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READING GENDER STEREOTYPES IN PRINTED ADVERTISEMENTS

Semiotics describes how advertising messages manipulate the connection between 'meaning' and 'reality' by investigating how already determined meanings are attributed to given products, thus establishing methods of decoding their true meaning. Therefore, the central theme of the semiotic approach to advertising is establishing a connection between meaning and reality. To that extent, semiotics as the science of signs is not an abstract study but rather reflects the essence of social life emphasizing the multi-layered and dynamic character of meaning creation. Advertising messages, therefore, have as much meaning as they have 'readers'. This research aimed to establish a connection between gender stereotypes and advertising messages, i.e. to point out the main gender stereotypes shown in advertising messages, and to determine whether, in the new century, there have been changes in the way and contexts of the portrayal of women and men in advertisements compared to of the same in the past. A total of 31 advertising messages displayed in a women's magazine were examined. A detailed analysis of the visual representation of female and male bodies, symbols, body positioning, and products was conducted. Messages are direct and open. Human bodies are glorified by emphasizing a healthy, well-shaped, well-groomed female and male body as a symbol of the extension of the species. It has also been noted that advertising messages reflect changes in society and social expectations among members of both sexes.

Keywords: gender; stereotype; advertisement; semiotics

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertisement is a global phenomenon. Advertising is a model of communication in marketing. However, advertising has not been used only as a tool for selling goods and offering services, but for the promotion of different cultural values. Advertisers employ a long list of different types of professionals to develop advertisements for important social content. Linguists, psychologists, sociologists, visual artists, and economists all work together on the development of all parts of advertisements, both verbal and visual. Advertisers are well aware of the value of messages that advertisements convey. By convincing potential buyers/customers/users of how much they need the advertised product/service, advertisers do not only sell the product/service itself but the concept that lies behind it. In the majority of cases, these concepts are influenced by social categories, such as gender.

This article aims to give a brief overview of gender stereotypes and their representations in images in advertisements displayed in the women's magazine *Cosmopolitan*. Are the same rules of representations of females and males applied in the advertisements intended for Western society? Which category is the most prevailing one in the media representations? Cultural values are represented in the media, but at the same time, the media impose cultural values via their devices, i.e. in this case advertisements on society. Advertisement is a complex semiotic sign that promotes the value of a product and at the same time informs viewers/readers. The focus of research is on visual representations in advertisements including women, men, body positioning, and the messages they convey.

2. METHODOLOGY

This article will represent research conducted on a body of 31 advertisements displayed in the American issue of *Cosmopolitan* magazine from 2005 to 2010. Women and men were represented differently in advertisements in the past, but now, some changes in the representations have been observed. Gender is still the most dominating social category in Western culture, but the division between the two genders has lessened. This is especially visible in the representation of genders in advertisements. Social expectations from both genders have altered, thus, these alterations entered the world of the media in general including advertisements.

Cosmopolitan magazine promotes values such as glamour, fashion designers and beauty products, and accompanying accessories. The content of *Cosmopolitan* deals

with different topics from different fields of study: health and body issues, philosophical ideologies such as gender ideology, professional careers, social status, all aspects of human relationships, fashion, and other trends in society. Gauntlett (2008) gives a brief overview of findings in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. He claims that articles give two different poles of one perspective; in the same issue, one can find an article that encourages readers to accept their bodies as they are and another that encourages them to practice, eat healthy, and stay fit. The same happens with other topics such as marriage, professional life, dating, etc. Editors justify this bipolarity of their articles claiming that their job is to offer both aspects of a topic. However, one cannot avoid concluding that their real intention is to shock readers and, at the same time, retain their target group of readers. *Cosmopolitan* defines a woman as sophisticated, urban, educated, glamorous, hard-working, and sexy. Susan Douglas (1995, in Gauntlett 2008: 58) defines this as the final triumph of capitalism: feminism is used to promote narcissism. Women will buy beauty products and spend money on anything they promote as fashionable. All the mentioned leads to one conclusion and that is that economic power regulates social trends. In this manner, it promotes and imposes cultural and social values on its readers. Their target reading group is women aged 20 to 40, financially independent, educated, politically aware, sexually free, and ready to make changes in the world regardless of their ethnic and national group, race, religion, or any other socially determined qualification.

