

Always #LikeAGirl Campaign
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Introduction

When you think of social media you are not likely thinking about feminine hygiene products or the brand that sells them. When you are scrolling through any of the social media platforms you are probably not hoping to see advertisements at all, let alone images of pads or feminine wipes. There is certainly a stigma that surrounds menstruation and the many things that can be paired with it— hygiene products, changes in mood or behavior, being a woman. While women continue to break barriers across societal expectations, they still face challenges because of their femininity. Making the transition into womanhood can be a difficult internal journey for young girls to face, let alone begin to face down the external pressures placed on them by our culture. The pad company Always decided that these young girls should not have to take up that task on their own. A video advertisement was filmed to begin their campaign on YouTube to change the definition of the derogatory phrase “like a girl.” Always intended to use the large reach of social media to attempt to turn the tide on this negative female connotation and change the perceptions of what it means to be “like a girl.”

Literature Review

When Always started to feel pressure from their competition targeting the young audiences they knew they needed to change their strategy. In a paper by Anna Coscia, an employee from the Leo Burnett agency that worked with Always to create this campaign, she discusses just that. Previously, Always was not marketing themselves in any differentiated manner. Coscia states that “Communication has also been traditionally functional...” and how “brands have historically fought over product superiority.” (Coscia, 2016, p. 2). The reason this was no longer sufficient, according to Coscia, was that Always’s competitors began to step

outside of the typical feminine hygiene product advertisement formula. The formula was simple: have a woman that was “on her period” doing something in the advertisement that might not be an activity that normally comes to mind for those who are, in fact, on their period. See **Figures 1.1 and 1.2** for examples of advertisements of this nature.

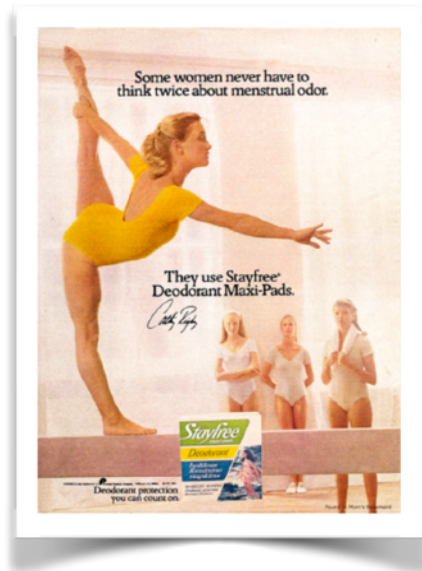


Figure 1.1 Shows a gymnast performing her routine with the help and protection of Stayfree. Posted from *Found in Mom's Basement* by P. Zargaj-Reynolds 2008 retrieved from <http://pzrservices.typepad.com/vintageadvertising/2008/09/1982-ad-for-sta.html>. Copyright 2003-2017 Typepad, Inc.



Figure 1.2 Shows a woman hiking while on her period with no visible worries about the man being able to notice. Posted on *Flashbak* by Y. Lowbrow 2014 retrieved from <http://flashbak.com/vintage-adverts-feminine-hygiene-a-go-go-1246/>. Copyright 2017 Alum Media Ltd.

Coscia continues to describe how these tactics were losing steam claiming there was research that pointed to female consumers growing irritated of such “stereotypical feminine care advertising.” (Coscia, 2016, p.2). Always needed a change.

Emotional Connections to your Consumer: Finding a Fitting Cause

At the core of the company, Always seeks to instill confidence within their consumers. Up until this campaign, this confidence usually resulted from reliable products providing the protection a woman needed to go through her day as normal. In order to produce a campaign that would be distinguishable they needed to think beyond the “female empowerment” that was already being leveraged by other brands (Coscia 2016). At the intersection of their new target audience, the young girl not yet committed to a brand, and their company’s pillar of instilling confidence in their consumer, they found their niche. Young women riding the roller coaster of puberty and having confidence in themselves. Coscia writes about this being one of the first times in a girl’s life when she starts to realize what the gender roles are and the stereotypes that seep into their lives (2016, p. 5). The resulting campaign #LikeAGirl was their effort to help society confront the gender stereotypes in hopes of restoring confidence in women and bringing positivity to the phrase.

The emotional connection was now developed and strong. Keeping in mind that self-esteem is one factor that can be used to estimate certain life results and higher feelings of self-esteem are related to those results such as “occupational success, social relationships, well-being, positive perceptions by peers, academic achievement, and improved coping skills” (Biro, F. M., Striegel-Moore, R. H., Franko, D. L., Padgett, J., Bean, J. A., 2005, p. 501). Conversely, lower feelings of self-esteem can be “associated with adverse outcomes, such as depression, substance abuse, and antisocial behavior” (Biro et al, 2005, p. 501). Any person regardless of gender would then be concerned for aspects of society that can shape the way you feel about yourself

given these implications stated above. Therefore, Always found an issue that deals with how young women feel now, how they could feel in the future, and how the rest of the world feels about them during the time in between. This holistic approach is broad enough to make sense to the brand's support, as well as specified enough to connect with their target audience.

Using Social Media to Build Brand Relevancy

Before embarking on a social media marketing strategy there are quite a few things to consider. Jack Yan wrote in a piece found in the *Journal of Brand Management* about 9 goals of social media branding and they are as follows:

(a) build a sense of membership or citizenship with the organization, (b) encourage the acceptance and communication of brand values, and (c) encourage the audience to engage in dialogue and promote the brand. Strategically, that dialogue can (d) help the organization find and maintain a competitive advantage; (e) inform the vision behind the brand and build differentiation for it; and (f) act as a check on whether the brand is being properly communicated and understood by the audiences. The consequences are to (g) build positive brand associations, (h) build the perceived quality of the brand, and (i) build greater awareness of the brand to audiences that it has not yet reached.” (Yan 2011 p. 691-692).

As advertisers and marketers catch up with innovation and the data available to them now, we are living in a time when we will see how people try to address each of these goals. How does a company use social media to these ends? Preceding the meeting where your company tries to tackle these kinds of questions you must ask yourselves: who are my customers, are they on social media, which platforms would it make sense for us to connect with them? Always drew

upon their research and confronted the dilemma they faced: connecting with the youngest part of their female demographic in a fresh and “much more emotional” manner (Coscia, 2016, p.3).

