

Research in Context

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Gucci is an Italian fashion brand. They are marketed primarily towards celebrities, fashionistas, and people of the upper class. Also commonly known for their luxurious products and their 'raunchy adverts'. After releasing an advert for the fragrance *Gucci Guilty*. That features actor Chris Evans and Evan Rachel Wood. From a graphic point of view, the ad has strong, high-quality imagery. The poster exhibits a striking contrast between the background and foreground creating a dark and mysterious atmosphere. The theme of this palette compliments the aesthetics of the product. Most likely, selected as best fitted to the target audience. The heading is bold, easily readable, and well suited to the identity of the brand.

The name of the fragrance 'pour homme' French meaning 'for men'. As an Italian brand, this did confuse me at first however, I later came to realise that the French are hugely stereotyped to be flirty, romantic, high fashioned, and commonly known to use perfume/ fragrances. So, I now believe this was a purposeful approach by Gucci. A very clever one too. As male and female models in the same environment, they are represented and used quite differently. I recognise a sense of a hierarchy represented in this ad. The position of the male model is almost central, with a tall, strong stance. That signifies authority, power, and admirability. Which is a perfect example of *hegemonic masculinity*. This best describes characteristics like; strength, confidence, and assertiveness (*Navigating Like Transitions, 2020*). The second model (female) is directly underneath. She is not only facing up and towards him but is also behind the fragrance bottle. "A woman's body language speaks eloquently, though silently, of her subordinate status in a hierarchy of gender." (*Bartky, 1997 p.102*). This structure may also imply that she is an accessory or 'tool' in this ad; objectified 'instrumentality' (*Nussbaum, 1995*). Understandably, implying 'The Male Gaze' Theory. She admires him and is lured and controlled by his scent. Therefore she is vulnerable, with less power. Perhaps no power at all. "...the gender power asymmetry is a controlling force in cinema and constructed for the pleasure of the male viewer, which is deeply rooted in patriarchal ideologies and discourses". (*Mulvery, 1975*). Their composition drives this sense of lust and desire. Together, they create a very sensual mood represented in their sultry expressions. It questions, 'does sex really sell?'. My answer to this question would be yes, it does. In previous studies carried out, it results that "men with higher hostile sexism showed more purchase intentions after viewing female sexualized ads than neutral ads." (*Gramazio, 2020*). As viewers, we are naturally drawn to the eyes of the male model. They appear light, bold, and sharp, This is deemed as attractive in society today and cleverly appeals to both male and female audiences. "A picture holds a thousand words". You could be drawn in relating this expression to his guilty conscience? or hers. Which then brainstorms the idea to viewers that maybe there is something to be 'guilty' about. This curiosity may perhaps even lead to potential sales, but firstly it catches our eye, and it's got our attention.

"It reinforces the idea that women can absolutely be sexual, but only for male pleasure and not their own."

Furthermore, his look denotes secrecy, which cleverly draws the audience in, excites us. In society today, the idea of sexual guilt and affairs are glamorized quite often in Films and TV. As an ad mainly designed for male viewers, their needs are prioritised (*The Male Gaze*). Gucci has chosen to use the female model as a passive object for male desire. It's known that some theorists have explored this and have discovered that it is quite common for brands to use sex or sexualized representation, nudity, objectification even when it has nothing to do with the product itself. They appear to be Caucasian with similar attributes, strong features, tanned sun-kissed skin, and light eyes. I feel that this ad poster portrays the standards of beauty in society today. This questions other elements such as; race, ethnicity, sexuality, body types, and even disabilities. Elements that have not yet to be considered for this ad. Have we accepted them in society? It is arguable that any representations can rely on negative stereotypes and can affect how others are perceived no matter their ethnicity. 'Stereotypical representations may not always have a negative impact'. But they tend to give a 'true image of what a particular nation or region is like'. (*BBC, 2021 p.04*). Which can shadow an individual's understanding of an area if it is the only representation they have.

Even when it comes down to the hair, gender-dependent hair is shown only on the male model, well-groom and presented. Whereas the female is flawlessly shaved and glows. "A woman's skin must be soft, supple, hairless, and smooth; ideally, it should betray no sign of wear, experience, age, or deep thought..." (*Bartky, p.98*). The female model is wearing dark eyes, red lips, and has dirty blonde hair. Red lips signify a morally dubious woman; an attempt to appeal more attractive and scientifically look younger. "Women are expected to be made up..." (*Bartky, 1997 p.100*). It is commonly known that most men prefer blondes, saying so in an academic study it has shown that women with lighter hair are more confident than brunettes or redheads. "Blondes attract more attention than other women". (*Wikes, Dailymail 2010*). Even as a campaign mainly marketed towards men of youth.

