

#IMPACTFUL

The monthly newsletter that deciphers opinion.

Edition #25

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REPORT OF THE MONTH

Shock communication

On your marks, get set, shock!

Have you ever been startled, felt ill at ease or left shocked by a disturbing advertising campaign? If you have, you've maybe been confronted with **shockvertising** (or shock advertising). In short, in the world of communication, shockvertising refers to the use of **shocking content** (often explicit images but not systematically) that evoke strong emotions from their audience (anger, guilt, disgust, fear...). To trigger such impressions, shockvertising doesn't hesitate to **violate norms, ignore traditions or offend moral codes** (with sexual references, blasphemy, vulgarity, obscenity or gratuitous violence).

Why resort to these tactics?

*To grab attention and boost brand recognition,
prompt reaction and conversation*

Campaigns that use disturbing content are all the more effective at a time when the public's attention and engagement are increasingly challenging to grab:

8 seconds

A person's average attention span
(Microsoft, 2015)

1 200

Advertising messages we are exposed to each day
(Think With Google, 2019)

60%

of the population want brands to wow them with
spectacular advertising (Wunderman Thompson, 2023)

REPORT OF THE MONTH

Shock communication

Shocking for a good cause

Shockvertising is a tool often favored by NGOs and public authorities who don't hesitate to expose the **reality of scourges or defendable issues**. Rather responding indifferently to the threat, the injustice or the danger that is represented in a shocking way, the audience is more likely to **change their behavior, especially if the campaign offers an explicit solution**.

”

“[The public] therefore then seeks relief, either by a donation, or by forwarding or sharing the video/photo. It's symbolic reparation for the damage suffered”

Christine Servais, Doctor in the Science of Information and Communication at the University of Liège.

“

To raise awareness about the use of animal testing in cosmetic laboratories, in 2021, the NGO Humane Society International produced a **chilling short film depicting the cruelty and trivialized violence in which a rabbit called Ralph talks about his life as a tester**. The **solution** is clear: stop buying products tested on animals. The animated film won the **Grand Prix for Good at the Cannes Lions in 2022**, got **15 million views** on YouTube and more than **42 million** on Instagram. An image that was as brutal as it was cartoonish - a mix of horror and absurdity - and the gamble paid off, raising public awareness and outrage.



To alert people to the fact that child marriage (a practice that still affects 12 million young girls every year around the world) is still widespread, the NGO, World Vision chose to **raise awareness without using explicit visuals**. By stating **“what we can't see, they live through every day”**, the aim was to **highlight the “unshowable”**, with a **campaign** of 3 print ads and 4 films (2023).

Here again, a **solution** exists to eradicate the practice: make a monthly donation to sponsor a child. By only implying the cruelty of this reality, without actually showing it, the campaign won a **Bronze Lion this year at Cannes**.

REPORT OF THE MONTH

Shock communication

As for brands: gratuitous shocking is a risky business

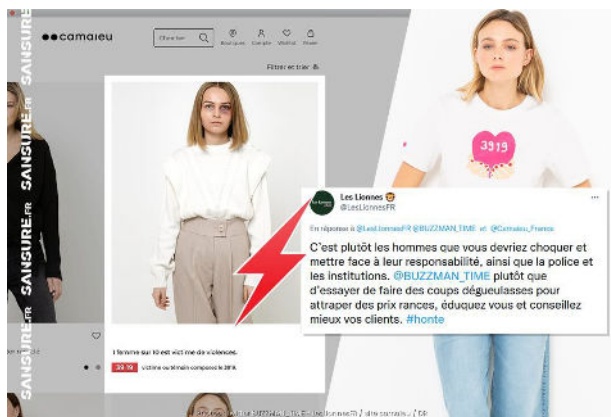
Shocking for a good cause is considered acceptable and relevant. Conversely, the media courtroom harshly judges those who just **shock for shocking's sake**.

In reality, when a brand wants to emerge using shockvertising, it has to be super careful: **"You can surprise, but not disconcert"** (Jacques Séguéla). And the same goes for reputation. Your shock advertising needs to be justified and legitimized, to assert a strong and differentiating position.

Staging a woman being "stoned" with flower petals, the Benetton campaign "End Violence against Women Now!" was very well received by the public, as the brand has defense of universal rights in its DNA (2014).

"I'm not here to sell sweaters, but to promote an image"

Luciano Benetton



Accused of "glamorizing" violence against women, the 2022 Camaieu campaign provoked **media unease**. The brand posted photos of abused women in the place of models on their e-commerce website. On social media, many people judged this level of shock unnecessary. The brand's gaffe was criticized, especially as the images didn't raise awareness for men, the obvious target audience, as they were only shown in the women's shops.

