

The Young Questions



Vulva

What is a vulva? And who has one? And what's up with the clit?
What does a vulva need? How do people feel about and care for their
vulva? What do I know about mine? Why do I hide my tampon when
I go to the bathroom? Why don't we talk? About the pain, the blood,
the shame, the history, the pleasure, the uniqueness?

Welcome to The Young Questions Vulva, a research artefact. It is
a broad exploration of factors changing and affecting the world of
vulvas and brands moving in this realm. To satisfy our wandering
minds, to inspire new perspectives. This document is intentionally
non-directional and to be explored through your intuition and
curiosity. It is meant to be interacted with, to spark a conversation
and share your opinions and experiences. So lean back and let your
curiosity roam and your mind question.

VARYING EXPERIENCES

The human experience is both universal and vastly different in its details. Not one person experiences the world and their menstruation quite like the other and the future holds the key to see this diversity beyond a previously defined and alienating “normal”.

Fig. 1 Callaly



LIVED REALITIES

One of the most striking insights from a series of in-depth interviews within this research regarding people’s experiences of their menstruation and vulva were the vastly different experiences each person had. People experience different ranges of emotions within their cycle, varying heaviness of their flow and the resulting period management, different pain levels, associations and changes within their life so far. Menstruation is not a monolithic experience.



Fig. 2 Gemma Chua-Tran

PERIOD ACTIVEWEAR

While exercising during one’s period might be uncomfortable, doing so has several health benefits and can even help to minimise the intensity of future flow. Despite the fact that a large portion of the population experiences menstruation on a regular basis, there are few sportswear options available that are expressly designed to meet these monthly requirements. Back in 2021, Thinx and Adidas developed their period underwear range by offering fitness-specific clothing with the ability to absorb the equivalent of two to five ordinary tampons’ amount of fluids. The collections, which include one-piece leotards, leggings, and bike shorts, are designed to emphasise the individual demands of every athlete while placing a strong emphasis on comfort.



McQuarrie, 2021; Smith, 2021

Fig. 3 Marie Specht

SEEKING COMFORT

When you have your period, you may experience physical discomfort such as fatigue, cramps, an uncomfortable bloated sensation, stomach pain, lower back pain, and painful breasts. Obtaining sources of comfort was vital to respondents in the study of McQuarrie experienced while their bodies were adapting to the changes that were taking place. This insight was further validated by our own interview study. But our study also uncovered rarely talked about period symptoms such as constipation and diarrhoea, rectal pain, disrupted sleep, sensitive or dry skin, sore breasts and armpits, gum pain, leg pain and sensitivity to smell.

McQuarrie, 2021

Cassano, 2021

INTERIOR SANCTUARY

“Interiors are becoming sanctuaries as never before, and as people are seeking stability, they’re gravitating toward colours and spaces that evoke feelings of warmth and security. The softness, dependability, and versatility of neutrals “create interiors that soothe, comfort and protect.”

Wunderman Thompson, 2021

TRANS VULVA

Trans men have a special relationship with their vulvas and might be subjected to physical changes regarding their genitals when starting to use testosterone for their personal gender affirmation process. Nonbinary trans man Vic shares his advice on Calla.ly: “Learning to be comfortable with yourself first helps. You can build up confidence that way, before engaging with new people. The way you think you’re going to feel about things is not necessarily the way you think about them when they happen. Nothing is how you think it’s going to be, so expect the unexpected. The prospect of having genitals that might be perceived as ‘other’ can invoke a lot of internalised transphobia. We are indoctrinated into a cishet* society, where we’re taught that genitals are meant to look a certain way. But genitals are unique from person to person and entirely ungendered! Vulvas are for everybody and can be referred to using whatever words work for you. Be patient with yourself while figuring out your new anatomy. It can be a bit strange – and even full-on awkward – to have your genitals change as an adult. With the physical changes of bottom growth come new sensations, too.”

*The term cishet (pronounced sis-het) refers to a gender identity as well as a sexual identity. This two-part identity means that a person is both cisgender and heterosexual.

COSY, COMFY, SOFT,
SNUG, WARM, HYGGE

RADICAL INCLUSIVITY

We're already seeing it happen – the scope and demand for inclusivity is widening and consumers expect a more authentic kind of marketing. In the future we will see society and companies challenge previously untouchable domains, such as ageism, sexual diversity, gender diversity, visibility of people with disabilities and the corresponding intersectionality.

fig. 4 Caliaity



CARING FOR TRANS CYCLES

The LGBTQ+ voice is growing stronger, and people are starting to see the importance of inclusive products and messaging for all menstruators. Period products have often been heavily gendered in design, packaging, and messaging, but not everyone who menstruates is a woman. To promote inclusivity and raise awareness, Freda, a period care brand, has introduced Cycle, a range that breaks free from stereotypes and considers all identities and bodies. Alongside the product launch, the brand partnered with three LGBTQ+ advocates who shared their experiences and discussed issues like shame and inequality. While the current focus is on creating gender-neutral packaging and using inclusive marketing, the next step towards inclusion is understanding and addressing the specific needs of this group with tailored product solutions.

Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

“I’ve seen a shift, the world has changed its perspective on menstruation. The conversation has become more inclusive to trans, non-binary and intersex individuals”
– Kenny Ethan Jones

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

Language is often a tool of oppression, and brands are launching campaigns to address this issue. They recognize that our everyday language shapes our perception of the world. Inclusive language initiatives, such as anti-racist and anti-sexist campaigns, are challenging and diversifying our vocabulary. Consumers no longer tolerate systemic inequality, being acutely aware of its subtle presence in society. Brands can no longer merely pay lip service to progressive ideals; they must actively combat harmful stereotypes perpetuated by the media.

TREND HUNTER Inc., n.d.

What language artefacts persist that perpetuate sexism?

AGEING REINVENTED

Everyday language shapes societal perceptions, leading brands to launch inclusive language initiatives. These efforts encompass anti-racist coding campaigns and anti-sexist language campaigns.

“Ageing Reinvented” challenges conventional roles for older generations. Many seniors are redefining their “golden years,” with retirement, reliance, sedentary lifestyles, and loneliness being reevaluated. Despite ageism, older generations remain economically, professionally, and socially engaged. Society must address the

fig. 5 Rankin



psychological, emotional, and social aspects of ageing, while healthy lifestyles and anti-ageing products combat physical ageing. Regulations against age discrimination and specialised training for older workers are necessary as people work beyond retirement age. Ageing populations pursue active hobbies, maintain social ties (aided by social media), embrace style and fashion, and engage

in society. Relate’s “Let’s Talk The Joy of Later Life Sex” campaign challenges stereotypes by celebrating intimacy among older adults. It sets an example for an inclusive approach to sexual health and positivity. Health and wellness brands will develop age-inclusive products and services to support personal connections throughout customers’ lives.

itonics, 2020



fig. 6 Kool shooters

COMMUNITY

Menstruation creates community and as our social networks are expanding into the digital realm a new culture of intimacy emerges.

CONNECTED

There is no doubt that social media has had a tremendous impact on people’s lives. More than two-thirds of all internet users utilise social media sites like Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, TikTok or Twitch. The world has changed because of social media. Technology adoption is transforming the way we find partners, get news, and organise to demand political change. These technologies are rapidly and widely utilised. Activist and peer-to-peer support networks target a particular range of issues. As more individuals spend time online, new platforms are being developed for

“It’s the one support
that we have
together. It’s like,
we’re in this together.
It makes me feel
really connected to
those around me”

— anon

BRANDING TOGETHER

Brands are putting aside rivalry in favour of collaboration to address social and environmental concerns as a result of a new breed of leadership. Generation Z is redefining brand purpose. According to a poll conducted by Wunderman Thompson Data in October 2020, 80% of US Gen Z’ers feel businesses should assist and improve people’s lives, while 82% believe brands should set aside their disagreements and collaborate for the greater good. The societal movement away from “me” towards “us” has spread to companies, proving that transformation takes collaborative effort. Another variation on this theme is the formation of strategic alliances between two or more businesses in order to improve their value offer and hence appeal to both new and current users. It is also utilised to maintain relevance as a result of unique and interesting relationships.

GENERATIONAL BOND

Conversations regarding the start of menstruation between girls and female relatives can be bonding and caring experiences. Creating open

dialogues about menstruation as a natural event connected to femininity and fertility is crucial element of raising girls to moms participating in a research study conducted by McQuarrie. A new social visual language of connectedness can also be seen on a bigger societal level: As Milis points out, the message of community is being reframed: “I’ve been extremely happy to see a scaling focus on building a sense of community through compassion as well as a growing understanding that we don’t have to occupy the same physical space to build community, to support one another.”



