

# Advertising, American Eagle vs. Shea Moisture

I have always loved SheaMoisture. However, over time I noticed their formulas had changed, and after some research I learned they also lost their Leaping Bunny certification—a detail that will deter consumers like me who value cruelty-free standards. My disappointment deepened as I looked further: the brand no longer appears to market toward white female consumers. In fact, I could not find a single advertisement featuring one. Whether intentional or not, the message is clear—we are being excluded.

When I switched to another shampoo and conditioner, my hair felt healthier and stronger. The relief was real; I had worried there was something wrong with my hair, but in truth, the brand itself had changed. For those interested in exploring this shift further, see their public page: SheaMoisture on Facebook.

*This observation ties into my broader casework on modern racial discrimination in branding. From here, two possible arguments emerge:*

1. The case for Caucasian branding—that white consumers deserve the same right to identity-based marketing as any other group.
2. The case for what I call Sapote branding—a model of advertising that welcomes everyone “under the sun” and embraces full inclusivity.

At this stage, I believe the stronger argument is for Caucasian branding. Why? Because the market is free. And yet, as we’ve seen most recently with Sydney Sweeney’s American Eagle campaign, Caucasians are not as “free” to advertise their own aesthetics without facing hostility, backlash, or even threats. What is celebrated as empowerment for one group becomes vilified as exclusion for another.

This imbalance is more than a consumer concern—it is a cultural lesson and an argument for fairness. Branding should be recognized as legitimate for all identities, including Caucasians. True inclusivity cannot mean that one group must disappear so that another can thrive.

## The Case for Caucasian Branding in 2025

In 2025, conversations about representation in advertising are sharper than ever. Audiences expect brands to balance inclusivity, heritage, and social responsibility, yet the standards applied are not always consistent. Campaigns that feature only Black women are often celebrated as affirming identity and addressing historical neglect, while campaigns centered on white models can quickly draw accusations of exclusion or worse. The recent American Eagle advertisement with Sydney Sweeney in jeans illustrates this divide: what was meant as a lighthearted play on words was criticized as reinforcing whiteness and outdated beauty hierarchies.

The reality is that Caucasian branding is not inherently discriminatory. Just as heritage brands like SheaMoisture legitimately market to Black women only based on cultural identity and unmet needs, brands that highlight white women or Caucasian aesthetics are also engaging in targeted marketing—a normal and longstanding practice in advertising. To feature blonde

hair, fair skin, or blue eyes is not, by itself, an act of exclusion. It is a recognition of demographic reality and cultural heritage. Advertising, by its nature, segments audiences and appeals to specific groups.

Criticism arises when representation feels one-sided. If white women appear only in narrow contexts while other groups dominate elsewhere, some audiences reasonably feel excluded from the broader cultural narrative. The inverse is also true: consistently omitting white women from beauty campaigns risks becoming a form of reverse exclusion. If representation truly matters, it must matter for all groups.

The line between legitimate branding and harmful messaging lies in intent and symbolism. Marketing that elevates one community does not need to diminish another. Problems arise when language or imagery implies superiority, whether through genetic references, coded ideals, or historic stereotypes. Inclusive campaigns can avoid this pitfall by celebrating a heritage audience while still acknowledging "Sapote"—proving that a brand can honor its identity without closing the door to others.

In short, Caucasian branding in 2025 should be recognized for what it is: a valid form of identity-based marketing. Just as Black-centered campaigns are framed as empowerment, white-centered campaigns should not be dismissed out of hand. A fair standard requires applying the same lens of legitimacy across all groups. True inclusivity means that every community—not only some—deserves to see itself reflected in the marketplace.