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ARTICLE

# Motherhood on screen: Representations in O Boticário's Mother's Day campaigns

# Maternidades na tela: representações nas campanhas de Dia das Mães de O Boticário

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**ABSTRACT:** *In this article, we analyzed representations of motherhood in the discourse of the O Boticário brand, reconstructing the creative process and development of four Mother's Day advertisements aired in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, and identifying the assumptions of motherhood that are challenged by the stories of motherhood told by the brand. The brand proposes an expansion and diversification of representations and stereotypes, but the assumptions of patriarchal motherhood (such as the individualization of responsibility and the normalization of the mother figure as the central caregiver) remain constitutive of or are subtly reinforced in the narratives, revealing the tensions between social demands and the maintenance of historical and hegemonic structures in advertising discourse.*

**Keywords:** *O Boticário; creative process; assumptions of motherhood; representations.*

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**RESUMO:** Neste artigo, temos como objetivo analisar as representações da maternidade no discurso da marca O Boticário, reconstruindo o processo e o desenvolvimento criativo de quatro anúncios do Dia das Mães, veiculados nos anos de 2022, 2023, 2024 e 2025, analisando-os e identificando os pressupostos da maternidade tensionados nas histórias de maternidade que a marca está contando. A marca propõe uma ampliação e uma diversificação das representações e dos estereótipos, porém os pressupostos da maternidade patriarcal (como a individualização da responsabilidade e a normalização da figura materna como cuidadora central) ainda são constituintes ou são sutilmente reforçados nas narrativas, revelando os tensionamentos entre as demandas sociais e a manutenção de estruturas discursivas publicitárias.

**Palavras-chave:** O Boticário; percurso criativo; pressupostos da maternidade patriarcal; representações.

## Introduction

The representation of motherhood in advertising discourse has historically been marked by processes of naturalization, universalization, and idealization that contribute to the consolidation of a hegemonic model of femininity. From a critical perspective on communication and gender studies, as Mendonça proposes in her semiotic analysis of advertising, it is understood that motherhood, far from being a merely biological experience, constitutes a discursive construction shaped by cultural, moral, and economic values.

One of the main symbolic effects of advertising is the presentation of motherhood as a universal experience. By predominantly portraying a specific profile of mother (white, heterosexual, middle-class, and embedded in traditional family arrangements), advertising discourse erases social markers such as race, class, sexual orientation, and material conditions of existence. This homogenization contributes to the consolidation of a normative imaginary that makes the plurality of maternal experiences invisible.

Associated with this universalization is the notion that motherhood is natural and instinctive. Advertising frequently represents caregiving as an innate attribute of women, reinforcing the idea that knowing how to mother is a biological competence. This framing disregards the historical and sociocultural dimensions of caregiving, while at the same time absolving other entities, such as the State, the labor market, and women's own partners, of responsibility. Another recurring element is the centrality of motherhood in female identity. Even when a woman is portrayed as a self-employed professional, the advertising narrative tends to reinscribe her identity primarily as a mother. Motherhood emerges as the organizer of female subjectivity, reinforcing a hierarchy that positions other dimensions of life, such as career, desire, and autonomy, as secondary.

Furthermore, advertising constructs motherhood as a predominantly harmonious, pleasurable, and emotionally fulfilling experience. Conflicts, ambivalence, exhaustion, and psychological suffering are rarely

addressed, which produces a regime of idealized expectations. This aesthetic of maternal happiness generates guilt, especially when women's concrete experiences do not correspond to the media ideal. Unconditional love, presented as automatic and absolute, becomes a moral parameter, against which any ambivalent feeling can be interpreted as an individual failure.

In parallel, there is a valorization of sacrifice as a constitutive virtue of the "good mother." The renunciation of one's own needs is frequently praised as proof of dedication and of the authenticity of maternal love. In this context, consumption plays a central role: choosing the "right" products becomes a public demonstration of responsibility and care. Motherhood is thus mediated by market practices that convert affection into purchasing decisions, establishing a morality of maternal consumption.

The representation of motherhood as a solitary and individualized experience deserves to be highlighted. Although contemporary discourses mention the "modern mother," who balances work and family, the idea persists that the emotional and practical management of domestic life falls primarily on women. Motherhood is presented as a voluntary and fully controlled choice, obscuring social pressures, structural inequalities, and material limitations that permeate reproductive decisions.

Advertising discourse acts as a pedagogical instance of gender, teaching legitimate ways of being a mother and defining symbolic boundaries of what is considered acceptable or deviant. By naturalizing standards and moralizing practices, advertising not only reflects social values but also actively participates in their production and circulation. Problematizing these representations implies recognizing motherhood as a plural, conflictual, and socially situated experience, opening space for narratives that challenge the normative ideal and broaden the horizon of recognition of the diverse ways of mothering or not mothering.

