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## Feminism In the fashion industry: publicity or protest



The way women dress has always been determined by someone else. In today's society, females still can't wear what they want without being harassed or oppressed but the fashion industry is making a stand. At the Chanel spring summer 2015 show models walked down the runway holding posters that said: "ladies first" and "feminism not masochism". Are designers all promoting feminism now or is it just another publicity stunt?

## Femvertising

A new trend called femvertising recently emerged in the advertising industry where brands use feminism as a way of selling their products. It all started with a campaign from EDF, a utility company, called #prettycurious. They wanted to attract more girls to become scientists by stating that they are not just pretty but they also have other qualities. Unfortunately, the campaign title did exactly the opposite. They got lots of criticism from women stating that girls don't need to be pretty to become a scientist. Although femvertising became very popular over the last couple of years, it has been around longer.

Back in the fifties, advertisements weren't very woman-friendly to say the least. Women weren't emancipated yet back then and were expected to stand in the kitchen all day. The cliché of the perfect housewife was what every woman should aspire to be. As more and more females started to stand up for their rights the ads followed slowly but surely. Lingerie brand **Formfit** came up with an ad that encouraged freedom for women by wearing their undergarments.

In the late seventies **Virginia Slims**, a cigarette brand, introduced the first cigarettes specifically marketed towards women. Their legendary campaigns were created by the Leo Burnett advertising agency, who are also behind the Always campaigns. The ads showed how women evolved over the years in different aspects of their life such as the right to vote.



Today there have been numerous campaigns by big brands such as #likeagirl from Always and #girlscan by **Covergirl**. The cosmetic brand used celebrities like Katy Perry and Ellen DeGeneres as examples of female empowerment to promote their makeup. Today they have a new campaign called #IamwhatImakeup that celebrates women's power to create who she is - and who she wants to be. Always made females from different ages do mundane things like a girl such as walking, throwing or talking. Then they showed them that doing something like a girl doesn't mean they do less well. That way they wanted to prove that the way a girl does something is no different than the way a guy does it.

Femvertising has become so popular that there are even awards to honour the brands that are challenging gender norms by creating advertisements that have pro-female messages and images. The Femvertising awards were created in 2015 by **SheKnows Media**, a women's lifestyle digital media company, and are held on the fourth of April to honour equal pay day. They have different categories like normvertising, winning women, next gen and people's choice. One of the winner's of the 2017 awards was L'oreal with their "being a woman transcends the body" video for international women's day.

## Feminism in fashion

Today, a sense of femvertising has made its way to the catwalks all around the world. The trendsetter was Maria Grazia Chiuri, who previously worked at Valentino, when she debuted her first collection for Dior in spring summer 2017.

As she was the first female designer for Dior, which is defined as a feminine brand, she felt the need to touch on this topic. By creating a female empowering collection she wanted to show that feminine means something different to her than to a man. Her iconic "we should all be feminists" T-shirt was by far the piece de resistance. Instagram got spammed with photos of bloggers and influencers wearing her tees with feminist slogans.



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After Chiuri's debut show, many different high street brands and designers followed her lead. Slogans along the lines of "yes I'm a feminist" and "females unite" can now be found in every shop on the high street. Was Chiuri's collection that brilliant? Is everyone a feminist now? Or is this just a publicity stunt from the retail market?

## All about brand image

**Laura Campbell**, lecturer in advertising at Solent university, thinks brands don't necessarily only use femvertising to promote their products. "I think it's more about the brand, They want to get their branding out there and their brand associated with things that people feel positively about. So I think for Dove, for example, a lot of people specifically women really like Dove because they like what they stand for. If they really like the message of their campaign that's always going to have a positive effect on the brand but a lot of advertising is not just about shifting the product. It is more about brand image really. That's where I think it works well for them but I don't see it as some kind of really unethical commercial intent."

The slogan tees many brands designed today won't make any difference in her opinion: "Unless they are supporting something that a lot of people don't support or are unaware of, but when it's something that's being talked about so widely. If I spoke to my gay friends for example and wore a T-shirt saying I support gay rights that would probably not have a lot of meaning."

Campbell feels that there are other more effective ways brands can support female rights. "I may be cynical but I always think if you knew to put your money where your mouth is, you would actually commit to something meaningful. So if those companies say look we are doing things fairly so now we are going to give ten percent of our charity budget to an organization that promotes feminist rights. Then I would go

actually doing something but not just by producing your own T-shirts which people are going to buy and have a slogan on them.”

## You are what you wear

Feminist T-shirts are being worn by different bloggers and influencers today but are all feminists buying them? **Alejandra Muñoz Mesa**, feminist and fashion student, doesn't own any feminist clothing. She does, however, believe that designers making feminist clothing will have a positive influence on our society.



