

The new post gender world - Emerging gender codes in brands' communication

O novo mundo pós-gênero - Os códigos emergentes de gênero na comunicação das marcas

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ABSTRACT

Set against our postmodern reality, this article discusses the reconfiguration of feminine and masculine codes and how these new social expressions affect consumption and consumers' relationship with brands. The authors seek to understand the emerging paradigms that are redefining the social roles of individuals beyond their niches and from the perspective of gender and sexuality. The research employed a qualitative bricolage methodology, adopting hybrid online/off-line techniques, consolidated in an analysis of the scenario, case studies and interviews with opinion leaders. The understanding of the nuances that shape these phenomena will help generate communication strategies that are connected with consumers' inner truth in all of its complexity and thus increasingly aligned with people's individual realities.

KEYWORDS: Gender; Femininity; Masculinity; New consumer; Sexuality.

RESUMO

Com o mundo pós-moderno como contexto de fundo, este artigo visa discutir como os códigos do feminino e masculino vêm sendo reconfigurados e de que forma essas novas expressões sociais devem interferir no consumo e nas relações com as marcas. A partir da perspectiva de gênero e de sexualidade, buscou-se entender os paradigmas emergentes que vêm provocando uma ressignificação dos papéis sociais dos indivíduos, além de seus nichos. Para tal, foi utilizada uma metodologia qualitativa de bricolagem, com técnicas híbridas *on-line/off-line* consolidando-se em uma análise de cenário, estudos de caso e entrevistas com líderes de opinião. O entendimento das nuances que formatam esses fenômenos deve contribuir para a construção de estratégias de comunicação mais conectadas com a verdade íntima do novo consumidor em sua complexidade, sua individualidade e cada vez mais alinhadas com a sua realidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Gênero; Feminino; Masculino; Novo consumidor; Sexualidade.

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1 INTRODUCTION

In a post-AIDS and post-sexual revolution world, myths and taboos have dissipated and uncertainty has become part of the daily routine of major urban areas. Human relationships were deeply affected by the dissemination of communication technologies, by the Internet's wide reach and the possibilities in terms of contact and spreading content that these tools allow.

Gender relations, the perception of sexuality, individuals' self-image and their relationship with others and how moral and ethics issues are dealt – all these concepts are changing fast, in a way that may be considered too abrupt by some people.

This study aims to bring to light issues associated with sexuality and gender that have been raised in our daily exercise of human understanding, as well as their relationship to consumer behavior and brands. We tried to widely and exploratorily map and identify the social, cultural and economic changes, which have been outlined based on the gender and sexuality discussion.

Over time, these changes result in new behaviors and moral codes that affect society as a whole, including the brand universe and relationships with consumption. Although these new codes are under development and there are only a few brands that are directly part of this debate, researching and understanding the basis of this movement is necessary.

Some specific questions are raised: what will be the impact on marketing of the resignification of gender roles? How can we have a better understanding of the new codes of Femininity and Masculinity that appear in this scenario? To what extent is this discussion of gender extrapolating niches and becoming the emblematic question of the new paradigm? What's the future of communication in a post-gender world?

2 METHODOLOGY

The purpose to approach the study with bricolage methodology along with hybrid online and offline techniques was to provide a sample of how it is possible to anticipate certain behavioral trends, applying this knowledge to the Communication and Brand Management.

This paper was based on an extensive qualitative online and offline research project with:

- Analysis of the scenario: “deep-dive” into the context of discussions about the subject in many forums (traditional media, new media, cultural expressions such as arts, fashion, cinema, etc.):
 - Desk-research: secondary data / published studies about the subject;
 - Bibliographical research (books, newspapers, magazines, web);
 - Social Media netnography and monitoring: research of online communities, tracking discussions about the subject in social media (immersion into existing / spontaneous communities, photographic representations analysis).). Kozinetz (2014), one of the main authors among those pointed out as the creators of the term Netnography, acknowledges the importance of a computer-mediated communication in the process of understanding and contextualization of the cultural life of the community being studied. The decision for the netnographic approach must convey, throughout the process, both the presence of the online factor and mainly, all the importance of this component. This is not presented as the progress of a new method to replace an old one, but rather, this is presented as a way of putting the spotlight, both on the assumption, on which the ethnography is based, and on the characteristics seen as special when it comes to the related technologies (Hine, 1998, p.1 apud Novelli, 2010).
- Case studies: ethnographic approach – observation/immersion, in-depth interviews and online diaries / visual anthropology (mobile tools: respondents videotape their daily routine and perform small tasks) – targeting some of the segments of interest for the research. The sample considered four case studies.

Interviews with opinion leaders who work in projects associated with the subject (psychologists, doctors, designers, LGBTIQ activists...). The sample included five in-depth interviews.

3 HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.1 CHANGES IN DEFINITIONS OF SOCIAL ROLES OVER TIME

The values of today's society, what we have agreed to call post-modernity – including flexibility, sensibility, intuition and diversity – represent a powerful counterpoint to traditional modern values such as reason, hierarchy, the truth, objectivity, correctness and predictability, which used to determine behaviors, attitudes and beliefs in all aspects of life (Perez & Siqueira, 2009).

The ambiguity we experience, new concepts and definitions of the daily routine, along with doubts regarding what is right or wrong in different aspects of our lives trigger a moral crisis that stands in contrast to the certainties and sense of security of the recent past.

The contemporary man is plural, mutable, metaphorical, like the 'multividual' described by Massimo Canevacci: multiple masks and avatars are overexposed in the speed provided by the digital world, generating simulations of social needs that have never been so explicitly amplified (Perez & Siqueira, 2009).

It has become very clear that the old model doesn't make sense anymore when we think about identity. The emerging paradigm is favorable to the discussion of identity and gender issues, such as: new family configurations; democratization of the information and greater freedom of speech; increased tolerance of differences and diversity; a culture of inclusion; new wave feminism; new activism, resignified causes.

When it comes to social roles, the highlights are a discussion of the consolidation of feminist achievements (especially feminist activism), the transformation of masculinity and new family configurations.

The expectations for this new social configuration clearly feature a search for differentiation from the models of past generations and the desire to construct new gender roles and meanings.

3.1.1 RENEWAL, EXPANSION AND REORGANIZATION OF THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT

There is no doubt that feminism is 'fashionable' right now: "vloggers" who address feminist issues (like Jout Jout Prazer) are becoming celebrities, the movie *Suffragette* was a big Hollywood hit in 2015 and terms such as "patriarchy", "empowerment", "protagonism" and "problematization" have left academic discourses to become part of people's daily speech. All this mainstream popularity has faced considerable conservative reaction, and one of the critics' main arguments is that the current context is fleeting, a superficial trend without major consequences.

What we see, however, in line with activists' viewpoint, are advances that reflect years of constant work of a political movement that has been gradually conquering its space.

