

“Doing well by doing good”

How businesses use social issues as marketing tool

Student Name: Caspar van de Poel
Student Number: 509183

Supervisor: Dr. Marco Scalvini

Master Media & Creative Industries
Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication
Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

Gucci is widely recognized as one of the most influential luxury fashion brands on earth. The brand is progressive and could be classified as social activist. This socially engaged profile appeals to the contemporary consumer, who increasingly values morally sound conduct. Companies like Gucci use cause-related marketing campaigns to moralize themselves, campaigns which heavily appeal to the consumers' emotion. This thesis examines the relationship which moralization and cause-related marketing have with social issues, like the inclusion of minorities or LGBT+ rights. Previous academic work has questioned the use of cause-related marketing and moralizing values, as they could exploit the emotions of consumers. Additionally, cause-related marketing campaigns often depict the pain and anguish of the Other – another questionable practice, according to scholarship. Gucci makes use of all these aforementioned theories and concepts: it markets itself as morally acceptable, by infusing its communication with values of progression and social justice. Therefore, research question which this paper answers is *how does Gucci construct and communicate about 'achieving change'?* This paper unravels Gucci communication and how it is crafted: which messages are sent and how does this relate to scholarship. This is examined by using a qualitative thematic analysis on two of Gucci's online platforms: CHIME FOR CHANGE and Gucci Equilibrium. In total, 40 webpages are studied, 20 of either platform. In total, 40 texts and 148 images are examined in this paper. The results indicate that Gucci wants to be seen as morally superior to competitors in the industry. Being morally acceptable is part of their marketing plan, which they achieve by taking an activist stance towards social issues. They foster empowerment, advocate for minorities and want a diverse corporate culture – fostering progression and social change seems evident. However, the thesis also reveals serious worries regarding Gucci's communication, which correlates with literature about marketing and distant suffering. Firstly, evidence emerges which questioned Gucci's honest intentions about progression. It highlights a commonly heard critique regarding marketing, its manipulative characteristics. 'Doing good' might merely be a tool to increase profitability. Secondly, the inclusion of suffering in marketing practices is questionable, as it exploits those witnessing pain, and those in pain. This paper highlights the dangers of cause-related marketing, and how moralisation and the inclusion of social values might damage charities. Currently, there are little to no papers which examine the relationship between marketing and distant suffering, a spectacle which this paper investigated. The thesis shares new insights into marketing's relationship with pain and other emotions, an affiliation which still needs further investigation – especially after his inquiry.

KEYWORDS: *marketing, suffering, witnessing, moralization, fashion.*

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Preface

These truly are extraordinary times. We are currently living through a pandemic, while fierce protests for equality are being held on a daily basis, too. And for good a reason. Inclusivity and diversity will now inevitably become even more prominent. Many companies have expressed their deepest sympathy towards the BlackLivesMatter-movement, they promised change and social progression. This thesis examined just that; how does business handles these kinds of social values in practice. Hopefully, this work can be of use in upcoming debates about equality and corporate social responsibility, as a truly just world for everybody must be engineered.

Moving on, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my supervisor, Marco Scalvini. His help, provision and knowledge made this thesis possible. Additionally, I would like to thank everyone who supported me – and kept me sane – while writing my thesis. My mother, my father, my sister, my girlfriend and my friends, they have all been greatly helpful and beacon of love and support.

Dedicated to Otto Joseph August Janssen.

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1. Introduction

In the marketing and advertising world today, narratives are increasingly being employed as a form of moral guidance to provide lessons about diversity and reminders on the value that should be placed on factors like social justice or inclusivity (Hopkins, 2015). Empirical research found that moral dimensions of consumption are increasingly significant to contemporary consumers, meaning that the morality of an item now motivates the consumer to purchase (Caruana, 2007). Luxury fashion brand Gucci anticipated the trend in consumer culture, therefore its business strategy changed and the brand started campaigning itself as ethically sound and progressive (Bonacchi, Perego, & Ravagli, 2011). Gucci is a market leader in the fashion industry, consistently coined as one of the world's most influential fashion brands (Bonacchi et al., 2011; Webbler, 2017). As authority in the industry, Gucci sets an example to other brands: about social responsibility, moral values and how these principles should reflect in a business' communication.

Social values about morality, progression and equality are clearly present in Gucci's policies. Firstly, the brand makes sizable donations to charities like UNICEF (UNICEF, 2015), which could be seen as philanthropic intent (O'Sullivan, Smith, & Esposito, 2012). Furthermore, the brand also directly speaks out for positive societal change, sustainability and inclusivity through its Gucci Equilibrium-website. Additionally, the company runs a campaign aimed at empowering women and minorities around the globe, called "CHIME FOR CHANGE". It could be seen as a cause-related marketing strategy: a strategy in which a for-profit works together with a good cause (Smith & Higgins, 2000). In this case, Gucci displays its progressive nature by fighting for gender equality, a globally prominent social issue. Marketing generally wants to appeal to the consumer's emotions (Hopkins, 2015), and cause-related marketing amplifies this ideal even further (Baghi, Rubaltelli, & Tedeschi, 2009). It is designed to create strong emotional involvement with the consumer by including a relationship with a charity or good cause, to evoke heavy emotions, like empathy or compassion.

The rise of cause-related marketing and other moralizing strategies is not surprising, considering contemporary society is increasingly 'emotionalist' (Smith & Higgins, 2000). It explains that consumers are "concerned with experiencing and demonstrating feeling and compassion" (p. 317), a sentiment to which cause-marketing appeals well. The moral awareness Smith and Higgin describe, is in line with Yurchisin, Jin Kwon and Marcketti's (2009) argumentation that ethical consumption became more relevant recently, which is communicated through the increased usage of cause-marketing. However, one of the main concerns regarding the marketing industry is its manipulative nature (O'Sullivan, 2012). Cause-marketing might just be a means to an end: making a business seem progressive and morally acceptable in order to increase profit, while not genuinely constructing meaningful change (Smith & Higgins, 2000). Brei and Böhm (2015) argue it could work

as a cover-up for ethical misconduct. Their study found that cause-marketing could simply be a tool to add an unique selling point to a product, in order to increase profit.

Worries regarding (cause-related) marketing's ethics and manipulative nature are common in the academic world (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2012; Brei & Böhm, 2015). Marketing wants to petition to the consumers' emotion in order to sell products, but in doing so, there is often little attention paid to the emotional consequences for the consumers. Certain concepts and events cause for a heavier emotional response than others. Social issues we can relate to – like gender equality, inclusion or sustainability – quickly cause for strong emotions of empathy or compassion, especially when it is accompanied by the depiction of pain and suffering (Kyriakidou, 2015). Italian brand Benetton ran multiple campaigns starring individuals suffering from AIDS in their campaigns (Scalvini, 2010). The company not only abused and exploited the emotions of their consumers by running these kinds of advertisements, the terminally ill were used as marketing tools. Concerns regarding emotional exploitation are similar in Gucci's online communication, which heavily relies on the inclusion on social, activist values. The emotional and physical well-being of the distant Other – mainly women in the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign – is depicted and used as marketing tactic. While marketing attempts to moralize a brand, company or product (Hopkins, 2015), the inclusion of distant suffering might make the campaign immoral, as it exploits the honest emotions of consumers and the Other.

Marketing's devious characteristics towards emotional appeal often get highlighted by scholars (Smith & Higgins, 2000; Baghi et al., 2009; O'Sullivan et al., 2012). The inclusion of values like social responsibility, progression or equality seems to be common practice in cause-related marketing, often accompanied by the inclusion of distant suffering. While marketing literature is elaborate and comprehensive, it rarely covers the exploitation of emotion and pain. For example, Yurchisin et al. (2009) studied the motivations of consumers: why do they buy cause-related products? The article explains that since the September 11 attacks consumers value companies' commitment to social issues more, but it does not assess how these moralizing narratives are constructed – and which role suffering plays in the spectacle. Brei and Böhm's (2015) inquiry into bottled water brand Volvic, and its '1L=10L for Africa'-campaign, does explain how a cause-related strategy works. It offers an explanation as to why it was successful, and how values of social responsibility and progressiveness were integrated. However, there was no emphasis placed on distant suffering of the exploitation of emotions, even though it seemed evidently present.

Marketing has often been the subject of empirical research, even in relation to the moralistic shift within the industry. While it is known and recognized that marketing attempts to create emotional involvement with the consumer (Baghi et al., 2009), academia has rarely focused in-depth on the exploitation of emotion – among both the consumers and the Other. Additionally,

the inclusion of distant suffering augments the response of the consumer, as it produces strong emotions like helplessness (Kyriakidou, 2015). However, the manner in which marketing constructs communication thriving off emotion and social values, remains largely unknown.

1.1 Aim of the research

This study provides an explanation as to how Gucci commodifies empowerment, by increasing the visibility of suffering to arouse compassion and willingness to help. The aim of this study is to explore how social values like progressiveness are communicated through marketing campaigns in the fashion industry. Cause-related strategies are especially prevalent in the fashion industry, since the sector is tainted by many unethical practices (Morrin, 2013). Moralizing marketing tactics could help nullify the sheer amount of ethical misconduct in the industry, like sweatshop conditions and child labour (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). Despite the plethora of immoral practices, the way large fashion companies communicate their social and progressive values through marketing has not been researched, much like the usage of distant suffering in their communication. Moreover, to illustrate this, the Italian high-fashion brand Gucci is studied. Gucci tries to come across as progressive and morally acceptable, values which are found in abundance on both the CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium platform. The brand depicts itself as activist, as advocate for social change. While CHIME FOR CHANGE's narrative is built upon empowerment of women and minorities, Equilibrium challenges a multitude of social issues through a progressive angle. Both platforms not only heavily draw upon the consumers' emotion, the depiction on suffering is vividly present in the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign. Gucci and its online campaigns contain all the characteristics relevant for this thesis: the moralization of itself, cause-related marketing, the inclusion of social values like progression and the reliance on emotions. Therefore, the research question is the following: *how does Gucci construct and communicate about 'achieving change'?*

To increase the feasibility of the project, three sub-questions are used. Firstly, *'in what campaigns can content about empowerment be found?'* is dedicated to the social value to which Gucci's entire online communication can be related back, empowering women and minorities.

Secondly, *'How is content about compassion structured?'* and *'How and through which dimensions does Gucci define empathy?'* are both aimed at the emotional appeal which marketing makes on the consumer. Empathy and compassion are common responses to progressive values like equality and inclusivity, as well as to witnessing disturbing events – like human pain.

1.2 Synopsis of research method

This paper attempts to unravel Gucci's online communication, based on their CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium platforms. Both websites consist out of a series of articles about varying social issues, ranging from ecological sustainability to gender equality. CHIME FOR CHANGE's focus is generally on gender equality and empowering minorities, while Equilibrium tackles a broader range of social issues, which it relates to Gucci's policies. Most articles on either platform consist of images and text about the same subject. Therefore, both websites were analysed through an inductive/deductive thematic analysis. Both the images and textual elements were studied, meaning that two different coding frames were crafted. The thematic analysis was based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step framework. In total, 20 webpages of either platform were analysed and interpreted. All webpages contained text, and usually multiple pictures. Thematic analysis was perceived as most appropriate, as it excels at finding patterns in data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These patterns made it possible to illustrate how Gucci's online communication was structured, and therefore, to answer the research question.

1.3 Personal interest in the topic

When I was younger, I did not care for clothing or fashion: I was shy and anything which covered my body sufficed. But once I grew older, I started to understand that it is a way to express yourself and to stand out, to be different than others. From there on, my interest in the field slowly started growing, until the point where we are at now: writing a thesis about a fashion-related topic. Once my interest in fashion started blooming, I was quickly made aware of its – sometimes – unethical nature. The social and ecological impact which fashion has is enormous and the supply chain is often tainted by questionable events. Most importantly, the fashion industry has an massive effect on the environment, something which I care for deeply. Since the 1950's Gucci has developed itself as one of the influential high-fashion brands ever. Therefore, I think Gucci should set an example for other brands regarding topics like sustainability, as they could seriously influence the world in a positive manner. However, there seems to be a tension between the belief that Gucci needs to be morally acceptable and cause-relating marketing, as there are justifiable concerns regarding CRM's manipulative nature. This pressure between societal ideals and anxieties about the company's capitalist design, led me towards the research topic.

1.4 Societal relevance

The fashion industry is notorious for its ethical wrongdoing: environmental impact, poor handling of hazardous chemicals, low wages in sweatshops, violation workers' rights and child labour (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). This misconduct in the industry is widespread knowledge in the public sphere, therefore it is no surprise that the fashion industry is drawn towards moralizing marketing practices. Popular fashion brands such as Moncler, H&M and Louis Vuitton all run cause-related campaigns together with prominent charities like UNICEF (UNICEF, n.d.), to boost their imagery and to market themselves as socially responsible. UNICEF is a common choice to partner with, because the well-being of children is one of the few things humans universally agree upon. However, campaigns with UNICEF quickly include suffering. For example, Moncler's "Warmly Moncler"-campaign illustrates disadvantaged children fighting against the cold (Warmly Moncler, n.d.). This makes an appeal to the witnesses' emotions, to consumers, the fashion brand seems noble and selfless, since they seem to help poor children. O'Sullivan et al. (2012) found that consumers are generally a proponent of cause-related marketing strategies, as they associate it with "doing good" and morally sound conduct. Essentially, consumers are not aware that cause-related marketing can simply work as a trick to moralize (unethical) businesses. It makes an appeal to their honest emotions, it exploits them, which is ultimately beneficial to the for-profit. Therefore, since moralizing practices are regarded as effective in marketing and consumers are sensitive to morally sound conduct, this thesis offers a critical review of marketing communication.

Additionally, the awareness that businesses have an obligation to be socially responsible, while still maximizing profits, is incorporated by companies on large scale (Hopkins, 2015). However, the capitalist ideal to maximize profit still remains intact: the phrase "doing well by doing good" summarizes the attitude, as it is assumed that being socially responsible leads to financial merit (Hopkins, 2015). This line of reasoning strengthens worries regarding the manipulative nature of marketing: doing good is just another way to increase profitability and covering up immoral practices. The victim of this logic and cause-related marketing, could be the charities and good causes which for-profits decide to partner with. The collaboration between both parties could lead to less donations to the charity, as well as to objectification among consumers (Smith & Higgins, 2000). Consequently, this thesis offers an analysis of Gucci's online communication, to unravel if the brand genuinely cares about social issues and strengthening charities, or abuses them for their own merit.

1.5 Thesis overview

This paper is divided into five distinct chapters. The present chapter serves as an introduction to the topic. It emphasizes both the academic and scientific relevance, presents the research question, scope of the paper and the methodology. After that, chapter two provides the theoretical structure on which this thesis is built. It offers an overview of previous research and highlights this paper's most important theories and concepts: the moralisation of marketing, cause-related marketing, the era of witnessing and distant suffering of the spectator and the Other. Moving on, the third chapter gives an in-depth justification for the chosen method – thematic analysis – and the sampling criteria. Additionally, the systematic way this research was carried out is explained, as well as measures to improve its reliability and validity. In addition, the fourth chapter shares the most interesting results which emerged from the dataset. It analyses the data and highlights the correlation between the themes and sub-questions. The fifth and last chapter provides a and detailed debate about the academic and societal implications of the paper. Not only is the research question answered, the limitations of the thesis and recommendations for future inquiries are also discussed. After that, a series of appendices completes this research.

2. Theoretical literature and conceptual framework

In this chapter, I briefly discuss the theoretical framework on which the thesis rests. In order to clarify those concepts related to the thesis, several theories and concepts are related to empirical studies. The chapter proceeds through the following steps. Firstly, the moralisation of the marketing industry is discussed, as well as the appeal of ethical products and criticism on moralizing narratives in marketing. Secondly, the thesis examines the rise of cause-related marketing, as the practice is increasingly used to give companies a moral edge over their competitors. Thirdly, the framework seeks to explain how the act of witnessing influences consumerist behaviour, and why the media plays a vital role in this spectacle. And lastly, the witnessing of distant suffering is explained. Its – often problematic - role in marketing is highlighted, but as well as its appeal to the marketing industry. Finally, the theoretical framework ends with a small summary of the chapter. The most relevant, interesting and useful concepts are emphasised once more, to establish their importance to the paper's scope.