In the last decade, we have witnessed a certain movement concerning representations in advertising discourse, driven primarily by what Wottrich (2017) conceptualizes as contestation practices: a movement that emerges in the sphere of consumption, driven mainly by women, who

demand more plural representations of women in advertising that are more consistent with reality. In this article, our objective was to analyze the representations of motherhood in the discourse of the brand *O Boticário*, reconstructing the creative development process (PETERMANN, 2023) of four Mother's Day advertisements, released in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, analyzing them and revisiting the assumptions about motherhood that are tensioned by the stories of motherhood the brand is telling.

## Notes on matricentric feminism

Andrea O'Reilly (2016, p. 10) coined the term "motherhood studies" to present and demarcate the knowledge developed on the subject as a legitimate and autonomous field, based on theoretical traditions on motherhood proposed by Patricia Hill Collins, Adrienne Rich, and Sara Ruddick.

> Mothers need a feminism of their own. When I use the term "mothers," I am referring to individuals who engage in mothering work or, as Sara Ruddick theorized, mothering practice. I am suggesting that any understanding of mothers' lives is incomplete without a consideration of how becoming and being a mother shapes their self-perception as women and how they see the world [...]. I do not intend to substantiate these claims, but rather to take them as my starting point. Mothers need a feminism that places motherhood at its center. Motherhood, one might say, is the unfinished business of feminism. (O'REILLY, 2016, p. 15).

Since "motherhood" is still an unfinished business for feminism, given that there are specific issues faced by mothers that remain neglected by the movement, the perspective of motherhood studies lies in the challenge of placing motherhood at the center of the discussion, as an additional oppression sustained by patriarchal logic. According to O'Reilly (2016), the process of liberation from the social burden on mothers involves the deconstruction of "patriarchal motherhood." Therefore, there is a need to go beyond the approach of the social meaning of motherhood to understand it in three dimensions:

- as experience and as role;

- as institution and as ideology;
- as identity and subjectivity.

Given the observation that there are issues and needs — social, economic, political, cultural, and psychological — that demand specific behaviors from women who are mothers, and that these issues impact their activities, social roles, and consequently shape their identities and subjectivities, it is understood that patriarchy oppresses them in a double way: as women and as mothers (O'REILLY, 2019).

From this perspective, O'Reilly (2016) defends matricentric feminism, which highlights the differences between the categories of mother and woman, allowing for reflection on how patriarchal motherhood becomes oppressive for women and enabling the development of resistance strategies. The same applies to the terms: motherhood and mothering. While motherhood is understood as a socially and historically constructed institution, mothering is seen as the practice involving care, which is also learned and transformed into habits; that is, these practices can be performed by anyone, rather than being exclusive to the biological mother. Therefore, from the perspective of matricentric feminism, the understanding of mother is not restricted to biological mothers, but encompasses all people who assume mothering work as a central part of their lives. Thus, mothering can be experienced as a space freed from motherhood as a patriarchal institution.

To reflect on how normative discourse on motherhood operates, O'Reilly (2016) systematized what she calls "ten assumptions of patriarchal motherhood," which function in an articulated way and can be observed both in the representations that circulate about motherhood on a social and historical level, and in the meanings present in culture and communication. These assumptions are fundamental for understanding the ways in which society and patriarchy impose norms and expectations on mothers. They are: essentialization, privatization, individualization, naturalization, normalization, idealization, biologization, specialization, intensification, and depoliticization of motherhood (O'REILLY, 2013 *apud* MENDONÇA, 2014, p. 27-28) (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Ten assumptions of patriarchal motherhood.

| | Assumptions | How do they work? |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Essentialization | Positions motherhood as the foundation of female identity; |
| 2 | Privatization | Situates maternal work exclusively within the reproductive and domestic spheres; |
| 3 | Individualization | Transforms motherhood into a job of individual responsibility, centered solely on the figure of the mother; |
| 4 | Biologization | Emphasizes blood ties, positioning the biological mother as the authentic and "real" mother; |
| 5 | Naturalization | Assumes that motherhood is natural for women, implying that all women are born knowing how to mother naturally; |
| 6 | Idealization | Establishes unattainable maternal models, which reinforce mothers' expectations of themselves and society's expectations of mothers; |
| 7 | Specialization | Advocates for child-rearing guided by experts, emphasizing the importance of mothering practices that require energy, money, and effort from mothers. |
| 8 | Normalization | Restricts maternal identities and practices to the specific model of the nuclear family, with the mother being the primary caregiver for the children and her husband as the economic provider; |
| 9 | Intensification | Advocates for raising children using methods that are intensely laborious and emotionally draining; |
| 10 | Depoliticization | Characterizes the raising and education of children as a private activity, without socio-political relations or implications. |

**Source:** Prepared by the authors based on O'Reilly (2016).

Based on the matricentric feminism outlined in these ten assumptions of patriarchal motherhood (O'REILLY, 2016), it is possible to perceive the existence of normative patterns that affect motherhood. They help to understand how patriarchy shapes and restricts women's experiences, imposing rigid expectations regarding motherhood and the role of mothers. Furthermore, matricentric feminism can act politically so that mothers reframe their experiences and claim their rights.

