

TinnGO

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Task 4.6b: Visual Analysis of Smart Cars: Volvo, BMW, and Fiat

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Abstract

Currently Europe regards itself as a leading part in the global race towards smart automated transport. According to ERTRAC, European Road Transport Research Advisory Council, automated driving innovation is motivated by both technological advancements as well as social goals of equality. This report shows how such perspectives of technology and social goals of equality are carved out and handled in visual e-marketing strategies by high end car producers selected representing both the North and South of Europe. Using visual analysis in a range of YouTube videos from car producers such as Volvo, BMW, and Fiat, we scrutinize their e-marketing with a focus on representations of gender, class, and ethnicity. The most popular video commercials provide material on imagined realities that the car companies portrait as desirable. The elephant in the room is so to speak that the three iconic car companies are striving to be competitive and to keep up their market shares up against threats from many sites: technologically, politically, globally, and also in relation to climate and CO₂ reductions. The visual representations in the promotional videos show that the car companies try to maintain their own unique profile and brand including a blend of social, gendered, and national and regional characteristics in the intensified competition at the global car market. Both Volvo and BMW use e-marketing in a broader effort of mobilization of memories, feelings, and identities in favor of energy saving; yet they still promote a car centric society as a signpost for modern society and smart middle-class mobility.

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Publishable summary

This report is part of the TinnGO deliverable 4.6, as task 4.6b. The report presents findings from a visual analysis of videos presented in the YouTube channels in three prominent European car firms: Volvo, BMW, and Fiat. It is demonstrated how the companies use YouTube videos in e-marketing with a focus on the following questions:

1. *How do the companies present electric and autonomous cars, and how do the smart cars connect to the history and characteristics of the car brand?*
2. *How are the new models presented and visualized and who is addressed in the videos in terms of gender, age, class, ethnicity, and locality?*
3. *How do the images meet the TiNNGO concept of Gender Smart Mobility which includes the indicators of being attractive, affordable, effective, sustainable, and inclusive?*

Volvo's representations indicate both a Scandinavian and a global trend towards a more gender inclusive marketing and car consumer strategy. Volvo is still – in spite of the new Chinese ownership – presented as a brand with specific Volvo Scandinavian traits. This goes for both the quality, the safety and sturdiness, as well as the attention to family and gender equality. Volvo's YouTube videos of autonomous and electric cars in particular address corporate gender equality and women's stem expertise.

BMW's YouTube representations illustrate a solid business- and leadership narrative, and focus on values like independence, freedom, intelligence, risk-taking, and control. In the visual representation of electric cars more attention was offered towards feminine qualities as well as sustainability and responsibility for the future.

Fiat's YouTube representations also focus on leadership, though a green leadership. Fiat celebrates in its commercials the small, more sustainable private car that – according to the representation - can live side by side with city life and non-motorized transport modalities. Fiat especially emphasizes their latest electrical car models, and they do so by addressing the modern businessman.

The YouTube analysis from each company showed both path dependency and break-up of the (in)sustainability masculine dominated car regime. The representations reveal a parallel track, which show some aspirations towards more sustainable models and inclusive designs; they showcase seamless car transport which occasionally include women and non-white persons.

1. Introduction

This report is part of the TinnGO deliverable 4.6, as task 4.6b. The report presents findings from a visual analysis of videos presented in the YouTube channels in three prominent European car firms: Volvo, BMW, and Fiat. We will demonstrate how the companies use YouTube videos in e-marketing with a focus on the following questions:

1. How do the companies present electric and autonomous cars, and how do the smart cars connect to the history and characteristics of the car brand?
2. How are the new models presented and visualized and who is addressed in the videos in terms of gender, age, class, ethnicity, and locality?
3. How do the images meet the TinnGO concept of Gender Smart Mobility which includes the indicators of being attractive, affordable, effective, sustainable, and inclusive mobility?

1.1 The car industry – from modern to smart?¹

In the West, the car industry has been closely connected to national economies and has held high visibility in the social landscape and cultural imaginary since the dawn of the 20th century.² In the modern period, cars and car culture have been at the heart of our understanding of the modern world and perceived as the iconic commodity form as such in the 20th century” (Ross 1995: 17). Not only did the car industry in many Western countries, become one of the most important drivers of national economic growth, cars and their use also became closely linked to certain gendered constructions that associated men and masculinity to cars in very specific ways. For example, the American car producer Ford from early on worked on cars and car production along strictly gendered codes and gendered division of work. During the same period the white male engineer was rendered a hegemonic figure in American and Western technology and innovation.³ Also the new technology of the car contributed to consolidate a conservative gender culture in the beginning of the 20th century. Women were by and large excluded from all transport related domains: They were absent as drivers and omitted from car design and production as well as from transport as a labour market. At later stages women were assigned to certain secondary family-oriented transportation tasks related to suburban life and family care (Scharff 1991; Wachs & Crawford 1992; Sanger 1995; Donnatelli 2001) as well as to certain service tasks in the areas of employment such as airhostesses which related to traditional female domains. Even today in the 21st century transport in all areas bear trajectories of such gendered divisions and hierarchical orders.

¹ This paragraph is an extract from the TiNNGO road map/ TiNNGO D. 4.1. – forthcoming as: *Christensen, HR & Breengaard, M.H: Gender Smart mobility. Concepts, methods, practices. Book contract in Routledge transport and mobility series (forthcoming 2021).*

² At the world level the number of registered vehicles rose from 126,888 mill. in 1960 to over one billion in 2010. The numbers represent the number of cars; light, medium and heavy-duty trucks; and buses, see OICA 2017.

³ Ford in 1914 introduced the five-dollar day, meant as a family wage and only open for (married) men and single women. The Ford adoption of a family wage also reinforced the notion that women should remain low waged or stay at home. See Day 1990: 275.

Car production has been and is still regarded as a growth engine for Europe, not least the leading car producing economies. The sector has a manufacturing output of 18,5 million vehicles per year, and a contribution to the total European GDP of 7 %, the car sector has an estimated employment of 14,6 million people (acea 2020). Europe regards itself as a leading part in the global race towards automated transport in both private and public terms.⁴ Europe is currently struggling to uphold a leading role in car production. As said by the director of the influential European Road Transport Research Advisory Council, ERTRAC, *“the road to automated mobility represents a key opportunity for Europe to retain its leadership and pave the way for a new mobility landscape for all of its citizens”* (ERTRAC 2019: 4). According to ERTRAC, automated driving innovation is motivated by both technological advancements as well as social goals: Automated driving is endorsed as *“one of the key technologies and major technological advancements influencing and shaping out future mobility and equality of life”* (ERTRAC 2019: 4). The chart below depicts how the step wise process of innovation reveals the full automated car as the end goal. Like the example of BMW below, the most advanced car producers are located in step 3 – yet all the car producers in this analysis are striving towards step 4 and 5 in harsh competition with other high-end brands. In this report we apply a broad and fluid concept of smart cars, as meaning various models of existing electric cars and the future vision of the autonomous car.

Table 1.2.1: Autonomous Driving Technology

Stages of autonomous driving	Description	Elaboration
1	Driver Assistance	Driver Assistant System supports the driver, but do not take control. Examples: Active Cruise Control with Stop&Go function, which independently adjust the distance to the car in front of you.
2	Partly Automated Driving	System can take control, but the driver remains responsible for operating the car. Examples: Steering and Lane Control Assistant.

⁴ At the global level the auto industry is regarded as the leading driver of global economic growth, cf. the International Organization of Motor Vehicle Manufacturers, and it has expanded over 30 % in the ten-year period ending 2005. The industry is a leading employer throughout the world, with 9 million people involved in making 60 million vehicles, or 5 % of global manufacturing jobs. Indirect employment from automotive activity is fivefold, representing 50 million jobs connected indirectly to the auto industry. Other industries involved in the manufacture and service of vehicles include textiles, plastics, iron, steel, glass, aluminium, computer chips and rubber. The industry also involves significant research and development activity, representing investment of nearly \$85 billion (€70 billion). It is estimated that the manufacture of vehicles contributes more than \$430 billion (€354 billion) to the governments of 26 countries combined. See <http://www.reportlinker.com/ci02294/Automotive.html>

3	Highly Automated Driving	<p>Personal CoPilot System allows the drivers more freedom to completely turn their attention away from the road.</p> <p>Examples: The car will be able to drive autonomously over long distances in certain traffic situations, such as on motorways. However, the driver must be able to take over control within a few seconds, such as at road construction sites.</p>
4	Fully Automated Driving	<p>On this level, the car can handle the majority of driving situations independently. The technology in level 4 is developed to the point that a car can handle highly complex urban driving situations, such as the sudden appearance of construction sites without any driver intervention.</p>
5	Full Automation (=no driver)	<p>Here, the car performs any and all driving tasks – there isn't even a cockpit. Therefore, every person in the car becomes a <i>passenger</i>, opening up new mobility possibility for people with disabilities, for example.</p>

Source: (BMW 2020a).

Visions of smart mobility are at present mainly led by producers and manufacturers who promote an optimistic vision of a society in which technological advances will deliver a “benign mobility system, that all users can access seamlessly and on demand” (Marsden & Reardon 2017). Also, the European Union and its aligned agencies endorse itself as a leading party in the development of what is now called CAD, i.e., Connected and Automated Driving. Smart cars are envisioned as a solution that can avoid many of the evils of today’s conditions. Smart mobility will, according to such optimistic lines, bring massive gains in safety, cost reduction, and infrastructures while vehicles will be used more efficiently and provide accessibility for all. Such optimistic predictions and dreams are however contrasted with more pessimistic and critical assessments. They forecast a reinforcement of the prevailing ‘system of automobility’, including all its evils of waste, pollution, and environmental degradation with the coming of the automated cars (Freudental-Pedersen, Kesselring & Servou 2019). This is a critical argument which is galvanized in the following analysis of smart car marketing, which in no way indicate a reduction of the car fleet. On the contrary e-marketing seems to make cars even more individual and personalized, as well as bigger and more space consuming. Car producers as we will see – apply sophisticated marketing tools and methods, which as we will show not only promotes the cars as isolated devices but in certain and specific contexts. Their e-marketing – both takes issue of the new communication technologies – here in the shape of YouTube videos where they try to maintain and to build up new alliances with new consumer values and preferences. Moreover, the car companies in their e-marketing very distinctively “reads” and reflects current buzz words and political trends related to climate and CO₂ reductions and various urban problems and maladies. The elephant in the room is so to speak that the three iconic car companies are striving to be competitive and to keep up their market shares, in a kind of death struggle or agoni which is only occasionally addressed. All of them are up against threats from many sites – technologically, politically, globally. As reflected by the current CEO of VOLVO – in the introduction to autonomous cars: “The

business will change in the coming years, and it is important that Volvo should be the leader, we should contribute to transform the business... it is really about going from selling cars to delivering mobility services to our customers.” The staging of the mature CEO as a relaxed white senior male in a sofa, talking slowly and in a low and crispy voice seems nearly as counter statement to this prediction of a glorious and changing future in which Volvo will take the lead. Or perhaps as a calming assurance that Volvo will survive no matter what. ⁵

In this report we will analyse how such perspectives are carved out and handled in marketing strategies which connect to the current visual turn in smart mobility and cities. A special focus will be on the reproduction or potential break up from gendered stereotypes where men and masculinity are linked with speed and mobility, and whether women and femininity are seen as immobility and aligned with home and domesticity.

1.2 Smart car cultures as imagined communities

It has been argued that the making of 21st century modernity and consumer communities correspond to the formation of nation states as imagined communities in the 19th century. (Christensen 2015, Small 2013; Cayla 2008; Eckhardt 2008). Today it is claimed that cars and other consumer goods have replaced media and political arenas as the channel for the imagination; and that the imagination is now situated in transnational connections and regional consciousness rather than within national boundaries. We will show how such developments are manifested in the visual representations where national features in various ways are entangled with the global and cosmopolitan trends. At the same time new transnational branding strategies address gender and class in multiple ways. In many companies e.g., the global model and the imagined needs and pleasures of the male business and government elites have been central and is sought to be actively incorporated in the new forms and technologies. Also, the introduction of new designs, colours and names play a role in both overt and underplayed gender and national components. As for class it is evident that leading car brands seek to attract both the local and the global middle class which so far have been mainly composed by men. Notwithstanding similarities among today's (European) and globalized car producers we will show how car companies also seek to maintain their own unique profile and brand including a blend of social, gendered, and national/ local characteristics.

