

THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN MARKETING

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Abstract: This paper approaches various issues, such as gender discrimination, equality, under the umbrella of a more complex concept like feminism. The feminist movement had several waves, influencing also fields like marketing and serving the interests of great companies, which swing between the image of a housewife or a sexualized woman and that of a powerful and independent one. The paper's objectives are identifying the portrait of the woman in marketing campaigns and finding solutions for raising the awareness related to discrimination and feminism. The research methodology consisted in a number of 20 interviews that led to establishing research directions and hypothesis for the quantitative research realized by applying a questionnaire on 154 respondents. The results of the qualitative and quantitative research contribute to the awareness of the danger represented by prejudgments and discrimination.

JEL classification: M14, M39

Key words: feminism; discrimination; equality; femvertising; hating butch; marketing.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a topical issue, both globally and in our country, because gender discrimination is, unfortunately, a reality in many states, women lacking the same rights or chances as men. The motto of our research on this subject is Gandhi's words: "Woman is the companion of man, gifted with equal mental capacity."

The motivation for choosing this theme derives from the desire to document this delicate subject, which is not given due importance in Romania, but also from the important role of the woman's image in marketing campaigns.

The objectives of the research are as follows:

- Emphasizing the importance of feminism;
- Delimitation of concepts of feminism, discrimination, femvertising, misandring;
- Determining the extent to which society knows the term feminine;
- Knowing the reasons why some people declare / do not declare feminist;
- Creating a woman portrait in marketing;
- Suggest solutions to change the woman's image in marketing campaigns.

In order to achieve the objectives of this paper, the **interview** and the **questionnaire** were used as research tools. The first was a preliminary stage in which we identified the main attitudes towards feminism and discrimination, as well as the public awareness of the role of marketing campaigns in promoting the image of women. Following this qualitative research, we initiated a quantitative research through an opinion poll in order to verify the established hypothesis.

The theme is interdisciplinary, combining knowledge from various fields such as marketing, marketing research, sociology, history, philosophy, ethics and politics. In addition to marketing issues (femvertising, women's campaigns), our study also presents the evolution of this phenomenon, from a historical and social point of view, as well as the ethical component related to gender discrimination.

2. OBJECTIVES

This paper addresses several categories of readers: sociologists, specialists on discrimination and equal opportunities, members of women's organizations, marketing specialists, or simply reader / reader categories who, among other interests, are animated by intellectual curiosity for a theoretical area still ignored in us.

By addressing this issue, we try to alert you to the dangers of using the woman's image in a discriminatory way in marketing campaigns, but also to the passivity of this phenomenon. At the same time, we express the hope that feminism will become a more visible movement, both in the theoretical researches and in the marketing practice of companies that use the image of the woman in an offensive way.

3. THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF FEMINISM

Throughout history, there have been strong female figures who strengthen the idea of equality between men and women, so plainly expressed by Gandhi. Among these, we can mention a few names such as: Cleopatra, Queen Elizabeth I (women who have shown that not only men are good at politics), Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who fought for women's right to vote), Coco Chanel a successful woman in the fashion industry (she changed the style of women's clothing, taking on masculine ideas), Margaret Thatcher - the first female prime minister of England, also called "Iron Lady," Lady Diana, also called "The Princess of the Hearts, known for his involvement in charitable acts). But there were also women who fought for equal rights, drawing attention to discrimination and shaping a feminist movement: Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir in their writings, Alice Paul (who had an important role in the right to move to vote in 1913). In the feminist movement, men also had an important role, some of the most prominent academic feminists being Michael Flood, Michael Kimmel and Michael Messner, who drew attention to the problems faced by women in society.

The history of feminism is temporarily divided into waves of feminism, highlighting the evolution of its phenomenon and its magnitude, both geographically and by the nature of women's rights.

The first wave of feminism manifested itself at the beginning of the 20th century, marked by the struggle for political rights. In other words, the feminism of the first wave was characterized as "feminism of equality" (Miroiu, M., 2004). For the first time, women's right to vote has been granted in some states in America (Wyoming). However, the full right of women to vote was obtained only in 1928.

The second wave was marked by the publication of books such as *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) or *The Second Sex* (Simone de Beauvoir, 1949). These two papers discuss the problems of women in a patriarchal society. Men and women were legally equal, but their chances were not equal. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Frieden focuses on the woman's image as a wife and mother, and criticizes marketing specialists who only propagate this image in advertising campaigns. In 1966, National Organization for Women, a NGO created by Frieden, was born in order to fight against offending advertising, portraying woman as a "decorative object in the home".