O'Reilly (2016) also acknowledges that there are variables that cause motherhood (and this also applies to pregnancy and childbirth) to be experienced differently by diverse groups of women, whether they are

categorized by race, class, culture, ethnicity, sexuality, ability, age, or geographic location, etc.

For Maria Collier de Mendonça (2021, p. 227, our translation), citing O'Reilly (2013),

> It is necessary to remember that, in the same way that these ideological assumptions were culturally constructed, they can be deconstructed because they are neither natural nor inevitable to mothering practices. For the author, by deconstructing the patriarchal narrative of motherhood, we enable the destabilization and support of its discourse; as well as its consequent interferences in the practices and meanings of mothering. Thus, we create a space for the articulation of counter-narratives capable of stimulating the creation of mothering practices that empower women, instead of oppressing them.

Mendonça (2021) starts from the central proposition that advertising reproduces and reinforces culturally constructed maternal ideals, while maternal experiences bring to light everyday experiences that are extremely relevant to understanding the cultural contradictions of this communicational phenomenon.

## Representations in advertising

Discussing representation in advertising, more than presenting a central point for communication studies, concerns understanding not only how discourses promote products, but also how they establish meanings in a collective context. In this sense, representation is an act of a relational nature, because it establishes "a relationship with a given object, and this act of materializing something involves the concept, the image, the idea, and knowledge" (LEITE, 2017, p. 3, our translation). Beyond this, representations are social in nature because we live in a shared world. In other words, being represented constitutes a basis for interaction among individuals who are part of society, enabling them to understand, manage, and confront social relations (JODELET, 2001).

This act stems from understandings and experiences accumulated throughout life, which underpin "a system of classification and

denotation, of allocation of categories and names" (MOSCOVICI, 2012, p. 62, our translation), guiding "what should be thought even before we have an understanding of the thought, and it is through these conventions and prescriptions that we classify, judge people, and thus relate to each other" (MOSCOVICI, 2015 *apud* MELLO; RIBEIRO, 2022, p. 8, our translation). Social representations then permeate discourse and, consequently, are carried into the media sphere (JODELET, 2001, p. 17), which, by transforming complex phenomena into familiar images, contributes to naturalizing certain worldviews.

Thus, advertising reproduces social representations while actively participating in their construction and consolidation, given that it promotes "the sale of other systems and, through its campaigns and the products it advertises, operates the social construction of identities, based on the representations conveyed" (PIEDRAS, 2004, p. 3, our translation). According to Hall (1997), representations are fundamental to the construction of these meanings and identities, acting "symbolically to classify the world and our relationships within it" (HALL, 1997, p. 8), operating through practices that shape how certain groups are seen and acting as a space for the circulation of stereotypes, norms, and values. Therefore, advertising acts as a space of reproduction, observing and reflecting on the very contradictions of society (OLIVEIRA-CRUZ, 2017, p. 198) and using stereotypes as a simplified representation of reality. Consequently, it is suggested how certain groups should be represented, what should be seen as feminine or masculine, how the Black population or a particular social class should be represented, and even what the acceptable maternal figure should be like, in a dialogue "with the values circulating in society" (OLIVEIRA-CRUZ, 2017, p. 188, our translation). We therefore have this "fantasy of images, words, sounds, movements and colors" (ROCHA, 2006, p. 19, our translation) that reiterate meanings that guide social practices, while at the same time naturalizing hierarchies and socially constructed roles.

Thus, narratives are conceived that "have sustained parameters of behavior and practices that suggest ideas of how to be a good mother"

(OLIVEIRA-CRUZ; CONRAD; MENDONÇA, 2024, p. 6, our translation), while at the same time delimiting boundaries between what is recognized as adequate motherhood and what is socially delegitimized. Such normativity makes it difficult for the plurality of maternal experiences to be seen and for these models considered acceptable to be transformed. These parameters are not natural, but historical constructions consolidated through media representation, which marginalizes care practices that occur outside this pattern, treating difference as a failure. Even so, there is space in this discourse "for resignification" (OLIVEIRA-CRUZ, 2017, p. 184, our translation). This is because we can see the reinforcement of social roles, but also their updating, even though advertising is not a place of significant tension. Proof of this is provided by advertisements that attempt to "break with some idealized maternal models" (OLIVEIRA-CRUZ; CONRAD; MENDONÇA, 2024, p. 4, our translation) in response to women's demands. Although we mostly retain the same models and stereotypes, there is room for transforming these biases and for representing, especially women, "with greater autonomy and decision-making power over their choices" (OLIVEIRA-CRUZ, 2017, p. 198, our translation). In this sense, it becomes fundamental to problematize representation in advertising, so that its role in the circulation and legitimation of imaginaries can be understood and how representations are produced, reiterated, or transformed in these discourses can be investigated.

