

Representations of Female Beauty: C&A Brazil and Portugal (Spring/Summer 2018)

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Abstract: This objective of this study is to compare and analyze how forms of female beauty were approached in the Spring / Summer 2018 campaigns on the Facebook pages of the clothing retailer C&A, in Brazil and Portugal. The key question is to understand how the company approached female beauty for the female audience, which included women and people who identify themselves as female, in both countries. The method of analysis is exploratory, qualitative, and quantitative, and applied content analysis to images used in the selected campaigns, and categorized elements to help compare them. The results of the study show that the company subtly sought to represent a diversity of different forms of female beauty although it has not yet presented a more evident inclusion of this representativeness.

Keywords: Advertising; Female beauty; Representativeness; Facebook; C&A.

Representações da beleza feminina: C&A Brasil e Portugal (Primavera/Verão 2018)

Resumo: Este trabalho tem como objetivo comparar e analisar a maneira como foram abordadas as formas da beleza feminina nas campanhas de Primavera/Verão 2018 das páginas do Facebook da empresa varejista do segmento de moda, C&A, no Brasil e em Portugal. A questão-chave está em compreender como a empresa abordou a beleza feminina diante do público feminino, no qual foram englobadas mulheres e pessoas que se identifiquem como femininas, em ambos os países. O método de análise é de cunho exploratório, e quali-quantitativo, aplicando-se a análise de conteúdo relativamente às imagens presentes nas campanhas selecionadas, categorizando elementos para fins de comparação entre elas. Os resultados deste trabalho evidenciaram que a empresa buscou sutilmente representar a diversidade das diferentes formas da beleza feminina e que ainda não abordou uma inclusão mais evidente dessa representatividade.

Palavras-Chave: publicidade; beleza feminina; representatividade; Facebook; C&A.

Representaciones de la belleza femenina: C&A Brasil y Portugal (Primavera/Verano 2018)

Resumen: Este trabajo tiene como objetivo comparar y analizar la forma en que se abordaron las formas de belleza femenina en las campañas Primavera / Verano 2018 en las páginas de Facebook del minorista de moda, C&A, en Brasil y Portugal. Así, la pregunta clave es entender cómo la empresa abordó la belleza femenina ante el público femenino, que incluía mujeres y personas que se identifican como mujeres, en ambos países. El método de análisis es exploratorio y cualitativo y cuantitativo, aplicando Análisis de Contenido en relación a las imágenes presentes en las campañas seleccionadas, categorizando elementos con el propósito de compararlos. Los resultados de este trabajo mostraron que la empresa buscó sutilmente representar la diversidad de las diferentes formas de belleza femenina y que aún no ha abordado una inclusión más evidente de esta representatividad.

Palabras-clave: publicidad; belleza femenina; representatividad; Facebook; C&A.

Introduction

With the passage of years, changes have transformed many paradigms and stereotypes related to the feminine beauty ideal. Questions about how the presence of feminism, which “questions the mediatization of stereotyped representations of femininity” (Mafalda MARTINS, 2016, p. 1), and the importance given to identity and forms of personal expression, reveal that society is constantly creating new forms of interpreting, relating and expressing itself. This is seen how the female body and beauty are represented. It is also seen in the recognition that the female public goes far beyond cisgender women, who are those who identify with the gender that they were born with. That is, the female public involves many forms of female identities and expressions (Judith BUTLER, 1990, 1993; Sandra SALEIRO, 2013).

New modalities of representation of ‘female beauty’ may or may not change how brands handle and relate with these social changes in relation to their public. Fashion brands and aesthetic products are closely associated to social discussions of the mediatic and fashion conscious aesthetic standard of female beauty (Koiti ANZAI, 2000; MARTINS, 2016). Fernanda Afonso (2016) shows that advertising observes the changes of these new paradigms as well as changes in consumer thinking and behavior: “Advertising does not stay behind, and its effects can, at times, be determinant not only to choices people make at the time of purchasing, but also to the actions and behavior of individuals”, in other words “in the composition of their identities” (AFONSO, 2016, p. 9). In this way, many companies and advertising agencies are adapting to this new contextualization that changes daily, and companies such as C&A are part of this context, as in the case analyzed here.

C&A was chosen for this study because of its presence in the two Portuguese-speaking countries selected, Brazil and Portugal, and because it is a company present in digital platforms and in vehicles of mass communication – such as television, magazines, newspapers, billboards etc. — in different countries. This allows making comparisons and observations related to similarities and differences in its advertising communications. These interpretations can be analyzed based on the C&A campaigns, considering how they represent female beauty.

Therefore, to understand that representations of “female beauty” encompass different female identities and different female genders – such as cisgender, transgender, drag queen etc., that is, people who feel feminine and who want to be represented – is an important social issue related to inclusion, ethics, social responsibility and citizenship, that affects companies and their advertising.

In this context, this study sought to observe if messages found in images presented by the company C&A in its digital campaigns for Spring/Summer 2018 found on its Facebook pages in Brazil and Portugal present a concern to include a diversity of ideals of female beauty in the images used in the campaigns in the two countries.