3.1.2 A VERY BRIEF OF FEMINISM

Seventeenth and eighteenth centuries - Rise of the *Précieuses* movement in French and English salons, featuring women who rejected traditional marriage and valued platonic and loving feelings ("I a lover without a husband, and I want a lover who, contenting himself with the possession of my heart, will love me until death", *Mademoiselle de Scudéry*). The French Revolution (1789) opposed women's rights, interrupting this emancipation process (Lins, 2011).

Nineteenth century - In the end of this century women started having access to education and professionalization. They started to act more strongly in the public sphere, where the discussion on women's vote gained strength.

1910s and 20s - In these decades a considerable part of Brazil's proletariat was composed of white female immigrants from Europe, who worked in spinning and weaving industries. Black women were responsible for domestic work. (Rago, 2006).

1920s - North-American women acquire the right to vote. In some states African American women were not allowed to vote until 1965.

1932 - Brazilian women acquire the right to vote. There are no explicit racial restrictions, but illiterate women, for example, were not allowed to vote until 1985.

1940s and 50s - Most women were trapped into secondary and submissive roles. Women occupy a secondary position fashion and culture, and housewives are idealized.

The Figure 1 shows ads in the Better Home and Gardens magazine with the sentences: "I courted an angel ... and married a cook" (Campbell soup) and "Can she cook?" (Procter & Gamble) – mentioned in the book "The Ideal Woman", by Jennifer Holt.



Figure 1 – Ads showing women into secondary and submissive roles
Source: Holt, 2014.

1960s and 70s - Rupture from traditional models, sexual liberation / invention of the contraceptive pill, empowerment and a massive number of women joining the workforce. It is the height of feminism – until today...!

The Figure 2 shows one of the icons of this time is journalist Gloria Steinem, pictured with Dorothy Pittman-Hughes, co-founder of Ms. Magazine. The original image, from 1971, is a symbol of the struggle for racial and gender equality. In 2014 they reproduced the classic pose.



Figure 2 – Gloria Steinem, pictured with Dorothy Pittman-Hughes

Source: <https://estilo.catracalivre.com.br/comportamento/foto-historica-de-gloria-steinem-e-dorothy-hughes-e-recriada-40-anos-depois/>

1980s and 90s - Women become increasingly economically active, but there is a denial of feminism in mainstream culture – hardening, alienation from femininity and assimilation of masculine codes. In 1990 Emory University (Atlanta, GA) starts the world's first Women's Studies PhD program. Feminism's quiet struggle goes on, while the general public rejects its activism.

2000's - A female renaissance in the arts, music, comic books, film... A new generation of proactive women leading a reconciliation between the general public and feminism, while mainstream questionings appear → "In the 2000s the discussion focused on the job market: why are there so few women in leadership positions?" (Revista Época, 2015).

2010s/Today - Democratization/expansion/dissemination of feminist ideas, mainly o new media/social media. Reorganization and structuring of different "causes", effective legislative support. Openness and freedom are the watchwords.

3.1.3 THE "NEW" FEMINISM, NOW ONLINE

Like other movements, feminism has found in social media the ideal arena for activism. Facebook, Twitter and other tools became forums for debate and platforms for campaigns. In Brazil, this is associated with the democratization of Internet access: more than 50% of Brazilians now have access to the web at home – broadband or mobile (TIC Domicílios, 2014).

Hashtags appear as the most popular manifestations in online discussions and campaigns. One of the most remarkable international initiatives of 2015 was launched by The Representation: the slogan #AskHerMore encouraged journalists to dig deeper, pointing out the differences between questions asked to male and female actors at the Academy Awards – while men are asked about their movies and careers, women are expected to talk about their outfits, hair and make-up. "This is a movement to say we're more than just our dresses", commented actress Reese Witherspoon.

Another example of collective protest online: after the Nobel-winning biochemist Tim Hunt declared that women in the lab result in love affairs and distractions and that "when you criticize them, they cry", scientists all over the world started using the hashtag #distratinglysexy along with photos of themselves in lab coats, joking about the uniform, which is far from being considered sexy. Less than a week after the Congress in Seoul, where Hunt made his unfortunate comment, the scientist was fired by the university where he taught in London.

Brazil had its own share of feminist hashtags in 2015. In November the campaign #agoraéquesãoelas ("their turn") called attention to the lack of women in important positions in media: for weeks many journalists and writers gave their column space to female colleagues, in major newspapers and online portals.

And actress Fernanda Torres was the protagonist of one of the most emblematic cases that illustrate this new era. She used her space in the media to criticize the new feminist movement, which was immediately met with reactions from feminist collectives, which are highly organized and constantly prepared to make a stand of their political beliefs. Torres subsequently wrote a 'mea culpa' article, apologizing and stating that her view of feminine roles is an exception, as opposed to the rule. She also promised to be more mindful of women's rights demands. She concluded in an interview to TV station Canal Brasil: "This episode has taught me many things, one of them is that I'm a woman from the past century" - referring to the semantic weight that words such as sexism carry today.

Another outstanding campaign was the hashtag #meuprimeiroassédio ("my first harassment"), created when a 12-year-old contestant of the TV show Masterchef Junior was a victim of sexist comments via Twitter. Promoted by the feminist collective Think Olga, the campaign was a direct reaction to the attacks, and encouraged women to share online stories about the first time they were sexually harassed. The results of this initiative revealed a frightening aspect of Brazil's reality: more than 82 thousand posts were made in the first 4 days of the campaign and an analysis of 3 thousand testimonies showed that the average age for the first harassment situations recorded was 9.7 years old.

In their website, Think Olga also lists other online movements and hashtags that went viral in 2015, which has been called "the year of feminist on the Internet":

- Feminicide Law (approval of a law that makes feminicide a heinous crime), #chegadesilêncio / "no more silence" (posts reporting cases of rape and abuse);
- Marcha das Margaridas ("The Daisies Walk") (featuring female rural workers);
- Viola Davis (first black actress to win the Emmy for Outstanding Lead Actress, making it clear there is a need for specific approaches within feminism considering racial and social differences);
- Enem/Brazilian national exam (essay theme about domestic violence and quoting Simone de Beauvoir "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman");
- Black Women's March (first national march denouncing how gender and racial bias affect the lives of women of color, who have the lowest development indexes in the country);
- #meuamigosecreto ("my secret friend"), hashtag that exposed sexist discourses internalized in social relationships, with the statements being attributed to people who are close to the women, such as fathers, husbands and boyfriends.

As demonstrated by the mapping conducted by Think Olga, feminism is active in different fronts and is becoming relevant for individuals in different social classes. The discourse that reached the masses in the "feminist spring" of 2015 and that is renewed in 2016 includes not only the sphere of women's political, social and economical power in the era post-sexual revolution, but also their relationship with today's complex ecosystem, with striking interaction with other humanitarian agendas. The transformations are deep and irreversible, and triggered by a paradigm shift that affects the entire discussion of gender.