## The brand *O Boticário* and its history: gender and motherhood in brand positioning

The brand *O Boticário* occupies a relevant place in Brazilian advertising when considering the relationship between consumption, identity, and representations. According to its website[1], the company, founded in 1977 by pharmacist Miguel Krigsner, began its activities as a compounding pharmacy specializing in the artisanal production of cosmetics. Over the

1 Available from: https://www.oboticario.pt/pages/historia. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

decades, the brand expanded, consolidating itself as one of the largest chains in Brazil, and became part of the Boticário Group, which brings together different brands in the sector.

Since its earliest years, the brand's communication positioning has been associated with the universe of emotions, affective relationships, and the appreciation of bonds. Unlike advertising strategies centered solely on the technical characteristics of products, *O Boticário* built its identity through narratives that emphasize feelings, experiences, and everyday moments. In this context, commemorative dates such as Mother's Day have become central to its communication strategy, functioning as spaces for the construction of meanings, especially regarding family, love, and care.

Specifically regarding Mother's Day, the brand produced campaigns that reinforce motherhood as a central affective experience in women's lives. For years, the narratives have associated the maternal figure with dedication, protection, and unconditional love, elements that resonate with traditional representations. The gesture of giving cosmetics or perfumes appears as a way of recognizing and reciprocating care, making the act of consuming function as a symbolic way of strengthening bonds.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, *O Boticário*'s campaigns reflected traditional gender roles, focusing on female beauty and seduction, while men were the active figures, holding positions of power or being the recipients of seduction. We highlight campaigns in which the advertisements of the time insisted on the idea that a woman should be perfumed to attract her partner and to be worthy, associating the product with the need for validation. An example is the "Pretty Girl" campaign[2] (1990–1993), in which the communication used short, romantic verses that linked female identity to beauty, perfume, and seduction. In the advertisements, the woman appeared as a delicate and desirable figure, while the perfume was presented as capable of arousing male interest and intensifying her attractiveness.

2 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x4UDyZ26YDA. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

The 1996 campaign featuring actress Mariana Ximenes, created for Valentine's Day, also stands out. It showed the actress with a suggestive smile saying, "Yes, I will give, everyone loves to give, everyone loves to receive." The ad[3] relied on the idea of women as objects of desire in the exchange of affection, with a double meaning reinforced by seduction. These campaigns presented a standardized representation, marked by references to traditional families and by representations of young, affectionate, and emotionally available mothers, in a process of naturalizing the roles attributed to women, in which motherhood is a central part of female identity. Thus, while valuing the maternal bond, advertising reinforces social expectations surrounding what it means to be a mother.

However, starting in 2010, a significant shift in the brand's discourse can be observed. There is a growing presence of contemporary debates about diversity and representation in the media, and in response, *O Boticário* began incorporating narratives into its campaigns that broaden the possibilities of representing relationships. This movement can be seen in campaigns that address different family configurations, including non-traditional motherhood and caregiving relationships that go beyond the biological model, showing that mothering can be performed by other people who assume this role in a child's life. As a result of this communicational change, *O Boticário* became a brand known for promoting diversity and breaking gender stereotypes. By challenging the hegemonic model of motherhood and gender structures, the brand aligns itself with a trend that seeks to recognize the plurality of experiences. In this sense, *O Boticário*'s communication demonstrates how the discourse operates simultaneously in two directions: on the one hand, it reproduces some consolidated cultural stereotypes; on the other, it responds to some social and cultural changes, incorporating new forms of representation that seek recognition and diversity.

3 Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-ONjzxV3XEY. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

## Methodology

Our analysis seeks to verify the creative development of four Mother's Day advertisements from *O Boticário*, broadcast in 2022, 2023, 2024, and 2025, respectively. The intention is to reconstruct the creative procedures, analyzing them and revisiting the underlying discourses: what stories of motherhood is *O Boticário* telling, and how is it telling them? Chart 2 presents this analytical process.