2.1 The moralisation of marketing

Moralism is derived from the concept 'moral' (morality), which is defined by Hopkins (2015) as something which "refers to principles, behaviour, actions, character, rules, values, codes, judgments, and decisions we each and all of us make or perform or express on a daily basis, either with the aim of making ourselves or the world better in some way or engaged as a critical practice of living" (p. 203). We live by morals: they help us critically reflect upon our lives and society, they teach us what is good and what is bad. Moralism addresses the same concepts as morals, but in a "hyperrealized" or exaggerated manner; therefore in a marketing context morality often becomes "hyper-morality" (Hopkins, 2015). Modern day consumers highly value the morality of products (Caruana, 2007; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2007; Nielsen & McGregor, 2013; Hopkins, 2015), a trend in consumer culture recognized by both marketing practitioners and academics. Ethical consumption and ethical consumers are on the rise; thus leading to an increase of ethical products (Yurchisin et al., 2009), infused with moralistic values. Marketing wants to appeal to the consumer, therefore it got increasingly moralized: products which are fair trade, ethical, sustainable or politically engaged, started to get the upper hand (Caruana, 2007).

This shift in consumer culture towards morality could be considered a surprise, as the nature of the concept morality carries a series of negative connotations (Hopkins, 2015): morality relates to "invoking a sense of sermonizing or lecturing, self-righteousness, or at least a button-holding or finger-wagging character" (2015, p. 12). Moralism tells consumers what is right and what is wrong. The reason why morality is appealing, is because consumers like to get their "heartstrings" (Hopkins, 2015, p. 12) pulled and crave endorsement: they "appreciate the

metaphysical comfort that comes from being assured that how we see things is good and right” (p. 12). Moralistic narratives in marketing validate the consumers’ worries regarding their moralistic perspectives, thus making them appealing and effective (Hopkins, 2015). Morally sound conduct might be commanded by consumers, but the moralization of the marketing industry does also cause criticism and concerns regarding the ethical implications of this shift. In debates about advertising’s morality, there is a clear distinction between ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Companies want to be seen as ‘good’ and progressive in the eyes of society (Eagle & Dahl, 2015), as this appeals to the contemporary consumer. However, this moralistic shift in marketing is often perceived as a cynical attempt to make businesses look more ethical, just to increase profits (Klein, 2000). Businesses are driven by the capitalist ideal to make profit, not by ‘doing good’ (Klein, 2000; Eagle & Dahl, 2015). Therefore, the moralistic shift in marketing could just be means to an end, an extra incentive to stimulate consumers to buy certain products and raise revenue.

Additionally, Hopkins (2015) explains that marketing narratives could be classified as propaganda: they urge consumers towards a distinct kind of behaviour, while persuading them to view the world in a particular manner. Hopkins continues to explain that marketing uses moralism as an instrument, as social propaganda. This strengthens the notion of manipulation in marketing, which is an often-heard point of critique on the industry (Klein, 2000; Smith & Higgins, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2008). Marketing is an effective tool to cover up ethical misconduct: Klein (2000) argues that businesses would rather market themselves as morally responsible, than actually changing their companies’ policies or culture, as this is cheaper and easier. Corporations and marketing practices are therefore often met with consumer cynicism. In his empirical study based on the Swedish fashion industry, Bertilsson (2014) found that ‘enlightened’ consumers show distrust towards the market, towards other consumers and towards the Self.

These enlightened consumers understand immoralities related to consumption, but they still admit to engaging in this consumerist behaviour (Bertilsson, 2014). This could be explained by Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård (2007), who argue that consumption can be understood on two levels which can be decoupled, functional and expressive: “A brand can be criticized on the expressive level, while still being consumed on the functional level” (p. 422). Consumer cynicism loses its power as critique on the industry (Bertilsson, 2014): as long as brands speak out against social issues like equality, other immoral practices are forgotten. It means that consumers are willing to turn a blind eye to ethical misconduct within businesses, if they at least attempt to seem ethical. Nonetheless, moralism might be more important to high-fashion brands, like Gucci, than to regular brands (Morrin, 2013). Traditionally, clothing was a functional, utilitarian good: this is challenged by luxury items, which are meant for hedonic and sensory pleasure. Therefore, according to Morrin (2013), buying luxury among consumers causes guilt, they feel it is immoral,

unethical and a sign of greed. If the moral aspect of these products is guaranteed, then this feeling of guilt is soothed, making luxury products more attractive to consumers.

2.2 Cause-related marketing as newfound standard

The ultimate goal of all businesses is the neoliberal ideal to maximize profits (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). In order to sell products, they need to appeal to consumers, who are often reached and persuaded by marketing practices (Hopkins, 2015). As explained, marketing got increasingly moralised and focused on ethical consumption. Companies want to come across as morally sound, which influences the way they market themselves. However, these kinds of practices have been going on for years. Philanthropic intent of companies – donating money to charity – has been common practice since the nineteenth century (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). The practice of businesses attempting to be morally sound and politically engaged, is often part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy: the strategy of a profitable company to seem ethical and socially responsible (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). "Doing well by doing good" is an often-heard slogan concerning this form of conduct, as it directly benefits the company's profits, while also maintaining the stamp 'responsible' (Hopkins, 2015).

A key trick in marketing, is establishing an emotional connection between the product and the consumer (Baghi et al., 2009). Marketing tries to present a product as if it is instrumental to our happiness or well-being (Hopkins, 2015), creating an sentimental connection: "[...] sentimental connections are not only more readily and easily available through, *but are made particularly possible* by the constancy and ubiquity of a consumer good" (p. 139). Products who appeal to consumers' emotions sell, which is showcased by the existence of cause-related products. Essentially, this is nothing more than creating an extra emotional edge to a product, which makes it more pleasing to purchase for the ethical consumer (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). This form of marketing has been proven successful since the 1980's, when financial services company American Express launched the first cause-marketing campaign (Smith & Higgins, 2000). The bank pledged a one cent donation for any card transaction and a one dollar donation for every newly made issued card, meant for the restoration of the Statue of Liberty (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). The campaign was a success: it raised over 1.7 million dollar over a three month period, and paved the way for more cause-related campaigns.

Smith and Higgins (2000) explain that society is increasingly 'emotionalist', meaning that feelings of empathy and compassion are gaining importance. Cause-related marketing takes full advantage of this development: people can do good and relieve their conscience by purchasing a product. The effectiveness of this is showcased by Yurchisin et al.'s (2008) and Brein and Böhm's (2015) empirical studies into cause-related campaigns. Both inquiries found a significant positive

effect of cause-related marketing on companies' revenues. While cause marketing is perceived positively by most consumers and marketers (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; O'Sullivan et al., 2008), many concerns regarding its true nature exist. The marketing method is often regarded as manipulative, propaganda or a trick to increase profits (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 2008; Hopkins, 2015). Other kinds of criticism focus on the relation between the for-profit and non-profit. Cause-related campaigns are made to help a charity and to infuse them with money, but cause marketing often proves itself to be detrimental to a non-profit (Smith & Higgins, 2000; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001).

The collaboration between non-profit and for-profit was designed to benefit both parties: the non-profit or charity receives extra funds, while the for-profit seems selfless for helping (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). However, Smith and Higgins (2000) explain these cause-related campaigns objectify the social issues for the consumer: "Its mechanisms remove many of the decisions that were previously discharged by the individual" (p. 314). Doing good or donating to a charity becomes affiliated with a pre-existing consumption activity. Consequently, Smith and Higgins (2000) argue marketing could decrease the other sources of revenue – like donations from consumers - for charities. Additionally, evidence exists that mainly companies which need to enhance their image to the public engage in cause-related marketing campaigns with charities (O'Sullivan et al., 2008). This makes the practice questionable. Even though society is often positive about cause marketing (Smith & Higgins, 2000; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; O'Sullivan et al., 2008), once a company is infamous for immoral conduct, consumers engage in scepticism.

Consumers often use scepticism as a defence mechanism towards marketing strategies of companies they deem deceiving or unethical (Kim & Lee, 2009). "Whenever authenticity and underlying motives are suspected, consumers are less likely to respond to a CRM program" (p. 466). Marketing in general is distrusted by consumers (Kim & Lee, 2009; Hopkins, 2015), but cause-related marketing adds another layer of distrust, which consists out of two reasons (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). Firstly, consumers think cause-related marketing is "self-serving" (p. 217) for the for-profit. Cause marketing is interpreted as yet another trick to increase profitability. Secondly, consumers believe that charities are being exploited: when companies do not explain their collaboration with charities enough, consumers believe they are hiding something. Paradoxically, when companies elaborate thoroughly on their collaborations, consumers feel like the charity is being exploited (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). Kim and Lee's (2009) empirical study into consumer scepticism confirms this finding. They found that consumers develop sceptical behaviour quicker when the goal of a cause-related campaign is described in a verifiable manner, than when it is described ambiguously.

The "doing well by doing good"-mentality is often related to a specific cause, which is the whole point of cause marketing (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 2008). Based on the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign you could argue that Gucci aims to empower women: on the platform it

identifies itself as advocate for gender equality and fights to empower women all around the globe. However, advocating for social issues through marketing might also have serious drawbacks for those it assumes it empowers. Gengler (2012) argues that the very notion that women need empowerment might accomplish the exact opposite and cause for disempowerment: “Yet the very notion of empowerment assumes that women have failed to take control of their lives and must be taught how to do so.” (p. 517). Despite the topic of the paper not being completely similar to this thesis, Gengler argues that the conclusions are generalizable and that a “gendered rhetoric of empowerment” (p. 518) causes more harm than it does good.

Additionally, the aforementioned line of reasoning is confirmed by Haraway’s (1990) notion of “Who speaks for whom?”, in which Haraway makes clear that we cannot speak for another we do not know. We assume that they are voiceless and lack the agency to speak, so therefore we assume empowerment is necessary. “The represented is reduced to the permanent status of the recipient of action, never to be a co-actor in an articulated practice among unlike, but joined, social partners.” (Haraway, 1990, p. 312). Assuming a group of humans needs empowerment does not allow them to be equal social partners, thus leading to disempowerment. Furthermore, Bayissa, Smits and Ruben (2018) explain that empowering women – especially in third world countries – is very difficult. Many empowering efforts are focused on the economic dimension, while other dimensions might be equally important. Empowering women in third world countries economically, might disturb a fine balance and disempower them. Thus, marketing practices which seek to empower – like CHIME FOR CHANGE – could cause more harm than they do good.

O’Sullivan et al. (2008) explain that cause marketing is more commonly used in industries which promote ‘hedonic’ products. Additionally, O’Sullivan et al. (2008) argue that ‘sin’ industries often make cause related campaigns about ethics, as it could potentially lead to a positive perception among consumers: the high fashion industry meets both these requirements. High fashion often loses its material, utilitarian values (Morrin, 2013). Therefore, Morrin explains that cause-related marketing is highly useful in high fashion: “Research in this vein suggests that cause-related marketing efforts will be more effective when tied to purchases that ordinarily induce guilt, such as luxury products, than to those that do not, such as utilitarian products” (p. 299). This notion also helps when dealing with consumer guilt towards indulgence. Morrin explains that a donation to towards a charity when buying a luxury product is more effective than discounting the product in terms of sales. Thus, it could potentially explain Gucci’s interest in cause related marketing, social responsibility, morality and values of progression.

The fashion industry could be classified as ethically troubled industry, because of the sheer amount of immoral practices going on. Battaglia, Testa, Bianchi, Iraldo and Frey (2014) explain that the supply chain in the fashion sector is very segmented and internationalised, causing companies

to lose sight over the production process and leading to immoralities - like sweatshop conditions (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). An example of the overly long supply chain, is the exploitation of Uyghurs by companies such as Nike, Adidas, Abercrombie & Fitch, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger and Fila (Xiuzhong Xu, Cave, Leibold, Munro & Ruser, 2019). In their study, Xiuzhong Xu et al. (2019). The investigation found that Uyghurs – a Muslim minority in China – are forced to make products for NGO's in re-education or work camps in the west of China, thus tainting global supply chains. To neutralize the consequences of the overly long supply chain, marketing campaigns which boost the brand image are deployed. The brand is linked to a charity or good cause, to cleanse a company's name.

2.3 Spectating pain: the era of the witness

This latest example, the exploitation of Uyghur workers, includes the pain and anguish of humans. Uyghurs are forced to work in detention camps, nullifying their human rights, causing them to suffer. Observing these kinds of practices is often understood through the act of witnessing: which automatically implies the witnessing of suffering (Ellis, 2009). Witnessing itself can be defined as either a noun or a verb. Peters (2001) explains that the noun 'witness' consists out of a triangle, as it has the ability to refer to three meanings: "(1) the agent who bears witness, (2) the utterance of text itself, (3) the audience who witnesses" (p. 709). Kyriakidou (2015) translates this into three pillars of witnessing: "audiences become witnesses themselves, vicariously experiencing events that happen elsewhere; they become witnesses of the witnessing victims, the people that give testimony of their suffering on the screen; and, finally, they are witnesses of the witnessing texts, those of the journalists that bear witness to the events taking place" (p. 217).

Consequently, witnessing often happens through the media, which is called media witnessing (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2014). The twentieth century was coined the "century of the witness" (p. 9) by John Ellis (1999), in his book 'Seeing Things'. Witnessing only happens when spectating events in real life, or through image. The twentieth century included vast advancement in field of media, with television being the pinnacle of human communication development (Ellis, 1999). It allows spectators to witness pain through moving images, accompanied by sound, which could strengthen the experience of a witness. Media witnessing is frequently present in moments of crisis, humanitarian disasters which showcase suffering through media, like terrorist attacks: Howie (2015) states that witnesses of suffering are terrorism's target audience, as they transform private experiences into public record. Hence, Peters (2001) argues that witnesses serve as "surrogate sense-organs of the absent" (p.709). We often do not witness the actual event itself, but rather its horrific aftermath (Ellis, 1999). Therefore, the meaning of the verb 'to witness' (Peters, 2001), which again, has multiple meanings. Firstly, to witness can be a "sensory experience" (p.

709), we witness something with our own eyes and emotions. And secondly, witnessing is also stating someone else's experience for the benefit of others. Hopkins (2015) names this 'secondary' witnessing. Journalists share their knowledge through the media, so others can witness dramatic events through their eyes. Hopkins explains that education serves the same purpose, as it decides what will be seen by witnesses. Interestingly enough, Howie (2015) conceptualizes witnessing as purely active, while Peters (2001) argues that witnessing has two faces: active and passive. In active witnessing, the audience is an accidental spectator of events. Whereas in passive witnessing, the audience is a privileged possessor of knowledge.

Witnessing of suffering has throughout the 20th century mainly focused on television, because of its rich audio-visual tradition and the possibility of "overabundance of detail" (Kyriakidou 2015, p. 216) in televised texts (Ellis, 1999 & 2009; Chouliaraki, 2006). The audio-visual allows us to understand and witness topics from multiple angles, meaning consumers are mobile in the way they witness. In television narratives events are generally much more intense and faster than daily life is, while also accurately depicting everyday living (Krijnen, 2007) – spectacles such as pain and sorrow included. However, because the sheer distance between the spectator and the act of suffering, intervening is impossible: "we can feel, but always already within a structure that gives both more and less than we would gain from a real encounter" (Ellis, 2009, p.71). Frosh and Pinchevski (2014) argue that times have changed: "Yet what is distinctive about the assemblage of media witnessing is that it interpellates audiences worldwide as the ultimate witnesses of events, while at the same time turning anyone with mobile media technology into a potential testimony-producer" (p. 300). Essentially, they explain that nowadays anyone with an internet connection could turn regular people into witnesses.