After deciding on the message and call to action, they filmed a short video to call out the negative gendered stereotyping surrounding the phrase “like a girl.” Coscia shares how they chose YouTube “as the main vehicle, given its ability to drive mass awareness.” (Coscia, 2016, p. 6). Now, YouTube was not the only mechanism at play. The article goes on to note that there were paid posts on other networks. When you consider that “Both genders, and netizens under 45 years of age, will tend to visit social networks heavily as part of their daily online usage...” it is easy to see why you need to contemplate where your audience is online and cover your digital bases (Yan 2011 p.690). Brands become involved on this more personal level with consumers because “They satisfy a need: the desire of engagement with a brand they wish to be associated with” (Yan 2011 p.690).

Gary Vaynerchuck wrote a piece discussing the importance of video content as a part of a marketing strategy and in it he touches on a point that speaks volumes to why/how social media strategies can be really effective. He said the following:

The truth is, people respond to effort. When a celebrity favorites your tweet, you get excited. Someone you admire likes a photo of yours on Instagram, it makes you feel good. Because, in reality, it's not about the 100th of a second it takes to double tap that photo — it's about the fact that they looked at your profile. They chose a photo. They saw it. And they “liked” it. That interaction, which takes all of 5 or 6 seconds, really touches people in a way that is unique to the powers that be on social (Vaynerchuck, 2015).

Knowing the power of social media and that ultimately consumers want to be part of your company's conversation, Always made an effort to "drive engagement and participation, we leveraged the hashtag #LikeAGirl, which appears at the end of the video, as a call to action, and asked women to tweet all the amazing things they do '#LikeAGirl'"(Coscia, 2016, p. 7).

Analysis and Observations

The Target Audience

In an industry looking to serve women with feminine hygiene products it is essential that you can connect with the young portion of this target audience because of the attrition of dedicated consumers due to their onset and completion of menopause. The younger portion of the women's demographic is especially important when you consider that research that shows "women tend to stay very loyal once they find a brand they like." (Coscia, 2016, p.2). Basically, once a young women finds a product she likes, she is likely to use that product consistency throughout having her period until she stops getting it. As previously mentioned, the stale advertising that Always had been employing was not keeping up with competitors. Coscia noted that other companies "started to engage young women at a more emotional level and to connect with them on social media...the result is that Always lost relevance with the 16 to 24 age group." (Coscia, 2016, p.2).

The Social Media Execution

During the investigation into the four different social networking sites/platforms that Always promotes their presence on, it was surprising to see two-way communication. From personal experience with social media, some brands provide content that prompts participation but don't further interact with those tweeting. Then there are the brands who are becoming iconic

in their tweeting participation,
like the fast food chain Wendy's
(see **Figure 2** for an example).
It furthers the brand's apparent
commitment to their consumers,
because they have that two-way
street communication. They can
prompt, consumers respond—
consumers can prompt and the
brand responds. It is that
secondary way just described

that drives positive brand feelings within a consumer. **Figures 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3** show examples
of the kinds of tweets and individual interactions that Always is having with other Twitter users.

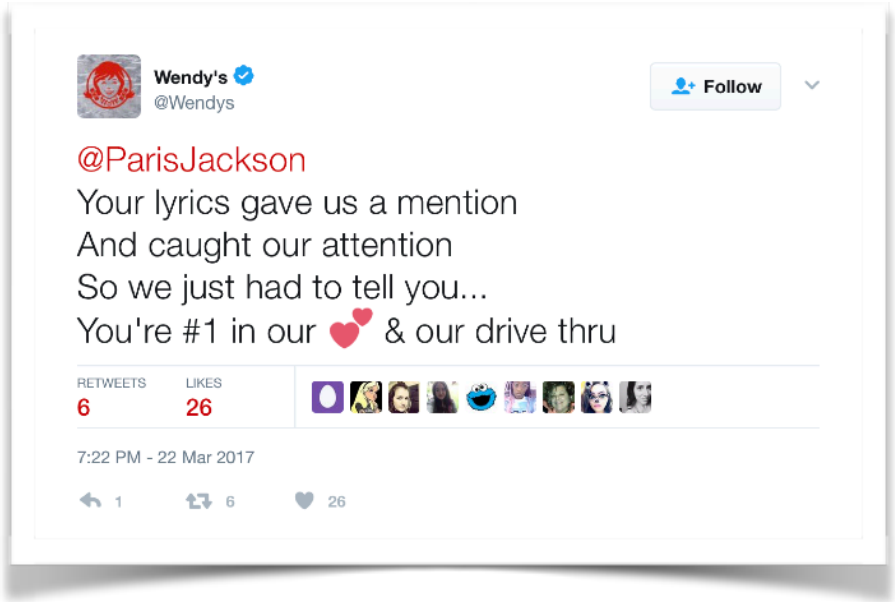


Figure 2 An example of the lively and witty tweets that can be seen coming from @Wendy's twitter account to a user that mentioned them. On *Twitter* by Wendy's, 2017, retrieved March 22, 2017 from https://twitter.com/Wendys/with_replies?lang=en



Figure 3.1 Samples of Tweets to demonstrate the kind of engagement Always has on Twitter. On *Twitter* by Always, 2017, retrieved March 22, 2017 from <https://twitter.com/Always?lang=en>



Figure 3.2 Samples of Tweets to demonstrate the kind of engagement Always has on Twitter. On *Twitter* by Always, 2017, retrieved March 22, 2017 from <https://twitter.com/Always?lang=en>