This research is limited to women's magazines and advertisements displayed there for the sake of this article.

3. ON GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes reflect general characteristics, opinions, and roles applied towards females and males. These processes are omnipresent. Gender is multidimensional and multifactorial and encompasses the following categories: gender roles, stereotypes, behavior, systems of values, sex typing, sexual orientation, identity, gender schematic, and attitudes. The definition of gender stereotypes is not an easily obtained task. Broadly speaking, gender stereotypes can be formulated as mutually accepted and agreed characteristics of behavior, attitudes, images, and emotions that are attributed to both women and men. Biernat and Kobrynowicz in Swann et al. (1999: 76) give a brief overview of earlier authors' definitions of gender stereotypes, and we will try to provide them in the lines to follow. According to Eckes (1994) representations of gender stereotypes are sets of personal traits, attitudes, overt behaviors,

and physical appearance and they can affect one's impression of gender independently. To clarify, when we form an impression of a person, irrelevant whether a person is a woman or a man, then one aspect of gender stereotypes will dominate over the others. Whether it is a person's attitudes, behavior or anything else is context-dependent. Differences between groups, male or female, would be noticeable through the prism of gender stereotypes. Although gender stereotypes may overlap, the nuances of variability will be present. These nuances are mostly visible in the area of life where one gender is dominant, e.g. the world of business. Traditionally perceived as a man-dominant field, the world of business is likely to perceive man as naturally ambitious. On the other hand, in the world of fashion, where women traditionally played a dominant role, men would be perceived as more feminine than they usually are.

Gender stereotyping is the process of applying gender stereotypes when forming an impression of a person. Assimilative gender stereotyping is the most common when a person's gender is the only feature known and based on this knowledge people make impressions and draw conclusions. When this type of gender stereotyping happens, then traditional stereotypes of women and men are likely to be applied: men are dynamic, physically stronger, and powerful and women are passive, of weaker physical appearance, and subordinate. The nullified gender stereotyping process is when some gender-specific characteristics are known such as the tone of the voice, physical strength, gestures, etc. In this case, observers will connect these to traditionally given roles to women and men. Contrastive gender stereotyping refers to counter-stereotypical judgments of women and men. If a woman is marked as more masculine than a man, then her professional and physical abilities will be judged as more competent than those of a male counterpart. However, the latter two processes should be taken with a pinch of salt because the category of gender affects judgments and impressions' formulation. It is the most stable of all social categories. Employers are noted to hire men for traditionally male jobs rather than women. The perceiver will judge a man in comparison to all men in general and stereotypes related to this group, and not in comparison to a woman of the same age, education, and social status. However, if both woman and man are labeled as, for example, aggressive, then a woman would be considered more aggressive than other women in her group, and a man would be considered more aggressive than other men in his group. Bearing in mind that women are believed to be less aggressive than men, an aggressive woman is crossing the limits of her sex. On the other hand, aggressiveness is not an unexpected characteristic of men, and an aggressive man is not crossing the limits of his sex. The

judgement of aggressiveness is equivalent but its interpretation differs across sexes. Judgments are interpreted concerning different sexes. For example, an emotional woman is not judged in the same way as an emotional man. Women are expected to be emotional and when we accentuate that a woman is emotional then what we are emphasizing is that she is more emotional than socially expected, more emotional than other women. In the same manner, the degree of height is differently judged for women and men. Men are expected to be tall, and when we mark a man as short then we are referring to other men, to the mean standards of height of men. Individuals are judged concerning their groups' standards, and these standards are different for the two groups, a group of women and a group of men. These judgments are influenced by gender stereotypes. However, modern social science offers a model for overcoming these 'double' standards. Biernat and Kobrynowicz in Swann et al. (1999: 84) propose an objective judgment scale that will allow researchers to determine the actual value of judgment. They say if the height in terms of short and tall is a subjective judgment scale, then we should introduce an objective judgment scale in terms of feet and inches, centimeters, and meters. Thus, if a woman is 175 cm tall, she is considered to be tall for a woman, and a 192 cm tall man is considered to be a tall man. These measure units, objective judgment scales, are unchangeable and present a method to display the effects of gender stereotypes. Biernat et al. (1991) conducted research where they showed photographs of women and men to research participants. Men were marked taller and heavier than women than their actual size. The research results showed that objective judgment units were more in agreement with stereotypes than subjective judgment units. The same group of authors proposed a question that has no physically visible connection: how much do women and men from the same photographs earn per year? The responses were the same: men were judged to earn more than women. However, women who earned less than men were seen as financially more successful than men who earned more. The explanation for these opposite judgments lies in different standards for the financial success of women and men. Successful women are judged in terms of their group, and financial expectations for this group are less than the financial expectations for a group of men. Thus, we can conclude that gender beliefs about height, weight, strength, and income are accurate stereotypes.