"You really must understand nothing about violence against women to come up with an idea like that."

Tweet from the feminist association Les Lionnes.



THE OMNI EYE

"The decision to choose shockvertising tactics must not be made hastily. A campaign that evokes strong reactions must always come with a risk mitigation plan, in anticipation of possible negative reactions and responses to the brand's controversy."

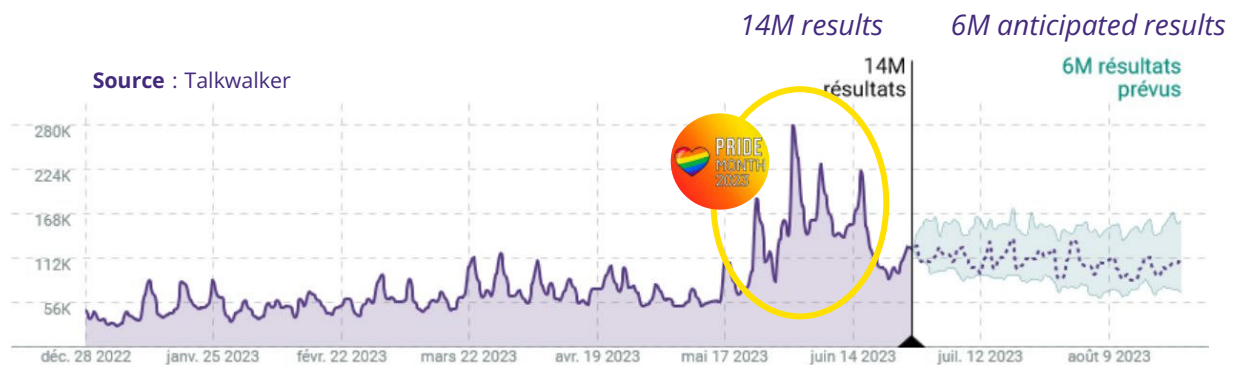
Alexandre Gavard – Head of Issue Management & Crisis, Omnicom PR Group

MEDIA VERSUS REALITY

LGBTQIA+ in the headlines

Media coverage on the increase

Pride Month, celebrated each year in June, represents a great **media spotlight** for LGBTQIA+ communities, their battles and their realities. In parallel, the media coverage of LGBTQIA+ people is on the rise, helping **better facilitate visibility of the diversity of their identities and issues**.



Pride Month constitutes a significant peak in media coverage. Media mentions about the LGBTQIA+ community are up to double the rest of the year.

Certain brands seek to establish themselves as spokespeople of the cause, developing visibility platforms for the LGBTQIA+ communities.



To celebrate Pride Month in 2021, Ikea collaborated with 10 designers to create a range of “love seats” representing the diversity of LGBTQIA+ identities. The line featured the “pansexual couch” and the “asexual couch” among others, with the aim of representing all members of the community and their respective nuances.

MEDIA VERSUS REALITY

LGBTQIA+ in the headlines

Media handling called into question

Even though the visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community is on the rise in the media, their representation remains inadequate or even problematic. Specifically, content that recreates **reductive stereotypes** and confines the LGBTQIA+ community to **standardized models**. The topics covered remain focused around **news items and stories of abuse** and are, still too often, presented in a way that is **anecdotal, sensationalist or entertaining**.

In February 2023, the AJL (the French LGBTI association of journalists) published **"Trans identity: from the invisibilization to a media obsession"**, a study observing the way online news media outlets handle trans identity. It reveals that **half of the articles about transgender identity are approximate, erroneous, or even disrespectful**.



Reserved for subscribers

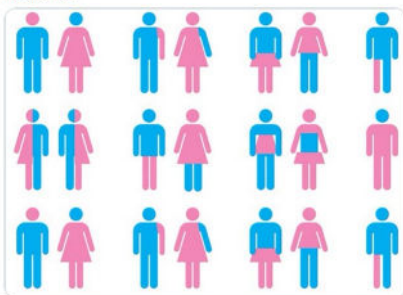
When **transsexuals** want the erasure of women

This article, published in October 2022 in French daily Le Figaro, uses the term "transsexual" (an abandoned designation which refers back to outdated medical understanding), underlining a lack of journalistic knowledge around transgender identity. Furthermore, the title itself is controversial and, in fact, contributes to the (re)circulation of anti-LGBTQIA+ terms and representations.



THERE ARE MORE THAN 2 GENDERS.

Traduire le Tweet



Brands and companies also make mistakes... in February 2023, Terror Alarm, a company specialized in the prevention of terrorist attacks, posted a tweet that was supposed to celebrate the diversity of genders: "There are more than 2 genders". The tweet was described as nonsensical by the LGBTQIA+ community, returning to the reductive dichotomy between "blue boy" and "pink girl" and the company was accused of pinkwashing, having not understood the stakes and grievances of the community.