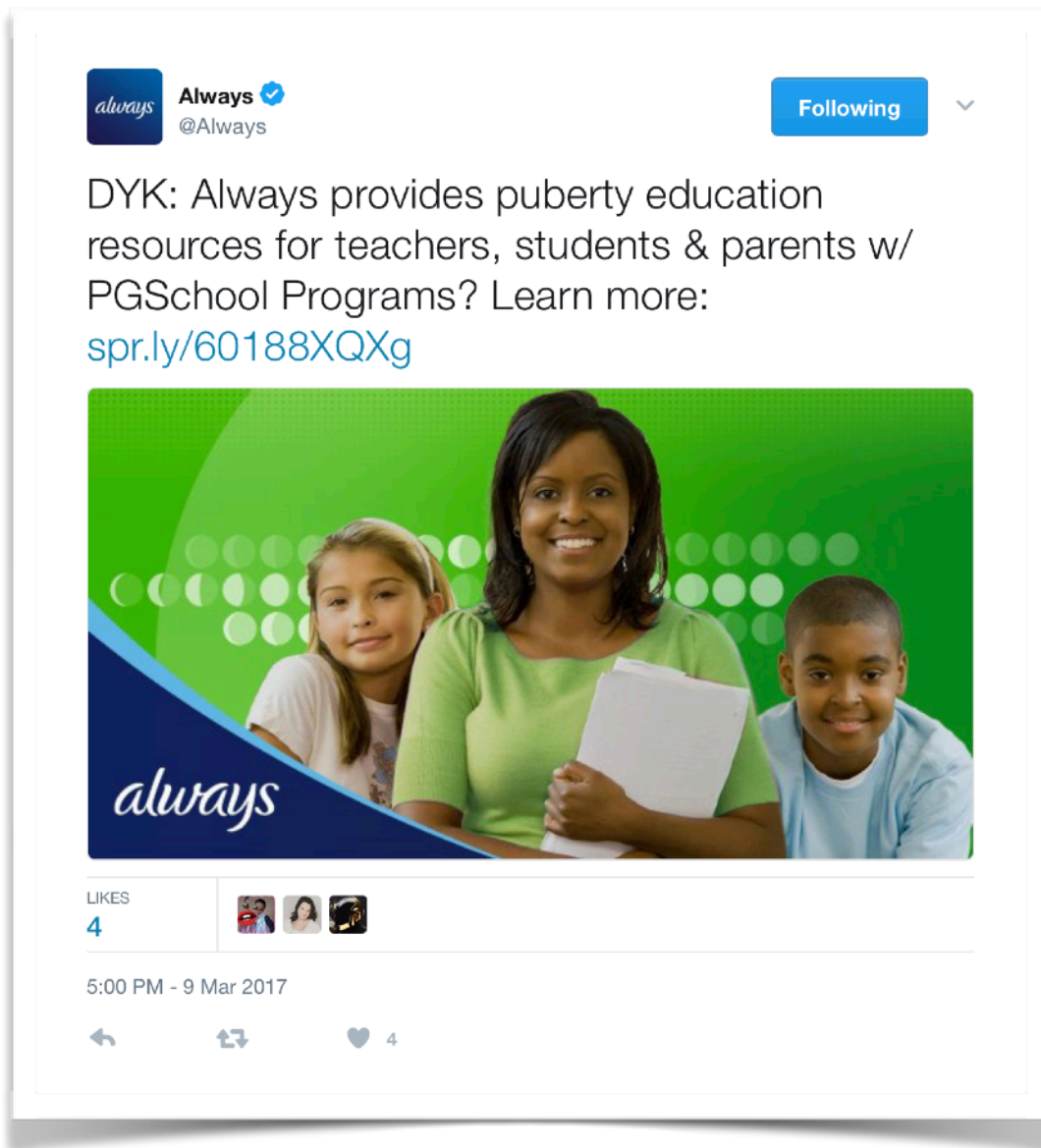


Figure 3.3 Samples of Tweets to demonstrate the kind of content Always has on Twitter. On Twitter by Always, 2017, retrieved March 22, 2017 from <https://twitter.com/Always?lang=en>

Figure 3.3 brings up another aspect of the campaign. If Always is going to provide information to its followers, considering their work on the promotion of girls' involvement in sports as part of their reframing of the phrase 'like a girl' and to help them build confidence, it would be prudent to advocate for programs that are adapted for their target audience, or educate people about the

benefits of such programs for their target audience. In a study that was exploring the relationship between pubertal timing and physical activity in girls, the authors reported that the results “... from this study suggest that programs designed to increase physical activity among adolescent girls should address the self-consciousness and discontent that girls experience with their bodies during puberty...” (Davison, K.K., Werder, J.L., Trost, S. G., Baker, B. L., Birch, L.L., 2007, p. 2391). Physical activity is both good for these young women's bodies but also for “more positive psychosocial health” (Davison et al, 2007, p.2392). This is yet another smart connection for Always because this, too, comes back to a girl's confidence. **Appendix A** showcases snapshots of social media posts by Always across the different platforms it uses (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Instagram).

YouTube

This platform had to have a section to itself. In **Figure 4**, you can see that Always only had 4 videos on their page before premiering their Always #LikeAGirl video.

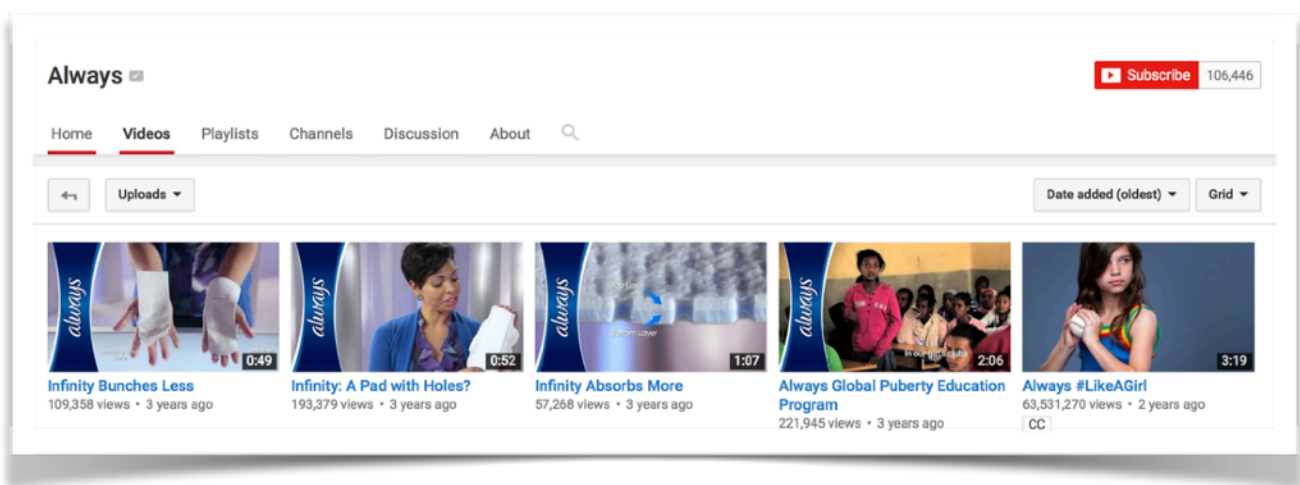


Figure 4 Sorted from oldest to most recent, you can see there were only 4 videos uploaded to their YouTube account before the video that started this campaign. On YouTube, by Always, 2014-2015, retrieved March 22, 2016 from: <https://www.youtube.com/user/AlwaysBrand/videos?view=0&sort=da&flow=grid>

