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Consistency and impact of *Femvertising* in film marketing strategies

Prof. Paolo Peverini

SUPERVISOR

Prof.ssa D'Aniello Alba

CO- SUPERVISOR

Anna Maria De Mita: 777911

CANDIDATE

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Introduction

In recent decades, the advertising landscape has undergone profound transformations, not only in terms of communication techniques and target audiences, but above all in the representation of social subjects; in particular, the female figure has been at the centre of a progressive process of symbolic redefinition, suspended between consolidated stereotypes and more or less successful attempts to reflect the plurality and complexity of female identity. Within this context, the phenomenon of femvertising emerges: a term coined to describe those advertising strategies aimed at promoting female empowerment through inclusive, authentic, and value-driven narratives.

The term femvertising refers to a form of commercial communication in which brands appropriate feminist themes and female empowerment to promote their products or image, conveying pro-women and anti-stereotypical messages within advertising content. In the case of the film industry, however, we are not dealing with brands that sell consumer goods in the strict sense, but with film texts and their promotional materials (such as the commercials we will analyse in this thesis), which can nevertheless adopt language, images, and narratives attributable to femvertising to position the film within the public discourse on female empowerment. From this perspective, the proposed analysis focuses not so much on femvertising as a brand marketing strategy, but rather on the use of communication codes like femvertising in trailers for films with feminist themes, and on their impact on audience expectations. While femvertising has opened new possibilities for the construction of an emancipated feminine imaginary, it has also raised important questions regarding the consistency between promotional rhetoric and narrative coherence, the actual ability of campaigns to represent female subjectivities in their diversity, and the thin line between genuine cultural engagement and the commercial appropriation of social values. These tensions become particularly evident when femvertising intersects with the field of marketing cinematography, where advertising messages are required not only to convey values, but also to anticipate and frame complex narrative worlds and characters. In this context, the representation of female protagonists in film advertising occupies an especially ambivalent position. On the one hand, contemporary campaigns increasingly attempt to distance themselves from traditional and passive portrayals of women, emphasizing autonomy, resilience, and self-determination; on the other hand, these representations often remain confined within idealized, performative, or emotionally simplified models, shaped by market logics and time constraints. Where femvertising aims to challenge conventional gender portrayals and propose more authentic female figures, cinematic advertising introduces an additional layer of complexity: how can a female character be represented truthfully within the limited space of a spot? How can empowerment be reconciled with vulnerability, and authenticity

with promotional desirability? And, above all, how coherent is the image of the female protagonist constructed in advertising with her actual representation within the film narrative?

This thesis seeks to address these questions by exploring how the principles of femvertising are applied within contemporary marketing campaigns for films with female protagonists, and by investigating the extent to which advertising representations align with the characters and stories presented on screen. The research focuses on the effectiveness of femvertising-based cinematic advertising and on the perceived coherence between promotional messages and film narratives, with particular attention to emotional engagement, identification, and credibility. To this end, the work is divided into two main parts. The first, theoretical section reconstructs the evolution of female representation in advertising, the emergence of brand activism, and the development of femvertising as a communication strategy, with a specific focus on its application to the audiovisual and cinematic context. The second, empirical section combines a semiotic analysis of selected film advertising materials with a qualitative investigation based on in-depth interviews with spectators of different ages and social backgrounds. The objective is twofold: on the one hand, to analyse the communicative strategies currently employed in femvertising-oriented film campaigns; on the other, to give voice to audience perceptions, examining how viewers relate to, identify with, or distance themselves from the representations of female protagonists conveyed by contemporary cinematic marketing.

Chapter 1

1.1 The Cinematographic Industry: Structure and Dynamics

The contemporary film industry can be interpreted as a collaborative and multi-level ecosystem, in which people, organizations and institutions are intertwined in a continuous process of exchange and interdependence. It is made up of authors, actors, technicians, production and distribution companies, festivals, awards and public institutions operating within a dynamic and relational system, based on temporary projects and strong social and technological connections (Dadlani et al., 2024; Verhoeven et al., 2020). Cinema, understood as a productive and creative space, is therefore configured as a complex field, in which collaboration becomes a necessary condition for the generation of value, economic and symbolic, and in which success depends on the interaction between creativity, management and the market (Cattani & Ferriani, 2008).

In this perspective, cinema presents itself as a form of constant balance between art and industry, between creative and economic logic. Its structure is based on a continuous dialogue between the authorial and productive dimensions, in which aesthetic research coexists with economic rationality (Eliashberg et al., 2006; Hennig-Thurau & Houston, 2021). A real liaison between the work of art and its industrialization is thus outlined, where artistic creation translates into an economic good subject to the laws of the market and the dynamics of commercial enhancement (Degrassi, 2018). The film industry thus becomes a laboratory of organizational complexity, a system that combines the precariousness of temporary projects with the stability of professional networks based on trust and reputation (Madduri et al., 2009).

In the volume *Economia del film. Industria, politiche, mercati* (2020) Marco Cucco proposes a reading of cinema as a sector in which "economic rationality, creativity, public intervention and cultural processes" are intertwined, a field in which different logics coexist and influence each other. From the very first pages, Cucco defines cinema as a real "cultural industry", capable of organically merging economic orientation with artistic purposes. This perspective makes it possible to overcome the traditional opposition between art and the market, highlighting how the two areas, far from being antagonistic, are actually complementary and interdependent (Ibid.). Each film, the author points out, is born from a combination of artistic and economic choices that cross the entire production chain, from the conception phase to distribution, up to final consumption. Understanding cinema therefore means recognizing it as a complex product, at the same time a cultural asset and an economic asset, the result of a network of subjects and decisions that determine its form and circulation (Ibid. pp. 9-13).

Cucco uses the concept of film supply chain to describe the life cycle of the film, divided into three main phases: production, distribution and exhibition. In production, the idea is transformed into a concrete project through development, financing and implementation processes. It implies a combination of creativity and risk management, since every film is an economic gamble that is based on the uncertainty of demand. The producer must balance artistic aspirations with the need to attract capital and ensure the sustainability of the project, coordinating creative skills and financial resources (ibid. pp. 17–21). Distribution is the strategic phase of the system, the one that allows the product to enter the market and reach the public. It can be defined as the junction point between creation and consumption, where the commercial fate of the film is decided. In this phase, the visibility, the duration of the programming and the profitability of the work are determined. Distribution involves a set of choices ranging from the timing of the launch to promotion, from contracts with exhibitors to secondary exploitation rights (ibid. pp 55 – 77)

Finally, the exercise phase represents the moment of fruition. If once it was identified almost exclusively with the movie theatre, today it includes a multiplicity of channels: television, home video, digital platforms and streaming.

In the 2000s, the functioning of the film industry and the ways in which its activity is regulated, stimulated and supported received unprecedented attention. On the one hand, the sector has experienced a series of complex changes and important shocks such as the affirmation of digital (with all that this entails in terms of the organization of the production chain and consumption methods), the globalization of markets, the growing trust in tax incentive tools, the appearance and success of streaming platforms, the Covid-19 pandemic, the relevance assumed by countries and cinemas that were once marginal on the international scene (think of China) (ibid. pp 87 - 140).

As far as the transformations brought about by globalization are concerned, the transnational dimension of the film industry does not necessarily imply homologation, in fact, the globalization of cinema does not erase differences, but reorganizes them, allowing certain national cinemas to transform their identity into a competitive advantage. International co-productions, multilateral funds and the digital circulation of content have both multiplied opportunities and increased the complexity of the market (Ibid. pp 116-118). Regarding digitization, it has transformed the structure of the supply chain, redefining power relationships and opening new ways of accessing content. Global platforms have introduced a new cinema economy, based on the centrality of data and vertical integration, in which production, distribution and consumption merge into a single ecosystem (as in the case of Netflix). If on the one hand digitization has broken down the barriers to access, allowing new subjects to produce and disseminate content, on the other hand it

has favoured oligopoly processes and a growing uniformity of the offer. Platforms do not just distribute films: they organise consumption, orient visibility and define value criteria. However, the limits of this evolution are also evident, such as the risk of concentration of benefits in a few large operators and the difficulty of maintaining a balance between economic and cultural objectives (ibid. pp 143–149). Public policies, in fact, cannot be limited to supporting production but must also guarantee the circulation, promotion and training of the public. In an increasingly competitive global context, institutional support becomes a form of protection of cultural sovereignty and plurality of voices. In fact, the public authorities have always intervened and continue to intervene in the sector itself with the intention of promoting and financing it through various institutions. Cinema cannot survive without strong public support since it is a high-risk sector with strong cultural relevance. The film is an experience good and a public good as it generates social benefits that go beyond the sphere of individual consumption, but at the same time suffers from economic instability and difficulty in accessing capital. Film policies, such as support funds, tax incentives or regulations on screening quotas, aim to compensate for these market distortions and preserve cultural diversity (ibid. pp 160-164). In Italy, it was only in 2016 (with the approval of the so-called "Franceschini Law", no. 220/2016) that the ability of cinema to exert a beneficial action on the broader socio-economic system finally found space in national regulation. In fact, Article 1, paragraph 2, reads: "... this law dictates the fundamental principles of public intervention in support of cinema and audiovisual as activities of significant general interest, capable of exerting positive effects of an economic, cultural and social nature on the country" (Gazzetta Ufficiale of the Italian Republic of 26–11–2016, General series, 157th year – Number 277

Finally, a crucial issue concerns the cultural and social value of cinema: cinema has played and continues to play a leading role in society as a means of cultural and political expression. From its origins to modern productions, it has influenced politics, given voice to marginalised groups and catalysed movements for social change. Its influence is set to grow in an increasingly connected world, where the stories told on the big screen know no geographical or cultural boundaries (Sala, 2025). Media and society scholars cannot limit themselves to considering it as mere entertainment or an industrial product. Rather, cinema is a layered socio-cultural system in which production and consumption are intertwined in ways that differ from those of a normal economic system. This intertwining is linked to a network of ideas and representations about the world and reality (Frezza, 2021).

Cinema generates multiple actions that are reflected in other forms of communication, individual and collective behaviour, worldviews and educational models. Finally, its influence extends to the

construction of lasting subjectivities capable of shaping entire lives. In this context, authorship has become fragmented: meaning no longer derives exclusively from the director or forms of expression, but from the interaction between screens and audiences, including through multiple platforms and new perspectives, such as those of gender. Contemporary cinema, in other words, is no longer centred on the author or form, but on the social and cultural relationship that images establish with viewers (ibid.).

In addition to reflecting reality, cinema transforms it. Issues such as racial discrimination, sexism, class struggle and civil rights have been addressed through works that have given voice to minorities and stimulated public debate. In recent decades, cinema has continued to be a catalyst for change, especially with regard to civil rights and minorities (see, for example, the films *Philadelphia* (1993) and *Selma* (2014)), and has helped to raise public awareness by having a lasting impact on public debate and fuelling movements for equality and social justice (Sala, 2025). Since its inception in the late 19th century, cinema has established itself as one of the most influential art and communication forms of modernity: a universal language that reflects and shapes society, conveys values, stimulates debate and contributes to the construction of the collective imagination (Altenloh, 2018).

Cinema, however, is not only a social phenomenon, but also an art form that intertwines aesthetics and ethics. According to De Caro and Terrone (2023), aesthetic value concerns beauty and artistic quality, while ethical value implies the ability to provoke moral reflection through the characters' stories. This dual dimension makes cinema a powerful tool for cultural education and social criticism.

In conclusion, cinema is a complex and interdependent ecosystem, characterised by continuous dynamics in which economics, culture and politics influence each other. The film industry cannot be reduced to a mere question of budgets, as it is based on a complex network of relationships involving individuals, institutions and markets. From this perspective, films take on a dual nature: they are both artistic and industrial products, economic objects and instruments of symbolic construction.

Recognising this hybrid nature is a necessary condition for fully understanding the role of cinema in contemporary society, especially considering the transformations brought about by technological innovation, globalisation and cultural changes. This approach allows us to interpret cinema not only as a form of expression, but also as a strategic actor within global economic and cultural processes.

1.2 Marketing in the Cinematographic Field.

Cinema advertising is one of the most dynamic sectors of audiovisual communication and has accompanied the evolution of the film industry since its inception. The first forms of promotion date back to the early 20th century, when cinema was still a popular attraction and not a structured industry. At this stage, promotional materials were illustrated posters, often created by local artists and displayed outside theatres. These posters were designed to capture the attention of passersby and communicate the tone and genre of the film through concise images and bright colours (Marich, 2013).

With the rise of Hollywood studios in the 1920s and 1930s, poster production became more sophisticated: recognizable styles developed, photographs of the protagonists were introduced, and true poster artists emerged, capable of creating iconic images that have remained in the history of cinema (Richards, 2010). Alongside posters, billboards and the first forms of large-scale outdoor advertising became widespread. Placed in strategic locations around cities, billboards reached a wide and diverse audience, helping to build anticipation around new releases. Their function was not only informative but also identitarian: through powerful images, they helped consolidate the brand of studios and stars, central elements of the Hollywood system (Staiger, 1990). With the advent of television in the 1950s, film advertising underwent further transformation. Television trailers were born, short commercials that condensed the essence of the film into a few seconds, introducing a new promotional language based on rapid editing, voice-overs, and memorable slogans (Marich, 2013). From the 1990s onwards, the arrival of digital technology and social media revolutionized the industry once again. Today, film promotion takes place on multiple platforms: trailers distributed online, viral campaigns, behind-the-scenes content, influencer marketing, and transmedia strategies. Communication is no longer one-way, but actively involves the audience, which becomes an integral part of constructing the meaning and success of the film (Tryon, 2013).

A reference model for strategic planning in the cultural sector is illustrated by Foglio (2005), who proposes a structured plan divided into phases and represented in the Marketing Plan (Figure 1).

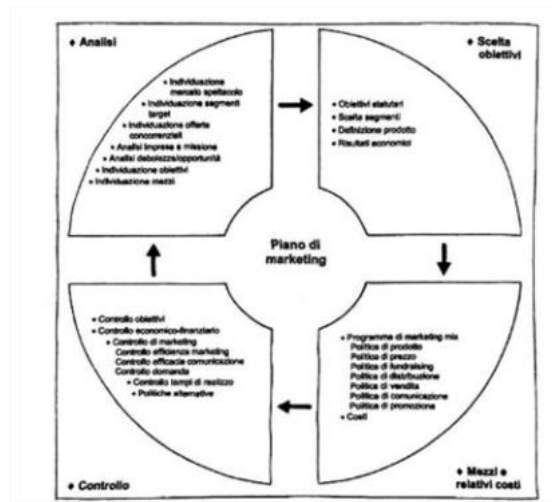


Figure 1: Marketing Plan (taken from *Il Marketing dello spettacolo* by Antonio Foglio. Franco Angeli ed., 2005)

In line with marketing management literature, the plan must be organized into four key stages: preliminary analysis of the context, definition of objectives, identification of the means and costs necessary to achieve them, and, finally, implementation of periodic control procedures (Kotler et al., 2016). This approach allows the creative dimension of the film product to be integrated with strategic management geared towards economic sustainability and maximizing visibility. Visibility is, in fact, a crucial element of film marketing. Films that manage to attract a wider audience than the usual viewers often do so thanks to effective promotional strategies, word of mouth, and constant media presence. In the Italian context, however, the promotional window is often limited: trailers are released only a few weeks before the release, while Hollywood productions launch complex campaigns with teasers and progressive materials even six months before the debut (Kerrigan, 2017). Promotional activities can be conveyed through offline tools—posters, banners, display materials—and online tools, such as official websites, social media, and dedicated applications. Pre-show advertising also plays a significant role, i.e., the “trailer period” that precedes the screening and guarantees privileged exposure to a particularly receptive audience.

As we have seen, cinema advertising has transformed from a simple information tool into a complex cultural device capable of influencing tastes, expectations, and collective imaginations. Analysing its evolution means understanding not only the marketing strategies of the film industry, but also the more profound changes in contemporary audiovisual culture.

1.2.1 Film Communication Tools

The promotion of a film product relies on the design of targeted communication campaigns. Beginning with a creative insight, the activities and channels most appropriate to amplify the message are selected and strategically implemented. The following tools are among the most widely used in contemporary film marketing:

a. Influencer Marketing

In today's dynamic marketing landscape, brands are increasingly leveraging social media influencers (SMIs) as an effective strategy to promote consumer engagement. Influencers are individuals who develop and maintain a personal brand and following on social media through posts that intertwine their personality and lifestyle with the products (e.g., goods, services, ideas, places, people) they promote, which can influence their followers' behaviour (e.g., attitudes, perceptions, preferences, choices, decisions) positively (e.g., purchase) or negatively (e.g., do not purchase) (Joshi et al. 2025).

When influencers establish emotional resonance and interaction with consumers, they are more easily influenced and inclined to make purchasing decisions; the immense value of influencer marketing lies in its ability to generate true advocacy on a large scale, comparable to prime-time advertising. Intimate emotional connections and apparent friendships between internet celebrities and their followers are cultivated through vlogs, conversations and the documentation of shared adventures (Dingqi, 2024). Furthermore, the information shared by influencers allows consumers to gain an authentic and direct experience of products, increasing their trust and desire to purchase. (Chen et al., 2024). According to the Influencer Marketing Benchmark Report 2025, between 2024 and 2025, the global influencer marketing industry grew by an impressive 35.63%, significantly exceeding the average growth rates of traditional advertising channels. In 2025, the surge was fuelled by growing investment in influencer-led campaigns, advanced AI-powered tools for campaign optimisation, and the increasing integration of social commerce platforms. However, it is sometimes difficult to maintain credibility because followers perceive influencer recommendations as mere marketing tactics. This challenge can be overcome by identifying certain factors that have a positive effect on marketing results. One of these is the informational and hedonic value of posts: by creating informative and hedonic content, influencers provide utilitarian information and enjoyable experiences. When consumers perceive content as valuable, scepticism is reduced and receptivity to the post increases; this suggests that content value has a greater impact in influencer sponsorships than in traditional celebrity sponsorships. Unlike celebrities who rely on fame and glamour, influencers achieve effectiveness by providing valuable content that resonates effectively with followers. Another factor concerns the social identity of followers, which can have broad effects on

consumer attitudes and behavioural engagement. This identification can lead to less criticism of influencers' persuasive messages, as consumers perceive them as recommendations from a credible peer rather than a persuasive attempt by a marketer. This suggests that promoting a sense of community and alignment with followers' values can enhance the effectiveness of influencer marketing, unlike the broader, less personalised appeal of celebrities. Furthermore, communication via influencers has the most significant effect on purchasing behaviour thanks to its unique combination of direct interaction and personal connection. This makes influencer endorsements feel more like friendly advice than a marketing pitch, reducing the activation of persuasive knowledge and improving the effectiveness of influencer marketing. This direct communication contrasts with celebrity endorsements, which rely more on star power than personal interaction. (Pan et al, 2025).

In the field of film marketing, social media influencers are one of the most powerful tools currently in use. Film studios often follow a basic strategy: they choose influencers who fit the target category and have key metrics such as many highly engaged users, stable views, large followings and excellent engagement rates. Content creators can also reap non-monetary benefits such as introductions or access to intellectual property. With the help of creative direction, they publicly promote these benefits on unboxing videos on Instagram, reactions to film trailers on YouTube, duets on TikTok to incorporate their opinions into public clips with green screen visual effects, and live tweets about any film-related events or previews. By selecting producers with a genuine affinity for film intellectual property, such as horror fans tasked with testing scary films, their enthusiasm is effectively conveyed to an already receptive and prepared audience. The results of impressions, trailer views, and opening weekend ticket sales can significantly increase return on investment (ROI) compared to traditional marketing expenses. Additional benefits come from improving the accuracy of targeting specific niche audiences, which is impossible through traditional television and print channels. Micro-influencers and nano-influencers, even with only tens of thousands of followers, can attract highly engaged communities that grow together. Meanwhile, projects that align with their respective industries receive endorsements from influential figures in the video game, comic book, and other entertainment industries. However, there are inherent risks due to the lack of control: although positive results abound, there is no guarantee that influencers will always avoid scandals in their personal lives. Such controversies and mistakes create the risk of contamination by association – especially for celebrities, who are constantly subject to intense public scrutiny. (Dingqi, 2024).

Influencer marketing remains an area in which much remains to be investigated and studied, especially considering the advent of artificial intelligence and its potential.

b. Social Media Marketing

In recent years, the increasingly widespread use of social networks has gradually shifted advertising strategies from traditional platforms to social media. Social media marketing enables word-of-mouth campaigns, promoting brand awareness, increasing turnover and improving relations between companies and potential customers, thanks in part to the possibility of more accurate targeting (Lee, 2016). Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+ and LinkedIn are also low-cost tools for increasing brand awareness and generating web traffic (Ding et al., 2017).

One of the main challenges for marketing professionals is evaluating the effectiveness of social media campaigns, as monitoring their results can be complex. However, analysing user interactions such as likes, shares and comments that provides a significant indicator of how the advertising message is perceived. An advertisement can be considered effective when it elicits positive responses from users, who help to further disseminate the content and amplify brand awareness (Lee, 2016).

In the context of social media, content is divided into *user-generated content* (UGC) and *marketer-generated content* (MGC). MGC includes messages and promotional materials created by marketers and represents a form of communication that is completely controlled by the company. More companies are using MGC in the form of text, images and videos to stimulate user engagement and influence their purchasing intentions. In the film industry, where pre-release information is mainly disseminated through official channels, MGC plays a particularly significant role (Zhien, 2025).

Among MGC strategies, emotional appeals are more effective than informational ones. Through words, images or videos capable of arousing emotions, they capture attention, create emotional connections and stimulate behaviours such as clicks, loyalty and purchase intentions. The literature consistently shows that emotional appeals outperform informational ones in terms of click-through rates, positive attitudes and engagement (ibid.).

User engagement is also a key indicator for assessing the effectiveness of film marketing. Analysing likes, comments, shares and overall interactions provides insight into which content resonates most with audiences. Elevated levels of engagement correlate with better box office performance, making engagement a key metric for measuring the impact of promotional initiatives. Triggering emotional appeals before the film's release can therefore maximise engagement, improving popularity, reputation and cinema screening rates (ibid.).

In addition to generating visibility, social platforms build networks of relationships that directly influence viewing decisions: social media marketing works by creating "social capital", which

mediates the relationship between promotional activities and box office performance. In this context, 'social capital' refers to the set of relational resources generated by interactions between users on social media platforms, resources that can be mobilised to influence the box office performance of films (Liao, 2025).

The literature further confirms the positive link between social media marketing and film economic results. Oh et al. (2017) highlight that consumer engagement behaviour (CEB) on Facebook and YouTube is positively correlated with gross box office receipts. Nanda et al. (2017), on the other hand, emphasise the importance of an integrated strategy capable of adapting content to the specificities of the platforms: Facebook favours connection through events and interactions, while X (formerly Twitter) amplifies positive word of mouth.

Digital platforms, therefore, are no longer simple information channels, but spaces for interaction and reputation building, in which the public actively participates in the circulation of content. The speed of dissemination of promotional materials and the ability to monitor user reactions in real time allow companies to adapt their communication strategies in a timely manner. At the same time, reviews, discussions and comments contribute to the formation of public opinion, influencing viewing decisions. However, there are some critical issues such as content standardisation, ineffective reputation crisis management, fragmentation of strategies across platforms and poor use of analytics. To address these challenges, strategies focused on content creativity, active community management, platform integration, and constant sentiment monitoring are needed. This means that the success of film marketing depends on the adoption of flexible, data-driven strategies aimed at building meaningful relationships with the audience (Huang, 2023).

c. Contest Marketing

In the contemporary landscape of film marketing, promotional contests represent an increasingly important strategic lever, especially in a media ecosystem characterised by the convergence of digital practices, user participation and widespread dissemination of content through social networks. Traditionally conceived as complementary tools to classic advertising campaigns, such as television, radio, print and billboard commercials, contests stand out for their ability to transform the audience from passive spectators to active participants, introducing an experiential dimension that strengthens the emotional connection with the film (Marich, 2013).

The logic of contests is based on engagement mechanisms that encourage participation through tangible rewards, such as tickets to previews, gadgets, meetings with the cast or exclusive

merchandising. These elements not only stimulate immediate interest but also contribute to the creation of a sense of belonging and community, encouraging the spontaneous sharing of the experience and amplifying the visibility of the film through digital word of mouth. User participation tends to generate content shared on social networks, increasing the memorability of the campaign and strengthening the film's brand awareness (ibid.).

With the advent of digital technology, contests have gradually moved to online platforms and social media, reducing organisational costs and expanding the reach of initiatives. Hashtags, challenges, AR filters and user-generated content (UGC) have become an integral part of promotional strategies, promoting virality and organic dissemination (ibid.). In this sense, digital contests fit perfectly into the logic of cultural convergence, understood by Jenkins (2006) as the process through which media content, practices and meanings circulate across multiple platforms and are reinterpreted by users who are no longer passive consumers but active participants. It is not only a technological phenomenon, but a social and cultural one. It is the theoretical basis that explains why digital contests work so well in film marketing. Furthermore, active audience participation echoes the concept of working consumers developed by Cova and Dalli (2009), according to which consumers contribute to the creation of symbolic and promotional value through creative and relational activities.

Digital contests take different forms, each with specific strategic implications. Creative contests based on UGC invite users to produce fan art, videos, memes or reinterpretations of promotional material, often generating content that is more authentic and viral than official content (Gummerus et al., 2012). Social contests, popular on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and X, exploit the logic of virality through hashtags and challenges, reaching younger audiences in particular (Kaplan et al., 2011). A significant example is the challenges linked to *Spider-Man: No Way Home* (2021), which generated millions of interactions (Yang, 2022).

Alongside these forms, experiential contests offer prizes linked to the cinema experience — such as exclusive previews or meetings with the cast, strengthening emotional engagement and transforming promotion into an event (Marich, 2013). Finally, gamified contests use quizzes, digital treasure hunts or mini games to increase interaction time with the film brand, as in the case of the *Cloverfield* (2008) campaign, which engaged users through online puzzles and parallel narrative sites (Marketing Ideas 101, n.d.).

In contemporary film marketing, digital contests do not replace traditional campaigns but enhance them by integrating them into a broader promotional ecosystem that includes advertising, PR, social media and engagement activities (Kerrigan 2010). In this context, digital contests help to

increase the memorability of the film, stimulate word of mouth, generate viral content, reach specific targets and reduce costs compared to traditional media.

Overall, digital contests represent one of the most significant innovations in contemporary film marketing. They enable participatory dynamics, generate virality and strengthen the relationship between the audience and the film. In a context increasingly oriented towards media convergence and community building, digital contests are strategic tools capable of integrating creativity, engagement and commercial visibility.

d. Event Marketing

In the context of the transformations that have affected the audiovisual industry over the last decade, event marketing has emerged as one of the most important strategies for understanding contemporary methods of promoting and distributing film products. Far from being a simple promotional tool, events now play a structural role in building the cultural, symbolic and commercial value of films, forming part of a media ecosystem characterised by convergence, participation and transmedia. As Kerrigan (2017) observes, film promotion can no longer be interpreted as a set of isolated communication tactics, but as a complex process of orchestrating experiences, narratives and interactions that develop across multiple platforms and time limits.

At the same time, film previews and launch events are strategic moments for activating the audience. In the era of digital distribution, such events have taken on a hybrid dimension, combining physical presence with online participation. Streamed premieres, virtual Q&As, digital transpositions of traditional post-screening Q&A sessions with cast and production members, and real-time interactions via social media transform the event into a transmedia experience, capable of reaching global audiences and generating a continuous stream of shareable content. The event is no longer confined to a specific place and time, but extends across platforms and social networks, becoming a process of widespread mediatization (Tryon, 2013).

An increasing role is played by experiential events and immersive installations, which lie at the intersection of marketing, performance and narrative design. These practices are part of a broader paradigm of 'promotional screen industries', in which promotion itself becomes a form of entertainment. Through interactive pop-ups, themed settings, multisensory experiences and live performances, the audience is invited to enter the narrative world of the film, participating in a process of meaning-making that goes beyond viewing the work. These forms of experiential engagement generate highly shareable content and contribute to the construction of a collective imagination around the film (Grainge et al., 2015).

Finally, event marketing fits squarely within the logic of transmedia storytelling: events, whether physical or digital, are not elements external to the narrative, but nodes that expand the universe of the film, generate updated content and encourage interaction between different media platforms. In this sense, the event becomes an integral part of the narrative and promotional strategy, helping to build an overall experience that goes beyond the viewing of the film (Scolari et al., 2020).

In conclusion, event marketing is now an essential component of film promotion. Through festivals, previews, experiential events and digital initiatives, the film and audiovisual industry builds immersive experiences, activates global communities and generates cultural and commercial value. In an increasingly convergent media landscape, events are not simply promotional tools, but spaces for relationship building, storytelling and participation that contribute decisively to the success of a film.

e. Ambient/Non-Conventional Marketing

In the contemporary landscape of commercial communication in general, consumer attention has become an increasingly scarce resource. In a context saturated with advertising messages, companies are forced to look for innovative ways to capture the interest of the public. Two unconventional communication strategies fit into this scenario: ambient marketing and Out of Home (OOH) advertising. Both aim to surprise, engage and stimulate interaction with the brand, exploiting public spaces and everyday moments to generate a memorable impact, capable of breaking the monotony of the urban landscape and establishing a creative dialogue with the public.

Out of Home advertising includes all forms of communication that reach the consumer while they are away from home. It includes billboards, shelters, means of transport, digital screens and interactive installations. OOH stands out for its ability to generate brand awareness and its constant presence in urban space, making it particularly effective for large-scale campaigns (Inside Marketing, 2025).

With the advent of Digital Out of Home (DOOH), outdoor advertising has acquired a dynamic and interactive dimension. Content can be adapted in real-time based on contextual data such as weather, time, or pedestrian flow, increasing the relevance of the message (Pladway, 2025)

Ambient marketing is a form of experiential communication that uses elements of the urban environment to convey advertising messages in a creative and unexpected way. Unlike traditional OOH, ambient focuses on the surprise effect and emotional interaction, transforming everyday objects or public spaces into communication tools (Gambetti, 2008)

While OOH and ambient marketing are conceptually distinct, integrating them can generate significant synergies. OOH provides structure and visibility, while ambient adds creativity and engagement. The most effective campaigns combine elements of both, such as interactive DOOH installations that react to passers-by behaviour or integrate augmented reality technologies.

Some of the key benefits of OOH include:

- **High visibility and visual impact:** thanks to their generous size and strategic positioning, OOH ads easily capture attention.
- **Increased Brand Awareness and Recall:** repeated and constant exposure during daily commute helps build brand awareness over time.
- **Consumer Credibility and Trust:** consumers tend to trust OOH advertising more than other mediums, perceiving the physical presence of the brand in the public space as a "public engagement" and a sign of stability.
- **Synergy with Digital Media:** OOH amplifies the effectiveness of digital campaigns, acting as a "bridge" between the physical and online worlds. Combining OOH and mobile marketing can increase the overall effectiveness of the campaign by reinforcing the message across multiple channels.

Ambient Marketing, an unconventional form of OOH that uses unexpected elements in the surrounding environment to surprise and engage the audience, also offers unique advantages:

- **High Engagement:** Ambient marketing relies on the element of surprise and creativity to engage audiences in unexpected ways. This unconventional interaction stimulates an emotional response, making the experience memorable.
- **Word-of-Mouth and virality:** the uniqueness and interactive nature of ambient marketing campaigns often generate conversations, word-of-mouth, and social media shares, extending the reach of the campaign beyond physical installation at no additional cost.
- **Experiential engagement:** This is a form of experiential marketing that puts the consumer at the centre of the action, creating a direct experience with the brand. (Hutter et al., 2011; Bhargava et al., 1999).

However, there are also limitations to OOH:

- **Difficulty in accurately measuring exposure, engagement, and return on investment (ROI).**

- Audience segmentation is limited to generic geographical or demographic characteristics of the installation area.
- The average exposure time to an OOH ad is notoriously short, often as few as seconds, as consumers are on the move (driving, walking, using public transportation). This limitation requires extremely concise, clear messages with simple visual structures to be quickly decoded.
- Setting up and managing OOH campaigns in high-profile positions can result in high upfront and production costs. In addition, traditional formats (pressing, vinyl) offer limited flexibility. Updating the message requires new production and installation costs, unlike the immediacy allowed by digital platforms.
- OOH ads are vulnerable to external factors such as adverse weather conditions (which can damage materials) or physical obstructions (buildings, vegetation, other urban elements) that reduce their visibility. In addition, there are local regulations and urban planning restrictions that can limit the availability of advertising space, the size and location of plants (Lesser et al., 2013).

The future of OOH and ambient marketing is increasingly oriented towards integration with digital. The use of sensors, artificial intelligence and real-time data allows you to personalize messages and monitor interactions. In addition, the growing focus on sustainability pushes towards creative solutions with low environmental impact, such as biodegradable or solar-powered installations (Marketing News, 2025).