Private cars are perhaps not what comes to mind, when one speaks of a sustainable and diverse transportation system, and this is not surprising, as cars in 2019 constituted 60,7 % of the total transport CO₂ emissions in Europe (European Parliament 2019). This only stresses the need to investigate how the car models today respond to requests regarding sustainability, diversity and inclusiveness (jf. Christensen and Brengaard 2019:46). The YouTube videos show us how car companies engage in expressing the private car narrative, which shapes the understandings of what a private car should be, and who a driver is. To examine the visual representations among car companies is therefore also to identify which potentials there are for change. In the following we outline the conceptual framework and the methodology of the visual analysis of YouTube video representations of what used to be leading European car firms: Volvo, Fiat, and BMW. We will demonstrate how the companies use e-marketing in various ways – and how they present the prospects of smart mobility.

⁵ See examples of Volvo future autonomous travel on the direct [link here](#) (time 5:04).

Following these reflections we will ask how new technology and designs are presented? How is gender, age, class, ethnicity, and locality presented? And who is the imagined audience? At last, this is compiled in a comparative discussion of how imagined and visualized videos and models meet the TInnGO concept of Gender smart mobility including the indicators of being attractive, affordable, effective, sustainable, and inclusive.

2. Methods

Images and visual communication are important to study especially in relation to the constructed and imagined communities and storytelling of the various smart car cultures and their effects on gendered practices. Not only have images been widely recognized as powerful means of how social life happens and have been staged as a “visual turn” in cultural and political analysis. It has also been demonstrated that the notion of smart cities and its close alignment with smart mobility are intensely communicated through visuals (Rose 2008/ 2016). Hence smart technologies and aligned forms of mobility are frequently transposed in visuals such as photorealistic computer-generated images and digital animations, in graphics and photographs or videos that evidence a future scenario – of relaxed transport and mobility (Rose & Willis 2018). This means that since the inception of social media in various forms visual communication has been thriving and has become dominant not least in the promotion of smart cities and all what comes with it – including smart and electric cars. In this report, we will bridge the rich body of feminist transport research, focused on modalities norms and practices, with the broader field of visual and image representations, values and symbols that contribute to the making of mobility and social life (Henriksson 2014; Doerr 2014; Trentman 2007). This provides a methodology that complies with the analytical aims of the TInnGO project, and the requirements of the broader and more complicated ideas, agendas and practices related to transport and mobility studies today.

Our material consists of selected popular YouTube video commercials from the car brands that are especially good material for detecting imagined and desired realities. By inspecting these videos we wish to examine the subtle and often invisible ways in which canonical gendered norms and hegemonic power relations are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in the various companies (Christensen & Brengaard 2011, Lazar 2007, Dijk 2001/2004: 12). We are inspired by feminist discourse analysis in the way that it forms part of an analytical approach that operates with the insight that a wide range of expressions from text and talk to sound have material and phenomenological effects for groups of men and women, and ethnic and sexual minorities in specific contexts (Lazar 2007, Marling 2010).

2.1 Gendered and Conflicting Scripts

Science and technology studies (STS studies) have made us aware of the co-production of technoscientific objects and the social and gendered order. STS-informed studies have made a significant impact by opening many black boxes in science and technology and revealing the intersecting nature of science, technology, and social processes. (Bijker 1995; Latour 2005; MacKenzie & Wajcman 1999) The notion of scripts plays a key role in this relationship and has been applied to empirical analyses of partial predetermined aspects of technology and human action. Scripts are implied in processes where *“particular technologies incorporate unintentional or intentional ‘scripts’ that prefigure users’ identities and experience, while at the same time being shaped by them”* (Peine et al. 2015: 12f).

Feminist studies operate with a similar idea of *Gender Scripts*, which address gendered aspects that are glossed over in the general idea of a script. *Gender Scripts* refer to explicit and implicit gendered bias in technological objects, such as cars and bikes, which are commonly perceived as neutral objects. In order to approach the gendered dimension of new technologies, one might understand them in terms of social relations that interact with the technology during

its design, development, production, and use (Peine et al. 2015: 14ff). The social shaping of technologies such as cars, bikes and walking devices includes the material object, the practice of using it and the identity of the (supposed) user. Gender scripts are powerful and used both by the producers and in marketing and can be applied to the study of the gendered character of mobility and various technologies. The notion of gender scripts has been applied as an analytical framework to assist in the interpretation of gendered meanings of material artifacts and also to specify conflicting ideas about what is seen as masculine and feminine. Certain artifacts galvanize stereotypical representations of femininity and masculinity which legitimizes, reproduces, and reinforces asymmetrical relations between gender. Others contribute to form alternative representations of gender which reduces the differences and segregations (Grahm 2006: 41f; Henriksson 2014:44). Moreover, gender scripts are rarely the result of designers' conscious attempts to exclude certain users. *"Rather it will be the result of unconscious repetitions and reiterations of the hegemonic masculine norm. A gender script analysis can be specified as a study of who has to 'adjust' more, who has to pay the price for not fitting the norm that is produced in the artifact."* (Rommers 2002: 413; Henriksson 2014:44).

The critical notions of gender scripts, imagined realities as well as a methodological inspiration of critical discourse analysis all in all widens and provides a new take on material human discourses, which goes beyond the narrow focus on behavioural studies in transport research. Studies of behaviour tend to divide/present the field of technology and humans in a hierarchical model. A model that promotes the idea that technology holds the upper hand in the development of smart technologies, meaning that technology and human agency are kept analytically apart and implicates that technology comes first - and that humans only enter this interplay as reactive users. The suggested theoretical framework also connects to current trends in the study of the smart city – where the vision is to recognize the close entanglements of humans and technology and to set up new versions of a livable city in the 21st century.

2.2 The role of images and how to approach them

In this report the images and their locations themselves take centre stage and are subject to analysis. Images can both function as disciplining in the ways it forms our ideas about ourselves and the others; yet images can also create a sense of imagined community and imagined identity which is central for the field of e-marketing. To use images as a social scholar implies an interest in what the images tells us about society (Sturken and Carwright, 2009, Rose 2012, Clarke 2005, Malin Henriksson 2004: 64). The explorative research design used in this report can be spelled out in three steps, which we have connected into the framework of smart cars and their YouTube brandings⁶ (Doerr & Milman 2014:430ff; Müller & Özcan 2007:288). The three steps include the following dimensions and guidelines for looking at content and interpretation of images:

1. visual content analysis
2. deeper iconographic analysis of selected videos

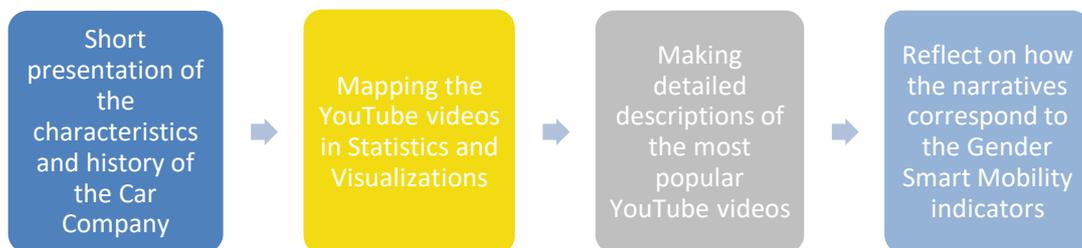
⁶ These steps were pronounced as part of TinnGO task 4.6c, and can be found here as part of other examples on use of visual analyses.

3. connection of the two first steps with contextual analysis and use of extended data and literature.

Through visual content analysis, we describe what is present in the videos, through iconographic interpretation we identify a more abstract level of stories and meaning, and at last in the third step we support the reliability of the visual analysis and form a link to consider how the car brands in their visual representations and more broadly connects to the indicators that have been developed as part of the TInnGO Gender Smart analysis. The analysis intends to describe the videos in a detailed and understandable manner, so that *“the readers ‘see’ for themselves”* (Cho and Trent 2006:329). The analysis focus on the car companies’ expressions, narratives, and potentials in gender smart mobility. Thereby it also examines not only who is represented and addressed within the videos, but also how they are addressed and represented. As such the analysis does not incorporate how the videos are received and interpreted among the involved such as the viewers (Cho and Trent 2006:328; Maxwell 1992:288).

Below follows a detailed description of how the visual analysis was conducted. The analysis process is combined in four steps: 1) A short presentation of the car company, 2) mapping the YouTube videos in statistics and visualizations, 3) making detailed descriptions of the most popular YouTube videos, and 4) reflecting on how the narratives and expressions correspond with the gender smart mobility indicators. The steps are illustrated in model 2.2.1 below.

Model 2.2.1: A step-by-step guide



Step 1: A Short presentation of the Car Company

First, we have described each car company that has been chosen. This has mainly been described through grey literature: Information has been sought from the car companies’ own webpages, but also newspapers, reports, and magazines. In this part of the analysis, it is vital to ask what the history of the car company is? What is it known for? What characteristics does it have? It is too important to note the price range of the company’s cars, and where they are sold and produced. At last information of the organization of the car company is also relevant, and so is information on the companies’ market share and size.

Step 2: Mapping the YouTube videos in Statistics and Visualizations

Second, one can start to look at the company’s YouTube channel(s). We have identified the international channel, as well as related channels that targeted specific geographical areas and countries. One can detect numbers of subscribers and views related to each channel. From here, we have mapped the material uploaded on the car companies’ international channels. We have done this in two ways: a) identified which playlists and themes that the

Car Company make use of, and b) identified which videos were most popular. These mappings can contain number of views, likes, the length of the videos, and the date of upload, which have been visualized in tables and figures.

Step 3: Making descriptions of the most popular YouTube Videos

Third, we can start to focus on specific video uploads. We have chosen cases that either illustrate a specific relevant theme or have a noteworthy high number of views. Once the cases are selected one can start to ask what happens in the video? Which social categories are represented and addressed, and how are they addressed? How does the expressions and narratives relate to statistics and stories happening outside the scene? Are the videos echoing stereotypes or challenging them? What characteristics are associated with the narratives and stories expressed in the videos? In this step, we have really sought to carefully describe both the video stories, but also the car companies' narratives and expressions.

Step 4: Discussion: How does the narratives and storytelling respond to the Gender Smart Mobility indicators?

Fourth, we have used the detailed descriptions of the video stories and narratives to reflect on how the car companies respond to the Gender Smart Mobility Indicators. This includes challenging both the car companies' self-representation, but also challenging if the indicators of Gender Smart Mobility need to be moderated to best capture the in private car transport.

2.1 YouTube as a Social Media Platform

In general, the YouTube video platform forms part of new communicative infrastructures, which also enable new forms of social connectivity.⁷ Social media platforms have spread like wildfire over the past decade and include social networking tools such as Facebook and Twitter, professional networking sites such as LinkedIn, as well as media sharing sites such as YouTube and Instagram, commerce communities such as Amazon, discussion forums and blogs (Habibi et. al. 2015). The benefits of social media for the companies are cost reduction, information collection, database enhancement and service delivery – and expanded geographical and global reach (Barnes 2010). The car companies analysed in this report uses both the YouTube and a range of additional platforms for branding and marketing purposes. YouTube has been chosen to be the platform, from where we analyse the car companies' commercials and videos. From a conceptual angle one can argue that social media platforms such as YouTube forms part of new communicative infrastructures, which also enable new forms of social connectivity and social being (Dijk, 2013). Social media images have more specifically been staged as an important part of the emergence of smart as a peculiar digital form of urban being - and as connected to nearly all forms of being in advanced capitalist societies. As such YouTube videos forms part of the new social media landscape which also co-constitute human beings in human material - intra actions. Yet the analysis also shows that

⁷Social media is defined as: "A group of Internet based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations starting with the Web 2.0 which have now been implemented in more advanced web generations / web 3.0 and 4.0) that allow the creation and exchange of user generated content and interactive/ AI communication etc. [content]" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010).

not all beings and affective fields are formed in the same way, and that they may vary according to nationality, age, gender, ethnicity and so forth.⁸

From the analytical perspective of the TInnGO project it makes sense to apply YouTube videos as visual data representing the aspirations and products of the various car firms, since the videos are purpose designed and present a coherent visual form. YouTube is owned by Google, and has an easy accessibility with more than 2 billion users worldwide (YouTube 2021). YouTube is used both as a personal platform, where individuals can upload content and has become a central platform also for social connectivity, the users can watch and upload their own videos, comment on videos, respond, like and dislike as well as they can subscribe to users and channels. We have chosen the YouTube platform because it is worldwide, and every person with a computer and internet connection can access the website; one does not need to pay for entering the website or to create an account to watch videos, which makes it accessible for many persons. Social media platforms are not neutral instruments for communication, but have different qualities, and affect what material is produced and how it is communicated (Poell 2014:717). Thomas Poell (2014) claims that YouTube hosts many inlinks, that is that its embedded links can be – and are – used in all other environments such as private blogs and websites, newspapers, and other social media platforms (Poell 2014:723f). Furthermore YouTube provides a special visual character, where personalized commercial can be distributed to a mass audience (Poell 2014:724). One though needs to be critical in how and which YouTube users are presented for commercials from the different car companies. The YouTube business model is targeted advertising (ibid.). Videos are therefore presented for the user by relevance – not by date of upload (ibid). Thereby it is not transparent why a video is presented, and the underlying algorithms make it difficult to make a systematic search query. The intention and execution of this analysis has been a systematic approach, and we have worked around the algorithms by making the car companies' own YouTube Channels focus of the analysis, from where, we have been able to select specific case studies, from the total number of videos that were uploaded from the car companies. The material that is studied is therefore a very controlled content, that reflects how the car companies address potential consumers.