The gains from the second wave of feminism were: family rights, the possibility of reproductive control, equal pay for work, access to professions that until then were considered "masculine professions" (such as the army, politics).

The third wave is represented by feminists of the 1990s, whose mothers were feminists from the second wave (Craig S., 1997). The focus is on having more opportunities and reducing sexism in society (Baumgardner, J., Richards, A., 2000). This period was marked by the intersection with other forms of discrimination (racial, ethnic, religious) and was known as post-feminism or new feminism in Europe. The areas on which women have begun to attract attention have spread to trafficking in human beings, prostitution, domestic violence, but also against media that convey the image of a sexually and anorexic woman.

The *concept of feminism*, presented above by its historical evolution, is intertwined with other concepts, such as gender discrimination, equal opportunities, sexism, misandria and femvertising.

Gender discrimination and sexism are similar concepts that highlight the violation of a woman's rights and may take several forms: sexual harassment, unequal treatment on the labor market, media offensive image, non-recognition of the right to decide on one's own body, and so on.

Feminism is, in fact, the movement that promoted equal opportunities for women, being a fight against forms of discrimination. The concept has a positive message, but due to a misinterpreted feminist radicalism, the term has now become a pejorative sense for many people, especially for men who feel attacked by activists. In our opinion, feminism is sometimes confused with a less-used term, that of misandring, which is repugnant to the male (misogyn being the perfect antonym for misandring). Sometimes, the boundary between feminism, as a struggle for equal rights, and misadventure, as a hatred of men, becomes very thin, a thorough analysis of this phenomenon being illustrated in his book O'Pie – *Exposing Feminism: The Thirty Years' War Against Men*.

The term **femvertising** appeared a few years ago and comes from juxtaposing the words "feminism" and "advertising". The „SheKnows” site defines this concept as the type of advertising (images, messages) that highlights the value of women. There are also marketing campaigns initiated by companies, which bring the image of a strong woman rather than a domestic woman or as a sexual object. Some of these campaigns are *Hit like a girl*, launched by Always, but also Dove commercials that emphasize feminine diversity, appreciating beauty beyond race, color, weight, age. The theoretical debates, however, point out that many feminist campaigns are in fact a way to sell and not necessarily represent an alliance with the struggle for women's rights, with the prevailing mercantile character.

Feminism in Romania had a shy start in the 19th century, being interrupted during communism. There have been very rare moments when feminist ideas have tried to disturb the political foundation. Feminism in our country is not sufficiently promoted (its active part is lacking), and the next question is: "*In the wave of feminism is Romania falling today?*". Most

specialists believe that Romania is at the boundary between the second wave and the third wave. Suciú highlights the reasons why the second wave of feminism has been offset in Romania, compared to Western countries. Communism emphasized the equality of women with men on the labor market, emphasizing, however, the discrepancy in the family environment, where the main purpose of the woman was the raising of children and the accomplishment of household chores. The author appreciates that the patriarchal system of values in the family is a legacy of communism, which is why Romania is in the third wave, slightly atypical stage.

4. QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON FEMINISM IN MARKETING

Qualitative research consisted of 20 interviews (10 male and 10 female) through which we tried to understand and analyze the reactions and responses of interviewees towards feminism in marketing. The structure of the interview consisted of two questions and the presentation of a feminist advertisement.

Analyzing the answers to the first question *Do you consider the pink color to be predominant to girls / women?*, six out of ten men answered this question affirmatively, many of them motivating that men should wear sober and more serious colors. Female respondents had a different approach, with eight out of ten women answering this question negatively. One of their arguments was: *As women can wear blue clothes, so men should not be judged if they have lighter and lighter colors than pink.*

To the second question, *"Why would you want women to fight in the future?"*, We received various answers. Even through their responses, men were discriminating, seeing the woman more like a mother, a housewife or a good housewife: *putting more emphasis on the woman's role of being a mother, child care and household.* On the opposite side, women have had diverse responses based on their desire for social equity: the same pension as men, the fight against discrimination in the workplace, more women in top political positions, longer and better paid maternity leave.

The third part of the interview was more relaxing, we tried to present the interviewees with a feminist advertisement and then asked them to comment. The chosen ad is the one from Always: *Hit like a girl.* As a result of watching the ad, we can say that ads have had a strong emotional impact on all interviewed people, adding quite interesting comments.