3.2 MASCULINITY IN TRANSFORMATION

When feminism reviews its social roles, masculinity is automatically questioned. According to Pierre Bourdieu, masculinity is frail and there is great effort to constantly affirm it, distancing it as much as possible from anything considered feminine. "Manliness is an eminently relational notion, constructed in front of and for other men and against femininity, in a kind of fear of the female, firstly in oneself" (Bourdieu, 1999).

We observe a failure of the patriarchy as the nucleus of the post-modern society, with changes provoked by the new family configurations and fast transformations in terms of social roles.

One of the communities studied, the Internet portal “Papó de Homem” (“Man Talk”) is surprising precisely because it appropriates a setting aimed at the male universe and uses the space to discuss feminist subjects, through a column dedicated specifically to this theme. Would this be the configuration of the new man? A man who is at once interested in soccer and in checking his privileges?

In practice, we see that the road to progress is still long, and clearly sexist discourses and concepts can be found between the lines. One example is this characterization of a woman that would be good “marriage material” in Figure 3).



Figure 3 - Characterization of a woman that would be good “marriage material” from the website Papó de Homem
 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/xico.sa/posts/10154400568196686>

The truth is that most men are experiencing an identity crisis or have become “pseudo-protagonists”, as pointed out by the American writer Paul Raeburn (2015) in his book about fatherhood. Although the current scenario brings more freedom and openness to express desires, wishes and needs that are not in line with traditional models (which used to be denied to men), there are no references or new models to inspire this new developing identity. Women conquer new ground, while men are gradually depleted of their role as providers and become unsure of how to position themselves.

Many men react by trying to harmonize themselves with new manifestations of femininity and feminism. Fatherhood gains importance in this context, and is one of the areas where this new masculinity can manifest itself with relative tranquility and protection. Beyond the domestic sphere, there are also some flexible men who are able to adapt to the fast social transformations of the post gender world.

4 CONSTRUCTION OF THE NOTION OF GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUALITY

4.1 REVEALING AND BRINGING ISSUES TO LIGHT

4.1.1 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF CONCEPTS

As a relatively recent phenomenon, it is often difficult to self define, establish parameters and create an understanding about many (and often times Transgender fragmented) possibilities. The attempt to encompass all this complexity and fluidity is a continuous task that continues to evolve. Either way, this paper seeks to establish some concepts and nomenclatures to create a mini glossary of terms associated with the theme.

According to the National Center for Transgender Equality, is a term for people whose gender identity, expression or behavior is different from those typically associated with their assigned sex at birth. Gomes de Jesus (2012) defines gender identity as:

The gender a person identifies with, which may or may not be the same as the gender attributed at birth". It does not correspond to a person's sexuality. "Gender identity and sexual orientation are different dimensions that should not be confused with each other. Transgender people can be heterosexual, lesbian, gay or bisexual, just like cisgender people.

That is, **gender identity** refers to the gender a person identifies with, how they self perceive.

Robert Stoller (1978), one of the leading researchers of the theme, considers sex and gender two distinct concepts. Conceptually, sex refers to anatomical, morphological and physiological aspects of the human species (genitals, sexual chromosomes, hormones) and is defined by biology. The concept of gender, on the other hand, refers to social, cultural and historical meanings associated with the sexes.

Stoller (1978) based many of his studies on cases of intersexed children (formerly called "hermaphrodites"), who were raised according to one gender that was established or chosen at birth. These children worked hard to maintain throughout their lives the behavioral standards of the gender chosen for them, even though they were aware of their own history. These observations led Stoller to conclude that it is "easier to change one's genitals than one's gender".

Thus it is known that a person may be born with female sex and identify as male, or vice versa. Again, gender identity should not be confused with sexual orientation: gender identity refers to how people self define (as female or male), while sexual orientation refers to the desire and affective-sexual attraction (homosexuality, bisexuality and heterosexuality).

In the attempt to create a didactic understanding of these concepts, activists, trend setters and experts have been trying to demonstrate these definitions in graphic and even fun ways, as exemplified in the diagrams below, widely distributed in social media (Figure 4).

With the same goal, a special article about transgender people has been published on TAB UOL *Questão de Gênero* (2016), a multimedia project promoted by the UOL portal with special reports presented in an interactive way. Using various interactive resources, the report displays some concepts associated with the theme in a didactic, simple and straightforward way.

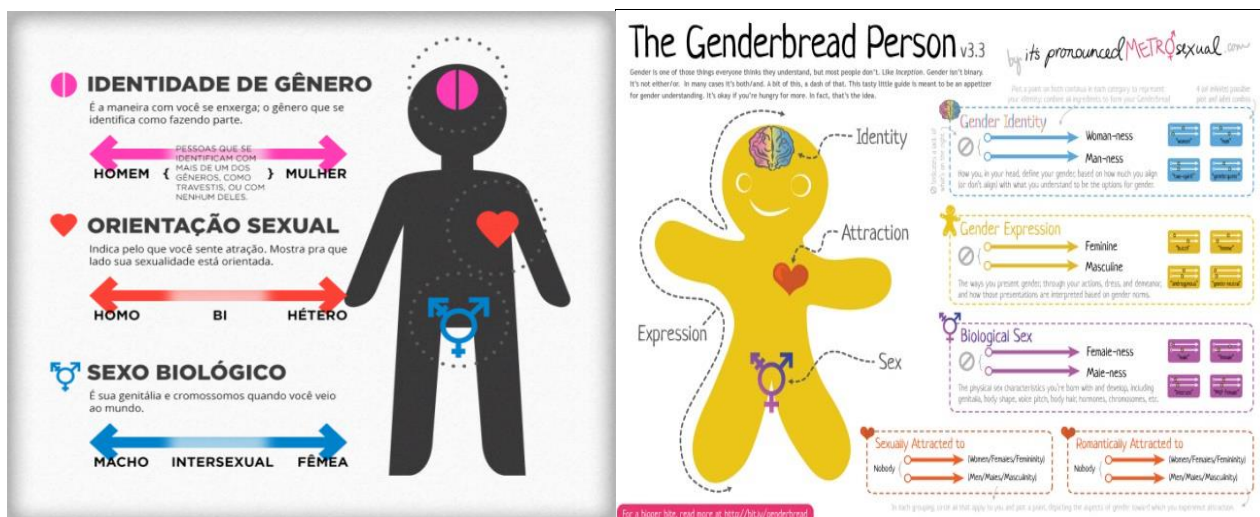


Figure 4 – Identity of the human being
Source: Alves, 2012; TAB UOL *Questão de Gênero*, 2016.

The glossary below was based on the definitions illustrated in the report, along with complementary information obtained in this research:

- Transgender and transsexual: the concept encompasses all configurations that are unlike the sex at birth, including female-to-male or male-to-female transsexuals, with or without gender reassignment surgery;
- Intersex: formerly called hermaphrodites or pseudo- hermaphrodites – born with sex organs of both biological sexes;
- Genderqueer, gender non-conforming or non-binary: those who do not identify with any gender or who navigate different genders;
- Crossdresser: those who like to dress like the opposite sex (in relation to sex at birth), in the daily routine or fetish situations, but who do not identify as this gender;
- Drag queen: a man who dresses like a woman for shows and performances. There is also the equivalent drag king for women who dress like men as performance;
- Travesti (transvestite): Term used in Brazil for those who identify as opposite sex (in relation to sex at birth), making changes in the body to fit this gender identity, but do not desire to undergo gender reassignment surgery.