It is quite notable the incredible difference between views on that video and those that came before it. The #LikeAGirl video that began the campaign was “built around a social experiment to show the impact the phrase ‘like a girl’ had on society; especially on girls pre and post-puberty” (D&AD). In the video, the person filming asks participants to run like a girl, throw like a girl and fight like a girl. **Figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3** show screenshots of those moments.

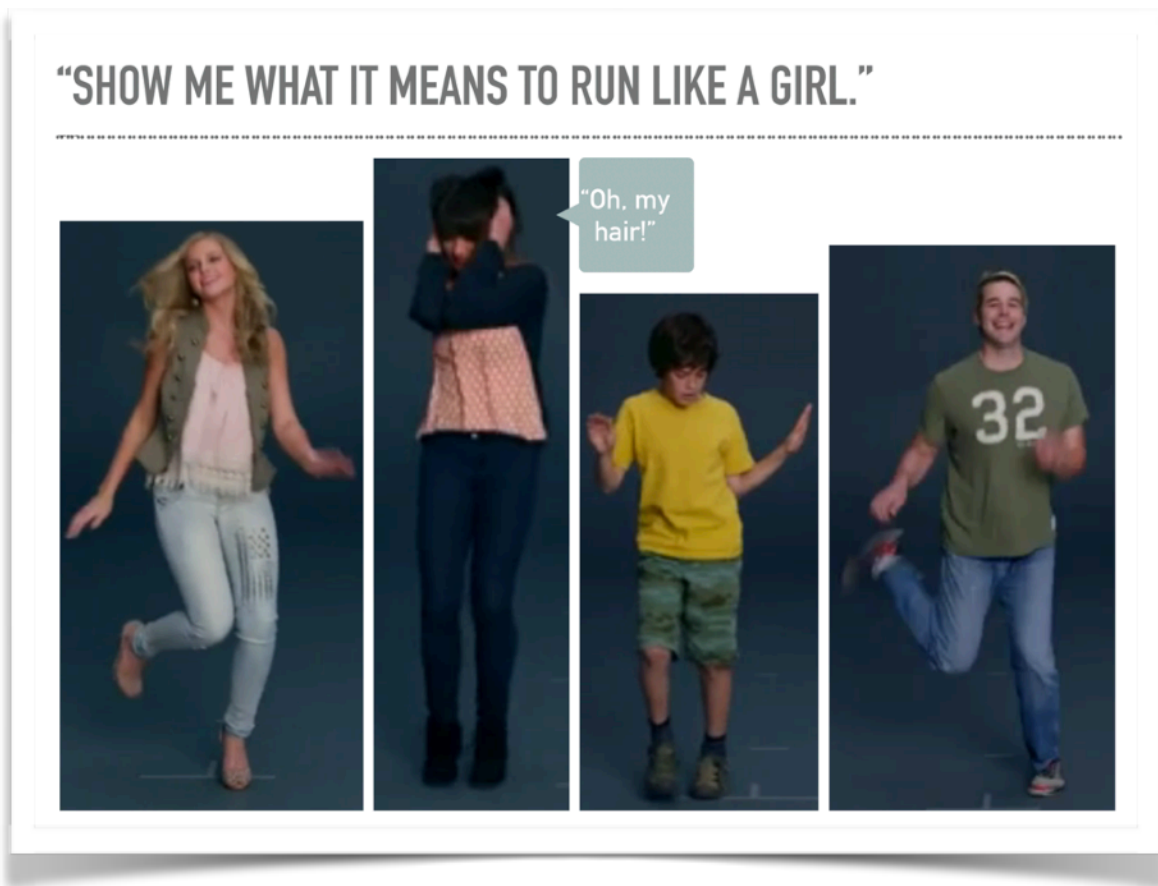


Figure 5.1 Participants react to the director asking them to show what it means to run like a girl. Screenshots taken from video that appeared on *AdAge* by Jack Neff, 2014, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/p-g-s-change-meaning-a-girl/293895/>