Chart 2 – Analysis assumptions.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resume | Objectives | | | |
| | Target audience | | | |
| Formulate | **Axis** | What to say about x (product, brand or service?) | | |
| Define | **Concept** | How to say it (what will y be?) | Metaphor | Compare x to y |
| | | How to say (what will y be?) | Narrative | Tell a story about y to talk about x |
| Visualize | **Manifesto** | How do we give concrete form to ideas? | Aesthetics, settings, colors, characters, and typography. | |

**Source:** Petermann (2023), adapted from Joannis (1988).

In addition to reconstructing the creative and positioning process of the advertisements, considering objectives, target audience, axis, concept, and manifesto, we established parallels between the creative paths and the assumptions of patriarchal motherhood, which we identified based on O'Reilly (2013) *apud* Mendonça (2014, p. 27-28), as shown in Chart 3.

In the following section, we detail the analysis of *O Boticário*'s advertisements as described. Based on the analysis of these advertisements, we seek to reconstruct an important part of the representation of motherhood in the discourse of one of Brazil's most important brands.

### Creative and maternal assumptions at O Boticário

The first selected advertisement, aired in 2022, is part of the brand positioning "Where there is love, there is beauty." The advertisement takes

place in a courtroom, where a woman judges herself based on how she has conducted her motherhood. The character is both the defendant and the prosecuting attorney, and the evidence presented in the courtroom points to alleged maternal failings: "leaves home early for work and returns late," "has even questioned whether becoming a mother was a good idea," "didn't breastfeed her own daughter," "gave pacifiers, sweets, and screens." In the end, the verdict comes from the daughter herself, who, when asked by the prosecution if "A mother like that deserves all the love and affection?", answers: "of course she does" (Figure 1, Chart 4).

Chart 3 – Ten assumptions of motherhood.

| | Assumptions |
|---|---|
| 1 | Essentialization |
| 2 | Privatization |
| 3 | Individualization |
| 4 | Biologization |
| 5 | Naturalization |
| 6 | Idealization |
| 7 | Specialization |
| 8 | Normalization |
| 9 | Intensification |
| 10 | Depoliticization |

**Source:** Prepared by the authors based on O'Reilly (2016).

The brand's discourse opens up space for reflection on maternal guilt and the judgments that arise from idealization processes, which establish unattainable maternal models, reinforcing mothers' expectations of themselves and society's expectations of mothers (O'REILLY, 2013 *apud* MENDONÇA, 2014, p. 27-28). In doing so, the advertisement problematizes individualization, presenting motherhood as individual, centered on the figure of the mother. Furthermore, it implicitly reflects the assumption of normalization, restricting maternal identities and

practices to the nuclear family model, with the mother as the primary caregiver (O'REILLY, 2013 *apud* MENDONÇA, 2014, p. 27-28). There is no reference to shared care or to the need for a support network, and, in the end, it is the daughter herself who absolves the mother, keeping the conflicts private and exempting society from the responsibility of absolving this mother, thereby withdrawing society from the process of accusation, a role it normally occupies. Thus, we agree with Oliveira-Cruz, Conrad, and Mendonça (2024, p. 11, our translation) when they conclude that:

> The disruption proposed by the *O Boticário* brand in addressing motherhood from ambivalent concepts such as guilt and judgment demonstrates, on the one hand, the adoption of strategies that favor a more plural and inclusive debate, which challenges gender inequalities. On the other hand, the response presented by the brand to the problem that the campaign itself proposes, by basing itself on the ideal of maternal love, makes visible how sophisticated the mechanisms of patriarchal domination that sustain motherhood are, because they are adorned with a feeling socially constructed as natural, divine and unconditional (BADINTER, 1985).

Figure 1 – *O Boticário* - Motherhood without Judgment – 2022.



**Source:** Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BJeBS2Wyb2k. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

Chart 4 – Analysis of "Motherhood without Judgment".

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Resume</td><td>Objectives</td><td colspan="3">Based on the positioning, "Where there is love, there is beauty," O Boticário proposes a reflection on maternal guilt and the different ways of mothering, encouraging respect and empathy for mothers. Finally, it strengthens the brand through identification and stimulates the purchase of gifts for Mother's Day.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target audience</td><td colspan="3">Women between 20 and 50 years old, from middle-class backgrounds, interested in beauty, personal care, and well-being.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Formulate</td><td>Axis</td><td>What is said about x (product, brand or service?)</td><td colspan="2">O Boticário presents itself as a brand that stands by women, who often receive criticism for their role as mothers.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Define</td><td rowspan="2">Concept</td><td>How to say (what will y be?)</td><td rowspan="2">Narrative</td><td rowspan="2">It tells the story of a jury meeting to discuss maternal guilt, revealing, in the end, that the mother is judging herself and that it is her own daughter who absolves her.</td></tr>
<tr><td>A trial</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visualize</td><td>Manifesto</td><td>How do we give concrete form to ideas?</td><td colspan="2">Aesthetics, settings, colors, characters, and typography.<br>The advertisement predominantly features brown tones, characteristic of legal settings. More formal attire and classic set design help establish the courtroom setting. The scene also includes an audience in which other mothers show empathy and suffer alongside the mother being judged.</td></tr>
</table>

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

The second advertisement selected for analysis was aired in 2023 and is part of the brand positioning "Where there is love, there is beauty." The advertisement takes place on a deserted island, where a woman appears as a shipwreck survivor, alone with her son, and highlights the motto "Those who love also need love." In addition, it emphasizes the hashtag #BeASupportNetwork (Figure 2, Chart 5).