Spectators frequently document these experiences using their smartphones, thereby becoming amplifiers of the campaign through user-generated content that extends the reach and resonance of the promotional initiative.



Figure 2: Interactive Billboards by Paramount Pictures Italia for Mission Impossible 8 –The Final Reckoning – Marketing Campaign 2025

The Italian Out Of Home campaign for Mission: Impossible – The Final Reckoning (2025), to which the photo refers, creates an “event effect” in urban spaces, coinciding the film's release with a live performance that directly recalls the imagery of the stunts typical of the saga: in Milan, in Piazza XXV Aprile, where a maxi ONE installation became the centrepiece of a vertical staging that culminated in the unveiling of the official poster. Two professional rock climbers, suspended in mid-air, descended vertically from the top of the maxi-installation by ONE, dominating the city skyline in a breathtaking descent that echoes the most adrenaline-fuelled scenes of the saga. The highlight was the unveiling of the official poster for the latest, highly anticipated chapter starring Tom Cruise: a spectacular visual tribute to the Mission Impossible universe (Ermisino, 2025). An additional level is the circulation design: such an action is designed to be filmed, shared and re-edited by viewers, so that the OOH extends from the physical location to digital feeds, multiplying the audience and duration of the impact. In this sense, the campaign works towards convergence: the live performance and the large installation feed short content (vertical videos, reactions, clips) that reinforce the memorability of the launch and consolidate the anticipation towards the release. This logic is integrated with the official launch communication (trailer and promotional content distributed on Paramount Pictures Italia channels), which provides the narrative and informational backbone, while the experiential OOH provides the emotional peak and the image-event. The result is a strategy in

which the “wow effect” is not an ornament, but a technology of meaning: it makes the film's promise and its action imagery tangible in the city space.

In the context of contemporary communication, the film industry has had to adapt to an increasingly fragmented and competitive media landscape. In this scenario, Out of Home (OOH) marketing and ambient marketing have established themselves as strategic tools to attract the attention of the public, stimulate curiosity and generate memorable experiences. These techniques, based on interaction with urban space and the surprise effect, integrate perfectly with the narrative and promotional needs of cinema. The film industry has successfully adopted OOH and ambient strategies to promote films and series. CineMagazine underlines how the film industry has had to adapt to new communication dynamics, integrating digital and unconventional tools to attract audiences (CineMagazine, 2025).

The benefits of OOH and ambient marketing mentioned above help strengthen the film's positioning and stimulate audience interest before its theatrical release. In an era dominated by digital communication, the return to physical space and direct interaction with the public represents a powerful lever to build memorable experiences and strengthen the bond between viewer and content. However, despite the advantages, these strategies also present critical issues. The use of public space can generate controversies related to urban regulation, as mentioned above, while the surprise effect can be perceived as invasive. It is therefore essential that campaigns are designed with attention to the cultural and social context, respecting local regulations and promoting values consistent with the cinematographic content.

1.2.2 Marketing Mix and Market Analysis

Viewers require differentiated approaches according to their profiles, typically classified as regular, occasional, and potential spectators. Regular viewers constitute the primary reference market, their demand being comparatively loyal, hence marketing communication becomes decisive to preserve and strengthen the relationship (Kerrigan, 2017; & Keller, 2016). Occasional viewers approach film offerings sporadically yet may evolve into repeat customers over time if appropriately nurtured through targeted campaigns (Kerrigan, 2017). Potential viewers are those the firm should most actively cultivate, since they have not yet been convinced of the offering's value and have not tested it directly (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Today's spectator is the pivot of any film-marketing strategy, making choices that are information-driven about the film, director, authors, and cast, rather than random, a dynamic tied to broader audiovisual literacy and the personalization of the cinema-going experience (Kerrigan, 2017). The

evolution of the socio-cultural context, the expansion of the entertainment industries, and the advent of television and multi-screen consumption have transformed the film consumer into an omni-channel media user who can access films beyond traditional theatres (Katz et al., 1974).

Audience segmentation proceeds from the heterogeneity of demand, dividing it into internally homogeneous groups, while targeting designates the chosen coverage strategy (Kotler et al., 2016). Within targeting, three approaches are commonly distinguished:

1. Undifferentiated marketing, a standardized offer designed to minimize resource dispersion while maximizing reach (McCarthy, 1960).
2. Differentiated marketing, the deliberate addressing of multiple, rigorously identified segments with tailored offerings (Kotler et al., 2016).
3. Niche marketing, the concentration of resources on a single segment with a highly specialized offer, effective yet exposed to shifts in needs and preferences (Kotler et al., 2016).

Analysis of the target audience informs both positioning and communication strategies, enabling the identification of key selling elements (attributes of the film that exert the greatest attraction) on which the promotional campaign can build (Ries et al., 1981). Film positioning cannot be divorced from its intended target, and when distribution extends beyond the country of origin, re-positioning may be necessary to align with national audiences and their cultural frames (Levitt, 1983).

The purpose of positioning is to build the product's image in the user's mind so that it is perceived as distinct from competitors and closely aligned with the ideal attributes that ensure satisfaction, leveraging how individuals receive, retain, and filter marketing information (Ries et al., 1981). Positioning a film thus entails crafting and conveying a coherent image that differentiates it in markets characterized by abundant supply and mature, specialized demand (Kerrigan, 2017); many elements contribute (title, artistic and technical cast, images, soundtrack, release date, plot, and subject) and it is their synergistic integration that yields perceived uniqueness (ibid.).

Key attributes can be grouped into internal and external selling elements. Internal elements include title, cast, music, subject, and genre; external elements include box-office performance and critical awards (ibid.). Recent debates emphasize advertising's role in supporting individual expression and social causes, expanding audiences beyond predefined targets and advancing cultural change (Foglio, 2005).

Within entertainment marketing, communication and promotion policies must consider several variables:

1. Communication and promotion directed to identified segments, for instance large audiences, regulars, occasionals, youth, or seniors (Kotler et al., 2016; Kerrigan, 2017).
2. Reference territory, i.e., tailoring content and channels to the geographic and cultural context of each target (Levitt, 1983).
3. Integrated communication and promotion budgets, coordinated to achieve mutually reinforcing objectives (McCarthy, 1960; Borden, 1964).

Communication and promotion are effective only when integrated into the marketing mix. In entertainment markets, producing a product/event typically requires the orchestration of press, television, radio, internet, telemarketing, and outdoor media, among others (McCarthy, 1960; Borden, 1964). Communication assists the spectator in identifying the product, while promotion, integrated with communication, increases the likelihood of adoption (Kotler et al., 2016).

The communication policy connects the offer to potential demand, whereas the promotion policy drives acceptance of the offer. Both require resources, tools, and capable management to deploy them strategically (*ibid.*). Given the competitive intensity in cinema, superior visibility like a coherent image and message, often determines outcomes. Compared with promotion, which seeks to persuade and stimulate, communication primarily informs and orients recipients, sustaining loyalty among regular and occasional users and creating awareness among non-users (*ibid.*).

Effective communication leverages available technologies and techniques to reach audiences and support processes of cultural participation and entertainment (Kerrigan, 2017). To earn consensus, it is not enough to “do,” nor merely to “make known,” rather communication must be adequate, timely, clear, and fit-for-audience, conveying the attributes that qualify the offer and the motivations that sustain it (Kotler et al., 2016). Typical operational prerequisites include marketing research and segmentation to define recipients, budget availability to ensure execution, message definition to guide all touchpoints, and media-mix selection to secure optimal feedback from the target (*ibid.*).



Figure 3: Communication Policy (retrieved from *Il Marketing dello spettacolo* by Antonio Foglio, Franco Angeli ed., 2005)

The communication policy can be articulated into three main phases: planning, implementation, and control (ibid.). Within the planning phase, the design of the communicative message must respond to four fundamental questions, echoing the classical framework of Lasswell's communication model (*Who says What to Whom, How, and With What Effect*, Lasswell, 1948):

1. What to communicate? The message must generate newsworthiness and arouse interest on the part of recipients. Only those who have established an appropriate flow of communication with their intended audiences can realistically expect to achieve equivalent benefits.
2. To whom to communicate? The principal recipient is public opinion, with the objective of making the type of entertainment known not only to audiences but also to stakeholders such as sponsors and the media.
3. How to communicate? The selection of channels must ensure that the message reaches its intended recipients. Suitable vehicles include mass media (press, television, radio, billboards) as well as digital platforms, debates, and online publications.

4. When to communicate? Timing is a decisive factor. Messages must be delivered neither prematurely nor belatedly, but rather at the precise moment when they can maximize impact. If audience interest is absent or weak, communication must be activated to stimulate it. Conversely, excessive or “rainfall” communication dilutes effectiveness, as successful campaigns rely on specificity: targeted themes, tailored channels, and objectives precisely aligned to outcomes.

Regardless of the channel or medium, the message must employ language that is simple, understandable, and persuasive. Communication should evolve into dialogue, conveying information and planning intentions, while simultaneously persuading and engaging recipients (Kerrigan, 2017).

Media visibility remains a crucial determinant of the success or failure of cultural products and events. In some cases, the role of media exposure, both direct and indirect, has proven decisive in shaping audience reception (ibid.).

The choice of media depends on several conditions:

- Rapidity, constancy, and general diffusion, ensuring broad dissemination.
- Degree of reception, linked to the pleasantness and acceptability of communication.
- Degree of penetration, ensuring the message reaches the widest possible audience.
- Degree of repetition since repeated exposure strengthens memorability and persuasive force.

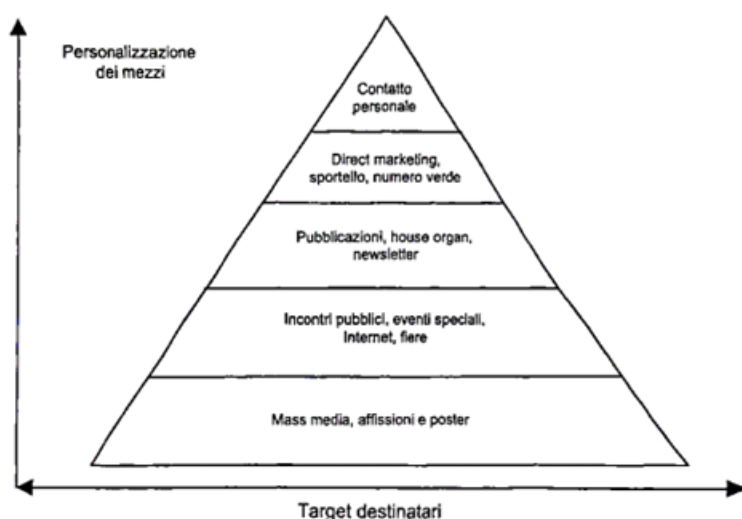


Figure 4: Type of Disclosure retrieved from *Strategie di marketing per il cinema* by Antonio Foglio, Franco Angeli ed., 2005).

The media employed to reach target audiences can be classified into two primary categories, corresponding to narrowcasting and broadcasting strategies (Kotler et al. 2016):

a. Direct and personalized media (narrowcasting).

This form of communication occurs when the message is delivered in a personalized manner, through email, telemarketing, or internet-based channels. Narrowcasting achieves important levels of interaction and involvement, thus offering significantly greater potential than indirect or impersonal communication. By tailoring messages to the recipient's characteristics, it enhances relevance and fosters stronger engagement.

Direct and personal communication tools aim to convey highly customized messages, aligned with the needs and preferences of the recipient. By maintaining constant contact with the user, firms can reinforce loyalty and build long-term relationships. Instruments such as surveys, telephone calls, and interviews allow organizations to measure user satisfaction; feedback, in turn, enables the refinement and adaptation of the offer, thereby increasing effectiveness and reinforcing trust (Kerrigan, 2017).

b. Indirect and impersonal media (broadcasting)

In media studies, indirect and impersonal media correspond to mass communication channels operating according to a one-to-many models, disseminating standardized messages to a broad and indeterminate audience (for example, television, radio, and the press). In Thompson's terminology, these forms fall under "mediated quasi-interaction": a mediated, unidirectional type of communication, oriented toward undefined potential recipients, characterized by a marked asymmetry between producers and receivers and by a one-way flow (Thompson, 2020).

When applied to the audiovisual field, broadcasting constitutes the basic infrastructure through which media texts, including films, are introduced into the public sphere and linked to one another within discursive networks that precede and accompany their consumption (ibid.). In particular, promotional materials distributed through mass media (trailers, spots, advertisements) have been conceptualized as paratexts: devices which, while positioned at the margins of the work, shape its reception by setting expectations and interpretive frames (Johnston, 2011).

Media	Utenti da raggiungere		Obiettivi			
	Grande pubblico	Segmenti target	Informare	Rafforzare immagine	Indirizzare	Fidelizzare
♦ Mezzi di comunicazione personale/diretta		*	*	*	*	*
• Direct marketing		*	*	*	*	*
• Mail		*	*	*	*	*
• Telemarketing		*	*	*	*	*
• Internet/comunicazione online		*	*	*	*	*
• Ufficio stampa	*	*	*			*
• Pubbliche Relazioni	*	*	*	*		*
• Biglietteria	*	*	*	*	*	*
• Front office: sportello e numero verde	*	*	*	*	*	*
• Incontri pubblici e privati	*	*	*	*	*	*

Figure 5: Means of communication based on users and objectives to be achieved (retrieved from *Marketing dello spettacolo* by Antonio Foglio, Franco Angeli ed., 2005)

Direct Marketing

The effectiveness of direct marketing depends fundamentally on three factors: the content and clarity of the message, the selection of recipients, and the possibility of eliciting a rapid response (Kotler et al., 2016). Direct marketing tools are diverse:

- *E-mail*. Information and promotional material can be distributed to precisely targeted recipients, ensuring cost efficiency and measurability.
- *Telemarketing*. This channel allows organizations to engage with recipients in a personalized manner, enabling dialogue and immediate feedback through voice interaction.
- *Internet/Online communication*. The internet has become one of the most essential tools for entertainment marketing, offering organizations the possibility of two-way communication: from the company to the audience and, reciprocally, from the audience to the company. Thousands of websites, portals, and platforms disseminate information about cultural and entertainment offerings, making the internet indispensable for awareness-building and engagement (Kerrigan, 2017).

Press Office

The press office plays a pivotal role in executing communication activities envisaged by the overall marketing strategy. Its responsibilities typically include managing relations with the media, producing information materials such as press releases, newsletters, and brochures, preparing both printed and digital support materials, and activating periodic press reviews. Furthermore, the press

office organizes interviews with actors, directors, and artists, coordinates with media representatives, and monitors press coverage and critical reviews. By consolidating visibility across traditional and digital outlets, the press office strengthens the credibility and resonance of promotional campaigns (Kerrigan, 2017).

Public Relations

Public relations encompass all activities aimed at creating and maintaining a positive relationship between the organization and its stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In the cinematic and entertainment sectors, some concrete examples include the ticket office as both a sales point and communication hub, or the customer service desk, where audiences can submit reports, complaints, suggestions, questions, and proposals, whether verbally, by phone, by mail, electronically, or through social media channels. The presence of such touchpoints guarantees immediate and continuous contact with the public. Ideally, responses are personalized, demonstrating attentiveness to diverse requests, while reports, suggestions, and criticisms are processed constructively to improve organizational performance (Kerrigan, 2017).

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Media	Utenti da raggiungere		Obiettivi			
	Grande pubblico	Segmenti target	Informare	Rafforzare immagine	Indirizzare	Fidelizzare
♦ Mezzi di comunicazione impersonale/indiretta	*		*	*	*	*
• Stampa	*	*	*	*	*	*
• Televisione	*		*	*	*	*
• Radio	*		*	*	*	*
• Cinema	*		*	*		
• Affissioni	*		*	*		
• Dépliant	*	*	*	*	*	
• Fiere		*	*	*	*	
• House Organ/Newsletter	*	*	*	*	*	*
• Sponsorizzazioni	*	*		*		
• Realizzazione di video	*		*	*	*	

Figure 6: Means of communication based on users and objectives to be achieved (retrieved from *Marketing dello spettacolo* by Antonio Foglio, Franco Angeli ed., 2005)

Press

The press represents a fundamental medium for launching messages and conducting integrated communication campaigns. Articles and reviews exert considerable influence on the choices of audiences, shaping perceptions and building legitimacy. Press support can be provided through editorial articles, addressing industry-related issues, launching initiatives, and presenting promotional campaigns, as well as through advertising messages, whose success depends on the clarity and

incisiveness of content, the scheduling of releases, and the feedback generated among targeted readers (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Nevertheless, press campaigns are most effective when combined with other media such as television, radio, billboards, direct marketing, and online platforms, within an integrated communication framework.

Television

Television remains a central promotional channel, particularly for film advertising. Messages are disseminated through commercials scheduled during peak audience moments, such as news programs, talk shows, or highly rated shows. Effectiveness depends not only on the content of the message and its alignment with the intended target audience, but also on the time of transmission, with evening and holiday slots typically attracting the largest viewership (Kerrigan, 2017).

Radio

Radio is often considered a secondary medium compared to television, yet this perception is misleading. For certain messages, radio can achieve objectives like television at significantly lower costs. While limited by the absence of images, radio nonetheless reaches substantial audiences, particularly through national stations, which address broad public opinion, and local stations, which facilitate geographically targeted communication and more personalized messages (Kerrigan, 2017).

Billboards

Billboards, encompassing posters, transit signage, and digital outdoor displays, remain essential for visibility in the cinema sector, especially in the context of declining theatre attendance. As already extensively covered previously, their effectiveness is determined by strategic placement (e.g., squares, intersections, stations) and by design elements such as clarity, colour, and memorability. Unlike other media, outdoor communication ensures longer message duration, thereby reinforcing film visibility over time (Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Festivals

Film festivals are now one of the most significant venues for international film culture, spaces where films are selected, discussed, celebrated and released into global distribution circuits. Their history dates to the 1930s, when the Venice Film Festival, inaugurated in 1932, became the first international festival in history. The birth of European festivals was a response to geopolitical logic: they were instruments of cultural prestige and symbolic diplomacy, designed to assert the cinematic identity of European nations in a context dominated by the Hollywood industry (Elsaesser, 2005).

After the Second World War, festivals took on a different and more complex role. With the founding of the Cannes Film Festival in 1946 and, shortly afterwards, those in Berlin and Locarno, a true international festival system began to take shape. Festivals became cultural institutions that mediated between production, distribution and reception. The official selection, awards, retrospectives and parallel sections began to define a critical discourse that profoundly influenced the perception of auteur cinema (De Valck, 2007).

Over the decades, festivals have become nodes in an increasingly complex transnational network. Dina Iordanova's analysis (2013) highlights how the contemporary festival system functions as a global circuit, characterised by film flows, cooperation strategies between institutions, cultural policies and territorial branding dynamics. Festivals are no longer just places for screenings, but platforms that produce symbolic and industrial value and promote the circulation of films (Iordanova, 2013).

At the same time, they often take cultural and social stances, supporting issues such as human rights, cultural diversity, gender equality and sustainability. In recent years, many festivals have adopted gender equality policies, monitoring the presence of women in selections and juries and promoting initiatives dedicated to female directors and audiovisual professionals (de Valck, 2020).

In this context, festival communication has also begun to reflect a growing focus on issues of inclusion and empowerment. This evolution shows that festivals are not only places for viewing films, but also true cultural actors that construct discourses, identities and imaginaries, helping to redefine the role of cinema in contemporary society.

Word of Mouth

Word of mouth (WOM), often referred to as buzz, is a form of informal communication between consumers about products and services. Two key characteristics distinguish it from other sources of information, such as traditional advertising: firstly, WOM is perceived as more credible and reliable; secondly, it is more accessible thanks to the spread of social networks. In the context of cinema, the value attributed to a film is also manifested through its premiere, advance and test screenings, and its ability to generate high-quality word of mouth from viewers (Huang et al., 2023).

Online word of mouth published on film websites covers a very wide range of content, including information about the cast and plot, production rumours, preliminary screening results, and recommendations on whether to see a film in the cinema. A simple observation of film platforms shows that users begin discussing films long before their official release. Furthermore, professional critical reviews (CR) and user-generated WOM messages coexist on many of these sites (Chakravarty et al., 2010). It follows that WOM in the film industry is already active in the pre-release phase and is a complement to, rather than a substitute for, other sources of information.

Film audiences tend to have grand expectations in the run-up to a film's release but become more critical during the opening week. In this context, the volume of WOM – more than its positive or negative value, shows significant explanatory power about box office performance, supporting the hypothesis that WOM operates primarily through an informational effect on product awareness (Liu, 2006).

The fact that word of mouth is particularly active in the pre-launch period suggests that, at least for entertainment goods such as films, informal communication about a new product does not necessarily depend on direct experience. Many potential viewers discuss the product based on expectations and speculation. Consequently, WOM management should be conceived as a multidimensional activity that goes beyond the product itself. Management must therefore consider additional factors that influence such speculation, including the company's product portfolio, its reputation, related events, and any 'rumours' that emerge during the new product development process (ibid.).

Word of mouth also remains one of the most powerful tools in film promotion: satisfied viewers spontaneously become promoters of the film, influencing potential audiences at no additional cost. Positive WOM can generate a multiplier effect of consensus, while negative word of mouth can increase mistrust and compromise the commercial potential of the work (Keller, 2013).

Promotional Techniques

Promotional activities can be divided into four categories:

1. *Information Techniques*, based on traditional communication campaigns (press, TV, radio, meetings).
2. *Product Techniques*, leveraging intrinsic attributes of the film, such as artistic quality, to orient spectators.
3. *Development Techniques*, involving direct and indirect interventions to stimulate audience training and information.
4. *Demonstration Techniques*, including personal contact, meetings, merchandising, and other experiential practices.

Key promotional tools therefore include television, radio, billboards, direct marketing, festivals, and fairs. These mechanisms are critical for reaching both the primary market (spectators) and the secondary market (distributors, promoters, industry stakeholders).

Digital Marketing and Innovation

Digital marketing, a consequence of the information revolution, refers to the creation and dissemination of content through digital media channels (websites, landing pages, social media, email, mobile applications). Strategies span paid, earned, and owned media, including SEO, SEM, PPC advertising, content syndication, and influencer marketing (Kotler & Keller, 2016). Video content has emerged as the most powerful format, particularly short, engaging clips distributed on platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. These platforms provide cost-effective personalization and segmentation, enabling dynamic campaigns that move beyond traditional trailers and interviews (Gennari, 2022).

Innovation plays a key role in marketing strategies, blending creativity and tradition. As Foglio (2005) notes, innovation in the performing arts must integrate with history and tradition, extending their life while responding to new audience needs. Offers devoid of innovation risk irrelevance, while dynamic innovations create opportunities for repositioning in new market niches.

Augmented and Virtual Reality

Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are two of the most significant immersive technologies in the contemporary digital landscape. AR superimposes digital elements — images, text, 3D models — onto the real environment, enriching the user's sensory perception without replacing the physical world. This definition is based on the pioneering work of Azuma (1997), who identifies three fundamental characteristics of AR: combination of real and virtual, real-time interactivity and three-dimensional recording.

Virtual Reality (VR), on the other hand, completely immerses the user in a digitally generated synthetic environment, creating a sense of presence and total involvement. The classic definition of VR describes it as an experience characterised by immersion and interactivity, made possible through devices such as stereoscopic headsets and haptic controllers (Steuer, 1992).

Between AR and VR lies Mixed Reality (MR), within the reality–virtuality continuum: a spectrum ranging from the real world to completely virtual reality, including all hybrid forms in which physical and digital elements coexist and interact (Milgram and Kishino, 1994).

In the film industry, these technologies are opening up new narrative and promotional possibilities. AR allows the film experience to be extended beyond the screen, integrating digital content into the viewer's real space, while VR allows immersive and participatory narrative universes to be explored. Together, AR, VR and MR are helping to redefine the relationship between audiences and audiovisual content, fitting squarely into the industry 4.0 paradigm, where interactivity, personalisation and immersion become central elements of the cultural experience.

Guerrilla Marketing

In a saturated and hyper-competitive media context, companies are forced to rethink their communication strategies to capture the attention of an increasingly distracted and selective audience. Guerrilla marketing fits into this scenario as a creative and low-cost response, capable of generating a high emotional and visual impact. The term was coined by Jay Conrad Levinson in 1984 and is inspired by the military tactics of guerrilla warfare, characterized by rapid, targeted and surprising actions; Levinson himself defines this approach as an unconventional communication strategy, aimed at maximizing promotional impact through the creative use of limited resources. It is based on the strategic use of surprise, originality and direct interaction with the public, with the aim of generating

emotional involvement and memorability superior to traditional forms of advertising (Levinson, 1984).

Guerrilla marketing has developed into a basic strategy that encompasses the marketing mix, a basic attitude of marketing policy for market development that goes off the beaten track to consciously seek new, previously ignored, even frowned upon possibilities for the implementation of certain tools (Nufer, 2013).

An emblematic example is the campaign for the film “It” (2017), which used red balloons tied to utility hole covers in cities to evoke the imagery of the film, generating virality and media attention (Meriano, 2017).

Guerrilla marketing can be implemented with diverse tools. A selective distinction and unambiguous categorization of the various guerrilla marketing tools is not possible. On the contrary, the individual tools complement each other and thus interact constructively to produce the actual impact of guerrilla marketing.

Therefore, a uniform categorization of these tools has not prevailed until now. The following are the most important guerrilla marketing tools:

- Ambient marketing: creative use of urban space to convey advertising messages.
- Experiential marketing: direct involvement of the public in sensory or interactive experiences.
- Viral marketing: spreading the message through spontaneous sharing on social media.
- Ambush marketing: unauthorized association with high-visibility events.

Guerrilla marketing is an ever-evolving dynamic concept that eludes old traditional methods and their application (Nufer, 2013).

In film promotion, guerrilla marketing established itself as a strategy to create an immediate emotional impact on the audience, merging the boundaries between everyday reality and the evocative narratives of the big screen. A portion of the popular literature on cinema and marketing tends to retrospectively interpret some of Alfred Hitchcock’s campaigns, such as those related to *Frenzy* (1972), as anticipations of guerrilla marketing, although these are journalistic readings rather than academically established historical reconstructions (De Togni, 2024).

Citing other examples of more contemporary films, for *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom* the idea of a life-size T-Rex emerging from the River Thames in London not only captivated passersby

but tangibly evoked the dramatic escape of dinosaurs from their island in the film. This visual event created a parallel story to the cinematic narrative, bringing fiction to the streets of reality and leaving a memorable impression on live witnesses and online observers.

The movie *The Dark Knight* used guerrilla marketing in an even more interactive direction. The initiative involved enthusiasts in a worldwide treasure hunt, extending the narrative of the film into the real world. Through clues hidden in various objects such as cell phones inside modified cakes, fans were drawn into an adventure that mimicked the conflict between Batman and his enemies, fuelling unprecedented collective anticipation for Christopher Nolan's work.

As for the horror *The Nun*, the film surprised the audience with a disturbing advertisement on YouTube. The commercial, unexpectedly interrupted by a jump scare, violated the site's policies for shocking content, leading to its removal.

The controversy and the thrill caused, however, stimulated word of mouth, acting as a catalyst for interest in the film.

Guerrilla marketing in cinema, therefore, manifests itself as a narrative adventure that defies conventions, immersing viewers in unique and unpredictable experiences, which surprises and engages audiences in everyday contexts and demonstrates the power of stories to extend their appeal beyond the confines of the movie theatre, thus revealing how thin the line between reality and fiction can be, between marketing and narrative art (De Togni, 2024).

1.3 From Commercial Narratives to Value-Based Narratives

Over the last few decades, film productions have progressively expanded their range of action, moving from a purely narrative or aesthetic function to an eminently social function, capable of reflecting and at the same time shaping the collective consciousness. The filmic dimension is not limited to representing reality but acts as a symbolic device capable of making visible the cultural tensions, structural inequalities and value transformations of contemporaneity (Bujgoi, 2025). The analysis of cinema as a mirror of society reveals a constant dialectic between reality and representation, between imagination and social structure. In this sense, films constitute a form of "cultural documentation" that reflects the dominant concerns of each historical period, returning the contradictions of the present in an aesthetic key. According to the most recent literature, contemporary film narratives address themes such as economic inequality, racial issues, gender identity, migration,

the environmental crisis, and the emergence of new social movements (Mohamed et al., 2024). The growing attention to these issues testifies to the function of cinema as a public space of symbolic elaboration, in which images take on a discursive and political as well as aesthetic value (Eren et al., 2024). Cinema, as a tool for the analysis and representation of reality, has progressively incorporated changes in social sensitivity. In the productions of recent years, an expansion of narrative forms related to civic engagement, inclusion and the representation of diversity has been observed.

The relationship between cinema and society is not a recent phenomenon: as texts produced by society for society, films have always been part of the social discourse. What has changed over time are the dynamics through which they engage with it. The very idea of “socially themed films” has thus evolved, no longer conceived as a distinct genre, but as a transversal approach that permeates the most diverse forms and aesthetics. Recent studies, such as *How Do Films Reflect Our Societies Today?* emphasize that every genre, from drama to fantasy, from biopic to documentary, can function as a vehicle for social discourse, translating collective conflicts and ethical tensions into images (Zirong, 2023).

Cinema, therefore, does not limit itself to reflecting reality, but contributes to building it. The act of representing inevitably involves an act of interpretation, selection and definition of social meanings (Jonas do Nascimento, 2019). Each film participates in the formation of common sense, influencing the public's perceptions on complex issues such as social justice, marginality, identity and cultural difference. This mechanism, which combines aesthetics and pedagogy, has been defined as the "social function of cinema", i.e. a process in which film representation becomes a tool for symbolic education and value transformation (Sharma et al., 2022).

Within this perspective, contemporary cinema is configured as a platform for social debate, capable of mobilizing emotions, empathy and critical reflection. Exposure to films with social issues produces significant changes in the attitudes and opinions of viewers, particularly among young people. Audiovisual storytelling stimulates processes of identification that promote the understanding of complex social contexts and the redefinition of one's values (Kubrak, T., 2020). Films thus become tools for collective awareness, capable of activating emotional and behavioural responses to social or political causes.

This persuasive power of cinema derives from its ability to combine aesthetic experience with psychological identification. The cinematographic mise-en-scène transforms social problems into affective experiences, making the invisible visible and translating into narrative terms what remains silent or marginalized. Works that address gender-based violence, racial discrimination,

or the climate crisis, for example, use storytelling to amplify the moral urgency of such issues and make them accessible to a global audience (Mohamed et al., 2024). The representation of social issues in contemporary cinema is strongly influenced by the cultural and political context in which the works are produced. Recent studies show how national cinemas (from Hollywood to European and Asian cinema) have incorporated social discourses and instances of inclusion in separate ways. The comparative analysis of Bollywood and Hollywood, for example, shows how the social emotions of shame, pride and redemption are declined according to distinct cultural norms and moral structures, but always in relation to the collective context (Rai et al., 2024). Global cinema thus reveals itself to be a privileged space for cultural hybridization, where universal themes are filtered through local sensibilities.

The question of representation is central to this debate. Contemporary cinema today is called upon to reflect the real diversity of society, not only for ethical reasons but also because of the growing pressure of the public and new media. Quantitative and computational studies have shown how the film industry is evolving towards greater gender and ethnic inclusion, but with still significant structural slowdowns (Mazières et al., 2021). The presence of women in key roles such as directors, screenwriters, producers, remains lower than men, and this is reflected in the content, characters and messages conveyed by films (Kagan et al., 2019).

At the same time, as mentioned above, there is a growing interest in films that address issues of social justice, civil rights and environmental sustainability. Documentary and independent cinema have proved to be particularly effective tools for the dissemination of social messages and for the activation of opinion movements (Bujgoi, 2025; Sharma et al., 2022).

Another line of study concerns the pedagogical and sociological function of cinema. Films are increasingly being used in education as tools to discuss social, economic, and cultural issues (Yuksel, 2024). In this sense, cinema becomes a means of collective reflection and a laboratory of citizenship. The screening and analysis of films in educational contexts foster the development of critical thinking and civic awareness, providing a common language to address complex issues such as racism, poverty or discrimination (ibid.).

In the contemporary perspective, cinema therefore appears as a social mean of expression that is constantly renewing itself. Films not only reflect society, but anticipate its evolutions, denounce its contradictions and build new symbolic possibilities (Bujgoi, 2025). Each film production becomes part of a broader network of cultural communication, where the audience is no longer a passive

spectator but an active subject, able to interpret, share and relaunch social messages through digital platforms (Xue, 2023; Lyu, 2023).

Film, and in particular social problem films, are interpreted as tools capable of disseminating ideas and values, raising awareness of urgent social, cultural, and political issues and, in some cases, contributing to the transformation of attitudes and behaviours among the masses. Through its specific combination of visual narration, emotional involvement, and broad dissemination capacity, cinema can therefore function both as a device of ideological representation and as a mechanism that helps to “create” new social reality, influencing ways of perceiving, judging, and acting in relation to the major challenges of the twenty-first century (Tombu, 2024).