Adverts which are created like Gucci Guilty, often tend to influence wider audiences.

Gucci is attempting to use those 'representatives' to embody their fragrance. From a selling point of view, they are created sex symbols for their product. It is more than obvious that both men and women are sexualized within the media, however there is a vast difference to how they are portrayed in real life situations. Women tend to be tied to their sex appeal whereas men can continue to be who ever they want. (*Rahlan, 2020*). The use of celebrity sex icons to promote brands, and products. This pursues the idea that people want to feel desired, and attractive by others. (*Mulvery, The Male Gaze, 1975*). Attractiveness is often followed by romance, intimacy, and love. These are some of many warming feelings that generally give a sense of involvement and purpose. Branded companies like Gucci will often use sex or sexualized advertisement to sell their products. Like most brands for example; 'Abercrombie & Fitch'. Who is commonly known for using sex appeal promotion to advertise their product. It is a strategy that plays on our needs and desires.

"Whether we like it or not, products play a role in society's intimacy equation..." (Roggers, 2012).

Abercrombie & Fitch is well known for being one of America's hottest brands. It's an overused trademark on sixpack abs and skinny slim models in advertising. As previously stated it is another company that tend to sell through sex appeal promotions. 'It's a strategy

of using sex to sell the preppy look to teenagers..' (Minato, 2012). It has never always been such a great success. Abercrombie & Fitch rebranded from sporting goods, to an audience of youth and naivety. With lots of sex. Like Gucci it's considered as a luxury brand but however does not share the same competitors. CEO Michael Jefferies states that "The target customers are the 'popular kids' in high school". (Minato, 2012). Abercrombie's preference for tan, tall blondes. In an experiment carried out in the University of Westminster by a science correspondent; it resulted that "men were more likely to assume sexual intent on the part of our confederate when she was blonde." (Macrae, 2012).

The difference between Abercrombie and Gucci is their target audience. It undertakes three brands- A&F, A&F kids and Holister, Abercrombie & Fitch targets young kids, children aged 13-18 and the youth as well. This became more of an issue when viewers became offended by the sexual advertising. From a graphical point of view it is a high quality image. The typeface used for the heading is big, bold and easily readable. The palette is made up of black, white and red that highlights the term 'sexy' in the title 'young and sexy. This is an eye-catching component of the design. I feel that it sets the mood and atmosphere of the imagery presented without being too discrete and explicit. It's a clever approach however I feel that it doesn't do a good job of advertising the company, or their products. I get the idea that their aim was to advertise a type of lifestyle and set values. As a young teenager their perspective of their ad will most likely spike interest and potentially lead to sales.

'Young and Sexy' is the slogan that reads off of black and white imagery of male and female characters. The male carries on top of the female in a very intimate position. "women's space is not a field in which her bodily intentionality can be freely realised but an enclosure in which she feels herself positioned and by which she is confined" (Bartky, 1997 p.97). The female model almost appears vulnerable (*The Male Gaze*). We are not framed with their faces or facial expressions. We can't tell if she is made up or not. We are presented with younger models; which suggests that this was decided based on the aim of the audience in mind. I feel that this ad also runs by the theoretical idea that sex is what excites consumers, it's what keeps consumers young and gives them that 'buzz' like the feeling when confronted with poster designs like so. Unlike Chris Evans and Evan Woods ad, they are clothed. As for this ad goes there is no obvious product marketed or shown in this poster. If it wasn't for my background knowledge of the brand I wouldn't necessarily relate this ad to a clothing/ retail brand. This takes me back to the ideology of big companies sexualizing their campaigns to seek the attention of their target audience (Roggers, 2012). The narrative of sensual desires, exciting affairs, and intimacy is what draws in the sales.

However, the male model seems to be portrayed near enough the same as the male model in the Gucci Guilty poster. With similar attributes such as strong bone structure, well-defined, and confident positioning. These ideas reinforce socially sanctioned mannerisms specific to each gender. Most societies encourage males to be masculine and females to be feminine. As I have previously discussed beauty standards in society, I have yet to consider the standards and expectations of male models within the media. The ideal male body has also attracted attention. In society today, the more aesthetically appealing representatives tend to be more lean, muscular, and V-shaped. Men are also confronted with the ideal body type that is difficult to achieve. Some studies have resulted that men, just like women, feel a sense of dissatisfaction when they are presented with the ideal body stimuli of their own sex (Arbour and Martin Ginis, 2006; Blond, 2008). Although it is arguable that sex can in fact reassure men of their masculinity, as a sense of validation.