These definitions confirm the need to separate three elements: sex assigned at birth, gender a person is attracted to, gender a person identifies as.

According to Isis Tavares, coordinator of the Department of Gender Relations (CNTE):

Gender identity doesn't need to be in line with sexual orientation. For instance, a young woman may not identify with her image, identifying more with the male gender and may start dressing like a man – but she may still (be attracted) to men. (UOL TAB Transgêneros, 2016)

There is also the difference between binary or non-binary identification. Binary identification is restricted to male and female codes (example: a male-to-female transgender person who identifies with female codes). Non-binary identification, on the other hand, refers to what may be called “freegender” or “gender non-conforming”, gender queer, intergender, gender blur... where there is no fixed or restricted identification with one of the genders. In these cases the construction of identity is marked by transience and fluidity (Grossi, 1998).

The combination of these elements brings numberless possibilities of representation and action, both in the social sphere and in the manifestation of sexuality. This complexity becomes clear when we try to define some of the common behaviors observed in today's society. Some examples of possibilities (UOL TAB Gênero, 2016):

- A hetero(sexual) cis woman (gender): is a woman who was born in a female body and is attracted to men;
- A bi(sexual) trans(gender) man: is a man who was born in a female body and is attracted to men and women;
- A homo(sexual) trans(gender) man: is a man who was born in a female body and is attracted to men;
- An a(sexual) cis woman (gender): is a woman who was born in a female body and is not sexually attracted to other individuals;
- A pan (sexual) trans woman (gender): is a woman who was born in a male body and is attracted to men, women and “gender non-conforming” individuals, etc...

4.2 LGBTQ ACTIVISTS: THE GUARDIAN OF NEW CODES

According to Bauman (2005), in his book *Identity*:

When identity loses the social anchors that made it look 'natural', predetermined and non-negotiable, identification becomes ever more important for the individuals desperately seeking a 'we' to which they may bid for access [...] identities have broken free and now each individual, male or female, must capture them in mid-flight, using their own assets and tools.

The LGBT movements appear in this context of search for identification and need to join forces to define just parameters of social interaction as well as personal and individual development.

Longo (2015) talks about this issue: "the LGTB community is a community because the social experience of 'being LGBT' puts this group of people 'in the same boat', although aspects such as gender, race and social class create many different experiences among us".

In the words of one of our respondents, Denílson Pimenta Junior general coordinator of the LGBT Lambda Group, Project Director at UNA (LGBT division of the National Student Union) and political articulator at the Center for LGBT Citizenship of the Municipality of São Paulo, political activism is crucial to guarantee that the issues gain space and representation:

It is no use to talk about tolerance, because we don't want tolerance, today we want respect, we want laws that regularize the concept of family, we don't want to be a conglomeration. So some moments are crucial for members of the LGBT population, when we see our rights being denied, we see very strong fundamentalist pressure. (Respondent 1)

He believes social media is key in this process, for communication and mobilization: "Social media is our main tool, there we are able to demystify. We build a large network and are able to have national and international visibility."

Denilson also believes that the fragmentation of the movements may weaken the process and that is important to work in a coordinated way:

Based on this I started tracing a state-wide and nation-wide movement, which is how the National LGBT Union (UNA) was created [...] UNA is a new entity, but it comes with a very interesting purpose, which is to unify the entire LGBT population in its ideals, in the construction of a society that is more just and equalitarian, where there is more respect and understanding of the gender issue, of race and ethnic issues. (Respondent 1)

There are many milestones that represent important breakthroughs and advancement in the struggle against prejudice and quest for inclusion and respect. One of the most notable events was Brazil's Federal Supreme Court's decision to recognize stable homosexual unions in 2011, which later evolved into the recognition of civil homoaffective marriages and the possibility to celebrate them. These are crucial steps in the struggle against prejudice and the recognition of these individuals' citizenship. Other recent examples of breakthroughs include a decree that allows gender reassignment surgeries to be conducted in public hospitals by the Unified Health System (Sistema Único de Saúde - SUS), laws that grants homoaffective couples the right to adopt children, the right of transgender individuals to use their social name in official documents, the right of homosexuals to file joint tax returns with partners and the right for the partner's pension in case of death.

Other important subject of discussion is official the classification of homophobia as hate crime, which is still one of the movements' main struggles. Currently there are no federal laws protecting the LGBT population, which is one of the main obstacles for fighting homophobia and transphobia. Although this is an urgent matter, no legislative bill to criminalize prejudice and discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender identity has been approved by Congress.

4.3 NOVOS ARRANJOS NO TERRENO DA AFETIVIDADE

The discussion of gender deconstruction has been gaining space every day, crossing and surfacing the issue of sexuality and of freedom of expression. Many authors consider bisexuality and androgyny to be trends in terms of human behavior.

The pressing need for a new model has been widely discussed in recent years and according to Lins (2011): “we no longer need to see ourselves as exclusively male or female. We are whole beings, with opposing qualities that are always present.” For the researcher Alfred Kinsey, homosexuality and heterosexuality represent extremes in the broad spectrum of human sexuality. Already in 1975, anthropologist Margareth Mead declared it was time to recognize bisexuality as a normal aspect of human behavior (Lins, s. d).

Celebrities such as Miley Cyrus, the transgender individuals Caytlin Jenner and Buck Angel, The Hunger Games’ Amandla Stenberg, Will Smith’s son Willow Smith, Laerte and Daniela Mercury are talking in public about their sexuality, their gender identity and their political position regarding these themes. They are paving the way for a new social order and, even more so, an unprecedented sexual revolution.

In a research conducted in England about sexuality, 23% of the respondents don’t consider themselves 100% heterosexual. And this number increases to 49% (almost half) among young people 18 to 24 years old. (You Gov, 2015). In this context, new affective connections and new possibilities open up. There is more and more talk about Polyamory, free love, non-conventional relationships of different types.

The Figure 5 shows the campaign by the Fortaleza municipal government featuring new family configurations. The comments online demonstrate it is necessary to represent society in an inclusive way, as it actually is. The lack of black women generated discussion about the lack of visibility of this group, a large part of the population in this city.



Figure 5 - New family configurations (Campaign by the Fortaleza municipal government)
Source: Fortaleza Municipal Government, 2015.

5 PAST TRUTHS AND POST-MODERN QUESTIONS

5.1 CONSTRUCTION AND DE-CONSTRUCTION OF TRADITIONAL GENDER ROLES

For most of the last century the distinctions between gender characteristics were very clear, as well as the social roles adopted by men and women. In the 1950s, for instance, the model-family was

formed by a heterosexual couple, with all power and authority focused on the male father figure, who was the breadwinner and responsible to provide for the home, the wife and the children.