In this sense, based on this context of new historic-social behaviors, and in order to perceive the positioning of the C&A company in relation to issues of representation of female beauty in the advertising campaigns selected for this analysis, the key questions of this work strive to understand the following points: How are forms of female beauty represented and operationalized through the images found in the publications on the Facebook pages of C&A in Brazil and Portugal? Can we identify a representation of different expressions of female beauty? What differences, stereotypes and representations can be observed through this case study?

To do so, the main objective was to comparatively examine the campaigns found on C&A's Facebook pages in Brazil and Portugal, observing the models presented in the advertising, and perceiving how the female public in question is represented, analyzing characteristics such as body format, physical biotype, hairstyle, ethnic-racial category, age, and gender. The study also sought to identify the potential presence of stereotypes in the two countries, and to see if this public can be perceived in the images used in the selected campaigns.

Therefore, it is important to perceive how the historic contexts of each country, related to the construction of the ‘female beauty ideal’, associated to fashion and media, have influenced how representations of ‘a beautiful woman’ are socially constructed in Brazilian and Portuguese society. Thus, to understand how companies – especially those whose products and services are related to fashion and aesthetic and cosmetic procedures, such as C&A, which is a retail clothing and fashion accessories company – use ideas of female beauty in their communications and advertising, raises questions such as: What do the images of women in the advertising campaigns of C&A Brazil and Portugal present to viewers?

Representations of women in advertising in Brazil and Portugal

Over the years, in patriarchal societies, women have been pressured to follow social norms of behavior such as caring for their homes, husbands and children (Francisco PEREIRA; Jorge VERÍSSIMO, 2008). There has been constant social pressure for women to be adept at following

these social rules, which from a historical and cultural perspective have affirmed that men have predominant influence on the definition of what is beautiful in a woman, what activities she should undertake and in what social contexts she should be inserted (PEREIRA; VERÍSSIMO, 2008).

Erving Goffman (1987, p. 57) shows that in advertising “Women more than men, it seems, are pictured engaged in involvements which remove them psychologically from the social situation at large, leaving them unoriented in it and to it, and presumably, therefore, dependent on the protectiveness and goodwill of others who are (or might come to be) present” which may or may not be present in images, which suggests that, in many visual ads, a woman is represented to show her need to be in harmony or to be “pleasing to someone else’s gaze”.

In many Western countries, like Brazil and Portugal, the image of a woman is perceived to have specific objectives such as to “present trends, and promote and confer credibility to a product” (PEREIRA; VERÍSSIMO, 2008, p. 294). In this context, according to Silvana Mota-Ribeiro (2002, p. 5): “In current Western culture, advertising messages have considerable importance as promoters of values around which and before which individuals, in one way or another, constitute their identity”.

In relation to the representation of the image of female beauty in advertising, Mota-Ribeiro (2002, p. 5-6) reveals that “actors situate themselves towards social groups and trends” which steer them to a perception of “identification with that which is displayed in terms of [social] values and behavior”. Thus, it is understood that it is possible that Brazil and Portugal have common stereotypes and standards of Western female beauty. However, analyzing historic and cultural questions, it can also be expected to find differences in what is considered beautiful in each country.

About the representation of women in advertising in Portugal, a study realized in 2001 by Mota-Ribeiro (2002, p. 8) in Portuguese magazines such as *Ana*, *Guia*, *Maria*, *Mulher Moderna*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Elle*, *Máxima*, *Activa* and *Lux Woman*, revealed that the main aspect found when examining the image of women in advertising and articles is the eroticization of the female body. This involves highlighting “visual indicators” such as “hair, body, expression, visual contact, pose, clothing, touch, body movement”, as well as observing insinuations of “sexual availability and the presentation of that body as an object of sexual desire”. This was also found in a study conducted by Pereira and Veríssimo (2008, p. 293) about gender stereotypes and the image of women in advertising, in which they affirm that women are operationalized in “more hedonistic dimensions associated to the world of beauty”, seduction, and affection.

Meanwhile, Vanessa Lecheta (2012) affirms that the image of a woman, in the Brazilian context, has strong Western influences, mainly European and North American. In addition, Nucia Oliveira (2001) shows that in the twentieth century the concept of beauty is considered mainly as a “question of health” or even as “a divine gift”. Thus, to “treat ugliness”, advertising offers aesthetic products and services that can help “resolve this problem”. Another author, Daniela Novelli (2014, p. 80), affirmed that, in the twentieth century, “women’s magazines”, such as *Vogue*, had an important role in the “dissemination” of “advertising, by focusing on the industries of cosmetics, fashion, products for the home and family, etc.”, that is, it allowed the idea of “acquiring or improving beauty” to be gradually implemented in Brazil. Débora Leitão (2007, p. 142) also added that advertising aimed at the female public revealed that “intelligible meanings are produced [...] creating an artificial synthesis of truth through efficient words (and images!)”.