Fig. 7 Katie Smart

Oxford, 2021

McQuarrie, 2021

Wunderman
Thompson, 2021

NEW INTIMACY

The concept that screen time and social media have a detrimental influence on our offline relationships is progressively beginning to fade as research presents contrasting findings and individuals begin to overcome the stiffness associated with technologies meant to humanise our digital interactions. Our conversations get more personal and intimate alongside the issues expressed and discussed online.

CYCLE CENTRIC

We’re slowly, but surely moving beyond the binary point of view of ‘period on’ or ‘period off’ and realise that the hormonal cycles AFAB (assigned female at birth) people go through are not an on/off state, but a continuous cycle affecting life and offering unique opportunities when we embrace it as a guiding force.

NOT A 28 DAY CYCLE

Only 13% of people who menstruate have a cycle that is 28 days long, around 65% of people have cycles between 25 and 30 days. Any cycle length between 21 and 35 days is normal. On average,

Bull et
al., 2019
Akers, 2019

a cycle is 29.3 days long. Furthermore, it is normal for cycles to vary in length for one individual. This can be both reassuring and a realistic guideline for when to reach out to a medical professional as a significantly shorter or longer cycle can be an indicator for an underlying health condition.

PRODUCT CYCLE

Access to different products is no longer limited to the cosmetic sector, it’s migrated into cycle care. Consumers demand simplicity and accessibility when it comes to their cycle and are being met by a new generation of companies catering to their requirements throughout the month. More data is available indicating how the fluctuation of hormones during the menstrual cycle affects each factor of health, complexion, appetites and more and marketers are utilising this data to drive future product creation. From vitamins geared exclusively for menopause like MPowder, to skin-care brands like Typology. Offering customised solutions depending on cycle stage, businesses within wellness are beginning to tap on this potential. With still so much to learn about how the hormone cycle affects individuals differently, and the most effective methods to harness it, there is still significant space for innovation and experimentation in this field.

EXERCISE. PERIOD.

Launched in February 2021, (Cycle)Sync is the outcome of a cooperation between sportswear giant Nike, R/GA London, and female psychologist Stacy Sims. This is the first-ever training collection on the renowned Nike Training Club App that is aimed at responding to the demands of women who are exercising throughout their menstrual cycle. The digital platform provides tools that assist women get the most out of their training, regardless of the time of the month. It is time to finally recognise there are fundamental differences between male and female physiology when it comes to training, especially during menstruation. This is something to embrace rather than ignore.

SUPER CYCLING

People are more conscious of the influence of their hormone cycle and how it alters their body and mind throughout the cycle. With improved access to personal data sets, individuals may take more control of their wellbeing balance, allowing them to alter routines and behaviours to fit with the needs of their hormonal changes.



Fig. 8 Los Muertos Crew

The supplier of everyday wellbeing for women Moody, delves into women’s biology and habits, connecting women to daily nutrition, exercise and wellness solutions to support their shifting emotions and physical ailments. Personal applications such as these are growing in popularity and are giving women more sophisticated information to help them understand their bodies with confidence. As these signals get stronger we predict it will become increasingly popular to workout, eat and work according to the hormone cycle.

THE FEMALE IMMUNE SYSTEM IS CYCLICAL

Maybin and Critchley claim that in humans, hormones directing the menstrual cycle modify the female immune response in a manner that allows for the implantation of a viable embryo even in the absence of fertilisation. They explain that female health is best thought of as cyclical since symptoms and susceptibility to infection change depending on the stage of the cycle. Women with varied cycling life histories have variable susceptibility to and experiences with illnesses. In other words, due to varying degrees of inflammation, female health is cyclical.

THE MORE THE MERRIER

Thanks to advancements in family planning, people in developed countries now experience over 400 menstrual cycles in their lifetime, a stark contrast to our ancestors and women in developing nations who had around 40 menstrual cycles. This significant increase is due to improved nutrition, reduced child births per woman (from an average of 4.69 in 1900 to 1.66 in 2020 in the Netherlands), fewer periods of lactational amenorrhea (lack of menstrual flow during breastfeeding), and earlier onset of menarche (the first occurrence of menstruation). In developed nations, the average age at menarche has decreased from 16.5 years in 1840 to 12 years today.

REMARKABLE REPAIR

The endometrium is a complex multicellular tissue that interacts with immunological, endocrine, and vascular systems. The careful management of this tissue during a cycle to enable repeated ‘injury’ and ‘repair’ leads to a unique physiological response that makes conception possible. This accessible tissue offers an excellent resource for studying inflammation, angiogenesis, and tissue healing and may offer insights beneficial for all people.

Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

Maybin & Critchley, 2015

DeMaria et al., 2019; Maybin & Critchley, 2015

Maybin & Critchley, 2015

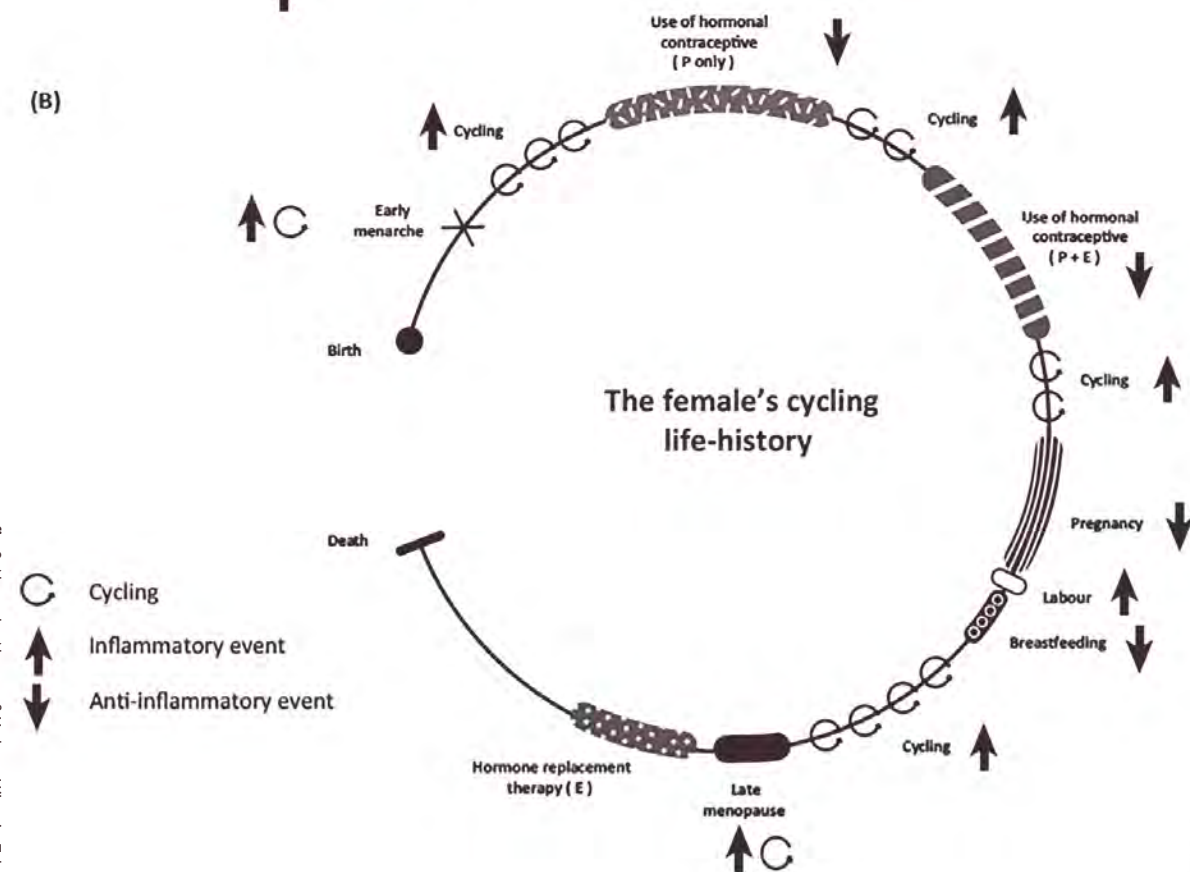
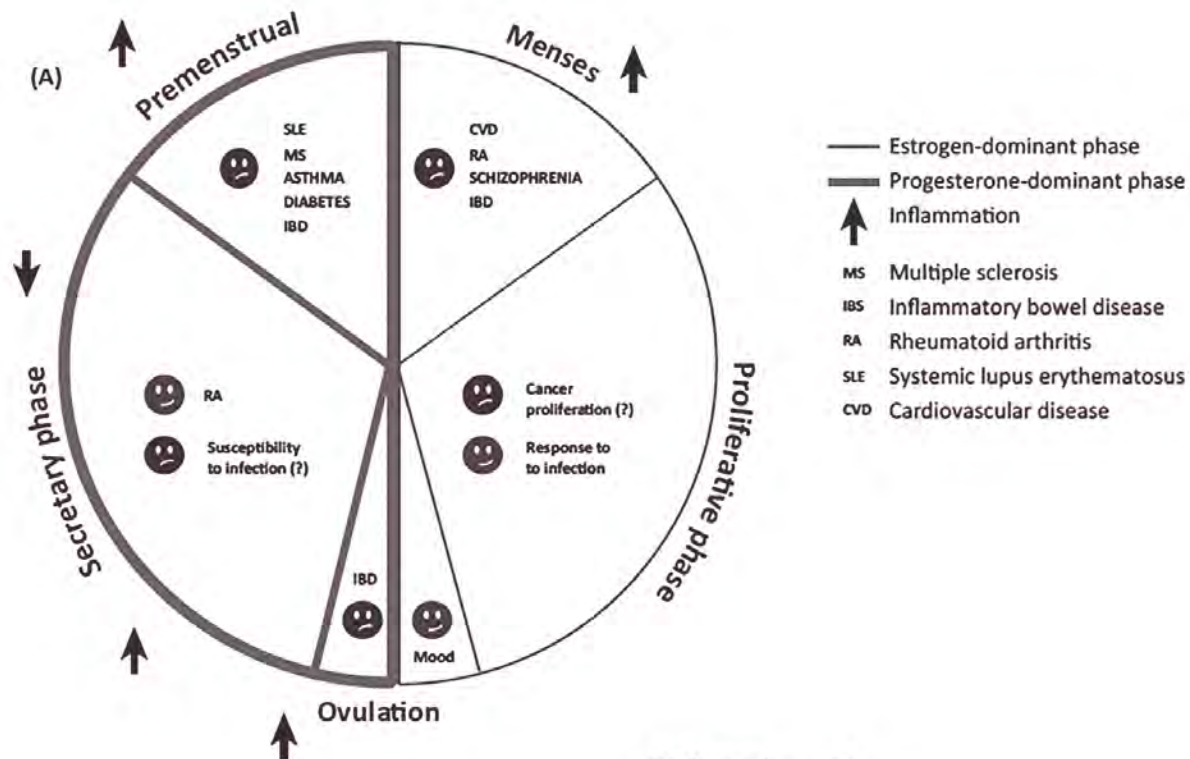