Spectators conceptualize suffering in different manners. According to Kyriakidou (2015), there are four distinctive types of media witnessing among viewers. Firstly, affective witnessing, which are the emotional responses to the act of suffering. Reactions include words like 'shock', 'touched' or 'moved' (p.220). Secondly, ecstatic witnessing, which is close to affective witnessing. It differs in the sense that is more intense, as viewers immerse themselves into the scene of suffering: "it is not the specificity of suffering faces that the viewers find emotionally compelling but rather the urgency of the situation" (p. 223). Thirdly, there is politicised witnessing, due to its affiliation with political discourses in the audiences' discussion. Politicised witnessing focuses less on spectators' emotions, but more on attributing blame or political responsibility to the events witnessed. And lastly, detached witnessing explains that the suffering witnessed was irrelevant to the spectators' everyday life. Any form of identification or emotional attachment are missing, hence the term detached.

Kyriakidou (2015) argues that witnessing is characterized by two elements with moral implications: “first, its affective nature, due to its relation to human vulnerability, pain and trauma; second, its cultural endowment with a sense of responsibility to interfere with and act upon the suffering witnessed” (p. 216). She continues to argue that by becoming a witness through the media, viewers are confronted with pain and suffering, which is accompanied by the thought of ‘something has to be done to stop this suffering’. This sensation and moral awareness, causes the spectators to feel helpless (Ellis, 1999). Ellis (1999) argues that since suffering is widely visible through the mass media, consumers can no longer say ‘they did not know’. Consumers nowadays know about atrocities: Ellis (1999) continues to explain that witnesses are “accomplices” (p. 9) of the crimes they spectate, as they make an active decision to not act. Awareness of suffering is created by the media, which triggers a moral obligation to take action among viewers (Kyriakidou, 2015). This moral awareness to help the Other is challenged by the overabundance of suffering showcased on television and other mediums (Ellis, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006). An overexposure to pain has a numbing effect on spectators: “Rather than cultivating a sensibility, the spectacle of suffering becomes domesticated by the experience of watching it on television. As ‘yet another spectacle’ too, suffering is met with indifference or discomfort, with viewers switching off or zapping to another channel” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 18).

2.4 Distant suffering of the Other

The sheer geographical distance between the spectator and those suffering - the Other - often undermines the moral response to help (Chouliaraki, 2006): “The combination of the sense of involvement in the events that knowledge of them provides with the sense of powerlessness that distance perpetuates finds itself at the heart of media witnessing” (Kyriakidou, 2015, p. 217). Because of the distance between the spectator and sufferer, the spectacle of witnessing pain becomes distant suffering: “as witnesses of the witnesses ‘in’ the media, the distant sufferers, viewers make imaginative connections with the distant victims whose suffering they watch on their screens” (Kyriakidou, 2015, p. 217). The sufferer-victim is therefore not the only one in pain, as empathy and the cosmopolitan mindset of spectators create suffering among them (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006): the distant suffering of ‘the other’ makes a moral appeal to the spectator, while the distance creates a feeling of helplessness. Chouliaraki (2006) argues that distant suffering might be the pinnacle of television and media. It possesses the power to mould spectators into witnesses of pain and suffering, while they feel a sense of helplessness: “this tension between a knowing yet incapable witness at a distance is the most profound moral demand that television makes on Western spectators today” (p. 112).

Boltanski (1999) however, does not think helplessness is the only emotion present among morally receptive spectators. He argues that these spectators become indignant, which is the result of feeling pity. Pity eventually evolves into anger, which could eventually lead to taking action. While showcasing suffering might be effective in evoking emotion, as a consequence it could become an immoral practice, especially once it is used in a marketing context and for commercial, capitalist purposes. The concept of suffering is always problematic when the object of distant suffering is real according to Boltanski (1999), which is often the case on television or on cause-related marketing campaigns in which a business and charity cooperate. Boltanski (1999): “[...] when the spectacle of the unfortunate and his suffering is conveyed to a distant and sheltered spectator there is a greater likelihood of this spectacle being apprehended in a fictional mode the horizon of action recedes in the distance” (p. 23). Being moved by the suffering of others and feeling the urge to help could be classified as compassion, which generally arises when the spectator thinks about what he is stuck in an unfortunate situation (Chouliaraki, 2006).

Furthermore, Boltanski’s (1999) concept of pity and Chouliaraki’s (2006) explanation of compassion, are both subsets of an overarching concept, called empathy (Ellis, 2009). Empathy could be understood as “the shared emotions one has with others as a result of some shared experience or affinity” (Scott, 2015, p. 453). Ellis (2009) argues that as a concept, empathy assumes that there is a distance between the spectator and the one suffering, thus making empathy relevant in relation to distant suffering. Ellis (2009) explains that spectators seek to experience the emotions of Others as their own. Furthermore, Ellis explains that there is a difference between intellectual empathy and empathic emotions. Intellectual empathy refers to the cognitive process, while empathic emotions refer to “the affective aspect of empathic experience” (p. 72). Empathy is often linked to cosmopolitanism, the idea that all humans are members of one and the same community (Appiah, 1997; Ong, 2009), which allows human beings to connect with ones they have not met, causing a greater sense of empathy. Contemporary societies are increasingly cosmopolitan, meaning that empathy among spectators for distant sufferers is increasingly present (Chouliaraki, 2006). While empathy and compassion seem similar, it is important to understand the difference between both. Empathy includes feeling sorry for another, being able to place yourself in their shoes (Ellis, 1999 & 2009). Compassion not only involves being moved by another’s situation, but also actively looking to take action (Boltanski, 1999). Feeling compassionate with the distant sufferer requires much more energy of a spectator than feelings of empathy. Therefore, empathy occurs more easily and frequently, compassion could be seen as the superlative of empathy.

Since compassion is emotionally demanding to spectators, an overexposure to distant suffering can lead to a “compassion fatigue”, which is the spectators growing indifference towards distant suffering (Chouliaraki, 2006). Furthermore, in her book *The Spectatorship of Suffering*,

Chouliaraki argues that a compassion fatigue is not simply caused by the overabundance of distant suffering present on television, but by the way distant suffering is presented in the media. The media “cleanse” (p. 113) the way in which suffering is portrayed: they leave out gruesome details, so that it can be exposed to the public. Real suffering is therefore rarely depicted on television or other media outlets, which means that the horrific event which causes suffering loses its urgency. Paradoxically, it is not possible to not censor certain details, as it would otherwise shock the audience too much: “[...] the cause of compassion fatigue in the relationship between the spectators’ zone of comfort and the minimalism of news texts, as the two feed into each other and reconfirm one another” (p. 113). Spectators find it difficult to witness the pain of the Other: the ghastliest details deter the audience from watching or witnessing. The news media caters to the audience’s preference, with the risk of losing the acute importance of the event. As a result of this, a compassion fatigue occurs.

Distant suffering as a concept is not problematic, it has to be abused in order for it to become an issue. Witnessing suffering causes for strong emotions among consumers, which could be further amplified by emphasizing the distance between the witness and the Other. This makes distant suffering effective for marketing purposes, since marketing wants to evoke emotions in order to establish a bond between the product/brand and the consumer. Campaigns, like Gucci’s CHIME FOR CHANGE thrive on emotion in order to be successful. They pose for ethical concerns, as not only the consumers’ emotions get exploited, but the pain and anguish of distant sufferers too. Cause-related marketing makes full use of this interrelationship, by linking a product or brand to a charity: the helplessness created by showcasing distant suffering can be satisfied by purchasing. Brei and Böhm’s (2015) empirical study into a Volvic’s ‘1L=10L for Africa’ involves the suffering of distant others and the results are telling: the campaign was highly successful, thus proving that companies can grow on the back of social problems and the usage of distant suffering.

2.5 The conceptual framework in brief

In this theoretical chapter, my aim was to clarify concepts that are taken up in the empirical investigation. First, I presented a brief overview of how ethical products are becoming the new standard in marketing, as they appeal to the increasingly morally aware consumer. Additionally, relevant side notes about hypocrisy and consumer cynicism were made, as well as ethical implications of the moralisation of marketing. Second, I offered relevant clarifications about the prominence of cause-related marketing and its mechanisms. It uses charities or good causes to moralize business, a trend which is approved by many consumers. However, concerns about the ethical implications of these practices are common. Is ‘doing good’ merely marketing? Do charities actually profit of these collaborations?

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These are just two of the many doubts vis-à-vis cause-related marketing. Third, I explained the conceptual relevance of the act of witnessing. Most importantly, it shed light upon the ethical implications of witnessing. Transforming the audience in witnesses generally causes for heavy emotions, making it morally questionable. Fourth, I draw on the involvement of distant suffering in marketing. In the spectacle of distant suffering the Other's pain is generally highlighted, depicting this spectacle might not only abuse the feelings of the Other, it also has the ability to exploit the cosmopolitan mindset of witnesses. All concepts indicated that emotional involvement is important in the marketing industry, as it could be used to great effect to sell products. In this respect, the next chapter frames the methodology in relation with the most prominent aforementioned theories and concepts.

3. Methodology

This chapter aims at defining a methodology to investigate Gucci's online communication. What kind of social values does the brand transmit and how is distant suffering included in this spectacle? The research design is based on a thematic analysis, which analysed two online campaigns run by the fashion luxury brand. In the first section of this chapter, I offer an overview of thematic analysis' strengths and weaknesses. The decision to choose for this particular method is then justified, including an explanation why others were deemed inappropriate. Secondly, the sampling strategy is debated together with the data collection process: its rigour and relation to the theoretical framework is highlighted. Moving on, the third section discusses literature in relation to the methodology. The main themes are defined, as well as their operational definitions. Fourthly, the analytical process of data collection is explained, which is based on Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step model for thematic analysis. Finally, the thesis' limitations regarding reliability and validity are addressed.

3.1 Research design

To answer the research question, this paper makes use of a qualitative methodology. Qualitative research has distinct strengths over quantitative methods, which are well compatible with the aim of the inquiry. For starters, a qualitative methodology is often used for exploratory studies used to build new concepts or theories (Brennen, 2017). This inquiry examined the interrelationship between a multitude of known concepts – (cause-related) marketing, witnessing and distant suffering – which has not been done before. Qualitative research understands that reality is socially constructed (Flick, 2007). There might not be one full, objective truth: the same symbols have different meanings in different cultures, thus proving that people's perception of reality is indeed constructed by their social environment. Instead of numbers, qualitative methodologies use texts as empirical material (Flick, 2007). In contrast to qualitative, quantitative research excels at quantifying motivations and behaviour (Brennen, 2017). It assumes that reality can be fixed and measured objectively, whereas qualitative presumes reality is socially constructed and that objective truth is near impossible (Brennen, 2017).

Moreover, qualitative research finds its interest in humans' interpretations of language, behaviour and relationships (Flick, 2007; Brennen, 2017), symbols which lack an objective truth. The empirical, textual material in this case, is Gucci's online activity. Since reality is socially constructed, the fashion brand's communication could be interpreted in a multitude of manners. Social and progressive values are the foundation of Gucci's online campaigns and communication, the brand attempts to market itself as aware of the struggles and subordination of minorities - to seem reformist and politically engaged. This paper attempted to create an exhaustive understanding of

how Gucci's communication is crafted and which kind of values and emotions are most prominently present. Moreover, the brand's online activity was questioned from an ethical, moralistic point of view.

The interrelationship between marketing, moralism and witnessing remains largely unknown to the academic world. However, by themselves, these topics have been the subject of exhaustive scholarship. Conveniently, these topics often make use of a qualitative methodologies: critical Discourse Analysis (Brei & Böhm, 2015), focus groups (Kryiakidou, 2015, 2017) and interviews (Palasinski, Abell, & Levine, 2012) have all been deployed in papers related to the aforementioned topics. Yurchisin et al.'s (2008) even used a quantitative methodology, survey research, to study ethical consumption. While these papers serve as useful examples of, none of their methodologies fully fit the scope of this paper: creating an understanding of Gucci's campaigns and communication. This thesis is not looking at power relationships or motivations for consumption, but for the construction of communication. Therefore, another qualitative method was deployed, textual analysis.

Textual analysis examines language, the 'bread and butter' of all human interaction: our reality is constructed over the language we speak (Brennen, 2017). Language expresses itself through texts, the definition of the word 'text' does therefore not limit itself to the written word. Texts are considered cultural artefacts, implicating they can be both literary and visual (Flick, 2007; Brennen, 2017). Therefore, most forms of human communication are texts, like books, websites, videos, photographs, advertisements or radio programmes. It is important to emphasize that textual analysis does not limit itself to explicit observations (Fürsich, 2009) "Textual analysis is generally a type of qualitative analysis that, beyond the manifest content of media, focuses on the underlying ideological and cultural assumptions of the text. Text is understood as a complex set of discursive strategies that is situated in a special cultural context." (p. 240). Textual analysis is useful in unravelling the implicit meaning of content, which can be heavily context dependent (Neuendorf, 2011; Phillipov, 2013). This does make it a suitable method to deal with advertising: it can demonstrate how marketing constructs narratives into pervasive, convincing communication strategies. Another strength of the method is its flexibility and systematic, iterative nature (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Fürsich, 2009; Brennen, 2017). Therefore, during the study, certain elements could still be adjusted or changed, if this was for the better of the paper. Moreover, the systematic manner in which large quantities of text can be summarized into short, clear conclusions and recurring patterns, could be identified as another strength of the method (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

To further specify the method, a thematic analysis was used to create an understanding of Gucci's communication and the values they transfer. A thematic analysis of text is "a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It organizes the dataset and

describes it in (rich) detail. However, frequently it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). These reoccurring themes eventually show a pattern that can answer the research question. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that thematic analysis can analyse the data on two levels: semantic and latent themes. Semantic themes are concerned with the surface meaning of data, while latent themes look at the underlying ideas, assumption and conceptualizations. Duffy and Ping Kang (2019) therefore argue that thematic analysis is suitable to analyse media texts, as ideological meanings can be discovered. This seems to be one of the most relevant arguments for many scholars who decide to adopt the method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Ponnampalloor & Dawra, 2013; Dekavalla, 2020), and it applies to this thesis, too. The aim of this study was to create an in-depth understanding of Gucci’s communication and ask moral questions about their conduct. These implications often go beyond the surface level, meaning that the latent (implicit) themes were understood as most relevant.

Thematic analysis can be carried out both inductively and deductively (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Inductive thematic analysis creates themes based on the dataset, meaning it is a data driven approach. However, deductive thematic analysis does the opposite. It is driven by the “researcher’s theoretical or analytic interest” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 84), thus the themes are based on previous literature. This paper made use of a combination of both, creating an inductive/deductive thematic analysis. Thus, the main themes were deductively derived from the literature: empowerment, empathy and compassion. Predictions for the subthemes were also made based on theory, but were inductively altered based on the dataset (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which allowed the analysis to be as accurate as possible. Firstly, the deductive method was able to create theoretically sound themes on which stable coding frames could be built. Secondly, the inductive aspect allowed for the subthemes to be in accordance with both the data and the theory. Additionally, inductive thematic analysis could have been useful if results heavily deviated from the expectations, as it is data driven.

3.2 Sampling and data collection

In qualitative research, a multitude of sampling methods are prevalent: snowball, convenience and purposive sampling are all valid options (Flick, 2007; Koerber & McMichael, 2008; Brennen, 2017). According to Emmel (2014), sampling is done for two main reasons. Firstly, for practical motives. Researchers often simply cannot study everything relevant to their study, as they have limited resources such as time and wealth. Therefore, based on a sample, insight relevant to the whole population can be established. Secondly, sampling is often done for strategic reasons too. Scholars are often only interested in social phenomena which demand a detailed, in-depth investigation: “The focus of sampling in qualitative research is towards achieving a depth of

investigation, rather than a breadth of coverage” (Emmel, 2014, p.5). This allows qualitative research to answer questions about social phenomena which need context, which was required for this thesis.