2.3 Case presentation

YouTube has been an important channel for marketing of smart cars for all three companies analysed in this report.⁹ BMW comes in as the leading company in terms of smart visuals and viewers. The official BMW YouTube channel “BMW” was established in 2006. By April 2021 it counted more than 1.2. million subscribers and attracted more than 169 million views. Volvo established its YouTube channel Volvo Cars in 2008 and as of January 2021 the channel had more than 166.000 regular subscribers and has since 2008 been visited by over 70 million viewers. Fiats' YouTube channel was established in 2009 and have a total of 57.800 subscribers of FIATs general YouTube channel, and has attracted over 90 million views. The

⁸Termed as post humans by Rose 2017. Posthumans here understood as human subjectivity that is co-constituted with technologies, and as such the term post human also directs/ invites attentions to subjectivities that are not the white, straight masculinity with which the “human” is so often conflated (Rose 2017, Rose & Willis 2018).

⁹Statistics have been collected from the YouTube channels from the three companies January the 4th 2021 (Volvo 2021), the 31st of May 2021 (BMW 2021), and the 6th of May 2021 (Fiat 2021).

interest for the brand in the national contexts also varies, still all three brands still in spite of globalization of the brands still hold a solid audience in their countries of origin: This can for example be seen as the number of subscribers of the Italian Fiat channel (65.900) extends the number of subscribers of the international Fiat channel (57.800).

The analysis is based on case studies of popular YouTube videos from three well-known car companies: Volvo, BMW, and Fiat. The companies are thereby both a typical case, as they are well established car companies, but they are also cases of both the South and North of Europe. Though the cars are sold and produced around the world, the car companies have each their attachment to Sweden, Germany, and Italy. We therefore expect to see some differentiation in the international car narrative that the companies make use of. The analysis looks at the companies' international YouTube channels broadly, but focuses on intensified cases that illustrates the car and car user narratives presented particularly well (Neergaard 2007:28). These intensified cases are elaborated individually but have been chosen reasoned to theme or to a high number of views. All material was collected between January and May 2021.

3. The Volvo YouTube Channel

3.1 Introduction to Volvo

Volvo was founded in Sweden in 1927 and is today a well-known international car brand, known for its historical Nordic and Scandinavian roots and qualities. Initially the Volvo car brand was closely linked to the Swedish or Scandinavian model of welfare and social responsibility.

From early on Volvo was promoted as a strong and safe car, which echoed the characteristics of “The people’s home”, the Swedish term for a well-ordered democracy and elaborate welfare state that protected its citizens. These ideas were carried on in the 21st century where the “Volvo for Life” was used as a bold campaign slogan that pretended to address all walks of life. Volvo catered for safety and security in individual car mobility as did the welfare state, the Peoples Home, in social affairs.

Volvo has been part of the national identity in Sweden and played a crucial role as a core industry and in terms of export value. Volvo cars was however separated from other parts of the company in 1999, where its branch of person car production was sold to the Ford company. In 2010 – due to enduring economic crisis, the Volvo Company was acquired by the Chinese Zhejiang Geely group, whose owner wanted to get access to a western quality brand and technology. The Chinese car Tocoon Li Shufu, founder and owner of Geely and chairman of Volvo since the takeover, had a desire to turn the Volvo cars into flashy, high-end vehicles appreciated by affluent Chinese customers – and which would be a competitor to the well-known German brands such as BMW, Mercedes Benz, and Audi (New York Times 2020).

The new divided ownership and management has spurred a conflict between Asian ideas and then the Swedish/ European management team, who wants to maintain a “*focus on safety and Scandinavian understatement*”. Understatement is said to be a part of the Swedish or Scandinavian DNA – where modesty and understated wealth has been an ideal. Volvo however has sought to maintain a certain independency, and the headquarters of Volvo cars is still in Sweden, even though most of the production takes place in various other parts of the world. Volvo cars have time and again used and reinvigorated its reputation as a Scandinavian car producer and maintained its historical heritage providing safety and security, as well as a whole way of life. In Volvo’s own promotion words:

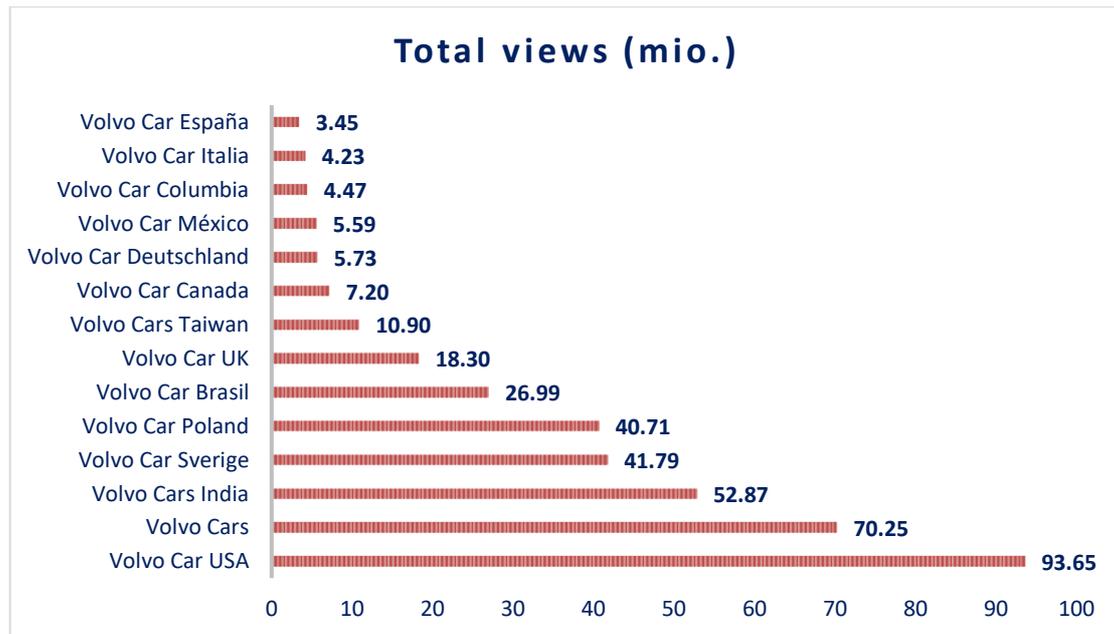
“Our reputation as a company is built on safety. Ever since Volvo Cars’ foundation in 1927, protecting the people inside and around our cars has been central to our brand and the way we develop our cars. That commitment is as strong today as it was more than 90 years ago.”
(Volvo 2021).

3.2 Volvo’s YouTube Channel

Volvo’s main YouTube channel “Volvo Cars” has existed since August 11th 2008, and as of January 4th 2021 it counts more than 166.000 regular subscribers, i.e., users who have an account on the site and have opted to receive notifications when videos are uploaded to the Volvo Cars channel. Volvo Cars videos have in total achieved over 70 million views since 2008.

Furthermore, Volvo has a diverse portfolio of channels that caters for customers in various countries. This is important for Volvo as a car manufacture in terms of customers as shown in table 1 below.

Figure 3.2.1: Comparing Volvo’s YouTube Channels



Statistics collected the 4th of January 2021.

The table shows the various channels and counts of their individual numbers of subscribers and views. The mapping of the various national channels also indicates the main Volvo markets. The U.S. appears as one of the main Volvo markets, along with Sweden as the homeland of the brand. Upcoming markets are some of the BRIC countries – Brazil and India - and then China, which is not included in this count. Poland also stands out as a post socialist country.

The following presentation is based on mapping of the main Volvo Cars YouTube channel; many of the videos from the main channel are also presented in the various national channels with subtexts or translations. The YouTube channel with open and public counts etc. enables the researchers to create a quite solid overview of the various YouTube videos, their focus and popularity. In the case of Volvo, they have been presented in various campaigns or series with affinities to the Volvo company including technological and marketing developments. Other details which can be simply harvested from the YouTube channel in addition to titles, includes view counts, duration, and dates of upload of the particular video. All this information has been sampled for each video in Volvo’s marketing campaigns in the tables and figures in the following pages.

3.3 Campaign: A Million More

A Million More, is a campaign YouTube series, which in a highly personalized and dramatic way addresses accidents and safety. The campaign, which was launched in 2020, consists of

short personal video accounts of dramatic accidents where the protagonists have been rescued by the Volvo seat belt. In the *A Million More* campaign, two videos stand out in terms of viewers: “Linda & Molly” and “A Million More”. Where the latter with more than 13 million views can be assessed as a huge marketing success, “Linda & Molly” that is the campaign’s second-most viewed video gained only close to 150.000 views.

Table 3.3.1: A Million More Campaign

YouTube Title	Views	Length	Date of upload
A Million More	13.758.952	2:01	30 th October 2020
Linda & Molly	148.906	1:43	14 th October 2020
Summer	101.88	1:32	14 th October 2020
Amy	18.208	1:22	14 th October 2020
Alex	9.814	1:26	14 th October 2020

Statistics collected January 14th, 2021

3.4 Campaign: Life in Electric

The campaign *Life in Electric* was launched early in 2020 as a teaser for the Volvo c.40 recharge campaign. The videos addressed very basic questions that potential car customers would pose. The campaign was, as we will show later, aimed at reaching out to a cosmopolitan and also more mixed gender consumer – read women segment. However, none of the videos in this campaign went viral as the *A Million More* mentioned above. What can be observed is that the video with the least specific question i.e. ‘*What are the Benefits of an electric car?*’, meaning the most “general” video attracted the majority of the views.

Table 3.4.1: Life in Electric Campaign

YouTube Title	Views	Length	Date of upload
What Are The Benefits Of An Electric Car?	26.914	0:54	19 th March 2020
How Far Can I Drive With An Electric Car?	16.396	0:56	19 th March 2020
Does Weather Affect Range In An Electric Car?	13.100	0:59	19 th March 2020
What Is One-Pedal Driving In An Electric Car?	12.911	0:56	19 th March 2020
Do Electric Cars Have Good Performance?	12.535	0:54	19 th March 2020
How Can I Find Charging Stations For Electric Cars?	10.710	1:05	19 th March 2020
How Can I Charge My Electric Car If I Live In An Apartment?	9.062	0:51	19 th March 2020
How Does It Feel To Drive Electric?	7.755	1:00	19 th March 2020
Can You Tow With An Electric Car?	6.483	0:49	19 th March 2020

Statistics collected January 14th, 2021

3.5 Campaign: Sustainability

The sustainability campaign consists in a range of different videos which are not as consistent as the connections and similarities of the campaigns already mentioned.

Table 3.5.1: Sustainability Campaign

YouTube Title	Views	Length	Date of upload
The XC40 Recharge - Our first pure electric SUV	87.505	0:57	29 th October 2019
Volvo Moment - Sustainability #VolvoRecharged	77.640	1:06	16 th October 2019
For Their Future	74.056	1:06	4 th March 2020
Volvo Living Seawall in Sydney Harbour	40.104	1:33	1 st November 2018
Living Seawall – re-thinking sustainability	21.444	1:30	5 th June 2018
Volvo Cars & Clean Seas XC60 Demo Car	10.818	2:58	10 th August 2018
Volvo Cars Vision For Recycled Plastics	8.758	0:37	21 st June 2018
Volvo Cars Skövde factory becomes climate neutral.	8.150	0:30	17 th January 2018
Operations Recharged. Climate Neutral Manufacturing by 2025 Volvo Cars Sustainability	5.981	0:49	17 th February 2020
World Environment Day 2018 At Volvo Cars	3.094	0:21	11 th June 2018

Statistics collected January 14th, 2021

The shared aim of this campaign is to present and market new and pathbreaking electric and future oriented Volvo models. Besides these videos also addresses the affordances of the new Volvo models as a necessity for future business as well as for sustainability. The most recent video merge the business perspective with a clear message of climate change as the most pressing issue in our time. These videos with basic and what seems rational presentation of Volvos technology and ethical concerns have reached a smaller, yet probably a more serious segment of potential customers, which the customers comments track could indicate.

In the following we will analyse a couple of significant videos from these campaigns with a focus on the gendered character of the imagined future of the electric car. A visual representation which both connects to the past and present in Volvo’s history.