Thus, it is possible to observe that advertising has been gradually gaining influence on the Brazilian female public, presenting values and trends, mainly through images, and collaborating with an imposed standard of beauty (LEITÃO, 2007). However, the country has specific cultural issues in relation to standards of female beauty, with a preference for a body with accentuated curves, breasts, and ample hips, yet that is thin, and has white teeth (ANZAI, 2000). These characteristics are highly recurring, for example, in beer commercials – a product predominantly aimed at the male public – which use “the woman as a consumption dream”, to “increasingly attract male gazes, so that they consume increasingly more” (LECHETA, 2012, p. 15).

In this context, it is necessary to better perceive how clothing companies, like C&A, relate with their target public through advertising, by how they present female beauty.

C&A Brazil-Portugal and the categories of analysis of “female beauty”

According to its official website, C&A was founded in 1841 by the Dutch brothers Clemens and August Brenninkmeijer, and the company name came from the initials of their first names (C&A, 2019c). The company considered itself a pioneer “in the production of ready-to-wear clothing” and is now seen as one of the world’s largest retail companies, with more than 1.8 thousand units in 24 countries in Europe, Latin America, and Asia” (C&A, 2019c).

It is interesting to observe that the company uses the same advertising communications in all European countries, has the same campaigns in its physical stores, on its Facebook pages, in the official European profile on *Instagram* (C&A 2019b) and on the official European website. That is, no distinction or exclusive steering is made for in each European country where the brand

is present. However, C&A's official Facebook page, like the one for Portugal, have content that is translated and aimed to the public of each country.

According to C&A's official international website (C&A, 2019a), since its beginnings, the company was always attentive to novelties and trends in the world of fashion. However, with its expansion to non-European countries such as Brazil, it had to position its communication with campaigns that included elements different than those used in the European context. For example, the company chose to address the theme of Carnival in some campaigns, and include the presence of individuals who represent communities such as LGBTQIA+ and funk carioca, as well as women like Brazilian pop and funk singers Pablo Vittar, who is a *drag queen*, and Anitta.

In these cases, the company demonstrated its attention to social changes and movements and to current discussions in both the digital realm and in the streets, among other contexts, about female visibility. By portraying public figures in some of its campaigns, it represented these movements and the diversity of female publics. It is seen that the clothes used in the campaigns that include Pablo Vittar are feminine, as are the clothes used by Anitta.

As mentioned previously, in Portugal, the images used in the publications and in the advertising campaigns on C&A's official Facebook page are the same as in other European countries, even though each country has its own singularities, and female social movements, as does Portugal, which has important feminist movements such as the União de Mulheres Alternativa e Resposta (UMAR) [The Union of Alternative Women and Response] and *HeForShe* Portugal.

As a method of content analysis, a categorization of elements such as the physical characteristics of the models was applied. This included six categories, each with various options. They include race-ethnicity: black, brown, white, Asian and Indigenous (IBGE, 2016); body shape: hourglass, pear, triangle, rectangle and oval (Jacqueline SANTOS; Silvani EMILIANO, 2014); physical biotype: thin, fit, heavy, curvy (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014); young/mature (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014); hair color and style (SALEIRO, 2013); and clothing style (Gilles LIPOVETSKY, 2009). The use of these categories allowed specifying visual elements found in the campaigns selected from C&A's Facebook pages for Brazil and Portugal. The method is based on the considerations of authors such as Santos and Emiliano (2014), Saleiro (2013) and Lipovetsky (2009), who have a conceptual and methodological base in Roland Barthes (1990, 2006) and Laurence Bardin (1977), and realize categorizations based on approaches developed by the latter authors. This interpretation is the basis for perceiving differences and similarities in the images presented in the two countries, that is, what in fact they present and what message is possibly expressed by these images.

This type of analysis, according to Roque Moraes (1999, p. 2), "is a research methodology used to describe and interpret the content of an entire class of documents and texts", thus, "this analysis, leading to systematic descriptions, whether qualitative or quantitative, helps to reinterpret the message and reach an understanding of its meanings at a level that goes beyond a common reading". Thus, "this methodology is part of a theoretical and practical search, with a special meaning in the field of social investigations".

Meanwhile, Klaus Jensen (2012), shows that there is an arbitrary nature to the question of signification of the sign, that is, the meaning of a sign can vary for each speaker of a language, for example, because each speaker has a social and cultural context, which makes this perception different.

Thus, to practically apply a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of images of a semiotic nature, this study selected three photos from each of the Spring/Summer 2018 campaigns of the C&A company on its official Portuguese and Brazilian Facebook pages. These campaigns take place at different times of year. For example, spring in Portugal (in the Northern Hemisphere), was between 21 March and 20 June 2018, and summer between 21 June and 20 September 2018. In Brazil (in the Southern Hemisphere), spring was between 22 September and 21 December 2018, and summer between 21 December and 20 March 2019. (IAG/USP, 2019).

