



always

ALWAYS #LIKEAGIRL:
CHANGING THE MEANING OF WORDS
TO MAKE GIRLS PROUD TO BE GIRLS

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Client: P&G

Issue:

Always was trusted at a functional level, but found itself losing relevance amongst younger women, who were drawn to brands which engaged them at a more emotional level. Differentiation through product performance alone was no longer enough. The brand needed a greater meaning and relevance.

Solution:

The core of the Always brand has historically been 'confidence', expressed through the superior performance of its products. But confidence also has a powerful emotional resonance, enabling us to find a new relevance which built on everything the brand already represented.

Our exploration of confidence led to the discovery that puberty is a time of confidence crisis in girls and that gender stereotyping has a significant detrimental effect at this vulnerable moment. Apparently small things, like using the expression 'like a girl' as an insult, constantly send out the message that being female is 'not good enough'. This affects girls deeply, just at the time when they are actually learning what it means to be a woman.

So we set out to change the meaning of the expression. We created a social experiment, holding a fake casting call and asking people to do things 'like a girl'. The difference between adults and pre-pubescent girls was astonishing. For adults, 'like a girl' meant 'silly' and 'not good enough'. For pre-pubescent girls, it meant being the best they could be.

The video of the experiment went around the globe and the hashtag #LikeAGirl became a symbol of female empowerment all over the world.

Summary

'Nobody will ever share anything that has the Always logo on it'

Who would want to be associated with periods?

A brilliant strategy and a great idea proved that you can make a feminine hygiene brand more popular.

And Always badly needed an injection of popularity. Its trusted, yet very functional image had become less distinctive and more vulnerable in recent years, and the brand was losing relevance with younger women. To reverse this, Always had to think and behave completely differently.

This paper tells the story of how planning helped Always connect with women, making the brand stand for way more than just product performance.

It is a story about strategic thinking but also about the passion that drove us once the possibility to make a difference for girls around the world became real.

Our journey took us deep into puberty and its challenges, with the realisation that a lot of the problems experienced by girls at that vulnerable age are created by society. It is a time when they start to learn about traditional gender roles and they stop being themselves in order to follow the rules that define how a girl should or shouldn't be.

And the sad thing is, in doing so, their confidence plummets.

This is what we set out to change.

A vulnerable place in a difficult category

Creating ads for sanitary products is no easy task. It is a low involvement/high sensitivity category: women claim not to care about periods yet they care immensely about how they are portrayed and take any message very personally.

Communication has also traditionally been very functional, as performance is key: after all, if a product lets you down the consequences can be quite unpleasant. Hence brands have historically fought over product superiority, using demos and showing women doing exceptional and often silly things during their period, to prove how 'liberating' a good pad can be. It soon became quite clichéd.

Yet this worked well for Always for quite some time, especially thanks to the great performance of its products, and the brand became globally recognised and used by over 227 million women.

More recently, though, research showed that women were getting tired of, and even annoyed by, stereotypical feminine care advertising.

Competitors started to engage young women at a more emotional level and to connect with them on social media. Their products also improved and functional differentiation between brands narrowed.

The result is that Always lost relevance with the 16 to 24 age group. This was a big issue in a category where, research shows, women tend to stay very loyal once they find a brand they like.

As Always' most loyal user base was aging and would eventually leave the category at menopause, the brand needed to secure its young consumer base to keep the business healthy in the long term.

Driving affinity and connecting with people at a higher level and in a different way was key. Product communication would not do. Always had to stand for something more than just protection, show that it had a heart and that it truly cared about women.

Moving away from product confidence

Confidence is at the core of the Always brand equity, and it was, therefore, our starting point.

The way we had communicated it historically was always very functional. We promised women to fix a physical problem so that they could be more confident during their period. It all started with the product, and confidence in the product would lead to self-confidence.

Yet this logic was exactly what women were starting to reject.

Confidence was indeed an issue for them, and one they were increasingly sensitive about; it affected their lives way beyond their period. But it was not an issue a pad could solve.

If we were to stay within this territory, and be more relevant, we had to move from a rational proposition to a much more emotional one.

We also had to find a distinctive angle, as most female brands promised confidence and many were already fighting for 'female empowerment'.