For this paper, a purposive sampling strategy was employed. Purposive sampling is a form of non-probability sampling in which the researcher is able to select the data which he finds most suitable for the paper (Flick, 2007; Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Brennen, 2017). This allowed me as a researcher to select the articles or pictures which depict social responsibility, progression and distant suffering most profoundly, thus strengthening the study. The researcher is able to set certain criteria for the data to be studied, such as date of release or the presence of keywords. This notion relates to Emmel’s (2014) arguments about practicality and suitability of the data. Purposive sampling allows scholars to eliminate irrelevant cases, which is ultimately beneficial for the validity of the paper. However, it is important to have a diverse dataset though: “Taking sampling in qualitative research seriously is a way of managing diversity [...] so that the variation and variety in the phenomenon under study can be captured in the empirical material as far as possible” (Flick, 2007, p. 4). Maximum variation is even coined “the most important guiding principle” in purposive sampling (Koerber & McMichael, 2008), thus emphasizing the significance.

Maximum variation ensured that the data is representative of as many perspectives as possible (Koerber & McMichael, 2008), something which can be achieved by rigorously selecting cases which represent different perceptions. This is accomplished by paying close attention to the data selection process, and by including deviant cases, critical cases and typical cases (Flick, 2007; Etikan et al., 2016). Flick (2007) explains that it is important that heterogeneity of data is important and needs to be guaranteed, in order to compare data meaningfully with each other. Since this thesis studies Gucci’s communication from two different platforms, heterogeneity of topics in the dataset is easily achieved. Scholarship about moralisation explains that social values in marketing are increasingly prevalent (Hopkins, 2015). Social values cover a wide array of ideals, ranging from LGBT+ rights to sustainability, which were all represented on the platforms. Maximum variation was therefore imperative in this research: it guaranteed heterogeneity, made sure the dataset was correctly covered, and that every social issue was represented.

To answer the research and sub-questions, two of Gucci’s website/campaigns were analysed thoroughly: Gucci Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE. Gucci Equilibrium is the fashion brands platform dedicated to corporate responsibility, which aired in 2018. Gucci’s engagement with environmental and social issues are addressed on the platform, together with the willingness to change through the promotion of equality. The CHIME FOR CHANGE platform however, was launched in 2013, to promote gender equality among the globe. Gucci portrays itself as an activist on the platform, as a protagonist in the fight against the oppression of women. It has many

characteristics of a cause-related marketing campaign as described by the conceptual framework. It fights for a good cause, teams up with charities, makes emotional appeals to the witness and ultimately links Gucci to doing good (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2008).

In total the studied dataset consisted out of 40 webpages. A webpage contains a written text, and ideally a photo, too. Concretely, 40 texts and 148 images were studied. The purposive sampling placed an emphasis on the concept of saturation (Etikan et al., 2016), which occurs once no new findings or themes emerge from the dataset. In this case, saturation was reached after 40 webpages, as it was rich in textual and visual details. Figure 1 below visualises how webpages were structured: they all had text, and a varying number of images.

Platform	Total number of texts	Total number of images	Webpages from 2018	Webpages from 2019	Webpages from 2020
CHIME FOR CHANGE	20	103	-	12	8
Gucci Equilibrium	20	45	12	8	-
Total	40	148	12	20	8

Figure 1: the dataset in numbers.

As figure 1 clearly displays, the webpages in the dataset came from three different years, 2018, 2019 and 2020. Previously it was the goal to study data from the same year, but this proved to be not feasible for a duality of reasons. Firstly, while CHIME FOR CHANGE launched in 2013, it does not have articles online ranging back to that year. Presumably because they updated their platform in 2019, when they entered a ‘next phase’ in their campaign (CHIME FOR CHANGE, 2019). Old webpages were removed, or replaced with something new that better relates to their renewed image. Secondly, there were no webpages retrieved from Equilibrium in 2020. The reason for this is simple, Gucci updated the platform in June 2020, like it did with CHIME FOR CHANGE in 2019. They removed their old policy webpages, and replaced them with new or updated pages. Evidently, the corporation knew it would be renewing the platform, therefore no new articles surfaced in 2020. Because it was not feasible to construct a dataset that incorporated maximum variation on the basis of a singular year, CHIME FOR CHANGE’s data came from 2019 and 2020, and Equilibrium’s data from 2018 and 2019. The dataset was crafted, recovered and saved in April 2020, meaning that no webpages were lost and the thesis still stands.

Furthermore, webpages had to meet one more strict criterion to be included in the dataset: the webpages had to have a textual part longer than 200 words. The range between length in words proved to be erratic, which meant that webpages were between 200 and 2000 words long. Because this paper examines a multitude of concepts and theories, the notion of maximum variation was taken seriously. CHIME FOR CHANGE is mainly about fostering empowerment through marketing, relating to scholarship about cause-related marketing and empowerment. Equilibrium promotes social issues in a much broader sense, relating to theory regarding the moralization of marketing and appeal of ethical produce. Koerber and McMichael (2008) emphasize the importance of homogeneity of data, which lead to the selection of long and short articles, as they were often about a different subject and contained different (sub)themes.

In order to improve the validity of the inquiry, the purposive sample was selected in a methodical manner. The CHIME FOR CHANGE website uses tags to merge webpages into categories. Four tags were labelled as most relevant and used to select data: changemakers, gender equality, activism and voices. These four were chosen because of the richness of available data, and because their intent fit the scope of this study: they relate most vividly to the theoretical framework and the main goal of CHIME FOR CHANGE, fostering gender equality. Tags like 'Africa' or 'Democratic Republic of the Congo' were interpreted as less valuable and therefore not used. The Gucci Equilibrium website consisted of three overarching categories: environment, people and new models. This lay-out was unfortunately changed in June 2020, when they updated the platform. During the analysis of data the previous format was still in use however. Therefore, all Equilibrium data was collected from the aforementioned overarching categories, as these too were interpreted as most relevant and rich in data.

3.3 Operationalization

Three sub-questions were made to support and answer the research question. As stated, this thesis makes use of an inductive/deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Therefore, the main themes were immediately derived deductively from the literature in relation to the dataset. Ultimately, the sub-questions relate to the conceptual framework, too: moralisation, cause-related marketing, witnessing and distant suffering. As argued, these theories and concepts illustrate a interrelationship, they strengthen and benefit off each other. Therefore the sub-questions, their concepts and the operational definitions will be discussed in this section of the methodology. It explains how they were made measurable and interpretable. Figure 2 visualises some of the questions, the conceptualizations and interpretations related to the three themes. Ultimately they are all related to Gucci's communication, which is infused with emotion and social justice.

Concept	Variables	Operational definitions
Communication constructed by emotion and social justice	● Empowerment	—○ Does the communication include values of inclusivity
		—○ Does the communication advocate for minorities
		—○ Does the communication promote gender equality
		—○ Does the communication discuss social responsibility
		—○ Does the communication emphasize diversity
		—○ Does the communication affiliate Gucci with doing good
	● Empathy	—○ Does the communication establish an emotional bond between the witness and the Other
		—○ Are empathic emotions evoked by the communication
		—○ Are pain and suffering clearly showcased or implied in the communication
		—○ Is the Other in pain; physically or mentally
	● Compassion	—○ Is there an appeal to take action present in the communication
		—○ Is being compassionate incentivised

Figure 2: conceptualization of ‘Communication constructed by emotion and social justice’.

The first sub-question relates to the broad theme of empowerment. The moralisation of marketing and rise of ethical consumption, as explained by scholars like Hopkins (2015), Caruna (2007) and Bertilsson (2014), is inseparably tied to social, societal issues. However, every social issue present on either CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium can be understood through the concept of empowerment. While Haraway (1990) is sceptical about empowerment, given she argues could actually work as disempowerment, Gucci is not. Gucci has been transparent regarding the use of CHIME FOR CHANGE, it exists promote gender equality and advocate for women’s rights. Additionally, Equilibrium too pays attention to gender equality and women’s rights. Creating a better world for women is evidently (one of) the most important social issues Gucci is willing to stand for. But other social issues, like inclusion in society, diversity in the workplace and even sustainability can be understood through empowerment. Gucci wants to empower those in need, to make them stronger: minorities, refugees or even the environment. It is what both platforms essentially revolve around, creating awareness for a social issue – and then empower those who can make a difference. By affiliating itself with noble causes and social problematics, Gucci markets itself as morally sound – exactly like the conceptual framework predicts.

Moreover, the second sub-question focuses on the concept empathy. The concept itself assumes there is a connection between the witness and another human being (Scott, 2015). Empathy means understanding someone, being able to put yourself in their shoes. (Cause-related) marketing often uses emotions like empathy, to establish an emotional connection between the

spectator and a brand or product (Baghi et al., 2009). It evokes emotions among an audience in order to make profit or moralize a brand or product, thus highlighting one relevant ethical concern. Especially to contemporary consumers who value moral conduct and possess a cosmopolitan mindset (Appiah, 1997), provoking empathy can be of use. That is mainly this second theme can best be understood: the text or visual creates some form of empathy. Additionally, empathy generally assumes there is a distance between the witness and the Other (Ellis, 2009). The strongest emotions of empathy appear once distant suffering is included in marketing; the Other is in pain and the witness feels helpless. While brands might portray the Other as sufferer in order to create awareness, the depiction of its pain could be understood as immoral. It not only exploits the pain of the Other, but also the empathy of the witness. This theme therefore examines the data for signs of empathy, while paying special attention to the suffering of the Other and the portrayal of that spectacle.

The third and last theme, compassion, is related to empathy. The conceptual framework explained that compassion in fact is a subtheme of empathy, but the difference between the two is significant. Compassion means that the witness wants to take action. He is so moved by the abominable situation of the Other that he feels urged to intervene, to help and improve the Other's life. As predicted by literature (O'Sullivan et al., 2008; Smith & Higgins, 2000) cause-related marketing offers a solution: an ethical product to clear the conscience of the spectator, to make him feel like he helped. The third theme therefore takes into consideration if the text – or image – stimulates the witness into compassionate behaviour.

Furthermore, to adequately answer the research and sub-questions, two different coding frames were crafted. As unit of analysis, webpages were chosen. These pages consist of two elements: written texts (the article itself) and visual texts (the image). Thematic analysis can analyse both written and visual texts, but using the same coding frame to do so could reduce the validity of the paper, as both texts serve a different purpose and therefore should be interpreted differently. The reason to believe this, is the inclusion of distant suffering. According to scholars (Ellis, 1999 & 2009; Chouliaraki, 2006; Kyriakidou, 2015) distant suffering is most profoundly transmitted through the (audio-)visual, and not through textual sources like written articles. It would therefore not make sense to analyse the written and visual text through the same lens, therefore two separate coding frames were constructed: one for the articles themselves and one for the images they include. Both of these coding frame can be found as appendices.

3.4 Analysis of data

The data which was retrieved from the Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE platforms was analysed in a short timeframe, two days to be precise. The CHIME FOR CHANGE dataset was

examined on May 8th 2020, and Equilibrium on May 9th 2020. Given the fact that the Equilibrium platform severely changed recently, this is significant. The visual and textual thematic analysis proved itself useful in finding the themes deductively derived from the data, while the inductively crafted subthemes also aligned with the conceptual framework. The fact that different coding frames were made, substantiated into a smooth analysis in which rich data could be investigated.

The framework for thematic analysis provided by Braun and Clarke (2006) is arguably the best-known piece of scholarship regarding the method's uses and limitations from the past 20 years. Therefore, the analysis of data was based on their framework, a six-step-model to examine data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework can be used to analyse both written and visual texts; which is what Ponnampalath and Dawra (2013) proposed and used – albeit slightly different. Because triangulation was used, separate coding frames were used during the analysis. In her study, Döveling (2015) makes use of a textual analysis that studies texts and emoticons. Döveling explains that emoticons represent emotion, they can strengthen the intended message. They are complementary to the text in which they are processed and reinforce the texts' meaning. Emoticons could therefore be interpreted as an image, as a visual depiction of sentiment. I argue that the pictures in this study serve the same purpose as emoticons in Döveling's (2015) work. The written articles themselves would manage on their own if well-constructed, pictures however strengthen the webpage, by adding a visual image to the evoked emotions. Additionally, I believe that this relationship between the text and the image serves the same purpose as that of video and audio, as explained in previous scholarship (Chouliaraki, 2006; Kyriakidou, 2015). Well written texts can be convincing, especially when accompanied by an image that strengthens them. Persuasiveness is not dependent on moving image or sound. This assumption too, was taken into consideration during the analysis.

Braun and Clarke's (2006) model for thematic analysis aligns with Boeije's (2010) idea of textual analysis. To emphasize, Boeije's (2010) method for textual analysis was not used, the similarities are merely highlighted, as they were useful in contextualizing and understanding the thematic analysis. After the dataset was created, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step-model was followed closely. According to them, firstly the researcher has to familiarize himself with the data. The researcher reads entire dataset, observes and interprets the images in order to understand what they are about. It could be understood as pre-analysis and safety net, an extra check to rate the data. This process of familiarization was accompanied by noting down first, initial ideas which could be useful. Secondly, the researcher gave initial codes to the dataset. These first codes are still raw and refer to a basic element of the dataset. This is in line with what Boeije (2010) calls 'open coding', labelling the dataset with early ideas. Thirdly, the initially collated codes were reanalysed. As the analysis started from a deductive perspective, these codes were attributed to one of the

predetermined themes: empowerment, empathy and compassion. Fourthly, the created themes were reviewed: “during this phase, it will become evident that some candidate themes are not really themes” (p. 91). This essentially meant cleaning up gathered data and preliminary themes. The inductive nature of the method came in useful here, as (sub)themes could still be altered slightly. This step more or less aligned with Boeijs (2010), who named the step ‘axial coding’: categorizing open codes into axial codes, essentially cleaning up the dataset. Moving on, the fifth step meant identifying and reviewing the created themes. Clear definitions were generated and themes finalized, which aligns with Boeijs’s (2010) ‘selective coding’. Lastly, as sixth step, the themes were reviewed in relation to the analysis. This is was last check to review if the themes correspond with the data and if they are named concisely.

Below, figure 3 – a screenshot of CHIME FOR CHANGE article 7 - visualizes how webpages were coded. It serves as example and represents how the coding process was executed, albeit with less detail than the original coding schemes. What is important to remember, is that not every textual or visual element is indeed relevant to the paper, as themes were deductively derived from theory. Textual and visual elements made pink relate to the theme empowerment, elements made yellow relate to the theme empathy. The third theme, compassion, was absent on this webpage. Additionally, the subthemes have not been highlighted separately in this figure, as this would make it unclear. However, the coding of both the text and image correlates with the coding frames in appendices 2 and 3. While some textual and visual characteristics align clearly with said coding frames, others need more explanation and interpretation. For instance, the amount of references to Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE itself presents a good example of the subtheme ‘affiliation Gucci with “doing good”’, of the theme empowerment. Essentially, the reference empowers the company itself, by directly linking it to the fight against gender inequality.

A textual element which needs more context and explanation, is “I can’t believe I still have to protest this shit”, which links to the theme empathy. The protagonist speaks out against gender inequality, she expresses her astonishment that gender equality is still a social issue. Statements like those recruit feelings of empathy: she implies that gender equality is a basic human right, but not realistic for half of the world’s population. This notion of oppression triggers empathy, as injustice appeals to the cosmopolitan minds of contemporary consumers (Appiah, 1997).

IGNITING CONVERSATIONS

25 FOR 25 SERIES: MP5

PUBLICATION

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WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



25 for 25 is an original content series by Gucci and CHIME FOR CHANGE to mark the historic milestone of Beijing +25 in March, as well as Women's History Month. The series will highlight activists, CHIME Advisory Board members, partners and supporters who represent the progress made on gender equality over the past 25 years, as well as the emerging next generation continuing this critical work.

