

Employer Femvertising: Women Empowerment in Employer Brand Messages

LORENA RONDA
GARAZI AZANZA
University of Deusto, Spain

This article develops for the first time the concept of *employer femvertising* as a talent attraction tool companies can use to position themselves as employers committed to empowering women. Based on the concepts of *employer branding* and *femvertising*, employer femvertising emerges as a set of messages and strategies through which an organization positions itself as an employer that demands and promotes the professional development of women and fights the stereotypes, obstacles, and labor challenges women face in the workplace. A social media content analysis was conducted to explore the messages used in the employer branding campaigns published by four top employer companies on LinkedIn in the first quarter of 2020. The contributions in this article reveal the existence of employer femvertising in employer brand building and identify a taxonomy of 5 categories for this femvertising content: *gender equality*, *female leadership*, *inclusive recruitment*, *female talent growth*, and *work-life balance*.

Keywords: *femvertising*, *employer branding*, *female talent attraction*, *women empowerment*, *female leadership*

Over the past five years, the number of advertisements themed on women empowerment has constantly increased across different types of media (Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). Advertising scholarship has named this phenomenon “femvertising” (Drake, 2017, p. 594), which refers to those messages used in advertising that have the function of empowering women and fighting the stereotypes they face (Powell, 2014). Subsequent academic research reformulated the concept of femvertising as advertising mainly aimed at women and containing messages that feature qualities of empowering women and gender equality (Becker-Herby, 2016, p. 18; Rodríguez Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017). This article proposes that the use of femvertising is not meant to be exclusive to those brands selling goods and services. In the field of employment, employer brands aim to attract the best talent and build an image of desired places to work. In this mission, the use of femvertising acquires critical importance as a tool to capture the attention of female talent and to encourage them to apply to an organization where they will be empowered as professionals.

Lorena Ronda: lronda@deusto.es

Garazi Azanza: garazi.azanza@deusto.es

Date submitted: 2020-03-19

Copyright © 2021 (Lorena Ronda and Garazi Azanza). Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd). Available at <http://ijoc.org>.

Under this assumption, this study presents the concept of *employer femvertising* as an original contribution that entails the incorporation of femvertising in the concept of employer branding. We understand this to be the advertising used in employer branding campaigns that features profemale talent messages and imagery to empower women and girls in achieving their career objectives. In the discipline of employer branding, marketing principles are applied to the field of human resource management, with the objective of positioning employer brands as unique employment experiences portraying organizations as desirable places to work for (Backhaus & Tikko, 2004; Edwards, 2010). This positioning is composed of the functional, economic, and psychological benefits that a company offers to its employees, and that differentiate the company from other employers (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Talent attraction studies have noticed significant gender differences when individuals evaluate those employment benefits. Some examples include women being found to value dimensions such as diversity management practices, inclusive recruitment, opportunities for career progression, and work-life balance to a greater extent than men do (Ng & Burke, 2005; PwC, 2017).

Though gender differences have been shown in human resource literature, employer branding scholarship has not followed suit. Addressing these issues can be of key importance to attracting female talent, especially for those business areas such as finance and consulting (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013), transport (Wright, 2015), technology (Prescott & Bogg, 2011), or science (Katila & Meriläinen, 2002), as well as positions such as managerial (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013) or technical roles (Peterson, 2010), which have traditionally been male dominated. This is of especial relevance as incorporating female representation into such positions has been proven to bring informational and social diversity benefits to the employer firm, enrich the behaviors exhibited by employees and managers, and improve women's and men's performance, leading to better firm performance (Dezsó & Ross, 2012; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004).

Concern for the employer brand image has been strengthened in the current information era (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Because of the increasing popularity of data-driven platforms, websites such as Glassdoor.com or Salary.com, and rankings such as Great Place to Work (2020) and World's Most Attractive Employers (Universum, 2019), it has become easier than ever for employees to evaluate and compare employers and their benefit packages before making their decision on their employer of choice (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). This tendency of employees comparing employers and job offers online has been reaffirmed by LinkedIn, the world's leading professional social network, reaching 500 million users in 2017 as well as featuring 9 million company profiles and advertising 10 million job positions (Awan, 2017).

The objectives of the present study are twofold: first, to analyze the existence of employer femvertising in the messages used by companies when building their employer brands, and second, to classify in different categories those employer femvertising messages according to the topics they cover. More specifically, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Do employer brands use employer femvertising messages in their employer branding campaigns?

RQ2: What categories of femvertising content are found depending on the topics this employer femvertising content addresses?

A social media content analysis (Lai & To, 2015) was conducted in a sample of 561 posts published by the top-most attractive employer brands of 2019 according to the LinkedIn ranking (Lobosco, 2019)—Amazon, Salesforce, Deloitte, and Uber—during the first quarter of 2020 (13 weeks) on their LinkedIn profiles. Posts were analyzed in terms of the presence of employer femvertising or not, the main function of the post (give company information, contribute to the community or social responsibility, or conduct a recruitment action), and in terms of the specific femvertising categories, or women empowerment related topics being addressed. The contributions of the study are twofold: first, results show the existence of employer femvertising in the posts of the four analyzed companies when building their employer brands on LinkedIn, and second, a total of five different categories are identified when examining this employer femvertising content.

Theoretical Background

Employer branding

In the present study, employer femvertising is conceptualized as a type of advertising to be implemented within the employer branding strategy of a firm. Employer branding represents the strategy that companies undergo to be perceived as desirable places to work, and therefore become employers of choice for potential employees (Edwards, 2010; Ronda, Valor, & Abril, 2018). The roots of employer branding are found in the concept of employer attractiveness, which refers to the perceived benefits that potential employees see in working for a particular firm (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). The more attractive an employer is perceived to be by potential employees, the stronger the brand equity of that company would be. Employer branding takes employer attractiveness to a new level, where principles of marketing are applied to the human resources field and, in the same way that products are positioned to target consumer audiences, brands would be positioned as a unique employment experience to target employees (Backhaus & Tikko, 2004; Edwards, 2010).

Ambler and Barrow (1996) defined the employer brand as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (p. 187). Subsequent authors reformulated this definition, revealing various new employer brand dimensions such as ethical benefits, development benefits, experiential benefits, or social benefits (Berthon et al., 2005; Ronda et al., 2018). These authors suggest that, just like any consumer brand, an employer brand has both personality and positioning (Berthon et al., 2005). Through the benefits they provide in their job offers, companies build an image of themselves in the minds of potential employees as great or not so great places to work (Ewing, Pitt, De Bussy, & Berthon, 2002). One of the most attractive employer benefits that establish companies as attractive employers is the package of economic and financial rewards (Ambler & Barrow, 1996), which helps employees to fulfill their socioeconomic needs (Edwards, 2010). However, psychological benefits related to the employment experience also create intangible traits that are provided for and valued by employees (Edwards, 2010). These include ethical concerns about contributing to society, career prospects that involve training, learning, and growing as professionals, work-family balance arrangements, or workplace harassment management policies that help workers feel fulfilled in both their personal and professional lives (Meeks & Howe, 2020; Ronda, Abril, & Valor, 2020).

Advertising has acquired a key role in communicating employer branding messages to potential candidates to identify, attract, acquire, and retain the most skilled talent (Berthon et al., 2005). These advertising efforts have the aim of improving both the attitudes that candidates have toward a firm and the awareness of the critical attributes that firms want to highlight (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Advertising strategies aimed to improve the employer brand image include TV campaigns (Berthon et al., 2005), messages added to employee uniforms (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), external rankings such as Great Place to Work (2020) or World's Most Attractive Employers (Universum, 2019), and professional campaigns on data-driven platforms such as in Glassdoor.com or LinkedIn (Awan, 2017). Such tools have enabled employees to evaluate and compare employers and their benefits packages easily online when making their decision on their employer of choice (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Firms that implement successful employer branding strategies and build strong brand images benefit from several positive consequences. They not only attract the most talented workers but they can also potentially decrease employee acquisition costs, improve employee relations, reduce turnover intention and costs by increasing retention, and even offer lower salaries compared with firms with weaker employer brands (Ritson, 2002). One of the biggest issues that companies that have established attractive employer brands face is to attract female talent. Women have not only been shown to apply to specific business areas, such as finance and consulting (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013), technology (Prescott & Bogg, 2011), or science (Katila & Meriläinen, 2002) to a lower extent than men, but they also seem to apply less to top positions such as managerial and technical roles (Barbulescu & Bidwell, 2013; Peterson, 2010). In the following section, the main drivers of female talent attraction will be explored to identify employer branding messages that may prove to be appealing to women's professional concerns.