At the same time, we are witnessing the rise of an increasingly sophisticated and integrated film marketing in which communication no longer represents an accessory phase but an extension of the story itself. The narrative does not end on the screen, but continues in promotion, partnerships, social media and the discourses that circulate around the work, since the film industry is configured as a complex system in which economy, culture and communication are intertwined (Cucco, 2024; Daley, 2024). In this sense, the art of storytelling extends beyond the confines of the screen, encompassing a complex tapestry of promotional strategies and advertising efforts (Daley, 2024). Film advertising that was once limited to promoting a product today builds worlds of meaning in which the viewer is invited to participate.

The transition from commercial to value narratives reflects a more profound shift in consumer and communication culture. Film promotion becomes a discursive and cultural space in which the public is no longer just solicited to buy, but involved in the sharing of social, political and identity values (Daley, 2024; Vredenburg et al., 2020). As Daley's case studies show, contemporary marketing no longer just spreads a message, it creates experiences and belonging. The *Barbie* campaign (2023), for example, has transformed promotion into a global phenomenon based on a narrative of empowerment, inclusion and participation. With a promotional budget of about \$150 million, higher than the production budget, the film generated partnerships with over one hundred brands, immersive experiences, events and activities that combined commercial and value dimensions, amplifying the audience's sense of identification with the brand (Daley, 2024).

The campaign aimed to build a shared universe of values. The colour pink, which has become an identifying and recognizable element, has been declined in every aspect of communication. From limited edition product packaging to urban installations, up to partnerships with fashion and design

companies. Brands such as [Airbnb](#), [Crocs](#), [Zara](#), [Beis](#), [Burger King](#) and [Xbox](#) have created "Barbie-style" lines and collaborations, creating a coherent and recognizable transmedia narrative.



Figure 7: Barbie's style collaborations with brands (retrieved from The Arthur W. Page Society. *Mattel/Barbie Case Study – Were Mattel's Efforts Kenough*, 2024)

Immersive experiences such as the “World of Barbie Experience” or the “Pink Carpet Premiere” represented moments of collective participation, capable of merging the language of cinema with that of everyday experience. Even the Google platform has joined the campaign by activating a completely pink screen when typing the title of the film, transforming the promotion into a global cultural event.

The most significant aspect of the strategy, however, was the message centred on values. The campaign promoted a discourse of female empowerment and inclusion, centred on the slogan "You can be anything". This message, already rooted in the history of the Mattel brand, has been reinterpreted in a contemporary key through a self-deprecating and conscious narrative, integrating the logic of femvertising and brand activism (Åkestam et al., 2017; Vredenburg et al., 2020; Daley,

2024). Barbie is no longer just the symbol of an unattainable aesthetic model but becomes the starting point for a critical reflection on gender identities and social roles. The campaign therefore acted on two levels: on the one hand, it exploited the logic of experiential marketing and digital virality, and on the other, it embodied a form of cultural brand activism, using the film as a platform for discussion on issues such as equality, representation and personal freedom (Daley, 2024).

The success of Barbie is part of a broader framework of redefinition of film marketing, increasingly oriented towards the construction of meaning. New media have played a decisive role in this evolution. They "promoted the innovative development of traditional marketing models and concepts", favouring participatory and interactive forms of communication (Lyu, 2023). Social networks today make it possible to create digital communities of viewers who do not limit themselves to receiving promotional messages but become co-authors of the discourse. Short video platforms such as TikTok and Instagram Reels represent the new pillars of film marketing, transforming films into cultural events disseminated and shared through hashtags, memes and spontaneous reinterpretations of the audience (Xue, 2023).

The digital revolution fosters expressive solutions based on the meaning effect of authenticity and emotional involvement. Experiential marketing awakens and influences user emotions, stimulates new thought processes, and fosters personal engagement (Lyu, 2023). Trust arises from the perception of consistency between the message and the reality of the brand, an essential principle for the effectiveness of authentic brand activism, i.e. the authentic activism of brands that align their communication values with business practices (Cucco, 2024; Vredenburg et al., 2020).

In this scenario, femvertising is also one of the most important expressions of value communication. Femvertising reduces advertising reactance compared to traditional advertising, improving attitudes towards the brand (Åkestam et al., 2017). However, its effectiveness depends on perceived authenticity, in fact if the message is artificial or inconsistent with the company's reality, the risk is to fall into fem-washing, i.e. the opportunistic use of the language of empowerment for commercial purposes. The Barbie case represents a successful balance between representation and self-criticism, between entertainment and social reflection, offering a paradigmatic example of how cinematographic communication can integrate content, value and market strategy.

The constructive interaction between cinema, communication and social values thus paves the way for a new paradigm of cultural marketing. Value narratives, as socially oriented discourses, expand the function of cinema beyond the economic sphere, transforming it into a space for cultural and

identity negotiation (Degrassi, 2018; Cucco, 2024). The film industry no longer limits itself to representing reality, but contributes to building it, reflecting and at the same time orienting the sensibilities of contemporary audiences.

This evolution, which marks the definitive overcoming of purely commercial narratives, prepares the ground for a new phase of contemporary cultural discourse, namely the one in which feminism, brand activism, social movements and femvertising become central components of communication strategies and processes of signification. The ability of films and their promotional campaigns to dialogue with collective instances, to stimulate participation and to build communities of meaning, paves the way for a new way of understanding communication in cinema: no longer as a promotional tool, but as a form of cultural activism (Cucco, 2024; Daley, 2024; Åkestam et al., 2017; Vredenburg et al., 2020). In this sense, the transition to value narratives constitutes the theoretical and symbolic premise of the second chapter, dedicated to the analysis of the relationships between cinema, feminist movements, brand activism and femvertising, and the way in which these dynamics transform the viewer into an active part of the social and media discourse.

Chapter 2

2.1 The Feminist Movement as Socio-Cultural Framework

The history of feminism is one of the most complex and multifaceted narratives of modernity, intertwining social movements, philosophical theories, legislative battles and profound cultural transformations. Feminism, understood as a set of movements and ideologies aimed at improving the status of women and achieving gender equality, has spanned centuries and continents, taking on different forms and objectives depending on historical, social and geographical contexts.

As early as 1902, Charles Turgeon argued that feminism was one of the great social movements of our time. It is not just a particular claim, but a profound transformation of gender relations, affecting the family, education, work and society as a whole (Turgeon, 1902). The origins of modern feminist thought date back to the European Enlightenment. Mary Wollstonecraft, with her famous treatise *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), is considered one of the founding mothers of feminism. In this work, Wollstonecraft argues that women must receive an education equal to that of men to participate fully in public and political life (Wollstonecraft, 1792). These early theories laid the foundations for the demands of the first wave of feminism, anticipating issues such as education, work, citizenship and criticism of patriarchal norms.

The first wave of feminism developed between the mid-19th and early 20th centuries, in a context marked by the industrial revolution, the expansion of civil rights and the emergence of labour and socialist movements. Industrialisation encouraged women to enter the labour market, albeit often in precarious and subordinate conditions. Legal and social inequalities were profound: women were excluded from voting, higher education, property ownership and many professions. The feminist movement arose from a desire to reform institutions to ensure equality between men and women before the law. The main demands concerned women's suffrage, the right to work and education, family law reform and the fight against sexual exploitation.

The second wave of feminism emerged in the United States in the 1960s, in a context marked by civil rights movements, protests against the Vietnam War, the sexual revolution and post-war economic growth. The movement spread rapidly to Europe and other parts of the world, taking different forms depending on national contexts.

Unlike the first wave, which focused on legal inequalities, the second wave broadened the debate to include cultural inequalities, gender roles, sexuality, family, work and reproductive rights. The second wave, from the 1960s to the 1980s, broadened the scope of action to include issues such as sexuality, reproductive rights, work and family. It was a period of cultural criticism and analysis of patriarchal

structures, with theoretical contributions from Simone de Beauvoir and Betty Friedan. This feminism also focused on the representation of women in the media and culture. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* is a philosophical treatise and one of the most important books of the twentieth century, on which much of the modern feminist movement was built, anticipating many of the subsequent reflections. In the book, Beauvoir states that 'one is not born a woman, one becomes one' (Beauvoir, 2010, vol. II, p. 330), emphasising that gender is a social and cultural construct. Philosophical and political reflection on the role of women finds turning points in this work, which theorised the social construction of 'femininity' and offered tools for analysing the historical condition of women as political subjects (Beauvoir, 1949/2010). Betty Friedan, for her part, denounced the dissatisfaction of American women confined to domestic roles and promoted active participation in public life (Friedan, 1963).

The 'third wave', a term introduced by Rebecca Walker (Walker, 1992), emerged in the 1990s as a response to perceptions of the limitations and failures of the second wave, in a context marked by globalisation, the spread of the Internet, the growth of LGBTQ+ movements and increasing attention to cultural, racial and class differences. The third wave is characterised by a plurality of theoretical currents, the valorisation of individuality and criticism of gender essentialism.

In the 21st century, feminism is developing in a context marked by the spread of social media, digital activism, the global economic crisis, and growing attention to intersectional and transnational issues. It is characterised by the strategic use of digital technologies for mobilisation, the denunciation of discrimination, and the construction of global solidarity networks. It has found new forms of expression through digital platforms (Sedgwick, 2020).

The *Me Too* movement, launched by Tarana Burke in 2006 and spread globally in 2017, represented a turning point in the public denunciation of sexual harassment and violence (Burke, 2006). These mobilisations have demonstrated feminism's ability to adapt to new media and build transnational networks of solidarity. Furthermore, criticism of rigid gender norms and growing attention to environmental issues have become an integral part of the current feminist discourse, which also addresses the challenges posed by globalisation and migration, promoting a transnational feminism that recognises the different conditions of oppression and resistance in distinct cultural contexts.

In this context, many scholars identify a fourth wave of feminism emerging in the late 2000s and early 2010s, linked to the spread of social media and digital platforms, new forms of online activism and campaigns such as *Me Too*.

However, the fourth wave has been criticised for the risk of superficiality and the 'mainstreaming' of feminist issues, especially when feminism is adopted as an advertising slogan or marketing tool by companies and the media (Sedgwick, 2020; Groeneveld, 2016). At the same time, woke culture (Erario, 2022) and the debate on gender identity have generated internal tensions, with some feminists denouncing the movement's loss of universality and the difficulty of building a common agenda. The debate on inclusive language, the representation of women in the media, reproductive justice and the fight against femicide are central themes on the current feminist agenda.

This brief and concise overview of the history of feminism is necessary to contextualise the topic and recall the main stages in the movement's evolution. However, this paper intends to focus on the specific aspect of femvertising, discussed in detail below: this term refers to the use of feminist language, images and values in contemporary advertising strategies (Gill, 2007).

2.2 Brand Activism and Social Movements

In recent decades, the transformation of global capitalism and the emergence of new social and environmental sensibilities have made it essential to analyse the role of businesses in society. In this context, corporate social responsibility (CSR) constitutes an economic phenomenon of significant importance. Today, firms determine welfare through producing goods and services for consumers, interest for investors, income for employees, and social and environmental externalities or public goods affecting broader subsets of society. Stakeholders often take account of ethical, social, and environmental firm performance, thereby changing the nature of strategic interaction between profit-maximising firms, on the one hand, and utility-maximising individuals, on the other hand (Kitzmüller, 2010). CSR has established itself as a central paradigm, aimed at integrating ethical, social, and environmental considerations into corporate strategies alongside economic objectives. However, CSR is not a univocal concept, but rather a field of tension between ethics, profit, and governance, which has progressively evolved from marginal philanthropic practices to a structural component of corporate strategy and global economic regulation. The historical origins of CSR lie in 19th-century industrial philanthropy and the early forms of corporate welfare, which were often paternalistic but indicative of an initial recognition of corporate social responsibility. In the 1960s and 1970s, the emergence of social and environmental movements, together with growing criticism of capitalism, prompted companies to formalise codes of ethics and environmental policies. With the globalisation of the 1990s and 2000s, CSR took on a transnational dimension: the visibility of supply chains and pressure from stakeholders led to the spread of international standards (such as the OECD guidelines or the United Nations Global Compact) and the practice of sustainability

reporting. (Moon, 2014). Legitimacy has been the primary social theory used to understand the importance of corporate social responsibility. It is based on the idea that firms, as institutions in a particular social and cultural environment, must be congruent with norms and expectations in that environment (Dowling & Pfeffer, 1975).

CSR, therefore, is no longer seen as a separate or secondary activity, but as a central element of corporate strategy. Companies that adopt CSR practices integrate ethical and sustainability considerations into their operational and strategic decisions, aiming to create shared value for all stakeholders (Crane et al., 2008). What is corporate social responsibility? As institutions in society, companies exist within a set of expectations for appropriate conduct in dealing with customers, making products, and following the law (Humphreys, 2014). On a theoretical level, there are two main conceptual frameworks that have defined CSR: stakeholder theory and the triple bottom line. The former highlights how companies must respond not only to shareholders, but to a variety of stakeholders. Companies must consider and balance the interests of all stakeholders, i.e. all those who can influence or be influenced by their activities (employees, customers, suppliers, local communities, institutions, investors, the environment). The theory broadens the function of the company from a mere profit generator to a social actor, responsible for the relationships and impacts it produces, and implies that, strategically, corporate management must integrate ethical values, long-term relationships and sustainability, because lasting success depends on the quality of relationships with stakeholders (Freeman, 1984). The triple bottom line (TBL) approach, on the other hand, proposes measuring corporate performance on three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – moving beyond the centrality of profit. The TBL proposes evaluating corporate results on three fundamental dimensions:

- Profit (Economic): the traditional financial bottom line.
- People (Social): the impact on people, including employees, communities and stakeholders.
- Planet (Environmental): the impact on the environment, natural resources and ecological sustainability. The conceptual innovation of TBL is represented by the shift in focus from profit maximisation to the creation of shared value, integrating ethics, sustainability and competitiveness (Elkington, 1997).

This approach is now considered an essential reference point for assessing corporate performance from an integrated perspective.

Finally, we can mention the notion of corporate citizenship, i.e. the idea that companies have an active and responsible role in society, like that of a citizen, with rights and duties (Crane et al., 2008).

These theories show the multidimensional nature of CSR and its ability to integrate ethics, strategy and innovation. It can no longer be considered exclusively voluntary: governments and international institutions have progressively promoted responsible practices through incentives, regulations and standards. CSR thus becomes part of multi-level governance, in which the public and private sectors interact through co-regulation mechanisms, partnerships and multi-stakeholder standards (Moon, 2014). In this context, accountability and transparency play a crucial role in the credibility of companies. The Commission of the European Communities' Green Paper: Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility states that, although corporate social responsibility is mainly promoted by large companies or multinationals, it is important for all types of companies and all sectors of activity, from small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to multinationals. It is essential that it be more widely applied in SMEs, including micro-enterprises, as their contribution to the economy and employment is the most important. Although many SMEs already assume their social responsibility, particularly through local engagement, greater awareness-raising and increased support for the dissemination of good practices could facilitate the promotion of social responsibility among businesses in this category (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). In 2011, the European Commission proposed a new definition of CSR as the responsibility of enterprises for their impact on society. Compliance with applicable legislation and collective agreements between social partners is a prerequisite for meeting this responsibility. To fully meet their social responsibility, companies must have a process in place to integrate social, environmental, ethical, human rights and consumer concerns into their business operations and core strategy in close cooperation with their respective stakeholders, with the aim of:

- do everything possible to create shared value between their owners/shareholders and other stakeholders and society in general.
- identify, prevent and mitigate their possible adverse effects (European Commission, 2011)

On the other hand, critical issues should not be overlooked: these include the risk of greenwashing, i.e. the use of CSR as mere rhetorical communication; the limitations of voluntary action, especially in the absence of verification and regulation; and the tensions between profit and social responsibility. The credibility of CSR depends on its ability to produce real and measurable impacts, rather than symbolic initiatives. (Moon, 2014).

CSR has since evolved towards a paradigm of integrated sustainability, linked to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (United Nations, 2023). Sustainable finance and the integration of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria are transforming economic

incentives, linking non-financial performance to the cost of capital. Looking ahead, CSR is becoming increasingly institutionalised, with reporting obligations and extended responsibility along value chains. CSR is not simply a reputational add-on, but a contemporary form of economic citizenship that affects companies' operating licences and competitive resilience (ibid.).

At the same time, in a context characterised by growing consumer attention to social and political values, the phenomenon of Brand Activism has developed. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and brand activism are two distinct but interconnected concepts in the contemporary landscape of corporate management and brand communication. CSR and brand activism are not alternative concepts, but complementary ones. CSR provides the institutional and strategic basis for social responsibility, while brand activism represents a more radical and communicative form of it, capable of mobilising consumers and influencing public debate.

Both are part of a broader debate on sustainability and business ethics, but they differ in their approach, purpose and methods of application (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018). Brand activism also stems from the growing role of consumers as active stakeholders. Stakeholders have long been pressuring companies to provide social benefits in addition to generating wealth for shareholders. These benefits have traditionally taken the form of corporate social responsibility. However, many stakeholders now expect companies to demonstrate their values by publicly expressing support for or opposition to one side of a socio-political issue, a phenomenon the authors call 'corporate socio-political activism' (CSA). Such activities differ from commonly favoured corporate social responsibility and have the potential to both strengthen and sever relationships with stakeholders, thus making their impact on corporate value uncertain (Bhagwat & Bhandari, 2020).

Activism has become part of brand management with the introduction of the term 'brand activism' as a popular term for brands' involvement in controversial socio-political issues. This has led to a particular focus on the activist brand. The activist brand represents a paradigm shift in brand management. It breaks with the traditional brand-centric, transaction-based approach, as well as with interaction-based approaches, which assert that brand value and meaning emerge in dyadic or triadic relationships between consumer and brand. The activist brand is characterised by its commitment to social programmes. It is therefore based on the idea that brand value emerges in interaction with socio-political and cultural contexts at the macro level (ibid.).

The activist brand can be characterised as critical, ideological and transformative: critical because it represents a critical voice towards dominant cultural norms and social conventions; ideological because it represents alternative visions and ideas of a better world; and transformative because it

aims to bring about social change. (Andersen & Johansen, 2021). Activist brands engage in controversial causes: they define themselves against, and challenge, dominant socio-political and cultural narratives at the macro level. Consequently, the activist brand is defined in and by cultural oppositions around which it orbits and against which it continually positions itself. These processes involve fundamentally different dialectics and dynamics than traditional brand conceptualisations. As a result, they require a thorough understanding of the controversies, oppositions, and resistances that condition the brand. (Andersen & Johansen, 2024)



Figure 8: Purpose - Action Scheme (retrieved from d *Brand Activism: From Purpose to Action* by Kotler& Sarkar, 2018)

Brand Activism is therefore the commitment of companies to social, environmental, economic and political issues, with an orientation that can be:

- Progressive, aimed at promoting social justice, sustainability and inclusion.
- Regressive, aimed at defending interests and hindering social progress.

The distinction between progressive and regressive activism is central to understanding the ethical and strategic nature of corporate choices (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018). The authors identify seven principal areas of activism:

1. Social (civil rights, equity, inclusion)
2. Environmental (climate change, natural resources)
3. Economic (fair wages, taxation, wealth distribution)
4. Political (transparency, democracy, participation)
5. Legal (justice and human rights)
6. Health (universal access to healthcare)
7. Education (inclusive and accessible education)

These dimensions outline a systemic framework in which businesses can act as agents of change.

Differences from CSR

Traditional CSR is often perceived as philanthropy or greenwashing (Porter & Kramer, 2011). Brand activism should involve taking a clear and sometimes controversial stance on social or political issues, with the potential for a direct impact on public policy and society (Kotler & Sarkar, 2018). However, this does not make it immune to accusations of “woke-washing” or opportunistic appropriation of social causes, as demonstrated by the much-criticised Pepsi campaign featuring Kendall Jenner, which was accused of trivialising social justice movements for commercial purposes. In this sense, brand activism can be interpreted as an attempt to further integrate ethical or political values into corporate strategy, but its credibility and effectiveness depend on consistency between discourse and practice, and on avoiding merely symbolic or instrumental uses of activism.

Role of consumers and leadership

Kotler and Sarkar (2018) emphasise that consumers, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, demand authentic and consistent commitment from businesses. Corporate leadership, and particularly the

CEO, is called upon to lead activism, transforming organisational culture and integrating social values into operational practices.

Strategic implications

Brand Activism becomes a competitive advantage: it strengthens reputation, attracts talent and builds customer loyalty. Conversely, companies that remain neutral risk appearing irrelevant. Activism, therefore, is not only an ethical imperative but also a strategic choice. It is emerging as a paradigm that is set to redefine the relationships between businesses, consumers and civil society. Looking ahead, it anticipates the debate on ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) and SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals), laying the foundations for a new form of responsible capitalism (ibid.).

One risk factor of brand activism may be linked to disparate and controversial public opinion on controversial causes, issues or events (Cammarota et al., 2021).

From an economic point of view, brand activism involves fewer human and financial resources, sometimes not even requiring a financial commitment, such as simply supporting activist groups, while CSR has a stronger financial commitment. Another difference is the nature of the strategies: brand activism is communicative in nature rather than reactive like CSR. Activism is usually characterised by strong, even aggressive communication; on the other hand, CSR is part of operational strategies and seeks to alleviate social problems. Furthermore, scholars have highlighted that, while CSR has positive effects on brand reputation, product ratings, customer engagement and loyalty, brand activism may have negative effects on a company's value. Finally, a salient difference between CSR and brand activism is the motivation behind their adoption: while CSR aims to 'support a cause', the purpose of brand activism is to create change by exerting pressure on institutions (ibid.).

In conclusion, two elements strongly distinguish brand activism from CSR: the first concerns explicitly stated positions on controversial issues and the second concerns advocacy. Activist brands seek to proactively change public opinion and behaviour, particularly the way citizens interact with policy makers (Korschun, 2021).



Figure 9: Brand Activism Toolkit (retrieved from *Brand Activism: From Purpose to Action* by Kotler& Sarkar 2018)

2.3 The Phenomenon of Femvertising

As already analysed, over the last two decades, brand communication has undergone a radical transformation, shifting from a model centred on commercial persuasion to a paradigm in which companies take on an increasing political, social and cultural role. This change has been driven by growing public awareness of issues such as sustainability, gender equality, social justice and civil rights, which has led consumers to demand not only products and services from companies, but also values, political positions and responsibility (Scherer, 2011). This is the context for the concept of brand activism, understood, as previously explained, as the commitment of companies to take a stand on social, environmental, economic or political issues, helping to shape public debate (Kotler, 2018). 'Brand-cause fit', i.e. the concept that a brand and a social issue are conceptually 'matched', is a topic of great interest. A growing trend in advertising is 'brand responsibility', in which a brand aligns itself with a social issue. An important focus of these messages is gender equality, particularly

women's empowerment (Champlin et al., 2019). Femvertising fits precisely into this trend: it arises from the interaction of several factors: activism for a more equitable representation of women in commercial communication, the spread of brand activism and conscious capitalism, criticism of corporate feminism, growing sensitivity to gender stereotypes and, finally, the tightening of regulations on the representation of gender roles in advertising. Together, these elements have fostered the emergence of a new way of communicating, in which brands are committed to presenting more realistic, inclusive and non-stereotypical images of women (Varghese, 2022).

Femvertising is one of the most obvious manifestations of the broader phenomenon of brand activism, i.e. the set of strategies through which brands take positions on social, political and cultural issues. In this context, femvertising campaigns are not limited to representing emancipated female figures but are proposed as cultural interventions that seek to influence public debate and build a recognisable value positioning.

Femvertising, therefore, is not just an aesthetic of empowerment, but a discursive practice that allows brands to enter the field of contemporary symbolic struggles. This dynamic is part of the growing trend for companies to present themselves as morally responsible entities, capable of taking a stand on issues of gender, diversity and inclusion.

This scenario includes 'femvertising', a neologism combining *feminism* and *advertising* that refers to advertising campaigns incorporating feminist or female empowerment messages. Although the term was introduced in 2014 during a debate moderated by Samantha Skey, then Marketing Director of the SheKnows Media website (Advertising Week, 2014), its theoretical genealogy is much broader and is rooted in research on media and gender representations. Feminist media studies have shown how the representation of women in advertising has historically been marked by stereotypes, objectification and traditional roles. To understand the innovative scope of femvertising, it is necessary to consider the long tradition of gender stereotypes in advertising. Stereotypes, understood as simplified and shared beliefs about social groups, have historically influenced the representation of women, who are often portrayed as housewives, mothers devoted to caring for their families, or sexualised objects. Far from being an agent of change, advertising has for decades reflected and reinforced dominant gender roles, lagging social evolution (Föhl, 2025). Stereotypes are a set of concepts related to a social category. As such, they offer a way to simplify and systematise information and help make sense of the world, which may explain why they are commonly used in advertising. Gender stereotypes are beliefs that certain attributes differentiate women from men. There is a vast literature documenting the use of gender stereotypes in advertising. It has been found that the attributes used to convey female stereotypes in advertising are related to

the physical characteristics, role behaviours, and professional status of the women included in the advertisements. Gender stereotypes in advertising tend to develop in tandem with social values and gender roles.

Commercial communication has often tended to reproduce prevailing gender roles rather than systematically challenge them, frequently portraying female figures in stereotypical, dependent, or domestic positions, even in contexts where women's social and professional roles are much more varied. From this perspective, the use of gender stereotypes becomes particularly problematic when it contributes to generating expectations and evaluations that may limit the perceived life opportunities of the individuals represented. Åkestam et al. (2017), for example, show that stereotypical portrayals can have negative effects on viewers' well-being, whereas non-stereotypical representations of women are associated with more positive emotional responses and more favourable brand evaluations (Åkestam et al., 2017).

The representation of women in advertising has a long and complex history, reflecting the cultural, economic and social transformations of modernity. Since the dawn of commercial communication, female figures have been used as symbols, icons and rhetorical tools to convey consumer messages, often in a stereotypical way. However, during the 20th century and especially in recent decades, these representations have undergone significant changes, moving from objectified and domestic images to more complex narratives, culminating in contemporary forms of femvertising. In advertising at the end of the 19th century and in the early decades of the 20th century, women were represented as ideal consumers or decorative figures. The first illustrated advertisements, such as those for Pears Soap, depicted elegant women, often in static poses, used to lend prestige to the products (Marchand, 1985).



Figure 10. Pears Soap – Vintage advertisement. Source: Wikimedia Commons

With the advent of modern advertising in the 1920s and 1930s, the female figure became increasingly associated with the domestic sphere. Advertising campaigns for household appliances, detergents and cleaning products – such as those for Hoover, General Electric and Lysol – portrayed women as devoted wives and mothers, responsible for the well-being of their families. A prime example is the 1953 Hoover campaign, with the slogan 'Christmas morning she'll be happier with a Hoover', which showed a woman delighted to receive a vacuum cleaner as a gift.



Figure 11: Hoover advertising campaign (retrieved from Google Images)

With the second wave of feminism and the socio-cultural changes of the 1960s and 1970s, advertising began to incorporate elements of female emancipation.

A significant example is Virginia Slims' You've Come a Long Way, Baby campaign (1968), which celebrated female liberation by associating it with cigarette consumption. Similarly, many cosmetics and fashion campaigns in the 1980s featured independent and successful women, but always within a highly sexualised aesthetic.

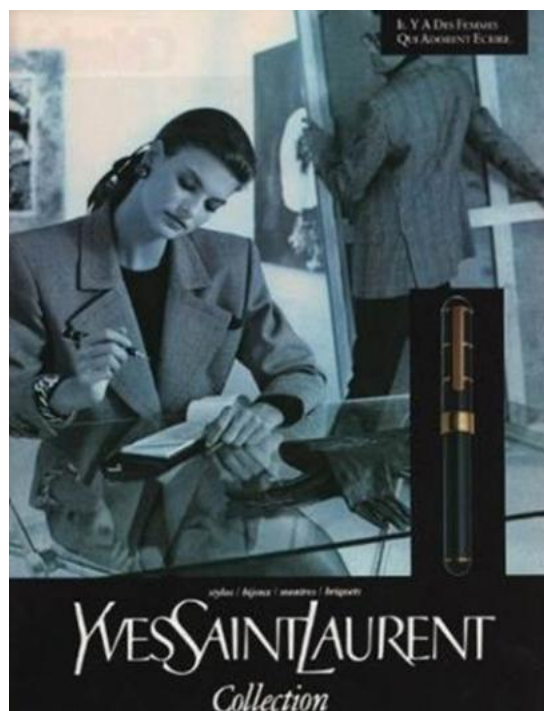


Figure 12: Yves Saint Laurent advertising campaign, (retrieved from Google Images)

Despite apparent modernisation, advertising continued to represent women in subordinate roles through codified postures, looks and gestures (Goffman, 1979). In the 1990s and 2000s, advertising incorporated elements of post-feminism, a form of neoliberal feminism centred on individualism, personal choice and individual responsibility. campaigns such as those by Wonderbra ('Hello Boys', 1994) or Calvin Klein (with Kate Moss in the 1990s) made hyper-sexualised femininity iconic, presenting it as an expression of autonomy (Gill, 2007).

In summary, femvertising is emerging as a key example of brand advocacy. This practice can contribute to sales growth, but it can also elicit positive responses from the female target audience.

This type of advertising and the number of brands engaging in femvertising continue to grow, with specific awards dedicated each year to exceptional work. This makes the concept of gender equality, particularly female empowerment, and related advertising, a prominent example of successful brand advocacy practices. To further explore the composition of femvertising, it is important to consider the "fit" between female empowerment and the products sold by the brand. The concept of "fit" has emerged from a similar practice in the areas of event sponsorship, celebrity endorsements, and brand extensions, all of which represent a "match" with a given brand. A brand can match a "cause" or "social issue" in many ways. These include: (1) a functional match where the functions of a product sold by a brand are linked to the cause; (2) an image match, where the type of personality or similar characteristics conveyed by a brand, such as activism, correspond to the image of the social issue; or (3) an audience match, where a brand's current consumers coincide with those who would be interested in supporting the social issue. In the context of femvertising, a similar example could be a brand that typically targets women and aligns itself with a social issue centred on women: again, it should achieve positive ratings thanks to this conceptual 'match'. In other words, brands that are comfortable and have a history of dialogue with women as their target audience have a high degree of correspondence with the target audience when it comes to simultaneously promoting female empowerment as a social issue. (Champlin, 2019). Femvertising arises precisely in this context, as a form of *commodity feminism* (Goldman et al., 1991) and, more generally, *commodity activism* (Mukherjee & Banet-Weiser, 2012), in which progressive values are incorporated into branding strategies. Campaigns that fall into this category, such as Dove's *Real Beauty*, Always' *Like a Girl* and Nike's *Dream Crazier*, offer narratives of female empowerment through emotional stories, representations of strong and resilient women, and motivational language that emphasises freedom of choice and personal autonomy (Gill & Orgad, 2018). Dove's Real Beauty campaign (2004) represents a watershed moment in the history of female representation in advertising, featuring real and diverse bodies in contrast to dominant aesthetic standards. The choice to show non-professional women, with physiques far from traditional standards, helped to redefine the concept of beauty in popular culture, while raising criticism about the consistency between the message and corporate practices (Johnston & Taylor, 2008).



Figure 13: Dove advertising campaign, Real Beauty (retrieved from Google Images)

However, these narratives tend to favour an individualistic feminism, which rarely addresses the structural dimensions of gender inequalities. Rottenberg (2018) points out that neoliberal feminism is particularly compatible with the market, as it promotes empowerment that does not require collective or political transformation, but focuses on the individual's ability to make it (Rottenberg, 2018).

The inclusion of femvertising in the broader phenomenon of brand activism raises important questions about its authenticity and ethical implications. On the one hand, it can be interpreted as a form of cultural activism, capable of influencing social representations and contributing to the spread of feminist discourse; on the other hand, it can be seen as an example of *cause washing*, i.e. the instrumental use of feminism for commercial purposes (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Another recurring criticism concerns representation. Femvertising often tends to promote a white, Western, middle-class feminism, as Nash observes, ignoring intersectional perspectives. While celebrating diversity, campaigns risk reproducing dominant aesthetic and cultural models, excluding the experiences of women belonging to marginalised groups (Nash, 2008).

Some studies argue that femvertising is effective when perceived as authentic. It is essential that brands using femvertising align their purpose and values with this activist marketing message and prosocial business practices. Authenticity leads to effective advertising perception: an authentic brand is transparent, consistent and genuine in its communication and behaviour, so when consumers perceive femvertising as authentic advertising, it helps to build trust and loyalty towards them as the brand represents reality rather than aspirational marketing. (Negm, 2023). Another explanation for

the positive effect of femvertising on brand perception is based on congruity theory. Osgood and Tannenbaum's (1955) model introduces the principle of *congruity*, a theory of attitude change based on individuals' tendency to maintain consistency between their evaluations. When a source expresses a positive or negative judgement about an object towards which the recipient already has an attitude, any inconsistencies generate cognitive tension that leads to an adjustment of evaluations; people tend to reduce evaluative inconsistency proportionally, bringing their opinions closer to a more consistent configuration. (Osgood & Tannenbaum, 1955).