Thus, the categories of analysis were: ethnic-racial: black, brown, white, Asian and Indigenous (IBGE, 2011, 2018); body shape: hourglass, pear, triangle, rectangle and oval (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014); physical biotype: thin, fit, heavy, curvy (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014); young/mature (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014); hair color and style (SALEIRO, 2013); clothing style (LIPOVETSKY, 2009). It is pertinent to note that other criteria could be used to evaluate the images. However, without denying the relevance of other criteria, the choice of categories applied here was based on studies about the body, personal characteristics that reveal and shape identities, and studies about fashion, such as Santos and Emiliano (2014), Saleiro (2013) and Lipovetsky (2009).

Discussion of the results

The content analysis of the three publications selected on the official C&A websites in Portugal and Brazil was conducted through the categorization mentioned. Below we analyze each image by observing each category of analysis.

Portugal

Upon analyzing the three publications selected on the timeline of photos on the official Facebook page for Portugal of the C&A company, reproduced in **Figure 1**, **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**, a few perceptions and interpretations can be considered.

Figure 1. Women and spring



Source: C&A (2018d). All of the images used in this article were produced by C&A for advertising purposes and are addressed in this article solely for the purpose of scientific academic analysis, according to C&A's General Terms and Conditions and Policy for Open Resolution (2018f).

FortheWorldtoSee: Four women in spring dresses walk together side by side on a street with flowers in the surroundings. They are smiling and appear to be happy to be together. From left to right, the first is a black woman, the second is white, a bit taller and appears to be older, the third is white, with brown hair and a curvier body, and the fourth is a white woman, with blonde hair, and a thinner body.

Figure 2. Women and the pool



Source: C&A (2018c).

#FortheWorldtoSee: Three women are in bathing suits in front of a pool, with the sea in the background. From left to right: the first woman is white, with blonde hair and a black bikini, with a top that covers her décolletage. The second woman is white, with light hair, she appears to be a bit older and is using a blue bikini with a print kaftan above. The third and last is a white woman, with blond hair, using a print bikini and dark glasses.

Figure 3. Woman and the city



Source: C&A (2018b).

FortheWorldtoSee: Four women are walking together side by side on a street in an urban environment, with trees to the left and buildings to the right. From left to right: the first woman is white, with blonde hair, and is using a cap, she has a cotton jersey and a spring skirt; the second woman is black, is using a strapless top, jeans and an open jacket; the third is a white woman, taller, with a floral dress with a jean jacket on top; the fourth is a black woman, with flowery pants, a blouse, a scarf and a jeans jacket.

The first category observed was the 'racial-ethnic category', in which is noted the presence of eight apparently white models and three who are black.

In terms of 'body shape, in **Figure 1** it is possible to observe the presence of two hourglass models, one pear and a rectangle. **Figure 2** has one triangle, an oval and a pear, and **Figure 3** has four models with a very similar rectangular silhouette. An intention is noted to show different types of body shapes, in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**, even if these silhouettes are close to "standard female aesthetics" (Clara FREITAS *et al.*, 2010; Carolina LOUREIRO, 2014; Denise SANT'ANNA, 2014), in terms of the sizes of their bodies and their curves. It is thus possible to observe that in **Figure 3** there is a presence of four models with measurements very close to the rectangular body shape — which is highly desired for runway models, for example, and by those who are immersed in the world of fashion (LIPOVETSKY, 2009).

In relation to the category 'physical biotype' eight models with thin bodies were observed in the three publications, one with a fit body and two with curvy bodies. In this case, it can be seen that perhaps the company is interested in representing curvy women who are beyond the aesthetic established by the media and by fashion — fit or thin (ANZAI, 2000; FREITAS *et al.*, 2010; SANT'ANNA, 2014) — but it is possible that there is still a hesitancy to use more curvy models or even a plus-size model because they go beyond the norm of high fashion that usually uses tall models, who have a rectangular body shape and thin physical biotype (LIPOVETSKY, 2009).

In the category 'young/mature' there is a strong presence of eight young models between approximately 25 and 35, two who are probably between 35 and 45 and one model who appears to be between 50 and 60. Note that in Portugal the company is receptive to encompassing young adult women and mature women to show that it is inclusive of women of various ages.. However, only one mature model is represented in the publications, even if characteristics related to the 'female standard of aesthetic beauty' (FREITAS *et al.*, 2010; LOUREIRO, 2014; SANT'ANNA, 2014) can be identified in her, since she is tall and thin with a rectangular body.