fig. 9 Alexandra Alvergne & Védraha Höglqvist-Tabor

fig. 10 Marie Specht



POST TABOO

Taboos are challenged, a status quo of internalised shame and silence is no longer tolerated as people free themselves and address persisting taboos to dissolve them through open communication.

BRIDGING THE ORGASM GAP

The phrase "orgasm gap" was invented to characterise the difference in orgasms experienced amongst lovers. Studies have employed orgasm disparity, also known as orgasm inequality, to quantify sexual pleasure across various demographics. A successful and healthy sex life isn't just determined by the number of orgasms experienced. However, studies have shown a significant disparity in the quantity of orgasms experienced by men and women in heterosexual partnerships. The orgasm divide isn't limited to heterosexual women and men. Lesbian and bisexual women experience significantly more orgasms than heterosexual women, according to research. Similarly, when women are alone and when they are with a partner, there is an orgasm disparity. Because female orgasms include psychological underpinnings, this disparity might be explained in part by social reasons. According to a study by Lentz and Zaikman (2021) orgasm with a familiar partner was the only orgasm variable that predicted sexual pleasure, demonstrating that not all orgasms may predict sexual happiness.

Broster, 2020

Overall, sexual assertiveness was the parameter that was positively connected with and predicted orgasm frequency and sexual pleasure in practically all settings. This suggests that educating women to be more sexually assertive might result in more orgasms and more sexual pleasure.

POST TABOO WELLNESS

As a strategy to alleviate anxieties among their users, health and wellness businesses are choosing to speak out about previously taboo topics. This is pushing new approaches in health-focused communications, with provocative ads and activations that concentrate on real-world, human storytelling on topics ranging from sex in later life to pubic hair celebration. The social company Hey Girls' Seeing Red commercial for example aims to make audiences angry by associating their emotions with individuals who suffer from period poverty. It successfully portrays the humiliation, embarrassment, and belittlement felt by certain individuals who cannot afford period items by embracing a feeling that most manufacturers would want to dodge in their marketing communications. The company worked with a social psychologist to produce the video, employing scientific research to guide colour choices, imagery, and auditory cues to induce sentiments of fury in viewers. While the advertising attracts attention by making people uncomfortable, it also highlights how brands and marketers can be beneficial in addressing and eliminating period poverty.

The Future Laboratory, 2021



fig. 11 Hey Girls' Seeing Red commercial

SOMETHING TO BE HIDDEN

Menstruation has historically been seen negatively. Menstruation, according to Aristotle, was an external symptom of feminine weakness, a belief that lingered throughout the nineteenth century and beyond. As women have access to high-quality education, begin working outside the house, obtain the right to vote, and have easier access to emergency healthcare and birth control, the 'taboo' of menstruation fades. As a result, some see societal attitudes on menstruation as a gauge of civilization and equality. However, menstruation's historical negative connotations continue to have a considerable influence on present culture, particularly women's and healthcare practitioners' beliefs and expectations. Advertisements and instructional materials are important socialisation agents that spread menstrual stigma. According to Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler (2011), the stigmatisation of menstruation affects people's health, sexuality, and well-being. It reflects and contributes to women's inferior social position, they argue. Previous research has shown that even reminders of menstrual blood (e.g., tampons) may cause avoidance and social alienation, implying that menstrual blood is a flaw in women's character. Menstruation is a concealed stigma, according to Johnston-Robledo and Chrisler, since women go to considerable lengths to hide it. Menstrual hygiene items (tampons, pads) are meant to absorb fluid and smells, to be discreetly carried in a handbag, and to be disposed of in a bathroom receptacle. Advertisements are cultural objects that shape meaning in society. Promoting confidentiality, avoidance of humiliation, and freshness has contributed to the communication taboo. Flowers, hearts, and blue rather than crimson liquid have been utilised to emphasise secrecy and delicacy. Women's dread of being detected menstruating is used in ads. Menstruation stigma affects women's health, sexuality, well-being, and social standing. The fear of revealing one's menstrual status is one of the most common repercussions identified in the literature.

Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011

fig. 12 Jesse Laitinen



WET ASS PUSSIES

Cardi B released the music video for her new song "WAP" starring rap's current It Girl, Megan Thee Stallion, on Friday, August 7, 2020. WAP then took over social media conversation and became a pop cultural phenomena in its own right. The music video has gained 513 million views on YouTube as of October 2023. The visual message is about sex, women who like sex, and women who enjoy being seductive. The video is unapologetically appreciative of women's sensuality and sexuality. It's not about being timid or coy; it's about the outspoken expression of female desire for sex in the way they want it, and it positions women as active participants with agency. The feedback from women has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic. In a world where women are increasingly equitably commodifying sex work, but where rape culture and patriarchy remain terrifyingly dominant, there is something rebellious and transgressive in women, particularly oversexualized black women, openly discussing their excitement and tastes and preferences for intercourse.

McClinton, 2020

STIGMA

Any stain or marking that makes an individual's body or character defective is referred to as a stigma. Menstruation and genital stigma and the resulting imposed secrecy surrounding both is heavily affecting people's health and wellbeing. This was further underlined in the conducted interviews as participants shared their personal stories and those of their friends and family. Not only do people struggle to identify issues they may encounter (such as infections or STDs), but drag them on in hopes they may go away by themselves, the lack of knowledge of the potential seriousness and because of shame about addressing their issue and seeking help from a healthcare professional which only worsens their condition.

Johnston-Robledo & Chrisler, 2011

MENSTRUATION PORN

Feminist erotic film director Erica Lust explains in an interview with Metro.co.uk: "People don't talk about periods, less about enjoying period sex. [...] It's like sex and (female) nudity, constantly censored and shamed in our popular culture. Just look at gendered censorship on social media; when photos of period blood are taken down, a natural body process is turned into a source of shame. [...] And when something is not allowed online, it translates into something that is not accepted in society. Periods are probably the most taboo of sex-related subjects." She speaks on >

(about not hiding period products on her way to a public bathroom)

"There's nothing to be ashamed of, it's just your body doing its process, why would I hide that? We don't hide when we sneeze, we don't hide when we blow our nose or cough. How is this any different?"

— anon



fig. 13 Dazed

the topic of an astounding lack of period porn. Given that so much that is generally regarded as repulsive is eroticized in photographic porn, which is only marginally underground by obscenity legislation as it is often defined, the relative rarity of menstruation porn is difficult to explain. Often it is actually due to the payment processors that make internet pornography feasible in the first place. Only a few companies will process payments for sites selling porn because of the restrictions and fees imposed by Visa and MasterCard on anyone processing credit cards for “high risk” sites, and even these more liberal businesses have some fairly strict rules about what is and isn’t acceptable for their clients to sell. One of the most outrageous instances of censorship is the outright prohibition of pornography that even hints at menstruation. Menstrual intercourse is a significant online porn no-go according to practically every payment processor, whether it’s because of the blood or the belief that menses are “bodily waste” equivalent to pee or faeces.