CHIME is honored to feature MP5, the Italian visual artist behind the creative identity of CHIME, as one of 25 gender equality activists and leaders working towards global gender equality. MP5 not only focuses on topics related to gender issues and queer activism but uses creativity and art to connect universally and support a shared vision of a gender-equal future for all. Discover their reflections on the connection between art and activism below.

What are your hopes and expectations for gender equality in the next 25 years?

I always think of that sensational banner at a protest that says "I can't believe I still have to protest this shit". Well I hope in the next 25 years an issue like gender equality won't even exist anymore.

What does gender equality mean to you?

It is one of the most basic civil rights and it's absurd that is something not granted yet.

What keeps you energized and committed as a leader for gender equality?

Being an artist gave me the chance to speak with a louder voice. At the same time as a human being having the chance to be an activist through my work is my chance to act for a better world.

What advice would you give younger generations on how to advocate / work for gender equality as they get older?

Every single situation and context matters. Fighting for rights whenever there's a chance is what not only the younger generations but all of us must commit to make our existences valuable in terms of evolution.

Who do you look to as an example / role model in the fight for gender equality?

Every single person that deals with gender issues with strength and dignity is my hero.

Figure 3: Example of the coding procedure.

The visual elements on this webpage emphasize both empowerment and empathy, too. Firstly, empowerment is highlighted through the visuals in the background, which depict humans of all sizes and genders. Gender equality is important to the platform, just like inclusivity. A positive attitude towards social inclusivity is transmitted through the depiction of these different humans. Secondly, the protagonist poses with her arms crossed, wears shades and looks fearlessly into the camera. Her pose indicates strength and bravery, which ultimately could be attributed to both aforementioned themes. Empowerment, because she depicts strength and willingness to fight for her ideals, which is intended to empower others. The second theme, empathy, benefits from the notion of multimodality on this webpage. Without the text, this image would not necessarily cause for empathy. The way she continues to engage in activist behaviour to foster gender equality, it visualizes her ambitions and battle. Ultimately, this attitude affects people in an emotional manner, as they feel touched by her words and work.

Additionally, empowerment and empathy are themes which tend to overlap and strengthen each other. For example, “It is one of the most basic civil rights and it’s absurd that is something not granted yet” contains both themes. The sentence suggests that change and empowerment are necessary, because not everybody is equal – it implies that women are being oppressed. Then, the sheer fact that this is still happening today, accompanied by the anger in her wording, fosters empathy with the protagonist.

3.5 Validity and reliability

Qualitative research in general is often criticized as subjective, since the results can be open to interpretation (Brennen, 2017). Qualitative research is iterative in its nature (Brennen, 2017). This essentially means that elements of the research can still be changed throughout the course of the study. This can be convenient while conducting the study, but it also exemplifies the criticism of subjectivity: qualitative researchers can just change something whenever they want. Additionally, thematic analysis is not free from concerns either. For example, Phillipov (2013) argues that researchers can “read off” (p. 212) meanings in text which are not present, because they are focused on finding results. Thematic analysis – and qualitative research in general – are interpretative methods, thus researchers can make mistakes. However, there are more pitfalls regarding thematic analysis and qualitative methods which could hurt this paper. Therefore, this section presents some common heard concerns and the measures taken to guarantee reliability and validity.

Firstly, measuring and examining themes in a thematic analysis can be challenging. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain that themes could be weak and unconvincing, or that researchers fail to measure anything at all. Just presenting themes does not suffice as thematic analysis. Data needs to

be put into context and examples need to strengthen the argumentation, which can validate the claims and thematic analysis. A scholar needs to be able to understand and explain the observed patterns in the data, otherwise it defeats the purpose of using qualitative methods in the first place. Clarke and Braun (2006) explain that by coding themes, parts of the context are lost. It is therefore instrumental to rebuild this context in the results section, as findings are more relevant in their true framework.

Secondly, Phillipov (2013) argues that textual analyses ultimately represent the opinions and values of the researcher, instead of the values which actually emerge from the data. "One of the fundamental criticisms of text-based approaches, then, is that they can lead to meanings being "read off" texts in ways that reflect the values and assumptions of the researcher, rather than those of the audience." (p. 212). Phillipov's point of critique is highly relevant, scholars should not tunnel vision on the presence of their own values and assumptions in the dataset. Doing research does not always mean finding what was anticipated, or what was searched for. Objectivity in that regard and lack of research bias were of vital importance in this paper, as it could otherwise taint the conclusion, reliability and validity. However, I would argue that a regular consumer and a researcher read the same text differently. Regular consumers do not take the time to discover the implicit meaning of texts, nor do they read them critically from a moral/ethical point of view based on an elaborate theoretical framework. The way a researcher reads text therefore is inherently different than how a regular consumer reads text; they go beyond the obvious.

Because of the concerns voiced by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Phillipov (2013), this thesis made use of extensive trial coding. Before the real dataset was analysed – or even composed – a series of webpages which were not included in the dataset were examined, for the trial coding (Schreier, 2013). Therefore, a threesome of webpages of both CHIME FOR CHANGE and Gucci Equilibrium was investigated before the actual dataset was. This eventually resulted in two preliminary, relatively stable coding frames – which were changed during the coding process. These coding frames were review by my peers, which Schreier (2013) recommends. They provided feedback on the line of reasoning and clearness and they shared their insights in light of Phillipov's (2013) fear of results being "read off" (p. 212) to confirm bias. Special attention was paid to the explanation of examples which illustrate the themes, as this helped increase the validity and reliability of thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

Thirdly, subjectivity is often coined as a threat to qualitative research, because of the notion that 'anything goes' (Fürsich, 2009; Brennen, 2017). Notable scholars like Norman Fairclough (2003) have acknowledged this worry, but also deflected it by arguing that textual analysis is inherently subjective and that there is no objective analysis of textual material possible. A researcher consciously decides to ask one question over another. Fairclough argues that this does not make for

improper conduct or research though: qualitative research is simply interpretative and not objective in its nature. Just like Phillipov (2013) addressed, context is highly important when it comes to textual analysis. Scholars have certain values and opinions too, these cannot interfere with research though. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that for a researcher, certain conclusions and themes make more sense than for others, as the research has been immersed in the data for a long time. The researcher makes connections between topics which someone who is not familiar with the dataset does not. Therefore, since interpretation of data is highly personal, the responsibility to be honest and conduct fair research lies with me. During this paper I have tried to be honest and transparent as possible. I did this by explaining everything elaborately, because of my intrinsic motivation to contribute to the academic world. Moreover, I asked my peers for feedback, to make sure my line of reasoning during the thesis was accurate and understandable to combat Phillipov's and Braun and Clarke's concerns.

Lastly, it is important to take the notion of ethical conduct into consideration. As the paper does not deal with people or respondents directly, worries regarding consent and proper conduct with respondents are irrelevant. However, fair and honest conduct is of great importance to any inquiry. Explaining findings as they truly are is leading throughout this paper, as unfounded claims and poor generalizations could potentially be harmful (Flick, 2007). Flick (2007) also warns against researcher bias, which could hurt the reliability of the study and its findings. In light of reliability and validity I would like to address the role of my personal opinion regarding this topic, to be transparent regarding prejudice. As stated before, I do value sustainability and social issues in general and I am interested in the fashion industry. Making sure the world is a better place for future generations is an obligation, so it would be supportive of NGO's to help – in an ethical manner though. Personally, I think my opinion has not clouded my judgement during this thesis. This paper has been critical, not biased, and open to criticism from others.

3.6 The research design in brief

This chapter proposes an investigation into the implicit meaning behind Gucci's online communication. The research design aims at showcasing the presence of social, progressive values in Gucci's campaigns – Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE – in order to influence consumers' perception of the fashion brand. Gucci does not want to be seen merely as 'just' a luxury brand, but rather as an activist fighting for social justice with morally sound values. This stance is highly political, but might be a requirement in contemporary marketing: proper ethical conduct and social responsibility are demanded by consumers. Therefore, first goal of this study is to prove the presence of social values in Gucci's communication. The second goal is to highlight the

overabundance of emotion in the campaigns. Empathy and compassion are weaved through the online communication, which – as research has proven – are effective tools to engage consumers.

Furthermore, the methodology firstly explained why qualitative research was chosen, more specifically, why thematic analysis was preferred. Secondly, the sampling procedure shed light on the corpus and how the dataset was systemically decided upon and what the boundaries were. Thirdly, the operationalization merged the methodology section with the theoretical framework: as an inductive/deductive approach was taken, context and operational definitions of concepts were elaborated on. In section four, the data analysis, the concrete steps taken to analyse the dataset were elaborated upon. And finally, section five considered the potential problems and limitations to this paper. Several measures to guarantee reliability and validity were implemented and clarified.

4. Results

The following section presents the most relevant results based on the deployed thematic analysis. In accordance with the methodology, three different themes were distinguished, around which this chapter is structured. Therefore, the first section demonstrates how the first theme, empowerment, can be observed throughout both campaigns; how they are different, but also how they are similar. Moreover, I reveal how the second theme, empathy, is used on both platforms – and through which dimensions it can be observed. Then, I provide an explanation how the content about the third theme, compassion, is structured and how it is different from empathy. Last, the most important findings from the section are highlighted once more.

4.1 Empowering those in need

The theme ‘empowerment’ correlates to the first sub-question, *in what campaigns can content about empowerment be found?* The theme was observed in nearly the entire dataset, making no distinction between Gucci Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE. The theme consists out of a threesome of categories under which the data could be classified, which appeared to be the same in both coding frames. This enables me to take multimodality into account; how do the written and visual data relate to each other? However, the two coding frames did have different subcategories though, which means that the difference between text and image is highlighted too. What is important to note, is that this theme contains a very broad array of different (sub)concepts, meaning it is much more comprehensive than the other themes.

Social activist

The first category relates to the social activist Gucci appears to be. Throughout both platforms Gucci attempts to emphasize its moral standards. By including these progressive and empowering values in their communication, Gucci makes an appeal to contemporary consumers, who values proper, ethical conduct and social justice (Caruana, 2007; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2007; Nielsen & McGregor, 2013). Gucci’s social activism seems to mainly focus on women, which might not be surprising considering the existence of CHIME FOR CHANGE, a platform whose sole purpose is fostering gender equality. But it is not just CHIME FOR CHANGE, gender equality and female empowerment is one of the main patterns throughout the Gucci Equilibrium website too: a platform meant for corporate social responsibility in general, a concept much broader than just gender equality. Subthemes such as female solidarity and female empowerment were present throughout both campaigns in both text and visuals: empowering women, striving for full gender equality and fighting for women’s rights in the first, second and third world were commonly seen. This is exemplified by how women are visually depicted on the platform; they are portrayed as

strong, and often together. The fact that women are rarely depicted alone creates a sense of unity, which ultimately leads to empowerment: women from all over the world, of all sizes and ages are working together for the same goal, complete gender equality in every nation, which is clearly depicted in figures 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3.



Figure 4.1: Equilibrium (article 12) Figure 4.2: CHIME (article 1) Figure 4.3: CHIME (article 2)

The visual portrayal of subtheme 'female empowerment' is depicted in figure 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 too, however, there are differences in the manner in which Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE do this. CHIME FOR CHANGE is a campaign which solely focuses on female empowerment and gender equality, which leads to a more explicit, apparent depiction of the phenomenon. Figure 4.2 plainly uses the word empowerment, while in figure 4.3 women are flexing their biceps; a reference to masculinity. It implies that women are equally strong as men. Equilibrium however, is visually less outspoken than CHIME FOR CHANGE about gender equality, meaning that the context and multimodality is relevant. Figure 4.1 depicts Indian women working to upcycle Sari's , traditional Indian clothing. The whole process is ran by women, which has an empowering undertone: women from any country can be successful. Textually, empowerment was often fairly explicitly mentioned, not just in the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign, but on Gucci Equilibrium too. CHIME FOR CHANGE actually ran a series of interviews with prominent female activists, in which they discussed gender equality; the woman in figure 4.2 being one of them.

"It takes a unique partnership to keep the needs of the female artisans in balance with the requirements of the luxury fashion industry. We call that Gucci Equilibrium."

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 12)

“Regardless of their personal situation, every employee who has been employed at Kering for at least 12 months is entitled to fourteen weeks fully paid maternity and adoption leave, and five days fully paid paternity or partner leave.”

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 15)

Gucci’s definition of Equilibrium is vastly different from the regular description of that same concept. To the brand, Equilibrium does not solely mean balance, it seems to mean gender equality; making sure men and women have the same basic rights. This includes the explicit explanation of maternity and paternity leave for both males and females. Female employees are entitled to fourteen weeks of paid maternity leave, meant to provide them with financial stability during and after their pregnancy – to empower and encourage them during a significant stage of their life. This policy is not exclusive to Gucci, but to the entire Kering group, the brands mother company.

Other social values, such as diversity and inclusivity, were prominently present in the dataset too – just not as protuberant as female empowerment and gender equality. Interestingly enough, figure 4.2 depicts these two subcategories: inclusivity and diversity, which were present throughout both platforms. Inclusivity was most often related to minorities: the LGBT+ community, ethnic minorities, people of colour, refugees and people with disabilities – like the woman in figure 4.2. Both platforms serve as advocates for minorities; they attempt to empower them and spread awareness about their struggles. Figures 5.1 and 5.2 demonstrate the manner in which inclusivity and diversity were visually portrayed on both websites, which was generally flashier than how these values were depicted in the written language. Figure 5.1 illustrates how Gucci includes diversity in its communication: not solely white models, but models of colour get the same opportunity. Figure 5.1 is no anomaly though, women of colour are well represented in both campaigns. Regarding inclusivity, figure 5.2 includes a multitude of personas from pop-culture with one commonality: they are all LGBT+ friendly, either homosexual or an advocate for inclusivity. This not only empowers LGBT+ minorities, it also directly associates Gucci with activism and LGBT+ friendly values.



Figure 5.1: Equilibrium (article 17)



Figure 5.2: CHIME (article 13)

Textually, the progressive values inclusivity and diversity were depicted in the same manner as visually, with one slight difference: skin colour was mildly disregarded. The imagery in the dataset often portrayed people – most often women – of colour, but textually this was less observable. Taking both the text and photo into account, one could argue that both platforms are highly diverse and that most minorities are well-represented, something Gucci is aware of and spends resources on:

“Our generation is the most diverse generation yet. With that diversity, we are the most intersectional. The more intersectional identities that you occupy, the more there is a connective tissue between you and your peers.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 17)

The quote above for example, is from an article about the CHIME FOR CHANGE podcast, which is ran by young women of colour who identify as activists: this webpage in particular cuts right at the intersection of inclusivity and diversity. In contrary to diversity, inclusivity was noticeable through both visual and textual elements. Figure 5.2 serves as example for visual inclusivity, an example which emphasizes the LGBT+ community. Additionally, figure 4.2 also accurately depicts inclusivity, inclusivity of people with disabilities. Textually, inclusivity was often related to the aforementioned LGBT+ community, as expected. But another group which Gucci – especially through CHIME FOR CHANGE – tried to appeal to, is the youth. The platform seems to highly value the inclusion of young activists, their opinions seem to matter as much as those of their older peers. The young generation of activists is understood as the future of social change, meaning that they are the main audience the platform wishes to inspire.

June 2020

“Building on its six-year legacy of funding more than 425 non-profit projects with 156 partners in 89 countries, directly benefiting more than 570,000 girls and women globally and reaching more than 3 million family and community members, CHIME FOR CHANGE is proud to support projects with global partners working to empower the next generation of leaders and help realize a gender-equal world.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 4)

The quotation above is just one of many in which CHIME FOR CHANGE emphasizes the importance of activism among younger generations. Those who are supposed to inspire the youthful social advocates, are the older generations of activists. CHIME FOR CHANGE underlines the importance of cooperation between young and old, in order to create a just world for everybody. The platform acts as an inclusive, diverse environment for everybody who desires social change. Inclusivity and diversity come together to fight for a common goal: empowering women and fighting for gender equality, with empowering minorities as a secondary objective.