In terms of 'hair color and style', of the eleven models in the publications, eight have clearly straight (or straightened) hair, seven have long hair, six dark hair, one gray, and four blondes. One appears to have her hair styled, one has her hair pulled back, and four have medium length hair, to the shoulders. It is interesting to note that the three black models have straight (or straightened) hair, which is supposedly the result of a capillary aesthetic procedure, given that the hair of most black women is coiled or tightly curled (SANT'ANNA, 2014; SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014). In the three publications of the Spring/Summer campaign reproduced in Portugal by the C&A company, there is no presence of hair in this format, which demonstrates a possible reaffirmation of straightened hair as a norm of aesthetic standards in the fashion campaigns. It is also possible to note a probable appreciation for long hair, given the presence of seven models with long hair, that is, below the shoulders, which may be related to sensuality and youth, for example (SANT'ANNA, 2014). We can interpret the use of models with long hair as an intension to transmit a sensation that a woman who has the clothes worn by the models can also be sensual and young. In addition, there is a strong presence of models with dark and blond hair, showing a possible perception related to youth and health (SANT'ANNA, 2014).

For the last category, 'clothing style', in **Figure 1** we see the use of print dresses of similar length, to the knees, with a cut that highlights the models' waist and bust, which can express an emphasis of youth (SANT'ANNA, 2014). In **Figure 2**, it is notable that only the young/mature model with an oval body who is at the center of the image has a beach cover-up. This can be interpreted as an effort to 'disguise' the body of the model in relation to the other two at her side (one with a fit body type and a triangular body shape and the other who is thin with a pear body shape), given that she may also be there to represent women from 35 to 45 years old. Women of this age may not feel comfortable with their body and want to 'hide it' when they are in locations where a bikini or single-piece bathing suit is normally used, because there is a high level of dissatisfaction with their bodies among women of this age, mainly because of factors such as pregnancy, and post-pregnancy, signs of aging etc. (SANT'ANNA, 2014).

Thus, these visual elements of the models in the publications selected from the Spring/Summer 2018 campaign of C&A Portugal allow interpretations that can question what the brand wants to demonstrate to the public. That is, if the company's intention is to approximate to a public in to represent it, to serve its requests and desires related not only to clothes and accessories, and if the brand is considering the mental and even physical health of its consumers.

Brazil

Elements observed in the three photos selected from the Spring/Summer 2018 campaign from the timeline on C&A Brazil's Facebook page are presented in **Figure 4**, **Figure 5** and **Figure 6**. Some comments can be made based on their categorization.

Figure 4. Women on the beach



Source: C&A (2018e).

#FortheWorldtoSee: Two women are on a beach, leaning against a lifeguard stand. From left to right: the first has Asian characteristics, uses a jumper with vertical stripes; the second is a white woman, who is using a jumper with a floral print with a bow in the décolletage region.

Figure 5. Montage with women on the beach



Source: C&A (2018a).

FortheWorldtoSee: The photo is composed of a montage divided in five parts with five different female models. From left to right: the first is a brown woman using a bikini and a long beach cover-up and is standing on a boat holding a cord with her right hand. The second is a white woman with long hair and is seated in the sand, with the sea behind. She is resting her elbows on her knees and her two hands on the left side of her face. The third is a white woman using a long skirt and a horizontally striped top, leaning on wooden drums, with the sea in the background. The fourth is a white woman in a bikini, who seems to be getting out of a pool, supported with her two hands on a wooden structure. The fifth is a white woman, using a one-piece bathing suit with a spotted print, a cap and a short cover-up, holding on to a ladder in the sand, with the sea in the background.

Figure 6. Summer, sun, and beach



Source: C&A, 2019d.

FortheWorldtoSee: Two women are standing in front of a panel on which is written: 'Summer Sun and Beach'. From left to right: the first is a black woman, using a black one-piece bathing suit, with a short black cover-up with white polka dots; the second is a white woman using a print, one-piece bathing suit, with her left hand on her waist.

In the "racial-ethnic" category can be noted, the presence of perceptible physical characteristics of one Asian model, one brown woman, six white models, and one black model. Although Brazil is a country historically, genetically, and ethnically composed by individuals from continents such as Africa and Europe (SANT'ANNA, 2014), a tendency to highlight women with light skin was noted in C&A's Spring/Summer 2018 campaign, which confirms previous studies that identify the prominence of white skin over the years in Brazilian advertising (LECHETA, 2012; SANT'ANNA, 2014). Despite the intention to represent different women with distinct skin colors, with the presence of only one Asian model, one brown-skinned model and one black model, most of the models are still white.

Another notable element in this category is the question of whitening related to the black model (Ruth FRANKENBERG, 1993) present in **Figure 6**. Not only in relation to the company's

choice for a black model with light skin tone, but also in relation to the other ethnic-racial markers, such as hair type. In this case the black model has light skin tone but coiled hair, and a body posture that is more carefree than the blond model next to her, which may also suggest how black women are still seen in advertising.

Pierre Bourdieu (1972) discusses what he calls “corporeal hexis”, to refer to unconscious posturing of the body, which can be observed in how women are positioned in advertising. “Corporeal hexis speaks immediately to motricity, as a postural scheme that is simultaneously singular and systematic, because it is in solidarity with an entire system of techniques of the body and of instruments, and charged with a myriad of significations and social values” (BOURDIEU, 1972, p. 190). Goffman (1987), in contrast, shows to what point advertising reflects this issue of corporeal hexis. Miguel Montagner (2006, p. 521) affirms that he “focuses his attention on three points: styles of behavior related to gender, how advertising presents a distorted view of the feminine, and the rules of production of this artefact of propaganda”. A review of these three points allows us to observe that an Afro-descendent model is present in only one of the three images from the Brazilian campaign. This may represent a greater absence of this characteristic of female beauty.