By challenging outdated stereotypes in the representation of women in advertising while emphasising positive and inspiring statements and opportunities for development, the conformity of the advertising message with the self-image of modern consumers is likely to be significantly greater, thus enabling the positive effects of *self-congruence* to be activated. Therefore, both perceived congruence and perceived authenticity are necessary for advertising to have a positive influence. When consumers perceive that brand marketing messages match the corporate brand personality and that the content is authentic, their level of trust increases, resulting in an increase in positive attitudes towards advertising (Negm, 2023).

Overall, femvertising is one of the most significant manifestations of contemporary brand activism. It contributes to redefining the role of brands as cultural and political actors, but at the same time highlights the ambiguities and limitations of the encounter between feminism and capitalism. To fully understand its scope, it is necessary to take a critical look, capable of grasping the power dynamics, economic logic and cultural transformations that run through it. Femvertising is not just a marketing strategy: it is a complex phenomenon, in which market logic, political demands and cultural transformations intertwine, reflecting and helping to shape the way contemporary society thinks about gender, politics and consumption.

2.4 Femvertising Applied to the Cinematographic Sector

Cinematographic femvertising shares some roots with commercial femvertising, but it develops in a profoundly distinct cultural and industrial context. Both use the language of female empowerment, but they do so with purposes, methods and implications that cannot be superimposed. Understanding the differences between these two areas is essential to grasp the specificity of femvertising applied to cinema and to avoid interpreting it as a simple transposition of traditional advertising logic.

As we have seen, commercial femvertising originated within the marketing and brand communication industry, with the primary aim of strengthening brand reputation and increasing sales.

Campaigns such as Dove's *Real Beauty* and *Always' Like a Girl* were key moments in this trend, proposing messages of female empowerment that had a significant impact on the public. These campaigns are based on an 'added value' strategy that associates the brand with social causes, transforming feminism into a reputational asset (Champlin et al., 2019). However, their effectiveness is often conditioned by the consistency between the message and corporate practices: when this consistency is lacking, femvertising risks being perceived as opportunistic, giving rise to phenomena of commercial appropriation or depoliticization of feminism (Gill, 2016).

In commercial femvertising, the feminist message is constructed in a simple, immediate and easily shareable way. The aim is to reach a wide audience, generate engagement and stimulate a positive emotional response. For this reason, campaigns tend to favour a 'soft' feminism, centred on self-esteem, natural beauty, individual strength and the celebration of diversity, a feminism that circulates in the mainstream media and lends itself to being incorporated into market logic (*popular feminism*) (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

Cinematographic femvertising, while sharing some elements with commercial femvertising, operates in a more complex context. Cinema is not just a product to be sold, but a cultural device that produces narratives, imaginaries and identities. Film promotional campaigns do not merely present a product but construct social discourses that influence public perception. For this reason, cinematic femvertising can take on more articulated and layered forms than commercial femvertising (Holt, 2004).

A first distinctive element concerns the relationship between the promotional message and the film content. In commercial femvertising, the empowering message is often only loosely or symbolically related to the product: for instance, a detergent or a clothing brand can associate itself with feminist or body-positive discourses mainly at the level of imagery and narrative, while the product's functional features remain largely unaffected by these issues. In cinematic femvertising, on the other hand, the promotional message is inevitably linked to the film's narrative. When the campaign emphasises empowerment, agency or inclusion, the audience expects these values to be present in the story as well. This constraint makes cinematic femvertising more exposed to the risk of inconsistency: if the film does not reflect the promotional message, the audience perceives the campaign as manipulative (Sobande, 2020).

A second element concerns narrative complexity. Commercial femvertising tends to simplify feminist discourse to make it immediately understandable. Cinematographic femvertising, on the other hand, can rely on the complexity of the film to articulate more nuanced messages. Some films, such

as *Barbie* (2023), for example, which will be discussed in more detail later, use an ironic and meta-reflective campaign that plays with stereotypes in order to deconstruct them, but does so in the knowledge that the film itself will explore these themes in a more articulate way. The campaign thus becomes an extension of the film's discourse, not just a simple slogan (Yilmaz Sert, 2025). Similarly, *Hidden Figures* (2016) builds its communication around the valorisation of invisible stories: those of the African American mathematicians who contributed to NASA's space missions. The film's promotional materials show the protagonists in professional attire, often placed in front of iconic elements of the space agency. The image does not focus on pop aesthetics or spectacular heroism, but on competence, intelligence and professional dignity. The campaign promotes intersectional femvertising, which does not merely celebrate female strength, but highlights the multiple forms of discrimination, gender and race, that the protagonists had to face. In this case, the consistency between the promotional message and the film's content is particularly strong, helping to construct a discourse of empowerment rooted in history and social justice.

A third distinctive element concerns the role of the stars. In commercial femvertising, testimonials are often selected for their ability to embody positive values and generate identification. In cinematic femvertising, actresses are not just testimonials, but an integral part of the creative and narrative process. Sometimes they use their visibility to support feminist discourses, helping to reinforce the consistency between the film and the promotional campaign. However, this dynamic can be ambivalent: the star can become a symbol of empowerment, but also a product to be consumed (Negra, 2014).

Finally, cinematic femvertising differs from commercial femvertising in its ability to generate public debate. Films such as *Barbie* or *Wonder Woman* do not merely promote a message but become a cultural phenomenon that stimulates discussion in the media, on social media and in society. Commercial femvertising can generate engagement but rarely produces a wide-ranging cultural debate. Cinema, on the other hand, could spark collective conversations, influence the imagination and redefine the way society perceives femininity.

In summary, commercial and cinematic femvertising share some communication strategies, but operate in different contexts and produce different effects. The former tends to simplify feminist discourse for branding purposes, while the latter can articulate more complex messages linked to film narrative and capable of influencing the collective imagination. Both, however, are fraught with tensions between emancipation and the market, between authenticity and opportunism, which require careful and informed critical analysis.

To fully understand the dynamics of modern femvertising and its discursive strategies, it is necessary to reconstruct the historical and theoretical path that has characterised the female presence on screen and behind the camera, since it is precisely within this long visual tradition that the cultural models that today's empowerment campaigns seek to rework have been formed, consolidated and sometimes subverted. It constitutes one of the most complex and layered fields of contemporary media studies. Its evolution spans more than a century of audiovisual history and reflects cultural, political and industrial transformations that have redefined the role of women both on screen and behind the camera. To understand how femvertising fits into the promotional strategies of contemporary films, it is necessary to reconstruct this path in a broad and critical way, observing how the film industry has progressively incorporated, and sometimes neutralised, feminist and post-feminist demands.

Since the origins of classic Hollywood cinema, the representation of women has been shaped by patriarchal logic that has defined their roles, postures and narrative functions; traditional cinematic language has been constructed to satisfy the heterosexual male gaze, relegating women to objects of desire and interrupting their narrative agency. The very structure of classic cinema, from staging to editing, is organised around a male point of view that controls and defines the visibility of the female body (Mulvey, 1975). This interpretation has profoundly influenced subsequent studies, paving the way for a systematic critique of the power dynamics inherent in cinematic language.

In subsequent years, the discourse has broadened to include psychoanalytic, Marxist and intersectional perspectives that highlighted how cinema has historically constructed women as 'other' in relation to the male subject (Kaplan, 1983) and how the representation of women is further complicated by dynamics of race and class, highlighting the marginalisation of black women and their exclusion from the dominant imaginary (Hooks, 1992). These contributions have made it clear that the issue of female representation cannot be addressed in a monolithic way but requires careful analysis of the multiple dimensions of identity.

With the crisis of the studio system and the advent of New Hollywood in the 1960s and 1970s, there was a partial transformation in the representation of women. Films such as Martin Scorsese's *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* (1974) and Paul Mazursky's *An Unmarried Woman* (1978) began to explore more complex female subjectivities, influenced by the feminist movements of the time. However, most films continued to reproduce stereotypical roles, and the presence of female directors remained marginal. Even when the protagonists were more autonomous, the narrative tended to bring them back into traditional patterns, confirming the persistence of a dominant male imagination (Haskell, 2016).

In the 1990s and 2000s, pop culture was swept by a wave of 'girl power', fuelled by phenomena such as the Spice Girls and *Sex and the City*. Cinema noticed this trend, offering strong, independent and sexually emancipated female characters. This was the post-feminist phase, a context in which feminism was incorporated into mainstream culture but often emptied of its political dimension. Films such as *Charlie's Angels* (2000) and *Legally Blonde* (2001) celebrate female autonomy, but they do so through hyper-commercial aesthetics and consumer-centred narratives, transforming empowerment into a product to be sold. This tension between emancipation and the market is fundamental to understanding contemporary femvertising, which often uses the language of feminism for promotional purposes (McRobbie, 2009).

Over the last ten years, the film industry has undergone a significant transformation due to several factors. The first is the impact of social movements such as #MeToo, which have brought to light dynamics of abuse and systemic discrimination, forcing Hollywood to confront its responsibilities. Feminist discourse has become a permanent feature of pop culture, influencing not only film production but also marketing strategies (Banet-Weiser, 2018). At the same time, the presence of women behind the camera has increased, although it remains below 20% in mainstream films: female presence in production influences representation, as demonstrated by the work of directors such as Greta Gerwig, Chloé Zhao, Céline Sciamma and Ava DuVernay, who have introduced new aesthetic and narrative sensibilities (Lauzen, 2023). In addition, festivals such as Cannes, Berlin and Venice have introduced gender equality guidelines, influencing film selection and promotion. Two new representation metrics have also been implemented:

- The Bechdel Test, one of the most widely used tools for assessing the presence and minimum quality of female representation in audiovisual products (Benshoff, 2009)
- the Geena Davis Inclusion Quotient (GDIQ), which uses machine learning, facial recognition and automated audio analysis techniques to objectively measure the actual time female and male characters appear on screen, the amount of dialogue attributed to different genders, the distribution of roles and narrative functions, and intersectional representation (ethnicity, age, social role) (Smith et al., 2017).

These have become widely used analytical tools, helping to raise awareness among the public and the industry: the Bechdel Test operates as a basic qualitative indicator, useful for quickly highlighting the presence or absence of meaningful female interactions, while the GDIQ provides a detailed quantitative measurement, capable of returning an accurate snapshot of gender distribution on screen.

The evolution of cinematic femvertising cannot be fully understood without placing it within a broader theoretical framework, which includes not only feminist studies on cinema, but also theories of cultural branding, visual semiotics, audiences and the cultural industry. Cinema, in fact, is not only a narrative medium, but a complex ecosystem in which economic, symbolic and political powers intertwine. The inclusion of femvertising in the promotional strategies of contemporary films is the result of a convergence between cultural transformations and industrial logic that deserves to be analysed through a variety of theoretical perspectives.

A first essential reference is 'feminist film theory', which emerged in the 1970s as a critical response to the representation of women in cinema and the mechanisms of power that structure the cinematic gaze. It is an interdisciplinary theoretical field that combines gender studies, psychoanalysis, semiotics, sociology and media theory. Cinema does not merely represent women but contributes to producing them as cultural subjects through narrative and visual devices. De Lauretis introduces the concept of 'gender technologies', showing how the media actively participate in the construction of gender identities (De Lauretis, 1984). This perspective is particularly useful for understanding cinematic femvertising, which does not merely show strong or emancipated women, but contributes to shaping what society considers 'female empowerment'.

Another fundamental contribution comes from post-feminism studies, which have shown how feminism has been incorporated into pop culture through a process of 'domestication' that has attenuated its political significance. Post-feminism proposes a model of empowerment based on individual choice, self-realisation and personal responsibility, elements that we often find in femvertising campaigns, both commercial and cinematic. Gill and Orgad (2022), in their recent work on confidence culture, highlight how self-confidence has become a sort of moral imperative for women, transforming empowerment into an individual duty rather than a collective process (Gill & Orgad, 2022).

Alongside feminist theories, it is useful to consider cultural branding theories, according to which brands do not just sell products but construct cultural meanings through narratives that respond to social tensions (Holt, 2004). Cinematographic femvertising can be interpreted as a form of cultural branding, in which film becomes a vehicle for articulating feminist or post-feminist discourses that respond to the needs of an audience sensitive to gender issues.

Visual semiotics offers a further tool for analysing cinematic femvertising. Images do not merely represent reality but construct it through systems of signs that convey cultural meanings (Barthes, 1964). Jean-Marie Floch (1990), applying semiotics to marketing, highlighted how

promotional materials are strategic devices that guide public perception. In cinematic femvertising, posters, trailers and social media content are not simply promotional tools, but cultural texts that construct models of femininity.

An important contribution also comes from star studies: stars are not simply performers, but cultural texts that embody values, ideologies and identities (Dyer, 1979). In cinematic femvertising, actresses play a leading role as they are not only promotional faces, but figures who actively contribute to the construction of feminist discourse around films. have highlighted how female stars are often used as vehicles for feminist values, but also as products to be consumed, showing the ambivalence of this dynamic (Negra, 2014).

Audience studies offer another useful perspective. The audience is not a passive entity, but an active actor who interprets, negotiates and sometimes resists media messages (Jenkins, 2006). In cinematic femvertising, the role of the audience is particularly evident: promotional campaigns are often designed to generate participation, discussion and virality. Finally, cultural industry theories offer a critical framework for understanding the tensions between emancipation and the market. The media and marketing systems characteristic of advanced capitalism tend to absorb and reformulate critical issues, transforming them into commodities, content and communication formats that are fully compatible with market logic. This dynamic is evident in cinematic femvertising: feminism, once a radical political movement, is often transformed into pop aesthetics or market value, a feminism that celebrates individualism, meritocracy and personal responsibility, aligning perfectly with the logic of contemporary capitalism (Rottenberg, 2018).

The integration of these theories allows us to understand cinematic femvertising as a complex phenomenon, situated at the intersection of culture, politics and the market. It is not simply a matter of representing strong or emancipated women, but of continually negotiating the very meaning of 'femininity' in a rapidly changing cultural context. Cinematographic femvertising can be emancipatory when it succeeds in constructing narratives that increase the visibility of women and their experiences; but it can also be opportunistic when it uses the language of feminism for purely commercial purposes. Its effectiveness depends on its ability to maintain consistency between the promotional message, film content and industrial practices, avoiding the simplifications and contradictions typical of commercial femvertising.

Cinematographic femvertising manifests itself through a variety of strategies that intertwine with marketing logic, industry transformations and the expectations of an audience that is increasingly sensitive to gender issues. To understand how these dynamics work, it is useful to look at some

emblematic films from recent years, analysing both their promotional campaigns and the visual and narrative materials that have contributed to constructing a feminist or post-feminist discourse around the work.

One of the most significant cases is *Wonder Woman* (2017), which represented a turning point in the construction of the female heroic imagination. The film's promotional campaign emphasised the figure of the protagonist Diana as the embodiment of strength, autonomy and leadership, using an aesthetic that reworks the codes of action cinema traditionally associated with male heroes. The posters show the protagonist in frontal poses, armed and determined, illuminated by a light that enhances her physical power without resorting to sexualisation. The image does not invite the viewer to desire the female body, but to recognise its authority. This iconography marks a break with the long tradition of the *male gaze*, replacing the body-object with a body-subject capable of acting and driving the narrative. The film's femvertising strategy is therefore based on direct empowerment, which celebrates female strength in an explicit and immediately recognisable way (Tasker, 2017).

A similar logic, but with a more pronounced motivational slant, characterises the campaign for *Captain Marvel* (2019). Here too, the protagonist is portrayed as a figure of resilience and self-determination, but the communication focuses on the 'first time' aspect: the first Marvel film with a female superhero in the lead role. The promotional materials use bright symbolism, with actress Carol Danvers often portrayed in front of an explosion of light that evokes the idea of revelation, rebirth and inner power. There is a message of self-affirmation that is close to the language of commercial femvertising, which associates empowerment with individual performance. The campaign had a strong impact on the public, but it also drew criticism for its celebratory and sometimes simplistic nature, which risks reducing feminism to a motivational message lacking in political depth (Brown, 2020).

A completely different approach is taken by *Barbie* (2023), which represents one of the most complex and innovative case of femvertising applied to cinema. The film's promotional campaign chose to play with stereotypes rather than avoid them, using pop aesthetics, pastel colours and constant irony that invites the audience to reflect on the cultural construction of femininity. The posters, deliberately simple and iconic, feature Barbie and Ken in stereotypical poses, but do so with an ironic tone that reveals their artificial nature. The tagline 'She's everything. He is just Ken' lightly overturns gender hierarchies, transforming feminism into an accessible and viral discourse. Barbie's campaign does not just promote a film, but constructs a meta-discourse on female representation, inviting the public to question how feminism is narrated, simplified or distorted in pop culture. In this sense,

Barbie represents an example of meta-narrative femvertising, capable of integrating irony, social criticism and active public participation (Yilmaz Sert, 2025).

Alongside these more spectacular examples, there are films, such as *Hidden Figures* (2016), that adopt more sober but equally significant femvertising strategies.

Semiotic analysis of the promotional materials for these films allows us to identify some recurring strategies through which they construct meanings and guide audience reception. In the case of *Wonder Woman* and *Captain Marvel*, the visual construction is based on an aesthetic of heroism, using assertive postures, dramatic lighting and symbols of power to communicate strength and autonomy. In *Barbie*, on the other hand, the semiotics are playful and meta-reflective: pastel colours, stereotypical poses and ironic taglines invite the viewer to recognise and deconstruct stereotypes. *Hidden Figures* adopts a more sober visual language, focused on professionalism and competence, which communicates authority and restores dignity to historically marginalised figures. In terms of femvertising strategy, the *Wonder Woman* campaign uses direct empowerment, based on physical and moral strength, and targets a cross-section of the public, not just women. The *Captain Marvel* campaign emphasises the 'first time' of a Marvel superheroine, using celebratory, performance-oriented feminism. In the case of *Barbie*, the campaign uses pop, inclusive and viral feminism, capable of generating memes, trends and active audience participation. Finally, the campaign for *Hidden Figures* uses intersectional femvertising, centred on merit, intelligence and historical recognition. These different strategies respond to different audiences and reflect different conceptions of feminism in contemporary pop culture. Heroic empowerment speaks to an audience seeking models of strength and leadership; *Barbie's* pop feminism appeals to a generation accustomed to communicating through memes, irony and digital languages; the intersectional empowerment of *Hidden Figures* captures an audience sensitive to historical and social issues. In all cases, cinematic femvertising does not merely promote a film, but contributes to building broader cultural discourses, influencing perceptions of femininity and the way women are represented and recognised in the public sphere.

Summary of dynamics

The analysis of femvertising applied to cinema shows how this phenomenon lies at the intersection of culture, industry and politics. On the one hand, cinematic femvertising inherits from commercial femvertising the language of empowerment, the valorisation of diversity and the strategic use of emotions to engage the audience. On the other hand, it operates in a much more complex narrative and symbolic context, in which promotional messages must dialogue with the story

told by the film and with the expectations of an audience that is increasingly attentive to gender issues.

Unlike traditional advertising, cinema can generate public debate, influence the collective imagination and redefine the way society perceives femininity. When cinematic femvertising is consistent with the film's content, it can help build emancipatory narratives that increase the visibility of women and their experiences. When it merely uses the language of feminism as a marketing tool, however, it risks reproducing the same dynamics of superficiality and opportunism seen in commercial femvertising.

The main challenge for the film industry is therefore to find a balance between market demands and cultural responsibility. Femvertising can be a powerful tool for promoting more inclusive and conscious representations, but only if accompanied by a genuine desire for transformation. In this sense, contemporary cinema is a privileged laboratory for observing how feminism is negotiated, reinterpreted and sometimes exploited in global pop culture.

In conclusion, the analysis of femvertising applied to cinema shows how this phenomenon lies at the intersection of culture, industry and politics. On the one hand, cinematic femvertising inherits from commercial femvertising the language of empowerment, the valorisation of diversity and the strategic use of emotions to engage the audience. On the other, it operates in a much more complex narrative and symbolic context, in which promotional messages must dialogue with the story told by the film and with the expectations of an audience that is increasingly attentive to gender issues.

2.5 Managerial Challenges in Communicating Femvertising in Film

It has already been highlighted that in the contemporary debate on femvertising, one of the most recurring themes concerns the issue of authenticity. The literature has shown that the adoption of feminist messages by brands and cultural industries can easily slip into forms of superficial appropriation. Pop feminism, increasingly prevalent in the media and commercial culture, tends to be incorporated into market logic, generating what is known as 'commercial empowerment', a process that risks emptying the original political message and transforming emancipation into a product to be sold (Banet-Weiser, 2018).

This dynamic is intertwined with 'postfeminist sensibility', a cultural sensibility that celebrates individual autonomy, personal choice and freedom of expression, but at the same time avoids addressing the social structures that produce gender inequality (Gill, 2016). In the context of cinema, this tension is particularly evident: when a film incorporates femvertising messages without real

narrative coherence or genuine commitment on the part of the production, the audience may perceive the result as performative feminism. This phenomenon, which is increasingly discussed in digital media, can generate negative reactions, accusations of opportunism and a loss of credibility for the brand or film production.

For communication managers, this implies the need to develop a critical sensitivity towards the consistency between declared values and values represented. It is not just a matter of avoiding partnerships with brands that lack a credible history of feminist commitment, but also of constantly monitoring public perception, which today is particularly attentive to forms of 'woke-washing', i.e. the instrumental use of social causes for image purposes (Sobande, 2020). Authenticity therefore becomes an essential strategic element, not only for the success of the femvertising message, but also for the overall reputation of the film project.

The analysis of the managerial challenges in communicating femvertising in cinema requires a methodological framework capable of capturing the layered nature of the phenomenon, which lies at the intersection of film narrative, corporate communication strategies and broader cultural processes. For this reason, the approach here adopted is based on a qualitative and interpretative perspective, which integrates tools from film semiotics, media discourse analysis and gender studies. This approach allows femvertising to be read not as a simple advertising message inserted into an audiovisual product, but as a complex cultural device that produces meaning through texts, practices and relationships.

Contemporary communication is increasingly oriented towards the construction of value narratives and the production of ethos through discursive strategies (Peverini, 2012). Applying this perspective to cinema means considering the film not only as a text, but as a node in a communication network involving promotional materials, institutional discourse, marketing strategies and consumption practices.

The methodological framework is divided into three interconnected analytical levels. The first level concerns the textual-narrative analysis of films. Here, the construction of female characters, their agency, relational dynamics and aesthetic choices that contribute to defining the representation of women are examined. The semiotic approach allows us to investigate how the film organises meanings through visual and narrative codes (Casetti, 1990). Feminist studies on cinema offer further tools for understanding how these representations fit into a cultural tradition marked by patriarchal logic and forms of objectification of the gaze (Mulvey, 1975).

The second level concerns discursive-promotional analysis, which focuses on the communication strategies that accompany the film: trailers, posters, press kits, interviews, social media content, and digital campaigns. Communication is never neutral but constructs interpretative frameworks that guide the audience's perception (Peverini, 2012). Applying this perspective to cinematic femvertising means analysing how promotional materials emphasise themes such as empowerment, diversity or criticism of stereotypes, and how these choices contribute to positioning the film within the public debate. Discourse analysis allows us to observe which rhetorical strategies are used to construct an image of the film as a culturally engaged product, and how these strategies interact with audience expectations and the dynamics of digital media (ibid.).

The third level concerns production-managerial analysis, which considers the economic, strategic and reputational logic that guides the making and promotion of films. This includes brand partnerships, positioning strategies, marketing choices and brand activism dynamics. From this perspective, femvertising appears as a form of 'value storytelling' that brands adopt to legitimise themselves culturally by taking positions on relevant social issues. Managerial analysis allows us to assess the consistency between the values declared by brands and their production practices, highlighting the tensions that can arise between commercial needs and the authenticity of the message (Vredenburg et al., 2020).

Contemporary film communication is not limited to promoting films, but is a complex ecosystem that includes transmedia strategies, capable of extending across social media, brand partnerships and value-based campaigns. This perspective fits into the theoretical framework outlined by Jenkins, according to which convergent culture and transmedia storytelling allow content to circulate across multiple platforms, generating forms of participation and meaning construction distributed between audiences and producers (Jenkins, 2006). Scolari also emphasises how transmedia storytelling represents a strategic way to expand the narrative universe and strengthen the symbolic positioning of cultural products, including films (Scolari, 2009).

In this context, femvertising can be integrated at distinct levels, each of which presents specific managerial challenges.

At the narrative level, femvertising manifests itself through the construction of complex female characters, endowed with agency and represented outside traditional stereotypes. This approach is part of the tradition of feminist film studies, which have highlighted the need to overcome the logic of the male gaze (Mulvey, 1975) and to construct representations capable of restoring subjectivity and depth to female figures (De Lauretis, 1987). However, for such representations to be credible,

careful coordination between screenwriters, directors and cultural consultants is necessary to avoid the message appearing artificial or a superficial attempt to adhere to current trends. The internal consistency of the filmic text is fundamental to ensuring the credibility of the narrative and its communicative effectiveness (Casetti & Di Chio, 1990).

At the production level, femvertising is intertwined with partnerships between film studios and brands engaged in gender equality initiatives. Here, critical issues emerge related to brand reputation, the transparency of its business practices, and the consistency between the values of the film and those of the commercial partner. The literature on brand activism has shown that such collaborations can only be effective when they are perceived as authentic and consistent, while inconsistent partnerships risk being interpreted as forms of woke-washing (Vredenburg et al., 2020); the narrative of brand values must be supported by real and verifiable practices, otherwise communication risks losing credibility (Peverini, 2012). Finally, at the promotional level, femvertising is expressed through social media campaigns, themed trailers and extra content that emphasises female empowerment. In this case, the challenge is to maintain a balance between marketing and social commitment, avoiding simplification of the message or its transformation into a mere slogan. Research on femvertising shows that the public only responds positively to empowerment-oriented messages when they perceive authenticity and consistency, while reacting negatively to content perceived as opportunistic or stereotypical (Åkestam, 2017; Champlin et al., 2019). The transmedia dimension also contributes to strengthening or weakening the perception of the message, as the circulation of content on digital platforms and its amplification amplifies the audience's ability to comment on, criticise and reinterpret communication strategies (Scolari, 2009). Another critical issue concerns the commodification of feminism, a phenomenon widely discussed in literature. Feminism can be transformed into a consumer product, reduced to aesthetics or a rhetorical device functional to market logic (Lazar, 2006); many advertising campaigns and cultural products oscillate between empowerment and sexism, proposing an image of women that is apparently emancipated but still inscribed in the logic of objectification (Gill, 2008). Banet-Weiser defines this process as 'commodity feminism', emphasising how feminism is often used as a symbolic resource to increase brand value rather than as a tool for social transformation (Banet-Weiser, 2018). In cinema, commodification can manifest itself through empowerment-oriented characters lacking narrative depth, feminist aesthetics used as marketing tools, or brand partnerships that exploit feminism as a commercial lever.

Research shows that audiences, especially female audiences, react negatively when they perceive inconsistency or opportunism. For communication managers, this implies the need to conduct in-depth audience analysis and adopt transparent strategies. The literature reviewed so far highlights

several managerial challenges that characterise the integration of femvertising in cinema. The first challenge concerns value consistency: the femvertising message must be organically integrated into the narrative, avoiding appearing artificial. A second challenge concerns authenticity and reputation: brand partners must have a credible history of social commitment, otherwise the risk of performative feminism becomes high.

A third challenge concerns cultural sensitivity: femvertising must be adapted to different international audiences, avoiding stereotypes and simplifications that could be counterproductive.

A fourth challenge concerns cross-functional coordination: creative teams, marketing, brand partners and institutional stakeholders must work synergistically to ensure consistency and authenticity. Finally, a fifth challenge concerns impact measurement: metrics need to be developed that evaluate not only the economic return but also the cultural and social impact of the message, to understand whether femvertising has really contributed to transforming the collective imagination.

2.6 Research Question

Following the analysis of the previous points concerning marketing in general and especially applied in cinema and the application of Femvertising on it, the research question proposed for this thesis is the following:

How effective are commercials in femvertising-based film marketing campaigns for promoting films with female protagonists, and how consistent is the image of the female character constructed in the commercials with her representation in the film?

Chapter 3

3.1 Research Methodology

The methodological design of this research is based on the integration of two complementary qualitative approaches, semiotic analysis and in-depth interviews, that interact to address the research question in a nuanced and rigorous way. This integration is not merely additive but structurally dialogical: each methodology illuminates specific dimensions of the phenomenon under investigation, and their interaction generates a deeper and more multifaceted understanding of the effectiveness and coherence of cinematic femvertising.

The first methodological component consists of a qualitative study conducted through in-depth interviews, inspired by an interpretive and constructivist paradigm. This methodological choice responds to a precise epistemological need: the research does not aim for statistical generalization but rather seeks to understand the meanings, motivations, and social practices that characterize contemporary female spectatorship.

The interview is conceived not as a simple tool for extracting information, but as a dialogical process through which researcher and participant co-construct meanings in an open and reflexive relational dynamic. The intrinsic flexibility of this instrument allows the researcher to follow unexpected interpretive paths, explore emerging themes, and capture the layered complexity of individual experiences, going beyond standardized answers to access the emotional, value-based, and cognitive dimensions of reception.

The specific objectives of the qualitative interviews unfold across several analytical levels. First, the study aims to analyse the relationship between audience and cinema, investigating the reception of cinematic femvertising campaigns and the ways in which they resonate (or clash) with viewers' expectations, values, and experiences. Second, the interviews seek to understand how audiences interpret and evaluate the empowerment messages conveyed by the advertisements: which textual elements are perceived as authentic, credible, and consistent, and which are identified as instrumental, superficial, or opportunistic. Third, the study explores the tensions between promotional discourse and filmic content, examining processes of identification with female protagonists and assessing the perceived coherence between the advertising campaign's message and the actual cinematic narrative. Finally, the interviews capture the emotional and value-driven responses elicited by femvertising, tracing the affective nuances that shape critical judgment and viewing decisions.

The second methodological component is semiotic analysis, applied to a selected corpus of cinematic advertising spots featuring female protagonists. Semiotics is understood as the general science of

signs and of their processes of production, transmission, and interpretation. Within the specific field of femvertising, semiotic analysis represents a well-established approach in studies of visual communication, advertising, and digital media, requiring an interpretive method capable of grasping the layered complexity of signs, rhetorics, and narratives that make up the audiovisual text. In the specific context of femvertising, this level of analysis is particularly revealing: it enables assessment of whether advertising truly promotes female empowerment through authentic value transformation or merely reconstructs traditional female roles within a more refined and contemporary discursive framework, thereby perpetuating stereotypes under the guise of progressive communication. The two methodologies adopted, semiotic analysis and in-depth interviews, do not operate in parallel but as complementary and dialogical, generating an integrated interpretive system. Semiotic analysis deconstructs the textual and rhetorical mechanisms of advertising spots, making explicit discursive strategies, narrative structures, and value hierarchies that organize the promotional message. Qualitative interviews, by contrast, reveal how audiences interpret, negotiate, and respond to these messages in the concrete practice of reception, capturing the pragmatic, emotional, and value dimensions of the viewing experience.

This integration directly addresses the two dimensions of the research question. About communicative effectiveness, semiotic analysis identifies the textual strategies employed to generate appeal and identification, while the interviews assess whether and how such strategies are persuasive, credible, and engaging for the target audience. Regarding representational coherence, semiotic analysis systematically compares the image of the female protagonist constructed in the advertisement with that represented in the film, while the interviews capture the coherence perceived by viewers, including any discrepancies and the resulting feelings of disappointment, betrayal, or conversely, affirmation and satisfaction.

In summary, the integrated methodological approach makes it possible to overcome the limitations of each method taken individually, offering an organic, layered, and rigorous understanding of cinematic femvertising as a complex communicative phenomenon situated at the intersection of text, strategy, and reception.

3.2 Semiotic Analysis

Although semiotics has long been identified primarily with the analysis of signs, today this discipline has evolved towards the study of processes of signification, thus dealing with everything that generates meaning. This broadening of perspective has led semiotics to go beyond the exclusive analysis of texts traditionally understood as narrative, extending its field of investigation to a multiplicity of objects that are heterogeneous in terms of expressive manifestation: spaces, packaging, advertising materials. This approach is intrinsically multimodal, integrating audio, visual and audio-visual dimensions in the construction of meaning. Specifically, in this research, we chose to use the tools of communication semiotics, a field in which advertising analysis plays a leading role. The adoption of this methodology is not accidental, but responds to a specific analytical need: semiotics, in fact, allows us to deconstruct and break down narrative structures to bring out the deep value systems that underpin them. In the context of feminist film spots, narratives that are dense and complex by nature, this approach is essential for going beyond the surface of the promotional message and understanding how meanings related to gender and empowerment are constructed and conveyed.

Below are some contributions that may be relevant to the application of semiotic analysis to the study of femvertising, albeit not always directly but as a methodological lens.