Mihai, 23 years old, student: *"Do you know what is strange? That I have a younger sister I always tease that she can do no good for the fact that she is a girl, and now I feel bad. I think I'll go to the store to get something sweet because it's worth it."*

Elena, 20, student: *"Thank you for showing me the movie, I feel really good now!"*

Carmen, 37, housewife: *"Do you have any idea where to find this ad? I must show it to my daughter!"*

Clearly, much can change, but we must have an initiative; a simple movie for a few minutes managed to soften more people than we would have expected. Creating an intelligent campaign is the first step. There are many people who support feminism and its goals, but would not dare to say "I am feminist," because of a misunderstanding of the term and insufficient promotion. Actress Julianne Moore said in an interview that *"Feminism has become a pejorative term. How did that happen? If you're a feminist, you're actually saying you're a humanist."*

5. QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH ON FEMINISM IN MARKETING

The study was conducted in February and March 2015 on a total of 154 people in Romania. The questionnaire was created with Google Forms and distributed online, the respondents also retaining anonymity. Even under these circumstances, I encountered some obstacles, some respondents being skeptical about completing the questionnaire, because they were afraid that somebody would find out what they answered. Although there were limitations inherent in an online study where we could not control the categories and the number of respondents in a category or another, from a qualitative point of view, we appreciate that the answers are more honest, accurate and respect the respondent's privacy.

The objectives of the research are: to identify the perspective of respondents (men and women) on the feminist movement in marketing; proposing solutions to reduce discrimination and increase the awareness of the importance of feminism. The main hypothesis of research is as follows: *Promoting feminism is a necessity, imposed by the lack of information on feminism and discrimination.*

The results of the survey show that young people are more open to responding, the number of respondents being classified as follows: 55% of respondents are between 18 and 24 years of age, 24% are aged between 25-30 years, 19% between 31 and 45%, and the percentage of 9% is represented by respondents aged over 45, as shown in Table 1. Regarding the environment of origin, 23% of respondents come from rural areas and the rest (77%) come from the urban environment.

Table 1: Distribution of respondents by age

Age	Percentage
18-24 ani	55%
25-30 ani	24%
31-45 ani	19%
Peste 45 ani	9 %

When asked about the concept of feminism, most respondents believe that "feminism is gender equality" (49%), followed by the "fight against discrimination" and "synonymous with femininity, delicacy" (both of which are represented by a percentage of 22 %). We can see from Figure 1 that eight respondents (5%) consider that feminine is "hatred for men" (misadventure).

Feminism means:

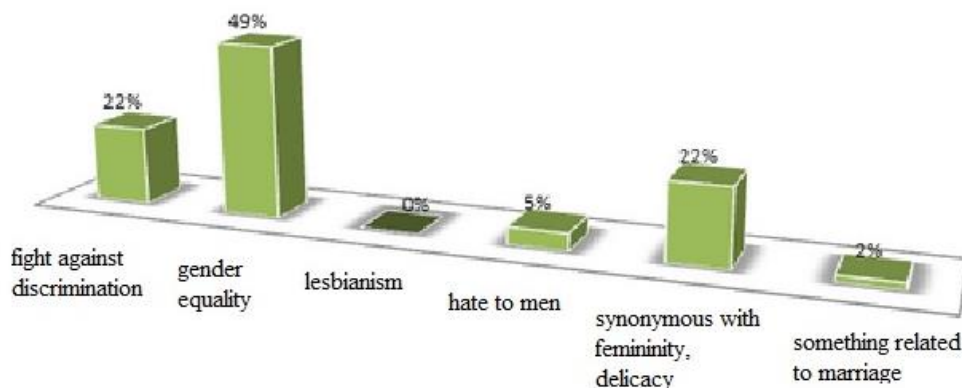


Figure 1 The concept of feminism in the respondents' opinion

Following the answers from the questions "What is feminism?" (Figure 2) and "How does feminism look in Romania?" (Figure 3), the majority of respondents (71%) believe that it is very poorly promoted in Romania (lacking the active part). The fact that women are viewed differently than men leads to a need to promote feminism, which is shared by 52% of respondents.