According to Giuliani (2010), the ideal woman was defined with base on traditional female roles – domestic occupations and taking care of the family, as well as characteristics of femininity such as maternal instinct, resignation and sweetness. To be a mother and wife was considered a woman's natural destiny.

At this time, the concept of femininity was defined by: motherhood, domesticity, modesty... A young woman belonging to a 'good family' should be restrained in her gestures and respect her parents. Masculinity, on the other hand, was characterized by participation in the labor market, strength and an adventurous spirit. Still today, according to Lins (2011), girls are expected to be gentle, sweet, delicate, sit down with their legs closed, "with manners" and should not curse.

For Lins (2011), the construction of gender starts in the cradle (or even before, in the preparation for the baby's arrival): "feminine attitudes and behaviors are taught the child from very early on and assimilated to the point that later in life they are believed to be part of their nature".

In her book "A Cama na Varanda" (The Bed on the Porch) the author says a survey was conducted with parents 24 hours after their children were born, asking what impression they had of the babies. The way they described the kids was revealing of this construction of gender: although all babies were the roughly the same size and had almost no contact with the parents, the adjectives and qualifiers attributed to them follow a very consistent pre-definition of gender: baby boys were frequently described as "big", with "striking facial features". The girls, on the other hand, were given characteristics such as "pretty", "delicate facial features", "cute" and "calm".

Masculinity is constructed based on expectations and stereotypes that are deep-seated in families and society. Men are attributed a strong, bold and aggressive personality, willing to take risks and embrace challenges.

Lins (2011) claims that masculinity is clearly in crisis today. She believes there is a growing trend to question male identity, and there are even self-help groups in the United States (and also Brazil) that meet to discuss masculinity and its deconstruction: "over 200 groups, according to the author.

Some "slogans" created in the 1970s by American authors Deborah Sarah David, Robert Brannon, exemplify well some of the imperatives of traditional masculinity (<http://www.psychologyofmen.org/male-gender-role>):

- No sissy stuff, i.e. Distance self from the sentimental and emotional universe considered "feminine";
- Be a big wheel, i.e. the typical "alpha male" who achieves masculinity through success, power and the admiration he inspired;
- Be a sturdy oak, i.e., a man must be strong, independent, avoid vulnerability;
- Give'em hell, i.e., strength is one of his most important characteristics and must be used (including violence, if necessary).

The Nigerian writer and feminist activist Chimamanda (2015) questions the way boys and girls are raised, mentioning the differences and highlighting how this can be harmful for their future. Boys are raised in a way that suppresses the humanity in them: they are not allowed to be afraid, weak or demonstrate vulnerability, hiding who they really are. Girls, on the other hand, are taught to 'shrink', to hide their potential, ambition and success: "...If you are the breadwinner in your relationship with a man, pretend that you are not, especially in public, otherwise you will emasculate him".

According to Rodrigues (2013), there are no fixed roles. The range between the extremes and its acceptance was an advancement of the twentieth century when it comes to the social roles of the sexes. For him, the 1970s introduced a scientific perception that part of the population have intermediary psychological characteristics. As he states in his book "Temas Sexuais" (Sexual Themes): men were then able to feel emotion, while women could demonstrate strength. This condition was not a novelty. The novelty was the recognition of this condition, without denying these possibilities". The author says that the prevalence of this discussion since the end of the past century

brings “more and more individuals needs that motivate people to develop different characteristics, setting them apart from the historically defined male and female roles”.

In an interview to the authors of this paper at his office, Rodrigues (2016) emphasized the concept of gender as a social construction:

Gender is a way to designate social rules [...] in nineteenth century Europe there was a need to restrict gender to two extremes [...] men and women develop in a culture as men and women in a way that goes beyond biology: there are rules about how men should behave socially and different rules about how women should behave. Women must dress this way, men must dress that way’, these are social, constructed rules.

For Chimamanda (2015), “The problem with gender is that it prescribes how we should be rather than recognizing how we are... Boys and girls are undeniably different biologically, but socialization exaggerates the differences”.

Issues surrounding the social construction of gender have been widely debated in social media. The idea that this construction starts at childhood led to questions about the way parents raise their kids and the type of activities and toys they offer them. The Figure 6, from Facebook, shows a preconceived scenario with the distribution of toys for boys and girls.

According to Paechter (2007), “if children are encouraged to test all types of toys and clothes, for example, they will be able to find the things they like as human beings”. In this movement, the job of educators would include the responsibility of breaking these barriers. "If kids start saying only girls wear pink, an adult (male) should show up wearing pink and show that to them", claims the author (Figure 7).

Experiment by South-Korean artist and photographer JeongMeYoon (Figure 8), showing kids and their toys that reinforce gender differences.



Figure 6 – The distribution of toys for boys and girls

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/CartazesLgbt/photos/a.228904437209393.37771.228900067209830/789136054519559/?type=3&theater>

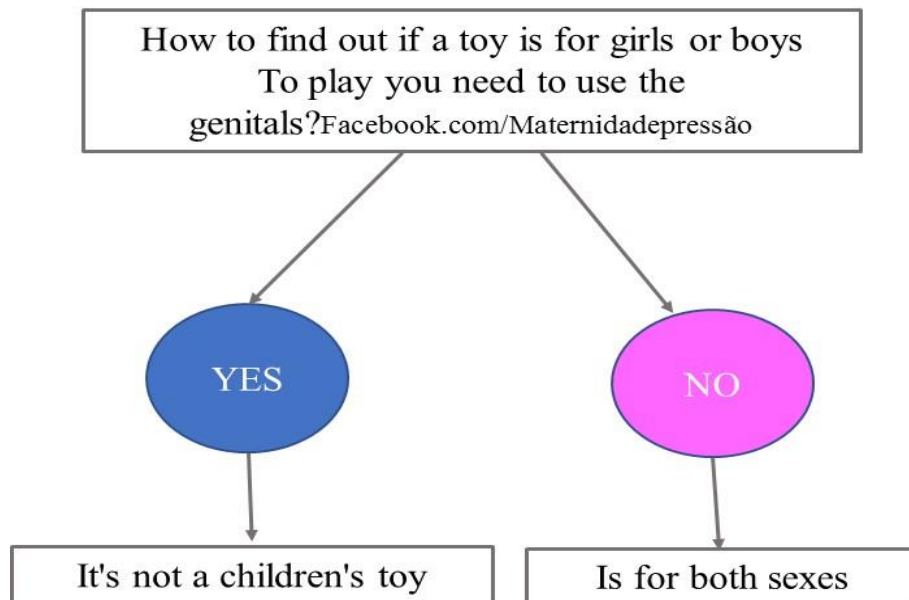


Figure 7 - Toys for boys or girls?

Source: <http://naescola.eduqa.me/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/igualdade-genero-escolas.jpg>



Figure 8 – Kids and their toys

Source: http://www.jeongmeeyoon.com/aw_pinkblue.htm

Awareness of the extremes in terms of codes that define gender is the beginning of the deconstruction of this discourse. Questioning how to deal with gender identity from childhood has led parents to pay closer attention to this issue.