In terms of ‘body shape’, it is possible to note that **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** present models with a rectangular shape, which is highly valued in fashion, because women ‘apt’ to become models with high fashion value must be tall and thin and rectangular (LIPOVETSKY, 2009; SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014). Meanwhile, in **Figure 6** a difference is notable in the approach to the body shape of the models, because in this case they have a pear shape, which is common among Brazilian women (SANTOS; EMILIANO, 2014). Also note that in **Figure 6** the two models portrayed appear to be smaller than the models of **Figure 4** and **Figure 5**, which can express a visual message that may reflect an effort to come closer to Brazilian reality (ANZAI, 2000; SANT’ANNA, 2014), in which most women are short and have a more curvy body, as is seen in the next category.

In relation to the category ‘physical biotype’, the three publications selected have models with a thin biotype, that is, they all have characteristics that can cause them to be considered thin, such as a ‘negative’ belly, a thin waist, long and thin arms and legs, and narrow faces. In this case, a probable emphasis on this type of physical biotype is seen. Moreover, it may be interpreted that the predominance of this biotype is a type of ‘recommendation’, or ‘suggestion’ that to use bathing suits and clothes for this season it is necessary to have a trim and thin body. This is remarkable given that a large portion of Brazilian women are not considered thin or perhaps do not fit this physical biotype (FREITAS *et al.*, 2010; LOUREIRO, 2014; SANT’ANNA, 2014).

In relation to the category “young/mature”, note that all nine models appear to have young facial and corporal characteristics and can be associated to women from 18 to 35. Here it is also possible to make an association between youth and health (SANT’ANNA, 2014) and relate them to elements such as sun, summer, beach, pool, well-being, vivacity, and fun. Visual elements of the models, such as smiles, youthful skin etc., can transmit the message that the line of clothes from the Spring/Summer 2018 campaign, which extended to early 2019, is focused on young women. This may have more mature women not feel visually represented in the images. However, these women may also want to show they are healthy and want to have fun in the summer with clothes that are in fashion.

In terms of the category ‘hair color and style’ it was noted that in the three publications there are seven models with straight hair, one with coiled hair, one with wavy hair, while one appears to have styled hair, and one with her hair pulled back. Four models are blonde or light brown with highlights, four have dark hair, three have medium-length hair and six have long hair. It is also possible to note a strong presence of straight hair, even if there is an intention to show a model with coiled hair, and perhaps reveal a representation of black women; but there are very few blacks in this campaign.

In terms of ‘clothing style’, **Figure 4** presents models wearing jumpers that highlight their waist and that have prints and cuts that visual elongate the body. That is, it can be interpreted as an outfit that has the purpose of “allowing the consumer to feel thinner when wearing it”, thus associating it to the aesthetic standard of female beauty related to thinness (ANZAI, 2000; SANT’ANNA, 2014).

In **Figure 5** we can observe that the bikini bottoms reach above the hips or have broader sides, which can be more comfortable for consumers to use, because they do not seem to be tight. This gives the impression that even if a consumer is not young, or even if she does not have a thin or fit biotype, she can feel that a bikini or one-piece can adapt to her body.

Comparing analyses

In terms of the ‘ethnic-racial’ category, the Portuguese campaign has three black and eight white models, while the Brazilian campaign has one black model, one Asian, one brown and six whites. Both the Portuguese and Brazilian photos have a majority of white models, which may indicate preference for using models with white skin in the Spring/Summer campaigns in

2018. In the Brazilian campaign models are observed that appear to fit into different ethnic-racial categories, such as Asian and brown, which in this case may imply an intention to have greater representation than in the Portuguese campaign.

Continuing in the 'ethnic-racial' category, it is notable that both campaigns chose black models with light skin tone, which may represent what is known as the "whitening black women" (FRANKENBERG, 1993). Working with "whiteness studies", Frankenberg (1993) shows that white identity influences other identities. In this study we found a domination of white models and a strong tendency to present black models with lighter skin tones, to assimilate them to white models. This domination has origins in the fact that "whiteness refers to a set of locations" such as Brazil and Portugal, which are "historically, socially, politically and culturally produced, and moreover, are intrinsically linked to unfolding relations of domination" (FRANKENBERG, 1993, p. 6).