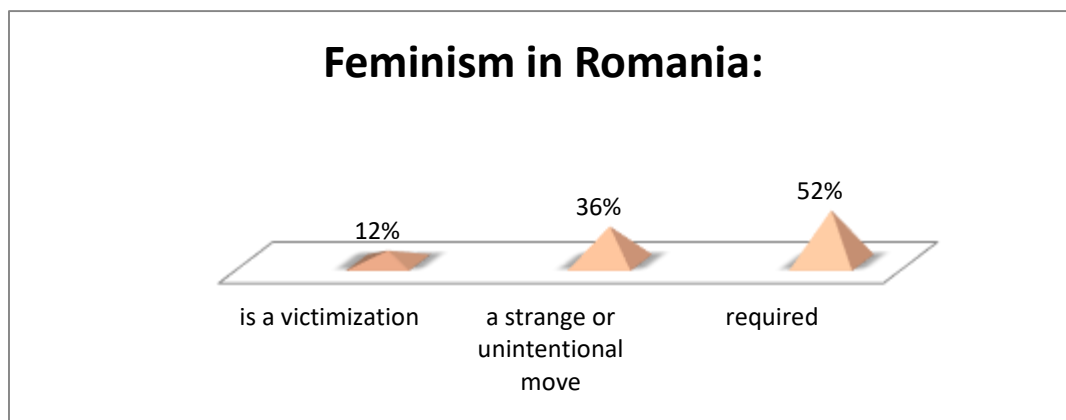


Figure 2 The Picture of Feminism in Romania

The 36% of respondents, who think that feminism is a strange or misunderstood movement, is large enough to strengthen the idea of lack of information and the belief that feminism needs more intense promotion, so that prejudices and misunderstanding the meaning of this term disappears. Often, the *feminist* adjective is used with a pejorative sense, with a negative connotation. We can say that the *Feminism Promotion hypothesis is a necessity, imposed by the lack of information on feminism and discrimination*, is validated.

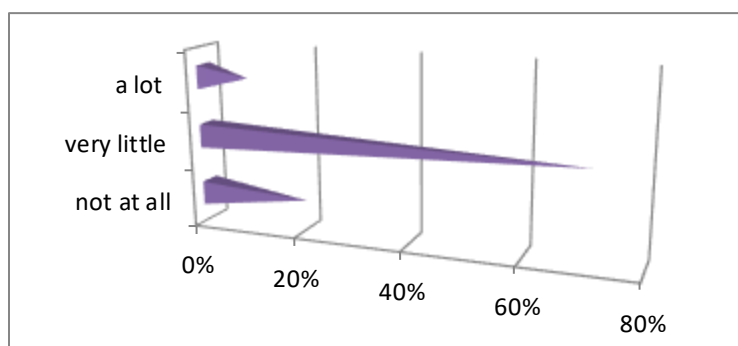


Figure 3 How well is feminism promoted in Romania?

In terms of advertising, the majority of respondents (68%) believe that women are aware of the personalities promoting advertising products, as shown in Table 2. We therefore find a recognition by the female public about how they are influenced in the purchasing process (out of the 154 respondents, 112 are women).

Table 2 Influence of woman's image in advertising spots

Women buy products that are promoted by strong personalities	Percentage
Total agreement	20%
Agreement	48%
Indifferent	23%
Disagreement	6%
Total disagreement	3%

As for advertisements, we notice the presence of discrimination (Table 3) in the spots promoting baby products using only women, 42% of those surveyed agreeing totally or partially on this aspect.

Table 3 Advertising Discrimination

Promoting baby products is exclusively made by females. Is this a reason for discernment?	Percentage
Total agreement	9%
Agreement	33%
Indifferent	23%
Disagreement	18%
Total disagreement	17%

In some advertisements, the woman is presented as the perfect woman, most of the respondents (52%) consider that this creates a sense of insecurity and accentuates the lack of confidence (Table 4). And the percentage of those who see emotional manipulation in such spots is quite important - 29%.

Table 4 Impact of the *perfect woman* image in advertising spots

"In certain advertisements, the woman is presented as the <i>perfect woman</i>, in your opinion this can lead to:	Percentage
Manipulating the consumer is used to his emotions	29%
Positive changes	9%
Providing satisfaction	10%
Creating a sense of insecurity and accentuating women's lack of trust	52%

Those surveyed are of the opinion that the "perfect" image is a disturbing personality and the trust of an ordinary woman. No wonder today that more and more women want to be physically perfect. Promoting this image of the "perfect woman" brings uniformity. It is also noteworthy that those who consider the image of "perfect woman" to bring positive changes are very few (10%).