Scottish mother Kerry McFadyen, 32 years old, has a 6-year-old transgender child, and has used social media to tell her story. Danni, her daughter, did not identify as male and Kerry created a Facebook page called “My Transgender Child” to narrate her daily routine and help parents who were going through the same situation (<http://virgula.uol.com.br/comportamento/mae-fala-sobre-filha-trans-de-6-anos-para->).

Equality between males and females has advanced so much that certain countries, such as Sweden, for instance, have adopted a third, neutral gender. In April of 2015, the neutral pronoun "hen" was officially incorporated into the vocabulary.

The Oxford dictionary, one of the most respected of the English language, included in August of last year the entry Mx., as neutral a variation for Mr. or Ms. According to the dictionary, Mx. may be "used before a person's surname or full name by those who wish to avoid specifying their gender or by those who prefer not to identify themselves as male or female" (<http://www.englishexperts.com.br/forum/oxford-adota-mx-como-termo-neutro-a-mr-e-ms-t50094.html>).

“Some initiatives also encourage the use of a third option in Brazil, especially online: "amigues", "amigxs" or "amig@s" (for “friends”) (UOL TAB Questão de Gênero, 2016).

The discussion about new family configurations and the deconstruction of gender is also gaining space in social media. The Figure 10 shows trans parents with a pregnant father.

The Figures 9, 10 and 11 show that the process of gender deconstruction presents different characteristics for men and women. And the rise of arguments that promote a break from gender codes and roles also provokes a rise of conservative arguments.



Figure 9 - The process of gender deconstruction presents different characteristics for men and women
 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/atoxicoemoral/photos/a.762657833776402.1073741828.759831180725734/1010329062342610/?type=3&theater>



Figure 10 - Trans parents with a pregnant father
 Source: <https://www.facebook.com/CartazesLgbt/photos/a.228904437209393.37771.228900067209830795692703863894/?type=3&theater>



Figure 11 - Kids with freedom to choose which gender they identify with
 Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/yih825M91H/>

6 CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWEES

This project conducted interviews with trend setters and people who are experiencing the transformations described here. The following are two cases that illustrate the post-gender universe well.

6.1 FEMALE TRANSGENDER: A PROCESS

6.1.1 RESPONDENT 2, 28 YEARS OLD, HAIRDRESSER

The beginning of the respondent 2's interview demonstrates right away the complexities of embracing one's gender identity. At first she self describes as a male hairdresser ("cabeleireiro" in Portuguese), only to say, seconds later, that she considers herself "wonderful", expressing all the relief she feels today because she is able to be natural with her self.

As it is true for many other trans women, she faced difficulties in the market place. After having suffered with the weight of prejudice in some professional experiences, she found in hair salons the safe haven to embrace an imperative aspect of her life: her female identity. But this was a period surrounded by doubts: "Should I transform myself and truly become a girl? I don't accept myself, I'm not feeling well as a 'travesti' (transvestite)", she remembers.

At childhood, while her brother sought their father's sports shoes and shorts, she preferred her mother's dresses and heels. The family already understood there was something different about her, and when they asked why she acted this way her answer was only: "I don't know, but I like it". When she came out of the closet the overall family reaction was "I knew it". Uncles sometimes told her brother to give her advice on how to be a 'normal' person. Today, she says that even her most sexist uncle has gotten used to it.

Recurring prejudice is attributed to our sexist society and religions that propagate prejudices. She also says LGBT peoples are not united. In her opinion the gender issue should be discussed as early as in school. She remembers that sexual education classes did not contemplate possibilities beyond a man and a woman. "Wow, this isn't just about sex, it is also: who are we?".

When she evaluates the role of the media, she recognizes some initiatives in soap operas, for example, that deal with the issue, pointing out with irony that some people believe it is a fad. "As if

there were no gays in society...!” she says. She also remembers the brands O Boticário and John John and says that although they risk becoming stereotypes “a brand for gays”, this new audience gravitates towards companies with this positioning. “I use Boticário more because they have talked about homosexuals, so we should support it”, she explains.

6.2 FATHER, MALE, HOMOSEXUAL AND HIS LIFE TAKING CARE OF THREE KIDS

6.2.1 RESPONDENT 3, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR AND LAWYER, 52 YEARS OLD

“Pãe”, the word that combines dad (pai) and mom (mãe) in Portuguese is commonly used when a mother takes over the roles of both parents. Our respondent, however, is an exception: a father who got full custody of three children after his 20-year marriage ended (the kids were 7, 10 and 12 years old at the time).

For the respondent 3 “family is one thing and married is another”, and he reveals he would not have separated from his wife if he wasn’t able to get custody of the kids, although he was aware of the obstacles regarding the both the law and his ex-wife. “I thought it was very unfair because I have taken care of my kids since they were born, not just after the divorce.”

When asked about the gender roles in his house, he emphasizes he was always the “mom” while his ex-wife was the “dad”. “I was the one worrying about their food, education, waking up at the right time, while she would play videogames all night”. Nothing changed after the separation, and he continued to provide care to the kids that he says would theoretically be feminine, but he cannot see it this way.

The respondent 3 also points out that he is unable to feel represented in the media “I see myself as a victimized person, marginalized, so the media doesn’t seem inclusive to me”. He is bothered by the way that the media emphasizes certain types of social behavior, beliefs and values, and he reveals this is so important to him personally: “I think I considered myself homosexual from the age when sexuality blooms” and justifies the period married to a person of the opposite sex as a time when his sexuality was repressed. “I thought I was choosing to be heterosexual and that this (homosexuality) would stop once I got married”.

He becomes moved in the interview when he tells us that his kids not only accepted his sexuality but encouraged him to be happy. In their words: “why did you suffer for so long?”. Although he says he didn’t suffer so much, he is sad about the “obscurity” he was in.

Sex is not an option, it is a condition. The choice is whether to exercise your sexuality or not. 3 or 4 ago I decided I was going to experience my sexuality and I don’t see media that communicate with me. I think humans would be more effective if (media) showed reality, rather than trying to satisfy all of our needs. There are consumers for everything, perhaps it is time to replace pleasure with reality – people need to know the truth. (Respondent 3)

7 THE ROLE OF CONSUMER HABITS IN THIS DISCUSSION

7.1 CONSUMER HABITS CAUSE AND STATEMENT

When we talk about consumer habits as a mechanism for the affirmation of causes, fashion is the most representative element for the materialization of this idea. Lipovetisky and Charles (2004) state that fashion is positioned as a social institution, more than a product of consumer society, but an indispensable element in the construction of the identity of the hypermodern persona. It is part of society and also dictates its functioning.

And as an element that structures both individual and collective expression, fashion has questioned gender roles with manifestations that include the appropriation of aspects of the opposite sex at the same time that it exists in an universe in which these characteristics don’t make sense. In the 1920s Coco Chanel was a pioneer when she proposed fluid and masculine suits for women in her collections.