Challenges in Attracting Female Talent

Building a strong brand image to attract female talent poses one of the greatest challenges for employers. Previous scholarship has linked the incorporation of women to teams that are overwhelmingly composed of men with several benefits for the firm and its workers (Dezsö & Ross, 2012). Diversity has been shown to improve the information processing and decision making of teams (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004), as women bring to the table different insights (Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 1999), creating heterogeneous groups that reach higher quality decisions (Van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Additionally, women in gender-integrated teams experience fewer role conflicts and hold a more positive view of their gender, whereas male workers perceive that behaviors associated with feminine work patterns are accepted and valued by the firm (Ely & Meyerson, 2000). This improves individual, group task, and overall firm performance (Dezsö & Ross, 2012).

Significant gender differences have been found in the perceived importance employees assign to the different employer brand dimensions, and building an attractive employer brand may be especially relevant for attracting female talent. For example, Ng and Burke (2005) found that women rated employers with good diversity management practices as more attractive places to work, and highlighted the need to put a higher emphasis on such elements for female talent attraction. Similarly, a report from PwC (2017), with a focus on successful gender-inclusive recruitment, emphasized the need for considering organizational processes, and

opportunities for career progression. Competitive wages, a culture of flexibility, and work-life balance were identified as the most attractive employer traits that should be included in their employer brand.

Regarding gender differences on the perceived value of specific dimensions, Bellou, Rigopoulou, and Kehagias (2015) revealed that women attributed higher importance to the quality of workplace relationships, working prerequisites, internal customer orientation, employee growth and development opportunities, participative decision making, and social responsibility. On their part, Alniçık and Alniçık (2012) posited that women prioritize social value, market value, application value, and cooperation value dimensions to a greater extent than men do. More recently, Amaram (2019) concluded that both family-friendly incentive programs and policies, which reduce workplace discrimination and stereotypes, and social aspects of the job, such as flexibility, may be the key to attracting female talent.

A recent systematic and critical review of the literature on employer branding conducted by Ronda and colleagues (2018) shows that the previously mentioned attributes have been included in the employer branding literature, but very few articles combine the concepts of employer brand and gender equality (Lundkvist, 2015). The gender differences observed in employer attractiveness-related elements stress the need for specific actions for female talent attraction and retention. In this context, PwC (2017) indicated the most popular strategies used by employers to add gender inclusion to their employer brand. These are incorporating imagery of a diverse workforce, sharing details of their diversity strategy (including the presence of a diverse workforce and leaders) via organizational data-driven platforms, and, providing access to corporate websites and recruitment materials. Additional strategies addressed by scholarship include using advertising targeted toward women that highlight the company's successful performance, the employee benefits provided, and the internal and social initiatives adopted (Bellou et al., 2015). In the following section, the concept of *femvertising* used in media communication will be applied to the employer branding domain, thus proposing *employer femvertising* as an employer advertising technique aimed at attracting female workers.

Femvertising as a Tool for Attracting Female Talent

The term "feminist advertising," or "femvertising," emerged in 2014, and it was first attributed to the lifestyle website SheKnows (Drake, 2017, p. 594), where it was used as a label for identifying those messages in advertising that challenged traditional gender stereotypes that women face. Advertising containing femvertising messages is mainly addressed to women and features qualities of empowering women and gender equality (Becker-Herby, 2016, p. 18; Rodríguez Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017). Female empowerment refers to the idea of inspiring women to confidently take control and responsibility for their identity and choices, and has been a fundamental element in feminist ideologies that aim to achieve gender equality. Therefore, "femvertising" has been defined in this article as "advertising that employs pro-female talent, messages, and imagery to empower women and girls" (SheKnows Media, as cited in Drake, 2017, p. 594).

Femvertising campaigns have experienced increasing development in the past two decades (Rodríguez Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017). They currently represent a growing marketing trend used by large brands, from the Virginia Slims campaign in the 1960s marketed at young professional women (Baxter, 2015; Rodríguez Pérez & Gutiérrez, 2017) to Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty in 2004. Femvertising

appropriates feminist values and female empowerment to encourage brand consumption (Akestam, Rosengren, & Dahlen, 2017; Feng, Cheng, & He, 2019). Ads with female empowerment themes have been praised for challenging gender stereotypes in the media and raising awareness about issues facing females of all ages while empowering women and young girls (Drake, 2017). The positive consequences derived from the use of femvertising can be understood from the study of reception theory, which emphasizes the audience's active role in interpreting mediated messages and explains how they interpret advertising messages and adapt them to their own life circumstances (Feng et al., 2019).

The use of femvertising breaks with the type of female portrayals typically found in advertising (Akestam et al., 2017), and it has been shown to have several positive consequences in its target audience (Feng et al., 2019). From a consumer perspective, the use of femvertising leads (mostly female consumers) to engage with the messages communicated by the brand (Feng et al., 2019), to have higher positive attitudes toward the brand, and to increase their purchase intentions (Kapoor & Munjal, 2019). For example, in Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty, consumers reported that they successfully connected the "real" women in the campaign with their real selves and lives. From the business perspective, brands using femvertising messages have been proven to achieve a better reputation as they are perceived to be congruent with consumer's beliefs (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016), and they have reported significant profits since launching femvertising initiatives (Drake, 2017).

Though the use of femvertising in product advertising has been increasingly capturing the attention of researchers, the study of femvertising in advertising employer brands and job offers has not followed suit. Research suggests that the progress women have made both in their careers and society has made them more receptive to marketing that represents their desires (Sivulka, 2009). This inclination also makes them targets of employment advertising campaigns that help them feel empowered to overcome the problems they face in their professional lives, and that are a consequence of gender inequality. Although women still face professional disadvantages and stigma (being associated with stereotypical industries, suffering from the pay gap, lacking work-family balance, etc.), today, the majority of companies have incorporated policies that aim to reduce these concerns (Ronda et al., 2018). However, research about whether employer brands engage in advertising campaigns addressed to women employing profemale talent, messages, and imagery to empower female workers is yet to be conducted. This issue is of key importance as women now have more economic and political power than in previous decades (Drake, 2017), and in developed countries are fully incorporated into the workforce, so employment advertising should have adjusted its messaging to resonate with this changing demographic. The incorporation of the Millennial generation into the workforce, which now amounts to almost half of the workers worldwide, has also had an impact on the way that employers must address gender issues in talent attraction. Millennials, both men and women, demand better work-family balance and equally attractive career perspectives (Ronda et al., 2020), which affect women to a greater extent. Millennial women are more than twice as likely to lean toward a brand that made an empowering ad (Drake, 2017; Henard & Rossetti, 2014).

This study defines for the first time the concept of "employer femvertising" as the female advertising used in employer branding campaigns that features profemale talent messages and imagery to empower women and girls in achieving their career objectives. In light of this, this study addresses the shortcomings of literature in this field by exploring the evolution of the use of employer femvertising by

employer brands. Additionally, different categories of employer femvertising content used by companies are presented. These are different areas in which women can be professionally empowered.

Method

Social Media Content Analysis on Data-Driven Platforms

The existing literature supports the critical role played by data-driven platforms in talent attraction processes (e.g., Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). In recent years, such data-driven platforms have become a valuable communication channel for sharing job-related information, building a strong brand, and communicating with potential candidates in recruitment processes (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). Company online services, such as their online profiles and recruitment websites, are widely used by young people to search for potential employers (Eger, Mičák, & Řehoř, 2018). Specifically, Facebook and LinkedIn were found to be the most visited sites by students searching for jobs (Herbold & Douma, 2013). More recently, Randstad (2019) Employer Brand Research concluded that LinkedIn is the most used data-driven platform for reputation checks. LinkedIn is considered to be the world's largest professional network (Chang, Liu, & Shen, 2017), and is used by 100% of the world's 500 fastest growing companies (Ratliff & Kunz, 2014). This professional network facilitates a greater understanding of the target audience and provides an opportunity to communicate at a more personal level (Hirsch, 2017; Witzig, Spencer, & Galvin, 2012). Because of its relevance as a channel for talent attraction, the present study will focus on LinkedIn posts of the selected companies to analyze their employer femvertising content.

Social platform content analysis is a systematic technique for analyzing message content across different forms of data-driven platforms (Kassarjian, 1977). As proposed by Lai and To (2015), the social media content analysis methodology consists of four steps: (1) definition of the goal and the scope of the study; (2) identification of sources in data-driven platforms and sample selection; (3) data transformation and coding; and (4) interpretation of results. The scope and goals of the analysis are twofold: first, to analyze the existence of employer femvertising in the messages used by companies when building their employer brands, and second, to classify those employer femvertising messages in separate categories according to the topics of female interest they cover.

Sample Selection

The present social media content analysis was carried out by examining the LinkedIn profile pages of four of the most attractive employer brands of 2019, according to the LinkedIn (Lobosco, 2019) ranking: Amazon, Salesforce, Deloitte, and Uber. To date, there is no standardized accepted sampling duration for collecting posts from data-driven platforms (Pinto & Yagnik, 2016). As the goal of this article is to reveal the existence of employer brand messages in employer branding communications, three months (or 13 weeks) of posts were analyzed, from January 2020 through March 2020, for a total of 561 total posts. The size of the sample is similar to that of previous social media content analysis studies (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012; Pinto & Yagnik, 2016). Posts were analyzed during March 2020 by clicking on "sort by recent" in the LinkedIn filter and going back on the timeline to the appropriate month.