The advertisement problematizes maternal loneliness and the lack of a support network, especially during the postpartum period. The initial

excerpt of the voice-over narration suggests a mother's outpouring of emotion: "Since I ended up here, a lot has happened. This place makes me very happy, but I need to say: it's a little scary."

> The campaign, by beginning with the statement "this place makes me very happy, but I need to say: it's a little scary," seeks to build its argumentative endeavor from the outset. The use of the word "a little" in the diminutive aims to soften the discourse, which relies on the common sense maxim: motherhood is a happy but tiring place. [...] This is because, even though the common understanding of motherhood and tiredness exists, the company does not seek to adopt a radical discourse, but a measured one, which allows it to approach its target audience (OLIVEIRA; FERNANDES VIANA, 2024, p. 10, our translation).

Figure 2 – O *Boticário* - Those who love also need love – 2023.




**Source:** Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QqQfOPy8mnw. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

Furthermore, it initially establishes the metaphor that will compare this phase of motherhood to a deserted island. This excerpt from the voice-over challenges the assumption of naturalization, in which motherhood is presented as natural for women, as if all women were born knowing how to mother (O'REILLY, 2013 *apud* MENDONÇA, 2014, p. 27-28). We observe, still regarding the assumptions of patriarchal motherhood, that the advertisement seems to problematize individualization, which

Chart 5 – Analysis of "Those who love also need love".

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Resume</td><td>Objectives</td><td colspan="3">Based on the positioning, "Where there is love, there is beauty," O Boticário proposes a reflection on loneliness and maternal overload, encourages the formation of support networks, strengthens the brand through identification, and also stimulates the purchase of gifts for Mother's Day.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target audience</td><td colspan="3">Women between 20 and 50 years old, from middle-class backgrounds, interested in beauty, personal care, and well-being.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Formulate</td><td>Axis</td><td>What is said about x (product, brand, or service?)</td><td colspan="2">O Boticário presents itself as a brand that is supportive and empathetic toward mothers experiencing loneliness and maternal overload.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Define</td><td rowspan="2">Concept</td><td>How to say (what will y be?)</td><td rowspan="2">Narrative</td><td rowspan="2">It tells the story of a shipwreck in which a mother and son find themselves alone on a deserted island.</td></tr>
<tr><td>A shipwreck isolates mother and son, leaving them exposed to the risks of life on a deserted island.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visualize</td><td>Manifesto</td><td>How do we give concrete form to ideas?</td><td colspan="2">Aesthetics, settings, colors, characters, and typography.<br>The advertisement takes place on a beach on a deserted island, but also features nursery furniture, such as an armchair, a window, a crib, and toys. The set design contributes to establishing the metaphor that compares motherhood to a deserted island without a support network, marked by loneliness, overload, and maternal exhaustion. The armchair also becomes a link that leads from the deserted island environment to the child's room and then to the home environment, undoing the established metaphor. In the home setting, at the end, we see other characters, such as someone who appears to be the father, someone who appears to be the grandmother, and a group of female friends.</td></tr>
</table>

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

transforms mothering into a task of individual responsibility, centered on the figure of the mother, as represented in the voice-over excerpt: "Therefore, this is not just a cry for help, it's to remind that we are like this because we feel alone." Another assumption is that of idealization, which establishes unattainable models that reinforce expectations about what it means to be a mother; and that of normalization, which restricts motherhood to the nuclear family model, with the mother as the primary caregiver and the husband as the provider. The voice-over excerpt "Here I feel afraid of not being able to handle everything, I feel tired, exhausted" allows for this inference, since the condition of "handling everything" implicitly involves taking care of everything alone. Finally, we identify the assumption of depoliticization, which characterizes the raising and education of children as a private activity, without sociopolitical relations or implications. These assumptions are manifested in the letterings "62.7% of mothers feel tired and overwhelmed" and "#BeASupportNetwork," accompanied by the phrase "those who love also need love." In a way, the data addresses a set of issues and implies the need for society to review the central role of the mother and engage support networks.

The third advertisement selected for analysis, aired in 2024, is part of the brand positioning: "Where there is love, there is beauty." The plot takes place in a house, which is revealed to be a boat on the high seas facing a storm, also representing the conflicts between a mother and her son. The tagline stands out: "Storms pass, love remains" (Figure 3, Chart 6).