And in the 1970s David Bowie navigated the genders and even an undefined mix of male and female through his various and mutant personas, always with a transgressor element that escaped the standards.

This sort of attitude has become what we now know as the gender bender movement, which advocates the same freedom in terms of clothes regardless of what is generally believed to belong to one group or the other. Gucci's fashion show in the beginning of 2015, designed by Alessandro Michele, adhered to this trend. On the runway the designer proposed the use of the same clothes by men and women, deliberately generating confusion in terms of the gender of the models. The brand stuck to this line of thought in its first show of 2016, when androgyny and unisex pieces were again central to the concept presented.

The participation of transgender models in fashion is also growing. In 2014 Brazilian trans model Lea T was the first to star in a cosmetics campaign, taking part in an ad for Redken. In an interview to the newspaper *El País*, the director of the brand, Shane Wolf, explained his motivation to choose Lea: "Her name was gaining strength in fashion shows and she has an image and hair that perfectly match the brand's philosophy. She has personality and a very interesting story to tell". (*El País*, 2015).

Another brand in a similar path is Louis Vuitton. Nicolas Ghesquière, the brand's creative director, chose the teenager Jaden Smith, son of actor Will Smith, as the star of its Spring 2016 campaign. Nothing remarkable, except that Jaden stars in the campaign for women, as opposed to the one for men. Known for his transgressor style and for challenging convention, stating that clothes are just clothes, his presence in the pictures among female models looks natural, and not like parody or disguise. According to *Vogue* magazine (2016), this wouldn't be a big deal for an indie brand, but we are talking about the super traditional Louis Vuitton.

The British brand Selfridges also believes in this trend and created an "Agender" line of unisex clothes. Designer Faye Toogood believes each piece has the potential to speak for itself, without need to dictate or attribute it to a gender. In this case what matters in the end is how consumers self identify – they are free to choose the clothes that best match their identity (Estadão, 2015).

Thus Lipovetisky (2004) believes that brands are capable to represent a series of meanings, and choosing this or that brand determines which social role individuals are interesting in embracing. The symbolic characteristics and the social meaning of consuming certain products are, thus, more relevant than their own functional utilities. Shaping one's profile according to consumer habits is a characteristic of post-modern society and, according to Bauman (2011), emphasizes in individuals the need to maintain a social position that protects self esteem and prevents feelings of inadequacy and impairment.

7.2 EXAMPLES OF DISCOURSES THAT ILLUSTRATE THIS CONTEXT AND POSSIBLE PATHS FOR BRANDS'S INTERACTION WITH CONSUMERS

Before talking about discourses that are in line with the expectations of respect for consumers' individualities, it is important to understand which discourses are completely disconnected, having quickly received negative responses from an audience that confirms its active and critical voice, reacting to certain positions that would not have provoked the same reaction just a few years ago.

The infamous "whining", expression used online to satirize people who complain about anything, must be considered by mindful brands one of the first indications of a possible image crisis. To understand and map the reasons for the complaint and the power of the community the complainer represents may determine which brands will survive in the next few years.

The recent condemnation of a bar as sexist in Vila Madalena (São Paulo city) is a very good example of this issue. After the incident was 'crucified' online – in a matter of hours the post was shared over 38 thousand times, with 125 thousand 'likes', and the brand's page on Facebook was invaded by 26 thousand people who took the client's side, and the case was featured in the press and in bar rating websites. The business' response, lacking humility and blaming the victim, further contributed to a very negative scenario. 25 years of tradition and credibility were lost in just a few days.

When we observe the various controversies around sexist campaigns that reaffirm social roles people no longer want to play, it becomes clear that some agencies and companies are completely unprepared for this movement. Campaigns that objectify the female body, with references to sexual violence or presenting fitness and the quest for 'prince charming' as fundamental for women's happiness are in dangerous terrain and ultimately destined to fail.

The menstrual pad brand Always released a campaign taking advantage of the sexist cliché "like a girl". The brand used a globally known technique called 'femvertising' – ad that aims to strengthen psychological and social advances of women. According to Meio e Mensagem Magazine (2016), the campaign "Like a Girl" received numerous awards in international festivals. Another indication of the advancement of these issues in advertising is that Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity now has a special award for cases that contribute with the deconstruction of gender stereotypes.

Avon is a brand that has an innovative positioning in its communication with women. With a clearly feminist stance, the brand explores the concept of empowering women while working with the global concept of "beauty that makes sense".

Avon's posts on Facebook tackle themes being discussed by the general public, including trans issues. It was one of the first brands to hire a trans woman as its spokesperson. Candy Mel, of the band Uó, was the face of the Breast Cancer Awareness campaign during pink October and when 'travesti' Amanda was approved in first place by UFPE, the brand wrote a post congratulating her and as a reminder that the university is for everyone. They also took the opportunity to talk about the movie Suffragettes, which tells the story of women acquiring the right to vote, and about domestic violence, a subject that has gained national prominence since the Enem episode.

The perspective explored among reps is financial autonomy. Using the hashtags #eumesintoconfortável (I feel comfortable), #eusouassim (This is how I am) and #meuverãominhasregras (My summer, my rules), the brand suggests that women should value self knowledge and freedom to express themselves their own way, liberating themselves from the lessons of the patriarchy and embracing an autonomous and independent posture in their lives.

Campaigns launched for Mother's day 2016 also featured the idea of empowerment. The newspaper Estadão posting accusations of domestic violence to its Twitter feed with the same speed that official reports are filed, every 7 minutes. Hashtags such as #nãoquerofloresqueroigualdadadesalarial ("I don't want flowers, I want equal pay") proposed a debate about the actual meaning of the date.

In the male universe, the positioning strategy of Axe (deodorant) is a case that represents the rupture with old codes of what it means to be man. The brand had worked with concept of the "Axe effect" for years, featuring a man who is desired by many women and focusing on the seductive powers of the alpha male, but now is reinventing itself by proposing more flexible codes for masculinity, celebrating realistic, sensitive men, who have freedom to express themselves in a new configuration of affective relationships.

All of our respondents also mentioned the need for representation of issues associated with sexuality. According to Denilson Pimenta Júnior, project director at UNA (LGBT section of the National Students Union), commercials featuring heterosexual, white and middle/high class couples (which he nicknamed "Doriana / margarine commercials") generate a sense of exclusion among LGBT individuals, as well as health insurance plans that only accept hetero-normative couples or banks that don't allow homosexuals partners to open joint bank accounts. "Thus is what I experience. I tried to get a joint bank account with my fiancé and we can't do it with Personalité (premium division of Itaú bank)".