Affiliating Gucci with doing good

Another category which can be seen clearly in the bit above, is the self-promotion of the Italian brand: affiliating Gucci with doing good. The text clearly emphasizes that CHIME FOR CHANGE is responsible for facilitating activism; which implies that Gucci is progressive and strives to effectuate social and societal change. Webpages from both CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium often include at least one reference towards Gucci. The reader is often reminded that Gucci is helping the world. Gucci markets itself as morally sound, giving the Italian brand an edge over competitors: their products can be interpreted as ethical products, something which is proven to sell (Yurchisin et al., 2009). It is textbook cause-related marketing, “doing well by doing good” (Hopkins, 2015), which Gucci is willing to admit:

“It shows that pursuing values actually creates financial value, generating positive benefits not only for the business and for the planet, but also for society and our stakeholders. It’s what we call a Culture of Purpose.”

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 9)

While the text does not simply read cause-related marketing, it markets the same concept as “A Culture of Purpose”, which implies that Gucci is not just trying to generate as much revenue as they can: no, they want to achieve social change. Though this was most vividly present through the written word, it was visually evident too. The most remarkable examples are figure 6.1 and 6.2.



Figure 6.1: CHIME (article 6)



Figure 6.2: Equilibrium (article 6)

Figure 6.1 portrays a female model wearing a CHIME FOR CHANGE t-shirt on the catwalk, an event which often draws attention. The back of the t-shirt reads "My Body My Choice", meant to empower women and to establish the brand Gucci as an activist, as it refers to a pro-choice stance in the debate about abortion. Secondly, figure 6.2 simply announces that Gucci will no longer make use of fur. Harvesting fur often causes inhumane living circumstances for animals: locked up in small cages, just for their coat. By announcing that Gucci will no longer make use of fur, they want to be seen as progressive. They, as luxury brand, will no longer be using a material that could be considered a staple in their fashion collection and history.

Corporate social responsibility

The last category within this theme, is corporate social responsibility. This category can be understood as the business decisions Gucci makes to let society benefit. This does not focus on female empowerment or gender equality, but rather on the environment, sustainability, animal welfare, and improving the supply chain. This category was most prevalent on the Equilibrium website, as it is a visualization of Gucci's corporate social responsibility strategy. This seems to be the main distinction between CHIME FOR CHANGE and Gucci Equilibrium. CHIME FOR CHANGE focuses on one rather specific topic, female empowerment and gender equality; whereas Gucci Equilibrium pays attention to nearly every social and societal issue on which the Italian brand has any form of influence.

The most prevalent subjects when it comes to corporate social responsibility are sustainability and caring for the environment. Both topics were observed in abundance throughout the Equilibrium dataset. This was the case for both the visual and textual part of the webpages. The main difference between both, was that visually the webpages were generally much less outspoken than their textual counterparts. However, this is no abnormality: throughout the dataset Gucci

Equilibrium often needs more context than CHIME FOR CHANGE, it benefits greatly from multimodality. This could be attributed to the fact that it covers a wider variety of issues ranging from environment to empowerment, instead of mainly focusing on gender equality. However, figure 7.2 is an exception to this unwritten rule, while figure 7.1 illustrates the argument.



Figure 7.1: Equilibrium (article 9)

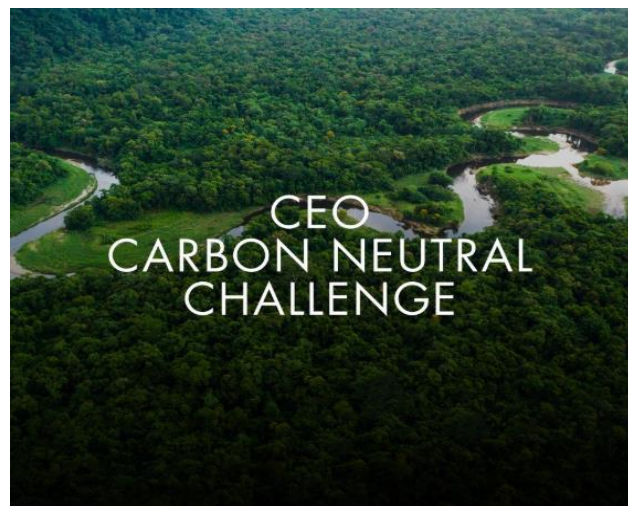


Figure 7.2: Equilibrium (article 10)

Webpages about sustainability are often about sustainably crafted materials or reducing the company's carbon footprint. These pages are accompanied by images which by themselves are meaningless, but aesthetically they are pleasing. Figure 7.1 is an example of this phenomenon, as it was part of a webpage about Gucci's environmental impact. By itself, it just depicts cranes, a family of long-necked birds common in Asia. But taking the latent meaning of cranes into consideration, the interrelationship between text and image seems appropriate. In multiple Asian cultures cranes have a symbolic meaning, along the lines of eternal youth or immortality. In Gucci's framework of sustainability this makes sense: cranes mean longevity, which Gucci wishes to for the planet. The meaning behind figure 7.2 is much more explicit than other images in the Equilibrium dataset. It showcases that Gucci will attempt to go carbon neutral in the near future, and it challenges other businesses to do the same.

"The CEO Carbon Neutral Challenge underlines the call for companies to take urgent action and implement a 360° climate strategy to create positive outcomes in the immediate."

- Equilibrium (article 10)

The text is an open letter from Gucci's CEO Marco Bizzarri to CEO's across all sectors, in which he calls for action: the environment must be saved. By writing this, the Italian brand seems like an advocate for sustainability and environmental friendly policies, thus signifying progressiveness and

the willingness to (foster) change. Moreover, the welfare of animals and supply chain are remarkable subcategories. Here too, the images require context, while the textual data is fairly explicit. Figure 7.2 is an omission though: the picture transmits the exact same meaning as the text it was accompanied with, meaning it is not context-dependent. The Italian brand does seem aware of the aforementioned problems with the long supply chain which haunts the fashion industry (Battaglia et al., 2014).

“Gucci prioritizes the well-being of its employees and partners, and is dedicated to enhancing the lives of all those involved in making its products through the responsible and innovative management of its supply chain.”

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 13)

The meaning of the article represents the transparency Gucci expects from itself, it acknowledges the issues regarding supply chains in fashion. However, it does also call everyone related to the brand family, even subcontractors. The text implies that if anything goes wrong, the entire Gucci brand is accountable for a mistake deep down in the supply chain; meaning the Italian brand claims responsibility for any possible wrongdoing related to its name. Just like webpages about the supply chain, content about animal welfare is dependent on the interrelationship between text and image. Written text about animal welfare is clear; rules regarding the health and living conditions of animals are established, which is complemented by innovative ideas to gather animal-based materials. However, the visuals on the webpages are again context dependent, as is often the case on the Equilibrium platform.

4.2 Empathy as objective

The second biggest theme, ‘empathy’, relates to the following sub-question: *How and through which dimensions does Gucci define empathy?* The theme was prominently present throughout both datasets, in two different manners. Firstly, empathic emotions are provoked with the audience by the author. Imagery or textual material creates a sense of empathy among the spectator by exposing them to heavy sadness or joy, emotions which affect the witness. Secondly, the article illustrates empathic emotions from the writer, which incidentally can create a sense of empathy among the witness. Both these dimensions were visible in the images and the text, multimodality often seemed to increase the empathic emotions felt by the spectator.

Provoking empathy

The first dimension through which Gucci defines empathy, is provoking the emotion among its readers/witnesses. Empathy relates to the shared emotions between the spectator and the Other (Ellis, 2009; Scott, 2015). It occurs when the witness recognizes something of his/herself in the Other, which leads to an emotional response. Empathy is most easily observed in difficult situations: the Other is in pain, or in discomfort at the very least. However, empathy has another dimension: it could also befall if the Other is joyful or ambitious: human emotions which anyone can identify with. Throughout the CHIME FOR CHANGE and Gucci Equilibrium campaigns, empathy was provoked with both emotions of joy and sadness. However, visually CHIME FOR CHANGE provoked empathy much more vividly than Equilibrium – which, again, depends much more on context and multimodality. This is illustrated in figures 8.1 and 8.2.



Figure 8.1: Equilibrium (article 8)



Figure 8.2: CHIME (article 19)

Without context, figure 8.1 simply depicts women with a headscarf, seeming to work on sewing clothing. However, with context to explain that they are refugees. The term ‘refugee’ often creates a sense of empathy itself, because of the connotations attached to the work. Refugees are the victim of war or other humanitarian crises, like famine. The text confirms the readers’ suspicion, it explains that these refugees were forcibly displaced from their country. Once the context is known, empathy occurs in two instances. Firstly, the witness starts to feel empathy for the women because they are victims of horrific events. Secondly, they are labelled as victims of crisis, but despite everything they hold their head up high. They seem to work, and not give up. Their positive attitude evokes empathic emotions in the same manner as horrific events could, albeit slightly different empathic emotions: applause instead of sorrow. Figure 8.2 however, does not need context to evoke empathic emotions. The mother looks lost in her eyes, emotionally broken, while carrying a

young child. This child does not understand the severity of the situation they are in, hence the peace symbol he makes with his fingers. The desperation the mother emits in combination with the innocence of a child, causes for empathy and feeling of privilege.

Textually however, both Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE use certain words to evoke empathic emotions among the audience. The main difference between both campaigns, is the type of topic in which empathy is involved. Empathic elements are visible throughout both campaigns, and they often seem to relate to gender equality or the mistreatment of minorities. As Equilibrium acts as Gucci's CSR-strategy, it is much more nuanced than CHIME FOR CHANGE and it addresses different topics.

"These include eliminating workplace discrimination, making sure business operations do not contribute to discrimination against customers, suppliers or members of the public, and working with business partners to address discriminatory practices up and down the supply chain."

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 17)

The Free Yezidi Foundation (FYF) focuses on trauma rehabilitation for Yezidi women and girls, including those who escaped from horrific sexual violence.

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 3)

The first citation, from CHIME FOR CHANGE, appeals to the spectators' empathic emotions much clearer: traumatized, sexually assaulted women cause for innate discomfort and sadness among the audience. The difference between both citations is remarkable: both make an appeal to the emotions of the witness, but Equilibrium packages the message much more subtle. It vows to eliminate discrimination in the workplace and against customers, something which aligns well with the company's stance on diversity and equality. It does this without emphasizing human pain and suffering, but it portrays ambition and willingness to change, sentiment which too can cause emotion. This particular quote relates to the brand's progressive attitude towards social change, which seems to be a pattern amidst both campaigns. Interestingly enough, values of progression and empowerment often appeal to empathic emotions: they promise to change the world, which causes for empathic and emotional responses, as they affect many people – generally people who are being oppressed. Therefore, theme one, empowerment, and theme two, empathy go hand in hand: progression and empowerment cause empathy.

Additionally, CHIME FOR CHANGE sometimes makes use of rather graphic imagery to provoke emotion, illustrated below in figures 9.1 and 9.2. Figure 9.1 below exhibits people whose faces have melted because of a gruesome act of violence. As a witness the viewer might understand

that these people have faced a great deal of agony, causing an empathic reaction. Furthermore, the image also explains what happened – which makes this case interesting. They were the victim of an acid attack. This knowledge results in emotion: the sheer image of being attacked with acid causes chills.

Moreover, Figure 9.2 depicts the aftermath of bombings in Kurdish communities, a minority in the Middle East without a country of their own. They have been oppressed for ages, causing a great deal of suffering. The pain and suffering of refugees is a returning narrative throughout the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign, as the vividness of pain – and therefore empathy – is evidently present. What is remarkable though, is that webpages about refugees are often both visually and textually sentimental: an appeal to the emotion of the witness is done through both image and written language:

“The first victims are children, Sara and Muhammed aged 8 and 10 are siblings, they are playing in the street when the bomb hits, he dies and she loses a leg. Another family of 5, Christians, sees all its member wounded, except for the mother who dies on the spot.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 19)

The citation above emphasizes the pain of refugees - and more specifically children - victimized by war. When the suffering of refugees is the main topic of a webpage, children are often paid special attention to. They are portrayed as helpless; innocent, young humans, struck by injustice and agony. As they are framed as helpless and, as the ‘ultimate’ victim, the suffering of kids provokes empathy quicker and more severely.



Figure 9.1: CHIME (article 12)



Figure 9.2: CHIME (article 19)

Showing empathy

The second dimension about empathy explains how the protagonist or author shows signs of empathy towards the Other. While this happened less frequently than simply provoking empathy through description, it was evidently present. It can incentivise empathy among the audience, as the protagonist is empathic too: ‘if he shows signs of empathy, so should I’. This category was not observable through images – unless the context was known. The category seems absent in the Gucci Equilibrium dataset, but was evident in multiple webpages from CHIME FOR CHANGE.

“It was an issue that I had never been aware of. It moved and shocked me.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 9)

“He was shrouded in a heaviness that came from his familial drama the night before.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 15)

Both citations came from vastly different articles. The first one – article 9 – tells a story about the lack of access to basic sanitary products during young African girls’ menstrual cycle. It involves a protagonist who is touched by this situation, and feels empathy with these young women. Empathy is illustrated and implied towards the other: there is a sense of disbelief, a feeling of injustice. The protagonist is a white, Caucasian woman: someone who CHIME FOR CHANGE’s audience can identify with easily, and who could be part of the audience. Because her emotions can be fully understood by the witness, he or she can feel the same sense of empathy as illustrated. The second citation – from article 15 – is from an article about a girl who wants to meet the man she met online. She too could be part of CHIME FOR CHANGE’s audience, making it easy to relate to her. This man she met becomes the victim of a family drama, thus shrouding her in empathy. However, the difference between both quotations is the inclusion of the Other. Article 9 exemplifies clear signs of empathic emotions towards the Other, whereas the man in article 15 is an acquaintance, not a stranger.

4.3 Fostering social action

The third theme, ‘compassion’, is defined as a sub-concept of empathy. However, it is very different than empathy, as it goes a step further: it calls for action. This third theme relates to the sub-question: *how is content about compassion structured?* The theme is structured similarly to the second theme, since content about compassion can be structured in two ways. Firstly, the author can make an appeal to the witness to take action. And secondly, the author expresses that it takes action itself, which might be an extra incentive for the spectator to become compassionate. This

theme is present in both campaigns, but it is much smaller than the previous two themes. Additionally, it is mostly transmitted through written text, not through visuals. What is important to note, is that empathy and compassion go hand in hand: if compassion is present, so is empathy. Before one can be compassionate, one first has to be empathic: it is the superlative of empathy. Visually, compassion was absent, with the exception of one image: it exhibited victims of acid attacks in India holding a sign, asking witnesses to take action against acid attacks (figure 9.1). But, textually compassion was much more interesting and profound. Content which includes compassion is structured in either of two manners: it provokes social action or it displays social action.

Provoking social action

The first way in which compassionate content is structured, is by provoking social action: the company asks the witness to take action, to be compassionate with the Other. This was often done by asking for donations:

“To learn more about this project and to donate directly, please visit GlobalGiving.org/CHIME.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 4)

“Help us support FYF’s vital work to empower women to recover from trauma and lead the fight for gender equality. Make a contribution via our strategic partner GlobalGiving.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 3)

This category is rather short, it is present throughout the CHIME FOR CHANGE platform, but not on Gucci Equilibrium. This has to do with the different scope of both platforms: Equilibrium is merely a vehicle to announce progressive businesses decisions, while CHIME FOR CHANGE intends to help charities and minorities. Part of this help is raising awareness and fostering social change. Another important aspect of the campaign is motivating spectators to be compassionate and supporting their cause.

Showcasing social action

The second category related to compassion is more prevalent than the previous one, it is visible on both platforms. But again, strictly textual. Additionally, there is a difference in the portrayal of compassion between the two platforms. Compassion in CHIME FOR CHANGE is often related to the protagonist: she takes action against injustice or social issues.