The open question - *The image of women in advertising will be improved when the natural woman appears more often in advertisements*, gives us insight into what people think about the "natural" woman's ad in the advertisements. Therefore, the answers of the respondents are the following: *YES, because it attracts more consumers by nature; Yes, then the woman would have more confidence and security; YES, because the natural woman find it all the way and there is no need for a perfect woman to be promoted; NO, because it has to steal the eyes of consumers through beauty and other means.* The views are divided, but the extent of positive responses to the promotion of female naturalness in advertising spots is noteworthy.

Feminine nudity in the advertising space:

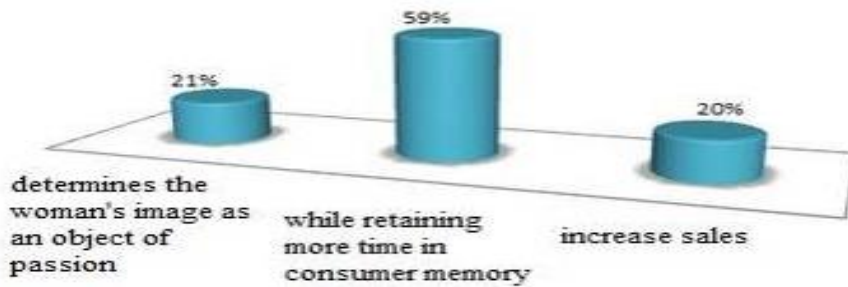


Figure 4 Impact of female nudity on advertising spots

Our degree of curiosity has also manifested itself in the campaigns that promote feminism. To the question "Which of the following women's advocacy campaigns is known to you?" (Figure 5), 41% of those surveyed know the "Respect Campaign". This is a Romanian campaign supported by celebrities such as Andreea Marin, Antonia, Loredana, Leonard Doroftei, Cornel Ilie, Răzvan Fodor. Is this why the campaign is recognized? The prestige of a campaign depends on who its promoters are?

Which of the following campaigns on women's rights advocacy is known to you

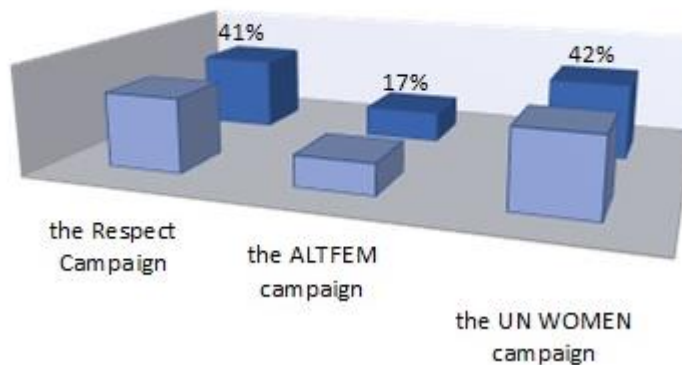


Figure 5 Campaigns to Promote Feminism

But the prestige of a campaign also depends on the means by which it is promoted, and our opinion is also strengthened by 42% of the respondents, who also mentioned the UN Women campaign. This has taken place on various social networks. (Figure 1).

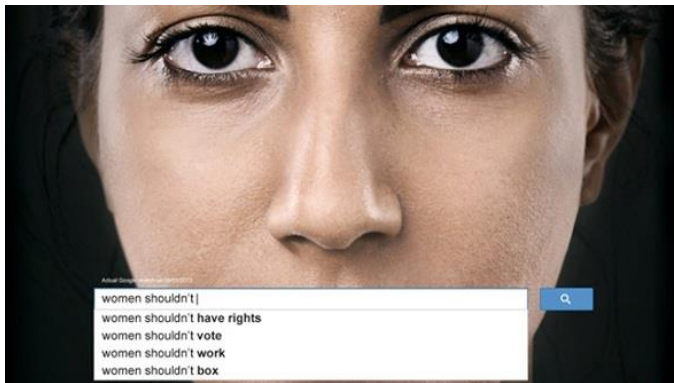


Figure 6 The UN Women Campaign

Sources: www.morallymarketed.com/case-studies/un-women-women-shouldnt/

We dared to pass the questionnaire and Sigmund Freud's famous "dilemma": "What does a woman really want?" We adapted the variants of the contemporary society, but also gave the respondents the opportunity to express their opinion. So, "What does a woman really want?": Career, family, financial independence? Figure 7 reveals the complexity of the reality we live in. If we were to achieve a top 3 female preference, it would be the following: family (62%), independence (60%), career (50%).