Alpturk, 2015



fig. 14 Maïse Cousins

LANGUAGE OF OBSCURITY

A curious observation within period product packaging was the plethora of euphemisms and obscure language evidently avoiding addressing menstruation and menstrual blood. Brands used claims of ‘protection’, ‘safety’, ‘discretion’, and ‘freshness’ to advertise their products beyond more functional aspects such as absorption and

comfort (albeit subjective). This implies the user to be in danger, unsafe without the product, it implies that users are unclean without this product, that it saves them from public humiliation due to the display of menstruation and other presumably “disgusting” bodily functions; it perpetuates menstruation to be portrayed as something to be hidden, not discussed. Another curiosity is the indication of which flow heaviness the product caters to – light, medium, heavy, mini, normal, super, ultra, plus. Especially the notion of “normal” goes against all insights gained through the interviews. Women experience a range of symptoms and flow, calling one or the other “normal” is yet again portraying a standard of acceptable range that is not representative of the lived reality of people. Furthermore, in a world where people with a heavy flow wear both a pad and sometimes even two tampons, the superlative of super or ultra seems rather inappropriate considering their ineffectiveness to absorb larger amounts of menstrual blood.

funk [reported], 2020

WHAT BINARY?

Binaries will be a thing of the past, we’re embracing the grey areas and the beauty in all their nuances.

SEXIST HEALTHCARE

The history of medicine, of sickness, is both social and cultural. It is a history of people, not simply of doctors, surgeons, clinicians, and researchers. Medicine has always absorbed and perpetuated socially imposed gender distinctions. Tradition has assigned authority and supremacy to males. Tradition has suggested that women are

inferior in politics, money, and education. Modern scientific medicine has thrived as a profession, institution, and field under precisely these settings. Male supremacy, and hence the superiority of the male body, was ingrained in medicine. Women were medically described as flawed, and inadequate due to anatomical differences. But women have a very valuable biological and social organ: the uterus. This organ determined

women’s role: to carry and nurture offspring. Female biology was focussed on women’s ability (and obligation) to reproduce. This has always mirrored and affirmed prevailing societal and cultural expectations about who women are, what they should believe, experience and desire—and most importantly—what they can do for males to be prescribed mild tranquilisers and antidepressants. Women are less likely than males to be referred for additional testing. Women’s discomfort is more likely to be perceived as emotional or psychological than physiological or biological. But gender bias in medical knowledge, research, and practice has recently become mainstream. “It seems ridiculous now to imagine physicians once believed that women’s nerves were too highly strung for them to receive an education and that their ovaries would become inflamed if they read too much. But these outrageous myths are alive and well in a world where menstruation and menopause are still seen by many people as credible reasons why women shouldn’t hold positions of political power. When clinical research exempts women from studies and trials on the grounds that female hormones fluctuate too much and upset the consistency of results,

Clegghorn, 2021

Women are less likely than men to be referred for additional testing

medical culture is reinforcing the centuries-old myth that women are too biologically erratic to be useful or valuable.”

WOMAN ≠ MENSTRUATION

Traditionally, the words ‘girl’, ‘woman’, and ‘female’ have been used synonymously to refer to menstruating people. This overlooks the distinctions between biological sex and gender identity.



fig. 15 Enby

Not everyone who identifies as a woman or a girl menstruates, and not everyone who menstruates identifies as such.

GENDER NEUTRALITY IN DESIGN

In formerly gendered areas, architecture and design are experimenting with new materials, forms, and colours to introduce gender neutrality into their designs. The start-up Maude has developed a line of gender-neutral sex products with a minimalist design as an alternative to those presently available. Each element in the series is designed in a minimalist style that avoids gendered pink and blue tones in favour of more natural off-white and brown tones.

Levy, 2021

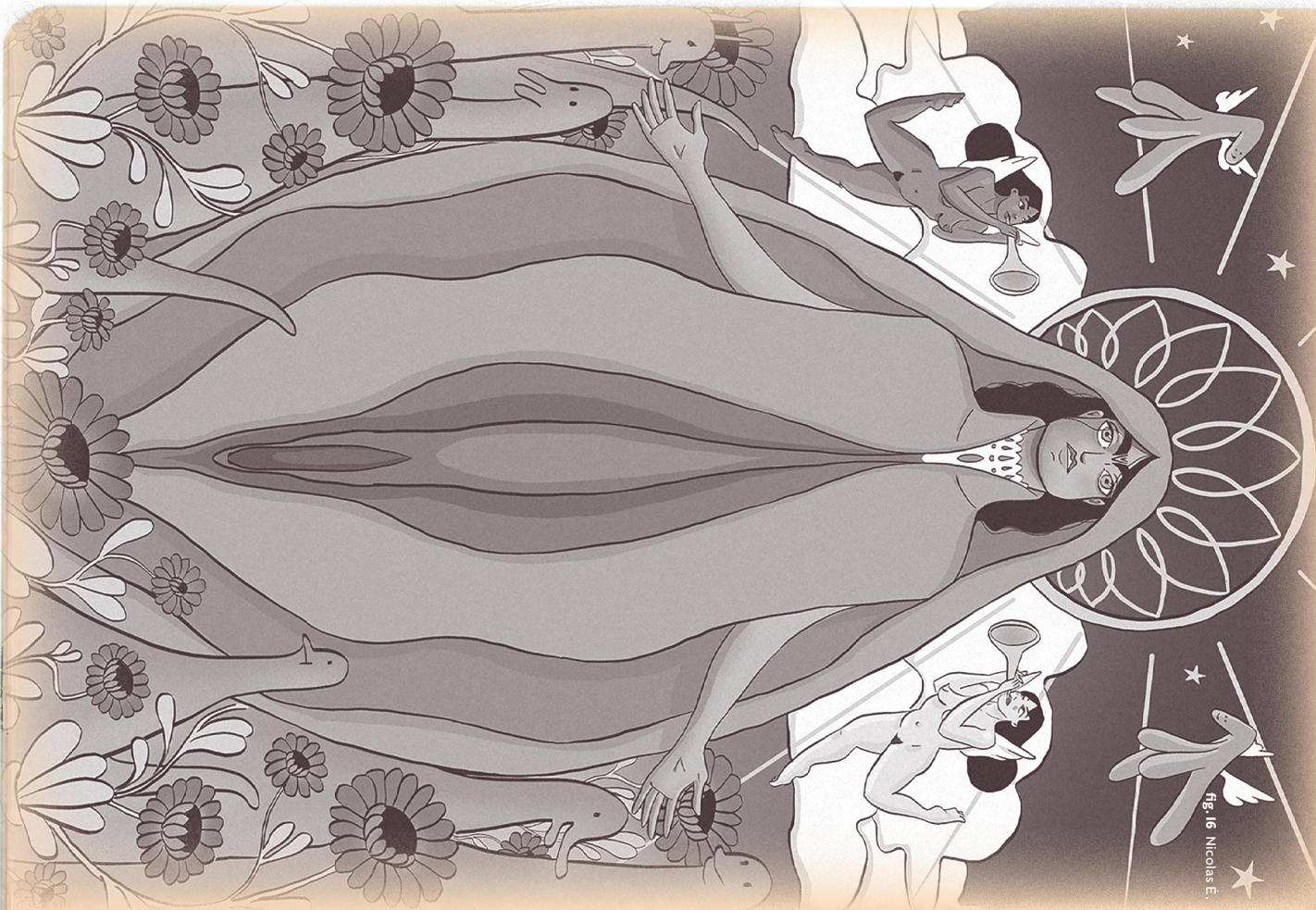
Yalcinkaya, 2021

THE DICHOTOMY OF WOMANHOOD

A saint, a whore. A natural being, a constant site of work. Women are constantly confronted with often conflicting societal expectations. This dichotomy forces both people and companies to take a stand and position themselves.

MENSTRUATION AND FEMALENESS

“You’re a woman now”. Many of the respondents in our in-depth interview series were greeted with this sentence when they disclosed their menarche towards their family members. Many felt disconnected with their own bodies. Gender expectations are now embedded as prejudices that severely affect all women’s care, treatment, and diagnosis. The health-care system fails



“My period was the most symbolic experience in my life, I got my period the day my sister was born. A really big symbol of womanhood to me.”

— anon

women in responding to and treating pain, particularly chronic pain. The girls, usually between 11 and 14, may experience an inappropriateness and dissonance when confronted with their social role as a woman in relation to their experience at the time. This dissonance carries through their adulthood as this idea of womanhood is oftentimes one of suppression and unrealistic ideals mismatching a more and more equal socio-cultural environment.