In the "body shape" category there is a presence of models with a rectangular shape in the two campaigns, although in the Brazilian campaign they are more prominent given that in both **Figure 4** and **Figure 5** all the models have this characteristic that is associated to runway models (LIPOVETSKY, 2009; LOUREIRO, 2014). This is curious, given that the company has a project known as #TodoDiaDelas [Everydayistheir's], which shows women in real life, with different forms of beauty, body shapes, biotypes, hair, skin tones, genders, etc. But this was not present in the official Spring/Summer 2018 campaign in Brazil, which allows questioning what the company wants to present with this project and the images from its official campaigns, considering that they are different. Why not use the image of women like those who participate in the project # Everydayistheir's for the images of the official campaigns of the company? Why does the company prefer to use models with characteristics synchronized to the 'standard of aesthetic female beauty'?

Analysis considering the third category, 'physical biotype', shows that both campaigns have thin models, which intensifies the emphasis on this choice of models that is in keeping with the physical characteristics demanded by the standard of female aesthetic beauty (ANZAI, 2000; LOUREIRO, 2014; SANT'ANNA, 2014). That is, the models have measurements close to 90 cm at the bust, 60 at the waist and 90 at the hips, for example, or are tall, with a 'negative' belly, and defined muscles. (ANZAI, 2000; LOUREIRO, 2014; SANT'ANNA, 2014). One difference noted is that the Portuguese campaign has women with a greater variety of physical biotypes, with models with fit and curvy bodies, while the Brazilian campaign has only thin models.

Thus, it is possible to interpret that in its campaign in Portugal, C&A sought to represent women of different physical biotypes, even if in a subtle manner, without presenting biotypes that are far from the 'standard of aesthetic female beauty'. Meanwhile in Brazil, the company used models of a single biotype, which is also curious, because the company has social projects like #Everydayistheir's, which presents women with different physical biotypes.

In the fourth category analyzed, 'young/mature', a strong presence of young models is seen in both campaigns. By presenting younger models, the campaign can lead the public to associate youth with summer and beauty and well-being. It is important to note that the Portuguese campaign presented young/mature and mature models, while the Brazilian campaign had no mature models, which may mean that the Portuguese campaign sought to encompass a broader public than the Brazilian campaign.

That is, the Portuguese campaign also sought to present mature women, although visually, the young/mature and mature models presented are not far from the 'standard of aesthetic female beauty' because they have a 'joyful' air.

It can also be observed that in **Figure 1**, the mature/older model is taller than the others, which may reveal a social hierarchy (GOFFMAN, 1987). A taller woman appears to call the attention of the other younger models. This analysis understands that the choice of this model was not random (Jorge VERÍSSIMO, 2008). She may have been chosen precisely because she stands out, perhaps indicating the high value placed on maturity. Meanwhile in **Figure 2** and **Figure 3**, the models have a similar height, which can reveal a probable intention to not emphasize or highlight any of them in relation to height, giving a sense of equality. In the Brazilian campaign the models have a similar stature, which is interesting given that it appears that **Figure 1**, from the Portuguese campaign, appears to value or highlight women of older ages, demonstrating a possible intention to give them greater emphasis than the campaign in Brazil.

The fifth category, 'hair color and style', reveals that in the Portuguese campaign all of the models have straight hair, even the black models, and in the Brazilian campaign, the majority have straight hair, although there is a single model with coiled hair, which is the only black model presented. In this case, it is possible to perceive that in the Portuguese campaign the choice of hair style may have valued models with hair that is more common among white women (Nádia SANTOS, 2015), for example, a factor that is also related to the: "whitening of black women in advertising" (FRANKENBERG, 1993). In addition, in the Brazilian campaign, although there is tied back hair, the hair appears to be straight, although the black model has naturally coiled hair,

which may be a choice by the company to present women with this hair style, and complement the models with straight hair portrayed in the campaign.

Finally, in the sixth category, 'clothing style', it was observed that in both campaigns the clothes used are youthful, that is, they are probably aimed at the young and young/mature public in both countries.

The elements used in the two campaigns are thus seen as strategies of persuasion that use the advertising language of images, like the presence of thin and youthful models who can reflect through these signs the real intention of the message (BARTHES, 1990). The visual analysis of the images in the photos chosen from the campaigns on the Facebook platform of the C&A company in Brazil and Portugal reveals that these visual elements may present a message of well-being, that these women feel good with the clothes they are using, that they are confident about their bodies and their attitudes, and are not ashamed to show their body, that they are happy or comfortable in relation to spring and summer and their association to sunny days. In addition, there is no visual emphasis in the campaigns on women of other genders, such as drag queens or transsexuals, for example. That is, the impression is given that all the models are cisgender women, and no other representations of female beauty are evident. Thus, a literacy, an interpretation, a learning that can be obtained from these images is that the female public that uses these clothes can also feel 'confident and pretty' like the models portrayed.

Conclusionary notes

This study was based on the understanding that the forms of expression of female beauty are historically and contextually situated and socially constructed, and that it was important to see if a brand like C&A, in both Brazil and Portugal, is attentive to new expressions of identity, of the female 'I'.