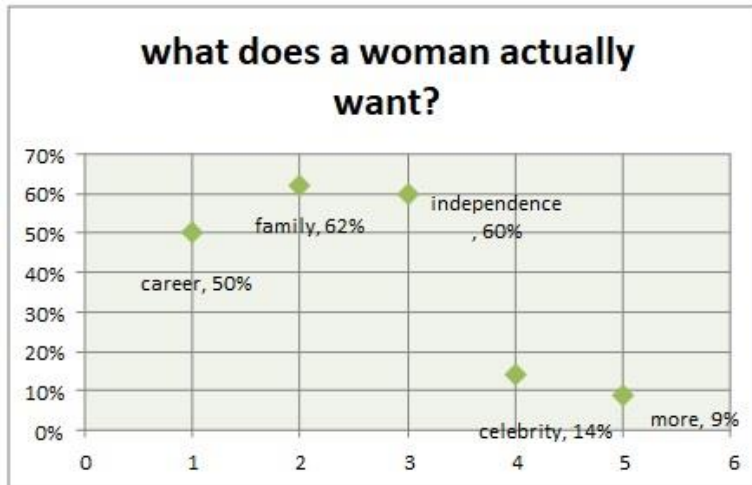


Figure 7 Women's Goals

In order to measure the desire for knowledge in the field of feminism, I asked at the end of the questionnaire the question: "Would you like / wanted to have courses in the educational institutions addressing the theme of feminism?" The answers are optimistic, 76% giving a positive response, as seen in Figure 8.

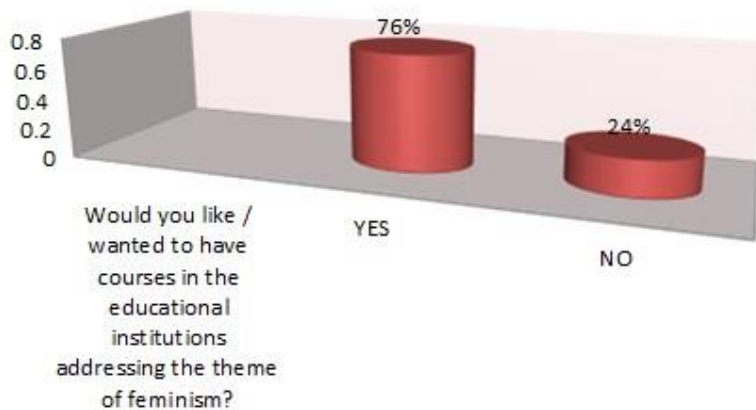


Figure 8 The intention to introduce thematic courses in schools

The results of this study highlight the need to promote feminism as there is still an erroneous understanding of this movement, and classic marketing campaigns continue to promote the same image of female template: housewife, mother woman, housewife woman, docile woman, perfect woman. However, there is a tendency for celebrity involvement in feminist campaigns, which can help reduce discrimination and promote equality between men and women.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Following these two researches we came to the following conclusions:

- Feminism is understood as gender equality and is seen as a fight against discrimination;
- The "lesbianism" phenomenon is not associated with the feminist approach;
- Feminism is not sufficiently promoted in Romania, but it is necessary to promote it, because women are viewed differently than men;
- The presence of public figures in advertising spots influences the way women purchase products;
- The phenomenon of discrimination is felt in advertising spots. This is manifested by the exclusive presence of females when promoting childcare products.
- The woman's image in advertising will be improved when the natural woman will appear more often in commercials;
- Feminine nudity in the advertising space increases sales.

So a change is needed so that discrimination disappears from marketing campaigns and gradually be replaced by a feminist vision in the sense of equality of opportunity and not in the pejorative sense acquired today, perhaps also due to the existence of the phenomenon of mismanagement. Promoting feminism can be achieved by various means, but a start would be to introduce courses to address the theme of feminism. Education is the answer to the issues of discrimination and negative perception of feminism.

As regards the woman's image in advertising, it needs to be improved. In order not to reach a total lack of women's confidence, it is recommended that women's naturalness be presented in the advertising spots; there are companies (Unilever with Dove campaigns) who have made this move by creating advertising spots that support women's beauty regardless of race, color, ethnicity, age. Feminine nudity in the advertising space should not become

exaggerated, and their broadcasting should be allowed at a specific time and on certain channels (or places).

In conclusion, the promotion of feminism is necessary, but to this end both marketers and educational institutions have to work to create a culture in the field, as well as to educate young people in the spirit of equal opportunities. Feminism is an important step towards a modern, non-discriminatory society.

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