In this advertisement, *O Boticário* seeks to broaden representations of motherhood by telling the story of a mother with a teenager. The challenges of motherhood are generally presented as beginning with the postpartum period and/or early childhood, as if they did not continue after this phase. In this commercial, the brand moves toward a diversification of stereotypes, even though none of the four advertisements analyzed here feature a Black woman, for example. The advertisement is structured based on the assumptions of individualization and normalization: no other character (husband, mother, or mother-in-law) is even mentioned in the narrative, centering all responsibility on the maternal

figure, both for the conflict and for its resolution. Although this family configuration reflects a lived reality, the advertisement does not explicitly problematize it. In none of the phases of motherhood that the narrative revisits in flashback do we see any representation or mention of the absence of essential figures such as the father. The phases are: when the child is a baby, in someone's arms and during bath time; the first challenges of school age, represented by a crisis involving judo; taking care of the child's appearance at the beginning of adolescence, etc. Throughout all stages, we only see the mother, which can also represent, on the other hand, the complex experience of single motherhood.

Figure 3 – *O Boticário* - Storms pass, love remains – 2024.



**Source:** Available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMOQthTVjpY. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

The fourth advertisement selected for analysis was aired in 2025. It is part of the brand positioning: "Love always has a plan." It presents a different characteristic from the others: at the opening, the lettering reads: "*O Boticário* presents: Plans." This characteristic reinforces that it is a brand positioning, even though, aesthetically, the advertisement resembles a short film. It is, like the 2024 advertisement, an audiovisual

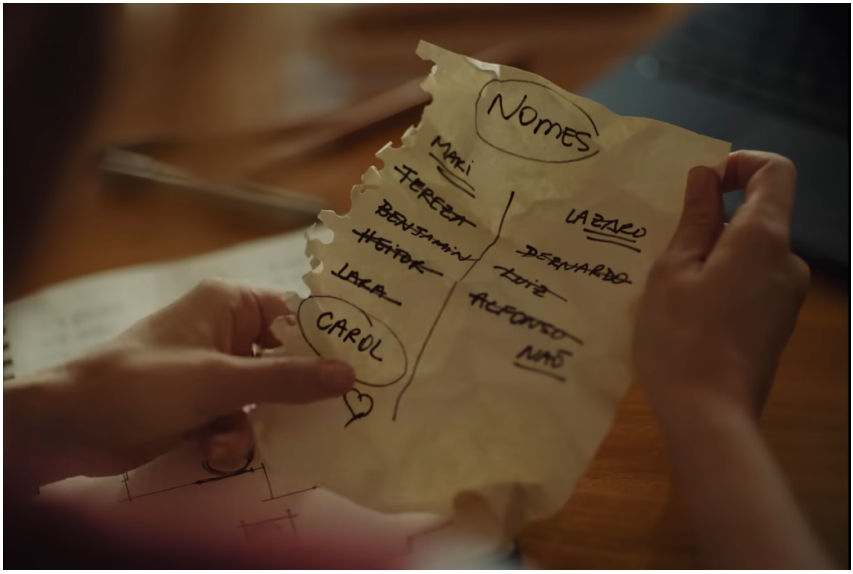
piece of more than three minutes, considered long in advertising, a field in which the duration of each commercial usually does not exceed thirty seconds (Figure 4, Chart 7).

Chart 6 – Analysis of "Storms pass, love remains".

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Resume</td><td>Objectives</td><td colspan="3">Based on the positioning, "Where there is love, there is beauty," O Boticário proposes a reflection on the conflicts of motherhood with adolescent children. The advertisement helps diversify representations of motherhood, frequently centered on examples of mothers of babies and young children, strengthening the brand through identification and also stimulating the purchase of gifts for Mother's Day.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Target audience</td><td colspan="3">Women between 20 and 50 years old, from middle-class backgrounds, interested in beauty, personal care, and well-being.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Formulate</td><td>Axis</td><td>What is said about x (product, brand, or service?)</td><td colspan="2">O Boticário presents itself as a brand that showcases different representations and experiences of motherhood, addressing conflicts between motherhood and adolescence that are rarely discussed in advertising.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">Define</td><td rowspan="2">Concept</td><td>How to say it (what will y be?)</td><td rowspan="2">Narrative</td><td rowspan="2">It tells the story of the conflicts between motherhood and adolescence, establishing a metaphorical parallel with a storm on the high seas.</td></tr>
<tr><td>A storm on the high seas</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visualize</td><td>Manifesto</td><td>How do we give concrete form to ideas?</td><td colspan="2">Aesthetics, settings, colors, characters, and typography.<br>The advertisement takes place in a house, where a mother anxiously awaits her son's arrival. The scenes include a dining room, kitchen, bedroom, hallway, etc. After the teenage son arrives and the two argue, the setting gradually transforms into a boat on the high seas. This is evident in the movements, the view from the window, and the instability that develops, symbolizing a storm. Finally, reconciliation is marked by the yellow and gold tones representing the sun shining again over the high seas, filling the boat and symbolizing the end of the storm.</td></tr>
</table>

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

Figure 4 – O *Boticário* - Mother's Day | Love always has a plan – 2025.