Data Transformation and Variable Coding

An SPSS code sheet was used to record information about all LinkedIn posts published during the first quarter of 2020, from January through March of 2020 by the four employer brands chosen. To analyze the format of the posts and their elements, indications (No = 0; Yes = 1) were made to specify whether or not the analyzed items were present. Saturation was reached between posts 390 and 400. The posts were classified according to four criteria: function, femvertising, post format, and femvertising category.

Function

Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) conducted a social media content analysis that revealed three functions that social media microblogging content could have: information, community, and action. Following that classification, the LinkedIn posts were categorized as *company information* when they consisted of descriptive content about the organization's activities, products, highlights from events, or any other news, facts, reports, or information relevant to an organization's stakeholders; as *contribution to the community* when they consisted of engaging with social problems such as natural disasters, diseases, contributing to building a better society, giving recognition to minorities, and other nonprofit actions; and finally, as *recruiting actions*, when they consisted of getting potential employees to apply for their organization by either posting a job offer to apply for, or by presenting the benefits of working at the company.

Femvertising

Posts were categorized as employer femvertising when they met the following five criteria (Becker-Herby, 2016, pp. 18–20): (1) use of diverse female talent in an intersectional manner; (2) messaging that is inherently profemale, (3) pushing gender-norm boundaries/stereotypes; (4) downplaying of sexuality, and (5) authentically portraying women. Unlike the way they are portrayed in consumer advertising, women in employer femvertising messages are not expected to downplay their sexuality or to be realistically portrayed as professionals. Therefore Criteria 4 and 5 are expected to be fulfilled in the entire sample of posts.

Post Format

The coders examined whether *video content*, *testimonials*, or *off-line company actions* were included as elements of the posts.

Femvertising Category

Finally, those posts classified as employer femvertising were further analyzed to identify those elements of women empowerment and female talent attraction identified in literature: *inclusive recruitment* as for female talent attraction (Ng & Burke, 2005; PwC, 2017); *work-life balance* as for communicating flexibility practices (Amaram, 2019; PwC, 2017); *female talent growth* as for development opportunities for women (Bellou et al., 2015); and *gender equality* as for reduction of workplace discrimination and stereotypes (Amaram, 2019; PwC, 2017). Additionally, a fifth category of women empowerment message was included in the analysis because of its recurrent appearance through the posts: *female leadership*. This category refers to

sharing testimonials or examples of successful women through their professional journeys in the company, their experiences overcoming challenges, their achievements, and the inspiration given to others.

Intercoder Reliability

Following the intercoder reliability procedure of Neuendorf (2016), a subset of 112 posts (20% of the total sample), a subsample size that is sufficient to calculate intercoder reliability, was coded by two researchers, an expert in the fields of marketing and employer branding and an expert in human resource management and organizational psychology. The researchers were asked to classify each published post according to its function, the presence of femvertising content in it, and the category of this femvertising content. Existing coding discrepancies were discussed and solved among the researchers. The average intercoder reliability was .82. The kappa coefficient shows acceptable agreement among the coders exceeding the threshold of .6 (Neuendorf, 2016; Riffe, Lacy, & Fico, 1998).

Results

The descriptive statistics shown in Table 1 confirm the existence of employer femvertising across the four companies analyzed: Amazon, Salesforce, Deloitte, and Uber. A total of 89 posts that represent 15.9% of the sample include employer femvertising content in them. Most of the LinkedIn profile posts dedicated to women empowerment in the sample correspond to Amazon (40), followed by Salesforce (31). Deloitte and Uber were found to have lower posts containing employer femvertising content (12 and 6, respectively).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics (Frequencies), N = 561.

Variable	Amazon	Salesforce	Deloitte	Uber	Total
Femvertising					
Femvertising posts	40	31	12	6	89
No femvertising posts	116	175	165	16	472
Number of cases	156	206	177	22	561
Function of femvertising posts (n = 89)					
Company information	17	9	4	4	34
Contribution community	3	22	4	2	31
Recruitment action	20	0	4	0	24
Number of cases	40	31	12	6	89
Format of femvertising posts (each post may feature more than one) (n = 89)					
Video	10	9	4	3	26
Testimonial	32	18	8	4	62
Off-line action	29	10	5	2	46

As for the function of employer femvertising content, all the functions identified in the literature were observed in the sample. The four companies use employer femvertising messages to transmit company information about how they deal with gender-related issues. When it comes to communicating their contribution to the community, Salesforce is shown to put a higher emphasis on transmitting how they

contribute to women's equality and development not only in their company but also when engaging in nonprofit actions that promote this in society. An example of these messages can be seen in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Salesforce post, with the function of showing their contribution to the community and using the format of a testimonial (Salesforce, 2020).

In contrast, Amazon focuses in the majority of its femvertising content on *recruitment actions* and female talent attraction. An example of this can be seen in Figure 2.

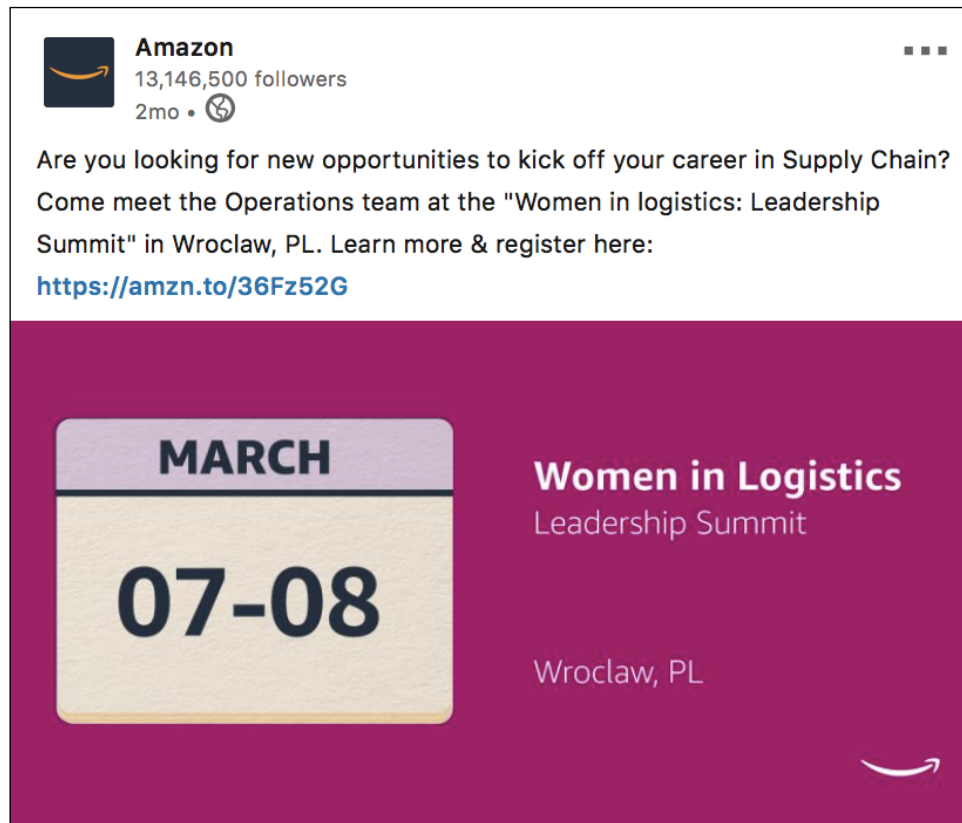


Figure 2. Amazon post, with the function of being a recruitment action and using the format of an off-line company action (Amazon, 2020).

In third place, with regard to the post elements that each femvertising post features, all the companies equally included *video content* in one-quarter of their posts (see Figure 3). To a greater extent, all four companies included *testimonials* (see Figure 1, Figure 4, and Figure 5) of women sharing their stories inside and outside the company in more than half of their posts. In terms of *off-line company actions*, Amazon engages to a greater extent in sharing gender-related off-line actions carried out by the company such as recruitment days, production of reports, and event management (see Figure 2).