Puberty and the drop in confidence

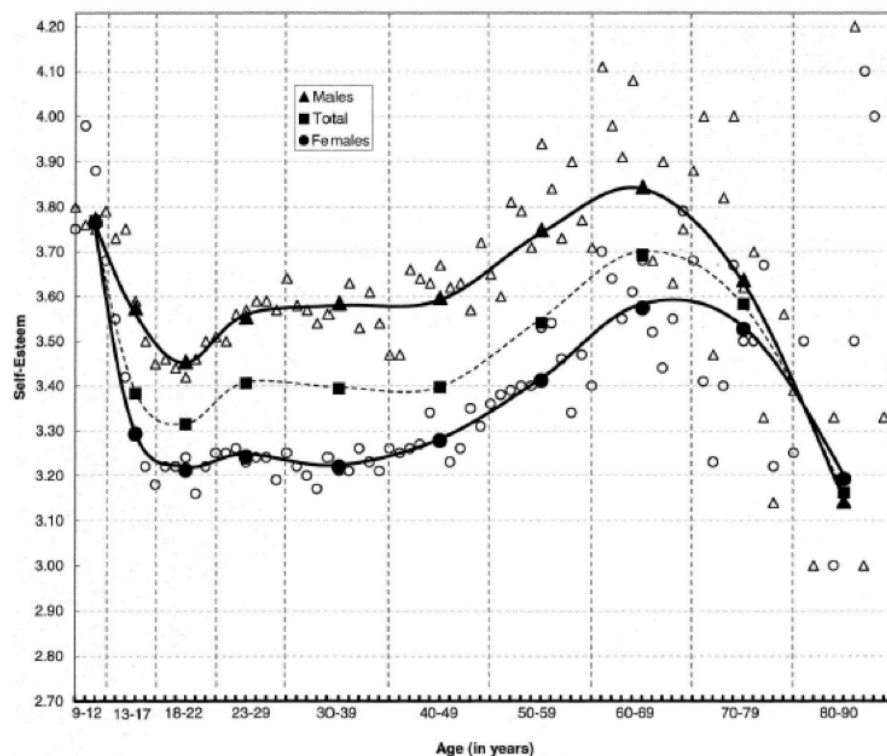
As we started to look at confidence throughout a woman's life, we soon realised that puberty is undoubtedly the most vulnerable phase.

Puberty is also the time when girls first come into contact with the pads category and the brand, and when periods have the most dramatic impact on their lives.

This made it the perfect territory for Always.

The more we read about puberty the more it became clear it was not just a 'vulnerable phase'. It was actually a time affected by a real confidence crisis.

The graph below shows just how big a crisis it is:



Source: 'Global Self-Esteem Across the Life Span' Study, American Psychological Association, Inc., 2002, Vol 17, No. 3, 423 - 434

Self-esteem drops for both boys and girls during puberty, but the drop is twice as big for girls. Later in life men's self-esteem rises higher than it was pre-puberty. The same is not true for women, who never regain the pre-puberty level of self-esteem.

Understanding why this happens was key. If we could even reduce the drop a bit, we would allow girls to start the 'journey into womanhood' from a better place.

Our target audience had just left puberty, but we were sure they would embrace our cause wholeheartedly if made aware of how big a set-back this time is for women.

Finding an enemy

We dug deeper into the causes of the drop in confidence, learning everything possible about the physical and physiological changes girls go through.

We could not change any of that.

Yet, we realised that there are also many external cultural factors that impact a girl's confidence during puberty, as this is the time when she learns what it means to be a girl, and young womanhood comes to be defined by a set of rules, like beauty and submissiveness.

Here we found the perfect enemy: the gender stereotypes that put pressure on girls and define how they should think and behave. It is during puberty, in fact, that for the first time girls feel the pressure to act in ways that are inconsistent with their actual thoughts and feelings, as they begin to learn about traditional gender roles and pick up on everyday sexism perpetuated within society.

Society constantly dwells on the differences between genders, sending out the message that leadership, power and strength are for men, not for women. And that boys should be raised not to be a girl, as if being female was 'not good enough'.

These stereotypes inevitably crystallise into girls' self-perceptions and affect their behaviours.

We could help change that.

But simply raising awareness about the confidence drop and its causes would not be enough. We needed to create cultural change.

The idea and the creative work

Our creative insight was that gender stereotypes are so ingrained in our culture, they are even part of our language. The expression 'like a girl', in fact, tends to be used, in every language, as an insult to tease somebody who is weak, over-emotional or useless.