**Source:** Available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0l6uPAiZBQ. Accessed on: Aug. 25, 2026.

The advertisement concludes its narrative with the lettering: "For all who dream, care for, and dedicate themselves to motherhood." It seeks to broaden the dialogue, continuing the brand's proposal to contemplate different representations of motherhood. In this case, it addresses those women who dream and desire to be mothers but are still in the process. It addresses a subject that is often treated as taboo and reserved for the intimate and private sphere. The brand seeks to give voice to the feelings and challenges of this journey. The narrative, centered on the pursuit of motherhood, which sometimes overlaps with happiness and personal fulfillment, flirts with the assumption of essentialization, which positions motherhood as the foundation of female identity. The processes of individualization and normalization could also be mentioned, since the difficulties in conceiving appear to be the sole responsibility of the mother.

## Final Considerations

The reflection presented in this study was grounded in the field of

Chart 7 – Analysis of "Love always has a plan".

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Resume | Objectives | It addresses the path to motherhood, highlighting the journey of women trying to conceive. The ad emphasizes the importance of empathy and support. Ultimately, the ad diversifies representations of motherhood, strengthening the brand through identification and encouraging the purchase of Mother's Day gifts. | | |
| | Target audience | Women between 20 and 50 years old, from middle-class backgrounds, interested in beauty, personal care, and well-being. | | |
| Formulate | **Axis** | **What is said about x? (product, brand, or service?)** | O Boticário reveals itself as a brand that reflects different types of representations and experiences of motherhood, encompassing the experiences and complexities of the journey toward motherhood, which are rarely addressed in advertising. | |
| Define | **Concept** | **How to say it (what will y be?)** | **Narrative** | It tells the story of a woman trying to become a mother, including the conflicts, frustrations, and support she finds in her friend, who has gone through similar situations, and the courage to start over. |
| | | The advertisement tells the story of the plans, frustrations, and course of life revolving around the dream of becoming a mother. | | |
| Visualize | **Manifesto** | **How do we give concrete form to ideas?** | **Aesthetics, settings, colors, characters, and typography.** The advertisement takes place on a bench amidst nature, but is interspersed with several flashback scenes: at work, when the realization that menstruation is approaching brings with it the frustration of not being pregnant; at a child's birthday party, where the presence of other children saddens the main character; and at home, in intimate moments, when she records the list of possible names for the much-desired baby. | |

**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

motherhood studies, as proposed by Andrea O'Reilly (2016). The author develops the perspective of matricentric feminism, which places the experience of mothers at the center of the analysis and highlights how motherhood is traversed by patriarchal structures that produce specific expectations and norms regarding mothering. In this context, motherhood comes to be understood in multiple dimensions, as experience and social role, as institution and ideology, and as identity and subjectivity, allowing for the problematization of the ways in which patriarchy regulates and shapes the experience of mothers. To systematize these dynamics, O'Reilly (2016) presents the so-called ten assumptions of patriarchal motherhood, which demonstrate how social and cultural discourses construct normative models of motherhood and influence the representations that circulate in society and the media.

From this theoretical perspective, the assumptions of patriarchal motherhood were mobilized in this study as an analytical tool to understand how certain social norms and expectations related to mothering are reproduced, negotiated, or challenged in advertising narratives.

Over the last decade, a significant shift has been observed in the field of advertising regarding forms of social representation. Sociocultural transformations, coupled with social pressures for greater diversity and inclusion in media narratives, have led brands to revise their communication strategies. In this scenario, advertising begins to challenge historically consolidated stereotypes and expand the possibilities for representing different subjects, identities, and experiences.

Regarding motherhood, this shift manifests itself in the attempt to question the traditional image of the idealized mother, often associated with sacrifice, selflessness, and an absolute centrality as the protagonist of caregiving, toward narratives that seek to highlight the complexity, ambivalence, and plurality of maternal experiences. In this context, campaigns by the brand *O Boticário* have explored more affective, realistic, and diverse dimensions of motherhood, presenting different family configurations, emotions, and challenges involved in this experience.

Based on the analysis, it can be seen that the brand proposes a broadening and diversification of representations and stereotypes; however, the assumptions of patriarchal motherhood (such as the individualization of responsibility and the normalization of the maternal figure as the central caregiver) are still constitutive elements of or are subtly reinforced in the narratives, revealing the tensions between social demands and the maintenance of historical and hegemonic structures in advertising discourse.

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