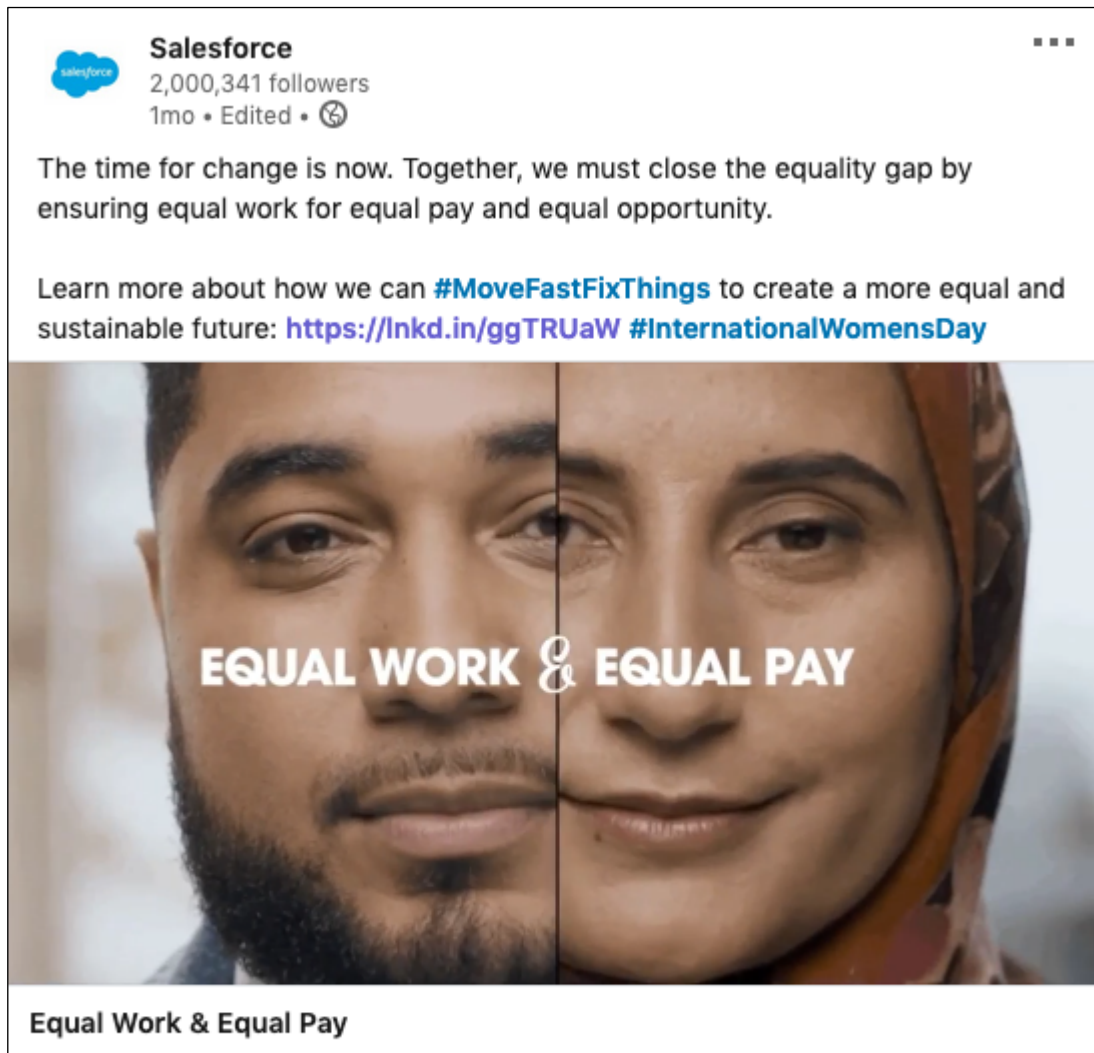


Figure 3. Salesforce post in the employer femvertising category of gender equality, using the format of a video (Salesforce, 2020).



Figure 4. Amazon post in the employer femvertising category of gender equality, using the format of an off-line company action (Amazon, 2020).

Gender equality awareness is also shown in testimonials by managers that highlight the importance of gender equality and in videos created by a company showing company commitment to gender equality (see Figure 3).

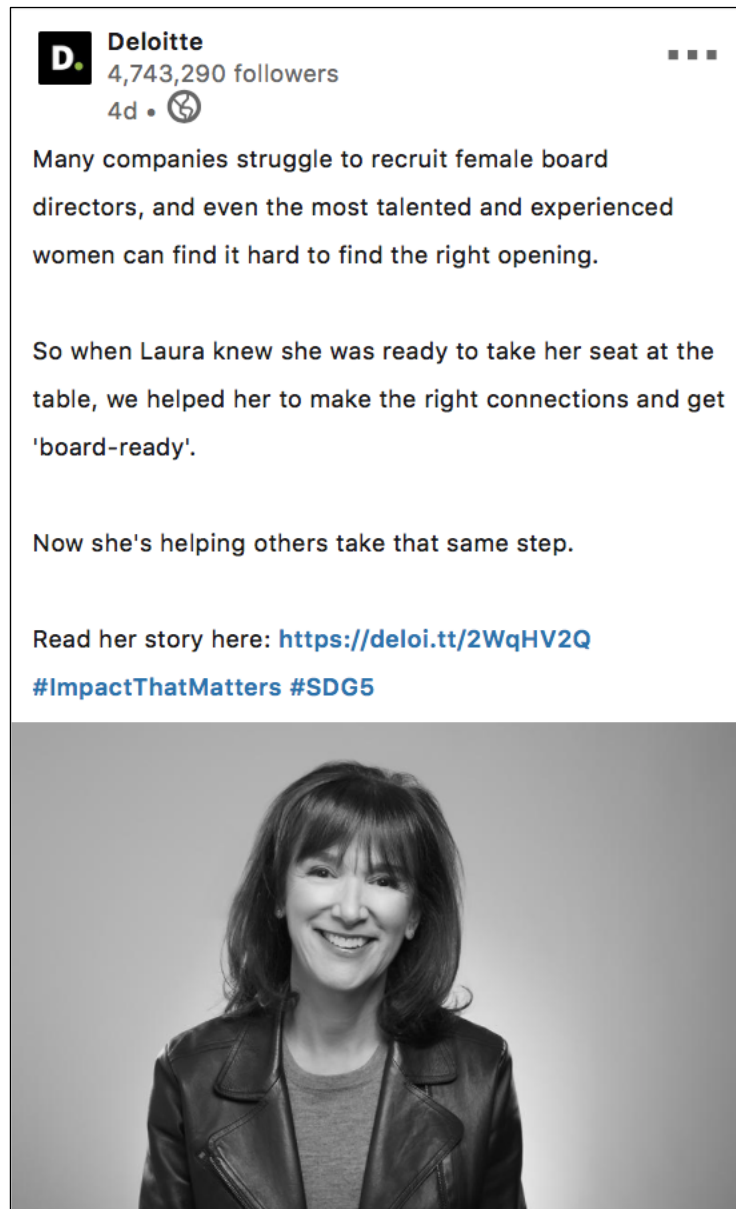


Figure 5. Deloitte post in the employer femvertising category of female leadership, using the format of a testimonial (Deloitte, 2020).

Lastly, regarding their content, the employer femvertising posts have been classified into categories. The results show that all five proposed categories are found in the LinkedIn posts of the analyzed companies (see Figure 6). The first aspect to be noted is that one single post can be placed in more than one category. The category of promoting *gender equality* and communicating the engagement of the

company toward this cause includes more than 50% of the posts published by the four companies studied, with Amazon and Salesforce being the ones leading this category. The four companies published content related to the employer femvertising category of encouraging *female leadership*. The category of promoting *inclusive recruitment* is also used by all the studied companies, with a higher presence in the posts by Amazon and Deloitte. When it comes to contributing to *female talent growth*, this category was also found, specifically in content posted by Amazon and Deloitte. Finally, the category of promoting *work-life balance* is the one being used the least, and present in a few posts by Amazon and Salesforce.

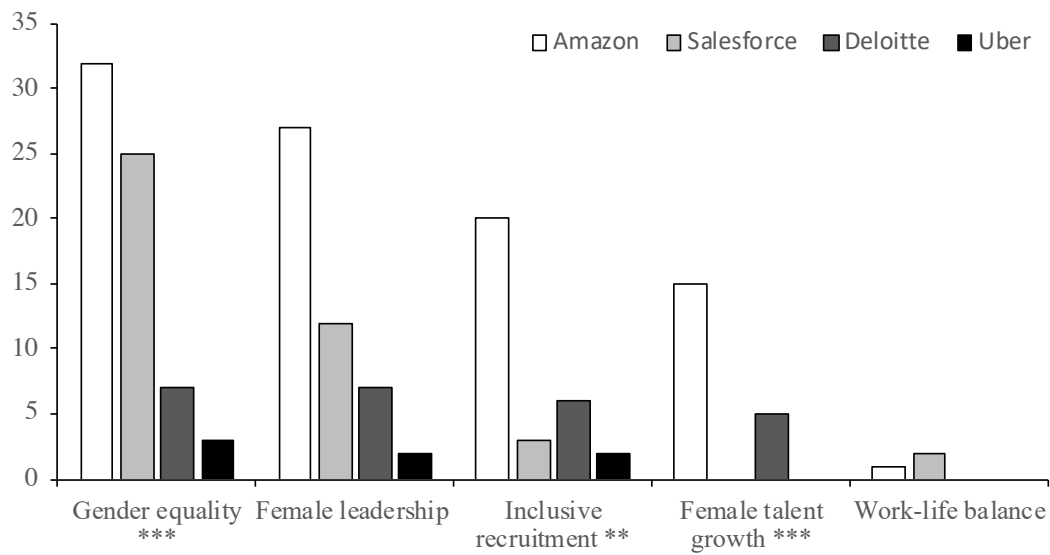


Figure 6. Categories in the employer femvertising posts by a company (frequencies), $n = 89$.