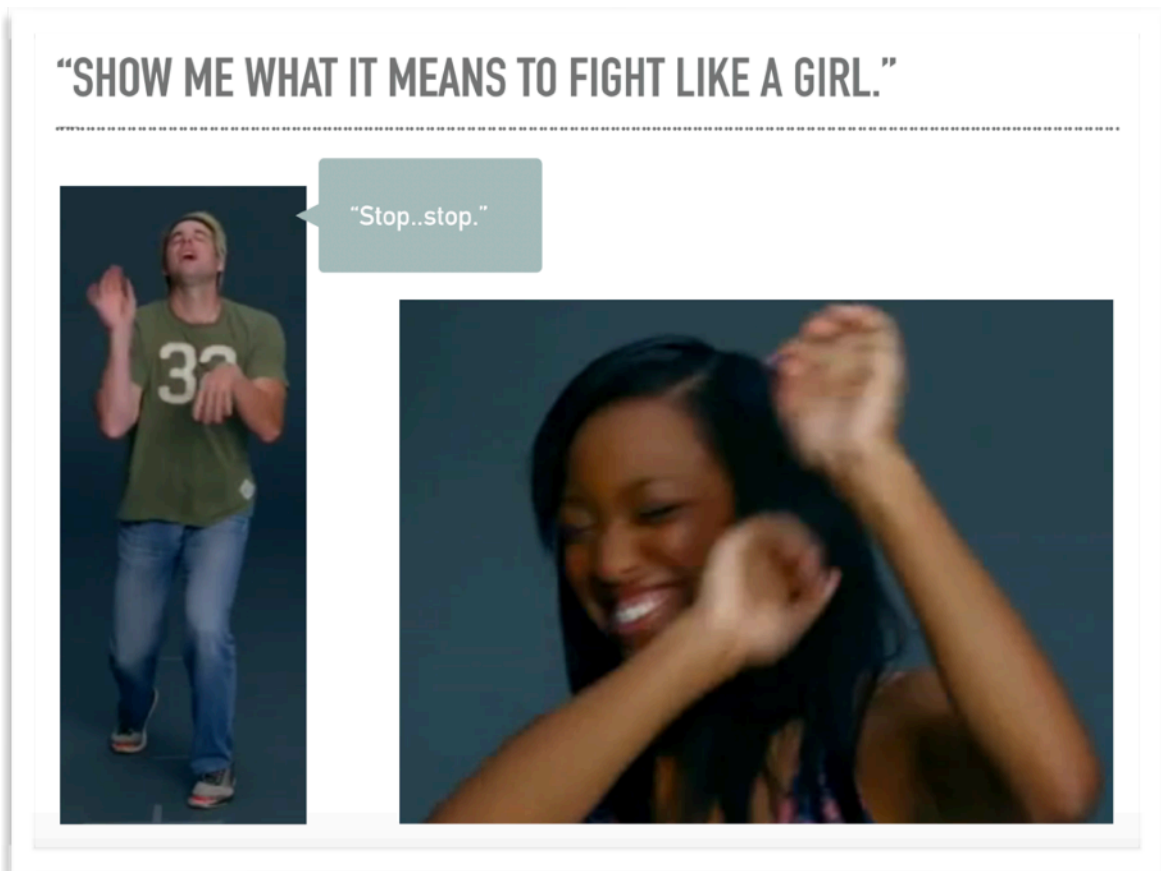


Figure 5.2 Participants react to the director asking them to show what it means to throw like a girl. Screenshots taken from video that appeared on *AdAge* by Jack Neff, 2014, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/p-g-s-change-meaning-a-girl/293895/>

Looking at the images you can see that the reactions by the participants showed how the phrase does not mean anything very positive. Everyone was giggling while effort and force of movement were minimal. The video then changes gears. The producer asks little girls to do the same things but the results were quite different (see **Figure 5.4**).

These girls showed no hesitation and gave it their all. It was a clear demonstration between girls that have not yet been as deeply effected by societal stereotypes and the rest of our society. This also displayed just how effective that phrase can be at instilling a mindset for the older girls.

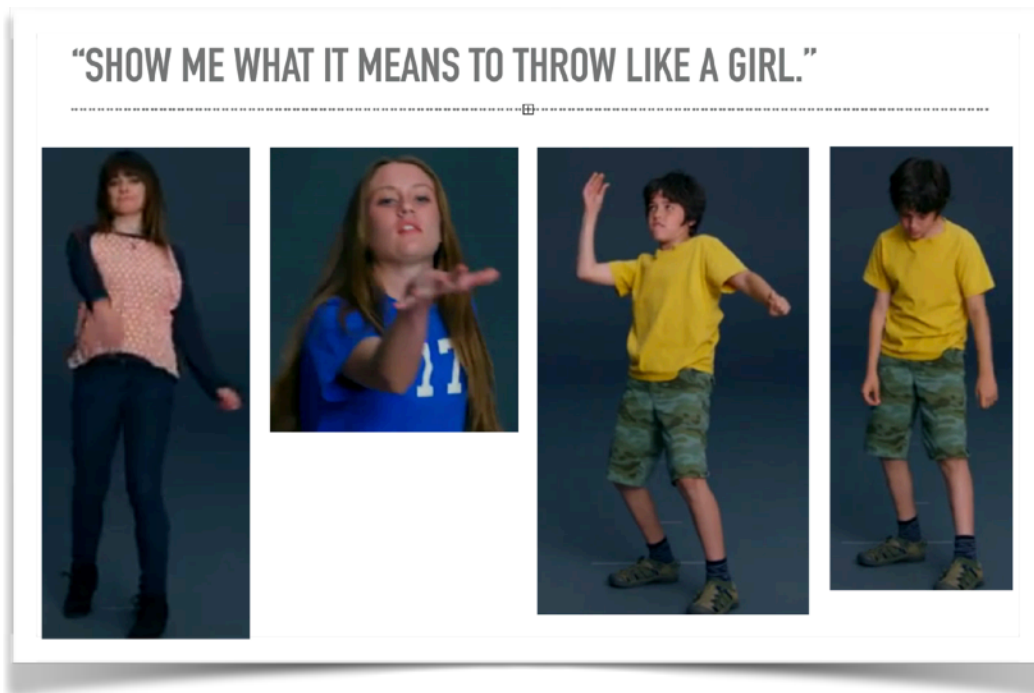


Figure 5.3 Participants react to the director asking them to show what it means to fight like a girl. Screenshots taken from video that appeared on *AdAge* by Jack Neff, 2014, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/p-g-s-change-meaning-a-girl/293895/>