One contribution comes from Rosalind Gill, who has analysed female representations in contemporary media in depth through a semiotic-discursive approach. Gill (2016) argues that femvertising is part of a broader postfeminist sensibility, characterised by rhetoric of individual empowerment, performative authenticity and self-optimisation. Her analysis shows how femvertising campaigns use visual and linguistic codes that combine feminism and consumption, producing narratives that appear emancipatory but often respond to market logic.

Another author of reference is Paolo Peverini: he analyses value-based campaigns as complex sign systems, in which images, texts and aesthetic choices contribute to the construction of a social imaginary (Peverini, 2009). Peverini's semiotic approach allows us to understand how cinematic femvertising uses symbols, metaphors and visual rhetoric to construct a recognisable and coherent cultural identity. A further contribution comes from Sarah Banet-Weiser, who analyses feminism as a brand through a semiotic-cultural approach. In her book *Empowered* (2018), Banet-Weiser shows how femvertising constructs narratives of empowerment through recognisable visual codes — such as the celebration of female strength, body diversity or solidarity among women — transforming feminism into an aesthetic and commercial language. Her analysis highlights how femvertising operates through a logic of visibility politics, in which representation becomes a value, often independent of structural changes.

Overall, therefore, the semiotic analysis of femvertising is an interdisciplinary field that integrates semiotics, media studies and gender studies. The authors cited show how femvertising is not only a marketing strategy, but a cultural device that constructs meanings, identities and female imaginaries through a sophisticated use of signs. Qualitative and semiotic research therefore allows us to grasp the complexity of these narratives, highlighting both their emancipatory potential and their ambivalences.

For the semiotic approach to be operational in a well-defined system, this study is based on a three-stage model inspired by Semprini (2006). These stages (superficial level, semio-narrative level and axiological level) progressively allow analysis from what can be observed to the abstract, from textual construction to cultural meaning, and each stage is essential for understanding how an advertising message encodes and conveys its message. Semiotic analysis begins at the Surface Level: the audiovisual text is segmented into narrative sequences, each of which has the value of an episode or a specific function within the advertising message. The aim is to highlight sequences that are cohesive with each other at specific narrative or thematic moments. According to Peverini's guidelines, each sequence is characterised by key visual and auditory features: sequence length and structure. Sequences can vary in both length and rhythm, ranging from a dynamic advertisement that is self-contained to a longer scene with its own narrative coherence, corresponding to real-life situations.

1) Description of content: advertising here takes on a discursive structure, as each sequence should be briefly summarised in terms of the action that takes place and who appears. This helps to give the advertisement a discursive structure.

2) Framing and camera work: framing the camera suggests that we focus our attention on people, actions or objects. Shots are chosen according to symbolic priority, e.g. faces that can convey emotions, objects that attract a brand.

3) Camera angle: unlike horizontal framing, vertical framing can signal both the perspective and the context in which we intend to frame. Angles create dynamic flows of power and emotional reactions.

4) Lighting: warm lighting evokes atmospheres of intimacy, while cold lighting evokes a feeling of professionalism or distance.

5) Colours: colour nuances are important for evoking emotional and symbolic moods: red or orange suggest energy, blue or green suggest calm and detachment.

6) Soundtrack and sound effects: it is necessary to identify the diegetic sounds that are part of the narrative story and the setting in which it is set, and the extradiegetic background sounds, aimed

exclusively at the viewer. These can be a voice-over, a sound effect or background noise. If sound and image are correlated, the rhythm and momentum of the advert increase;

7) Point of view and point of listening: here we see how much and how sound supports the narrative and the enunciative strategy;

8) Rhythm and time: the rhythmic scanning of cuts, movements and landscapes defines the logic and internal orientation of the advert. Rhythmic variations can correspond to the emotional intensity and importance of the advert's characteristics.

Therefore, surface-level analysis helps us understand how form and aesthetics are at the forefront of interpretation: if each sequence is segmented through compositional and sensory elements, the analyst gains access to the discursive strategies through which meaning is organised. To fully understand how narratives and values are encoded, it is necessary to go beyond this level into the semiotic-narrative and axiological dimensions.

The semio-narrative level, which constitutes the second phase of semiotic analysis, is condensed into the deep narrative structures that structure narrations. Two models are fundamental: the Actantial Model and the Canonical Narrative Scheme. The Actantial Model, developed by Algirdas Julien Greimas within structural semiotics, is a fundamental tool for analysing the deep logic of narratives. In his seminal work *Du sens*, the author introduces the idea that every story can be described through a stable structure composed of six actants, organised into three opposing pairs: Subject/Object, Addresser/Addressee, Helper/Opponent (Greimas, 1970). Greimas, expanding on his model, emphasises that these functions do not correspond to specific characters, but to abstract narrative roles that can be embodied by individuals, objects, institutions or abstract values (Greimas, 1970).

These tools highlight the internal grammar of the text, as meaning emerges through the relationships between roles, actions and transformations, without the brevity or apparent simplicity of the medium having any bearing.

The Actantial model is relevant to six fundamental narrative roles, the actants, which are present in all narrative structures. These roles correspond more to functions that people, objects, ideas or institutions can perform than to specific characters. Let us specify who the six actors are: the Subject, the protagonist, the one who desires to obtain the Object; the Object or the goal to be pursued. In advertising, the object could consist of various possible goals, such as self-confidence, time, beauty, esteem from society or inner serenity; the Sender, i.e. the entity that guides the search and could be the company, the family, the brand in question or a normative ideal; the Receiver, i.e. the actant who

receives a mandate from the sender and promotes a narrative programme aimed at acquiring the object of value. In a logistical situation, the recipient becomes the subject of the quest; The Helper, i.e. the agent who assists the subject in achieving the set goal, i.e. the advertised product or service. Finally, the Opponents, i.e. adversaries capable of hindering the process, such as time pressure, stereotypes or social norms.

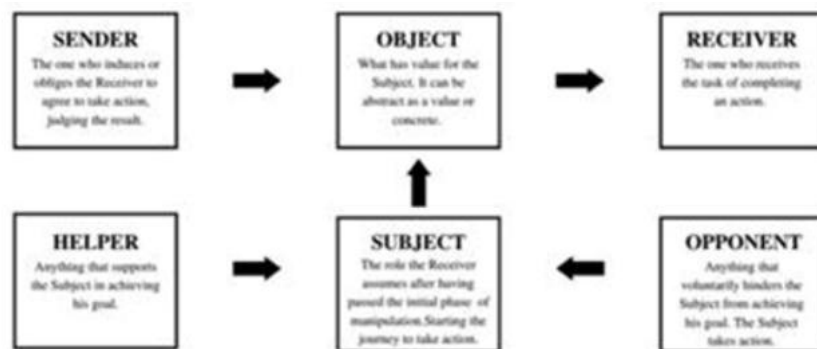


Figure 14: The actantial model by Greimas

In advertising analysis, this model is fundamental in that it shows how brands can determine relationships of desire, conflict and resolution. An example is provided by femvertising campaigns: in these, the brand often takes the form of a helper, enabling the subject (usually a woman) to overcome adversaries such as unrealistic expectations, social depression or cultural constraints.

The Canonical Narrative Scheme articulates the dynamic structure of transformation into narrative. The story is divided into four key stages, each representing a stage in the subject's journey:

- 1) Manipulation: the initial stage explains why the subject embarks on the quest. A lack or desire is perceived, frequently through a sender figure or cultural code. It is normally the sender who induces the subject to act. In advertising, this often corresponds to the articulation of a problem, a situation of social pressure or frustration with which the viewer is likely to relate.
- 2) Competence: the subject proves capable of performing an action, acquiring the tools or means to succeed in the quest. In advertising, this is the moment when the product is presented not only as an object, but as a solution, a way to give value to the action or transformation. The competence stage answers the question: how can the subject act?

3) Performance: the action takes place, the Subject acts, striving to achieve the object of value. A narrative climax develops in which the transformation begins, often dramatized in physical, emotional or symbolic terms.

4) Sanction: final phase, the Sender evaluates the result and the Subject is rewarded or validated for their action, implicitly or explicitly. This is followed by an emotional outcome or recognition, which in advertising often manifests itself in a resolution scene that associates the brand with success, serenity, well-being or empowerment.

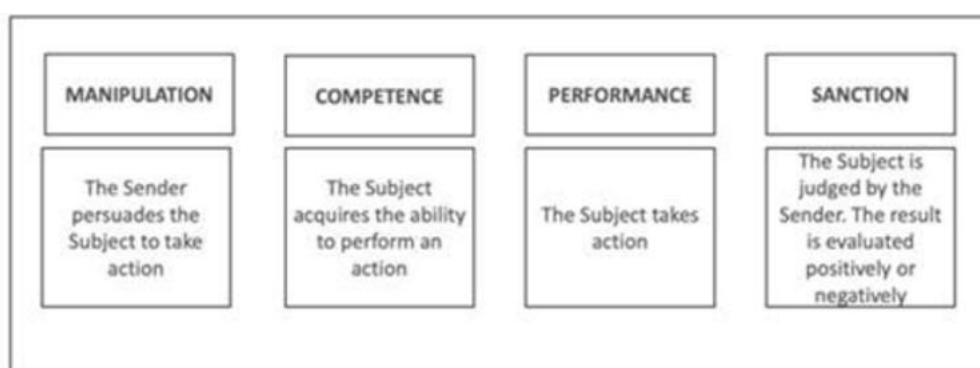


Figure 15: Greimas' canonical narrative scheme

The Actantial Model is based on roles and relational dynamics, while the Canonical Narrative Scheme emphasises the temporal and logical development of the narrative. When combined, the advertising message acquires the value of an in-depth and systematic reading; the actants define who is involved, in what role, how the story develops over time and for what reasons. With the integration of these models, the semio-narrative level exposes not only the structure of the story, but also the more hidden mechanisms of meaning, identification and ideological coding.

The third and final phase concerns the axiological or value level of advertising:

Through the semiotic square, Greimas shows how each text organizes meaning around pairs of values and counter-values. Axiological analysis therefore makes it possible to identify the hierarchies of values that orient discursive practices and to understand how a text – film or promotional – builds, stores or transforms these values.

In the context of femvertising, the axiological level is particularly revealing: the researcher can determine whether the advertisement truly promotes empowerment or simply reconstructs traditional female roles within a more refined framework. From this point of view, axiological

analysis places the advert within broader cultural discourses and highlights its role in shaping the collective imagination. Semprini's (2006) representation of *the Brand Identity System* encompasses the discursive (surface), narrative and axiological dimensions of each advert.

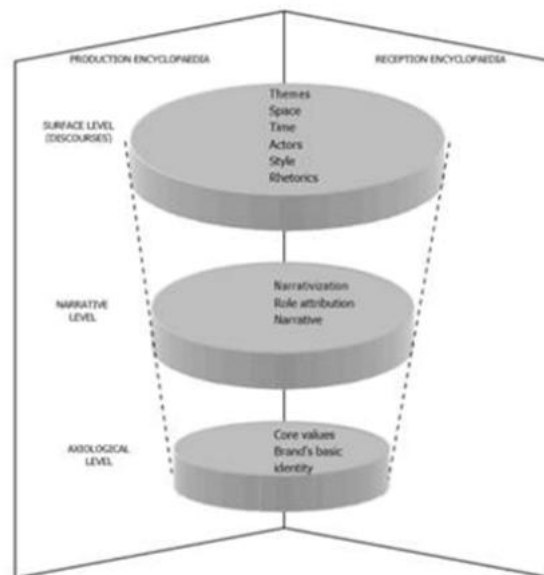


Figure 16: Brand Identity System

3.3 Corpus Analysis: Selection Criteria and Relevance

The corpus selected for the semiotic analysis consists of five film trailers and spots for films with female protagonists: *Babygirl*, *C'è Ancora Domani*, *It Ends With Us* – *Siamo noi a dire basta*, *Barbie*, and *The Substance*. These promotional materials were chosen based on relevance, heterogeneity, and theoretical fit with the research question, with the aim of constructing a set of texts that is thematically coherent yet able to capture the variety of contemporary declinations of cinematic femvertising. First, all selected spots place a female protagonist at the centre of the promotional narrative, which makes it possible to directly interrogate the construction of agency, empowerment, and gendered subjectivity within campaigns that position themselves, to varying degrees, within an explicitly or implicitly feminist discourse. These are therefore texts that, by their very configuration, lend themselves to examining the coherence between the image of empowerment evoked in the promotion and the representation developed in the film's plot, a core concern of this research.

Second, the corpus was assembled to achieve controlled heterogeneity along three main dimensions:

- film genres (intimate drama, Italian auteur cinema, romance/drama, meta-narrative blockbuster, body horror),
- communicative registers of the spots (militant, ironic, emotional, spectacular, unsettling),
- femvertising strategies (explicit empowerment messages, critique of stereotypes, emphasis on identity complexity, the female body as a site of conflict).

An additional layer of complexity concerns the industrial and distributional profile of the films. The five titles belong to different distribution companies and circuits, positioned in distinct segments of the industry (international majors, Italian cinema, more auteur-driven productions) and relying on divergent marketing approaches and resources. This allows us to observe how femvertising is articulated within heterogeneous promotional strategies, and to assess whether and how rhetorical and narrative devices shift according to the industrial and distribution context in which each film is situated. Third, the selected spots are highly pertinent to the theoretical framework outlined in the previous chapters, where femvertising is described as a phenomenon located at the intersection of culture, industry, and politics. On the one hand, campaigns such as *Barbie* and *C'è Ancora Domani* explicitly position themselves within public debates on gender, power, and historical memory, adopting a strongly value-driven promotional stance; on the other hand, titles such as *Babygirl*, *It Ends With Us*, and *The Substance* make it possible to investigate more ambiguous or controversial forms of representation, in which empowerment, vulnerability, and symbolic or material violence are intertwined in less linear ways. In this sense, the corpus was conceived as a comparative laboratory in which to test, across different contexts, the theoretical categories discussed in the chapters on femvertising, brand activism, and gender representations in cinema.

Finally, the decision to limit the corpus to five spots responds to a need for methodological balance: on the one hand, to guarantee an adequate depth of analysis compatible with the three-level semiotic approach (surface, semio-narrative, axiological); on the other, to ensure an empirical base sufficiently articulated to avoid hasty generalisations drawn from isolated cases. Each spot is thus analysed as a singular case and, at the same time, placed in relation to the others in a continuous movement between in-depth analysis and cross-case comparison.

3.4 Semiotic Analysis of a Corpus: Spot Ads with Women as Protagonists

Film spots are a specific form of promotional communication aimed at presenting a film to the public through highly condensed audiovisual language. They are the most widely used tool for film marketing, especially in social and digital media. Characterised by their short duration and high information density, they select and reorganise narrative, aesthetic and thematic elements of the film to construct a persuasive discourse aimed at generating interest, anticipation and emotional involvement. From a semiotic point of view, the advert operates as an autonomous text which, while referring to the film in question, activates its own strategies of signification: it emphasises certain values, defines recognisable actantial roles and constructs a horizon of expectations that guides the viewer's interpretation.

3.4.1 Babygirl



You Tube Link: [Babygirl | Al cinema](#)

Spot Duration: 15 seconds

Date: February 2nd, 2025

Film Distribution Company: Eagle Pictures

Famous Actors: Nicole Kidman e Harris Dickinson

Babygirl is an erotic thriller starring a powerful businesswoman who jeopardizes her professional and personal life when she embarks on a secret and intense relationship with her young assistant.

For this role, Nicole Kidman won the Coppa Volpi for Best Actress at the Venice Film Festival and received a Golden Globe Award nomination.

A – SURFACE LEVEL: Sequence by sequence segmentation

SEQUENCE	SEQUENCE LENGTH	VISUAL COLUMN	SOUNDTRACK	NOTE
1	00:00-00:02	Content description: Romy (Nicole Kidman), an elegant and determined woman, is introduced in her glass office while working in a corporate setting. She appears pensive and meanwhile, her employee asks her a question. Then Samuel, one of the interns the employee is known to be referring to, is also framed. His gaze is intrigued and shy, suggesting the novelty of the context. The setting is modern and minimalist, evoking an idea of success and professional rigor. The pace is tight, and the commercial immediately makes it clear that the	Predominant diegetic dialogues, music almost absent.	Opening of the commercial - introduction of the protagonist in a professional environment.

		protagonist is a figure of power and control. • Frame width: Half-length shots or from the knees up, showing all characters standing to show the balance between bodies and environment. Then there are many medium fields to visualize the interaction between multiple characters and the spatiality of the office. • Camera angle: Frontal angle and slightly from below, a choice that helps give authority to the various figures. The camera is steady, with minimal movement to suggest control and steadiness. • Illumination: Cool, diffuse light from large windows and neutral artificial lights. The lighting is constant and free of marked contrasts, evoking rationality, order and a “corporate” atmosphere.		
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		No area is in shadow: everything is visible, transparent, “under control.” • Colour: Palette dominated by cool, neutral tones: steel grey, white, black, with blue accents. The colour choice contributes to the construction of a professional, detached environment, where emotionality is suppressed in favour of efficiency. The figure of two characters in this sequence is characterized by some colourful clothing such as Nicole Kidman's ochre shirt and the intern's light blue shirt that make you more aware of their presence, instead the employee is dressed in dark and blends chromatically with the background		
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2	00:02-00:03	- Content description: This is where the beginning of the soundtrack starts, and framing in the elevator. This is the just as the two glances meet the arrival of first meeting between them in the elevator, hinting that Samuel, the two. It is formal but from there lies the new intern, in charged with latent beginning of a dynamic Romy's work tension. The environment between the two. space. slows down, and attention is focused on first eye contact. The music is "Make you mine" by Madison Beer. - Frame width: In the beginning we have a medium-field shot, framing Samuel in full as he stands in one of the office rooms. In transition, close medium planes are used in the elevator to isolate the facial expressions of both characters. - Camera angle: Horizontal angle toward Samuel, who appears more exposed, almost observed. Finally shot from behind of the two meeting as if someone is looking at them from behind to give an idea of mystery and to bring out the eye contact between the two. In fact,	Introducing
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		here we have a frontal and symmetrical angle, making the confrontation equal but laden with ambiguity. The viewer is positioned between the two, suggesting complicity. • Illumination: Warmer but also darker light that simulates a softer context, compared to the previous scene. The tones become softer, the shadows longer. This effect serves to create an emerging intimacy and introduces an emotional contrast to the initial coldness. • Colour: Here, the colours blend a bit more with the environment-in fact, Samuel's shirt, in the elevator, almost seems to blend in with the background of the doors, and Romy also has a coat that does not stand out in the scene, considering that the colour is very anonymous. This effect	
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		serves precisely to create intimacy between the two and especially to make us focus more on their looks. In fact, we find orange and golden tones suggesting emotion and vulnerability. The colour difference with previous scenes underscores the shift from a professional to a more personal and sensory context.		
3	00:03-00:05	Content description: In the foreground we see the two main characters (Nicole Kidman and partner) during a passionate kiss, in a nightclub party setting. In the background, a group of extras in half-light suggests a nightclub atmosphere. Promotional elements appear on the overlay: at the top, the “Babygirl” logo in soft pink font; in the centre, two purple-pink laurels with the words “BEST ACTRESS WINNER”	In the commercial at this point the soundtrack is entirely overlaid with electronic music style with a medium-slow bpm	Here we begin to anticipate what will be the physical and intimate evolution of the relationship between Romy and Samuel. The two dance sensually.

		and “GOLDEN GLOBE BEST ACTRESS” (both referencing Nicole Kidman); at the bottom, the tagline “FROM JANUARY 30 TO THE CINEMA” and, to the right, the “14+” rating and studio logos. • Frame width: The kiss occupies the entire main area of the frame: the heads, necks and part of the shoulders of the two actors can be seen. The extras in the background remain blurred to focus attention on the faces and physical connection of the protagonists. • Camera angle: Here there is an Eye-Level, frontal where the camera is placed at eye level, directly in front of the two actors, for an effect of full emotional immediacy. We also find a slight implied over-shoulder (the man's left shoulder is partially in the foreground), which creates depth	
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		without distracting from the kiss. • Illumination: Soft, diffuse key light, a light front light that enhances the features of the faces without creating sharp shadows. Colourful back-light/edge light (probably pink/purple), visible on her hair and his shoulder, detaching the silhouettes from the background. The rest of the setting is kept in half-light, allowing only contrasting figures to be glimpsed, to reinforce the effect of “stolen” intimacy during the crowd. • Color: Here there are warm, slightly desaturated tones, highlighted by the contrast with the colourful back-light. In the graphic overlay we find a soft pink for the title “Babygirl,” purple-pink for the laurels, white for the tagline; it creates a strong visual reminder of romantic-pop tones.	
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		There is a prevalence of blue-purple shadows in the background, hinting at night club lighting.		
4	00:05-00:06	Content description: Here we see the family consisting of Antonio Banderas and Nicole Kidman together with their two daughters posing in front of the Christmas tree. In front of them is a camera suggesting that they are taking a souvenir family photo for the holidays. The expression on their faces is smiling but composed, as if in an official and affectionate moment together. In the other scene, Antonio Banderas hugs his wife Romy aka Nicole Kidman from behind. On the overlay appears the pink-purple	Here the music is in the background and the sensual voice of the protagonist speaking emerges in voice over.	Here the other side of the protagonist's life is introduced. One sees her family standing in total contrast to the other frames of the passionate commercial with the intern Samuel.

		words “EXPLOSIVE,” attributed to a review. • Frame width: Here we have a shot that includes the entire family, the tree in the background, and some of the camera equipment in the foreground but blurred. In the other scene, however, there is a shot on the busts of the two actors; you can clearly see Banderas' affectionate gesture behind her back and Kidman's expression. • Camera angle: The cameras inside the scene (the tablet and the camera) are positioned lower than the subjects' faces, giving them an authoritative yet familiar appearance. During the embrace with her husband, on the other hand, we have an eye-level frontal angle, with a slight forward slide bringing Kidman's face closer, amplifying the intimacy of the gesture.		
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		• Illumination: Diffuse natural light, probably coming from a right side window (behind the camera). The tree is lit by Christmas lights, which add a soft warm glow to the background. Also, in the other scene we have a frontal soft key light that keeps faces clearly visible without creating harsh shadows. • Colour: Festive but understated palette: beige and light wood for the walls, warm tones (burgundy red of Banderas' sweater), green and yellow tree lights. The girls' dresses introduce notes of white and bright red, emphasizing the Christmas mood. And then soft, pastel tones: white and cream of the setting, warm colours of Kidman's sweater (pink floral), with the “ESPLOSIVO” graphic in bright pink standing	
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		out against the neutral background.		
5	00:07-00:15	- Content description: The sequence opens with Nicole Kidman sitting in a hotel room, in a bathrobe, watching with a mischievous smile as Samuel the shirtless intern approaches and dances in front of her. A dynamic moment follows in which the man takes her in his arms as she lets herself be carried away, laughing. In the process, the review “A SEXY BOMB” appears. Finally, we move on to an intense clash of glances between Nicole and Samuel, filmed in a neutral setting. Also appearing here is the review “THE 50 SHADES OF NICOLE.” - Frame width: Medium field with Nicole sitting full-length and man half-length. Medium close-up field with Nicole in man's arms, he seen Close-up	Here the music is inaudible and there is only the sensual voice of the main character speaking emerge as in voice over. Here the music is inaudible and there is only the sensual voice of the main character speaking emerge in voice over.	This sequence builds Nicole Kidman as a central figure of desire, control, and duality. Her position changes: first a seductive observer, then an object of (literal) transportation, until she becomes a completely dominated figure in the final face-to-face when she says “I will do whatever you tell me to do.” Reviews interpret and reinforce the film's

		with faces facing each other, cheek to cheek, in strong visual tension. • Camera angle: At first, we have a frontal angle only on Kidman, slightly tilted from the left, positioning the viewer as a witness. Then low angle with shooting from the level of the man's torso emphasizes physical gesture and control. Finally, we find a contrasting gaze in reverse vertical axis (Nicole looks from bottom to top) but reversing the classic dynamic. • Illumination: Lighting begins warm and intimate with indoor light, with obvious points of light. Then the light becomes cold, neutral, diffuse with an almost abstract ambience, in sharp contrast to the previous context. This colour transition reinforces the		positioning as a “sensual, strong, ambiguous” work and an erotic thriller with alpha woman at the center who, however, is controlled sexually.
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		emotional leap and erotic tension. • Colour: Warm palette with golden, deep brown, cream tones. Nicole's white bathrobe stands out. Finally, however, cool palette light blue, steel grey, light skin.		
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B– SEMIO-NARRATIVE LEVEL

Actantial Model

In *Babygirl*, Romy is **the Subject**: her narrative trajectory is marked by the desire to transgress her social role and live an erotic experience that undermines her image of power and control. **The Object** of her quest is therefore the satisfaction of desire, the exploration of vulnerability and loss of control. **The Sender** is represented by the tension between norm and transgression: on the one hand, the social and family imperative that wants her to be an impeccable wife and mother, on the other, the inner and erotic call that pushes her towards Samuel. **The Receiver** is Romy herself, who experiences the pleasure and transformation linked to desire. The viewer is not a Receiver in actantial terms, but the addressee of the discourse, invited to witness and interpret her ambiguous metamorphosis. In the specific economy of the spot, which sells an erotic thriller centred on transgression, Samuel acts primarily as **the Helper** of the Desire. While narrative logic might later reveal him as an **Opponent** to Romy's social stability (through blackmail or manipulation), within the promotional clip he serves as the essential catalyst allowing the Subject (Romy) to access the forbidden object of value: her own repressed sexuality and loss of control. He 'helps' the narrative move towards the promised eroticism.

Canonical Narrative Schema

- **Manipulation**

Romy is a successful woman, accustomed to control, living in an apparently stable business and family environment. Her encounter with her young colleague Samuel introduces a missing element, namely the perception of a compressed emotional and desiring life, which triggers her trajectory of transformation. The object of value is not Samuel as such, but the possibility of reactivating a desiring and transgressive subjectivity outside the normative roles of manager and mother. Samuel thus takes on the role of catalyst for this process, while the universe of professional norms, family expectations, and moral codes that surround Romy is configured as a contrast, marking from the outset the tension between order and desire that structures the commercial.

- **Competence**

The protagonist possesses both social and family competence (impeccable wife and mother) as well as seductive and erotic competence. Samuel, on the other hand, brings naivety and vulnerability, which are indispensable to the narrative game.

- **Performance**

From the glance in the elevator to the kiss at the party, to the hotel scene and the final confrontation, Romy goes from being a dominant figure to a dominated subject, declaring her surrender to desire.

- **Sanction**

Within the narrative structure, the sanction remains latent: the trailer deliberately suspends the Sender's final judgment to maintain narrative tension. Outside the diegesis, however, the paratextual framing fills this void with media celebration. The reviews and claims ('Explosive,' 'Sexy Bomb,' 'The 50 Shades of Nicole') do not act as a moral verdict on the character, but rather consecrate the transgression itself, framing Romy/Nicole as an erotic and ambiguous icon for the audience.

C – AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL

The commercial is structured around a set of values including desire, power, and the various nuances of female identity. Romy (Nicole Kidman) is presented as a woman who embodies social success and professional and family control, but her narrative trajectory changes when she enters a transgressive relationship with one of her younger interns.

Romy's professional competence and her role as wife and mother are recognized visually but are quickly overshadowed by scenes that portray her as an object of desire.

In this commercial, the woman is at once powerful and dominated, subject and object, dominatrix and submissive.

Romy is a fifty-year-old woman, an established professional, wife, and mother: according to the dominant imagination, at this age her value should lie in her career, family, and stability, while the erotic dimension would be considered marginal or even inappropriate. The transgression that the film depicts is just the opposite.

On the one hand, there is the expectation that a mature woman should sublimate her identity in her work and family, renouncing eroticism; on the other hand, there is the assertion that sexuality does not belong only to youth but is an integral part of being human at all ages. The commercial hints at the social taboo of the film, namely the fifty-year-old woman who rediscovers herself erotically and not only as a mother or professional figure

In terms of semiotic values, the trailer positions itself away from traditional 'Moral Condemnation' and firmly within the Glorification of Female Agency, even when that agency is self-destructive. On a semiotic square, the opposition is not between Good vs. Evil, but between Social Constraint (The CEO Role/Mother) and Individual Liberation (The Affair). The trailer validates the latter.

From a femvertising perspective, this represents a significant shift: the text does not celebrate Romy for being a virtuous leader (classic empowerment), but for daring to be an ambiguous subject of desire. The promotional apparatus (music, cuts, reviews) aestheticizes her risk, suggesting that true power includes the dangerous privilege of making 'wrong' choices without being reduced to a victim.

3.4.2 C'è Ancora Domani



You Tube Link: [C'è ancora domani - Al cinema! Spot Sei in tempo](#)

Spot Duration: 15 seconds

Date: October 13th, 2023

Film Distribution Company: Vision Distribution

Famous Actors: Paola Cortellesi, Valerio Mastandrea, Romana Maggiora Vergano, Emanuela Fanelli, Giorgio Colangeli and Vinicio Marchioni

Subject and screenplay by Furio Andreotti, Giulia Calenda, Paola Cortellesi

Delia (Paola Cortellesi) is Ivano's wife and mother of three children.

Wife, mother. These are the roles that define her, and that is enough for her. It is the second half of the 1940s, and this ordinary family lives in Rome, torn between the positive momentum of liberation and the misery of the war that has just ended.

Ivano (Valerio Mastandrea) is the supreme leader and master of the family. He works hard to bring home what little money he can and never misses an opportunity to emphasize this, sometimes with contemptuous tones, other times directly with his belt.

Delia's only relief is her friend Marisa (Emanuela Fanelli), with whom she shares moments of light-heartedness and some intimate confidences.

It is spring and the whole family is excited about the imminent engagement of their beloved eldest daughter Marcella (Romana Maggiora Vergano), who, for her part, only hopes to marry quickly to a

nice middle-class boy, Giulio (Francesco Centorame), and finally free herself from that embarrassing family.

Delia wants nothing more than that too. She accepts the life she has been given, and a good marriage for her daughter is all she aspires to. However, the arrival of a mysterious letter will give her the courage to overturn the established plans and imagine a better future, not only for herself.