3.6 Autonomous Cars in the Volvo Context: Made by Men for Women?

The introduction of autonomous cars in the Volvo context has been clearly connected to the historical line of Volvo as a brand that extends safety and robust design. As presented by the Volvo president in the 360 C autonomous concept:

“With the advent of autonomous driving technology, we see new opportunities to further advance traffic safety by taking human mistakes out of the equation. And we believe that it is autonomous drive technology that will further take society towards a future without accidents and traffic fatalities, in line with our safety vision. Autonomous cars are not yet in

the public domain. But in the next few years, we will see them on our roads and an autonomous Volvo car will be as safe as Volvo customers expect. And further into the future, autonomy offers huge promise to revolutionize the way we travel. As we demonstrated in our 360c autonomous concept, it could radically change how we use our cars, where we work and where we live.” (Volvo 2021).

Over recent decades the Volvo brand has radicalized its environment and climate concerns. In 2021 Volvo has promoted the all-electric car model as part of a bold move towards digitalization of pricing and sales as well as a Volvo care packet, which will ease the burden of the car owner in terms of maintenance and trouble shooting. Volvo has recently announced a shift towards a more clear-cut global and environmental agenda of climate change which guides both the urge for going all electric and for more sustainable/ responsible production modes and materials. In this idealized Volvo horizon, there are no contradictions of more and bigger cars and sustainability, or of the claim that autonomous and electric cars will enhance safety also for non-motorized residents/ citizens. The general atmosphere of Volvos YouTube videos is high class/comfortable middle class, and class and other inequities do not exist. Job loss and unemployment in the wake of closing of show rooms and engineering workshops are not addressed. The video leaves the viewer with an optimistic feeling of the autonomous car as inevitable and Volvo as the problemsolver that will take care and safeguard safety in the car and security in relation to the outer world

What happens when a car brand like Volvo known for robust and advanced engineering transforms from combustion to electric cars and potential from there to autonomous mobility? What is the open and underlying composition of gender, age, and class in the presentations of the new mobility ages, and the new range of cars? And what are the effects of the focus of the e-car marketing on the TInnGO idea of Gender smart mobility?

Volvo 360 c. Autonomous Concept. the Volvo 360c autonomous concept car emerges slowly out of the dark and with various zooms and depiction of new light design (Volvo Cars 2018a).¹⁰ The visualization offers associations to both past and future – to the past of a Batman car with shiny neon lights in the dark – and towards the future where lightening signals are foreseen as central to the upcoming autonomous car regime. The CEO talks like a serious politician who predicts a changing future where Volvo will take the lead in new and ground-breaking technology.

“We will change a lot. First of all, it allows us to take a really big step when it comes to safety, but it also enables consumers to spend hours in the car and to do something else than sitting and driving.” In the new horizon/ mobility culture drivers and passengers have become consumers with driving as a minor assignment while sitting in the car (Volvo Cars 2018b).

Electric and autonomous cars addressed at the outset the needs and affordances of the male business elite which was made visible in text and images of the imagined futures of autonomous cars (Hildebrand & Scheller 2018). The most clear-cut visual representation of the imagined future of the Volvo autonomous car seem to widen the circle of the business community and to include women both as users and as experts.

¹⁰ See the direct [link here](#), time (0:04, 0:57).

The 360C concept looked at four different vehicle designs and scenarios where the businessman – routinely to be visual addressed – was exchanged by businesswomen. The four scenarios clearly addressed so-called daily life at the business class level, and can be described as 1) Business woman on her way to work, 2) Travelling as an alternative to office meeting, 3) Travelling as a VIP party, and 4) Business journeys – an alternative to air travel (Volvo Cars 2018a)¹¹

Businesswoman on her way to work

How the vehicle can take you to work. The model depicts a business/ professional woman sitting in the car with her breakfast while she enjoys watching the news. The scene includes a close-up picture of breakfast neatly served as in a café or hotel; the breakfast is enjoyed while the woman looks into a glittered journal – the scene reminds of a business class airplane serving.

Travelling as an alternative to an office meeting

Alternative to an office/ office meeting. Here two well dressed women sit in front of each other in the car in a business meeting in comfortable chairs and with a table between them. The voice presents the situation as follows: “You actually pick up a client, you present your work, you have a side screen, and fresh coffee.” The coffee is served in a designed cup shown earlier by the design director.

Travelling as a VIP party

Then a bit of fun. We have imagined a VIP party, which will take you from the clients’ hotel to maybe a restaurant. The model scenario shows two glasses with champagne – no persons – but the atmosphere might indicate more than a business meeting.

Business journeys – an alternative to air travel

And then the fourth design scenario, which from the design vice president’s view is the most interesting. This is the car which can substitute air travel: “Imagine a car which pick you up from work and takes you directly to your destination in another city for a meeting the next day”. Here we see the businesswoman underway. And again, the cabin and bed look like a business class airplane design.

3.7 Volvo as a woman inclusive car?

As for addressing gender issues Volvo has been both explicit and implicit. Both family orientation and gender equality has been echoed with various strength in the visual marketing over the past decades. In a 2007 analysis Volvo Cars was appreciated for its family orientation: “The company wants the public eye to see a “Volvo Family”. They are concentrating on family unity and how the safety of these vehicles will lead to a happier and healthier family” (Ruiz 2007). This was an outstanding feature of the Volvo websites compared with competitors where the focus was on performance and technology as the first components. Already then, the Volvo website in the order of links showed the priorities of the company as safety, design, performance, and environment (Ruiz 2007). These priorities have over time been materialized e.g., in the early introduction of the seat belt in 1959 and later in the build in child booster seat in the rear seat (Volvo 2018) .

¹¹ Direct link to the four scenarios is found [here](#), time (2:00, 2:10, 2:23, 2:30).

Another example of how Volvo has addressed gender issues and women as drivers is the Volvo concept car, which was developed by an all-female team of Volvo engineers, designers, and technicians in 2004 (Volvo 2002). The car was promoted as “all decisions made by women” and aimed at addressing “the most demanding premium customer: The independent woman professional”. The woman concept car was never put into production, but innovative elements have been recycled in later models and not least in today’s electric cars. They consist in a range of design and maintenance details, such as easy access and handling of trouble shooting in the new Volvo care program. Also, the emphasis on bodily affordances, on personal storage space and hooks for the handbag, easy removal of seats, better and more space for cargo and baby strollers were introduced in the Volvo concept car and have been transposed into the latest electric models.

The idea of women as professional car makers and customers have been carried on in the recent introduction of the Volvo All electric car: Volvo, however, has recently presented all electric cars along two visual trajectories which also reveal the span in current Volvo strategies, the aim of which is addressing both women and affordances of a romanticised leisured and cosmopolitan middle class as well as a more puritanical professional middleclass women Nordic style.

3.8 Life in Electric.

The stage for the Volvo depiction and marketing of the new electric car, is a naked pink and white studio which is very different from other Volvo videos, where the environment is robust and masculine showing workshops, production halls etc. These short videos are clothed in a dream like soft atmosphere where practical issues and troubling assumptions about electric cars are elucidated (Volvo Cars 2020a).¹² Questions of attention are related to middle class urban life: 1) How can I recharge my Volvo, 2) If I live in an apartment, what is the range of the battery, 3) Does weather conditions influence the speed and driving, 4) How to handle noise reduction, 5) Whether one can clutch things to the car.

Also, the actors are different and not the usual Volvo staff presenting a new model. The human actors consist in a mixed ethnic heterosexual couple and in the videos a soft feminine atmosphere is accentuated: From the douche pink walls, over the white outfit/ dress of the couple, both of whom are young, slim, and fit – to the white car and the voice over which presents all the messages and information in a soft feminine pitch. The videos first and foremost stress the affordances of the Volvo electric car, such as noise reduction, the seamless ways of operating the car and how easy it is to drive, there is e.g., only one pedal to press. It is striking however how the perspective in a quite subtle way is shifting from a feminine to a masculine gaze, when the focus of attention becomes the technical power and speed of the car. Both speed and battery power – are visualized by female athletes – whose bodies becomes the symbol of the abilities of the car and the (male) car owner. Perhaps a reminiscence and modernized version of the traditional female radiator figure and sexualized car shows, where women models were used as part of the display and as a marketing tool to attract male customers. The entire atmosphere refers to leisure and service activities, rather than to the daily life and professional assignments. Life is electric videos have a clear and pronounced shape as a seductive marketing tool and the intention to attract more women as

¹² Direct link to videos in the campaign *Life in Electric* is found [here](#).

Volvo car consumers. These videos make up an exception from the otherwise robust, rational, and informative presentations of the Volvo car by Volvo staff – promoted in the presentation of the Volvo XC recharge: Walkaround.

3.9 The Volvo XC 40 Recharge: Walkaround.

This long video with detailed presentation of the first all-electric Volvo XC 40 recharge connects to the historical presentation of the concept car developed by an all-women Volvo staff team in the beginning of the 2000s (Volvo Cars 2020b). All details of the car are presented by women staff – except for the digital equipment, which is presented by the digital vice president. Even though the range of high-level Volvo women staff is impressive - the male expertise on digital solutions might indicate a subtle shift from the traditional engineering skills – which were indispensable in the combustion car. Today, the digital potentially take the lead in car production. The video which connects to the routines of Volvo presentations as being down to earth and rational, but not emotional! This might both connect to the assumptions of women as rational car consumers, but also for the Volvo equality brand to present women role models in STEM vocations (Volvo Cars 2020b).¹³

In the beginning of the over 14 minutes long video, we see a picture of the new car in an off-white version on a background of bright walls. The music soundtrack is after a few seconds partly interrupted by the sound of high heels, which indicate the arrival of a woman. It is a younger woman – in high heels – walking energetic and with loud steps towards the spectator. *“Hi, I am Beatrice Simonsen, I am product manager.”* She is dressed in black trousers and a sand-coloured jacket, with hair tightly set up. In front of the robust car, she reminds of Alice in Wonderland, a little girl in front of an oversized car. The car is, she argues, designed for an active, urban lifestyle. Everything to make your life easier - and it is all about making life less complicated. *“You can activate your preheated seats over the Volvo app on the phone, and all you have to do to drive is to carry your key”.*

She enters the car and looks directly at the spectator: *“Do not look for the pedal there isn’t any”* – and with a certain thrill: *“in fact it is integrated in the seat as a sensor so once seated just push the brake pedal, choose your gear and off you go, it cannot be easier.”*

“Our new purely electric xc 40 recharge really takes driving to a new level(..)” is the start sentence from, Karolin Krellin, the Volvo Solution manager of electric propulsion (Volvo Cars 2020b).¹⁴ She enters the screen in a casual style and presents the advanced technical details standing in front of a naked car Turque. Her presentation, held in a rational and neutral tune, is accompanied by several depictions of technical details of speed and reach of the battery, charging times etc. She assures that the cx 40 recharge is made with no compromises – and offers a truly inspiring drive, she says, to head of the assumptions about battery problems and driving modes etc.

The electric power train is said to be at the heart of the driving experience, and she addresses the driver directly: *“One pedal driving means that you only press for acceleration and release*

¹³ See the Walkaround of the Volvo XC 40 Recharge presented by the female Product manager on the direct [link here](#), time (0:25).

¹⁴ See the Walkaround of the Volvo XC 40 Recharge presented by the female Volvo Solution manager of electric propulsion on the direct [link here](#), time (8:50).

for braking, it offers more relaxed drive in the city. And more intuitive control.” As for the battery which has been one of the main concerns of potential car consumers, she also assures that the 78 KW battery gives you a driving range of over 400 km, which makes it the perfect car in the city as well as for long distances. The battery also lowers centres of gravity, stiffens the body and even weight distribution. All this makes the car even more fun and comfortable to drive, she assures.