Kraus, 2017

fig. 17 Marie Specht



FLICKING THE BEAN

Women's access to arousal media (e.g. online pornography, erotic books) or self-stimulation objects more suitable for the expectations of a feminine audience tends to trivialise the practise of feminine masturbation (sex toys). As a result of shifting societal norms around female sexuality, women are more willing to acknowledge acts that are not inside the socially-acceptable framework of the marriage. Despite the fact that both sexes' behaviour has become more similar, masturbation is still not a part of women's sexual repertoire as it is for males, nor is it a habit readily disclosed to a partner.

MENO - WHAT?

Menopause is seldomly mentioned in popular culture. The portrayals often cause anxiety and provided little insight of what it was like to experience it firsthand. It was only in 1821 that the term “menopause” was coined. In the first publication on the topic, French physician Charles Pierre Louis De Gardanne introduced it. The labelling of an experience that is intrinsically feminine by a man was in itself questionable. The word stayed and is often used interchangeably with “the shift” as a shorthand for describing a wide variety of experiences related to women's ageing. A slew of new works have aimed to make menopause visible, reframing the transformation as a moment of empowerment, in a big departure from the grotesque or comic lady suffering from hot flashes who is desexualized and ignored. The award-winning TV series *Fleabag* has a particularly strong portrayal. A candid conversation on ageing between the titular character and an older entrepreneur deviates from the anticipated, aggressively challenging popularly held views of menopause. “The menopause comes. The fucking menopause comes and it is the most... wonderful fucking thing in the entire world.” New cultural representations of menopause are important because they may raise awareness and shift viewpoints. They give a much-needed

Shaw, 2020

education to modern audiences, which has the ability to raise public awareness and, as a result, increase knowledge of life cycle change, health and well-being, and the ageing process for both genders.

A FORCE OF NATURE OR A DAMSEL IN DISTRESS

Women often use a “natural” language in connection to their menstruation, which varies from advertising's “protective” discourse, which takes a binary view of menstruation and links it with shame and concealment. In ensembles of forging “feminine identities,” women, paradoxically, combine both discourses.

A DELICATE FLOWER

Ephemeral. Fleeting. Innocence. Virginity. Beauty as purpose. Fragile. To be viewed. Decorative. To be picked. Defenceless. Attractive. Alluring. Passive. One-dimensional. To encourage discretion and delicacy, metaphoric imagery such as flowers and hearts (as well as blue rather than red liquid), have been employed euphemistically to describe menstruation, female genitals and sexuality in general. It is an outdated concept of femininity depicting women as passive recipients and denies their agency and intellect.

fig. 18 Maisie Cousins



KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Knowledge is empowerment. Even in the year 2023 the lack of data on female sex health is astounding, but the issue is gaining awareness and new platforms offer new opportunities to educate and learn.

TEACHER TIKTOK

TikTok is a dynamic learning community that has the potential to change the face of education. TikTok has grown to become one of the world's biggest learning platforms in recent years: It's accessible in over 160 countries with over 1.1 billion users. Creators produce a range of short-form films on anything from culinary techniques to dancing routines to crafts and arithmetic abilities on the app, which is accessible in 75 languages. The reasons why TikTok is such a popular platform for learning include the empowerment it offers to creators, influence as a new form of accreditation, making learning short lived, fun and interactive.

EDUCATION

One recurring insight gained through a series of in-depth interviews was the respondents wish they would've gotten a more extensive and nuanced education like that of their male counterparts.

“I’m actively trying to have positive associations towards my vulva and vagina.

This is why it’s so great to have an education, a conversation about it, it’s all it takes. I’ve never had this before, ever.”

— anon

VULVA DIVERSITY

Female teenagers often seek medical help because they are self conscious about the look of their external genitalia. These individuals may be self-conscious about their genital look and some want surgery to rectify a perceived deformity. The literature accessible to them lacks accurate descriptions of typical (teenage) female genital anatomy. Labiaplasty has become more common in people of all ages in recent years. The causes of this heightened worry over genital appearance are unknown, although they might include tight-fitting clothes, genital grooming, and the internet’s availability of vulvar photos. There is a lot of variation in genital anatomy, and there is no recognized typical range. Artist Jamie McCartney has taken this issue to the art world in his famous work “Wall of Vagina” and describes his artwork as follows: “A sculpture made from plaster casts of 400 women’s vulvas. Spectacle & education together. Knowledge is power. Freedom from genital anxiety is the goal...”. Another inspiring initiative is The Vulva Gallery initiated and illustrated by Hilde Atalanta. Another most recent pop culture moment was the addressation of vulva diversity in the Netflix series “Sex Education” which also refers to a website called www.all-vulvas-are-beautiful.com with the telling quote: “Vulvas come in all shapes and sizes – all of them beautiful in their own unique way.” Actually, unlike the perceived “normality” of how vulvas should look, 56% of people with vulvas have inner labias that are visible or bigger than the outer labias.

Brodie et al., 2019

McCartney, n.d.

Lykkebo et al., 2017; Williams, 2021



fig. 19 Jamie McCartney

Everyone knows how to draw
a dick, but do you know how to
draw a vulva?



fig. 20 Anna Kiosse

GENITAL LITERACY

Many people with vulvas struggle identifying their own genitals. Even the popular names are usually wrong: it's vulva. In March 2021, a group of gynaecologists and epidemiologists presented the findings of a research that entailed surveying patients in a UK hospital's outpatient waiting rooms. The participants were instructed to identify the various components of the vulva using their own terminology (the urethra and anus were acceptable as "pee-hole" and "bum-hole," respectively). Only 46% of respondents said there are three "holes," and almost half left the labelling area blank. Only 9% correctly identified all seven structures. The externally visible genitalia, includes the mons pubis, the labia and the outer part of the clitoris. The vagina connects the vulva with the cervix and the uterus. Is the genuine orgasmic centre within the vagina or outside at the clitoris? In any event, without the clitoris, nothing happens. This organ, together with its erectile tissue, protrudes very far into the lower abdomen where it can get stimulated from both the outside and the inside. For a long time, sex education has focused on reproduction, procreation, and how to avoid it. There is no mention of female pleasure. The major sexual organ is the clitoris. The vaginal canal is a separate structure with a distinct function. However, we are only educated about the latter. Structure and purpose are somewhat overlapping for men. (It was only in 1998 that the complete anatomy of the clitoris was identified.)

Morgan, 2021

3sat, 2021

Morgan, 2021



fig. 21 Matthew Tammara

EVERY ORGASM COMES FROM THE STIMULATION OF THE CLITORIS

And only around 20% of people with vulvas can orgasm from penetration alone. "Freud contended that the clitoral orgasm was adolescent, and that upon puberty, when began having intercourse with men, women should transfer the centre of the orgasm to the vagina, [...] The vagina, it was assumed, was able to produce a parallel, but more mature, orgasm than the clitoris. Much work was done to elaborate on this theory, but little was done to challenge its basic assumptions. The idea of one kind of orgasm being more mature is ridiculous.", in her renowned 1970 article, The Myth of Vaginal Orgasm, feminist Anne Koedt spoke about the myth of vaginal orgasm. In a 2017 research conducted by Hebernick, 1,055 women aged 18 to 94 were invited to complete a private online survey. While 18.4% of women said intercourse was sufficient for orgasm, 36.6% said clitoral stimulation was required for orgasm during intercourse, and another 36% said that while clitoral stimulation was not required, their orgasms felt better if their clitoris was stimulated during intercourse.

MENSTRUAL BLOOD IS MOSTLY NOT BLOOD

The actual term for the discharge is menstrual fluid, yet many people keep referring to it as menstrual blood. Menstrual fluid has a somewhat deeper reddish-brown hue than venous blood. Blood makes up around 50% of menstrual fluid. The amount of sodium, calcium, phosphate, iron, and chloride in this blood varies depending on the woman. The fluid also contains cervical mucus, vaginal fluids, and endometrial tissue, in addition to blood. Water, common electrolytes, organ moieties, and at least 14 proteins, including glycoproteins, are mostly present in vaginal secretions during menses. During menstruation, many people observe clots. These appear as blood clots that resemble tissue. Menstrual clots or shed endometrial tissue are sometimes mistakenly thought to indicate an early-term miscarriage of an embryo, but if there was a miscarriage or stillbirth, a microscope examination can confirm whether the shed tissue was endometrial tissue or pregnancy tissue. The colour of a person's period blood may tell you a lot about their health. Orange or grey blood, for example, might occasionally suggest a vaginal infection. Depending on how old it is, the bloody fluid lost during menstruation may range from brilliant red to dark brown

Oberhaus, 2017

Hebernick et al., 2017

Wikipedia contributors, 2021

or even black. Blood that has been in the uterus for a longer time will oxidise when it comes into contact with oxygen. Blood that has oxidised has a darker appearance. The colour and texture of period blood may also be affected by hormonal changes and medical conditions.

Eske, 2019



fig. 22 Karolina Grabowska

“That’s straight up me, that’s my body, it’s me. Doing its thing. And I love red.”