An in-depth analysis of the posts featuring each employer femvertising category will be presented below, and a summary of the proposed taxonomy can be found in Table 2.

Table 2. Proposed Taxonomy for Employer Femvertising Content.

Category	Content
Gender equality	Gender equality practices Gender equality awareness
Female leadership	Female leader role models Female empowerment and professional advice
Inclusive recruitment	Employment of a diverse workforce Attracting women to the company Attracting women to the industry
Female talent growth	Professional journey of female employees Actions that promote female growth opportunities
Work-life balance	Flexible schedule Ability to balance

Gender Equality

The category of *gender equality* is addressed by companies using two types of posts. First, there are posts addressing *gender equality practices*. This can be found in testimonials of women in leadership positions that describe their personal experience, and highlight company practices devoted to ensuring gender equality (see Figure 7).

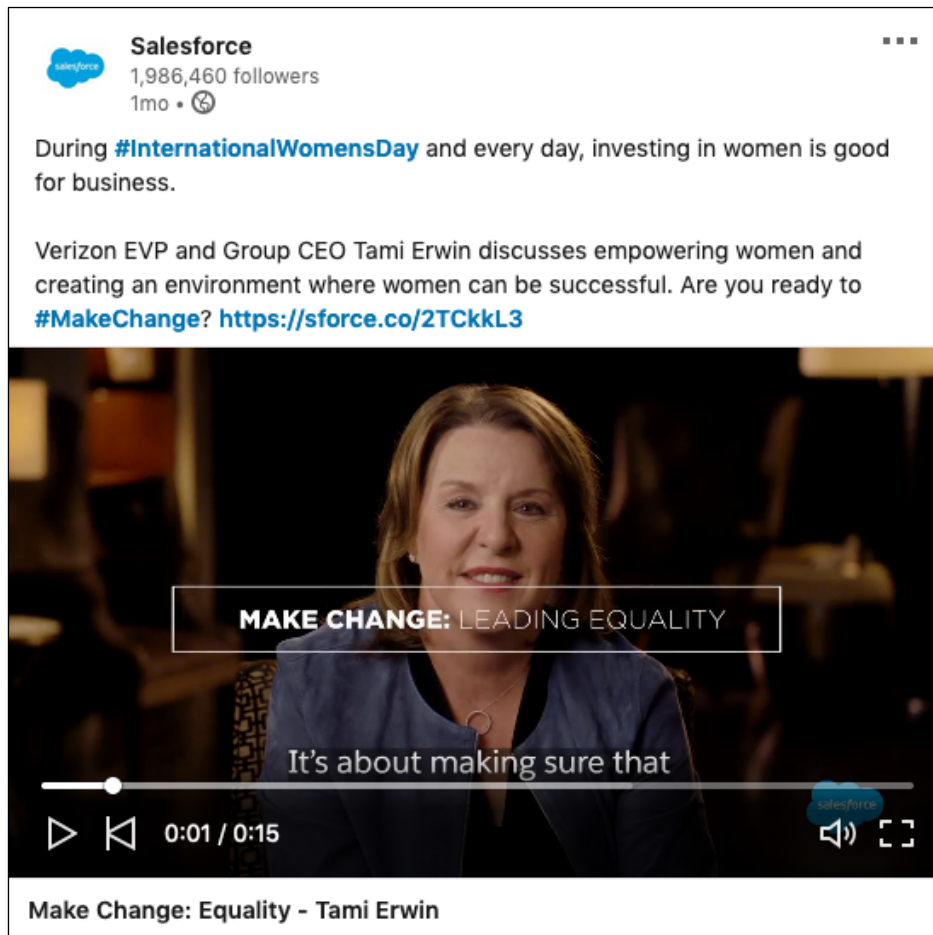


Figure 7. Salesforce post in the employer femvertising category of gender equality, using the formats of a testimonial and a video (Salesforce, 2020).

The second type of post is the one that focuses on *gender equality awareness*. These posts consist of descriptions of actions developed by the company that contribute to increasing awareness regarding gender equality. An example can be found in Figure 4, which shows a panel discussion organized by the company to foster an inclusive culture.

Gender equality awareness is also shown in testimonials by managers that highlight the importance of gender equality and in videos created by a company showing company commitment to gender equality (see Figure 3).

Female Leadership

Companies in two types of posts address female leadership. First, there are posts showing *female leader role models*. These can be found in the testimonials of women who succeed in leadership positions. An example can be found in Figure 5, where a board director shares her experience and the challenges she overcame.

The second type of post focuses on *female empowerment and professional advice*. These posts consist of testimonials by female leaders from the company, including recommendations for women. An example of this can be found in Figure 8, which shows a testimonial from a senior leader sharing specific advice for young women.

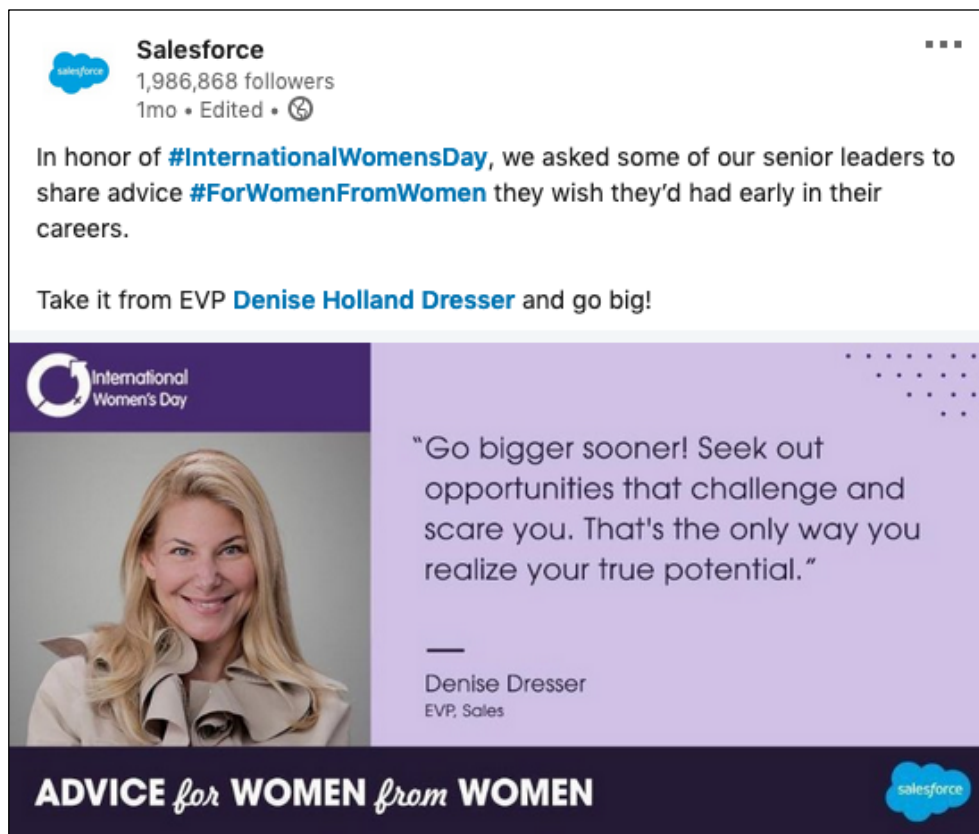


Figure 8. Salesforce post in the employer femvertising category of female leadership, using the format of a testimonial (Salesforce, 2020).

Inclusive Recruitment

Companies in three types of posts address the employer femvertising category of inclusive treatment. First, these posts are addressing the fact that the company is already *employing a diverse workforce* where women and men are hired similarly for every position. An example of this type of post can be seen in Figure 4. These posts usually feature images and videos showing women or groups of men and women.

The second type of post includes those *attracting women* to the company and encouraging them to apply to a position in it. An example of this type of post can be seen in Figure 2. As the image shows, these posts usually include a link that directs the applicant to a recruitment website or a specific recruitment offer.

The third type of post includes that *attract women to an industry* or a position that has been traditionally male dominated, such as technology (Prescott & Bogg, 2011), or science (Katila & Meriläinen, 2002). An example of this type of post can be seen in Figure 9, where a female leader in the technology industry is quoted as saying, "Marketing and technology have long been male-dominated fields" (Salesforce, 2020). Attracting women to industry posts can also usually be classified in the *gender equality* category, as they incorporate hashtags such as #WomenforWomen, or in the *female leadership* category, incorporating elements such as a testimonial from a woman that succeeded in the industry, as in the case of Figure 9.