Thus, this study, which was guided by content analysis, found that the C&A retail clothing company used in its Spring/Summer 2018 campaigns on its official Facebook pages a majority of models who are within the current standard of female beauty and that, considering the images analyzed in the publications in both countries, there was only a slight intention to represent the female public beyond thin, tall, blond, white women with straight hair. Only a small sample of black, Asian, curvy, and mature models were used, and very discretely, and these women did not differ from the typical characteristics found in most advertising campaigns: they are thin, cisgender women, with straight hair and smooth youthful skin.

It was also perceived that the company had the intention to use these thin youthful models as a strategy with persuasive language, which characterizes promotional messages in general (Gillian DYER, 1982), and that in a certain way, in some cases attained the objective of passing a message of levity, beach, summer, fun and beauty.

In addition, the choice of models with characteristics close to the norm of female beauty can be considered as a type of symbolic violence (BOURDIEU, 1972) in the discourse of this standard, given that, as mentioned, there is no real presence of different bodies, of people with different expressions of femininities etc. That is, there is no explicit and broad inclusion of different forms of female beauty found in the female public.

It was also seen that the strategy of placing these campaigns on online social networks may give the company greater freedom to take 'risks'. It can use the Facebook platform as a tool to present campaigns aimed at and prepared for the female public in its diversity.

In this way, based on the key questions of this study, it was seen how the forms of female beauty were represented and operationalized through the images on Facebook from the Spring/Summer 2018 campaigns of the C&A company in Brazil and Portugal. It was seen that there is only a limited representation of different modalities of expression of female beauty, and in general, the company did not make an effort to emphasize this diversity.

Moreover, in terms of the objective of this study, it was found that there is a presence of stereotypes of the media standard of female beauty in the images from the campaigns in both countries and that they are quite similar, following the pattern of the Western stereotypes, which emphasize characteristics like white or light skin, straight hair, tall women with a rectangular body shape, and a thin physical biotype. It was also observed how the representation of more than one type of female beauty was operationalized in the images chosen from the campaigns. Only a few models were mature, or black or curvy, marking a limited representation.

The content analysis applied found similarities and differences among the photos chosen, although there was not a great difference between the two campaigns in terms of the physical characteristics of the models used, which reveals a probable option by the company to unify and emphasize aesthetic standards of beauty that are similar in the two countries, mainly because they are Western societies strongly influenced by European fashions.

It was observed that in the Brazilian campaign there were more models 'outside the hegemonic standard' but in Portugal there was no search for different physical characteristics in

the campaign. Thus, it was seen that in a certain way C&A recognizes the different female publics in Brazil and Portugal, but did not make different types of visual communication plainly visible in the two campaigns, in a way that would reflect on the scope of the target public and company sales.

In this context, Daniela Schmitz (2015, p. 271) argues that “it is through the meanings mobilized that the positioning and use of what is consumed is operated”. Thus, it can be seen that the approach in these advertising campaigns, which used female figures that follow a standard media aesthetic of beauty, may reveal a possible positioning by C&A towards what is socially considered to be pretty, and the representations it wants to promote to its target public. This has us recall Goffman's (1987) questioning about the point to which different modalities and circumstances of advertising can change “daily routine” that is, influence behavior, representation, and stereotypes.

This study sought to contribute to the discussion of the manipulation by advertising of the hegemonic ideology of genders, showing that the rhetoric of inclusion found in isolated advertising campaigns, in relation to women's bodies, is still quite timid. On one hand, the advertising indicates that it keeps up with social movements such as feminism, in various forms, as well as the body positive movement, by promoting figures that are ‘outside the hegemonic standard’. On the other hand, this systematized analysis of advertising found that there is still a “hegemonic ideological standard” of genders in the advertising examined. The study found that the content of the official C&A campaigns is not representative of the reality of Brazilian and Portuguese female diversity. That is, contrary to incorporating a broad representation and voices of various femininities, the C&A advertising lacks representativity and appears as a set of social standards related to female beauty.

The study also reinforces the importance of continuing studies about the relation between Brazil and Portugal in terms of how female beauty is presented in the two countries and the influences that arise in these societies in terms of self-acceptance, identity, well-being, and respect for “self”, as shown by the studies of Hadassa Oliveira (2019) and Simone Freitas (2010).

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HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE ACCORDING TO THE JOURNAL'S NORMS

OLIVEIRA, Hadassa Guimarães; LAPA, Tiago José. "Representações da beleza feminina: C&A Brasil e Portugal (Primavera/Verão 2018)". *Revista Estudos Feministas*, Florianópolis, v. 30, n. 2, e76563, 2022.

AUTORSHIP CONTRIBUTION

Hadassa Guimarães Oliveira: conceived the theme, wrote the article, developed the state of the art, applied the analysis, and developed the final considerations.

Tiago Lapa: Supervised planning and reviewed the content.

The original version of this article was translated to English by Jeffrey Hoff (jeffhoff@floripa.com.br).

FINANCIAL SUPPORT

Not applicable.

CONSENT TO USE IMAGE

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APPROVAL BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

Not applicable.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Not applicable.

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BACKGROUND

Received 18/08/2020
Resubmitted 13/05/2021
Approved 07/06/2021