3.10 From Modern to Smart

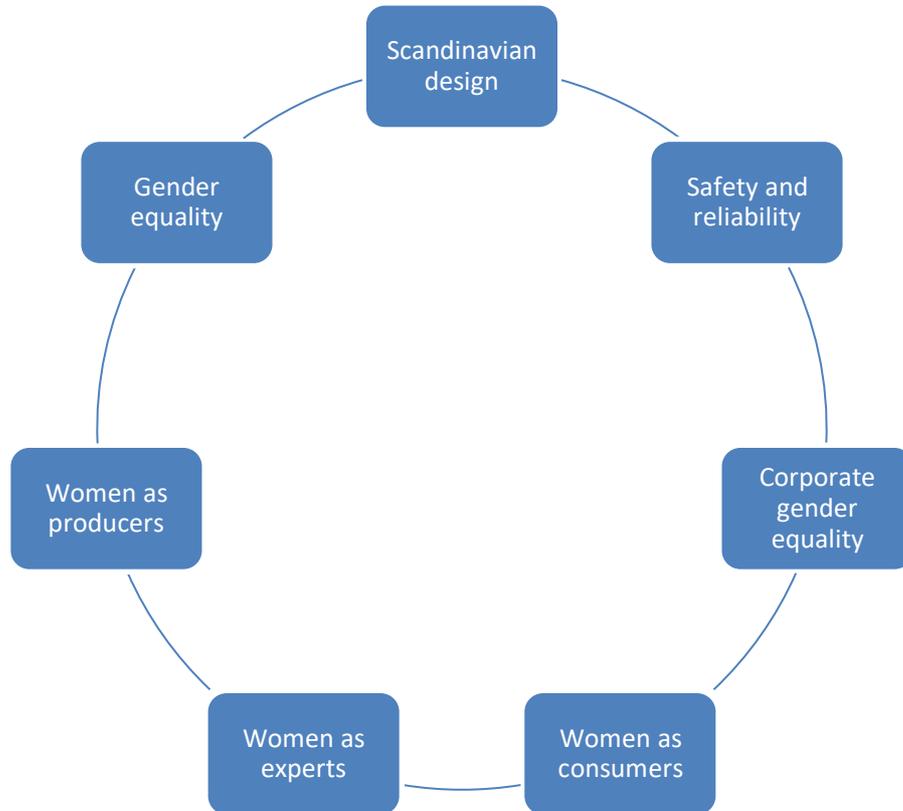
In the visual promotion of the Volvo brand, the scope of autonomous self-driving car is kept on a separate long term visual track – more as a trial balloon than as part of the current Volvo program. The promotion of electric cars takes a more timely and immediate representation with the various introductions of the all-electric Volvo model in 2021.

It is striking that Volvo tries to reach out to a broader constituency by including visualizations of sustainability and corporate gender equality in a parallel move. Yet still a more traditional track of cars as a primarily masculine asset can still be observed in many Volvo presentations. Electric and autonomous cars at the outset addressed the needs and affordances of the male elite – which was made visible in text and images of the imagined futures of autonomous cars. The most clear-cut visual representation of the imagined future of the Volvo autonomous car seem to widen the circle of the business community and to include women both as users and as experts.

Volvo cars notwithstanding various steps towards sustainability in the electric car fleet- still belong to the higher end of middleclass cars. On the Danish market the price on electric cars range between €55.818 and €166.969, why Volvo not become a “peoples car” (Volvo Cars 2021). The size and sturdy design is also not promising for the prospects of seamless transport in the big cities in the future. The videos also transpose a white middle class culture which is not challenged or changed by users from non-white ethnic groups.

From a Volvo perspective the core message in the videos indicate both a Scandinavian and a global trend towards a more gender inclusive marketing and car consumer strategy. Volvo is still – in spite of the new Chinese ownership – presented as a brand with specific Volvo Scandinavian traits. This goes for both the quality, the safety and sturdiness, as well as the attention to family and gender equality. While Volvo has been known for paying attention to family life, there seems in the more recent YouTube videos of autonomous and electric cars to be a narrower emphasis on corporate gender equality. This is an observation which addresses new norms in the Western world, yet the trend has to be explored also in China as an important Volvo market.

Model 3.10.1: Association map, Volvo



Association map of features based on visual analysis

4. The BMW YouTube Channel

4.1 Introduction to BMW

BMW is a German multinational corporation, which produces highly luxury cars and motorcycles. The company was founded in 1916 and has since then growth into one of the World's leading car brands – both in terms of luxury, innovation, and sustainability. BMW strives to be a fully sustainable company, e.g., by cutting CO² emissions, to recycling, to expanding hydrogen technologies, and even to planting peanuts (BMW 2020b).

4.2 BMW's YouTube Channel

The official YouTube channel of BMW, 'BMW', has existed since January 2006. By April 2021, is counts more than 1.2 million subscribers and has had over 169 million views.

Table 4.2.1: Comparing BMW channels

Channel name	Total views (mio.)	Subscribers
BMW France	63,9	49.000
BMW USA	61,4	250.000
BMW Italia	50,5	8.160
BMW UK	21,2	49.200
BMW Deutschland	16,9	66.400
BMW Sverige (Sweden)	6,6	1.560
BMW Danmark (Denmark)	2,0	454

Statistics collected May 31st, 2021

The following visual analysis is divided into two main sections of analytical focus. The first section focuses on how BMW use various visual effects and tools to construct and present a specific brand identity on masculinity and leadership. This analysis is completed through a close examination of the top three most popular YouTube videos.

The second section focus on the development on electrical and autonomous cars and examines how these cars are promoted and connected to the brand identity of BMW.

Table 4.2.2: Top ten BMW YouTube videos

YouTube Title	Number of Views	Length	Data of upload
The small Escape	23.314.065	3:51	October 2 nd 2019
The Epic Driftmob feat BMW M235i	18.296.255	2:01	July 30 th 2014
The all-new BMW 7 Series. All you need to know	8.493.837	8:12	June 10 th 2015
BMW S1000 RR. Dinner for RR	6.806.422	1:07	March 5 th 2010
Retirement is about exploring your wide-open future	5.848.162	0:53	May 22 nd 2019

BMW iX Test Drive. #NextGen2020	4.625.481	5:53	November 17 th 2020
The all-new 7 Series. Official launch film.	4.468.375	5:38	June 10 th 2015
Lead the way you change. The new BMW 5 Series Sedan	3.524.118	1:32	May 27 th 2020
The all-new X6: All you need to know	3.506.527	7:49	June 6 th 2014
BMW Steering. Making every driver a better driver.	3.520.447	1:09	July 16 th 2020

Statistics collected May 5th, 2021

4.3 The Small Escape

The Small Escape is the most popular BMW YouTube video with more than 23 million views and 88.000 likes. (BMW 2019)¹⁵. The video depicts a historic landmark of Berlin in 1964 where East Berliners desperately tried to cross the border to West Berlin. The Berlin Wall divided families and friends, and the time of 1964 were characterized by fear and uncertainty.

In the beginning of the video, a desk-line scene is unfolded. The lighting is dark yet allows the audience to perceive glimpses of technical drawings of a BMW vehicle. The scene is then slightly changing, and we can see in the background the appearance of a BMW Isetta. White letters are appearing in front with the words: “Based on a true story”.

The video then illustrates scenes from the Berlin Wall and its checkpoints where West Berliners could cross the borders to East Berlin to commute to work. The lighting is still dark due to the evening atmosphere. The only lighting within the scene is from the projectors surrounding the checkpoint, which leaves the audience with a feeling of coldness. The scene then changes from a bird perspective to ground perspective where we witness how a car is closely examined by the checkpoint guards. Suddenly, the owner of the car starts running and the guards try to stop him. The scene ends with the main character, a middle-aged white man, wakes up. He gets out of bed and sits at his desk – the same desk, we as an audience saw in the beginning of the video with technical drawings of a BMW vehicle laying around.

The scene then changes: From dark scenes of nervous men working on the car to light scenes of the everyday life of West Berlin. The use of dark lighting and close-ups stresses that something dangerous is happening. The men are rebuilding the small BMW Isetta, making enough room to hide a man within the car. The scenes are filled with tension and nervousness, illustrating the seriousness of danger involved in such a mission.

Now, days or weeks of working on this mission, the time has come: It is time to cross the borders and smuggle an East Berliner into West Berlin. The scene has changed from the garage environment to the checkpoint between East and West Berlin. This scene last about

¹⁵ See the full video on the direct [link here](#).

one minute and constitute one quarter of the entire video. The atmosphere is tense, and it feels like time is moving very slowly. Then all the sudden, the main character is cleared and allowed to drive into West Berlin – with an East Berliner hiding in his BMW Isetta.

The choice of selecting such a historical moment of Berlin suggest an embracing of the German history and Western values. It illustrates a story of the innovative, intelligent, and brave man, who stands up against the oppressive system. It emphasises freedom, independence, and leadership, and underscore the identity of BMW as a strong car brand, which we can count on. It paves the way and drives us into the future.

4.4 The Epic Driftmob feat. BMW M235i

In the second most popular BMW YouTube video, *'The Epic Driftmob'*, we are watching five BMW 235i cars performing a drift-choreography in about 90 seconds. The setting is a modern urban area with admiring pedestrians on the sidewalks as audience. All five drivers are men and the video show remarkable drifting skills, speed, and playfulness. The sound is heavily dominated by the noise of the vehicles when drifting, which accentuate a wow-feeling when watching the video.

Obviously, drifting is not to be confused with usual and responsible driving. On the contrary, drifting is a high-risk activity that requires an extensive amount of training and the acquisition of professional driving skills. Only few people will have the proper skillset and knowledge to perform and control such a situation. To some extent, drifting can be understood as what Lyng describes as Edgework, i.e., a dangerous yet controlled activity for the skilled ones (Lyng 1990). Both edgework and drifting involve risk taking, and control of a dangerous situation (through acquired skillsets) is a key factor.

Because of these central aspects of edgework and drifting, the choice of using drifting within a BMW marketing video indicates an intention to be associated with the features of drifting. That is, having the professional skillset of controlling a risky and dangerous situation. Such features resonate with the stereotypical image of masculinity (e.g., power, risk-taking, danger) and to some extent leadership (Connell 1987, 1995). As mentioned above, only few people are capable to perform drifting just as only few people are capable to perform and act as a leader.

The visual connection between BMW vehicles and drifting suggests an appeal towards a specific customer segment, who values both the Wow-factor of drifting and its required skillsets: Having the skillset of drifting is one way of standing out of the crowds – just like when driving BMW. Furthermore, drifting is commonly associated with being a “guy thing” or something for the “man child”, who loves fast cars. This stereotype is reinforced within the videos choice of using only male drivers. The only time a female character plays a part, is when the sexy police officer throws off her hat and gets into one of the vehicles in the end of the video.

Taken together, these compositions of the video portraits an image of the BMW driver as a person (read: male), who leads with power, risk-taking, while at the same time having the professional skillset to control what others consider to be a dangerous or risky situation. He stands out of the mainstream and is not afraid to do so. Such portray resembles a hegemonic

masculinity, where certain traits and characteristics become idealized and receive social recognition (Connell 1987, 1995). By employing an idealized form of masculinity, which only few men are able to live up to, BMW become an identity marker and an efficient way of position oneself socially from the crowd.

4.5 The All-New BMW 7 Series. All You Need to Know.

In the third video, *'The all-new BMW 7 Series. All you need to know'*, we meet a male presenter, who is introducing the new BMW 7 Series. The video contains beautiful landscapes, mountains, and a highly modern house, which sets the setting for the presentation, while underscoring the luxury, comfort, and exclusiveness of this BMW model.

Throughout the video, the presenter demonstrates and explains many of the innovative features of this model and illustrate how such fits perfectly into the modern lifestyle of a businessman. This includes for example its work-lounge in the backseats or its built-in massage device. The camera is frequently zooming into each of the features, which allows the audience to absorb the visual expressions and luxury details of the interior of the car. The presentation video is more than 8 minutes long and comprehends a great amount of detail-oriented information. It employs relaxing music in the background, which is playing while the presenter is talking. This move creates a soothing atmosphere and leaves the impression of the car as a place for both work and relaxation. The impression construction of the car as both work and relaxation is further emphasised through the presenter's use of scenarios and narratives related to the potential BMW driver, for example by saying: *"And after a hard day's work, use the tablet to kick in the vitality program or to use the massage seats"* (BMW 2015)¹⁶. These work-relaxation associated scenarios portrays a specific type a consumer or BMW driver, where business and luxury are highly intertwined.

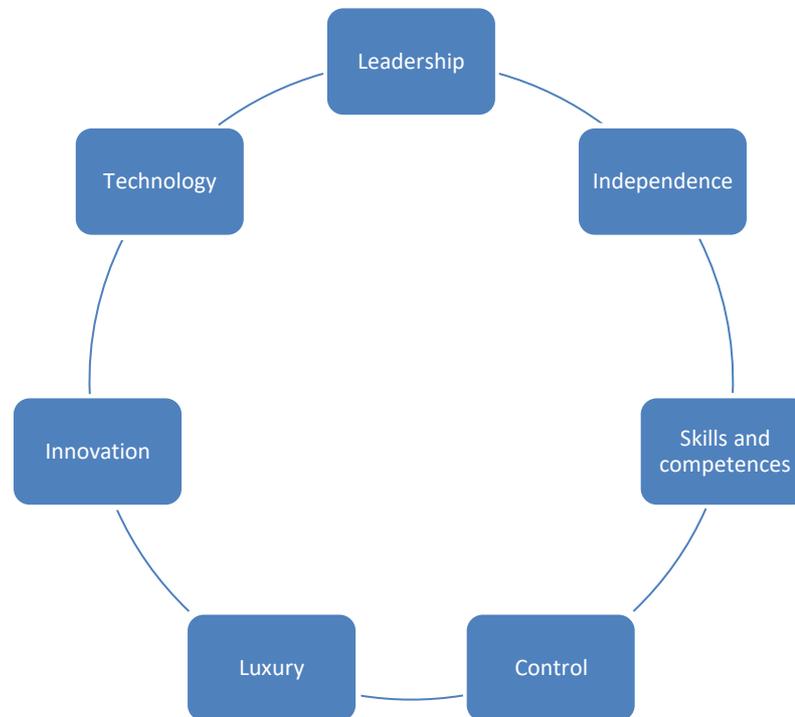
Although this video contrast itself from the two videos, e.g., due to its length, being more serious and employing a virtual seller-buyer interaction, the video resonates with the former videos in its presentation and reproduction of BMW values and identity traits. Once again, the video speaks into the business and leadership narrative, including using idealized forms of masculinity within its presentation. This is for example illustrated through the use of associations, such as activating associations with Hollywood agent movies when presenting the parking features: *"You might be thinking of some kind of special agent Hollywood movie, but this is the BMW technology available today"* (BMW 2015: 0:36).