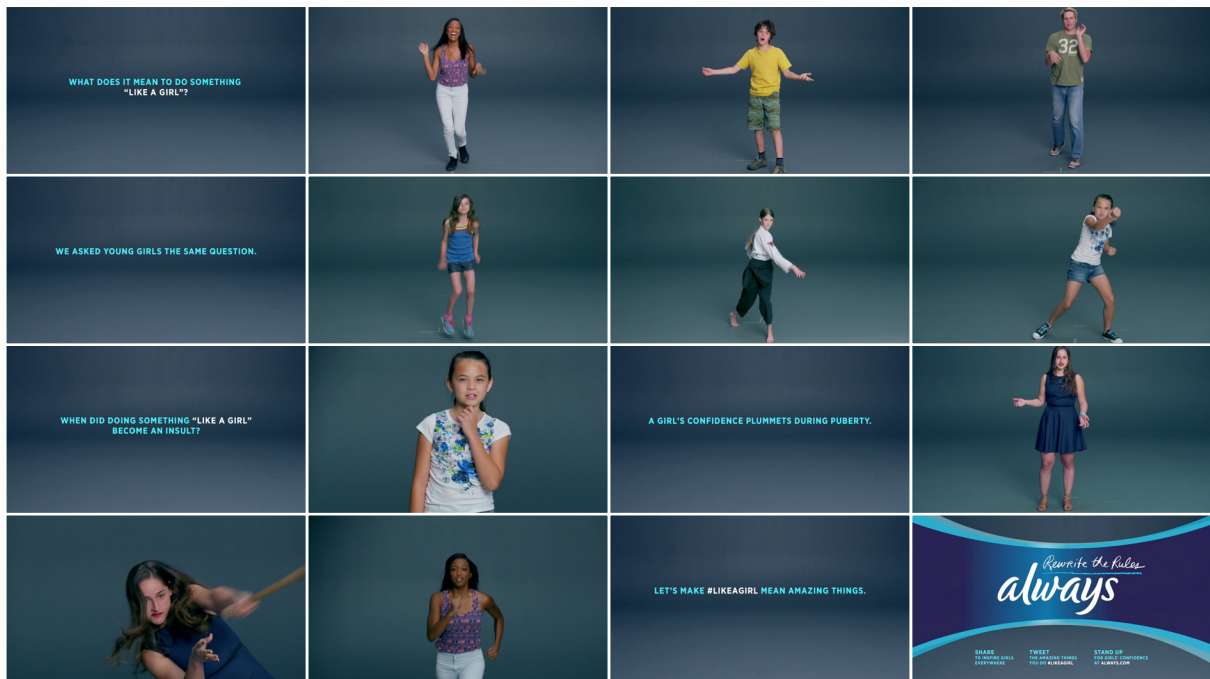
Changing the negative meaning of a sexist expression was a powerful idea.

It may seem like an insignificant thing. But at a moment when identities are already very fragile, words can have a devastating effect.

To demonstrate this, we created a social experiment, holding a fake casting call with young women and men, boys and young girls. They were all asked to do things 'like a girl', for example to run or fight like a girl. The results, captured on camera, were astonishing and proved our point better than we could have ever expected.

Women, boys and men all behaved in a silly and self-deprecating way, acting out the insulting stereotype. But when the pre-pubescent girls were asked the same questions they reacted completely differently. They ran and fought and hit as hard as they could, with confidence, pride and incredible self-belief. They had clearly not been influenced yet by the 'rules' that define womanhood and were simply being themselves. For them, doing something 'like a girl' meant doing it as best as they could.

The video, shot by the award-winning filmmaker Lauren Greenfield, was carefully put together in order to take viewers on an emotional journey. You go from laughter, to surprise, to anger, as you realise how language can affect the way girls perceive themselves. You end in tears, when the older girls realise that they have been sucked into a cultural cliché and they are given the chance to do it all again, this time just being themselves.



Screenshots from the video

Getting #LikeAGirl out in the world

We had a powerful insight that resonated universally, and one piece of content able to bring the whole story to life. Hence we decided to focus solely on the video, and maximize views and reach.

As we wanted to affect culture, we harnessed the power of social media. We chose YouTube, or similar channels in countries where YouTube didn't exist, as the main vehicle, given its ability to drive mass awareness. The video ran as a pre-roll, accompanied by paid Facebook and Twitter posts, paid reach and influencer outreach.

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'.

A team was set up to respond in real-time throughout the launch. This created a community of people, inspired by a common cause.

A #LikeAGirl page, hosted on Always.com, was also created to serve as a campaign hub and give women the opportunity to engage in conversations around the topic.

Furthermore, the overall campaign included PR/ER activation through e-influencers and top media.

Finally, a 60-second version of the video was aired during the 2015 Super Bowl.

Results beyond our wildest expectations

Awareness:

- 76 million views globally after 3 months; most viewed video in P&G's history; #2 most viral video globally.
- +1100 earned media placements and +4.4 billion media impressions in the first 3 months.
- 177,000 #LikeAGirl tweets in the first 3 months, including many celebrities.
- Over 1 million shares by Day 28.
- Always Twitter followers tripled in the first 3 months; Always YouTube Channel subscribers grew 4,339%!
- Ranked most popular digital campaign of the Super Bowl.