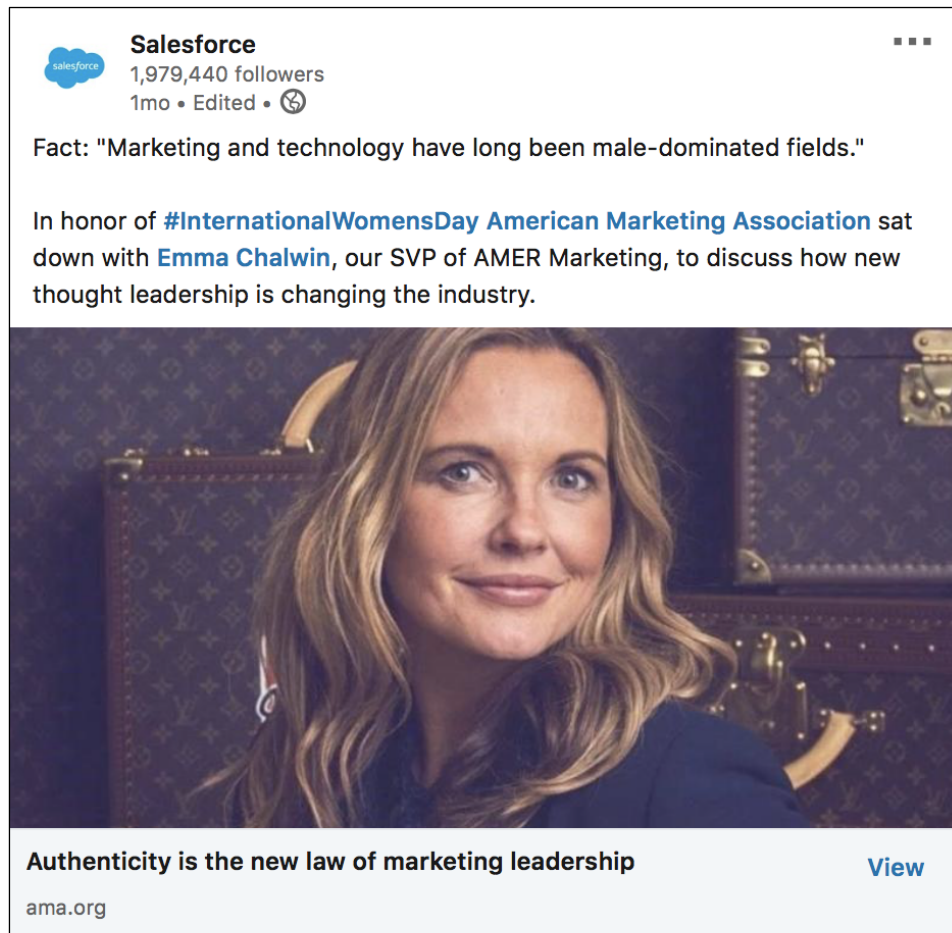


Figure 9. Salesforce post in the employer femvertising category of inclusive recruitment and female leadership, using the format of a testimonial (Salesforce, 2020).

Female Talent Growth

The category of *female talent growth* comprises two types of posts. First, there are posts that are addressing *female employees' professional journeys*. They can be found in testimonials from women that describe their personal experience, highlighting the career development opportunities that the company offered them (see Figure 10).

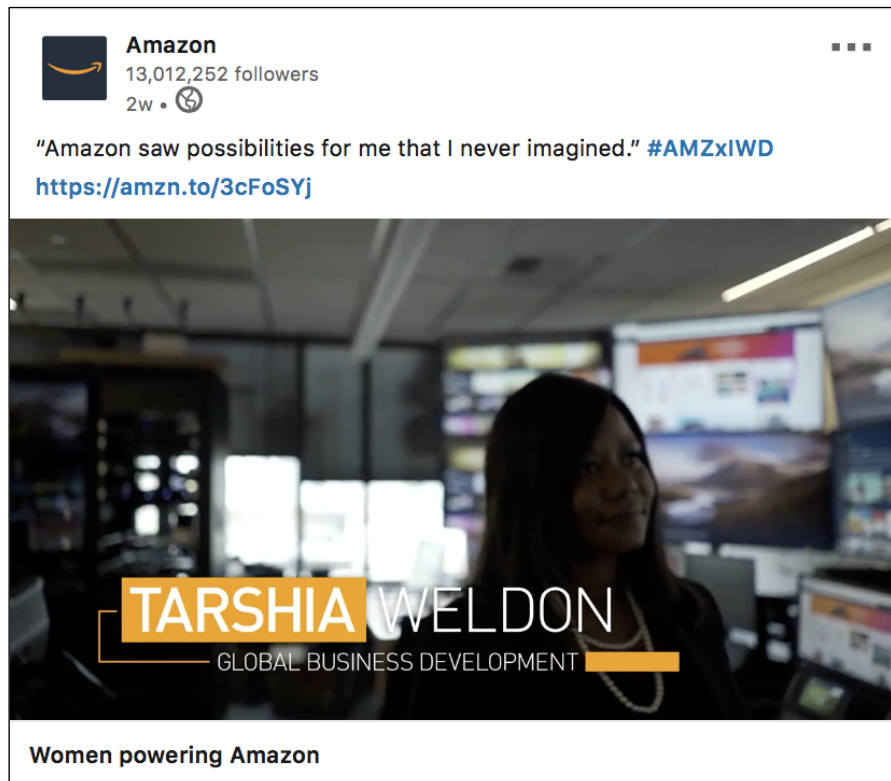


Figure 10. Amazon post in the employer femvertising category of female talent growth, using the formats of a testimonial and a video (Amazon, 2020).

The second type of post is the one that focuses on *actions that promote female growth opportunities*. These posts consist of descriptions of actions developed by the company that contribute to the community by fostering career opportunities for women, but not necessarily within their company. An example of this can be found in Figure 11, which describes the workshops organized by the company to empower young women through technology in South Africa.

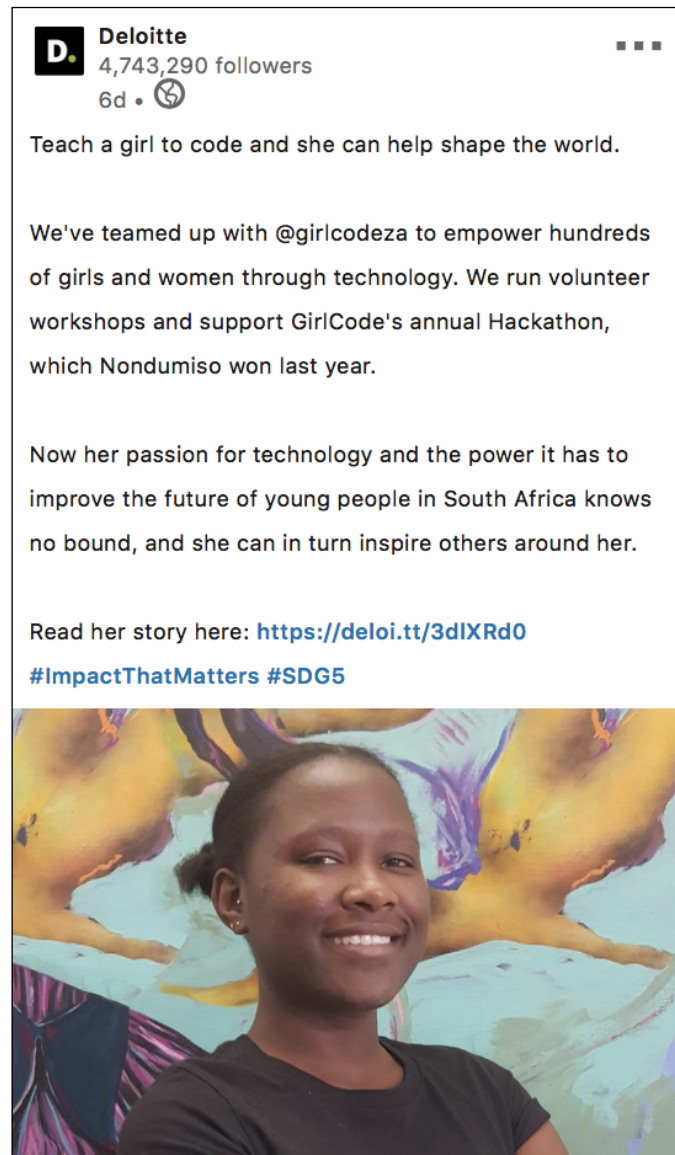


Figure 11. Deloitte post in the employer femvertising category of female talent growth, using the formats of a testimonial and an off-line company action (Deloitte, 2020).

Work-life Balance

Two types of posts form the work-life balance category. First, some posts are addressing the fact that the company offers a *flexible schedule*, an attribute which is listed among others when enumerating the benefits provided by the company. This can be found in a job description or in a testimonial by a woman who states the advantages of working in the company. However, this attribute does not stand out among others.