Although some feminists believe that fashion can make a difference, there are many women who are in mixed minds about them. **Emily Dawes** from the Feminist society thinks the message brands are sending is great but the way it is conveyed is not the best. “Firstly, and most importantly,

a lot of the clothes and T-shirts are made in exploitative conditions that especially affect women, which doesn't fit in feminist ideals at all. If you're going to buy feminist apparel, make sure it's from a reputable brand like The Green Box Shop for example.”

The perfect feminist outfit to her does not necessarily include any feminist slogan items: “A feminist outfit does not have anything special or specific because being a feminist is about your beliefs and your actions. We encourage people to wear what they want, free from judgement and restraint. If you wanna show some skin and get your boobs out then go for it!! But if that's not your thing then hey, no worries. Your clothes aren't determined by your height, size, weight, gender, class or religion.”

The slogans themselves also need a lot of work according to Emily: “They need to genuinely reflect ideals, not just say things like "pussy power" which very much exclude the transgender community.”

When it comes to fashion being used to promote feminism, Emily thinks it can be a powerful tool. “I think it can be used to promote feminism if the clothing is created ethically with proper feminist slogans on them. It's an easy way to show that you care about a movement and feel proud to be a feminist. I think the fashion industry does definitely need to change though. Clothes should not be gendered and should not be several sizes fit all. It's ridiculous that men's jeans are sized by waist and height, but women by even numbers. I think that's how fashion can help women more, by reminding them it's okay to just be happy and comfortable in your own skin.”



However, **Jacklin Kwan** from the **Mancunion**, a student newspaper, believes trying to sell feminism is degrading. In an article called she pleas for brands to stop selling her feminism. She states that the T-shirts that are now being sold everywhere “tend to dilute the feminist message into depoliticised slogans that emphasise individual spiritual liberation rather than structural reform.” Besides the fact that it takes away from the feminist message also thinks it is wrong that brands are trying to make women believe that the best way to get equality is to buy garments with slogans on them. She calls in conspicuous consumption which means that you buy things to get other people’s approval not just because you like them.

Although fashion brands today might be using feminism as a way of shaping their branding image, it is still a good way of opening up the conversation.

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VOGUE

*SOCIAL MEDIA  
STRATEGY*

# PLATFORMS

VOGUE

The feature would be promoted on Instagram and Facebook since those platforms have the most followers. It also makes the most sense since the objective of the article is to get a conversation going, which works best on Facebook and Instagram. British Vogue tends to post on those platforms the most although they do have other social media like Pinterest and Twitter.