Biernat et al. (1991) in Swann et al. (1999: 94) further explain that their research led them to question people's self-stereotyping. They found that both women and men compare themselves with others that they believe are similar to them and the social category of gender is the prevailing one here. Women and men when asked the

same questions about income responded in comparison to their gender group. Furthermore, when self-stereotyping women and men described themselves as having the features of their group even when there was no objective judgment evidence for that. Williams and Bets (1977, 1990) (in Gauntlett 2008: 40) researched gender stereotypes people apply to women and men by providing a list of adjectives that participants should use to describe themselves and their friends. The findings were ambivalent: when describing their friends participants used adjectives that described stereotypical characteristics of their friends. However, when describing themselves they ascribed certain attributes to themselves that are more typical for members of other groups, e.g. a total of 25% of both women and men described themselves using adjectives that were more stereotypic for men and women respectively. In conclusion, people do not apply gender stereotypes to themselves although they do to their closest ones.

4. ON GENDER STEREOTYPES IN ADVERTISING

Semiotics studies how signs catalyze meaning, suggesting such interpretations depend on the structural set of signs that appears during the definition processes. The semiotics of advertising analyze the advertising message from different points, clarifying its structure and semantics, and understanding the basis for the suggestive effect of advertising. “Successful advertising can manifest rich, intimate, and astute cultural and subcultural messages and representations as well as universal biological desires” (Cortese 2008: 29). Gender stereotypes that contain sexism and inequality are already represented in advertisements for children. Later, those patterns are supplemented with given qualities, e.g. “real” men are open, decisive, brave, prone to sports, and strong. On the other hand, “real” women are expected to be sympathetic, gentle, loving, and caring for their children and families. Both of the sexes are expected to fulfill their roles in society. Advertisements very often reach for these cultural and collective markers such as the most classical types of cultural stereotyping, national resentments, gender and sexual exclusivity, intergenerational clichés, and such (Stolac, Vlastelić 2014).

Earlier, the dominant gender stereotypes represented in the advertising industry were macho men versus family-dedicated women, men were depicted as emotionally distant and helpless around children, and women were obsessed with shopping and beauty products. Both men and women were expected to strive for the ideal body shape and never to age Swann, Langlois, and Gilbert (2000).

In this section of our research, we will focus on visual parts of advertisements to decode the messages they show, and to determine what prevailing gender stereotypes are now in advertisements in the twenty-first century. We will also try to decide whether gender stereotypes have changed in comparison to the traditional ones, and in what direction these changes, if any, go. Visual parts are gestures, posture, body, and facial expressions, but also colors and positions of objects and people. Goffman (1976) in his book *Gender Advertisements* discusses three basic techniques used to construct power and superiority: size, attention, and positioning. Humans reveal their hidden thoughts, desires, and ideas by gesturing, and they, in advertisements as well as in real life, witness our verbalizations. Advertisements are reflections of real-life images and their interpretation in the eye of a beholder. Now, let us see and discuss advertisements, their visual cues, and the prevalent images and messages, in our corpus.



Fig. 1.1 (May 2006)

Athletic male bodies (Fig. 1.1) present an ideal that men should strive for, and women should agree to no less than a muscular man. A male model is represented as an athlete, a swimmer jumping off of a product advertised, a shower gel, which he uses as a diving board. The subliminal message is the usage of this shower gel can turn a man into a handsome athlete.