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“Women’s Voices Now (WVN), the organization for which I serve as executive director, seeks to affect positive social change by promoting, producing, and sharing films that move audiences from empathy to action.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 20)

“I realised that my purpose is to give back by helping others see their own potential and everything they can accomplish.”

- CHIME FOR CHANGE (article 8)

CHIME FOR CHANGE often emphasizes the journey of the author; her backstory and motivations to be compassionate are emphasized. Generally the protagonist is a she, a woman who used to live a ‘normal’ life like everyone else. But then, she sees injustice and feels the need to take action and to be compassionate with the Other. She acts as an example for everybody: if someone just like her can make a difference, then so can you, and so should you. Article 8 is perhaps the most vivid example of this phenomenon. The main character – a now grown up, adopted woman – goes back to her roots, to Africa to help children born in war. She is a regular woman, a professional dancer, but decides it is up to her to give back – to be compassionate. It is the exact behaviour which Gucci hopes to foster.

Equilibrium tackles compassion differently: it likes to emphasize how compassionate Gucci is, as a brand. The evidence of compassion behaviour is in their policies, in their progressive social responsibility policy. They are not just empathic with minorities, they are progressive, empowering and try to make a difference. Compassion is therefore differently observed than in CHIME FOR CHANGE. Equilibrium links compassion clearly to Gucci, instead of to individuals or charities. This citation from article 19 might perhaps be the most interesting evidence to support this claim:

“In 2019 Gucci debuted the next chapter of its CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign under the banner “To Gather Together,” a call for the global community to unite in support of gender equality.”

- Gucci Equilibrium (article 19)

The CHIME FOR CHANGE platform links Gucci to doing good, by linking CHIME FOR CHANGE to doing good. Though it is clear that the platform is ran by the Italian brand, its relationship throughout the dataset is often implied, not explicitly mentioned. Equilibrium however, refers to Gucci as a compassionate, progressive factor. This again is evidence that Equilibrium serves as

vehicle to show off liberal policies, which explicitly link Gucci to doing good and being morally aware.

4.4 Overview of the results

The thematic analysis ultimately revealed three themes: empowerment, empathy and compassion. Overall, these patterns were visible on both the Gucci Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE campaigns. The first theme, empowerment, revolved mainly about Gucci's dedication to combat gender inequality. The company depicts itself as social activist, fighting for women's rights, LGBT+ and ethnic minorities, and wants to foster activism among younger generations. The second theme, empathy, was evidently present throughout a large share of Gucci's online communication. An appeal to emotions of empathy is constantly made, explicitly or implicitly. The third theme, compassion, was the least present of the three. However, while compassion originally is a subtheme of empathy, it was often much clearer present. Gucci regularly asks their readers to be compassionate, or to donate to a noble cause.

Additionally, these themes have interrelationships among them, with as most important note, is that every webpage of either platform at least includes some form of empowerment or progressiveness. Witnesses can be sensitive for progression; if we feel excluded we want to be included, so if Gucci advocates for equality we feel touched. What is important to understand, is that everything can potentially cause empathy, it is a phenomenon which is highly personal. But what is evident, is that the brand Gucci uses universal social issues, to provoke feelings of empathy – and ideally compassion. The inclusion of themes which cause empathy raises concerns about ethical conduct. People fighting the system and people in mental or physical pain are given a stage, their anguish is depicted. But do they benefit from starring in Gucci's communication? Or is it merely Gucci? Is this spectacle morally acceptable? Questions like those arise, but what is for certain, is that despite the different types of articles on both platforms social, progressive values is what they are funded upon.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In the following section the last two parts from the paper are debated: the conclusion and discussion. Firstly, the conclusion concisely answers the research question. Additionally, the section shortly reflects upon the chosen theoretical and methodological approach. Secondly, the discussion explains the scientific and societal implications of the research findings. Moreover, it clarifies if the outcomes are in line with the theoretical framework, or if they diverge from scholarship. And lastly, the limitations and recommendations for further research are voiced.

5.1 Main findings

This qualitative paper studied Gucci's online communication in order to unravel how it is structured. The findings from all three sub-questions contributed to the final answer to the research question: *'how does Gucci construct and communicate 'achieving change'?* The paper's discoveries relate to the interrelationship between morality, cause-related marketing and (distant) suffering. Gucci acts as an advocate for social progression and societal change in its online communication. The brand thrives on taking the moral high ground. Gucci wants ethically sound conduct and progressiveness to be synonymous to its name, as this gives them an edge over their competitors. This is achieved by establishing the company as an advocate for contemporary moral issues: ranging from sustainability to LGBT+ rights. The narrative through which these social and societal matters are addressed could be classified as feminist. Topics such as gender (in)equality, female empowerment and female subordination are present in abundance throughout both Gucci Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE. This is proven by the fact that empowerment was the most frequent theme in the dataset. Other subjects - such as inclusivity, sustainability or diversity - are all explained with mild feminist undertones too. Furthermore, empathic and compassionate emotions seem to be weaved through Gucci's content on both platforms, which creates a - sometimes troubling - tension with its own moral values, and with general proper ethical conduct. Additionally, emotion is used to provoke reactions from consumers, in order to benefit Gucci: all discussed topics on the platforms relate to empathy – or emotion – in some way, shape or form.

Gender (in)equality is the most common returning pattern on both websites: it is what both CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium are founded upon, even though the scopes of both platforms seem vastly different at first. CHIME FOR CHANGE transparently institutes itself as an empowering, progressive campaign fighting for gender equality and women's issues. However, Gucci Equilibrium could best be explained as the brand's corporate social responsibility strategy. A wider array of social and societal issues is tackled in Gucci's policy-making on the platform, like sustainability, corporate culture and long supply chains. But it is clear what their main focus is: "Gender equality, diversity and female empowerment are key to Gucci and have become synonymous with our

brand.” (Gucci Equilibrium, article number 17). Even in this context diversity seems to mean an equal amount of men and women in the workforce, diversity based on factors like ethnicity seems to be disregarded. Though Equilibrium does not exactly hide its nature, at first glance, its activist stance towards gender equality is not immediately clear.

Prior studies have noted the importance of emotional involvement in marketing strategies (Baghi et al., 2009; Hopkins, 2015), a finding which got confirmed by the findings of the paper. Both platforms structure much of their content around emotion, with empathy being the most often exploited sentiment. Additionally, compassion was prevalent in the dataset too, albeit not as excessive as empathy. Perhaps Gucci seems aware of concepts such as compassion fatigue (Chouliaraki, 2006), as this could harm the good cause they stand for. Furthermore, the inclusion of distant suffering was evident based on both textual and visual data. This finding corresponds with the Brei and Böhm’s (2015) study into Volvic’s ‘1L=10L for Africa’ campaign – which too included distant suffering. Distant suffering causes emotions like empathy and compassion, a trick used to create emotional involvement. Gucci’s marketing practices around CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium were expected based on the literature, nearly every concept came forward: how moralization is used in marketing, the strength of cause-related campaigns and witnessing distant suffering. The main deviation from the theoretical framework, was the sheer openness Gucci uses in their marketing plans. Kim and Lee (2009) explain that authenticity and honesty often cause for suspicion among consumers regarding marketing strategies; Brønn and Vrioni (2001) even argue that it is better to leave the audience in the dark about collaborations with charities, as too much detail causes for distrust. Gucci disproves this assumption, as they attempt to look honest regarding their social and societal intentions, on both platforms. Therefore the idea that openness causes distrust, might need to be rethought or subjected to more research.

Additionally, theoretical concepts such as the moralization of marketing and cause-related marketing were returning patterns in the dataset. Not only did they serve as the academic basis for the findings, the (critical) ethical implications which were highlighted did also come forward. The assumption that morality is valued highly by contemporary consumers seems evident based on the results and analysis (Caruana, 2007; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2007; Nielsen & McGregor, 2013; Hopkins, 2015): Gucci establishes itself as a moral choice of consumption, as better than its competitors. Equilibrium explains much of their official policies and shares insight in their corporate culture, while CHIME FOR CHANGE describes all the charities and good causes Gucci fights for. Consequently, the contribution of cause-related marketing proved valuable: it aligned well with the activist, socially involved image Gucci paints of itself. Cause-related marketing either markets products as ethical, or it affiliates a business with doing good (Smith & Higgins, 2000; O’Sullivan et al., 2008). Campaigns based on this technique often cause emotions like empathy and compassion,

in order to foster an emotional response from consumers (Hopkins, 2015), which can be directed towards consumerist behaviour. Gucci applied this exact strategy on both Gucci Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE, sometimes simply asking readers to be empathic and compassionate. By doing this, Gucci seems ethical itself.

Methodologically, the employed thematic analysis proved itself useful. Braun and Clarke (2006) explained how it is mainly used to unravel patterns from large quantities of textual data, which is precisely what this paper did. Three main themes were derived from the dataset – empowerment, empathy and compassion - which eventually made it possible to answer the research questions and its sub-questions. The inductive/deductive approach proved itself as beneficial to the results: the theoretical backbone was stable enough to fall back on in deciding the themes, while this could inductively be adjusted by information derived from the dataset. Furthermore, the facts from the dataset helped establish less obvious patterns and subthemes. What is significant to mention, is that the study did not study Gucci’s entire online communication – which was not feasible. Gucci’s main website and social media remain untested, which could be fascinating to research in further investigations. Though I am certain that the found patterns are representative for Gucci’s entire communication, there could be a disparity between those and Equilibrium and CHIME FOR CHANGE.

5.2 Theoretical implications

Looking back, it is important to review the findings to the theoretical foundation on which this thesis was built. The analysis of data revealed insightful results, which are critically discussed below. While many of the findings aligned with previous theory - such as marketing research - this was not frequently the case. Therefore, the deviations from the theoretical framework are also revealed. Evidently, empowerment is of great relevance to the company, especially gender equality and the empowerment of women. In the literature Gengler (2012) argues that by assuming that empowerment is necessary, disempowerment is developed. If women are in need for empowerment, Gengler (2012) reasons they have failed to take control over their life and must be taught to do so. Thus, by aggressively marketing female empowerment and gender equality, Gucci might achieve the opposite. Context is important when considering this notion: in certain countries and cultures women have much less agency than in others. But as empowerment is so prevalent to Gucci, caution could have been wise. Additionally, Bayissa et al. (2018) explain that empowerment is structured through many dimensions, meaning that investment in just one facet might not help at all – it could even disturb the fragile balance. Theoretically, Gucci’s efforts could therefore be considered as counterproductive. Haraway’s (1990) notion “Who speaks for whom?” adds to this worry. Why does Gucci decide to speak for the “inappropriate(d) Other”? Supposedly, because

they cannot speak for themselves: humans victimized by war with no home or belongings, are voiceless, is the assumption. Therefore someone, Gucci, 'must' represent them and advocate for their rights. While this is seemingly noble by societal norms, the line of reasoning is flawed. Based on Haraway's (1990) argumentation, representing the Other could lead to ethical pitfalls: one takes away agency from the Other, perhaps the only possession refugees have left. Speaking for someone else leads to misrepresentation as one cannot precisely know what they want or need. Additionally, the Other is transformed into "the recipient of action" (p. 312), making them dependent on you. This is an example of neo-colonialism: large, powerful NGO's helping third world countries, making them dependent on the kindness of businesses whose objective is making profit.

Additionally, Gucci seems rather uncluttered about their ultimate intentions regarding fostering social and societal change. "Doing well by doing good" (Hopkins, 2015) appears to be their mentality: increasing profitability by fostering change. Gucci openly admits this on the Equilibrium platform. The company simply brands it as a 'Culture of Purpose', which frames the phenomenon much more positively. This raises the concern that social issues and charities are being exploited for corporate gain, confirming worries about the self-serving nature of marketing (Smith & Higgins, 2000; Brønn & Vrioni, 2001). The complete honesty in which Gucci admits to this, seems to be at odds with the literature. Scholarship (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; Lee & Kim, 2009) argues that as soon as underlying motives are suspected with cause-related marketing campaigns, the likelihood that consumers support them decreases. The brand disproves this assumption, by stating that doing good directly benefits them, while remaining hugely popular in the mainstream: both scholarship and pop-culture agree that Gucci is (still) one of the most important, influential fashion companies in the world (Bonacchi et al., 2011; Webbler, 2017).

Gucci's online communication transforms regular spectators into media witnesses by exposing them to wicked events, which confirms assumptions from previous studies (Frosh & Pinchevski, 2014; Kyriakidou, 2015). The exposure to pain leads to empathy among cosmopolitan civilians, but because of the distance they cannot help, making them feel powerless – thus leading to distant suffering. According to scholarship (Boltanski, 1999; Chouliaraki, 2006), distant suffering is incredibly powerful in fostering an emotional response, which Gucci wants: it gives the company the opportunity to market themselves as an advocate for the Other and as progressive activist. This spectacle does exploit the consumers honest emotion and pain. By divulging them to sorrow, Gucci profits, while potentially hurting other humans. This makes the process ethically questionable and an atypical strategy for a company who benefits from ethical impeccable conduct and taking the moral high ground.

Distant suffering was commonly present in Gucci's online communication and generally caused by two groups: refugees and women. This first group, refugees, came up as expected from

the literature (Brei & Böhm, 2015). Refugees have no home or possessions. They have been through dreadful procedures – making them a group many people have empathy for. When talking about refugees, special attention is paid to the suffering of children. It seems evident that their suffering causes severe emotion: they are depicted and perceived as helpless, blameless, youngsters, struck by misfortune and pain. On the one hand, refugees' stories have to be told: the way they have been mistreated should be known to the world, so structural change can be made. This strengthens Ellis' (1999) argument of 'we did not know, therefore we did not act': their abuse is known to the public, thus we cannot ignore it. Gucci giving refugees a platform might therefore be a honourable thing. On the other hand, the Other's – the refugee's – pain seems to be exploited. Gucci openly declared that doing good is profitable, meaning superficiality and corporate greed seem like more than reasonable motivations for this kind-heartedness. In many elements Gucci's online communication seems very similar to Volvic's '1L=10L' for Africa campaign, as studied by (Brei & Böhm, 2015). It explained how companies could profit over the back of suffering and social problems, it simply adds another unique selling point to the company and its produce, while questioning the ethical implications of this practice.

The second group, which was not based on the literature, are women. Though, it is no surprise they are depicted as suffering Other: Gucci identifies itself as feminist, hence their policies and the existence of the whole CHIME FOR CHANGE platform. But simply portraying women as the Other, needlessly suffering, again might disempower instead of empower: why are women in the situation that they need empowering? (Gengler, 2012). Additionally, here too the notion of "Who speaks for whom?" (Haraway, 1990) seems prevalent: we cannot speak for someone we do not know. Do all women – the Other - want to be empowered by Gucci? And even if women indeed want to be empowered by the brand: how can one empower all women through the same communication? One simply cannot. Women in first, second and third world countries all have vastly different daily problems: one struggles with unequal pay, while another fights for her right to not wear an hijab. Using one platform for all complications females face causes unwelcome generalisations. It leads to disempowerment and could increase gender inequality: women all around the globe, in every country and culture, could be seen as weaker than men, because they all seem to need the same empowerment.

Moreover, it is argued that distant suffering is most profoundly present through a combination of the audio-visual (Ellis, 1999 & 2009; Chouliaraki, 2006; Kyriakidou 2015). However, I would argue, the combination of detailed, explicit written language in combination with vivid imagery has the potential to accomplish the exact feeling. Reading a well-written article about human suffering, accompanied by graphic images causes for empathy and helplessness among the reader, just like the audio-visual does. The effect might be less graphic, but more sophisticated,

which could be understood as a strength. The audio-visual has the ability to portray gruesome events in baffling detail, meaning people sometimes feel forced to stop watching and listening – causing a compassion fatigue (Chouliaraki, 2006). Therefore, the combination of text and image could be more effective in causing distant suffering and genuine feelings of empathy towards the Other: it is less explicit, meaning that chances are that the witness actually reads the entire piece of content. This thesis contributes to the literature about (distant) suffering. It argues that the phenomenon could also occur through text and image, which is common on the internet.