When it comes to social orientation, O Boticário was very prominent in June of 2015. The brand's campaign for Brazilian "Sweethearts Day" featured the ad "Sweethearts Day for all forms of love", which caused controversy because it showed couples with different sexual orientations exchanging gifts. Many threatened to boycott the brand, which was also sued through Conar (Self regulating organ of the advertising industry) for "disrespecting Brazilian families" – but the brand was ultimately acquitted and counted with massive support against the conservative reaction. An event was created on Facebook to boost the number of 'likes' the YouTube version of the video had, in order to surpass

the number of 'dislikes'. In February of 2016, eight months after its original release, the video had 3,6 million views, with 389.551 likes against 193.744 dislikes.

The announcement released by the brand after the controversy reinforced its positioning: "O Boticário believes in the beauty of relationships, which are present in all of all communication pieces. The proposal of the 'Couples' campaign launched on May 24th is to approach with respect and sensitivity different forms of love, regardless of age, racial background, gender or sexual orientation – represented by the pleasure to give a gift to your loved one on Sweethearts Day. O Boticário also would like to emphasize that we value tolerance and respect the diversity of choices and viewpoints" (UOL Economia, 2015).

In Sweden the toy manufacturer Top-Toy engages with the discussion of gendered play. Without any separation between products geared at boys or girls, including no distinction in terms of colors, the brand also conducts a program among its employees to raise awareness and question deep-seated concepts they may have regarding gender roles. Jan Nybergm, the company's sales director, said in an interview to the newspaper The Guardian that children are not born knowing the codes of color and therefore should be free to choose what they want to play with.

After a picture posted on Twitter by a consumer from Ohio who questioned Target's toy segmentation in its stores had over 3 thousand 'likes', the retailer announced it would stop dividing its sections (toys, bedding, towels and entertainment) by gender, starting in August 2015. With an official announcement in its blog, the brand explained that they understand that consumers' preferences and needs have changed and that it no longer made sense to divide products by gender, as pointed out by the chain's own customers. In spite of boycotting threats, the company says customers are responding in a positive way to the initiative (Blog Target, 2015).

8 CONCLUSIONS

The context of change, fluidity and transience that defines post-modernity is the background for the turbulent scenario that surrounds the discussion of themes associated with gender identity, sexuality and social roles.

There are more and more questionings and doubts, and an increasing need to see, understand and decode the various individual and collective manifestations about these themes.

The inclusion of issues of gender identity and the expression of sexuality in the political and social agenda brings critical mass to the public debate, while social media projects different discourses and demands. Activism becomes part of the new social paradigm, inaugurating a new moment for feminism and for the discussion of LGTB civil rights.

New social roles and possibilities of affective configurations are being outlined, resulting in a renewal of social organization and a new paradigm. Some certainties of the past are lost - such as well-defined genders and their corresponding identity codes - giving way to freedom of self-expression and coherence with individuals' most intimate inner truth. Social conventions of the past are replaced by an unprecedented move towards authenticity.

Given the high level of complexity and revolutionary potential of this moment, it is necessary to promote in-depth understanding of all aspects involved in the context and this study aims to be one of the first steps in the context of market research and consumer knowledge in this sense. There is fragmentation (perhaps excessive) and even contraposition of the various movements and discourses. It is fundamental to discern in detail what moves each piece of the puzzle.

Some key points should be taken into consideration when thinking about this context:

- Current times feature extreme fragmentation and a re-definition of boundaries and limits, with the co-existence of many movements and initiatives associated with gender issues and sexuality. Although the causes often have a common root or even coinciding goals, different currents may have difficulty dialoging and interacting. For instance: some groups within the LGBT movement feel better represented in society than others;

- We can say that the current stage represents, to a certain extent, the beginning of a more structured debate, with clear juxtapositions, confrontations and territories to be defined. In this sense, the overall climate tends to have tense overtones, especially in social media, where arguments and viewpoints often become aggressive, defensive and unilateral;
- In spite of the breadth and amplitude of the discussion, it is important to take into consideration the type of reaction this debate provokes. While it generates openness and empathy in large segments of society, it is also met with a conservative reaction, which is gaining strength and support from expressive sections of the population (religious individuals, traditionalist politicians, etc.).

These points are crucial when it comes to brands' communication and interaction with the theme. It is important to consider the dichotomy that is inherent to this context: the need for inclusion and recognition juxtaposed, to a certain extent, to the acceptance of diversity, uniqueness and difference. To be respected and recognized as equal, but without denying or invalidating the differences. This doesn't seem to be an easy task, but the brands that succeed in this challenge will have considerable competitive advantage.

There is growing pressure for companies and brands to position themselves in terms of social issues – silence and omission are not tolerated by new generations. Not recognizing this reality and minimizing gender issues will lead to rejection and lack of identification with the brand and everything that surrounds it.

Accusing people of “whining” or complaining that “the world is becoming boring” are postures that are not in line with this moment of self-recognition, overhauling positions, resignification of identities and looking for empathy.

The following stages seem to be necessary to outline a communication strategy capable to encompass this complexity:

- Stage 1: recognizing the existence and importance of this paradigm shift, and its influence on how people live and perceive the world around them. It is key to be aware of the breadth of the changes: gender issues are one aspect of an even broader context, including a discussion of freedom and expression, self-acceptance and the relationship between individuals and society. It is important to consider that the identity of post-modern individuals is mutable, multiple, fluid and metamorphic;
- Stage 2: Seek knowledge about this new reality, distinguishing and interpreting the various threads of this network (origins, pillars, political and social roles, motivations, desires and expectations of all involved in these gears). When thinking about a communication strategy, the basic and customary questions are becoming even more relevant: who are we talking to? What causes do they identify with? How do they express themselves?
- Stage 3: Provide integration and diversity in all processes that involve the brand's communication. The participation and inclusion of representatives of various segments and profiles in all stages of the strategy (from conception/creation to application/execution), through co-creation and co-management, brings authenticity, truthfulness and legitimacy to the discourse. It is important to integrate, in a holistic and truthful way, the brand's narrative to this new social moment.

An important issue to highlight is that this is still a very difficult theme to intimately access as it also brings out practical implications during the article's development and primary data collection. The care and even certain protectionism actors in this universe proved to have made it impossible for the researchers in charge of this material to directly conduct some interviews. We had to access a few interviewee profiles through counterparts who were already in these environments.

That is, in addition to bringing direct impact on the way brands will have to guide their positioning strategy from now on, the post-gender world should also remodel the context of

market research, which, similar to other brands, will have to really count on staff teams that are both multidisciplinary and plural in their practice and personal experience. Thus, the basis of this debate brings out a series of questions:

- How can we, as researchers, access this diversity and combine it with our investigation and knowledge building processes?
- What impacts could this social role resignification create in the future?
- How can we better understand the new male and female codes in this new scenario?
- Regarding the gender issue as a whole, has it virtually been surpassing niches and becoming an emblematic issue of a new paradigm?

Once identity loses its social anchors that would make it seem “natural”, predetermined and non-negotiable, “identification” becomes ever more important for the individuals desperately seeking a “we” to which they may bid for access [...] identities have taken free course and now, it is for each individual, male or female, to capture it during their flight, by using their own resources and tools. (Bauman, 2005)

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