Lately, androgyne models are more present in the advertising industry to blur gender differences. In our examples, Figures 1.2 and 1.3 both female and male models

have the same hair color, hairdos, clothes, posture, and gestures. In Figure 1.2 one model ironically says: “*we’re just too different.*” although they are almost the same, but then concludes “*i am what i am. boy crazy*”, confirming the attitude that being yourself is all right no matter how much one differs from the standards.



Fig. 1.2 (April 2007)



Fig. 1.3 (April 2007)

Gender is the key factor for human socialization processes. Girls and boys change during the period of puberty. Although they are usually divided during their early years, after puberty the interests of members of other groups lead them to mingle. Sexual motivations are the ultimate reason why these two groups leave their primary group and search for the members of the opposing group. Advertisers, as socially and culturally cunning wits, use images of sexuality to shock and attract attention to their products. In Figures 1.4 and 1.5 both couples are in an intimate atmosphere, sexually involved and advertisers want customers to believe that the usage of the products they advertise leads these couples to sexual intercourse. The verbal part of Figure 1.4 adds to this idea because it clearly shows the difference between ***SMALL TALK*** meaning chat and ***PILLOW TALK*** meaning the relaxed, intimate conversation that occurs between two partners after the act of love next to which a product stands.



Fig. 1.4 (February 2008)



Fig. 1.5 (February 2009)

Huge companies such as Calvin Klein do not put much of an emphasis on verbal parts in their advertisements. Their brand names speak volumes for themselves. Thus, they only put the brand name and the name of their product and let the image do the magic.

An ideal body image for both women and men is a must. The classic triangular shape of broad shoulders and narrow waist presents an ideal body image of a man, and a small waist is an ideal image of a woman. Reproduction is a biological and social demand that leads both sexes to display interest in sexual acts, and to reproduce both sexes need to be perfectly healthy. Led by the proverb *Mens sana in corpore sano*, advertisers emphasize the importance of a healthy body in their advertisements.

Large pupils are a sign of sexual arousal. The half-open mouth is also a sign of sexual need. Thus, advertisers use them in their promotion of various products, but usually, they use these signs for beauty products. In Figure 1.6 a woman is sitting with her legs spread inviting for the sexual act. Her head is softly bent and she is looking directly at the camera with her enlarged pupils. Her mouth is half open and the expression of her face is displaying sexual arousal. Although she is wearing a white dress (white symbolizes purity), the atmosphere around her is sexually colored. A man in this ad is naked and positioned in water (again, water symbolizes cleanness). Thus, two opposing extremes purity and cleanness, on one side, and sexual arousal, on the other side, fuse into a desired image.



Fig. 1.6 (June 2009)



Fig. 1.7 (June 2009)

Scenes of insinuated sex are no rare case in advertisements (Fig. 1.7). A man and a woman are involved in an act of explicit love-making with their half-naked bodies fully exposed in the advertisement, and a bottle of a product is displayed next to them. Again, advertisers while promoting a product, i.e. a male and female perfume, evoke a sense of smell as an important factor of attraction between sexes.



Fig. 1.8 (December 2008)



Fig. 1.9 (July 2008)



Fig. 1.10. (July 2009)



Youth, health, and beauty are signs of sex appeal and, for those reasons, are numerous present in advertisements in *Cosmopolitan* magazine. Perfect skin is achieved through the usage of anti-aging products such as lotions, powders, foundations, etc. Models in advertisements have perfect facial and body skin, and in this

way, advertisers lead their potential buyers to connect with their models (Fig. 1.8). The smell, as one of the primal signs of sexual attraction in mammals, is recognized by advertisers and emphasized in promoting perfumes (Fig. 1.9). Women in advertisements for perfumes display sexually initiated positions of the body that are appealing to men. They are almost always in a lying position with their lips and eyes half open simulating the act of sex. Their bodies are usually half-naked. The display of female breasts is of crucial importance for evoking sexual attraction. Healthy, long hair is another sign of sexual attraction in women and is abundantly represented through advertising. Healthy teeth and a wide smile (Fig. 1.9) are also considered signs of approval and initiation of sexual attraction. In Western culture, women's legs present the ultimate factor of sexual attraction. Thus, they are always displayed in advertisements as long, hairless, and tanned (Fig. 1.10).