— anon

BIG CLIT ENERGY

The average clitoris is approximately 11 cm long, which means it is about 2 cm longer than the average penis which is around 9 cm. It is not only a little nub and definitely not insignificant. An artist dedicating their creative efforts to the visibility of the clitoris is Sophia Wallace: listen to her Ted Talk about “Cliteracy”. Many people are not aware of the fact that the clitoris describes an extensive organ beyond the clitoral glans. If you’re surprised by this fact, you’re not alone.

Ted [Tedx Talks], 2015



fig. 23 Sophia Wallace

EVERYONE GETS HARD

Although the penis is external and the clitoris is internal, they are very similar. When the XY and XX chromosomes are activated during pregnancy, the fetuses are classified as cis-male or cis-female. The clitoris develops on the inside, whereas the penis grows on the outside. The differences between these organs may appear significant – the penis is an important part of the male reproductive system, whereas the clitoris serves only as a source of pleasure; the clitoris appears to be much smaller than the penis; the clitoris lacks a urethral canal – but as sensory organs, the clitoris and the penis are quite similar. This implies they’re both sensitive to touch, aroused, and capable of giving you a lot of orgasms in a sexual sense. Furthermore, both sex organs have their own zones. The foreskin and clitoral hood, for example, are homologous to the glans clitoris (the nub where the tops of the inner labia meet, the visible head of the clitoris), and

the head of the penis is homologous to the glans clitoris (the nub where the tops of the inner labia meet, the visible head of the clitoris).

In addition, all genitals get aroused, and arousal corresponds to blood flow. Blood flow is what causes erections in all types of tissue, including the clitoral and penis, and it’s crucial for increasing pleasure. Both the clitoris and the penis include erectile tissue that is very sensitive and has cavernous areas, allowing it to stiffen when engorged with blood. In the same manner as a penis grows erect, the clitoris becomes plumped up with blood. The clitoris and penis become firm and erect as blood rushes into them.

Engle, 2021

VULVAS CHANGE THROUGHOUT LIFE

Depending on a person’s hormone levels throughout their life the appearance of their vulva will change. During puberty, which happens between the ages 8 and 13, vulvas grow hair, change colour and grow in size. Further changes, such a change of colour, size and thickness of pubic hair, occur in peoples 20’s and 30’s and are also influenced by their choice of birth control. During pregnancy the labias swell and may change in colour. Pre-menopausal women report on their pubic hair thinning and turning grey. During menopause vulvas have less fat, thinner skin and decrease in size, they may also be more dry than before.

Farage & Maibach, 2005



fig. 24 Jock Leung

GOT AN ITCH?

It’s very normal to encounter issues regarding your vulvovaginal health at some point or another depending on nutritional changes, hygiene routine, materials being in contact with the vulva or sexual

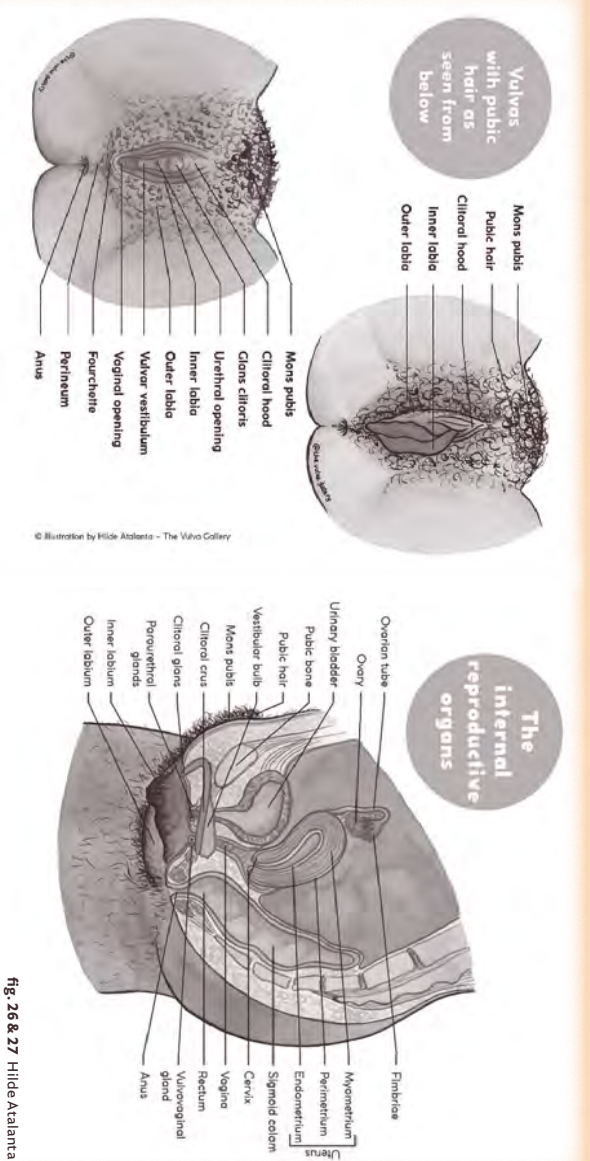


fig. 25 Marie Specht

contact. The most common issues AFAB (assigned female at birth) people encounter are dryness, itchiness, discharge changes, vaginal cysts, sexually transmitted infections and pain during sexual intercourse.

A PICTURE, A LIE

“The clitoris is never correctly pictured in the drawings showing the female genital apparatus.” Not only do biology text books rarely if at all show the vulva beyond the internal reproductive female organs, it also depicts a stylized version of the vulva that has little to do with most people’s genital reality, but the also tend to not show the clitoris in its entirety as an organ at all or in a minimised rudimentary incorrect version.



© Illustration by Hilde Atalanta - The Vulva Gallery

fig. 26 & 27 Hilde Atalanta

MENSTRUATION SOCIETY

The menstrual taboo is continuously challenged by menstrual activists and feminists questioning the societal status quo on the accessibility of period products and the effects of the menstruation surrounding silence on the most vulnerable members of society.

#FREEPERIODS

State-funded schools and institutions in England will have access to free period products starting January 20th. The Department of Education is the driving force behind the initiative. The #FreePeriods grassroots and student-led campaign, as well as the Red Box Project, overwhelmingly applauded this decision. Both joined forces to make it their objective “to encourage every school and college in England to enter the Government’s new plan.” Free period products at schools and universities would undoubtedly relieve financial hardship for low-income families while also helping to de-stigmatize menstruation as a whole. The new programme, along with a few other educational initiatives set to launch in 2020, is part of the government’s ambition to “eliminate period poverty worldwide by 2030.”

Nedelcheva, 2020

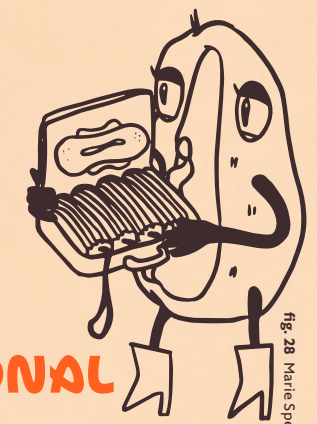


fig. 28 Marie Specht

PROFESSIONAL VULVA

As women protrude previously male dominated and focused areas, systemic changes and adjustments are needed to match differentiating needs without discrimination.

WFH

Many organisations have been attempting to emulate in-office routines electronically in order to keep workers engaged as they are still engaged in Covid enforced work-from-home settings. Everything from coffee breaks to chat rooms that are set up to seem like workplaces is included. But not every employee misses their familiar office setting and as the world is returning to normality and in-office-work one might question how companies can bring the comforts their employees enjoyed at home into their spaces. One example is the question of how companies can offer more convenient and safe spaces for menstruators to take care of themselves, access period products and change products in a more hygienic manner.

TREND HUNTER Inc., n.d.-e

WORKFORCE

Women are more conscious of prejudices against other women than men, with 34% of women reporting hearing or seeing discriminatory conduct against women in the previous year, 2.7 times more than their male colleagues. Companies may find it challenging to mobilise and solve concerns related to women’s employment experiences as a result of this knowledge gap. If males, who still account for four out of every five C-suite executives, do not believe that gender prejudice exists, they will not feel forced to devote resources to resolving the issue.

Beard et al., 2021

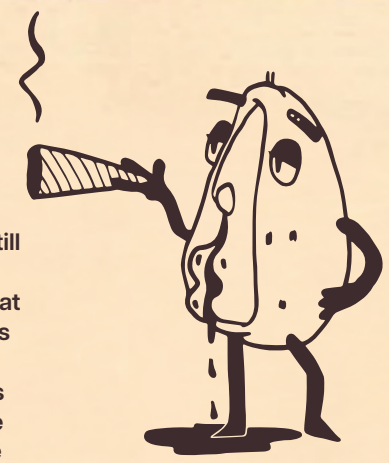


fig. 30 Marie Specht

MENSTRUATION INNOVATION

Menstruation innovation is a piece of work. For decades menstruating people were met with barely anything groundbreaking. We use the same pads as our grandmothers while humanity is simultaneously entering space age 2.0. But not all is grim, a new era of female entrepreneurs is changing the game in menstruation innovation.