The second type of post is the one that focuses on the *ability to balance* personal and work responsibilities that women who work for the company experience. These posts consist of testimonials of women relating their personal experiences in a video or a written interview. An example of this can be found in Figure 12, where a Deloitte employee explains how she was able to take several years off to take care of her responsibilities, and she was able to rejoin the company with a personalized career path that was adapted to meet her needs.

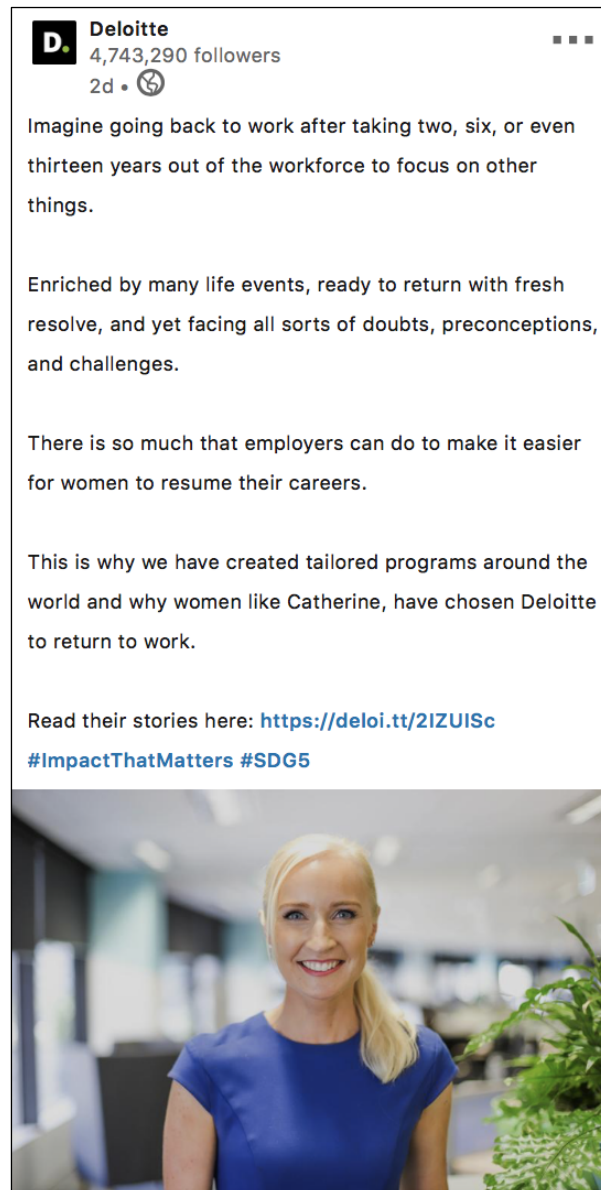


Figure 12. Deloitte post in the employer femvertising category of work-life balance, using the format of a testimonial (Deloitte, 2020).

Conclusion

The main contributions of this study are twofold. First, the concept of *employer femvertising* was proposed for the first time as a tool for female talent attraction that companies use to position their employer brand by showing their commitment to women empowerment. The social media content analysis conducted

to analyze the messages of four top employer companies on LinkedIn revealed that the four companies employed employer femvertising in their employer brand development on LinkedIn. The companies included profemale talent messages and imagery to empower women in achieving their career goals. The content included company information, their contribution to the community, and recruitment actions.

Second, different categories of employer femvertising in social media employer branding campaigns are shown, and a taxonomy of five categories is proposed: *gender equality*, *female leadership*, *inclusive recruitment*, *female talent growth*, and *work-life balance*. Each category comprises different functions and formats, and it is observed that one single post can be classified in more than one category at once. The most featured category is *gender equality*, found in posts with a focus on the company's gender equality practices and in posts raising gender equality awareness. *Female leadership* was found in posts showing female leader role models and featuring messages from these female leaders related to empowerment and advice. *Inclusive recruitment* was featured in posts showing that the company is employing a diverse workforce, posts encouraging women to apply for the company, and posts to attract women to a traditionally male-dominated industry. *Female talent growth* was observed in posts describing employees' professional journeys and presenting actions of the company focused on increasing women's growth opportunities. Finally, the least used category is *work-life balance*, found in posts that highlight the company's offer of a flexible schedule and the ability of their employees to balance their personal and professional responsibilities. The use of work-life balance is the least observed category in employer femvertising. This can be explained by two facts. The first one is that work-family balance is no longer exclusively perceived as a female issue, and therefore messages tackling this problem are addressed to potential employees regardless of their gender. The second one is that working hours and flexibility are part of the job description, and job descriptions are barely shared in online posts as they are subject to negotiation.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

This research is not without limitations. Although function, format, and category of the employment femvertising messages were reviewed in the analyses, our study did not include information about sectorial and customer segmentation, nor the consequences of using women empowerment messages in employer brand communication strategies. Along these lines, the identification and introduction of the employer femvertising concept opens up a vast horizon of novel avenues of research in the domains of employer branding, communication, talent attraction, and human resource management.

First, because of the limitations of the sample and the exploratory nature of the present research, this study was unable to capture significant differences among different companies in terms of the use of employer femvertising in the context of their employer branding strategy. Future work should explore how companies in different sectors make use of this content and whether significant differences exist across industries. The sample used in this study was cross-sectional, capturing the first term of 2020. Future work should explore the differences in the communication of employer brand messages across time and see how the incorporation of employer femvertising has evolved and consolidated in them. This research could respond to interesting research questions, such as whether those industries that are currently male dominated put a higher effort in attracting women, or which are the sectors where employer femvertising is used the most and the least often and the reasons behind those patterns.

Moreover, our findings show differences across the companies about the employer femvertising categories used. However, again, the nature of the sample does not allow us to observe the significance of these differences. Future research should further explore them as relevant insights can be found. For example, though some companies might focus on inclusive recruitment strategies to encourage women to apply to their job offers, others could adopt female leadership strategies where they use testimonials from current female managers who share their success stories to attract female talent to the industry. In future, we should address which strategies are more efficient for each industry and applicant profile to craft successful segmentation strategies and use the right message and tone in employer brand communication.

Finally, our study focuses on the existence and taxonomy of employer femvertising, but it does not address its effectiveness or consequences. As has been indicated, attracting female talent and hiring a diverse workforce can lead to a better performance for both firms and employees, so subsequent research should focus on the impact that employer femvertising messages have both on the employer brand image of the firm and on female talent attraction. Future studies should consider analyzing attitudes, comments, and job application behaviors that result from employer femvertising to gather more information about the impact and audience of this content.

To conclude, the present study provides a case study that contributes to our understanding of employer brand messages by recognizing the existence of employer femvertising and its taxonomy. Research has yet to examine the impact of such messages on employer attractiveness and explore differences across industries, time, and applicant profiles.

References

- Abitbol, A., & Sternadori, M. (2016). You act like a girl: An examination of consumer perceptions of femvertising. *Quarterly Review of Business Disciplines*, 3(2), 117–128. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/4y6s0>
- Akestam, N., Rosengren, S., & Dahlen, M. (2017). Advertising “like a girl:” Toward a better understanding of “femvertising” and its effects. *Psychology and Marketing*, 34(8), 795–806. doi:10.1002/mar.21023
- Alnıaçık, E., & Alnıaçık, Ü. (2012). Identifying dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding: Effects of age, gender, and current employment status. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 58, 1336–1343. doi:10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.09.1117
- Amaram, D. I. (2019). Attracting and retaining women talent in the global labor market: A review. *Journal of Human Resources*, 7(1), 1–10. doi:10.15640/jhrmls.v7n1a1
- Amazon (2020). Company profile. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/company/amazon/>

- Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(3), 185–206. doi:10.1057/bm.1996.42
- Awan, A. (2017). *The power of LinkedIn's 500 million member community*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://blog.linkedin.com/2017/april/24/the-power-of-linkedins-500-million-community>
- Backhaus, K. B., & Tikoo, S. (2004). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9(5), 501–517. doi:10.1108/13620430410550754
- Barbulescu, R., & Bidwell, M. (2013). Do women choose different jobs from men? Mechanisms of application segregation in the market for managerial workers. *Organization Science*, 24(3), 645–964. doi:10.1287/orsc.1120.0757
- Baxter, A. (2015). Faux activism in recent female-empowering advertising. *The Elon Journal of Undergraduate Research in Communications*, 6(1), 48–58. <https://cutt.ly/zhigYut>
- Becker-Herby, E. (2016). *The rise of femvertising: Authentically reaching female consumers* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/11299/181494>
- Bellou, V., Rigopoulou, I., & Kehagias, J. (2015). Employer of choice: Does gender matter? *Gender in Management: An International Journal*, 30(8), 616–634. doi:10.1108/GM-01-2015-0004
- Berthon, P., Ewing, M., & Hah, L. L. (2005). Captivating company: Dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding. *International Journal of Advertising*, 24(2), 151–172. doi:10.1080/02650487.2005.11072912
- Chang, S. E., Liu, A. Y., & Shen, W. C. (2017). User trust in social networking services: A comparison of Facebook and LinkedIn. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 69, 207–217. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.12.013
- Collins, C. J., & Stevens, C. K. (2002). The relationship between early recruitment-related activities and the application decisions of new labor-market entrants: A brand equity approach to recruitment. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(6), 1121–1133. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1121
- Daily, C. M., Certo, S. T., & Dalton, D. R. (1999). A decade of corporate women: Some progress in the boardroom, none in the executive suite. *Strategic Management Journal*, 20(1), 93–99. Retrieved from [https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/\(SICI\)1097-0266\(199901\)20:1%3C93::AID-SMJ18%3E3.0.CO;2-7](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/(SICI)1097-0266(199901)20:1%3C93::AID-SMJ18%3E3.0.CO;2-7)
- Deloitte. (2020). Company profile. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/company/deloitte/>