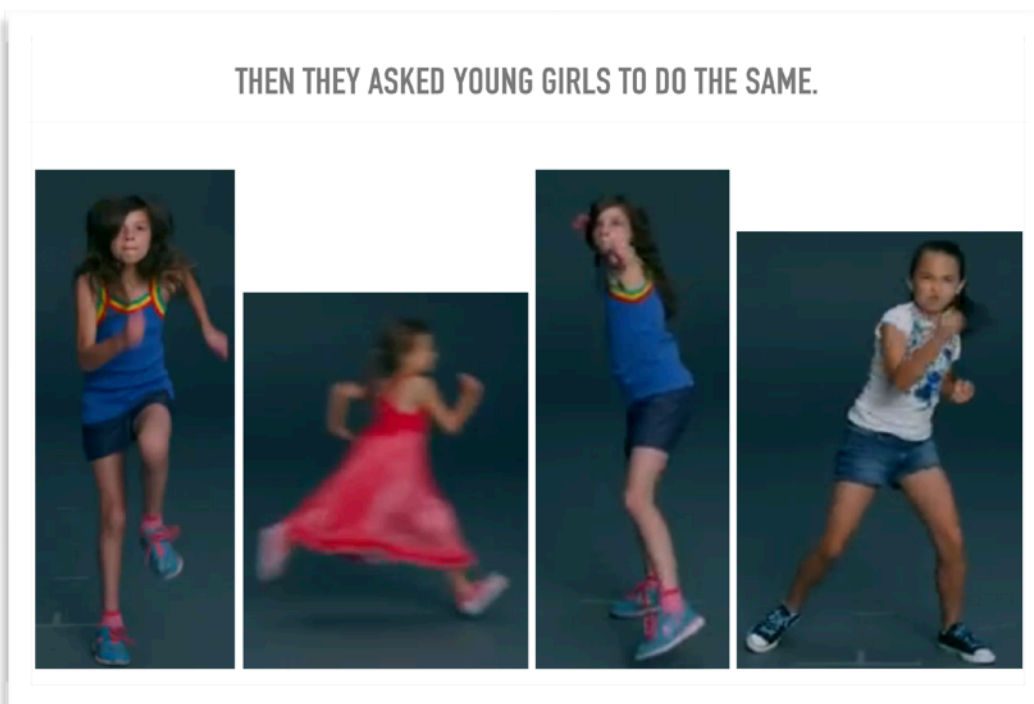


Figure 5.4 The young females participants react to the director's same prompts as the others, but they react much differently. Screenshots taken from video that appeared on *AdAge* by Jack Neff, 2014, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <http://adage.com/article/cmo-strategy/p-g-s-change-meaning-a-girl/293895/>

The Response

Since this video has gone viral Coscia reported some considerable results. Some of the most notable were that “Always YouTube Channel subscribers grew 4,339%... 76 million views globally after 3 months... 177,000 #LikeAGirl tweets in the first 3 months...” (Coscia, 2016, p. 7). According to Ann-Christine Diaz the advertisement “went viral when it debuted in June 2014” (Diaz, 2015).

The added power of celebrity engagement certainly pushes the content along. Celebrities usually have large follower bases on the social platforms, therefore when they are joining in on the Always #LikeAGirl campaign it becomes even more visible to social media users. **Appendix B** shows some examples of celebrities sharing or writing about the campaign on their own social media accounts. If you were a Demi Lovato fan and/or follower and you saw her talking about an inspiring video you just may be more inclined to watch it than if it showed up as an advertisement or paid post (see **Figure 6** for a screenshot of this post).

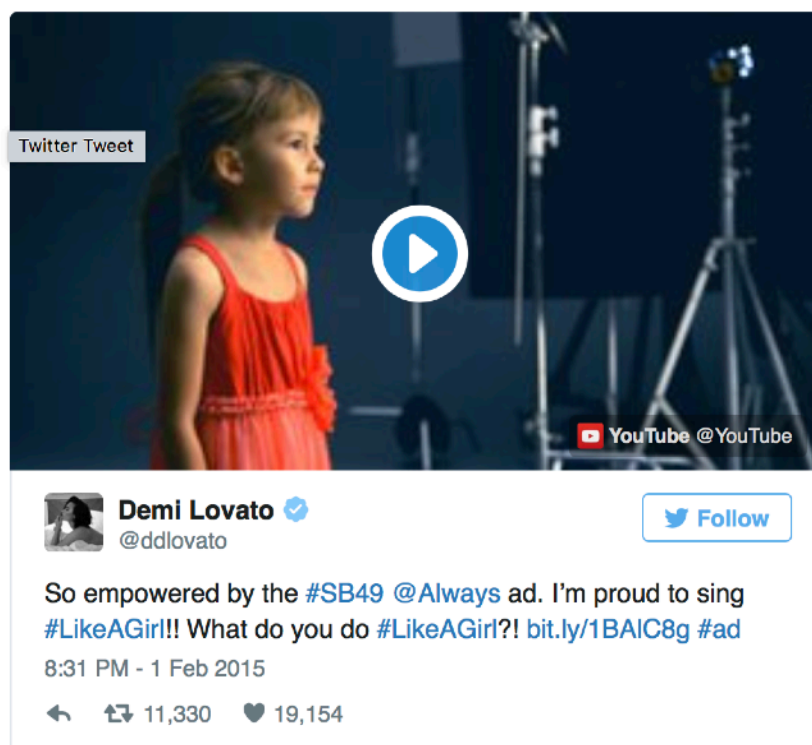


Figure 6 Demi Lovato tweets the #LikeAGirl video sharing that she is proud to sing #LikeAGirl. Screenshots shared on *Twist Magazine* by Kristine Hope Kowalski, 2015, retrieved on March 20, 2017 from <http://www.twistmagazine.com/posts/see-these-celebs-proudest-likeagirl-moments-50876/photos/demi-lovato-concert-76946#photo-anchor>

Discussion

Limitations from Resources

The article continuously referred to throughout this case study by Anna Coscia could be problematic when you consider that she was employed by the company she wrote this paper about. While this put her in a great position in regards to insights into how the campaign developed and the motives behind this change in marketing strategy, it was important to be conscious of the obvious bias she has for Leo Burnett. The information included in this case study from her paper was not found elsewhere. Upon reaching out to Always they chose to keep their tricks of the trade private and politely declined the request for an interview. Therefore, despite her affiliation with the advertising company, her remarks are useful but to be taken with the understanding of her position.

Much of the coverage on the topic specifically, was from destinations on the web that I had not heard of. I am always apprehensive to trust information that does not come from familiar sources of whose reputations I am aware of. Thankfully, publications like AdvertisingAge had made some remarks about the campaign's success. Unfortunately they were usually brief and informative of the accolades the campaign received rather than the information leading up to the campaign.

When trying to evaluate Always's social media usage and their interactions with fellow users it is hard to determine the ratio of message and response. For instance, as we have already seen on Twitter, the account clearly responds to some users. It would be much more difficult to search twitter for @Always mentions and then click on them all individually to see if the majority of tweets get responded to.