THE OMNI EYE

"Subjects linked to the LGBTQIA+ community are politically charged, effectively sparking polarized opinions. Brands that endorse pioneering roles inspire debate among larger audiences, even when their initiatives are clumsy. These debates, which are then reported in the media, gradually helping to reflect the diversity of issues affecting LGBTQIA+ people."

Gaëtan Peret – Strategic Planner, Omnicom PR Group

EMERGING SIGNALS, STRONG SIGNALS

Are chatbots finally up to the job?

Conversing like a human being, a promise now met...

In **1966**, computer scientists at MIT created the very first chatbot called **ELIZA**, a conversational agent limited to simple programming language. Years later, thanks to the introduction of innovations like **Natural Language Processing** and **Artificial Intelligence**, virtual assistants have become capable of **simulating real human behavior**. "Advanced contextual chatbots" rely on AI to fuel conversation with appropriate and personalized suggestions (like ChatGPT), replacing "simple chatbots" that interact using prewritten keywords and pre-recorded replies.

...therefore making it possible to move into new territory, like that of public utility

As they offer increasingly sophisticated features, new stakeholders – institutions, public authorities, specialized companies – are investing in these virtual agents.



To inform people about all the benefits available in the Paris region, Valérie Pécresse, President of the Regional Council of Ile de France, aims to develop a chatbot for all Ile de France residents so they can **"find their way around the jungle of the welfare system"**. Due to their memory skills and exceptional data processing capacities, virtual assistants will be able to respond more efficiently and precisely than a human operator.

Pecresse: a chatbot for the benefits system in the Paris region

To assist in the administrative tasks, the **start-up, IA Medical, launches ALIX**, a chatbot designed to give advice to caregivers of patients with Alzheimer's. As well as supplying personalized advice and tips, the virtual assistant is able to identify specific needs of each patient and even to simplify and accelerate the search for financial aid.



THE OMNI EYE

"Let's stop putting man and machine in opposition of each other. Are organizations, after the all-human and the all-digital, finally on their way to finding a fair balance? The future belongs to "augmented" agents, whose emotional intelligence can be complemented by technology. Let's assume that it is this understanding, the quintessence of humanity, which will make the distinction when chatbots reach maturity."

Eugénie Dautel – Senior Account Manager, Tech Division, Omnicom PR Group

LAST BUT NOT LEAST

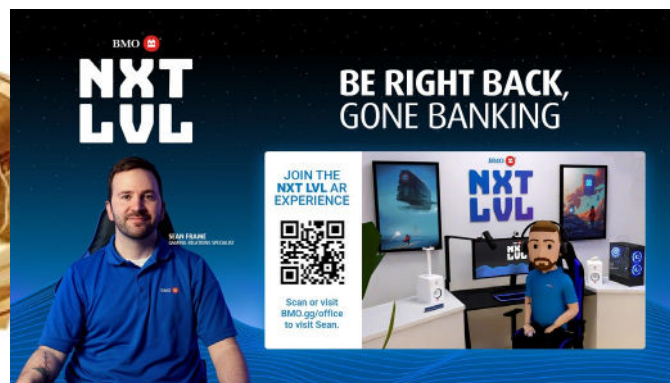
Cannes Lions 2023: video games in the limelight

For its 70th edition, the **Cannes Lions festival inaugurated the Entertainment Lions for Gaming**, a new category celebrating campaigns that “connect people to brands through **gameplay**”. With the advent of augmented reality and the metaverse, the number of winners linked to video games has increased by 74% over the last five years. The launch of this award is therefore indicative of the “**gamification**” of **society**. The increase in investment from brands in video games and their universe, represents a growing lever for engagement.

CANNES LIONS



“**Los Santos + 3 degrees**”, a replica of Los Angeles, launched on GTA in February 2022, won a **Gold Lion** in this brand-new category celebrating the world of gaming. Flooded buildings, climate refugees, destruction of ecosystems: it raises Brazilians’ awareness of the potential consequences of global warming. **Greenpeace and VMLY&R Brazil** are offering an immersive virtual experience, set in the heart of Los Angeles, showing what could become of the city, if no action is taken to curb climate change.



Gaming is also widely represented in the other Cannes Lions categories. Winning a **Gold Lion in the “Creative Commerce” category** for their campaign “**NXT LVL**”, **FCB and the Bank of Montreal** spotlighted video games by reinventing the customer/bank relationship. The bank opened a branch on Twitch in May 2022 and employed a “**gaming relations specialist**” to talk about personal banking problems: a world first for a financial institution.

WANT TO TALK?

For any advice or guidance, please contact the
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