A – SURFACE LEVEL: Sequence by sequence segmentation

SEQUENCE	SEQUENCE LENGTH	VISUAL COLUMN	SOUNDTRACK	NOTE
1	00:00-00:06	Content description: In these seconds we see a modest room, the choreographed moment (played by Valerio Mastandrea) enters with a confident and defiant attitude. He begins a “dance” with Delia (Paola Cortellesi), who is initially hesitant, then	The editing, pacing, and use of music (“<i>La Sera Dei Miracoli di Lucio Dalla</i>”) convert the beating into a choreographed moment, showing without showing, creating a disturbing tension between the seemingly “light” tone and the real meaning. Moreover, already in this sequence we see a voice over of the protagonist beginning, talking to her daughter who appears in the next sequence.	This sequence is one of the most powerful connecting points in the film and the commercial: it employs a visually gentle language (dance, music, smiles, and slow gestures) to represent internalized and repetitive domestic violence: a 'choreography of submission' that Delia endures but also acknowledges. In Paola Cortellesi's direction, we never see the actual blow; yet we are

		approaches him. The seemingly romantic sequence resumes a pas de deux: intense glances, outstretched hands, bodies attracting and touching. But behind the affectionate staging, the viewer senses that it is the transfiguration of an act of violence: he is not inviting her to dance but preparing to hit her. • Frame width: Many half-busts, to show both facial expressions and body movements. In central moments, close-ups of faces and hands emphasize emotional tension. • Camera angle: Predominantly		led to understand everything through the form of the gesture, and the silence of what is unseen must be 'felt' by the viewer. Therefore, dance is not a moment of balance, rather the aesthetic form that the protagonist, and perhaps society, gives to violence to endure it.
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		frontal angles that put the viewer in a “theatrical” viewing position, as if he or she were watching a dance scene on stage. • Illumination: The film is in black and white but the light is soft and diffuse, without much contrast. The environment is domestic, almost suffocated. • Colour: Black and white with strong medium greys. The colour contrast is muted, which reinforces the feeling of stillness,		
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		cyclical, no way out.		
2	00:06-00:07	Content description: We see Delia's daughter, in the foreground in the background, watching her mother with a serious, question-laden gaze. In the blurred foreground, in profile, we catch a glimpse of the mother's face. The focus is entirely on the daughter, who is looking straight ahead: not so much at Delia as a person, but at a possible decision, a possibility, a	There is no more music here, but the voice-over of Delia and her daughter continues.	The daughter's gaze is a silent question, almost an accusation. The framing itself is an act of questioning: the mother is blurred; the future is sharp. Through this image, the film tells us that there is still tomorrow, but it will not be the same as today only if someone, Delia, breaks the cycle. The viewer is immersed in a gaze that does not ask for words, but only for a gesture, an act of truth.

		different tomorrow. This scene does not show action, but it is charged with emotional tension and expectation. It is the look of a daughter asking, without speaking, for a gesture of courage, an example. • Frame width: Medium close-up plane on the daughter's torso. It allows us to capture her expression clearly, isolating her from the physical context but emphasizing her interiority. The out-of-focus of the mother in the extreme foreground		
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		accentuates the asymmetry between the two. • Camera angle: Lateral and fixed angle, with shallow depth of field. The viewer is ideally positioned in Delia's mind: we see her daughter as she sees her, but with a framing that makes her daughter central and dominant in the scene. • Illumination: Lateral, soft, indoor light. The image is constructed with delicate but contrasting tones: the light is not harsh, but highlights the daughter's facial features,	
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		making them sculpted and sharp. • Colour: Black and white with strong medium greys. The colour contrast is muted, which reinforces the feeling of stillness, cyclical, no way out. The separation between blurred foreground (the mother) and sharp background (the daughter) is all played out in intense blacks and muted whites.		
3	00:07-00:09	• Content description: Delia (Paola Cortellesi) is standing still, fearful and with stiffened body. In front of her, her	It reprises the music in the background, but here with the opposite function: whereas before it accompanied a choreography of masked violence, now it punctuates a real verbal conflict.	This sequence powerfully shows the paralysis of female identity in the patriarchal context. Delia does not respond, she does not move, she is at the centre of dual male and generational oppression because on the one hand the man

		husband (Valerio Mastandrea), in a tank top, questions her in a threatening tone, “Where are you going?” Her body is relaxed only in appearance; instead, her face expresses tension and control. The daughter observes her mother with a critical gaze, no longer compassionate but accusatory, as if saying, “Once again, you are not reacting.” The sequence shows three levels of oppression: the man's violence, the woman's self-censorship, and the daughter's heavy gaze. • Frame width: Medium		who controls and dominates her, on the other the daughter who judges her for not knowing how to rebel. The strength is that no one raises his voice and no one moves abruptly, yet the scene is tight as a string: everything is in the unspoken. The viewer feels that this is a threshold: if Delia does not break the cycle now, her daughter will inherit her own prison.
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		fields are used here at the beginning: they show both characters in domestic settings, with dark, bare walls, emphasizing the claustrophobic, suffocating dimension. Then there is a half-bust of the daughter, frontal, returning all the emotional tension concentrated in her gaze. Finally, blurred close-ups of shoulders appear here as well. • Camera angle: Slightly lowered front	
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		al on Delia, to return her tension and the pressure she receives. Reverse subjective on her husband: it is as if we are seeing him from her point of view, the shot lets the faces do the talking. Direct look of the daughter at her mother: the angle is straight and judgmental, a true moral rather than emotional confrontation. • Illumination: Dimmed natural light, with soft but present shadows. The backgrounds are dark, bare and rough in places, like cracked walls. The daughter's face is the only one to be	
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		fully illuminated, a symbol of lucidity, of awareness. • Colour: Black and white with a strong medium grey.		
4	00:10-00:11	• Content description: Delia runs down the street, at a brisk pace. Her hair tossed in the wind, her purse in her hand. She does not look back. The framing is dynamic: her movement is sharp, cutting through space, suggesting urgency, liberation, determination. • Frame width: Dynamic	The background music fades out, as if giving way to a new narrative phase. The speaker's voiceover starts, masculine and solemn: “C'è Ancora Domani un film di Paola Cortellesi.”	Running is the gesture that sums up Delia's entire journey. It is the first moment in which we see her break the pattern physically. She is no longer enclosed in a domestic space, nor blocked by judgment or fear. She is coming out.

		medium field: Delia's entire body is visible, and she moves diagonally in space. The camera follows her in movement but lets her lead the scene. • Camera angle: Lateral angle in motion (tracking shot): the camera runs with her, without antici- pating or overtaking her. This creates a kinaesthetic empathy effect: the viewer runs with her, feeling the push and pull of the moment.	
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		• Illumination: Natural, diffuse, almost neutral light. The urban environment is clear, but devoid of visual emphasis. • Colour: Black and white consistent with the rest of the film. Here, however, the contrast between the movement of the figure and the static background makes Delia unique, alive, in a world that remains still.		
5	00:11-00:15	• Content description: In the midst of a crowd of	The music has now faded away or remained as it was.	Delia does not shout, does not challenge, does

		women, Delia's daughter turns and smiles: she has understood. Her face is lit up, her gaze is proud, proud. She is looking at her mother. Then we see Delia, also smiling, in the crowd. The viewer understands that she has gone to vote. It is the gesture he has been waiting for throughout the film, but we do not see it directly: we guess it from the looks, the context, the position of the two women. Finally, the final screen appears with the title, "There's Still Tomorrow," ideally closing the transformative journey. • Frame width: Both	Only the voice of the speaker can be heard in the background. not declare: she shows up. She goes to vote. A simple, silent, but revolutionary gesture. The film does not need to show it explicitly because what matters is the transformation of the daughter's gaze. She, who until then had looked at her mother with disappointment or anger, now sees her with respect. This visual exchange is the real ending: respect gained, dignity regained.
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		protagonists are shot with half-length bodies in a crowd. This places their bodies in the flow of the collective story, but at the same time emotionally isolates them through focus. • Camera angle: The camera is at the level of the gaze, direct, empathetic. The daughter's gaze is turned to the camera, or slightly to the side: the viewer feels complicit in the discovery, witnessing a generational transition. • Illumination: Despite the presence of black and white, a full, diffuse and soft natural	
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		light is perceived. Everything is clear, visible, there are no more shadows or darkness. • The protagonists are frontally lit, with an almost “moral” light. • Color: Black and white, but here with gentle contrast: not dark, but vibrant. The choice of black and white turns out to be a symbolic strategy here, because the absence of color enhances the strength of faces,	
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		emotions, and looks.		
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B– SEMIO-NARRATIVE LEVEL

Actantial Model

The subject is Delia, who undergoes a transformation from a submissive woman to someone capable of making choices. **The object** is regained freedom and dignity, symbolized by the act of going to vote. **The sender** is embodied by her daughter's silent and questioning gaze, which forces her to choose a different future. **The Opponents**, by contrast, are the patriarchal and violent system that surrounds her, the abusive husband who enforces it, and the inner fear that has paralysed Delia for years, all of which try to keep her imprisoned in the imposed role. **The receiver** is Delia herself, who achieves personal redemption, but also her daughter, who inherits an example of courage and sees the possibility of 'a different tomorrow' opening. Finally, **the helpers** are the community of women who appear in the final scene, the memory of the violence suffered (which becomes a driving force for awareness), and the act of running, which physically embodies the break with paralysis.

Canonical Narrative Schema

- **Manipulation**

In *C'è Ancora Domani*, the subject is Delia, a woman living in Rome after World War II within a rigid patriarchal structure. The discovery of a possibility for change (a proposal, an event, or news that disrupts the established order) acts as a catalyst, bringing to light a valuable object linked to dignity, self-determination, and the possibility of a different future for herself and her daughter. The patriarchal family and the social context represent the Opponents, while small allies (female friendships, external figures, or even just her own growing awareness) act as Helpers who make transformation conceivable and practicable. In this way, the Manipulation phase is not reduced to a simple 'triggering event' but immediately establishes a conflict between traditional order and the desire for female emancipation.

- **Competence**

Her initial competence is that of endurance, of resisting and adapting to violence that has become internalized. Over time, however, she acquires a new awareness, realizing that survival is not enough, but that a political and symbolic gesture is necessary to transform her own destiny and that of her daughter.

- **Performance**

The turning point comes when Delia runs into the street, physically breaking the immobility that imprisoned her and joining the crowd of women. Her choice to go and vote represents the decisive action, the silent but revolutionary gesture that translates her awareness into concrete action.

- **Sanction**

The real reward is not declared in words but in the exchange of glances: her daughter, who previously looked at her mother with disappointment, now gives her a proud smile. In that visual recognition, the transformation is complete: dignity regained, respect earned, and the promise of a different tomorrow.

C – AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL

The commercial for *C'è Ancora Domani* talks about dignity, silent resistance, and the possibility of transforming life through political action. Delia (Paola Cortellesi) is a woman who lives in a domestic environment marked by violence and patriarchy. The underlying ideology is one that has for centuries relegated women to silence, submission, and fear.

However, the film introduces a reversal. At its core is not the celebration of female patience as a virtue, but the need to break the cycle. Delia's act of going to vote becomes a symbol of this break because it affirms women's right to count, to speak out, to emerge from invisibility.

A central axiological point is the daughter's gaze. Initially accusatory, almost disappointed, it eventually becomes proud and fierce. It is in this silent exchange that the value sanction is fulfilled, namely, respect earned and dignity regained. The future is built on a new model of emancipation.

Thus, *C'è ancora domani* aligns itself with a system of values that privileges justice, dignity, and historical memory, positioning itself not only as a story of female emancipation, but as a collective manifesto that invites us to recognize the political value of everyday choices.

3.4.3 It Ends With Us – Siamo Noi A Dire Basta



You Tube Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lo6dmrwhVzo>

Spot Duration: 15 seconds

Date: July 30th, 2024

Film Distribution Company: Sony Distribution

Famous Actors: Blake Lively, Justin Baldoni, Brandon Sklenar

It Ends with Us, a big-screen adaptation of Colleen Hoover's debut novel, tells the passionate story of Lily Bloom (Blake Lively), a woman who has overcome a traumatic childhood and embarks on a new life in Boston to pursue her lifelong dream of opening her own business. A chance encounter with the charming neurosurgeon Ryle Kincaid (Justin Baldoni) sparks an intense connection, but as the two fall deeply in love, Lily begins to see sides of Ryle that remind her of her relationship with her parents. When Lily's first love, Atlas Corrigan (Brandon Sklenar), suddenly reenters her life, her relationship with Ryle is turned upside down, and Lily realizes that she must learn to rely on her own strength to make an exceedingly difficult choice for her future.

A – SURFACE LEVEL: Sequence by sequence segmentation

SEQUENCE	SEQUENCE LENGTH	VISUAL COLUMN	SOUNDTRACK	NOTE
1	00:00-00:02	Content description: There are two separate and opposite scenes here: First, He (Ryle) and she (Lily) are dressed as newlyweds. They are happy, smiling, in a tender and excited embrace. In voice-over he utters the words, “Will you marry me?” Then the scene changes dramatically. We are in a more everyday setting in their home. Lily looks at Ryle with concern and says: “Hey, what's wrong with you?” Ryle's gaze is tense, sombre, absent. He does not respond. The transition is stark: from the initial idyll to the	The music accompanies the entire sequence; it is present but, in the background, leaving room for the dialogue. In fact, male and female voice-overs are then present.	The sequence suggests, with tight but calibrated editing, that there is a crack behind the fairy tale. The smiling face of the bride becomes a tense and vulnerable face. The protagonist, initially confident and affectionate, becomes an emotionally sombre man.

		unspoken prelude to deeper tension. • Frame width: Tight American close-up showing the two protagonists in the moment of the wedding embrace and then close-up (close-up) on the faces, capturing pure emotions and silent reactions. • Camera angle: Frontal and symmetrical in the wedding scene, suggesting balance and union. In the next two frames, the camera shifts to mirror shots, isolating the characters: first she speaks, then he is silent. This play of field-counterpoint with selective focus highlights the conflict between the two. • Illumination: First warm, soft,		
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		romantic light. It filters through the curtains and creates a dreamy, almost fairy-tale-like tone. Then it switches to a cold, neutral light, diffuse, devoid of drama. Everything appears real, every day, almost aseptic. • Colour: The colours in the first frame are enveloping: white, cream, gold, warm complexions. In later frames gray, blue, and faded green dominate: dull tones.		
2	00:02-00:05	• Content description: The sequence opens with a sudden gesture of anger i.e. Ryle, at home hurling a glass object, off-screen, to the ground in an uncontrolled gesture. The scene continues with Lily speaking calmly but	Music continues in the background. Lily's voice enters while her face appears in the scene.	This sequence represents the emotional fracture point. The initial violent gesture destroys the ideal of romantic love shown in the first part of the commercial. Lily's speech marks a moment of awareness, and makes the viewer

		determinedly, addressing him directly. The question he asks is crucial and charged with the moral sense upon which the entire film turns: “If you had a daughter...and she came to you and told you that the person she loves was hurting her...” This is followed by a cut to a night scene, set on a terrace overlooking the city, in which Ryle, alone, hits a chair hard, manifesting pent-up anger. • Frame width: The initial launch is captured with a blurred medium field that captures movement. Then there is Lily's speech in close-up on her face. Finally, the night action is in full field, useful in showing both the environment and the character's isolation. • Camera angle: The violent gesture is filmed from a		realize what the real theme of the film is. The sequence introduces the film's central theme: violence toward women and the need to break toxic cycles.
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		lateral, dynamic and unstable frontal perspective. During the verbal confrontation, the camera is frontal and symmetrical, (field-counterpoint). The kick to the chair is filmed from a distance, slightly from above, accentuating the foreignness and loneliness of the gesture. • Illumination: In the first scene, strong natural light from a window, contrasted by the presence of the person's body against the light. In the dialogue scene, soft, neutral light. The rooftop scene is nocturnal, with cold artificial lights aimed at Ryle, and the city in the background bathed in urban glare. • Colour: Warm tones in the initial room.		
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		Neutral, natural colouring in the dialogue: real complexions, desaturated background. In the night, cool, bluish tones, with the black of Ryle's clothing contrasting with the city light.		
3	00:06-00:08	Content description: The sequence opens at night, on the rooftop of the city: Lily is alone, looking into the distance and her face is pensive. Meanwhile, the voice over continues, in which she completes the sentence started in the previous scene. Then Lily looks at herself in the mirror or at her body and shows bruises on her shoulder. The scene is quiet, introspective, and you can really sense that she almost feels guilty about those wounds from which she feels she cannot escape.	Lily's voice over dominates this sequence, while the music remains in the background, very unobtrusive.	This sequence encapsulates the moral core of the commercial. Lily's body becomes a document of violence that cannot be seen, but that has left its mark. Lily's question seems to be asked of all men: “What would you advise your daughter to do if she met a man who hurt her?” There is no 'direct' accusation, but a call to responsibility.

		This is followed by a return to visual dialogue with Ryle where Lily continues to talk and finally ends the second sequence's sentence about her daughter by saying, "In that case ... what would you tell her?" • Frame width: The first image is in a set half close-up, placing Lily in the urban night context. The bruise scene is a tight half-bust. The concluding dialogue is again a close-up with Lily's face. • Camera angle: On the roof, the angle is slightly from below as she looks at the horizon. In the bruise scene, the angle is frontal and intimate with a gaze reflecting in the mirror. In the dialogue, we are again in the reverse subjective, back-field.		
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		• Illumination: On the roof, we find natural, cool, night light with urban reflections. Then in the bathroom we have dim, greenish, filtered, artificial light. Finally, back to soft natural light, illuminating Lily frontally. • Colour: Midnight blue and grey tones in the roof. Dark green and shadows in the bathroom. Warm and natural complexion in the final dialogue.		
4	00:09-00:15	• Content description: The sequence opens with a promotional sign on a dark background, with the film's title "IT ENDS WITH US" and release date. We are the ones who say enough," also spoken by the off-screen speaker.	The music stops completely: only the male voice over and the speaker's pronouncing the title and release date remain.	The final message, both the character's sentence and in the title slogan, is clear. Breaking with violence is possible, and it depends on a choice, an individual act of courage. The commercial thus closes in a manner consistent with its

		Next, the scene shifts to Lily, who looks intently at someone off-screen, in silence. Her expression is turned toward someone unseen, and she seems to look at him with a face of surprise. Finally, the shot shows a new male character (Atlas), who speaks directly to her, although the viewer does not yet have all the elements to understand his role. The sentence he utters in voice over is clear, affectionate, direct: “If you decide to love again, fall in love with me.” The scene ends with a new sign bearing the film's release date: “FROM AUGUST 21 AT THE CINEMA,” again on a black background. • Frame width: There two textual screenshots The shot on Lily is a close-up half close-up, centred on her face. The shot on Atlas is a slightly angled half close-		ethical tension: it does not offer a fairy-tale conclusion but opens the possibility of loving in a healthy way again.
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		up and from below as if it were Lily's point of view. • Camera angle: Faces are shot frontally and sideways to restore connection. • Illumination: The scenes with the characters are bathed in warm, soft, slightly subdued light. The light source comes from the side, creating depth on the faces and leaving some light shadows to emphasize the intensity of the moment. Promotional lettering, on the other hand, is on a completely black background with light focused on the text. • Colour: The colours of the scenes are natural, warm, with beige, copper, leather and wood tones. The black of the billboards, on the other hand,		
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		communicates seriousness and narrative intensity.		
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B– SEMIO-NARRATIVE LEVEL

Actantial Model

In this story **the Subject** is Lily, a woman who begins in the illusion of perfect love but soon faces the reality of abuse. **The Object** of her journey is freedom, the chance to break the toxic cycle and reclaim dignity and the possibility of a respectful love.

Senders are both the violence she experiences, which forces her to confront the truth, and the moral question she formulates “what advice would you give if the man she loved was hurting her?” **The Receiver** is Lily herself, who regains autonomy and self-respect, but also the audience, called to share responsibility in saying “enough.”

Her **Helpers** are Atlas, who represents the possibility of a healthier relationship, and her own growing awareness and inner strength. **The Opponents** are Ryle, with his uncontrollable anger, and the patriarchal culture that normalizes silence and submission.

Canonical Narrative Schema

- **Manipulation**

In the case of *It Ends With Us*, the commercial presents Lily as the Subject, placed in a relationship that alternates between moments of intimacy and violence, already fraught with ambivalence. The gradual awareness of the abusive nature of the relationship and, in particular, the responsibility towards future generations (potential daughters, other women) function as the Destroyer, articulating an Object of value that is not only the escape from violence, but the possibility of “saying enough” to a transgenerational chain of abuse. The violent partner embodies the main Opponent, supported by cultural norms that normalize certain couple dynamics, while support networks (friends, family, professionals) play the role of Helpers. Manipulation, in this sense, defines the narrative arc as a

transition from a condition of silent endurance to one of conscious rupture, in line with the femvertising rhetoric of ‘breaking the cycle’.

- **Competence**

Lily becomes aware of her condition through the marks on her body, the wounds that tell of an intimate and hidden pain. Her competence is not initially that of open rebellion, but of awareness. Ryle, on the contrary, shows the loss of control and fragility of a beloved man, unable to control his anger.

- **Performance**

Lily's gesture is not spectacular, but radical in its simplicity because she faces violence without shouting but with determination. The narrative culminates with her encounter with Atlas, who offers her the possibility of a new love, based on care and respect. The performance thus translates into the act of choosing between remaining a prisoner of violence or opening to a practical alternative.

- **Sanction**

The sanction comes on a symbolic and moral level. The very title of the film, *It Ends With Us*, seals the possibility of breaking the cycle. There is no conventional happy conclusion, but an opening, and the viewer is called upon to share the responsibility of saying ‘enough’.

C – AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL

The *It Ends With Us* commercial revolves around domestic violence, the silence that surrounds it, and the need to break toxic cycles. At first, Lily and Ryle's relationship is shown as a romantic fairy tale with marriage, hugs, and smiles. But this idyllic image soon cracks with his dark silences and sudden angry outbursts.

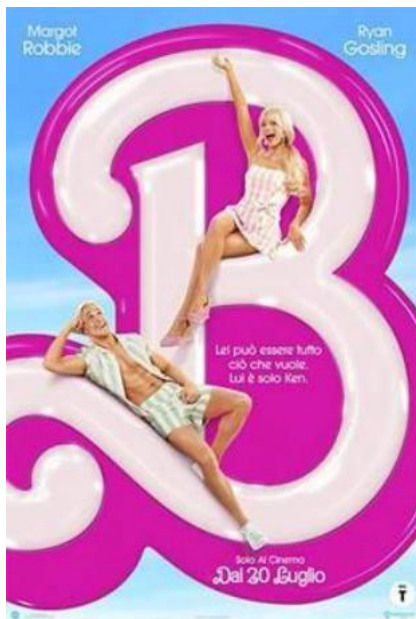
The question Lily asks Ryle is central: “If your daughter told you that the man she loves is hurting her, what would you say to her?” This sentence becomes the axiological heart of the story, which seeks to highlight that violence can no longer be minimized or justified, but must be named, addressed, and broken.

The message is that saying “enough” is not selfish, but an act of courage and justice.

On a symbolic level, the film denounces stories of domestic violence that are often hidden or normalized. Here, however, everything is made visible, with the aim of creating identification and empowerment.

Thus, *It Ends With Us* is part of a value system that prioritizes dignity, awareness, and responsibility, transforming a private drama into a public manifesto against gender-based violence.

3.4.4 Barbie



You Tube Link: [Barbie | Spot 30'' Truth](#)

Spot Duration: 15 seconds

Date: July 12th, 2023

Film Distribution Company: Warner Bros.

Famous Actors: From Oscar®-nominated writer/director Greta Gerwig comes Barbie, starring Oscar® nominees Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling as Barbie and Ken.

Living in Barbie Land means being perfect in a perfect place. Unless you are going through an existential crisis. Or you are Ken.

A – SURFACE LEVEL: Sequence by sequence segmentation

SEQUENCE	SEQUENCE LENGTH	VISUAL COLUMN	SOUNDTRACK	NOTE
1	00:00-00:06	Content description: The sequence opens with an iconic shot with Barbie's feet that remain arched even as she removes her high-heeled shoes, evoking the typical anatomy of toy Barbies. This is followed by Ken as a surfer, with the all-pink, plasticky city in the background where we can see that everything is hyper-stylized, saturated, and deliberately fake. Then a musical moment with Barbie's dancing coordinated in a glossy musical atmosphere. The euphoria is perfectly consistent with Barbie Land. Finally, an unexpected event occurs i.e., Barbie (Margot Robbie) shows her feet with finally flat heels and says, as if revealing a heresy:	In the background is bright, rhythmic pop music, musical or teen movie style. Above, characters speak in a bright comedy tone. The phrase “My heels are flat on the ground” breaks up the musicality and introduces a comic-dissonant effect.	The unreal anatomy of Barbie is introduced as a symbol of the unattainable female model. The final sentence “I have flat heels” has a double value is symbolic physics. It represents the loss of artificial balance, the first step toward the human. The Barbies around her react upset, as if it were a deviation from the myth they are used to. Here it is meant to emphasize that even in a seemingly perfect mono there are imperfections.

		<i>“My heels are flat on the ground.”</i> The other Barbies are shocked at the news as if this is an aesthetic heresy for that world to which they belong. • Frame width: Close-up on feet, designed to emphasize anatomical strangeness. Long field on Ken, to enhance the “living toy” set and aesthetic. Dynamic medium field in the collective dance. Medium field and American plane in the last scene, to bring out the interaction between Barbie and the others. • Camera angle: Low angle on feet, to mythologize the position. Frontal and symmetrical for Ken and the dance scene, musical style. Light frontality with diagonal in the Barbie group, to liven up the scene and show the amazed reactions to the change.		
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		• Illumination: Lights are artificial but simulated as “perfect natural,” to reinforce the ideal-world patina. No dramatic shadows: everything is bright, unreal, almost 90s magazine glossy. • Colour: Ultra-saturated palette: pink, turquoise, white, lilac, hyper-vivid pastel colours. Pink dominates as the Barbie brand's identity colour code.		
2	00:07-00:16	• Content description: The sequence opens with a black screen in which the words “From director Greta Gerwig” appear in pink “Barbie” font. A speaker utters the phrase. Immediately after, we move to a key narrative moment where we see Barbie asking “What can I do?” referring (or so one might think) to her anomalous feet. A grotesque and irreverent figure (probably “weird	At the beginning and the end, we have speaker voice over with extremely low music volume. During the central scenes, the music is practically absent; everything focuses on the dialogue between Barbie and the woman with the shoes. As soon as Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling's	The heel represents continuity with the role assigned to the woman (perfect, plasticized, always on point), while the sandal recalls humanity, reality, the fall of the mask. The character presenting the choice appears deliberately excessive and unruly because she embodies

		Barbie”) offers her two options, pointing to a heeled slipper (the old perfect life) and a Birkenstock sandal (contact with the real universe). This is followed by two short inserts with the film's protagonists-Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling-in ultra-patterned settings (in pink snow and tulips), introduced by pink graphic lettering accompanied by the speaker. • Frame width: The first and last frames are split screens: black half with the actor's name, visual half with the fairy tale setting. The choice scene uses half-fields and close-ups to highlight faces and hand gestures and shoes. The framing is always centred and symmetrical, to emphasize the iconicity of the “toy” language.	appear, the same the inconvenient music returns to high volume. This is presented with irony and metanarrative awareness as the viewer perhaps laughs but senses that it is Barbie herself who begins her journey of transformation.
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		• Camera angle: Predominantly frontal, to give clarity to the symbolic narrative. The scene of the shoe proposal has a slight sideways tilt, enlivening the choice and charging it with ambiguity. • Illumination: Bright, diffuse, cool light where everything is perfectly visible, consistent with Barbie Land's plasticized style. The figure offering shoes is in coloured backlighting, with pink and orange lights. • Colour: Pinks, fuchsia, white and hyper saturated pastel shades dominate. The contrast between the elegant and the comfortable shoe is also marked chromatically because the former is shiny and glittery, the latter matte and brown. The world illustrated around is always full of chromatic excess.		
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3	00:16-00:30	Content description: At first Barbie enters the real world for the first time, greeted by two men in black suits. She is in the centre in a shocking pink outfit and astonished smile, representing the contrast between her “plastic” identity and the real world. Then Barbie and Ken, in garish 1980s looks, skate along the waterfront among ordinary people. The natural setting contrasts with their vivid colours, generating an alienating and comic effect. Barbie introduces herself at a school to a group of plainly dressed, darkly dressed teenage girls, completely at odds with her. Barbie enthusiastically opens her arms and introduces herself smiling but the teenage girls look at her incredulously, sceptically, annoyed. Barbie and Ken flee being chased by a shopkeeper, after a (implied) theft, only to end up	Background music present, soft and low during the initial scenes (entrance, introduction). Musical silence in the middle part (confrontation with girls, arrest), where only dialogues emerge. Strong resumption of music on the final two cards, accompanied by a speaker saying the name of the film and the release date.	The sequence represents a key moment in the film, in which Barbie faces the clash between her ideal world and reality. The girls' reactions and the arrest sequence dismantle the myth of the “perfect Barbie” and make room for vulnerability. The tone shifts from comic to reflective, with the sentence about crying marking a humanizing moment.
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		on the 'front shot on Barbie, dressed as a skater, while holding the police sign with voice over of her saying, “In the real world I get arrested all the time.” Barbie talks to the man in the suit telling him that she has learned to cry and has discovered tears. The tone is vulnerable, and her expression is amazed and fragile. Finally, the pink “Barbie” and “From July 20 in theatres” signs appear, with glittery, childlike font, closing the sequence by taking the viewer back to the information about the theatrical release of the film in cinemas. • Frame width: Prevalence of medium and full fields to show interaction between characters and environments (entrance, skating scene, cafeteria). Close-ups to emphasize Barbie's emotional reactions (especially during the arrest and final conversation).		
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		American close-up is used when Barbie introduces herself to the girls, to highlight posture and clothing. • Camera angle: Frontal angles centre attention on Barbie as a protagonist and figure out of place in the real world. In some scenes, slight low angle shots to enhance her stage presence and theatricality (e.g., cafeteria). Some over-shoulder and contra-angle shots during dialogue with male character in black and during confrontation with teenage girls. • Illumination: Diffuse natural lighting for scenes in the real world (bright, sun-filtered or ambient light). Flat, bright light in the scene where Barbie enters the real world, consistent with the film's aesthetic palette.		
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		Accentuated contrast during the arrest scene (shadow on the face, photo shadowing lights), marking a break in tone. • Colour: Vivid, saturated colours (pink, light blue, yellow) dominate Barbie and Ken's clothing, creating a dissonance with neutral or urban environments. The dark-clad teenage girls emphasize Barbie's real-world strangeness by contrast. The black of the agents reinforces the sense of authority and seriousness that clashes with the naivete of the main character.		
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B– SEMIO-NARRATIVE LEVEL

Actantial Model

In this story, **the Subject** is Barbie, who sets out on a journey to become more human, leaving behind her perfect, artificial image. **The Object** of her quest is the freedom to choose, to accept imperfection, and to experience real emotions. **The Sender** is the anomaly of flat feet, a sign that something is no longer working, reinforced by the intervention of Weird Barbie, who forces her to decide between illusion and reality. **The Receiver** is Barbie herself, who conquers her new identity, but also the audience, invited to reconsider the myth of perfection. **The Helpers** are Weird Barbie, the clashes

with the real world, and the discovery of tears, which reveal the depth of human experience. **The Opponents** are Barbie Land and its stereotypical ideals, along with the distrustful and repellent reactions of the real world, which make the path of transformation more difficult.

Canonical Narrative Schema

- **Manipulation**

In the Barbie commercial, the Subject is Barbie herself, initially depicted within a perfect, hyper-coded world, Barbieland, where everything seems to function according to a glossy, normative feminine ideal. The emergence of “cracks” in this perfection (existential questions, thoughts of death, friction between the ideal world and the real world) acts as a Sender, introducing an Object of value linked to the search for authenticity and identity complexity beyond the simplifications of the iconic doll. Barbieland, with its strict rules and assigned roles, is both a Helper (the starting point that gave her power) and an Opponent (a symbolic cage that limits her growth), while the real world and the encounters that arise from it amplify the tension between imagination and experience. Manipulation, therefore, establishes the path as a transition from superficial empowerment to a search for a more nuanced and critical subjectivity.

- **Competence**

Barbie's initial competence is that of plastic perfection, dancing, smiling, embodying the standardised model of femininity. But Barbie is given the opportunity to acquire a new competence, namely the ability to choose between illusion and reality, between artifice and humanity. It is the beginning of critical consciousness, a new knowledge that questions the established order.

- **Performance**

The actual performance takes place in the real world. Barbie and Ken find themselves catapulted into a context that views them with suspicion or derision: their flashy clothes, the reactions of teenage girls, their comical but humiliating arrest. In this phase, Barbie experiences vulnerability and misunderstanding, until she discovers tears. It is the act of crying that marks the transition from artificial figure to authentic person, because Barbie becomes capable of emotion and fragility.

- **Sanction**

The sanction is symbolic and moral. The myth of perfection collapses, but in its place arises the dignity of vulnerability and choice. Barbie is not rewarded for her plasticity, but for her ability to

accept imperfection and experience human emotions. The transformation is complete, the Barbie of old has become something else, and the audience is invited to follow her in this new identity.

C – AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL

The Barbie commercial compares artificial perfection with human authenticity. At the beginning, the myth of Barbie Land dominates, a hyper-stylized, plastic, and sparkling universe where everything is harmony and choreography. The anomaly of flat feet breaks this balance, showing that even behind the utopian image, imperfection can emerge, a sign of a transition from the artificial to the real. The central opposition is therefore between idealization and reality, between the myth of the perfect woman and the right to show oneself as vulnerable and imperfect, but unique precisely because of this.

The protagonist finds herself at a symbolic crossroads: either embody the stereotypical model of perfection or accept the complexity of reality. The act of choosing becomes the axiological core, because it affirms women's freedom to break out of pre-established roles and redefine themselves beyond social expectations.

The narrative privileges values such as authenticity, vulnerability, and humanity. Barbie discovers tears and experiences all moments that dismantle the myth of perfection and affirm that being a woman does not mean conforming to an aesthetic model, but experiencing emotions, conflicts, and choices.

3.4.5 The Substance



You Tue Link: [THE SUBSTANCE | Spot 30" Italiano Ufficiale - DAL 30 OTTOBRE AL CINEMA](#)

Spot Duration: 30 seconds

Date: October 22nd , 2024

Film Distribution Company: I Wonder Pictures

Famous Actors: by Coralie Fargeat with Demi Moore, Margaret Qualley, Dennis Quaid

Have you ever dreamed of a better version of yourself? It is still you. Better, in every way. Really. You must try this revolutionary product. It is called “The Substance.” It changes your life. It creates an updated version of you. A younger, more beautiful, perfect version. There is only one rule: you must share the time. One week belongs to the previous version of you. The next belongs to the new one. Seven days each. A perfect balance. Easy, right? If you respect the balance... what could go wrong?