What Can be Learned

Returning to an article referred to earlier, Yan mentions in the same piece the following sentiment: “Audiences have demanded greater ethics from brands for many years. However, that demand has become far louder as audiences found their voices through the Internet, in particular, driving a greater awareness of social responsibility in the 2000s” (Yan 2011 p. 695). Looking at the concerns people have raised with Always in their tweets or comments, it is easy to see how the consumer voices have gotten louder. Each and every tweet is a chance to interact with a potential consumer, its a chance to spread your message and values, its a chance to extend your reach beyond the person your brand is communicating with (depending on their security settings and the platform, those interactions could be visible to their friends) and it is a chance to make someone feel part of your brand’s community. It was discussed earlier that Yan stated how creating the sense of community was one of the goals for branding on social media. Looking down Always’ s Twitter feed, Facebook posts, Instagram posts, and their YouTube content it is very apparent they are trying to maintain the community they have created. Judy John, a Chief Executive Officer from the advertising company, Leo Burnett, that worked with Always, was quoted describing how “having a hashtag that captured the essence of the idea and encouraged people to take part in changing the meaning of it had in impact on our success” (D&AD). This also coincides with Yan, as another goal was to put people in a position to promote the brand and participate in the conversations around your brand (Yan, 2011). Hashtags are a reliant tool for creating easy to follow discussions and are a great way to foster that sense of community.

Recommendations

Take a look at **Figure A.2** in **Appendix A**. Here you can see the thumbs nails or stills that Always shares on Instagram. One of my biggest recommendations would be to adapt some of their YouTube content to this platform. In the article already referenced written by Vaynerchuck, he mentions that the number of minutes people are watching videos on Facebook is rising while the figure comparatively for YouTube is in decline (Vaynerchuck, 2015). With Always trying to target their younger audience I think it is important to do more with Instagram. According to Alex York, approximately 59% of people between the ages 18-29 use Instagram compared to the 36% of people between the ages 18-29 that are using Twitter (York, 2017). This shows the trend for younger audiences being more likely found on Instagram than Twitter.

Instagram has many of the same easy social listening features like hashtags and mentions as well as the ability to tag, so I think the efforts could be similar and would easily translate over to Instagram. Just from being an avid social media user, I notice that some brands use Instagram to tease their longer videos featured on their other pages like YouTube. This approach could be used by Always or they could shorten their features like they did for the original Always #LikeAGirl video when it was to appear in the 2015 Super Bowl commercial line up (Coscia, 2016). The first problem I noticed when I was analyzing their Instagram account was that Always was not certified, which for a large brand like them, would cause hesitation for me when deciding to be a follower. The only reason I know this is their actual account is because they feature icons/links on their actual website and I followed them to confirm I was investigating the appropriate accounts. Through Instagram it would be possible and easy to tap in the large body positive and female-supporting communities that are already actively connecting with each other.

These audiences do not shy away from sharing images that confront the kinds of stereotypes that Always was hoping to address in this campaign. It would be meaningful for girls to go on Instagram and see Always right there breaking barriers alongside the users in this community rather than these images that are playing it way too safe. If Always was truly looking to help society change gender stereotypes then people need to know more about the female experience. It would be useful for discussions around this subject matter to have people that are not afraid of, embarrassed by or disgusted by periods, taking part in those conversations. I think that brands like Always have a unique opportunity to broaden what is ok for women to talk about by exposing large numbers of people to feminine images or issues that are normally shied away from. Large text quotes will be scrolled past or won't leave much impact, which I think is an issue since their mission was to create change throughout society and to make a significant impact on people. While you can see in **Figure A.4** in **Appendix A** that their YouTube channel does explore this territory quite a bit, I'm afraid that people aren't seeing this content "due to its sheer size, there's a ton of competition amongst videos on YouTube all fighting to be seen" (Vaynerchuck, 2015).

In an "era of competing media and short attention spans" you can't expect all consumers to search for your videos, watch longer length videos, and expect to continue the same progress and reach they were experiencing when the #LikeAGirl campaign went viral (Yan, 2011, p. 689). The brand is not being unsuccessful by any means, and their reach is still quite considerable. The latest featured advertisement they have now on their YouTube called, Always #LikeAGirl—Keep Playing, has more than 28 million views in 8 months. However, their past effort would suggest they have the motivation it takes to pursue these campaign efforts just a bit farther. There

is a wealth of potential amongst the young people as well as the female-supportive groups that have created a community on Instagram that Always could be engaging with.

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Appendix A

Figure A.1



Figure A.1 Shows the kind of interactions that were typical between Facebook users and the Always Facebook account. Screenshot taken from a post that appeared on Facebook by Always and Erica Johnson, 2017, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <https://www.facebook.com/always>

Figure A.2

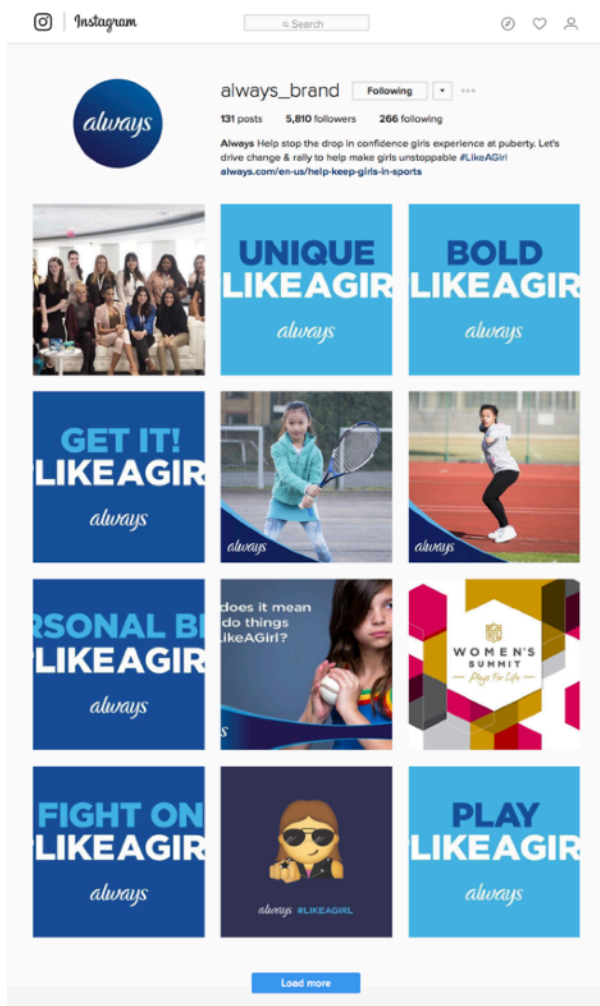


Figure A.2 Shows Always's Instagram feed. Screenshot taken from Instagram by Always and , 2017, retrieved on March 20, 2017 from https://www.instagram.com/always_brand/

Figure A.3



Figure A.3 Shows the kind of posts that were typical on Facebook by the Always account. Screenshot taken from a post that appeared on Facebook by Always, 2017, retrieved on March 19, 2017 from <https://www.facebook.com/always>

Figure A.4

PG School Programs - Puberty Education

P&G School Programs is proud to offer educators videos to help teach the fundamentals of adolescent development and puberty education in the classroom. The Always Changing and Growing Up videos...