4.6 Driving Towards Success, Innovation, and Leadership

Taken together, these associations constitute an aggregated narrative, where independence, leadership and comfort are central for the representation of the BMW identity. These associative features can be illustrated in the following model:

¹⁶ See the direct [link here](#), time (3:19).

Model 4.6.1: Association map, BMW



Association map of features based on visual analysis

Each of these features contributes to the overall narrative of the BMW identity as a company, who develop and design vehicles for the future. The features reflect a narrative of BMW as an innovative, serious, and high-quality brand, which only few people can afford, and reflects an identity of the BMW consumers as successful, leading, and independent people, who values quality and innovative design. Such values and characters are commonly associated with the business world, where people in order to stay in the game are expected to perform innovative thinking, leadership, and independence.

4.7 New Forms of Leadership

When visually exploring and analysing the top 10 YouTube videos of the BMW main channel it becomes clear that women are rarely represented. Instead, women are more commonly depicted as either non-existing, as sexual objects (e.g., in *Driftmob*) or as less significant for the storytelling (e.g., the mom/ wife in *The Small Escape*). However, newer YouTube videos presents a shift in the gender representation and illustrate a greater focus on gender diversity. This is for example showed in the video *'The Art of Leadership'* from 2020, which distinguish itself from prior videos in especially two aspects: 1) the main character is a woman, and 2) the woman's ethnicity is non-white. The woman is Sara Al Madani. She is a serial entrepreneur and public speaker. She started in fashion and took a U-turn to the tech world, so now more than 70 % of her investment portfolio is tech related.

The Art of Leadership. Sara Al Madani and the BMW M6 Gran Coupe

In the video, Sara Al Madani expresses an aversion against the stereotypes. Stereotypes are understood as chains holding us down and inhibiting us from reaching our full potential. Instead, Sara Al Madani encourages us to be true to ourselves. Don't surrender. Be free and be happy. She speaks about the importance of risk-taking, hard work, ethics and daring to be in touch with our emotional side. To lead with emotional intelligence.

Despite the dissimilarity between Sara Al Madani and the prior videos regarding gender and ethnicity, the values depicted within the video, e.g., hard work, freedom, and emotional intelligence, resonates with and continues the values previously portrayed in the videos of BMW and leadership. The inclusion of a female, non-white main character illustrates a greater sense of diversity, while extending the same core values as are commonly associated with the brand of BMW.

This portrayal suggests a specific female BMW consumer identity. Sara Al Madani is not the stereotypical woman. Rather, Sara Al Madani is a woman in a man's world both in relation to her choice of career (entrepreneurship), in her engagement with technology and now in her choice of car. Although she mentions her role as a mother and the importance of emotional intelligence, both of which are associated with female traits, the main narrative of her portrayal and storytelling are resonating with masculine traits, such as risk-taking, being in a man's world, not surrendering, etc. In this regard, Sara Al Madani is not representing the majority of women and mothers, but the businesswoman and "boss ladies". Therefore, although BMW to some extent expands their gender diversity, there continues to be a lack of greater representation of the majority of women and mothers.

4.8 Pioneering Electric and Smart Mobility

The storytelling and identity of BMW as a leading, innovative, and business-oriented car brand is furthermore extended through its development of electronic cars and focus on smart mobility in general. When examining a selected amount of YouTube videos from the YouTube Channel BMWi, which has existed since September 2006 and currently has more than 47.800 subscribers, it becomes evident that BMW considers themselves as pioneers when it comes to electronic mobility. This is for example due to their evolution of straight-up electronic cars to mild hybrid technology. Some examples of electronic BMW cars are the BMW i3 and BMW i3X (BMW 2021a, 2021b)¹⁷

Both car models are fully electronic and integrate the innovative technology of BMW. They are powered with BMW eDrive technology, which features BMW's high voltage lithium-ion battery. In the video *'Beijing gets electrified. The BMW iX3 and BMW Concept i4'* (2020) we are presented for some of the sustainability aspects of BMW, for example their use of renewable energy and green manufacturing process in Beijing. According to the video, more than 95 % of an iX3 can be recycled.

The focus on environmental issues and sustainability are emphasized in several of YouTube videos – both within videos on BMWi and the main channel BMW. At the YouTube channel BMWi, one of the latest YouTube videos, *'Remembering the future. The BMW i3 Moments.'*

¹⁷ See the BMWi3 on the direct [link here](#), and the BMW i3X on the direct [link here](#).

(2020), dedicates its attention towards humans' responsibility in protecting our environment. The setting of the video is characterized of nature: Landscapes, sunlight, trees, flowers, and the ocean. We see two young people travel around in their BMW i3. They are enjoying the silence of the car, the sunlight, sitting in the car and viewing the waves and ocean.

This particular video distinguishes itself from some of the prior YouTube videos of BMW. First and foremost, it employs a soft female voice-over, and the female character is much more in focus than previously. Secondly, even though many of the prior videos contain beautiful landscapes and people enjoying the nature (e.g., by swimming), there seems to be a greater focus on the presence and being-with-the-nature within this video compared to a more consuming-the-nature within some of the prior ones.

The choice of extending the brand of BMW by including the development of electronic cars and their use of marketing strategies, such as *'Remembering the future'*, seems to prolong the identity of BMW as the brand for leaders – for people, who dare to try something new and to lead the future. However, research on electrified car brands and the role of brand personality, experiential brand associations and emotional design suggests what appears to be a discrepancy between the identity of BMW and the extension of electrical cars (Moons and de Pelsmacker 2015). Based on surveys and interviews, Moons and De Pelsmacker finds that people commonly associate the brand personality of BMW with being an active, sporty, and even aggressive brand. It was described as sharp, strong, and masculine, and with a focus on technology and luxury. This stands somewhat in contrast to electrical cars, which were commonly associated with being softer, feminine, and more responsible and reflective.

Within our visual analysis, we can identify a somewhat similar pattern. Many of the non-fully electrical cars are in overall presented within a 'hyper-masculine' framework, where luxury, innovative technology and a storytelling of leadership are in focus. The storytelling of leadership continues to be in focus within the electrical car videos, yet, these are much more concerned with emphasizing sustainability aspects, containing female characters (either as voice-overs or in person), and has less degree of a business narrative.

Our visual analysis of the some of the electrical car videos indicate a shift within the framework of BMW, wherein the narrative of leadership is extended yet added with some more feminine and softer traits. This shift suggests a greater focus on driver diversity and the everyday life of families. Where some of the prior videos focus mainly on comfort for a stereotype businessman, such as working lounges, these videos focus much more on efficient and mobile transportation, fast charging systems and making sustainable choices for you and future generations.

Autonomous driving

Another dimension of *Smart Mobility* and innovation is autonomous driving. Autonomous driving refers to the level of which the vehicle takes over tasks and responsibilities from its driver. Such tasks can for example be steering and lane-keeping distance assistance as well as remote-controlled parking. An overview of the five levels is presented below:

Table 4.8.3: Autonomous Driving Technology

Stages of autonomous driving	Description	Elaboration
1	Driver Assistance	Driver Assistant System supports the driver, but do not take control. Examples: Active Cruise Control with Stop&Go function, which independently adjust the distance to the car in front of you.
2	Partly Automated Driving	System can take control, but the driver remains responsible for operating the car. Examples: Steering and Lane Control Assistant.
3	Highly Automated Driving	Personal CoPilot System allows the drivers more freedom to completely turn their attention away from the road. Examples: The car will be able to drive autonomously over long distances in certain traffic situations, such as on motorways. However, the driver must be able to take over control within a few seconds, such as at road construction sites.
4	Fully Automated Driving	On this level, the car can handle the majority of driving situations independently. The technology in level 4 is developed to the point that a car can handle highly complex urban driving situations, such as the sudden appearance of construction sites without any driver intervention.
5	Full Automation (=no driver)	Here, the car performs any and all driving tasks – there isn't even a cockpit. Therefore every person in the car becomes a <i>passenger</i> , opening up new mobility possibility for people with disabilities, for example.

Source: (BMW 2020a).

At present, levels 3-5 are still in the testing phase. However, the Driver Assistant (level 1) is highly common today and is used in all current BMW models. Some BMW cars have implemented the technology of level 2 with the Partly Automated Driving. This technology uses sensor data – for example speed limits, the distance to other vehicles and lane markings – as well as GPS and navigation systems data to actively support the driver through the vehicle management, when either needed or desired.

4.9 Summarising

Based on our visual analysis of YouTube videos from BMW we can conclude that the brand of BMW Group to a large extent appeals to white businessmen, who identify themselves with leadership. The visual analysis illustrated a solid business- and leadership narrative and identity framework, wherein values like independence, freedom, intelligence, risk-taking and control are strongly associated.

Our visual analysis of the top ten most popular BMW YouTube videos suggests a marketing strategy, wherein BMW becomes more than just a brand – it's a symbolic identification, wherein customers can position themselves and display a specific group membership. In most of these videos, we identified a tendency to focus more on the storytelling than on the actual car. The car becomes a identify marker or status symbol, which reflect a specific personal identity of the consumer.

When examining sustainability and the visual expression of electrical cars our visual analysis illustrated a new shift in the branding of BMW models. From being more or less attentive towards white businessmen, much more attention was offered towards feminine qualities and values in the electronic car videos. These videos contained a higher degree of female characters and had much more focus on sustainability and responsibility for future generations to come.

5. The Fiat YouTube Channel

5.1 Introduction to Fiat

Fiat has its origins in Turin where Italian professionals and businessmen created an automobile factory in 1899 (Fiat 2021e). The company has through history been supported economically by Italy but has since the 2000's no longer received state aid which has internationalized its' operations more, transforming the company into a more global player (Germano 2012: 65). In 2020 Fiat sold just under half a million cars, whereby they constitute 4,1 % of the market, which makes them the 10th bestselling car brand in Europe (Bekker 2021). The organization of the brand Fiat is still developing, as the Italian-American Fiat Chrysler Automobiles (FCA) has joined forces with Groupe PSA in January 2021 and together created the company Stellantis (Arent 2021). The two groups had in 2020 together a sale on around six million vehicles, and the automotive group is thereby the sixth biggest in the world (ibid.).

The Italian heritage is a story and a brand that Fiat actively promotes. On Fiat's webpage, you can follow their timeline on "A Driven By Dreams Story" created in context of their 120th anniversary in 2019. In the timeline you can see the different car models that Fiat has produced over time, and they for example highlight the New 500 from 1957 as inspiration for the company's electric models today (Fiat 2021e)¹⁸. The New 500 from 1957 was inspired by the 500 Topolino meaning "little mouse" (Fauri 1996:170). Where the Topolino represented an affordable car for the middleclass, the New 500 from 1957 has been argued to be a symbol of economic renaissance and wellbeing in Italy after the Second World War (Filieri & Alguezaui 2012: 2). However, the reintroduction of the New Fiat 500 models in 2007 seem to break with these understandings, as the company's management express that it is a new way of doing business at Fiat, and instead "...focuses on quality and emotions, on uniqueness rather than on mass-production..." (Filieri & Alguezaui 2012: 3). The brand is therefore changing, but expresses the Italian heritage as shaping and consistent for the company.

5.2 Autonomous and Electric Driving

Information on the company Stellantis is still being created and uploaded, but the earlier organization Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Group has pronounced that Fiat Chrysler has a partnership with both BMW, Intel Corp, and furthermore Mobileye in developing automated driving technology (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles 2020b; White 2020). That is to create a state-of-the-art autonomous driving platform for global deployment (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles 2020b). The understanding of what automated driving technology entails are therefore in line with BMW's pronounced stages of automated driving (See Table 4.8.3 "Autonomous Driving Technology"). Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has made an exclusive partnership with Waymo, a unit of Google parent Alphabet Inc, for developing future vehicles with L4 autonomous technology to move both goods and people (Fiat Chrysler Automobiles 2020a). Fiat is not highlighting autonomous driving on its YouTube Channel, but it does present technology solutions through the collaboration "Hey Google" which enables the driver to remotely interact with the car, check where the car is, how much fuel it has, and lock/ unlock doors and trunk on the vehicle (Fiat 2021b, 2021a).