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 *3,6 MILLION LIKES*

 *800 THOUSAND FOLLOWERS*

 *3,5 MILLION FOLLOWERS*

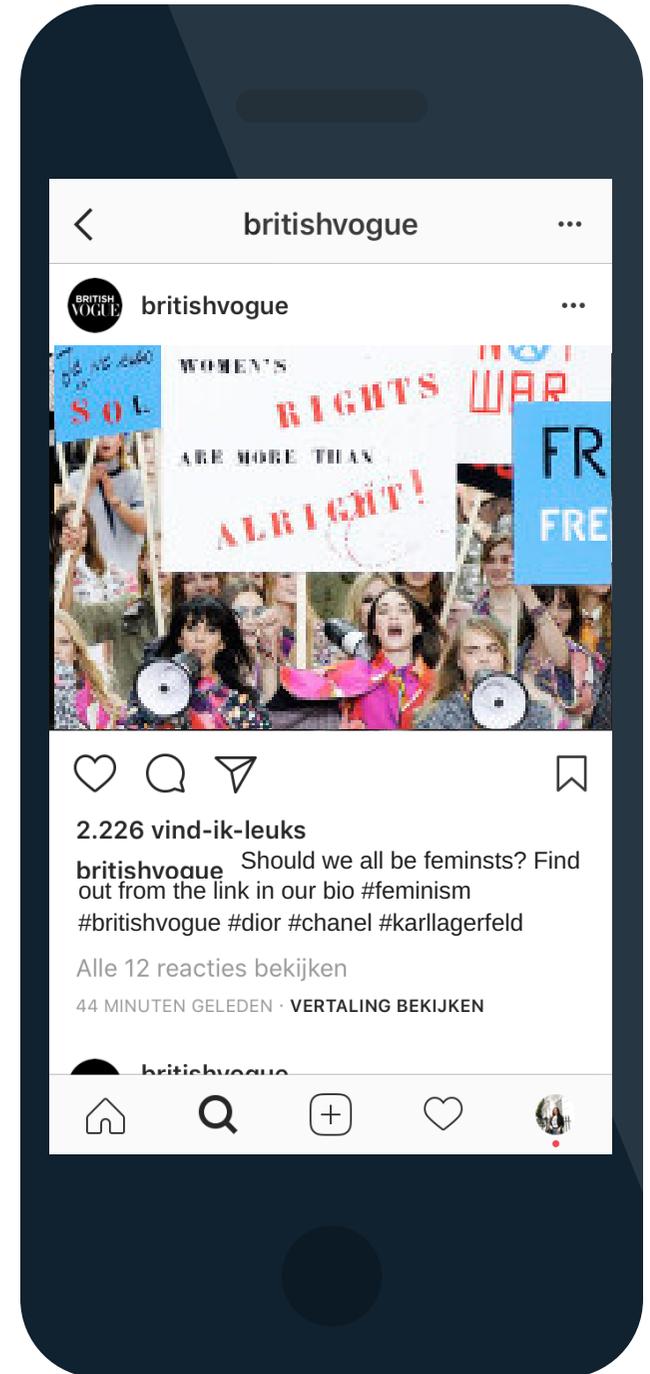
# INSTAGRAM

VOGUE

I would promote this feature on Vogue's Instagram by posting a picture of the protests at the Chanel show. This draws a lot of attention and will get the readers interested. By adding the link to the bio they would be able to access it.

## CAPTION

Should we all be feminists? Find out from the link in our bio *#feminism #britishvogue #dior #chanel #karllagerfeld*



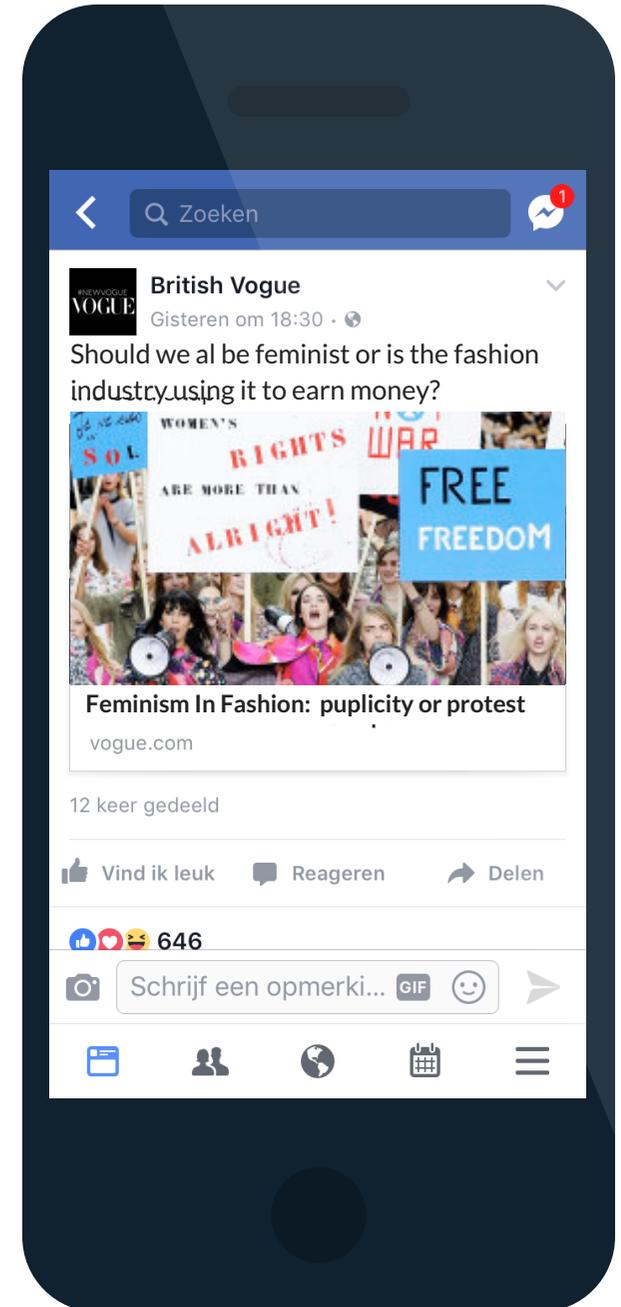
# FACEBOOK

VOGUE

I would promote this feature on Vogue's Facebook to start a conversation. Putting a question as the caption for the article will create a conversation in the comments which will make it appear on more people's timelines. This will ensure that the article gets more exposure.

## *CAPTION*

Should we all be feminists or is the fashion industry using it to earn money?



# MULTIMEDIA FEATURE

VOGUE



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