CANNABIS FOR YOUR VAG

According to Moxie Meds, “Women’s specific cannabis needs have been overlooked for too long” and it is on a quest to deliver answers for treatment and healing. Based on this idea, the business developed by cannabis clinician Jessica Peters provides Relief and Recovery as simply titled tinctures for women. The company especially concentrates its efforts on treating difficulties regarding menstruation and associated effects, menopause and fertility issues. While Relief is a tincture with a 1:1 ratio of CBD to THC* that’s been developed to deliver a high degree of pain relief, the Recovery tincture with a 4:1 ratio of CBD to THC is ideal for reducing stress and tension, all the while lowering inflammation and giving support with mood management. And other brands are following.

*CBD stands for cannabidiol, and THC stands for tetrahydrocannabinol, both of which are substances found in cannabis plants.

McQuarrie, 2019



fig. 29 Omo Blase



HEALTH SELF EFFICACY

fig. 31 Marie Specht

The future holds more agency for the individual and empowers us to take our health into our own hands, tracking symptoms, facilitating tests and finding underlying patterns and alleviation of symptoms.

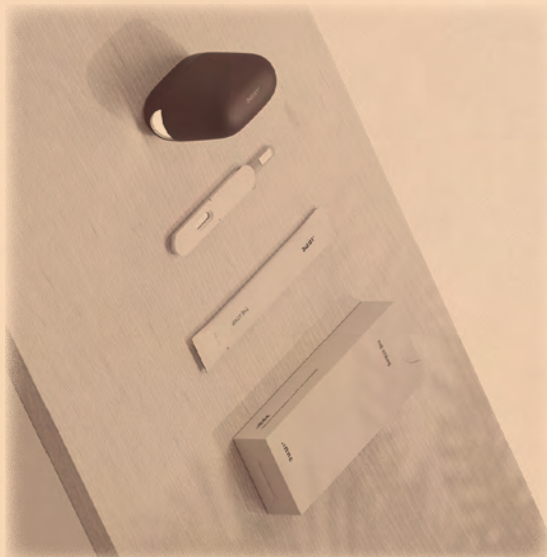


fig. 33 Inne

HORMONE CONCIERGE

As the embrace of telemedicine and home testing continues to grow, hormone concierge services present a new care experience for people, especially those who identify as women and are tired of being turned away and misdiagnosed by their regular healthcare providers.

According to Feminade, an online concierge service, 80% of women suffer from hormonal imbalance, with women often waiting 6-8 years after symptoms first present before being appropriately identified. Not only can platform based diagnostic tools like Feminade speed up the diagnostic process, but they also give tailored treatment plans and on-going assistance from

licensed doctors who will monitor progress and collaborate with patients in order to change the plan as required.



Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

fig. 32 Marie Specht

AI

The healthcare and cycle industries lag behind in offering personalised goods and solutions. The beauty market, not bound by the same healthcare regulations, has rapidly advanced with AI-driven formulas. Examples include Function of Beauty, creating custom formulas based on profiling quizzes, and Opte, a skin-scanning inkjet serum printer. Tuune, a contraceptive health brand, is set to launch the world's first personalised contraception solution. It involves assessing the patient's hormone profile and a comprehensive exam in five areas before prescribing the right contraceptive. We expect to see personalised cycle services and solutions across the entire cycle care industry as consumers demand more than one-size-fits-all hormone treatments. These solutions will encompass tailored birth control, personalised vitamins, and clothing.

Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

CYCLE SELF CARE

Recent innovations in period goods have sparked a wave of innovation in the industry as a whole. To help women cope with the physical and mental demands of their period and beyond, Self-Care Kits provide a wide range of holistic products. Additionally, the kits help to promote brand loyalty since the extra components may be utilised at any time, not only during a certain period. Young women just beginning their menstrual cycle may benefit from the education and empowerment that companies like Blume are providing via their product offerings. Period stigma and shifting requirements are becoming more prevalent in the market. Supplements, adaptogens, and hero components like CBD are becoming a staple of the cycling industry. Brand partnerships and product expansions are the future in the wellness business to meet the demands of new customers who have raised their expectations.

Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

QUANTIFIED ME

Individuals have a growing tendency to track, analyse, and contextualise their personal data, not only does this change the level of knowledge people have, it also creates a potential resource for health care. This is known as the "quantified self." The term "Quantified Us" refers to the collection of data from groups of individuals with similar traits. This has the potential to revolutionise healthcare, but problems of ethics, data bias, privacy, and liability must be addressed. It is possible to induce behavioural change and help people realise their full potential via the use of big data and artificial intelligence (AI).

HEALTH EMPOWERMENT

Technology's role in healthcare is growing. Advanced tools like mobile video conferencing, AI, and analytics enable remote diagnosis and treatment. Remote care can bridge gaps caused by infrastructure, mobility issues, or infectious diseases. Ethical guidelines are evolving, reshaping digital healthcare despite the rapid telehealth acceptance accelerated by COVID-19 in 2020. In 2019, only 11% used telehealth, but now 76% are open to it. Telehealth's affordability and scalability make it ideal for specialised care and chronic illness treatment. This shift signals a move from symptomatic treatment to prevention. Remote software, sensors, surgical implants, and continuous monitoring data further advance the field, reducing chronic illness costs and cases. Digital therapeutics (DTx) and machine learning in pharmaceutical R&D will significantly impact healthcare costs and access. This shift in participation can empower individuals with vulvae to better express their healthcare needs.

fig. 2020; itonics, 2020

PROACTIVE HEALTH ENFORCEMENT

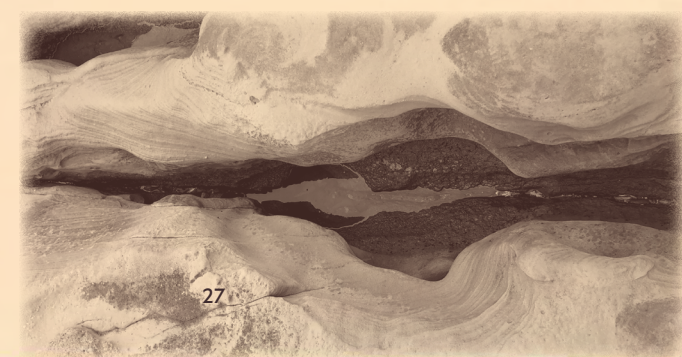
Proactive Health Enforcement is a movement that aims to identify and treat the root causes of ill health in society before it becomes a problem. Healthcare, government regulations, cultural and lifestyle variables as well as the influence of



fig. 33 Gustave Courbet

businesses—especially those that create FMCGs—are all included in the scope of the study. In order to promote health and wellbeing, Proactive Health Enforcement recommends a variety of measures such as prohibitions and limits, restrictions on the marketing of products, taxation, and incentives. As governments grapple with chronic illnesses, they are looking for inventive ways to promote healthy habits. In the future, more governments will implement policies and campaigns that aim to enhance the health of their citizens, therefore lowering the load on public healthcare systems. To encourage healthy habits, these policies will use both "carrot" and "stick" tactics: they will regulate companies, tax unhealthy items, and regulate advertising that promotes unhealthy habits.

fig. 34 Onno Blase



BEAUTY 2.0

The beauty industry is growing and continuously reinventing itself, the newest iteration addresses the single use culture and is simultaneously reimagining the true meaning of beauty.



fig. 35 Annika Neubauer, Monika Müller & Wolfgang Bohusch

REUSABLE CARE

Consumers are looking for methods to lessen their personal footprint in their everyday routines as they become more aware of the significance of climate change's present and prospective environmental implications. Everyday rituals that are adjusted to account for pollution reduction add up over time for consumers, no matter how small the change is. Reusable skincare products for example are becoming more popular as companies try to reduce the waste they generate. These items are available in a variety of formats, ranging from facial cleaning pads to reusable silicone face masks.

BEAUTY GLENO

Companies such as Sephora and Blume feel that period care products belong on beauty shelves. In September 2020, Sephora started carrying period goods for the first time, bringing generation Z beauty and period care brand Blume's menstruation pads and tampons to its website, accessible to Canadian buyers. As the beauty sector continues to develop, increasingly merging with the health and wellness sectors,

the beauty aisle is booming with it. Expect to see continued crossover as businesses leap aisles to provide antimicrobial beauty, period skincare and beauty textiles.

Wunderman Thompson, 2021

How would it change our perception of menstruation if period care products were in the beauty aisle?