¹⁸ See the New 500 Topolino under the tab 1957 through the [link here](#).

What we will see later that Fiat really promotes itself on is green leadership through affordable electric vehicles. The actual development of electric vehicles though may not be as drastic, as its promotion, at least not in the introduction of the vehicles. In a study from 2019 Sovacool et. al. compares two electric vehicles the BMW i3 and the Fiat 500e. The Fiat 500e is seen as the conservative choice from the authors' point of view, and BMW i3, as a type that is transformative – more is invested in this model as a shift for the company, where Fiat rather reacts to external political pressure (Sovacool et. al. 2019: 26). The former CEO of Fiat actually encourages customers not to buy the 500e, as it costs Fiat more money to produce it (Sovacool et. al. 2019). Now both BMW and Fiat has shown that they get closer in ambitions: BMW has downscaled their ambitions, and Fiat has changed strategy to embrace electrification as the future of mobility (Sovacool et. al. 2019: 30)

5.3 Affordability and price

Among new electric cars, Fiat places its palette in the more affordable part of the scale. An edition of the new electric 500 hatchback costs in Danish prices incl. taxes 25.564 € without any extra equipment, and a Fiat Panda (Mild) Hybrid costs below 17.000 €. In comparison the most sold plug-in hybrid car in Denmark in 2020 was Ford Kuga with a price on €38.979, and the most sold electric car in 2020 was Tesla model 3 for 53.792 € (Sandal 2021; Tesla 2021; Ford 2021). Here, Fiat offers a cheaper alternative to a hybrid or electric product.

Table 5.2.1: Fiat models and prices

Model	Type	Cheapest Available Edition
Fiat Panda Hybrid	Hybrid	16.809 €
Fiat 500	Hybrid	16.810 €
Fiat 500C	Hybrid	20.173 €
New electric 500 hatchback	Electric	25.564 €
New electric 500 cabriolet	Electric	33.633 €
New electric 500 3+1	Electric	32.692 €
New Fiat 500X	Gas* / Diesel	35.160 € / out of stock
Fiat 500L Wagon	Diesel*	28.665 €
Fiat Tipo	Gas / Diesel	22.861 € / 30.943 €
Fiat Tipo Cross	Gas / Diesel	28.240 € / 30.943 €
Fiat Tipo Station Wagon	Gas / Diesel	24.206 € / 32.409 €

*Price in Denmark incl. taxes. Prices retrieved 3rd May 2021. *When marked, the lowest price of the model is out of stock, and the lowest price of available editions is shown.*

5.4 Fiat's YouTube Channel

A powerful way to communicate is through video commercials, where the consumer can see the car in motion, details can be emphasized, and a story can be presented. The Fiat international YouTube channel has more than 90 million views and have seven related channels targeting different countries. The Italian channel have 65.900 subscribers, which is more than the international Fiat channel.

Table 5.3.1: Comparing Fiats channels

Channel name	Total views (mio.)	Subscribers
FIAT	90,72	57.800
FIAT ITALIA	44,17	65.900
FIAT UK	19,83	7.960
FIAT BELGIUM- LUXEMBOURG	12,98	961
FIAT FRANCE	11,87	7450
CZ FIAT	4,50	464
FIAT SCHWEIZ	2,24	788
FIAT MAROC	0,02	Unknown

Statistics collected the 9th of April 2021.

We will now look a bit closer at the content posted, and here we will focus on the international YouTube channel “Fiat”. Table 3.2 shows a list of the 10 most viewed videos on the channel, and include both commercials, documentaries, and conferences, but regardless the form, it is clearly the New Fiat 500 that is emphasized, as it constitutes 8 out of the most viewed 10 videos. The last two videos (8th and 10th place) present model Centoventi, which is Italian for “120”. This model was announced in 2019 as Fiat celebrated its 120th anniversary.

Table 5.3.2: Top10 viewed commercials

	Total views	Length	Date of upload
1. New Fiat 500 “la Prima” All-in with Leonardo Di Caprio	34.715.023	1:28	4 th March 2020
2. New Fiat 500 “la Prima” The third generation of an icon	19.890.160	0:55	4 th March 2020
3. New Fiat 500 ft Leonardo DiCaprio The function is here	9.688.292	0:51	27 th January 2021
4. New Fiat 500 “la Prima” Reincarnation with Leonardo Di Caprio	5.786.560	1:25	4 th March 2020
5. New Fiat 500 You ask, Fiat answers.	3.461.807	3:48	24 th October 2020
6. The brand new Fiat 500 Towards new times	3.369.571	13:50	24 th August 2020
7. Fiat Concept Centoventi A small car, that makes a big statement	1.823.256	1:53	15 th March 2019
8. New Fiat 500 One Shot documentary by VICE – Genesis of the New 500 One-Offs	1.165.838	15:35	27 th May 2020

9. Nuova Fiat 500 Presentazione ufficiale ft. Olivier Francois	1.006.564	17:06	6 th March 2020
10. Fiat Official Press Conference ft Olivier Francois 2019 Geneva International Motor Show	813.954	20:45	7 th March 2019

Statistics collected the 6th May 2021 (Fiat 2021f).

The video ranges from almost 35 million views to less than a million views. Almost all videos are in English, except one video, where the (French) CEO of Fiat, Olivier François, presents the New Fiat in the streets of Milan in Italian. Several of the commercials highlights Italian style, details and a modern development of an old car, and the CEO is happy to welcome the customer to see the fabric and car from inside. Out of the 10 top viewed videos, two are presentation of car models without any persons, three are presented starring actor Leonardo DiCaprio, four are presented by the CEO Olivier François, and one is presented by Olivier François and a team of design experts, including both men and women. White, middle-aged men are in the centre of presentation of the most viewed videos of Fiat models, where women, children, non-whites and (no) elderly persons appear in the background.

In the following, we will look into the newest video on the top 10-viewed list uploaded in January 2021, which is the third most viewed video with 9.7 million views. Here Oscar winning actor and climate icon Leonardo DiCaprio presents the electric New Fiat 500. One could argue, that Leonardo DiCaprio is just the brand for a sustainable car, as he in 2016 when he won an Oscar as actor in leading role, used his speaking time to stress that we should *“not take this planet for granted”* (Nielsen 2016).

5.5 “Welcome Back Future”

*“We stand at a junction. A crossroad between two futures:
One that repeats the mistakes of the past; and one that we still have to write together.
Welcome back, future.”*

That is the dramatic picture painted by the voiceover with Leonardo DiCaprio speaking in the commercial (Fiat 2021d).¹⁹ We see a bricking wall there has been painted a green city with a blue sky, a lot of trees and wind turbines in the background, and with big letters “Welcome back Future” has been written over the drawing. There are a lot of garbage thrown up against the brick wall, and one sees grey concrete buildings and black, heavy clouds in the background. The camera shifts, and we now see Leonardo DiCaprio looking at the drawn picture. There is a lot of noise surrounding him: A mix of car horns and construction noise. The first setting is an illustration of the mistakes of the past, where the painting on the bricking wall instead is an imagined reality. DiCaprio moves towards the drawing, and it becomes clear that it is actually possible to step into the painting and be a part of the world that the painting illustrates. DiCaprio steps into the picture, which comes alive, and the noise changes to birds singing. The changing reality creates associations to the massive hit and Oscar nominated and

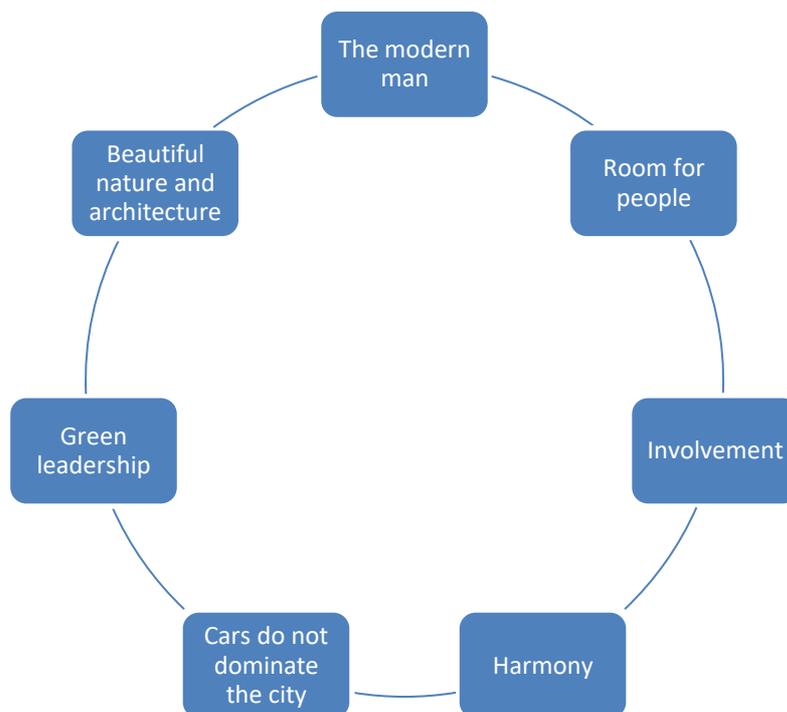
¹⁹ See the full video called “Welcome Back Future – New 500 ft. Leonardo DiCaprio” on the direct [link here](#).

winning movie *Inception*, in which DiCaprio is a leading role. In the movie the actors are able to change the city surrounding them, using their imagination, and this is what now seems to happen in the New Fiat 500 commercial.

Once DiCaprio has stepped inside the brick wall, one sees a New Fiat 500 is being charged with electricity. DiCaprio unplucks the car, and once he starts driving, the sound from the car transforms into a romantic, classical melody. The camera zooms in on some of the characteristics of the car; the headlights, the motor that plays music, and cabriolet opens its roof. It is the only car moving on the road, and on the side one can see beautiful waterfall installations, and families and children playing. The car passes big, beautiful buildings, which mirrors reflect wind turbines and solar cells in the background. This definitely shows a future that is green and in harmony.

DiCaprio takes a turn from the bigger roads, and down a road that is divided, where the space for cars and bicycles are of equal size, and a woman with a helmet passes the car on the other side of the road. At last, the car is parked next to a bicycle, the car does not take up a lot of space and does not dominate the space in the city. If one looks closer, it is parked in front of the original brick wall with the painting, but the setting is now different, the sky is now blue, and harmony is in place. Still there is written “Welcome back Future” on the painting, and once DiCaprio looks back at it, and says: “Welcome back, Future” it almost gives a feeling, that something is familiar, and that the future with idyll, green, and classical music really had been there earlier, just as Fiat welcomes the model 500 back again. Based on the commercial we have produced an association map below.

Model 5.5.1: Association map, Fiat



Association map of features based on visual analysis

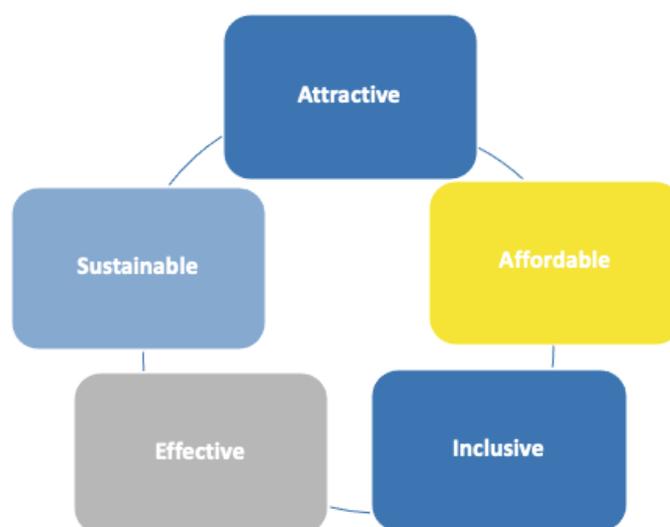
5.6 Main findings: Harmony and Green Leadership

When we look at the history, the advertising, and the pricing of Fiat car models together, we see a narrative that draws on characteristics such as harmony, green leadership, and room for people in the city. This contradicts with priority of sustainability for Fiat only ten years back (Sovacool et. al. 2019). The question is therefore whether consumers accept Fiat as a green leader, as it advertises. What Fiat really has success in advertising is the small, more sustainable private car, as eight out of ten of the most viewed videos on Fiats international YouTube Channel concerned the New Fiat 500: An electric car model. The popular videos did include a priority of the climate, of space to joy and play, as well as non-motorized transport modes. Though the Fiat 500 has had a reputation for being a woman's car, the most popular commercials were presented by successful men in suits.