A – SURFACE LEVEL: Sequence by sequence segmentation

SEQUENCE	SEQUENCE LENGTH	VISUAL COLUMN	SOUNDTRACK	NOTE
1	00:00-00:07	Content description: Demi Moore, starring Elizabeth Sparkle, once a diva hailed with Oscars and a star in the Hollywood Hall of Fame, now gazes at her own scarred and dull face in a mirror. Then we switch to a shot of a hand lifting a syringe containing a greenish, fluorescent liquid: the mysterious experimental protocol called The Substance. Then the camera enters an extreme close-up on a girl's eyes, a prelude to her transformation into Sue, her perfect young counterpart. Finally, the scene shifts to a giant billboard that still depicts her as a toothpaste testimonial but workers are peeling off her face, isolating it in a symbolic removal	Dark and tense soundtrack, with slightly distorted electronic sounds that evoke a psychological horror atmosphere. In the background, a deep narrative voice saying, "Have you ever dreamed of a better version of you?"	The sequence summarizes the dramatic core of the film: the fall of a star, the tempting promise of an artificial rebirth, and the cruel removal of a constructed image. The use of the syringe and the billboard become a metaphor for a pact with the devil, in which the pursuit of aesthetic perfection is paid for by the dismantling of one's authenticity.

		of the glossy image that no longer represents her. • Frame width: The shot begins as a tight medium field, including the head and shoulders of the protagonist, then the hand with the syringe, to convey the size of the gesture. Then detail on the eyes in the foreground, emphasizing the transformation. The final scene, on the other hand, takes place in full field on the billboard, restoring the sense of unravelling of a wider image. • Camera angle: The visual remains essentially frontal and neutral, without camera movement, to evoke essentiality. The only axis shift occurs with the close-up on the eyes of the protagonist's young alter ego. Finally, the camera takes a slightly		
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		downward angle to make the gesture of removing the billboard monumental. • Illumination: The lighting is cold, uniform, and without marked contrasts: the white interior spaces and syringe accentuate the sterile atmosphere. On the eyes, subtle green reflections create an almost neon effect, emphasizing the artificiality of the transformation. Outside, the light remains natural but softened, with soft shadows outlining the figure of the workers without warming the scene. • Colour: The colour palette is dominated by ice tones and acid green accents: the aseptic white of the environment looks like a laboratory, while the liquid substance stands out with its flashy		
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		yellow colour. The toothpaste billboard retains its bright red and glossy white but already appears faded once workers peel off its face.		
2	00:08-00:16	Content description: First the sign appears with “As the film Coralie Fargeat,” then an extreme close-up on Elizabeth's iris where the black pupil is surrounded by gold and blue rays shows an early effect the substance has once taken. Immediately after that, two reviews in large print (without dwelling on the texts) scroll by, first on “Verdict Vogue” and then on “The Playlist.” Finally, there are two pieces where old Elizabeth and young Sue are simultaneously filmed as they both lift their	Dark and tense soundtrack, with slightly distorted by electronic sounds that evoke a psychological horror atmosphere. In the background, the same deep narrative voice.	Here the intention is to make the effect in the copro, once the substance is taken, feel perceptible, focusing on the visual effects in the eye. In contrast, the next moment highlights the duality between Elizabeth and Sue, highlighting with a single gesture i.e. lifting the glasses, how Sue represents Elizabeth's perfect, young and artificial counterpart.

		sunglasses, as if to show the two sides of the same person. • Frame width: Extreme close-up on the eye, to emphasize internal transformation and the promise of substance. Graphic insert on the reviews (full screen of black and white text). Front medium field on the two women, occupying the central part of the frame in mirror symmetry. • Camera angle: Frontal and stable: the eye is framed directly, without tilting, for a hypnotic observation effect. Full screen text: camera fixed on review cards. Frontal in medium field with Elizabeth and Sue, without camera movement, to suggest equivalence and comparison between the two versions.		
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		• Illumination: Cool, diffuse light in the extreme foreground, from artificial source to accentuate the contrast between ocular white and golden highlights. Then warm natural light in the outer middle field, with backlighting from palm trees creating a bright bokeh. • Colour: Absolute black and white in the headlines and review cards, emphasizing the “press review” aspect. Golden and blue tones in the iris, symbolizing alteration and mystery. Finally, intense colours given by Elizabeth's coat and Sue's clothes, which stand out against the background of palm trees and sky.		
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3	00:17-00:30	- Content description: Here the whole This sequence makes Elizabeth realizes that thing is the misuse of the the use of Theoverpowered by substance feel like an Substance has had Demi Moore's out-of-control process, unforeseen andspeaking voice.escaping all protocol. dangerous effects. WeThen we hear herVisual hallucinations see her distraught as shescreams and(flames, multiplied realizes that thefinally Sue'seyes) build a horror situation has gotten outvoice before theescalation, illustrating of hand. Finally, therefinal signs. the dramatic side are some extremely effects. fast frames where The last scene with Sue everything seems to (“Let us begin”) brings spin out of the focus back to control: flames, an eye duality: in the face of with multiplying irises, Elizabeth's chaos, and Sue running as if Sue remains calm and in mad. Elizabeth is control of the game, increasingly shaken, he ready to usher in the r makeup smeared, her next phase of the pact dark circles deep: The with The Substance. Substance is literally getting out of hand. The last shot shows us Sue, perfect and glacial, turning to the camera and pronouncing “Let's begin,” as the title “The Substance” and the release date appear in overlay. - Frame width: Close-up close-ups on Demi
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		Moore. Tight fields on images of hallucinations: details of flames, multiplication of irises and pupils. Medium field on Elizabeth's increasingly misshapen face and then full field on the final title and Sue “getting started.” • Camera angle: Frontal, unstable angle in close-ups of Elizabeth and Sue, to render disorientation. Slightly downward angle in shots of hallucinations (flames, eyes), for monstrous effect. Eye-level angle for Sue in the last scene, to enshrine the continuity between experimentation and control. • Illumination: Strobe lights and violent shadow play in hallucinations: orange and red flames contrasted with bursts of white light. Cool, muted light in the close-		
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		ups of Demi Moore and Elizabeth, with blue-greenish highlights that hint at the chemical. A bright halo over Sue in the last shot, underscoring her aura as the dominatrix of transformation. • Colour: Hellish palette (reds, oranges, intense yellows) in the dreamlike moments, contrasting with the natural but dull tones of clinical reality. The stark black and white of the title “The Substance” close the montage with a graphic stroke.		
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B– SEMIO-NARRATIVE LEVEL

Actantial Model

The Subject of the story is Elizabeth Sparkle, a diva from the past who cannot accept the decline of her body and career. **The Object** is to regain the youth, beauty, and recognition that the entertainment world has taken away from her. **The Sender** is twofold because, on the one hand, we have the film and advertising industry that erases aging bodies and imposes unattainable aesthetic models, and on the other, Elizabeth's own sense of inner inadequacy. **The Receiver** is Elizabeth, who hopes to regain dignity and success, but also society, which becomes the recipient of the new artificial image produced by The Substance. **The Helpers** are the serum itself and the transformation into Sue, the young and perfect version of Elizabeth. However, these helpers are deceptive, because behind the promise of power they hide the loss of control and the beginning of destruction. **Opponents** emerge gradually. Sue, who from an ideal projection becomes an

autonomous and threatening rival; the devastating side effects that alter body and mind; and above all, the myth of aesthetic perfection, which manipulates and devours authentic identity.

Canonical Narrative Schema

- **Manipulation**

In *The Substance*, the commercial presents the protagonist as a Subject trapped in a system that controls women's gaze and bodies, an industry that demands youth, perfection, and continuous performance. The offer of the mysterious "Substance," which promises a "better" or regenerated version of oneself, acts as a powerful Addresser, introducing an Object of ambivalent value: the possibility of regaining visibility, desirability, and power in a system that is expelling her. The substance itself takes on the function of a deceptive Helper, while the aesthetic and productive regime that generated her sense of inadequacy operates as a structural Opponent. Manipulation here establishes a field of forces in which empowerment and self-annihilation are dangerously intertwined, making the axiological analysis proposed in the semiotic model particularly fertile.

- **Competence**

The answer comes with the injection of the mysterious serum, "The Substance." Elizabeth acquires the artificial competence to generate Sue, her young and perfect version. But this competence is deceptive, because it is not authentic and brings with it unpredictable consequences. The real ability she has left is to perceive danger and understand the diabolical pact she has fallen into.

- **Performance**

The intake of the substance and the transformation into Sue are the central performance: a gesture that seems to guarantee a return to glory, but which proves devastating. The images of mutated eyes, flames, and bodies out of control show the loss of stability. Elizabeth, scarred and destroyed, sees her identity split and degenerate, while Sue appears increasingly cold and dominant.

- **Sanction**

The sanction is that there is no reward, but the realization that the myth of perfection leads to destruction. The message is also clear to the viewer: obsession with youth and the illusion of perfection come at a price.

C – AXIOLOGICAL LEVEL

The trailer for *The Substance* highlights youth and aging, authenticity and artifice, freedom and slavery of the image. Elizabeth Sparkle, a former diva, is led to believe that her value lies solely in beauty and youth. The entertainment industry, which erases mature bodies and replaces old faces with younger, newer ones, imposes a single aesthetic model.

The substance promises rebirth and perfection, but artificial regeneration brings with it the destruction of authentic identity. The object of desire, eternal youth, becomes a curse.

In this case, we find ourselves with a model of femininity that cannot accept time and aging without guilt, ending up in a nightmare that condemns us to pursue an impossible ideal.

Thus, *The Substance* denounces the tyranny of youth and the commodification of the female body, showing that the obsession with aesthetic perfection is not emancipation but a new form of slavery.

3.4.6 Semiotic Analysis Results

The semiotic analysis conducted on the corpus of the five selected trailers (*Babygirl*, *C'è ancora domani*, *It Ends With Us*, *Barbie*, *The Substance*) delineates a complex framework regarding the femvertising strategies applied to the film industry. Although the genres and stylistic registers differ profoundly, all the audiovisual texts examined are structured around a single fundamental axiological opposition: the dichotomy between freedom/emancipation and oppression/constraint. This narrative tension does not merely serve as the engine of action; rather, it defines the value-based positioning of the "brand-film," interpolating the female viewer not only as a consumer of entertainment but as an active subject called upon to validate or sanction the protagonists' choices. Through a semiotic lens, it becomes evident how the representation of femininity oscillates between two emotional and "sanctioning" poles: a euphoric one, aimed at celebrating the conquest of identity, and a dysphoric one, intended to denounce the toxic drifts of social pressures.

On the euphoric side of redemption, we find narratives such as *C'è ancora domani* and *It Ends With Us*. In these instances, the communicative strategy leverages a resilient femininity that,

while starting from a condition of victimization (historical domestic patriarchy for Delia; psychological and physical violence for Lily), arrives at a definitive positive sanction: the breaking of silence. Here, the film brand speaks to a woman seeking a model of ethical empowerment within the narrative; freedom is presented as an arduous but necessary conquest, and the spectator is invited to stand in solidarity with the heroine, validating her journey of liberation from relational chains. On the opposite side, characterized by more dysphoric or ambiguous tones, lie *The Substance* and *Babygirl*. Here, freedom assumes the contours of danger or tragedy. In *The Substance*, the obsession with eternal youth imposed by the male gaze transforms the desire for emancipation into self-destruction, serving as a dark warning against unattainable aesthetic standards. In *Babygirl*, freedom manifests as the exploration of an erotic desire that challenges power hierarchies, presenting a complex femininity that seeks no moral reassurance but claims the right to ambiguity. Barbie positions itself as an ironic mediation point between these extremes: by deconstructing the stereotype of plastic perfection, the film transforms the realization of reality (and one's own imperfection) into the supreme form of freedom, addressing a consumer weary of unreachable ideals.

In conclusion, shifting the analysis from the narrative level to that of marketing strategy, a coherent design emerges: these trailers do not simply sell plots, but rather propose value systems. The underlying strategy is the transformation of the spectator into a value-based ally. Each film constructs an enunciative pact in which viewing the work becomes an act of adherence to a specific worldview regarding women. Whether it is rejecting violence, accepting an aging body, or claiming the right to vote, cinema proposes itself here as a space for identity negotiation, where the consumption of the film product coincides with the affirmation of a precise instance of freedom.

3.5 Qualitative Research: In-Depth Interviews of Target Audience

A qualitative methodology was adopted for this research, in line with the objective of exploring the symbolic and cultural meanings that define representations of female empowerment in advertising. The qualitative design relied on in-depth interviews, which are one of the most effective tools for discovering how individuals interpret their experiences, articulate cultural codes and activate broader social discourses; in-depth interviews allow for a dialogical exchange in which the interviewer and interviewee construct meaning together (McCracken, 1988). The interviews were designed and conducted according to several key principles of qualitative interviewing. First, it was essential to establish a critical distance for both the interviewee and the researcher. The critical distance, in this context, is the ability to take a step back from one's own experience and common-sense assumptions to look at them analytically. In this case, for the interviewees, this meant being

encouraged to question taken-for-granted social beliefs and practices; for the interviewer, it required continuous self-awareness and reflexivity regarding their own cultural assumptions and potential biases.

Furthermore, the design of the interview process included a balance between formality and informality to create an environment in which participants could feel respected and at ease. At the beginning of the interviews, a brief explanation of the research objectives was provided, followed by a guarantee of confidentiality and a formal request for consent. The first questions can be defined as 'icebreakers' aimed at reducing anxiety and facilitating conversation, before naturally evolving towards more complex and emotionally resonant topics.

The research sample was composed of ten female participants, aged between 27 and 60 years old, recruited through direct contact sampling. Each participant was shown five cinematic spots, lasting either 15 or 30 seconds, referring to the films *Babygirl*, *C'è ancora domani*, *It Ends with Us* – *Siamo noi a dire basta*, *Barbie*, and *The Substance*. The women participants, belonging to different socio-occupational categories (students, workers, and housewives), were included as regular viewers and potential consumers of the film product. The eligibility criteria required participants to have seen at least three of the films whose commercials were analysed and not to belong to the film, advertising, or media sectors, to avoid professional skills that could potentially influence the interpretative processes. This eligibility criterion ensures a minimum level of familiarity with the audiovisual material, reducing the risk of random or uninformed responses and limiting variance due to poor exposure to the content. Furthermore, selecting subjects with prior viewing experience allows for more stable and meaningful assessments of recall, comprehension, and attitudes toward the advertisements considered.

The selection was geared towards building a heterogeneous sample, functional to exploring the different modes of interpretation and emotional response to film marketing campaigns based on femvertising and to the representations of women in the promotional materials analysed. All respondents were willing to share articulate and reflective opinions regarding film advertising, emotional engagement, and the coherence between promotional messages and narrative representations within the films. From a socio-demographic perspective, the sample includes respondents of different ages and professional backgrounds, allowing for a broader exploration of how femvertising messages are received across life stages and social roles. This diversity made it possible to observe how perceptions of female representation and empowerment in film advertising intersect with different individual experiences, degrees of professional identification, and everyday realities.

The research sought to produce reliable and replicable insights by following a clearly defined interview structure and analytical process. The aim was to identify patterns and consistencies among participants' responses regarding how they perceive, interpret and respond emotionally to representations of women in advertising. This approach maintained an analytical distance from the data, while recognising the relevance of personal experience, allowing the researcher to move from individual accounts to more generalizable thematic interpretations. Participants were selected in such a way as to ensure a variety of profiles and points of view. In this way, it was possible to work on a wide spectrum of experiences and interpretations. Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed in full for analytical purposes and, in accordance with best practice in qualitative research, the interview transcripts were subjected to iterative reading and coding. This procedure led to the identification of analytical categories, a focus on interrelationships and the identification of thematic patterns in the interview corpus. By exploring both existing literature and emerging data, the analysis sought to reconstruct the cultural and ideological frameworks through which female empowerment is understood and represented in contemporary advertising. Through in-depth interviews, this study was able to understand not only the participants' conscious opinions and, but also their underlying assumptions, emotional reactions, and socio-cultural positioning. The qualitative approach proved indispensable in revealing the tensions, contradictions, and negotiations at the heart of the representation of women's roles, contributing to a deeper understanding of how femvertising strives to transform gender expectations in terms of female empowerment.

People were selected who were willing to share articulate opinions on advertising campaigns related to feminism or clearly anchored to distinct positions, ranging from full opposition to moderate diversification, susceptible to evolutionary dynamics. This sampling made it possible to explore what can condition or, conversely, support the perception of personal autonomy and the desire to eliminate barriers.

Respondent Code	Respondent Age	Respondent Job
R1	32	Consultant Associate
R2	45	Housewife
R3	58	Housewife
R4	52	Middle school teacher
R5	60	Housewife

R6	49	Lawyer
R7	34	Customer service specialist
R8	43	Freelance professional (self-employed)
R9	57	Bank Employee
R10	27	Master Student

About the procedure, a semi-structured protocol was used as a guide for the interviews relevant to this research, including a set of thematic areas derived from the literature review and introductory theoretical considerations. The thematic areas were explored through Grand Tour questions: open-ended, ad hoc questions designed to encourage participants to share personal stories and observations. To deepen the investigation and clarify specific elements that did not emerge spontaneously, the interviews employed floating prompts (spontaneous follow-up questions used during the interview to investigate relevant issues that gradually emerge from the participant's narrative. These are not predefined but arise in response to the interviewee's statements, so that the researcher can explore specific aspects without interrupting the flow of the conversation. These prompts ensure that key theoretical themes are addressed in all interviews, ensuring consistency in data collection. These include contrast prompts, exceptional incident prompts, and category questions, which are useful for eliciting richer descriptions and reflections from participants. Regarding the protocol, three main sections were organised, subject to careful planning, to negotiate adequate flexibility to ensure consistency and guide participants through an exploration characterised by the progressive importance of the research topics. Here is a summary of the different sections:

1. The first section was dedicated to exploring the role of women. The interview aimed to make people reflect on their identity, on the sources of pride and challenge in fulfilling their role within society, and on their sense of visibility in the media and advertising. Precisely because the conversation was anchored in lived reality, this section aimed to elicit first-person narratives and lay the cognitive and emotional groundwork for the rest of the interview.
2. The second section consisted of an exposure phase, in which participants were shown a curated selection of commercials from the corpus analysed in the semiotic section of the thesis. The selected commercials included: Babygirl, Barbie, It Ends with Us, C'è Ancora Domani and The Substance. The use of the same commercials served a dual

purpose: firstly, it ensured conceptual consistency between the analytical and empirical components of the research; secondly, these specific ideas were selected because they were recognised as particularly significant, emotionally impactful, and relevant in the way they treat the representation of women. Each participant was exposed to approximately three advertisements for films they had previously seen at the cinema.

3. After each viewing, participants were invited to express their emotional reactions, discuss the extent to which they felt represented, and reflect on the realism and cultural relevance of the content. This rather complex selection led to a rich comparative dialogue, prompting participants to reflect on the emotional register, narrative development, and representation strategies that made them perceive a real consistency between the message of the advert and that of the full film seen at the cinema.
4. In the closing section of the interviews, a series of evaluative questions were asked to summarise the opinions expressed on the representation of the role and position of women and on the message in advertising. At this stage, the stimulus to identify what is considered to make a campaign authentic and credible, which elements can cause pressure and discomfort, and which characteristics determine the perception of feeling understood, emerges. This part of the protocol offered a critical view of the participants' expectations, ideals, and sensibilities about how femvertising could more effectively emphasise the complexity of female identity. The result was also a more conscious understanding, from a strictly technical point of view, of how effective 15/30-second commercials are in femvertising-based film marketing campaigns to promote films with female protagonists, and how much correspondence was perceived between the image of the female character constructed in the commercials and her representation in the film. In this way, participants were able to express their opinions on how femvertising can effectively bridge the gap between authenticity and aspiration in campaigns focused on the role of women in films.

3.6 Decoding the Data from Qualitative Interviews

Even though the research sample consisted of only ten participants, the diversity of profiles enabled the emergence of clear recurring themes and shared interpretative patterns, with limited divergences mainly linked to individual sensibilities and personal taste in communication style. While the findings are not statistically generalizable, the qualitative richness of the

data provides valuable insights into how femvertising-oriented cinematic advertising is perceived by a non-specialized audience, highlighting both its potential and its critical limitations in representing female protagonists authentically and coherently. For the analysis and decoding of the data collected through the interviews carried out, the *Thematic Analysis (TA)* proposed by Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006; 2021) was chosen as it offers a flexible and rigorous methodological framework, capable of capturing the patterns of meaning emerging from the post-vision interviews and of interpreting in depth the perceptions, emotions and cultural readings activated by the interviewees in front of the film commercials shown. This method is now one of the most widely used qualitative methods in the social sciences, psychology and cultural studies. Its popularity derives from its ability to combine methodological rigor and theoretical flexibility, allowing the researcher to identify and interpret patterns of meaning within a textual, visual or multimodal data corpus (Braun & Clarke, 2006; 2021). The analytical process is divided into six phases, which should not be understood as linear steps, but as recursive and interconnected moments. The first phase consists of familiarization with the data, through repeated readings and preliminary annotations that allow you to grasp the first analytical insights. This is followed by the initial coding phase, in which the researcher segments the material and assigns codes that synthesize relevant conceptual elements, actions, emotions, or meanings. The third phase involves the organization of the codes into potential themes, through a process of grouping and mapping the relationships between the different elements. The fourth phase involves a critical review of the themes, aimed at verifying their internal coherence and mutual distinction, returning to the data to confirm or reformulate the interpretative hypotheses. The fifth phase concerns the definition and naming of the themes, which must be clearly described, specifying what they include and what they exclude. Finally, the sixth phase consists of the production of the analytical report, in which the themes are presented and discussed through meaningful excerpts and a coherent theoretical argument (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The versatility of Thematic Analysis makes it particularly suitable for the study of complex phenomena, such as gender representations, discursive practices in the media or identity narratives. The possibility of operating at a semantic or latent level allows us to analyse both the manifest meanings and the cultural and ideological structures underlying the texts. For this reason, TA is also widely used in feminist studies and media studies, where attention to the processes of signification and power dynamics requires flexible and theoretically sensitive interpretative tools. The application of TA to the interviews carried out in this study requires particular attention to the interpretative dynamics activated by the spectators in the face of highly condensed audiovisual content. As previously explained, film commercials, in fact, are extremely synthetic forms of communication, built to convey in a few seconds a narrative identity, an emotional tone and a representation of the

characters that is immediately recognizable and engaging. In the specific case of films with female protagonists, these promotional materials play a crucial role in the construction and dissemination of models of femininity, agency and gender representation. The Thematic Analysis, in its reflective declination proposed by Braun and Clarke, offers a methodological framework particularly suitable for exploring how the interviewees receive, interpret and evaluate these representations, through an open dialogue. Thematic Analysis makes it possible to enhance this discursive richness, identifying patterns of meaning that cross the different individual narratives and reveal how the interviewees build meaning with respect to the female protagonists represented in the commercials.

In the process of familiarization with the data, particular attention was paid to the implicit references that the participants made to the visual and sound elements of the commercial: the posture of the protagonist, the tone of the narrator's voice, the choice of shots, the presence of evocative music or slogans that summarize the promotional message. These elements, although not always verbally explicit, profoundly influence the participants' interpretations and must be considered in the initial coding phase. Coding, in this context, is not limited to recording what is said, but aims to grasp the structures of meaning that emerge from the interaction between audiovisual stimulus and discursive response. During the construction of the themes, recurring patterns were identified concerning the perception of female empowerment, the evaluation of the protagonist's credibility, the presence of gender stereotypes, the ability of the commercial to generate identification or detachment, or the perceived coherence between the promotional message and the cultural expectations related to the representation of women in cinema. These themes should not be understood as descriptive categories, but as theoretically informed interpretations that allow us to understand how viewers negotiate the meaning of the proposed images. The review phase of the themes is of particular importance, as it allows you to verify that they accurately and not forcefully represent the experiences of the participants. In this phase, questions were asked about the internal coherence of themes, their mutual distinction and their ability to account for the complexity of the answers collected. Reflexivity, a central element of TA, also requires explaining how one's theoretical and cultural positions influence the interpretation of data, especially when analysing gender representations that can activate specific sensitivities and preconceptions.

Finally, in the production of the analytical report, the topics are discussed in the light of the literature on film promotion and gender studies, integrating extracts from the interviews that effectively illustrate the interpretative dynamics identified. This approach allows us to understand not only how the interviewees react to the commercials, but also how these reactions fit into a broader cultural

system of meanings related to femininity, cinematic storytelling and promotional strategies of the audiovisual industry. The Thematic Analysis, in this sense, allows us to grasp the cultural and symbolic dimension of the commercials, highlighting how they contribute to the construction and circulation of models of female representation.

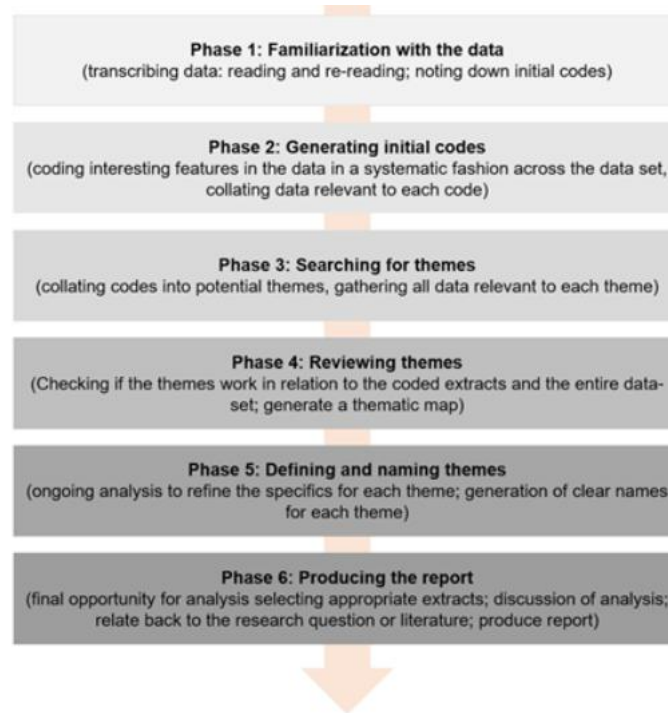


Figure 17: Braun and Clarke's 6 phases of thematic analysis (retrieved from Google Images)

3.7 Findings and results

The qualitative interviews gave an articulated and complex picture of the effectiveness of commercials in film marketing campaigns based on femvertising and the coherence between the female image built in the commercials and that proposed within the films. The participants, belonging to different age groups and socio-professional backgrounds, showed a strong sensitivity towards the ways in which female characters are represented, revealing a growing attention not only to narrative content, but also to the symbolic and emotional language used in promotional communication. A first element that emerged across the board concerns the ability of commercials to activate an immediate emotional response. Most of the interviewees said they felt intense emotions while watching the spots analysed, particularly for films such as *C'è ancora domani* and *It Ends With Us*, which were perceived as capable of conveying a strong empathic charge. R2 said: *"This commercial struck me immediately because it talks about things that I feel close to, relationships, difficult choices. It made*

me want to see the film to better understand that woman." Similarly, R5 pointed out how some spot managed to evoke subjective experiences: *"At certain times I saw myself, especially when they show women who have to find the strength within themselves"*. Personally identifiable is one of the main indicators of perceived effectiveness. Many respondents said they recognized themselves at least in part in the protagonists presented in the commercials, especially when they were represented as complex, vulnerable and not idealized women. In this sense, *C'è ancora domani* has been frequently cited as a particularly successful example. R4 remarked: *"I felt that this woman could be real, not a figure built only to excite. This made me trust the commercial."* This perception of authenticity seems to strengthen the link between the viewer and the promotional message, increasing the likelihood of interest in the film. Conversely, in cases where the depiction appeared overly glossy or distant from reality, the effect was perceived as less convincing. Some respondents expressed reservations especially with respect to commercials in which female empowerment appeared too explicit or rhetorical. R1 commented: *"When I hear phrases that are too 'programmatic' about being strong or independent, it seems to me that they are trying to convince me more than telling me a story"*. This suggests that an overly didactic approach risks weakening the credibility of the femvertising message. A second central theme concerns the perception of realism over idealization. In general, the interviewees showed a clear preference for realistic representations, in which the protagonists appear imperfect, crossed by inner conflicts and inserted in complex relational contexts. Films such as *Babygirl* and *The Substance* have aroused ambivalent reactions: on the one hand appreciation for visual and symbolic strength, on the other a certain emotional distance. R8 said: *"They are very powerful commercials, but sometimes they seem more conceptual than real to me. It's difficult to identify completely."* On the contrary, *It Ends With Us* has often been perceived as closer to the emotional everyday life of the viewers. R3 said: *"I recognized dynamics that are also part of my experience, this made me feel involved."* A particularly relevant aspect for the objectives of the research is the evaluation of the consistency between the message of the commercial and the representation of the female character within the film. Most of the participants emphasized how narrative and emotional coherence is a crucial factor for the credibility of the entire campaign. In several cases, respondents perceived a strong continuity between commercials and films, for *C'è ancora domani*, considered an emblematic example of alignment between promotional communication and narrative content. R9 said: *"The commercial told exactly what I later found in the film. This made me feel respected as a spectator."*

However, there have been situations where consistency has been perceived as partial or problematic. Some participants reported a discrepancy between the image of empowerment proposed in the commercial and a more ambiguous or less incisive representation within the film. R6 noted: *"The*

Babygirl commercial promised a very strong woman, but in the film I saw a more fragile and contradictory figure. It's not bad, but it creates a certain dissonance." This tension suggests that cinematic femvertising must grapple with a delicate balance between promotional expectations and narrative complexity. As for the impact on the decision to go to the theatre, many respondents recognized a significant role for commercials in the choice process. In particular, the perception of a message "also addressed to me" emerges as a determining element. R7 said: *"When I hear that the commercial is also about what I experience, it comes naturally to me to want to see the film"*. R10 added: *"It's important for me to feel represented. If the commercial succeeds in this, it becomes one of the main reasons to go to the cinema."* This confirms that femvertising, when perceived as authentic, can concretely affect cultural consumption choices. A critical issue that has emerged recurrently also concerns the excessive brevity of some commercials, perceived as a significant limitation in the transmission of the feminist message and in the construction of a credible representation of the female character. Several participants pointed out that the 15 or 30-second format does not always allow for adequate development of the narrative and emotional complexity required by this type of communication. In particular, R1 observed: *"In some cases I had the impression that the message was too compressed, it didn't really get through."* Similarly, R6 said: *"I understand that the commercial has to be short, but to tell the story of a complex woman perhaps it would take longer, like in a real trailer"*. This perception suggests that, especially in the context of cinematographic femvertising, the short duration of the commercial may represent a structural constraint, limiting the possibility of transmitting articulated value content and reducing the identifying impact on the viewer. Some respondents expressed a clear preference for the trailer format, considered more effective in communicating not only the atmosphere of the film, but also the psychological depth of the protagonist. R7 said: *"With a trailer I can better understand who that woman is and what she lives, while in the commercial sometimes everything remains too hinted at"*. In this sense, the idea emerges that femvertising applied to cinema needs wider narrative spaces to avoid an excessive simplification of the characters and to ensure greater coherence between promotional message and film representation.



There's still tomorrow - At the cinema! Spot You are on time

It was certainly noted that among the commercials analysed, *C'è ancora domani* was indicated by numerous participants as the most effective. The recurring reasons concern narrative sobriety, the centrality of emotions and the absence of explicit rhetoric. R2 commented: *"I didn't have the feeling that they wanted to teach me anything, but only to tell me a true story"*. *Barbie* also aroused positive reactions, especially for her ability to combine irony and critical reflection on gender roles. R1 observed: *"It's a commercial that makes you smile but also think, without being heavy. At first it may make you think that it is a superficial film but to me, in particular, it immediately made me understand, even through irony alone, the true moral behind it"*. Regarding the characteristics of a credible and authentic feminist message, respondents highlighted three main elements: emotional realism, character complexity and narrative coherence. Effective femvertising should not only present a strong woman, but show the path, contradictions and relationships that define her identity. R4 underlined: *"I am more convinced by stories in which strength comes from difficulties, not those in which the protagonist is already perfect"*. At the same time, widespread concern has emerged about the risk of obsolescence of feminist language when it is reduced to stereotyped formulas. R6 said: *"If all the commercials repeat the same slogans about empowerment, they stop being inspiring and become predictable."* In describing the "ideal advertisement" for a female-themed film, respondents imagined narratives capable of combining emotion and authenticity, avoiding both excessive idealization and forced dramatization. The favourite image is that of an imperfect but aware woman, inserted in meaningful relationships and able to evolve throughout history. R8 said: *"I would like to see real women, who make mistakes, who change their minds, who don't have to be heroines."* In this sense, cinematic femvertising is interpreted not as a simple promotional tool, but as a symbolic space for identity negotiation. A final theme that emerged concerns the transformative potential of commercials. Several participants acknowledged that some commercials contributed to reviewing prejudices or expectations towards certain films. R9 said: *"I thought it was the usual 'for women' film, but the commercial made me*

realize that there was something deeper." This suggests that femvertising, in addition to promoting, can play a relevant cultural function, broadening the audience's interpretative horizons.

The thematic analysis of the ten interviews led to the identification of several central themes, expressed through macro-codes, constructed from semantic recurrences in the participants' narratives regarding the commercials and films analysed. The themes were defined through an iterative process of coding and revision, in line with Braun and Clarke's approach, with specific attention to how viewers interpret the authenticity of femvertising-oriented messages, their identification with the protagonists, and the consistency between commercials and film text.

The following table shows the main macro codes, a brief description, and the percentage of interviews in which each theme emerged explicitly and repeatedly.

