded in the last years, consumers are getting used to, and expect brands to take a sociopolitical stand. This supports the point of view that brands

should take a stand in social issues, and the only questions are what to support, and how. In choosing what to support, our findings imply that it is important to choose a cause that consumers see as appropriate for the brand to support. From our content analysis, it appears to be more appropriate for Always, a brand mainly focused on female consumers, to interact in femvertising than the car manufacturer Audi. Further, the authenticity of the marketing is important when looking into how to support the cause. The brand needs to show that they really do support the cause and are not merely following a trend, by having corporate practices that match their marketing message and showing determination over time. Both of the brands we investigated were seen as quite authentic and they are both showing their support for the cause in other areas, such as hiring more women (Audi) and investing in long term marketing campaigns (Always).

Whether the target audience responds positively or negatively to a marketing campaign, woke advertising in both cases provides the brands with a lot of media cover which makes them stand out of the crowd. It catalyzes reactions, discussions and emotions among consumers and makes them remember and think of the brand more often. Both Always and Audi received a great amount of media cover after publishing these ads, and neither experienced any fatal consequences. This fact, and looking at earlier success stories might tempt brands to engage in woke advertisement, but this effect might wear off as woke advertisement is getting more common. Millennials expect brands to take a stand, and it is likely that after some time they will not react as strongly to brands doing as expected of them, especially when many other brands are doing the same. In conclusion, even if woke advertising is a risky business, this paper supports the idea of brands supporting sociopolitical issues as long as it is relevant and important for their target group, the brand itself, and executed authentically.

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