Always Changing and Growing Up | Co-Ed Puberty Education Video

Always 28,167 views • 5 months ago



Always Changing and Growing Up | Girls Puberty Education Video

Always 179,195 views • 5 months ago



Always Changing and Growing Up | Boys Puberty Education Video

Always 74,011 views • 4 months ago

Confidence | Be Unstoppable #LikeAGirl

By working together and showing the world what being a girl or a woman really means, we're enabling confident & empowered girls and women behind an amazing family that stretches across our partner...



How playing sports benefits your body ... and your brain - Leah...

TED-Ed

342,219 views • 8 months ago

CC



Always Infinity | Goalkeeper Training :30

Always

5,139,760 views • 1 year ago



Secret Deodorant | Raise | #StressTest

Secret Deodorant

1,780,293 views • 11 months ago



Becky G: #GirlsCan Take the Stage | COVERGIRL Women...

COVERGIRL

197,664 views • 1 year ago

CC

Breaking It Down with Always Infinity

Defy expectations any day with Always Infinity



Always Infinity | Goalkeeper Training :30

Always

1 year ago • 5,139,760 views

Watch Stephanie Labbe, international goalkeeper, defy expectations with Always Infinity. Infinity's FlexFoam protection absorbs 10X its weight and feels like nothing. Conquer the fiel...



Always Infinity | Because I'm a Woman :30

Always

1 year ago • 1,941,191 views

Defy expectations any day with Always Infinity! See how Stephanie Labbe, international goalkeeper, rewrites the rules with Always Infinity. It's made with FlexFoam and absorbs 10...



Infinity: A Pad with Holes?

Always

3 years ago • 193,388 views

Always Infinity Microdots draw fluid away from your body for amazing protection you can barely feel.



Infinity Absorbs More

Always

3 years ago • 57,279 views

Always Infinity absorbs up to 55% more fluid than the leading Ultra Thin* for amazing, long-lasting protection.

Figure A.4 Shows the headings and thumbnails of videos that the Always brand posts on their YouTube account. Screenshot taken from YouTube by Always, 2017, retrieved on March 18, 2017 from <https://www.youtube.com/user/AlwaysBrand/featured>

Appendix B

Figure B.1



Figure B.1 Olympian gymnast Aly Raisman tweets the #LikeAGirl video sharing that she does gymnastics #LikeAGirl. Screenshots shared on *Twist Magazine* by Kristine Hope Kowalski, 2015, retrieved on March 20, 2017 from <http://www.twistmagazine.com/posts/see-these-celebs-proudest-likeagirl-moments-50876/photos/aly-raisman-77080#photo-anchor>

Figure B. 2

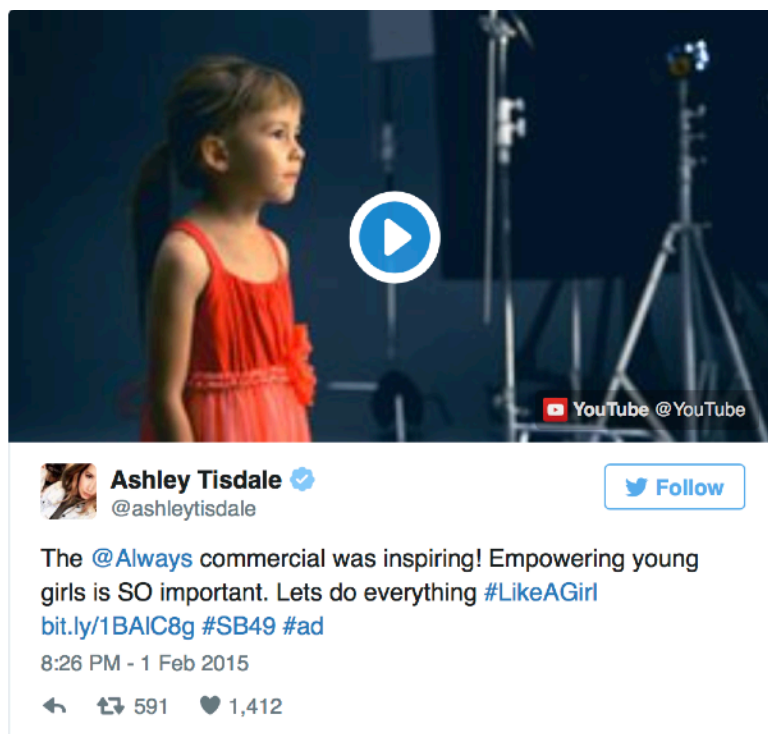


Figure B.2 Ashley Tisdale shares the video on Twitter. Screenshots shared on *Twist Magazine* by Kristine Hope Kowalski, 2015, retrieved on March 20, 2017 from <http://www.twistmagazine.com/posts/see-these-celebs-proudest-likeagirl-moments-50876/photos/ashley-tisdale-76959#photo-anchor>

Figure B.3

Figure B.3 Television show *Two Broke Girls*' star Beth Behrs tweets a photo collage of her adventures saying she is proud to be #LikeAGirl. Screenshots shared on *Twist Magazine* by Kristine Hope Kowalski, 2015, retrieved on March 20, 2017 from <http://www.twistmagazine.com/posts/see-these-celebs-proudest-likeagirl-moments-50876/photos/beth-behrs-girl-power-76955#photo-anchor>