Macro-code / Theme	Brief description	% of interviews in which the theme emerges
Authenticity and consistency of female representation	References to the idea of a "true story," absence of explicit moralizing, and consistency between the character in the spot and in the film.	80%
Emotional involvement and identification	Expressions related to emotions felt while watching the spot, a sense of recognition, and "seeing oneself" in the female protagonists.	70%
Complexity vs. gender stereotypes	Reflections on the depth of the characters and on the presence/absence of clichés and stereotyped feminist language.	60%
Saturation of empowerment language	References to the repetitiveness of feminist slogans and formulas perceived as predictable or not very incisive.	50%

Consistency between promotional message and viewing experience	Evaluations of whether the promises made by the spot are “kept” in the film and of any narrative discrepancies.	60%
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Overall, the results indicate that the effectiveness of femvertising-based commercials depends mostly on their ability to construct coherent, realistic, and relationally dense representations, especially considering its brevity. The coherence between promotional image and film representation emerges as a fundamental condition for the credibility of the message, while emotional authenticity is configured as the main lever of involvement. Three dimensions are central: identification, narrative coherence and symbolic realism. These elements constitute not only a synthesis of the empirical results, but also the basis for a broader theoretical reflection on the role of femvertising in contemporary film marketing.

3.7.1 First Insight: Searching for authenticity and consistency in female representation

A first central insight that emerged from the interviews concerns the powerful desire of viewers to recognize, in the commercials of films with female protagonists, an authentic, coherent and psychologically credible representation of female characters. The participants clearly expressed their need to go beyond simplified, idealized or excessively symbolic images, asking for narratives capable of restoring the emotional, relational and identity complexity of the protagonists. In this sense, the female figure is perceived as effective only when she appears as a complete narrative subject, endowed with ambivalences, inner conflicts, fragility and strength, and not as a simple vehicle of abstract value messages. Several interviewees underlined how authenticity is the first criterion through which they evaluate the credibility of a commercial. R4 says: *"I am more convinced by the commercials in which the protagonist seems a real person, not a figure built only to convey an idea"*. Similarly, R2 observes: *"When I see a woman who is too perfect or too 'symbolic', I find it hard to feel really involved."* This need for realism does not imply a renunciation of the inspirational dimension of femvertising, but rather a request for narratives that start from concrete experience to build deeper and more lasting messages of empowerment. The complexity of the protagonist is perceived as a fundamental narrative resource. Respondents show a clear preference for representations that include moments of uncertainty, contradiction and personal transformation, considering them essential elements to promote identification. R8 declares: *"I like more characters who change, who make mistakes, who have not already 'arrived' and I like to see*

myself in that sense of incompleteness because that's where I really recognize myself." In this perspective, feminine strength is not understood as a static or idealized quality, but as the result of a path, of a continuous tension between vulnerability and self-determination. A particularly relevant aspect of this insight concerns the consistency between the image proposed in the commercial and the representation developed in the film. Most participants cited this consistency as a prerequisite for the credibility of the entire marketing campaign. When the promotional message is aligned with the narrative construction of the character, the commercial is perceived as respectful and reliable. R9 says: *"If I see a woman in a certain way in the commercial, then I expect to find her really like that in the film. When it happens, I feel more satisfied."* In this sense, *C'è ancora domani* has frequently been cited as a virtuous example of symbolic and emotional continuity between promotional communication and film storytelling.

On the contrary, the discrepancies between commercials and films are experienced as a source of disorientation but above all as a loss of trust. Some respondents perceived a distance between the image of empowerment proposed in the trailers and a more ambiguous or less incisive representation in the cinematic narrative. R6 observes: *"Sometimes the commercial promises a very strong woman, then in the film the character is much more fragile. It's not a problem in itself, but it makes you feel like something doesn't add up."* This tension suggests that cinematic femvertising is moving on delicate terrain, in which excessive promotional emphasis risks compromising narrative credibility. Respondents explicitly reject stereotyped or overly idealized representations, which are considered not only unrealistic but also potentially counterproductive. R5 says: *"Women who are always perfect make me uncomfortable, they seem far from reality and in general they can also distance you from the film out of a sense of inferiority"*. However, what is rejected is not the aspirational element itself, but its superficial declination. The participants do not ask to replace one ideal with another, but to build more nuanced and holistic narratives, capable of holding together strength and fragility, autonomy and relationships, desire and responsibility.

In this perspective, the female protagonist should not be reduced to a simple symbol of empowerment, but presented as a central narrative subject, bearer of a story, a point of view and a recognizable identity path. R1 says: *"I'm interested in understanding who that woman is, not just what she represents."* This request for symbolic centrality highlights how cinematographic femvertising is evaluated not so much for the explicit presence of feminist messages, but for the narrative and relational quality of the proposed representation.

In summary, the theme of authenticity is the most recurrent macro-code, emerging in eight out of ten interviews, and it revolves around the perception of campaigns as "real", credible and not

exaggerated in the way they portray women's experiences. In this sense, the spot for *C'è ancora domani* was identified by several participants as the most effective, precisely because of its narrative sobriety, emotional centrality and the absence of explicitly didactic feminist rhetoric.

Within this first insight, the thematic analysis allowed for the identification of more specific sub-themes, summarised in the table below.

Macro-code / Theme	Brief description	% of interviews in which the theme emerges
Perceived authenticity of the story	References to the spot as “real”, “credible” or “not exaggerated” in portraying women and their everyday experiences.	80%
Consistency between spot and film	Comments on the alignment between the female character in the spot and in the film (tone, conflicts, personality)	70%
Rejection of performative / forced feminism	Critiques of campaigns perceived as merely “jumping on the feminist bandwagon” without real commitment or narrative depth.	50%
Credibility of the empowerment message	Evaluations of whether the empowerment conveyed in the spot feels earned and believable within the film's narrative universe.	60%

Authenticity is thus intricately linked to consistency between the protagonist's image in the commercial and her representation in the film: interviewees appreciate campaigns in which emotional tone, character traits and narrative conflict return in a recognisable way during cinema viewing. Conversely, when the trailer overemphasises a spectacularised empowerment that does not find confirmation in the film, participants speak of “disappointment” and “forced message”, signalling a weakening of the overall credibility of the campaign.

3.7.2 Second Insight: Emotional Engagement and Identification as Levers of Effectiveness

A second insight that emerged recurrently from the interviews concerns the significant role of emotional involvement and the identification process in evaluating the effectiveness of femvertising-based film commercials. The interviewees clearly expressed how the ability of a commercial to arouse authentic emotions is one of the main factors of attraction towards the film; however, this emotional effectiveness is strongly conditioned by the way in which these emotions are constructed and communicated. What is sought is not an amplified or rhetorical emotionality, but an emotional participation perceived as sincere, measured and consistent with the promised narrative experience. Many participants emphasized how identification with the protagonist emerges above all when the commercial manages to evoke recognizable situations, feelings or dilemmas, without forcing the feminist message into explicit or sloganized formulas. R7 says: *"I'm more impressed by commercials that make me feel something without telling me what to think."* In this perspective, emotion is not understood as a simple persuasive tool, but as a relational space in which the viewer can recognize parts of his or her own experience. A key element concerns the rejection of excessively rhetorical communication. Several respondents expressed a certain distrust of commercials that try to emphasize the theme of female empowerment in a way that is too overt, perceived as artificial or not very credible. R1 observes: *"When the message is too explicit, it seems to me constructed and I find it more difficult to get involved."* Similarly, R6 states: *"If a commercial insists too much on wanting to be 'strong' or 'feminist', it risks losing naturalness"*. This suggests that the emotional effectiveness of cinematic femvertising depends largely on its ability to show, rather than declare, the values it is intended to convey. Within this balance, the theme of emotional measurement emerges strongly. Respondents do not ask for cold or detached narratives but reject both idealization and overdramatization. Commercials that insist exclusively on pain, suffering or the tragic dimension of the female experience have been perceived as reductive and unrepresentative. R5 says: *"If a commercial focuses only on suffering, it distances me instead of bringing me closer"*. What is appreciated, however, is a representation capable of integrating different emotions: vulnerability and strength, fear and desire for redemption, fragility and awareness.



[It Ends With Us | From August 21 at the cinema - "Do you want to marry me?"](#)

Emotional involvement is particularly effective when the commercial manages to suggest a path, rather than a result already accomplished. In this sense, films such as *C'è ancora domani* and *It Ends With Us* have been cited as examples in which emotion arises from the perception of an inner journey, rather than from the immediate celebration of the protagonist. R4 says: *"It struck me because I felt that this woman was going through something, not because she was presented as a model"*. Identification, therefore, is built through the narration of an emotional process and not through the simple exposure of a value message. A further relevant aspect concerns the emotional continuity between commercial and film. The interviewees underlined how the effectiveness of the commercial is confirmed or denied by the experience in the theatre. When the emotions evoked by the promotional message are reflected in the vision of the film, the involvement is strengthened; on the contrary, an emotional discrepancy generates disappointment and a sense of distance. R9 notes, *"If the commercial makes me feel a certain way and then the film delivers on that emotional promise, I feel more involved and fulfilled, otherwise I would feel really disappointed."* This highlights how emotion works not only as an attractive lever, but also as a criterion for evaluating the overall coherence of the campaign.

In describing what makes a commercial truly engaging, many participants referred to everyday emotions, expressed through gestures, glances and silences, rather than through explicitly emphatic scenes. R8 says: *"Sometimes a detail, a look or a difficult choice is enough to make me feel inside the story"*. This focus on the emotional micro-level suggests that the effectiveness of cinematic femvertising often lies in the ability to enhance the ordinary, transforming it into an emotionally meaningful experience without spectacularizing it. This element is especially important for tools such as the commercial that in a brief time (i.e. 15/30 seconds) must give an almost immediate idea of the film. Therefore, in commercials it is more important to bring out the most symbolic scenes that are not necessarily those in dialogue or more concrete.

Participants describe as more effective those commercials that elicit complex emotions (commotion, recognition, indignation, irony) and allow them to “see themselves” in the situations portrayed, even when the narrative context is distant from their everyday life.

Macro-code / Theme	Brief description	% of interviews in which the theme emerges
Emotional intensity of the spot	References to feeling moved, touched, shocked, amused or otherwise emotionally activated by the campaign.	70%
Identification with the female protagonist	Expressions of “seeing oneself” in the character’s doubts, struggles or aspirations.	60%
Recognition of everyday experiences	Comments linking scenes or dialogues in the spot to situations lived or witnessed in everyday life.	50%
Lasting emotional impact after viewing	Mentions of emotions or reflections that persisted after the end of the spot and the film.	40%

The *Barbie* spot, for example, was positively evaluated for its ability to combine irony with critical reflection on gender roles, generating both lightness and thought. In this framework, identification does not depend solely on the character’s strength, but on the representation of her journey, contradictions and relationships: participants feel more involved when the protagonist appears “imperfect but self-aware” rather than already fully empowered.

3.7.3 Third Insight: Emotional Tone Calibration and Short-Form Limitations

A third relevant insight that emerged from the interviews concerns the calibration of the emotional tone adopted in film commercials and, in close connection with it, the structural limitations of the short format in conveying femvertising messages effectively and credibly. The interviewees showed a strong sensitivity not only to *what* is told, but above all to *how* it is told: the emotional tone, the

narrative rhythm, the choice of images and music decisively affect the perception of authenticity of the message. Many participants highlighted how overly emphatic, celebratory or melodramatic communication tends to generate detachment rather than involvement. When the emotion is perceived as forced or constructed, the commercial risks appearing manipulative and not very credible. R4 says: *"I get excited when I hear something true, but if the commercial insists too much on emotion, it pushes me away."* Similarly, an excessively artificial lightness or irony has been critically evaluated: humour only works when it arises from recognizable and shared situations, while it is disturbing if perceived as out of context or disrespectful. What is most appreciated is a measured emotional tone, capable of reflecting the complexity of the female experience without reducing it to a single expressive register. Respondents pointed out that the most engaging emotions are often those suggested, hinted at, indirect and allowed to emerge through small visual or narrative details. R6 observes: *"I prefer a commercial that makes me smile or reflect simply, without exaggerating"*. This request for emotional restraint translates into a preference for narratives that know how to alternate strength and fragility, tension and delicacy, without slipping either into the rhetoric of empowerment or into the excessive dramatization of suffering. In this context, the issue of the duration of the commercial emerges strongly as a critical factor. Several interviewees highlighted how the 15 or 30-second format often represents a limit in the construction of a balanced emotional tone and in the transmission of an articulated feminist message. R1 says: *"Sometimes the commercial is too short to really get the message across, it all seems compressed."* This narrative brevity can lead to an oversimplification of the protagonist and her path, reducing emotional complexity to a few quick and sometimes stereotyped signals. For this reason, some participants expressed a clear preference for the trailer format, which they felt was more suitable for developing a coherent emotional arc and restoring more depth to the female character. R7 notes: *"With a trailer, I can get more into the story and understand who the protagonist really is."* The trailer, offering more narrative time (60/90 seconds), allows a more effective modulation of the emotional tone and a less hasty representation of the female experience, reducing the risk of rhetorical excesses or symbolic simplifications. Despite this, respondents do not reject the short format itself but recognize the need for greater expressive awareness. An effective commercial, according to the participants, should focus on a few key elements, avoiding emotional overload and favoring an essential but meaningful narrative. R5 says: *"Even a gesture, a look, is enough, if it is told well"*. This suggests that brevity can only become an asset when accompanied by a strong focus on tone quality and narrative coherence.

Overall, this insight highlights how the effectiveness of cinematic femvertising does not depend exclusively on thematic content, but mostly on the regulation of the emotional tone and the ability to adapt the message to the possibilities and limits of the chosen communication format. Emotionally

calibrated, sober but intense communication can generate recognition and involvement even in brief time spaces; on the contrary, a careless management of the tone risks compromising the credibility of the message and the trust of the viewer.

Some participants emphasise that the repetition of “empowerment” slogans and images risks losing inspirational force and being perceived as predictable, especially when not supported by real narrative complexity.

The following table synthesises the main sub-themes linked to this third insight:

Macro-code / Theme	Brief description	% of interviews in which the theme emerges
Perceived oversimplification of complex issues	Remarks on how topics such as violence, sexism or empowerment are “compressed” or simplified in the short format.	60%
Saturation of empowerment slogans	References to repetitive, predictable or overused feminist formulas and taglines.	50%
Balance of emotional tone	Evaluations of whether the spot manages to avoid excessive pathos and trivialisation of the issues.	50%
Desire for more narrative depth	Comments expressing the wish to see more context, backstory or character development beyond what the commercial can show.	40%

Chapter 4

4.1 General Discussion

The integration of the results that emerged from the semiotic analysis of commercials and qualitative interviews allows us to identify a significant evolution in the way femvertising is applied to film marketing campaigns dedicated to films with female protagonists. Both methodological approaches, on the one hand the analysis of the symbolic and narrative devices of the commercials, on the other the analysis of the perceptions and experiences of the spectators, converge on a central point: the need to overcome communicative logics based on simplification, rhetorical emphasis or idealization, to build a more authentic, coherent and stratified communicative space. The campaigns analyzed adopt different expressive registers and strategies: some focus on the explicit empowerment of the protagonist, others on a marked emotional intensity, others on a more symbolic or ironic language. However, a recurring critical element is the tendency to isolate individual dimensions of the female experience, strength, vulnerability, resilience, emancipation, separating them from the overall narrative path of the character. This fragmentation produces partial and polarized representations, which risk reducing the complexity of the female character to a set of immediately recognizable but shallow traits. As is clear from the interviews, this reduction prevents many viewers from feeling fully represented. The results of the qualitative analysis show how the female experience is perceived as intrinsically ambivalent and processual, made up of contradictions, transitions, moments of strength and moments of fragility, desire for autonomy and relational ties. When commercials select only one aspect of this complexity, isolating and amplifying it, a distance is created between the promotional message and the viewer's actual experience, with a consequent weakening of the identifying potential of femvertising.

A further element of convergence between semiotic analysis and interviews concerns the emotional tone of the campaigns. Viewers showed a strong sensitivity towards the ways in which emotions are constructed and conveyed. That is, the celebratory excess, the forced dramatization or the use of emotionally overloaded slogans were perceived as artificial and not very credible. In the same way, irony is also appreciated only when it is rooted in recognizable and shared situations; An overly stylized or stereotyped humour tends to generate detachment. It is precisely this emotional and narrative distance that prevents many campaigns from generating empathy, identification and a sense of involvement. In this context, the communicative format also plays a significant role. The short duration of the film commercial represents a structural constraint that directly affects the possibility of developing a complex emotional and narrative representation of the female character. The interviews show how this limit is clearly perceived by viewers, who recognize the commercial as

having a strong initial impact, but often feel its incompleteness. The trailer, on the contrary, is considered a more adequate narrative space to build emotional coherence, symbolic continuity and psychological depth, reducing the risk of oversimplification. What emerges, therefore, is both the possibility and the need for a rethinking of femvertising applied to film marketing. Effective femvertising cannot be limited to transmitting explicit value messages, but must build a relationship with the viewer, based on recognition, consistency and respect for narrative complexity. This implies the abandonment of normative models, idealized or prescriptive, in favour of stories capable of restoring the female experience in its entirety, without simplifying or spectacularizing it. The realism that emerges as desirable is not a crude or disenchanted realism, but a profoundly human realism: a representation capable of attributing dignity to inner conflicts, value to everyday gestures and meaning to the paths of transformation. In this perspective, the strength of the female character does not lie in her exceptionality or perfection, but in her narrative credibility and in the consistency between what is promised by the commercial and what is told by the film.

In conclusion, this research shows how femvertising in film marketing can only renew its communicative and cultural effectiveness if it is willing to abandon promotional simplification and embrace complexity. By overcoming the polarization between idealization and dramatization and adopting a more conscious and respectful look at women's experiences, cinematographic communication can become a space of recognition and connection. It is precisely this balance between authenticity and aspiration, between representation and identification, that defines a possible new paradigm for femvertising applied to contemporary cinema.

4.2 Theoretical Contribution

The results of this research contribute significantly to the theoretical debate on femvertising, drawing attention to an area still little explored in the literature: the role of commercials in the film marketing of films with female protagonists and the construction of the image of the female character between promotional communication and film storytelling. Although femvertising has been widely analysed in recent years as a communication strategy aimed at countering the historical objectification of women (Sternadori et al, 2019; Gill, 2007), the application of this approach to the cinematographic context has remained largely on the margins of the debate, often limited to a superficial reading of the empowerment messages proposed in the trailers and commercials. This research intervenes to fill this gap, proposing a reflection that shifts the attention from the simple presence of feminist messages to the quality of representation and narrative coherence between commercials and films. The results show that viewers do not reject femvertising as a concept, but

question those campaigns that construct overly idealized, symbolic or emotionally simplified female characters. What is criticized is not the emancipatory intent, but its translation into models that are not very credible, which end up distancing instead of involving. From the interviews, a powerful desire for authentic representations clearly emerges, capable of returning complex female characters, crossed by contradictions, transformations and inner conflicts. In this perspective, the female protagonist becomes a privileged lens through which to rethink the very concept of empowerment, that is, no longer understood exclusively as individual affirmation or personal success, but as a narrative, situated and relational experience. Film femvertising, therefore, is redefined not as a celebration of abstractly strong and perfect female figures, but as a communicative practice capable of telling paths of awareness, choice and change, sometimes dictated by trauma and difficulties. Within this framework, a central theoretical contribution concerns the concept of the centrality of the female character in promotional narratives. Viewers clearly express the desire for the protagonists to be at the centre of the advertising story, not as decorative or symbolic figures, but as narrative subjects endowed with psychological depth and continuity with the story of the film. However, for this centrality to be credible, it cannot be based on unrealistic or hyper-performative models. On the contrary, the female character must be represented in her everyday truth, made up of emotional ambivalences, inner tensions, responsibilities and meaningful relationships. A representation of this type does not reduce the protagonist to suffering or sacrifice, but returns her as a fully human subject, worthy of recognition and respect. This gives the viewer the opportunity to identify with the story and have the right curiosity to go to the cinema.

The research also contributes to broadening the theoretical reflection on the relationship between the communicative form and the symbolic construction of empowerment. Film femvertising cannot be analysed without the structural constraints of the advertising medium: the brevity of the commercial, the need for synthesis and the emphasis on immediate impact profoundly influence the way in which female identity is told. The results suggest that many of the critical issues detected do not derive so much from the values promoted, but from the difficulty of translating them into an extremely small narrative space, which often favours simplifications and polarizations. In this sense, the comparison with the trailer format opens new theoretical perspectives on the relationship between narrative time and representational depth.

Overall, this research invites us to rethink the very definition of femvertising in the context of film marketing, expanding it towards more complete, coherent and layered female representations. Viewers do not ask to be persuaded through explicit feminist slogans or to witness idealized narratives; on the contrary, they express the need to recognize themselves in characters who live the

female experience through a plurality of emotions, choices and contradictions. Feeling represented means being included in a story that does not eliminate complexity but takes it as a value. The form of femvertising that emerges from this study is not afraid of complexity but considers it a fundamental narrative resource. It is a femvertising that does not separate autonomy and relationship, strength and vulnerability, aspiration and realism, but holds them together within a coherent story. In this perspective, even the presence of other relational figures, when relevant, is not perceived as a threat to female centrality, but as an element that can contribute to making representation more credible and sustainable, if it does not obscure their narrative role.

In conclusion, fully representing female characters in film marketing means offering a communicative space in which women can truly recognize themselves: not as abstract symbols of empowerment, but as complex, imperfect and authentic subjects. It is precisely in this ability to welcome and tell the complexity that cinematographic femvertising can find a renewed theoretical and communicative relevance.

4.3 Managerial Implications

In addition to offering a theoretical contribution to the ongoing discourse on femvertising, this research provides practical implications for film distributors, production companies, advertising agencies, and communication professionals involved in the design of promotional campaigns for films with female protagonists. The first key insight to emerge concerns the need to abandon idealized, simplified, or excessively symbolic portrayals of female characters. Participants explicitly rejected representations that appeared overly perfect, hyper-performative, or detached from lived experience, as these models were perceived as artificial and not credible; such narratives not only create emotional distance but may also generate frustration or disengagement among spectators. Viewers expressed a clear desire to see female protagonists represented in a way that feels closer to reality: through everyday emotions, internal conflicts, moments of doubt, effort, and transformation, but also through agency, satisfaction, and self-awareness. For this reason, cinematic marketing campaigns should present authentic female characters, neither flawless heroines nor stereotypical figures, but complex women capable of being strong and vulnerable, determined and uncertain, ironic and emotionally open. These representations are perceived as more believable and foster deeper identification, increasing the effectiveness of the promotional message. Moreover, the communication tone plays a significant role. Campaigns should maintain a consistent and balanced emotional register, avoiding both rhetorical excess and forced sentimentality. Spectators are not looking for advertising that presents empowerment as perfection, nor for messages that dramatize

female experience; rather, they seek campaigns that make them feel understood and respected. Emotional engagement emerges when the tone is measured, sincere, and coherent with the story told in the film. A second crucial implication concerns the balance between authenticity and aspiration. The interviewees did not call for bleak or disenchanted promotional narratives, but for truthful representations that are also capable of conveying pride, possibility, and emotional resonance. Realism should not turn into resignation, just as aspiration should not translate into idealization. The most effective cinematic campaigns are those that can depict struggle without erasing beauty, and complexity without turning it into failure. Finding this balance allows advertising to generate empathy, credibility, and long-term value for both the film and the brand behind it. From a strategic perspective, brands and distributors aiming to build a meaningful relationship with their audience should move from a purely representational logic to a more relational and dialogical one. This shift can be supported through extended narrative formats (such as trailers, behind-the-scenes content, interviews with actresses or directors, and branded content) that allow more space for character development and narrative coherence. Viewers do not want female protagonists to be merely “shown”; they want to understand them, follow their journeys, and recognize themselves in their contradictions. Allowing more narrative depth within promotional strategies can significantly increase engagement and trust.

In conclusion, this research demonstrates that the principles of femvertising can be effectively applied to marketing cinematographic products, if this is done with narrative coherence, emotional awareness, and respect for the complexity of female experience. Campaigns that succeed in balancing realism and aspiration, emotional nuance and promotional effectiveness, will not only communicate more persuasively, but will also be better positioned to generate cultural and symbolic value within a domain, the representation of women in cinema, that has too often been shaped by external expectations rather than by authentic storytelling.

4.4 Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Like any qualitative study, this research also has some limitations that must be recognized and contextualized. First, the study is based on a limited number of in-depth interviews, conducted with a sample of viewers belonging to a relatively homogeneous socio-cultural context. Although the variety of ages and professional backgrounds contributed to enriching the analysis, the lack of greater geographical, cultural and economic diversity represents a limitation in terms of generalizability of the results. Perceptions related to female representation and emotional responses to film commercials can in fact vary significantly based on factors such as cultural context, level of education,

personal experience and the predominant value system. Secondly, the research adopted an exclusively qualitative approach, combining the semiotic analysis of a selected number of film commercials with individual interviews. This methodological choice has allowed an in-depth exploration of the subjective perceptions of the spectators, the emotional dynamics and the processes of identification, but does not allow to formulate statistically generalizable conclusions. In this sense, future research could integrate quantitative methods, such as surveys on larger samples, to validate the results and to investigate possible correlations between socio-demographic variables and modes of reception of femvertising messages in the film context. A further limitation concerns the composition of the sample, which mainly includes viewers with relatively traditional life experiences and family models. The absence of a broader representation of family and identity configurations, such as, for example, single viewers, unconventional families or people belonging to distinct cultural backgrounds, may have influenced the variety of perspectives collected. This lack may have limited the analysis of how cinematic femvertising is perceived by audiences who recognize themselves less in the dominant narrative models proposed by commercials and films. Despite these limitations, the research opens several promising directions for future studies. Firstly, it would be particularly useful to extend the analysis to international contexts, to understand how femvertising is declined in film marketing in different markets and cultures. A cross-cultural comparison could highlight significant differences in the symbolic construction of female characters and in the reception of empowerment messages, highlighting how some strategies can be effective in certain contexts but less relevant in others. In addition, future studies could expand the sample to include audiences with more diverse experiences and identities, to explore how cinematic femvertising can more inclusively represent non-normative forms of femininity and less conventional walks of life. In this perspective, it would be interesting to analyse if and how female representation in commercials manages to dialogue with audiences that are on the margins of dominant narratives. A further direction of research concerns the temporal evolution of femvertising in cinema. Analysing how communication strategies change over time, in response to social, cultural and political changes, could offer relevant insights to understand the ability of film marketing to adapt to new sensitivities and expectations. At the same time, it would be useful to deepen the role of different communication formats, short commercials, extended trailers, branded content, digital or social content, evaluating their comparative effectiveness in the construction of coherent and credible female representations.

Finally, future studies could experiment with new narrative and promotional formats, such as hybrid content between communication and cinematic storytelling, short documentaries, podcasts or transmedia projects related to films, analysing their impact in terms of audience

engagement, trust and identification. Evaluating these alternative modalities could help rethink femvertising not only as a promotional tool, but as an extended narrative space. In conclusion, this research represents a first step in exploring the intersection between femvertising and film marketing. The results show how this area offers not only interesting theoretical contributions, but also concrete development opportunities for a more aware, coherent and respectful communication of female complexity. Future research directions will be able to broaden, deepen and diversify this field, helping to make cinematographic communication not only more effective, but also more attentive to the emotional, cultural and identity dimensions of contemporary spectators.

Conclusion

The reflection developed during this thesis has shown how the representation of female characters in contemporary film marketing, and in campaigns that refer to the principles of femvertising, constitutes a space of tension between innovation and tradition, between aspiration and authenticity, between symbolic empowerment and market logic. If femvertising has undoubtedly marked an evolution compared to the stereotyped and simplified narratives of the past, the analysis of cinematographic cases highlights how the path towards a truly inclusive, coherent and respectful representation of female complexity remains articulated and crossed by contradictions. The semiotic analysis of the selected commercials has highlighted a plurality of narrative and visual strategies: some campaigns opt for an explicit celebration of the strength and autonomy of the protagonist, others adopt an ironic or symbolic tone, while others still attempt to represent the emotional complexity of the female experience without sugarcoating it. However, even the most successful campaigns show recurring limitations, often linked to the need to maintain a balance between authenticity and desirability, between reality and idealization. The female protagonist, although emancipated from a purely subordinate or accessory representation, is still frequently constructed as a performative, responsible and resilient figure, but rarely as vulnerable, imperfect or ambivalent; in other words, as profoundly human. Qualitative interviews conducted with viewers enriched this reflection by offering a bottom-up perspective on how audiences perceive, welcome or distance themselves from the female images proposed by film commercials. What emerges strongly is a widespread desire for recognition in its own complexity, without being reduced to symbolic models or predefined narrative functions. Interviewees express the need for less idealized and more diversified representations, capable of including fatigue, doubt, contradiction and social pressure, without giving up the possibility of feeling involved, inspired or valued. Identification does not arise from perfection, but from the credibility and coherence of the proposed narrative path. In the light of these results, it is possible to say that femvertising applied to film marketing involves a double responsibility: on the one hand, to contribute to the construction of a fairer and more realistic cultural imaginary; on the other hand, avoiding the risk of transforming empowerment into a simple aesthetic or commercial strategy. Campaigns that want to communicate effectively and responsibly must go beyond the superficiality of symbolic empowerment and work towards a coherent alignment between promotional message and film representation, between storytelling and narrative content. Only in this way will it be possible to overcome the risk of a form of "femvertising washing" and build a communication that is truly meaningful. In conclusion, this research shows how femvertising in film marketing can only renew its cultural and communicative relevance if it is willing to abandon simplification and embrace complexity. Overcoming the polarization between idealization

and dramatization and adopting a more attentive and respectful look at women's experiences, allows cinematic communication to become a space of recognition and connection. It is precisely this balance between authenticity and aspiration, between representation and identification, that defines a likely future direction for femvertising applied to contemporary cinema.

Appendix

Interview – General Audience

Introduction

Presentation of the interview:

Ciao, sono Anna Maria, studentessa all'università LUISS. Sto lavorando a una tesi che approfondisce il modo in cui il femvertising, ovvero la promozione che punta sull'empowerment femminile, viene utilizzato per pubblicizzare i film. Questa intervista fa parte della mia ricerca, e mi piacerebbe molto conoscere il tuo punto di vista su come hai vissuto questi messaggi promozionali.

Why you have been chosen:

Hai visto recentemente alcuni film che fanno parte del mio studio e i relativi spot pubblicitari, e per questo credo che il tuo parere possa offrire uno spunto prezioso per capire meglio la percezione del pubblico.

Privacy:

Ti assicuro che tutto ciò che condividerai resterà completamente anonimo e sarà usato esclusivamente per scopi accademici. Nessuna informazione personale verrà diffusa.

Consent:

Posso avere il tuo permesso per registrare questa conversazione, solo per facilitare la trascrizione e l'analisi? Puoi scegliere se audio o video.

Central phase

Part 1 - Reactions to individual commercials (with viewing)

Ora ti mostrerò alcuni spot da 15/30 secondi legati ai film del mio studio. Dopo ognuno, ti farò qualche domanda.

Per ciascun video:

Che emozioni ti ha suscitato questo spot?

Ti ci sei ritrovata/o? In che modo?

Secondo te questo spot rappresenta bene la realtà o è più idealizzato?

Pensando al messaggio dello spot, pensi che aiuti a valorizzare la figura femminile? O rischia di cadere in stereotipi o cliché?

Part 2 - Individual experience and perception

Ti ricordi cosa ti ha colpito di più negli spot dei film che hai visto? Che tipo di impressione ti hanno lasciato? Durante il film invece, hai provato le stesse emozioni e ti hanno colpito gli stessi elementi?

Dopo aver visto il film completo, ti è sembrato che ci fosse coerenza tra il messaggio dello spot e la storia raccontata?

Hai sentito che quei messaggi pubblicitari parlavano davvero anche a te, come spettatore/spettatrice? Se sì, lo considereresti uno dei motivi per cui sei andata a vedere il film in sala?

Ti sei sentita/o rappresentata/o in modo sincero sia dal film che dallo spot o solo da uno dei due?

Part 3 - Comparison and reflection

Quale degli spot che hai visto ti è sembrato più efficace e perché?

Cosa rende secondo te credibile e autentico un messaggio pubblicitario femminista?

In quali casi, secondo te, questo tipo di comunicazione rischia di diventare obsoleta, anziché ispirare?

Se potessi descrivere la tua “pubblicità ideale” su un film a tema femminile, che caratteristiche avrebbe?

Ti è mai capitato che uno spot ti facesse rivedere un’idea che avevi o cambiare modo di avvicinarti a un film?

Conclusion

Ti ringrazio davvero per aver condiviso il tuo punto di vista.

C’è qualcosa che vorresti aggiungere, chiarire o approfondire?

Se ti va, posso inviarti i risultati della mia ricerca. Ti interesserebbe? E in che modo preferiresti riceverli (e-mail, messaggio, ecc.)?

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