LABIAPLASTY

Female genital cosmetic surgery is a new and contentious surgical discipline with societal factors and medical intersect. Cosmetic labiaplasty is a sort of Female Genital Cosmetic Surgery that is done with the purposeful goal to modify the look and morphology of the external genitalia without underlying medical issues. Over the previous decade, there is a rising demand for these procedures and the business behind it is continually developing. Labiaplasty was estimated to be the fourth most common cosmetic surgery operation in the United States behind liposuction, breast augmentation, and rhinoplasty. Vaginoplasty, hymenoplasty, and labiaplasty are all procedures that fall under this umbrella category. Labiaplasty is the most common of these treatments, which usually include procedures to trim or restructure the labia minora or, less often, the labia majora. The 'Barbie' vulva, with the labia minora cut to the point of invisibility and no apparent protuberance beyond the labia majora and symmetrical appearance, is a popular result. Another surgical procedure to achieve this ideal is clitoral hood reduction. Vaginal rejuvenation is yet another field of corrective surgery. Vaginal rejuvenation

Kalamakis & Michala, 2021

Octaviano, 2021

Lowe & Black, 2021

refers to a variety of vaginal remedial procedures. These treatments may be done for aesthetic reasons or to address age-related concerns including incontinence and loss of vaginal tightness. Non surgical vaginal rejuvenation is possible using energy-based therapies. Postmenopausal and postpartum women are the two primary categories of women who get this surgery.

Cleveland Clinic, n.d.

BEYOND NEUTRAL

With increased media literacy the consumer of the future no longer tolerates companies doing the bare minimum and recognizes greenwashing. Consumers want to see companies as proactive drivers of positive change.



fig. 36 Masha Raymers

EARTH POSITIVE

An urgent call has gone out to salvage the planet's fast deteriorating environmental situation and to preserve our home for future generations. "Planet Positive" as a movement has the potential to accelerate conscious behaviour and contribute to a carbon-free future. The advantages of slowing down global manufacturing chains, the benefits of openness, and how it may boost customer confidence while saving our environment have all been proven in the last 12 months. Traditional, harmful period products take over 500 years to degrade, and the typical individual will have 450 periods throughout their lifetime. Even some of the most unlikely eco-warriors are changing their ways to be more conscious of their influence on the environment. People today demand a variety of environmentally responsible options that meet their requirements without compromising comfort, style, or budget. Accessibility is critical because we recognise that to make a major dent in the acceleration of climate change, we need everyone to adopt aware behaviours, even if imperfectly. Cycle care is becoming more reusable and accessible as time goes on, providing conscientious and practical answers expressed not just via product creation but also through incentives, platforms, and open dialogue.

Ultraviolet Agency, 2021

NONPROFIT GOODNESS

Consumers are increasingly searching for businesses with a strong purpose or that give back in some form. This trend will only grow, and a well-rounded marketing strategy should take advantage of this by collaborating with non-profit groups. This collaboration opportunity has the ability to help both build companies while simultaneously aligning them with significant humanitarian initiatives. It's a win-win situation to simultaneously grow the brand and its reach while also advocating for a good cause. However, merely expressing support for a nonprofit organisation should not be the end of the marketing strategy. These kinds of relationships, according to charity executive coach Mallory Erickson, can help reach a new audience all across the world.

Hall, 2021

GEN Z GAME CHANGERS

Compared to previous generations, Gen Z takes a different approach to spending. They are also less concerned with flashy consumerism and more concerned about sustainability and purpose. Among their strongest values are human rights, environmental aid, political reform and education

Zebra IQ, 2021

for all. This tendency was enhanced and made more cross-generational by Covid. These pressures suggest that, in the long term, there will be less of a rush for consumption.

TRANSFORMATION ECONOMY

The Transformation Economy is about catharsis, metamorphosis, and self-actualization, not only about companies providing utilitarian or even emotional value to their consumers. In the Transformation Economy, companies assist customers in realising their full potential and embarking on a unique path toward a greater outcome, such as self-improvement, expressiveness, or fulfilment. This necessitates that customers not only see but also engage in brand-crafted and technology-enhanced experiences that are more immersive, customised, and meaningful. Offerings become increasingly customised as economic value increases, aligning more closely with consumer wants and allowing firms to distinguish themselves from competition. Commoditization happens when customers perceive offers to be undifferentiated and begin buying based on price rather than value-added services.

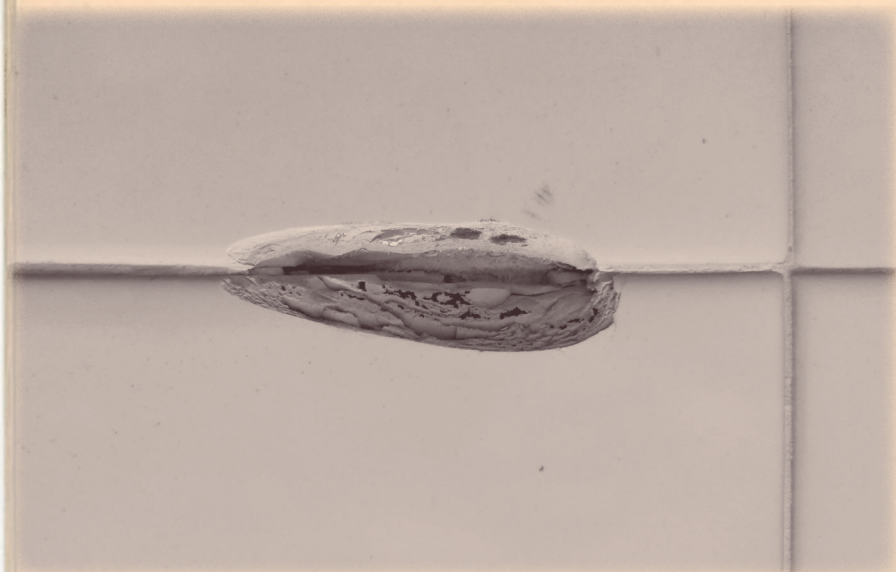


fig. 37 Orno Blase

The “experience economy,” in which companies construct meaningful and memorable encounters, has therefore spawned the Transformation Economy. Emotional weight and transformational worth will influence how businesses portray themselves in the future as a new generation of customers seeks significance above consumerism. Value propositions will focus on providing customers with the tools, community, and

enabling environment they need to fulfil their objectives. Brands who can use technology to improve customer experiences will gain a strategic edge. The change-makers will be those that provide transcendental and serialised experiences that lead their clients on a journey of self discovery and success.

itonics, 2020

GREEN AS THE GRINCH

Climate anxiety is an integral part of Gen Z culture and it is more and more accepted that all of us have to take initiative and make more sustainable choices. Consumers happily opt for more ecological alternatives to ease their consciousness as the call to save the planet is becoming increasingly urgent.

ECO LABELLING

Communicate true expenses and build consumer trust. The ‘klimabutik’ is a pop-up store developed by Swedish food company Felix where things are priced according to their carbon footprint. Customers have a weekly carbon budget of 18.6 kg telling them, in a very hands-on manner, what the environmental impact of their shopping is. Meanwhile, Felix items that are marketed abroad are also tagged with a climate-impact rating. Not only food firms, but restaurants and fashion brands are increasingly implementing carbon labelling to educate customers

on the hidden costs of items while obtaining a new competitive edge.

itonics, 2020

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

As the world is making steps towards a digitalized existence people are seeking connection to themselves and themselves as a natural being.

itonics, 2020



fig. 38 Jessica Kersten and Sandrine Le Goff

REWILDING

“Rewilding describes a process of restoring ecosystems to the point where nature can take over and look after itself. Humans have an active role in driving regeneration, nurturing natural processes and even reintroducing species. The approach has benefits for biodiversity and supports the fight against climate change.” “Our vision is to heal the land, heal nature and heal ourselves.” There are growing opportunities for brands that want to tackle climate change to partner with rewilding initiatives to restore nature, for the benefit of wildlife, the planet – and people too.

Wunderman Thompson, 2021

IN TOUCH WITH ONESELF

Menstruation provided women a means of knowing one’s body that, according to respondents, keeps women in touch with themselves. When speaking with respondents many made sense of their period as something that connects them with their body, their health and fertility.

Malefyt & McCabe, 2016

“It was such a long journey to figure out anything that helped.”

— anon

This research was motivated by the question of what is up between our legs, why we don't talk about our vulvas more. Why is such an integral part of our body, of life, source of pain and great pleasure, clouded with shame? With an awkward giggle? Shrouded in nebulous illiteracy?

The intention of this research is to open up the topic of vulvas, acknowledging but not hindered by preconceptions, with sensitivity and boldness, with admiration and grief, endless curiosity and eagerness to learn, considering the experiences of people and their vulvas. And opening up a vast playing field of opportunity, for businesses, educators, friends, ourselves.

Do you have any questions? Yes!
Please reach out to us – we love them.

The Young



The Young

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