Brand preference and purchase intent:

- Higher than average lift in brand preference; purchase intent increased up to 92%; claimed purchase intent grew +50% among our target.

Cultural change:

- Before the campaign the expression 'like a girl' was mostly used in a derogatory way; since the launch it's been attached to overwhelmingly positive sentiment, becoming a symbol of female empowerment around the globe.
- In a study conducted in December 2014, almost 70% of women and 60% of men claimed that 'Viewing the video changed my perception of the phrase "like a girl"'.
'Viewing the video changed my perception of the phrase "like a girl"'.
- On March 9th 2015 Always received a UN award for the impact the campaign had on female empowerment around the world.

Sparks retweeted



heidi @Regina_Heidi 21d
When somebody tells me I am
doing something #LikeAGirl I know
I must be doing something right.
@Always
pic.twitter.com/GOhJuN74Q3



Details



England Cricket ✓
@ECB_cricket

THIS is how you... Hit #LikeAGirl
youtu.be/6oJHo86yKgc



[View Larger](#)

THIS is how you... Hit #LikeAGirl

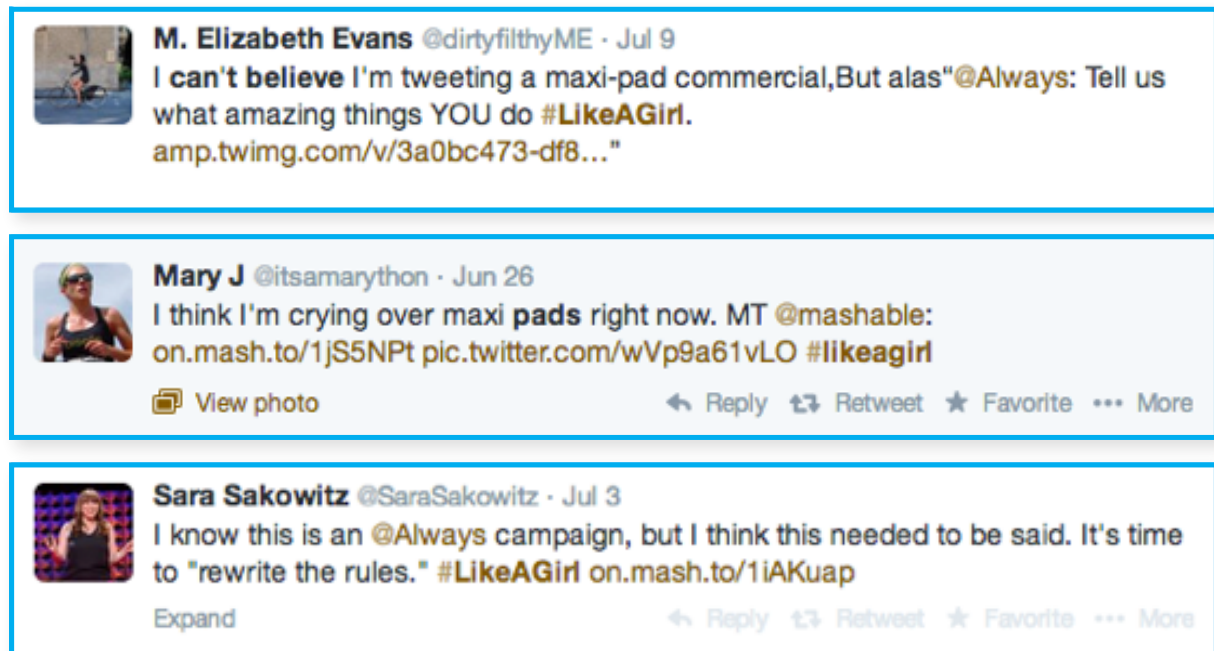


Hallie Wilson
@coralsncognacs

Seen on 27th street... (This one's
for you, @iamnowMellyG. cc
@soulcycle) #likeagirl 💪😊❤️
pic.twitter.com/VrZtSQAwgk



Conclusions



So, who would not share content with the Always logo on it now?

Planning was instrumental in making Always more popular and loved.

We challenged the brand's communication model and pushed the shift from functional to emotional, and from product to brand.

We redefined and contextualised confidence.

We connected Always to culture by identifying gender stereotypes as the enemy to fight.

We helped unearth a powerful cultural truth with universal appeal and thus drove cultural change.

Most importantly, we empowered women all over the world and made Always part of something big, giving the brand a new, much deeper meaning.

(1980 words)