6. Discussion: Gender Smart Mobility and TinnGO Indicators

In continuation of the above analysis and overview of the Volvo, BMW, and Fiat YouTube channels and products, we will now look closer to the gender smart indicators (Christensen and Breengaard 2019:16). It seems as if these car producers - notwithstanding their differences, use e-marketing, in a broader effort of mobilization of memories, feelings in favour energy saving, yet still a car centric society as a signpost for modern society and smart mobility. The interest of the car producers is not to destabilize or decode the car discourse and practices. Meaning that the broader issues of climate friendly solutions are narrowed providing a better and more safe and sturdy car for the individual and individual families. The TinnGO project has provided gender smart mobility as a critical challenge to this dominant narrative meaning. The application of the gender smart mobility indicators in the end of each chapter therefore functions as a critical reflection of how the main message of the car producers comply or subverts the current political discourses of climate change and CO₂ reduced mobility, and decoding of the wider consequences of the bigger and more space consuming cars and of urban congestion are not dealt with. At the end of the day the present e-marketing culture of in particular the most luxury brands an unchanged technological fix wrapped in soft clothes of gender equality/ safety and affordances for the middle class family – and in the promise of a continued masculine lads culture material driven by the provision of an advanced car in terms of speed and design. This implies a broad and critical take on the car branding discourses. More specifically, we will now discuss whether these brands can be seen as inclusive, affordable, attractive, effective, and sustainable transport modes. For an introduction to the Gender Smart Mobility Indicators see Christensen and Breengaard 2019:45f.

Figure 6.0.1: Gender Smart Mobility Indicators



6.1 Inclusive Transportation

In the TinnGO Roadmap, relevant questions for the inclusive smart transportation are whether the upcoming smart transport systems address various groups of citizens in non-stereotyping ways, and how this is expressed in the transport systems design, accessibility, safety, public campaigns, market promotions, living labs etc. (Christensen and Brengaard 2019:46). Our visual analysis of the Volvo, BMW and Fiat YouTube videos points towards a lack of inclusiveness. Although the analysis occasionally identifies both female and non-white characters, there continues to be strong reproduction of gendered stereotypes within the videos. For example, the notion of 'hyper masculinity' storytelling in BMW and how leaders (be they women or men) look like. Such 'inclusion gap' and strong identification with leadership and masculinity may be a turn off for potential buyers in that they reproduce gender stereotypical images (which can be impossible to leave up to) and primarily appeals to men (Dron 2018).

Moreover, our visual analysis across the three companies YouTube videos only identified few examples of women who actually drive the vehicle, and more or less none of them are the main characters in the videos. Fiat has for example beautiful, styled Italian women driving the 1957 model, and we see an example of a modern young women driving and signing with a friend. However, the women are not at the centre of the commercials, but the design applies to women when Centoventi is showed to implement of variety of such needs as coffee cups, room for pets, sunglasses, surfboard, etc. Earlier research shows that women are more likely to make more multipurpose trips, and do not make the same long-distance trips as men (Christensen et al. 2007:42f). The electric New 500 may be able to meet both of these needs, as it has a range up to 320 km (Fiat 2021c).

Furthermore, a great deal of the companies offers customized solutions, but relatively little space which can be a challenge for some family constellations or elderly persons travelling with a roller. The size of the New 500 can be problematized in not thinking in meeting needs of the elderly who might need to carry a roller or a wheelchair in their vehicle or to family constellations who need room in their vehicle for a stroller or a pram. Here the options for the bigger alternatives with Fiat become a gas or diesel car. There is one alternative in the electric New 500 3+1, where the CEO sends his thanks to a woman named Laura, and her "great team of women" who have developed an extra door on the side of the car that melts in with the design, and makes it possible to bring kids along more easily on trips (Fiat 2020).

However, it should be emphasized that we across the three car companies did identify examples of diversity and inclusiveness, although in a much smaller scale compared with the representations of white male drivers and experts. One example is how Volvo has addressed gender issues and women as drivers in their Volvo Concept Car, which was developed by an all-female team of Volvo engineers, designers, and technicians in 2004. Another example is BMW's choice of including Sara Al Mandani and her visions for technology and leadership. Though, despite of the positive shift initiated by the car companies in terms of inclusion and diversity, there continues to persist an 'inclusion gap' within the visual expressions of the videos. This gap invites for further inclusion development and points towards possible potentials for change and greater diversity.

6.2 Affordable Transportation

The affordable transportation indicator refers to that *public investments address robust and stable public transit provisions, e.g., if investments support the innovation of smart small cars for all rather than luxury cars for the few, keeping in mind the gender pay gap, and that women in general are less economical resourceful than men* (Christensen and Breengaard 2019:46). Of the included three car companies, only electrical and hybrid cars offered by Fiat seem to be an affordable alternative to other hybrid (though a mild hybrid) or electrical cars popular in the market. The price for a new BMWi3 starts from €37.600, which suggest that only middleclass families and above will have the financial resources to buy such. The price for a XC40 Recharge Volvo begins from €65.895, making it difficult even for most middleclass families to purchase such.

6.3 Effective Transportation

According to the TinnGO Roadmap, effective transportation can be seen as when *transport planning and policies provide seamless transport for all including, e.g., walking and biking in relation to smart mobility provisions, and that market stakeholders are directed to produce smart and efficient public transport rather than smart luxury cars* (Christensen and Breengaard 2019:46). All three car companies display a high degree of effective transportation in terms of providing seamless transportation, as private transport gives a high degree of flexibility. The key question here is: For whom. The electric vehicles that all three car companies offer, are private solutions – not public or shared – and the variation in price of the vehicles shape the accessibility to space and transport in urban areas. The cars vary in size, and here especially the Fiat 500 was advertised as a car that took up little space and did not dominate non-motorised transport in the city. Some of the appealing features of the BMW, e.g., technological innovation and comfort, may correspond to an “effective” travel for the individual, but do not speak into an effective transport system for the broader society. More so, the electrical car models now contain batteries that provide the car with a wide range of kilometres, making it possible – at least in countries with a smaller geographical area – for most people to go to work by an electric car (Danmarks Statistik 2018).

6.4 Attractive Transportation

Whether the transport is attractive can be defined as if *the planning provides safe, accessible, and liveable spaces in all parts of the city, and if it provides smart solutions for shared transport for broader and diverse groups of people* (Christensen and Breengaard 2019:46). The YouTube channels that were under the loop in this analysis all represented car firms which offered private – and not shared – forms of transport. Though all YouTube Channels, and especially BMW’s high number of views, reassures the brands’ popularity, it is not safe to say that the car brands offer attractive transport for the city. The extension and inclusion of both electrical cars and the evolution of more autonomous cars among the car brands may support that the car brands respond to the requests on a flexible and liveable city. The car brands responded differently on the safety criteria: Where the BMW highlighted its drivers as competent and skilful through commercials with drifting, Volvo really highlighted itself as bringing safety and responsibility into private transport, for example through the introduction of the seat belt. Fiat did not highlight the safety dimension, and the Fiat 500 has earlier been given low grading

in the Euro NCAP's test. The New Fiat 500 has to our knowledge not yet been tested by the Euro NCAP, but some safety improvements have been implemented including adaptive cruise control and lane assistant (Rasmussen 2017, 2020).

6.5 Sustainable Transportation

When we speak of sustainable transportation, it is not usually private cars that come into mind. In the roadmap developed by project TinnGO it is also the non-motorized transport that is considered to be at the core of ensuring sustainable transport (Christensen and Breengard 2019:46). However, non-motorized vehicles may not be an opportunity for everyone on all journeys, and despite that it is fundamental to incorporate non-motorized transport as part of the transport system, it is still relevant to ask how the motorized transport too can be reflected a sustainability criterion. Sustainability was in this analysis indicated as cars that were small and electric, and reused its materials. To measure sustainability in this way is though not that easy. It too gives out CO2 emissions to reuse and change materials used, and electric cars may not be the sacred saviour that it is often sought out to be. More CO2 emissions come from producing an electric car, and for it to be a more sustainable choice it needs to be charged on renewable energy (European Parliament 2019). If it is not charged on renewable energy, the CO2 emissions that come from an electric car can even exceed the CO2 emissions from ordinary diesel or gas cars (ibid). When reflecting on sustainability when speaking of motorized vehicles, it seems that we need a more scaled indicator that measures across different dimensions. A scaled indicator for sustainable transport in motorized vehicles could be:

- **Accessibility:** Are the car accessible for all, including parents with kids, people who travel with luggage or goods, elderly people, people with disabilities?
- **Production:** How is the car produced, and what is the size of the car? Do the car company reuse materials, and how? What are the social and environmental consequences of producing the vehicle, and can the car companies document extracted elements, e.g., lithium and cobalt for batteries?
- **The country's energy and infrastructure:** How is the country's infrastructure, and is the country capable to provide renewable energy for charging electric vehicles? Does the geographical area offer functional alternatives to private cars?
- **Use:** How many persons are travelling in the car, and how is it charged? For what purposes are the car used – are there alternatives? Is the car shared or private?

Summary

To summarize this discussion, all three brands meet the Gender Smart Mobility Indicators, though in various degree. None of the companies are fully inclusive, and it is difficult to label them as completely sustainable despite all of them having ambitions on green transition. When we speak of individual car use and sustainability, the discussion needs to be broadened and include more criteria than electric/ non-electric opportunities – we also need to discuss the use, share, and charge of electric cars, as well as how countries can provide transport and

electrical infrastructure to make individual cars sustainable, where there are no functional non-motorized or public transport solutions.

What was apparent from the three YouTube channels were that storytelling was in the centre of attention when promoting very different car products. Volvo reassured its Scandinavian traits through quality, safety, and sturdiness, and this also included the attention to family and gender equality. BMW showed with promoting videos “The small escape” and “The Epic Drift Mob” that this is a company with a narrative that includes characteristics such as leadership, independence, skills and competence, control, luxury, innovation, and technology. Fiat too emphasized leadership, but this was a green leadership for the modern man, though earlier studies showed that Fiat originally did not see a transformative potential in electric car models. Fiat surprisingly spoke into seamlessness transport where cars were not meant to dominate the city. Our overall findings from the discussion are illustrated in the table below.

Table 6.6.1: TinnGO – Gender Smart Indicators

	ATTRACTIVE	AFFORDABLE	EFFECTIVE	INCLUSIVE	SUSTAINABLE
Volvo	Yes	No	Yes	No	To some extent
BMW	No	To some extent	Yes	No	To some extent
Fiat	To some extent	Yes	Yes	To some extent	To some extent

Though many masculine, and at times exclusive, traits were found in YouTube’s e-marketing commercials from especially BMW, one can see some potential in the inclusive development of the companies, as women are included as both experts and users in newer commercials. Fiat’s YouTube Channel too included women, but when we look at the channel’s most popular videos, women are in general omitted. The car companies still follow a strong path dependency in creating new luxurious and space consuming cars also in the autonomous car regime which is foreseen to come. The efforts are directed towards visualizing and addressing new consumer groups, but they still have a long way to go when it comes to including women, non-whites, different age groups, and persons with disabilities. The streamlined car company narratives do not really confront their past and present storytelling with needs and wishes from these groups and in their striving to survive as car brands they also act counterproductive to the idea of smaller cars which can be shared in the urban space.

Conclusion

Returning to the issues raised in the beginning of this paper: Potentials and limitations of the coming of smart cars, this analysis sheds light on the complexity and scale of the topic. It has been argued that the making of 21st century modernity and consumer communities corresponds to the formation of nation states as imagined communities in the 19th century. (Christensen 2015, Small 2013; Cayla 2008; Eckhardt 2008). Today it is claimed that cars and other consumer goods have replaced media and political arenas as the channel for the imagination; and that the imagination is now situated in transnational connections and regional consciousness rather than within national boundaries. We have shown how such developments are manifested in the visual representations where national features in various ways are entangled with the cosmopolitan and global trends and attention to sustainability and climate change. At the same time new branding strategies tend to maintain the business elite as a target group while at the same time aiming at widening the scope to include gender and to a lesser degree ethnic minorities as potential consumers. As for class it is evident that leading car brands seek to attract both the local and the global middle class which so far have been mainly composed by men. Notwithstanding similarities among today's (European) and globalized car producers the visual representations in YouTube videos show that the car companies try to maintain their own unique profile and brand including a blend of social, gendered, and national/ local characteristics in the intensified competition at the global car market. They use e-marketing in a broader effort of mobilization of memories, feelings in favour of energy saving, yet they still promote a car centric society as a signpost for modern society and smart middle class mobility. Time will show if and car producers are willing and able to make a more fundamental shift which connect with customers' growing interests and desires for climate and shared solutions with advanced technologies.

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