The sexuality of women in advertisements are used as a drive for consumption for both women and men (*Yasmar University, 2014 p.6132*). It seems to be the most debated issue that women are sexualized as objects within the media and are used as a 'promotive element'. When their bodies are objectified there is a takeaway from their personality and follows them into their everyday lives. "Female sex icons are hypersexualized in way that men simply aren't" (*Rahlan, 2020*). Sex is perhaps not the greatest universal acceptance of all strategies ever used in the media. To write in conclusion I would say both brands; Gucci, and A&F are companies that appeal to younger audiences. I feel that both campaigns portray youth and sexiness based on physical appearance. Ads that both also obtain sensuality and sexualization. Which can result in making consumers feel mentally young, and sexy. It is a form of psychology; that when viewers are confronted with these type of ads, they are believed to think that what they see is the definition of sexiness, attractiveness, lust and desire. This results in the consumers will take lengths and efforts to the extent of wanting to look and feel like the models, this often leads to sales for the company and so forth.

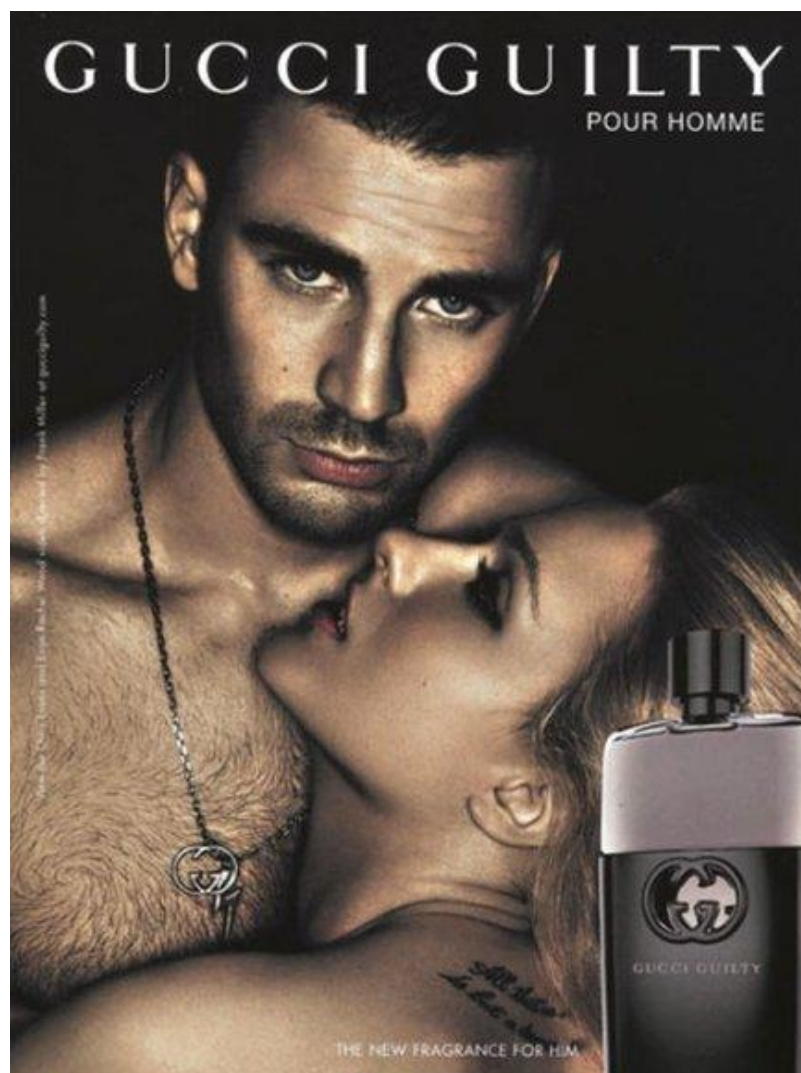


Image 1

Ad Campaign: Gucci Guilty Fragrance Models: Evan Rachel Wood and Chris Evans
Photographer: Unknown Website: www.gucci.com Accompanying Gucci Guilty fragrance is
the new men's - Pour Homme line set to hit the stores early 2011.



Image 2

Ad Campaign: Abercrombie & Fitch. Models: Unknown
Photographer: Unknown

Biography

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