- Dezsö, C. L., & Ross, D. G. (2012). Does female representation in top management improve firm performance? A panel data investigation. *Strategic Management Journal*, 33(9), 1072–1089. doi:10.1002/smj.1955
- Drake, V. E. (2017). The impact of female empowerment in advertising (femvertising). *Journal of Research in Marketing*, 7(3), 593–599. doi:10.17722/jorm.v7i3.199.g76
- Edwards, M. R. (2010). An integrative review of employer branding and OB theory. *Personnel Review*, 39(1), 5–23. doi:10.1108/00483481011012809
- Eger, L., Mičík, M., & Řehoř, P. (2018). Employer branding on social media and recruitment websites: Symbolic traits of an ideal employer. *Economics and Management*, 21(1), 224–237. doi:10.15240/tul/001/2018-1-015
- Ely, R. J., & Meyerson D. E. (2000). Theories of gender in organizations: A new approach to organizational analysis and change. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 22, 103–151. doi:10.1016/S0191-3085(00)22004-2
- Ewing, M. T., Pitt, L. F., De Bussy, N. M., & Berthon, P. (2002). Employment branding in the knowledge economy. *International Journal of Advertising*, 21(1), 3–22. doi:10.1080/02650487.2002.11104914
- Feng, Y., Cheng, H., & He, L. (2019). Consumer responses to femvertising: A data-mining case of Dove's "campaign for real beauty" on YouTube. *Journal of Advertising*, 48(3), 292–301. doi:10.1080/00913367.2019.1602858
- Great Place to Work. (2020). *Ranking best workplaces 2020*. Retrieved from <https://greatplacetowork.es/mejores-empresas-para-trabajar-20/>
- Henard, D. H., & Rossetti, C. L. (2014). All you need is love? Communication insights from pop music's number-one hits. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 54(2), 178–191. doi:10.2501/jar-54-2-178-191
- Herbold, J., & Douma, B. (2013). Students' use of social media for job seeking. *CPA Journal*, 83(4), 68–71.
- Hirsch, P. M. (2017). Venture labor and media work: The canary has flown. *International Journal of Communication*, 11, 2053–2055. Retrieved from <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/7288>
- Kapoor, D., & Munjal, A. (2019). Self-consciousness and emotions driving femvertising: A path analysis of women's attitude towards femvertising, forwarding intention, and purchase intention. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 25(2), 137–157. doi:10.1080/13527266.2017.1338611
- Kassarjian, H. H. (1977). Content analysis in consumer research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 4(1), 8–18. doi:10.1086/208674

- Katila, S., & Meriläinen, S. (2002). A serious researcher or just another nice girl?: Doing gender in a male-dominated scientific community. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 6(3), 163–173. doi:10.1111/1468-0432.00079
- Kissel, P., & Büttgen, M. (2015). Using social media to communicate employer brand identity: The impact on corporate image and employer attractiveness. *Journal of Brand Management*, 22(9), 755–777. doi:10.1057/bm.2015.42
- Lai, L., & To, W. M. (2015). Content analysis of social media: A grounded theory approach. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 16(2), 138–152. Retrieved from <http://www.jecr.org/node/466>
- Lobosco, M. (2019, April 3). *Here are the top companies of 2019*. [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/employer-brand/2019/linkedin-top-companies-2019>
- Lovejoy, K., & Saxton, D. (2012). Information, community, and action: How nonprofit organizations use social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 17(3), 337–353. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2012.01576.x
- Lundkvist, H. (2015). Gender aware employer branding: How to become authentic, unique and attractive. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 10(11), 62–73. doi:10.5539/ijbm.v10n11p62
- Meeks, L., & Howe, W. T. (2020). Manager–employee communication in the #MeToo era: The role of gender similarity and context ambiguity in ethical leadership. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 2464–2482. Retrieved from <https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/13416>
- Neuendorf, K. A. (2016). *The content analysis guidebook*. London, UK: SAGE publications.
- Ng, E. S., & Burke, R. J. (2005). Person-organization fit and the war for talent: Does diversity management make a difference? *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 16(7), 1195–1210. doi:10.1080/09585190500144038
- Peterson, H. (2010). The gendered construction of technical self-confidence: Women’s negotiated positions in male-dominated, technical work settings. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, 2(1), 66–88. Retrieved from <http://genderandset.open.ac.uk/index.php/genderandset/article/view/61>
- Pinto, M. B., & Yagnik, A. (2016). Fit for life: A content analysis of fitness tracker brands use of Facebook in social media marketing. *Journal of Brand Management*, 24(1), 49–67. doi:10.1057/s41262-016-0014-4

- Powell, R. (2014). How ads that empower women are boosting sales and bettering the industry. *Adweek*. Retrieved from <https://www.adweek.com/brand-marketing/how-ads-empower-women-are-boosting-sales-and-bettering-industry-160539/>
- Prescott, J. & Bogg, J. (2011). Segregation in a male-dominated industry: Women working in the computer games industry. *International Journal of Gender, Science and Technology*, 3(1), 205–227. <http://genderandset.open.ac.uk/index.php/genderandset/article/view/122>
- PwC. (2017). *Winning the fight for female talent: How to gain the diversity edge through inclusive recruitment*. Retrieved from <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/about/diversity/iwd/iwd-female-talent-report-web.pdf>
- Randstad. (2019). *Randstad employer brand research 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.randstad.es/employerbranding/estudiosemployerbrand/employer-brand-research-2019/>
- Ratliff, J. M., & Kunz, M. B. (2014). A profile of social media use by Fortune 500 and Inc. 500 corporations. *Academy of Strategic Management Journal*, 13(2), 61. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/0k1fz>
- Riffe, D., Lacy, S., & Fico, F. (1998). *Analyzing media messages: Quantitative content analysis*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Ritson, M. (2002). Marketing and HR collaborate to harness employer brand power. *Campaign*. Retrieved from https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/opinion-marketing-hr-collaborate-harness-employer-brand-power/162068?src_site=marketingmagazine
- Rodríguez Pérez, M. P., & Gutiérrez, M. (2017). Femvertising: Female empowering strategies in recent Spanish commercials. *Investigaciones Feministas*, 8(2), 337–351. doi:10.5209/INFE.54867
- Ronda, L., Abril, C., & Valor, C. (2020). Job choice decisions: Understanding the role of nonnegotiable attributes and trade-offs in effective segmentation. *Management Decision*. Advance online publication. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-10-2019-1472>
- Ronda, L., Valor, C., & Abril, C. (2018). Are they willing to work for you? An employee-centric view to employer brand attractiveness. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 27(5), 573–596. doi:10.1108/JPBM-07-2017-1522
- Salesforce. (2020). Company profile. Retrieved from <https://www.linkedin.com/company/salesforce/>
- Sivertzen, A. M., Nilsen, E. R., & Olafsen, A. H. (2013). Employer branding: Employer attractiveness and the use of social media. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(7), 473–483. doi:10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0393

- Sivulka, J. (2009). *Ad women: How they impact what we need, want, and buy*. Amherst, NY: Prometheus.
- Tanwar, K., & Prasad, A. (2017). Employer brand scale development and validation: A second-order factor approach. *Personnel Review*, *46*(2), 389–409. doi:10.1108/PR-03-2015-0065
- Universum. (2019, April 10). *World's most attractive employers 2019*. Retrieved from <https://universumglobal.com/blog/worlds-most-attractive-employers-2019/>
- Van Knippenberg, D., De Dreu, C. K. W., & Homan, A. C. (2004). Work group diversity and group performance: An integrative model and research agenda. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(6), 1008–1022. doi:10.1037/0021-9010.89.6.1008
- Witzig, L., Spencer, J., & Galvin, M. (2012). Organizations' use of LinkedIn: An analysis of nonprofits, large corporations and small businesses. *Marketing Management Journal*, *22*(1), 113–121. Retrieved from <https://n9.cl/2uud>
- Wright, T. (2015). Women's experience of workplace interactions in male-dominated work: The intersections of gender, sexuality and occupational group. *Gender, Work & Organization*, *23*(3), 348–362. doi:10.1111/gwao.12074