5.3 Social implications

Besides significance for the scientific world, this paper revealed noteworthy implications for the social, everyday world too. The social issue which Gucci most highly values is empowerment. Minorities, their employees and – most notably – women are groups which the brand advocates for. It makes Gucci seem morally sound, as they fight for equal rights. The emphasis on gender (in)equality and the feminist narrative do not come as a surprise. Globally it is a prevalent subject, as nearly every country worldwide still struggles with at least some form of gender inequality in its society. Thus, by focusing on empowering women – a target audience of over 3 billion people - Gucci attempts to create a sense of unity: women from every country in the world, are fighting for the same basic principle. And then incidentally, Gucci is the binding factor, creating an activist, highly moral image of the company, loved by many societies among the world.

Additionally, in light of how highly Gucci values gender equality, their policy regarding paternity and maternity leave causes friction. Female employees are entitled to 98 days of paid maternity leave, while male employees are entitled to 5 days of paid paternity leave. Pregnancy itself affects the mother more than the father, as she carries a child in her abdomen for nine months. But the disparity between paid maternity and paternity leave is disproportionately large, especially since fathers play as big of a role in raising a child as the mother does. Gucci therefore seems to be at war with its own ideal, gender equality. This is seemingly not up to Gucci though itself though, as they are part of the Kering group. This maternity/paternity policy is present throughout all Kering-owned companies, not exclusively to Gucci. However, as avid proponent of social justice and equality, one might expect the company to create a policy of its own, as it does with other social and societal issues. For example, Gucci has its own policies regarding the use of animal based materials or carbon emissions. Gucci's CEO explicitly encouraged the business world to reduce their carbon emission, a message which was not sent from the Kering headquarters, it was a personal announcement from the fashion brand. It proves that Gucci itself does have the agency and power to address social issues like equal rights in parenthood, but chooses not to.

Nevertheless, since the brand heavily markets itself morally responsible, ambiguities like these are often not noticed by the public. This study proves that even morally acceptable brands might simply market themselves as such – to sway consumers. Awareness in this regard could therefore be of use among society, which this thesis attempted to foster. Another good example hereof, is Gucci's recent banning of fur products. Gucci packages the announcement as a great victory against the suffering of animals, but fact in the matter is that using fur has been disapproved and criticized for decades. The brand attempts to spin this around, into something progressive. It highlights the manipulative side of marketing, which scholarship (Klein, 2000; Smith & Higgins, 2000; O'Sullivan et al., 2008) warned about. In this case, an event which is generally not considered a progressive achievement anymore - especially not for one of the leading, global luxury fashion brands – is framed as such.

However, the brand does seem to understand its importance as market leader in the fashion industry, as argued by Bonacchi et al. (2011). Gucci finds it highly important to be ethically and socially responsible, ideals by which many other in the sector are inspired and influenced. Take marketing purposes out of the equation and this is nothing less than noble and honourable: they foster progression and a better world for all. This might especially be advantageous in the fashion industry, since the industry has seen many morally despicable practices (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). A narrative which often includes compassion in Gucci's online communication, is "if I can do it, so can you" – a narrative especially CHIME FOR CHANGE made use of. It depicts a 'normal' person – often a woman – who takes action to improve the lives of the Other. In the most severe cases, the women depicted gave up their normal life in the western world in order to help those in need. This promotes a belief among the audience that anyone can help and engage in compassionate behaviour, no matter who you are. While this sentiment seems praiseworthy, it is often motivated by self-profit and accompanied by the depiction of suffering. An overexposure to pain eventually leads to a compassion fatigue (Chouliarakis, 2006): the witness becomes indifferent to pain and does not feel inclined to help any longer. Considering Gucci frequently appeals to the spectators' compassion, this threat is looming and could greatly hurt charities and Gucci's own mission: indifference towards human pain causes consumers to stop making donations to charities and desensitize them to systemic social problems (Smith & Higgins, 2000).

Lastly, it is noteworthy is that Gucci deviates slightly from the literature regarding ethical, cause-related products. The fashion brand made one cause-related product to the CHIME FOR CHANGE campaign, a t-shirt which included CHIME's logo and the slogan "My Body My Choice". I would argue that this is no ordinary cause-related product for two reasons. Firstly, the profit made over the t-shirt is not donated to an ordinary good cause, but to CHIME FOR CHANGE. The cause-related campaign is interpreted as charity, to Gucci. Secondly, Gucci is a luxury, exclusive brand;

very little people can afford it. This character of decadence relates to Morrin's (2013) argument about luxury fashion and functionality of clothing. Clothes used to be utilitarian, functional. Luxury fashion challenges this notion, as it is not merely used for practical purposes, but stands for social status and decadency. Still, cause-related products, even expensive ones, can relieve the sensation of powerlessness after witnessing pain among the audience (Smith & Higgins, 2000; Chouliaraki, 2006; Yurchisin et al., 2008). Additionally, the company often directly asks the consumer to donate to a good cause. While this might seem more ethical – since a charity is not linked to consumerist behaviour - this too discharges the consumers own decision to donate, as argued by Smith and Higgins (2000). As consequence, consumers continue to objectify charities, behaviour which Gucci (unintentionally) fosters, by exposing its audience to suffering and then asking them to donate. Additionally, this strengthens the notion that the consumers' emotions are being exploited. While it financially seems to benefit a good cause, ultimately Gucci might benefit most. This line of reasoning emphasizes the social relevance of the paper. Consumers cannot blindly trust the collaboration between a for-profit and charity: it might benefit the for-profit more than the charity and consumers are manipulated into consumption.

5.4 Limitations of the thesis

The main limitations of this study lie in its time frame. Because of the limited resources time-wise, the paper was not able to examine Gucci's entire online communication. The paper limits itself in investigating only two platforms through which Gucci expresses itself regarding progression: CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium. However, the brand has a main website and a large variety of social media channels under its wings too. Gucci is rather active on social media, most notably on Facebook and Instagram, but even their YouTube channel contains plenty of content which relates to the theoretical framework – meaning that could have been valuable to include, too. Additionally, the thematic analysis was highly useful in recognizing patterns and was able to explain the implicit meaning of content. However, a method like Critical Discourse Analysis could have been able to review power relations between Gucci and those who they represent. This could have been highly valuable – especially considering the "Who speaks for whom?"-dilemma (Haraway, 1990).

Furthermore, because the methodology assumed maximum variation (Koerber & McMichael, 2008), a large variety of different webpages were researched. As heterogeneity of data was assumed to be relevant (Flick, 2007), it became difficult to be picky in the data collection process. The potential issue with this, is the fact that some webpages were much larger than others: they contained more text and images. While this could be defended – and understood – from a methodological point of view, it also leads to some concerns. Since some webpages were

more elaborate than others, they simply have the ability to contain more themes, patterns and codes. However, this does not make the study irrelevant, but the disparity in length between articles could definitely be interpreted as a limitation; as something which could be avoided in sequential research.

Additionally, it is important to remember that this is merely one case study into a very large agglomeration of subjects: moralization, cause marketing and distant suffering. While this paper was able to reveal and explain patterns between these concepts, no previous scholarship which covers all these theories exists. Brei and Böhm's (2015) paper about Volvic's campaign is the only piece of scholarship which is partially similar. However, their paper did not paint a clear connection with the moralization of marketing, nor did it fully elaborate on the concept of distant suffering. While they were able to link the exploitation of suffering to the Other, they did not establish a relationship between the exploitation of the distant sufferer's emotion and marketing. This paper is unique in that aspect, which could make this paper valuable. However, this could also be interpreted as limitation and even as a weakness. As little to no prior scholarship exists, there is not saying (yet) if the conclusions are indeed trustworthy or generalizable at all. Right now, this paper depicts Gucci's online communication strategy and that alone. Until comparable research is done, about different and similar companies, it might be difficult to use this paper's findings for practical implications. Additionally, it could even be difficult to generalize these findings to other luxury fashion brands. While the results from this paper are probably – at least partially – generalizable, one simply cannot be sure: every brand has its own character, quirks and philosophy.

5.5 Suggestions for future research

Future research into brands like Louis Vuitton, Dior or Prada's online communication could potentially shed more light onto the topic and the luxury fashion industry. Studies like those could boost the value of this paper, especially if similar patterns arise. As indicated before, it could be interesting to study Gucci's remaining online communication – like their social media. One could observe the differences and similarities between CHIME FOR CHANGE and Equilibrium, and their social media outlets. However, the interrelationship between marketing and distant suffering still deserves more attention from the academic world, especially research from an ethical point of view could be valuable. This was is one of the questions this paper could not explicitly answer: is it under all circumstances unethical to depict and benefit from distant suffering? Or does it serve a function and benefits it the Other significantly? Those type of questions remain unknown and need answering, as they could impact society positively.

While this paper generally aligned well with previous literature about moralization and distant suffering, it deviated from scholarship regarding (cause-related) marketing in some

instances. These theories and concepts therefore could use some rethinking and perhaps future research. Firstly, scholarship predicted that when companies which are open about their cause-related marketing goals and collaborations, underlying motives are quickly suspected and consumers start to distrust the campaign (Brønn & Vrioni, 2001; Lee & Kim, 2009). Gucci disproved this notion in its entirety. The brand tries to be open about their intentions, who it donates to and who it partners with. This does not seem to harm them, as they remain one of the market leaders in fashion (Bonacchi et al., 2011). Therefore, it could be useful to research – or at least re-evaluate – this notion, since this paper rejects it. Additionally, the notion of (dis)empowerment turned out to be prominently present in this inquiry – particularly in the dataset. While this was partially anticipated (based on CHIME FOR CHANGE’s nature), its dominant inclusion in Equilibrium was surprising.

Scholarship highlighted that the line between empowerment and disempowerment is thin (Haraway, 1990; Gengler, 2012; Bayissa et al., 2018); it remains difficult to come up with an unambiguous conclusion whether Gucci’s empowering content does more good or more harm. The potential drawbacks of the content were explained, but this paper cannot explain whether their content works mostly empowering or disempowering. This too is a notion which could be further explored, as empowerment and gender equality are prominent concepts in contemporary society.

6. References

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7. Appendix 1: the dataset

Article number	Title	Platform	Year	Article number	Title	Platform	Year
1	25 for 25 series: Sinead Burke	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	1	ArtLab	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
2	Mexico: Creating Structural Change by Connecting the Feminist Movement	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	2	Sustainable processes	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
3	Iraq: Empowering Yezidi Women to Lead After Trauma	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	3	Gucci Changemakers Volunteering	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
4	Women Deliver: October 2019 Project Highlights	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	4	Gucci Changemakers North America	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
5	We are Searching for Life: Stories and Reflections from Migrants and Refugees	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	5	A conversation between Marco Bizzarri, Naomi Campbell & Suzy Menkes at CNI Luxury Conference	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
6	GUCCI LAUNCHES CHIME T-SHIRT ON REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS FOR THE CRUISE 2020 COLLECTION	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	6	Fur Free	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
7	25 for 25 Series: MP5	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	7	GUCCI ÉCOLE DE L'AMOUR	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
8	Uganda: Reclaiming Children's Lives after War	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	8	Gucci partners with Tent.org for World Refugee Day	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
9	Southern Africa: Addressing Period Poverty to Keep Girls in School	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	9	Assessing our Environmental Impact	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
10	Women Bylines Mexico: "Who Cares" by Daniela Rea	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	10	CEO CARBON NEUTRAL CHALLENGE	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
11	25 for 25 Series: Latanya Mapp Frett	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	11	Plant/Cellulose-Based Fibres	Gucci Equilibrium	2019

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12	25 for 25 Series: Kulsum Shadab Wahab	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	12	I was a Sari	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
13	The Irregular Report: Gen Z and Fluidity	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	13	Sustainability Guidelines and Principles	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
14	Georgia: On Gender Equality, Pride and Freedom in Tbilisi	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	14	Environmental Reporting	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
15	France: "Tethered" by Nathalie Neubert	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2020	15	Better Lives, Better Lifestyles	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
16	CHIME in the Arab Region: Connecting and Mobilizing Activists for Gender Equality with Equality Now	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	16	The Built Environment	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
17	Listen to Inspiring Voices Discuss Activism in the Gucci Podcast's Chime for Change Episode	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	17	Gender Equality and Diversity in the Workplace	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
18	Event Recap: 'SITARA' Film Premiere Joins Changemakers in Conversation to Promote Girls' Right to Dream	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	18	Animal Based Materials	Gucci Equilibrium	2018
19	Syrian Kurdistan: Caught between One Hatred and the Other	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	19	CHIME FOR CHANGE	Gucci Equilibrium	2019
20	From Empathy to Action: Films Inspiring Social Change from Women's Voices Now	CHIME FOR CHANGE	2019	20	Responsible Gold	Gucci Equilibrium	2018

8. Appendix 2: coding frame visual thematic analysis

Theme Empowerment		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Social activist	● Female empowerment	○ E.g. "My body my choice" on t-shirts
	● Diversity	○ E.g. depicting different gender and skin colors
	● Gender equality	○ E.g. women posing with flexed muscles
	● Inclusivity	○ E.g. depicting women with disabilities
	● Female solidarity	○ E.g. women hugging and posing closely together
Affiliating Gucci with "doing good"	● Affiliating Gucci with "doing good"	○ E.g. the presence of Gucci's logo
Corporate social responsibility	● Showcasing social responsibility	○ E.g. depiction of sustainable packaging

Theme Empathy		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Provoking empathy	● Imagery which provokes positive empathic emotions	○ E.g. depicting the Other in a photo studio
	● Imagery which provokes negative empathic emotions	○ E.g. depicting the Other protesting in the streets for equal rights
	● Emphasizing the pain of the Other	○ E.g. showing acid attack survivors
Showcasing empathy	● The protagonist is in touch with the Other	○ E.g. showing the protagonist together with the Other

Theme Compassion		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Provoking social Action	● Compassionate behaviour is incentivised	○ E.g. depiction of "donate to acid attack survivors"

9. Appendix 3: coding frame textual thematic analysis

Theme Empowerment		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Social activist	● Focus on younger generations	○ E.g. "[...] empower the next generation of leaders [...]"
	● Diversity	○ E.g. "Our generation is the most diverse generation yet [...]"
	● Gender equality	○ E.g. "[...] and help realize a gender-equal world."
	● Inclusivity	○ E.g. "[...] and advocate for the inclusion of all."
Affiliating Gucci with "doing good"	● Female empowerment	○ E.g. "[...] every employee who has been employed at Kering for at least 12 months is entitled to fourteen weeks fully paid maternity and adoption leave [...]"
	● Affiliating Gucci with "doing good"	○ E.g. "In October 2017 Gucci made headlines when our President and CEO Marco Bizarri announced that we would no longer use animal fur in our products."
Corporate social responsibility	● Showcasing social responsibility	○ E.g. "come together in the CEO Carbon Neutral Challenge."

Theme Empathy		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Provoking empathy	● Emphasizing the pain of the Other, mental or physical	○ E.g. "[...] who escaped from horrific sexual violence."
	● Ambitions and other positive emotions of the Other	○ E.g. "Today I graduated as a journalist but I am studying"
	● Personal stories which show empathic emotions	○ E.g. "He now roams the streets freely and I am left to raise a child alone despite having undergone almost 16 surgeries"
Showcasing empathy	● The protagonist shows empathic emotions	○ E.g. "It was an issue that I had never been aware of. It moved and shocked me."

Theme Compassion		
Category	Subcategory	Example
Provoking social Action	● Compassionate behaviour is incentivised	○ E.g. "Donate today to [...]"
Showcasing social Action	● Compassionate behaviour is shown by protagonist or author	○ E.g. "I realized that my purpose is to give back by helping others [...]"