Sexual attraction is biologically influenced and is more or less defined, performed, and understood in all cultures in the same manner. However, the idea of sexual attractiveness varies across cultures, i.e. what is considered to be sexually attractive in one culture is not necessarily treated in the same way in another culture. As we previously mentioned, female legs are considered to be highly sexually attractive in Western culture, and thus, women pay a lot of attention to the beauty of their legs and use beauty products for their legs. However, in Japan female neck has the same status as the female legs in Western culture. Japanese men consider the female neck to be the most sexually attractive part of a woman's body. Consequently, Japanese women invest as much energy, time, and money in the beauty of their necks as Westerners in their legs. Thus, we can conclude that standards of beauty are culturally influenced. Sometimes these standards may go unnoticed by members of other cultures. For example, the ideal of the female body is lean, thin, and toned in Western culture. On the other hand, in the South Pacific thin women are not considered to be sexually attractive (McGarty, Yzerbyt, Spears 2004). However, regardless of cultural influence and ideology, one is considered to be the universal ideal of beauty: a healthy body with perfect skin.

Advertisements are omnipresent and very often people are not aware of their presence, at least on a subconscious level. However, they do leave a mark on our minds, and whether we want it or not, our brain memorizes them and they affect us subconsciously. This subconscious level is the field that advertisers strike the most. The subliminal messages provoke and influence potential buyers to consume advertised products. Deconstruction of these advertisements shows that advertisers use the principles of contemporary psychology to send concealed messages. Concealed messages

stay stored in people's minds and stimulate their desires. Advertisers rely on the theory that once memorized messages will entice customers to consume the brands they advertise. Advertisements for lipsticks are exemplars of this theory (Schneider 2005). Products are almost always positioned near women's lips representing phallic symbols (Fig. 1.11).



Fig. 1.11 (May 2009)

Other sexual subliminal messages are also present in advertisements of this kind. In Fig. 1.12 naked woman's legs protrude out of open watermelon are represented as if a woman is involved in sexual intercourse. A watermelon symbolizes the scent of a perfume advertised in a literal sense, but in a non-literal sense, it is a symbol of a man's genital parts.



Fig. 1.12 (March 2006)

In Figure 1.13 an object is given human characteristics and the ability to involve sexually. The object is placed in a glass area, and together with its reflection in the glass represents the couple in a sexual act that could be one interpretation of an image. Another interpretation could be that one is involved in self-pleasure. The verbal part of this advertisement just adds to the message – INTRODUCE YOUR LEGS TO FOUR PLAY., which could be also understood as foreplay, a sexual activity that precedes intercourse. The Quattro razor has four razor blades and they used homophones *four* and *fore* in the text block to denote intercourse.



Fig. 1.13 (March 2007)

Cortese (2008: 42) claims that women's bodies are often chopped in parts in advertisements. In this manner, their bodies are in focus instead of their intellectual and emotional capacities. Objectification of women leaves them with human characteristics. In Figure 1.14 women's legs are in the center of the advertisement, their faces are invisible and therefore unimportant. However, the objectification is not the exclusive privilege of women. In the corpus we analyzed, several examples of chopping male bodies were found as well. These examples display that male sexuality is accentuated as the most important feature of men. In Figure 1.15 male genitals X-ray is given to symbolize the characteristic of a product. As in Figure 1.15, in Figure 1.16

male's private parts are represented dismembering of his head, brain, and face, i.e. individuality. Human sexuality seems to be the safe card that advertisers use abundantly.



Fig. 1.14 (May 2010)



Fig. 1.15 (April 2009)



Fig. 1.16 (August 2005)

The process of mating and attraction is one of the aspects of social life that also varies across cultures. The stereotypes of mating and attraction from real life are copied in the media, and consequently in advertising. In conservative cultures, this process is usually hidden and one must possess a certain amount of cultural knowledge to be able to recognize it. Otherwise, it may lead to confusion and embarrassment. For example, in rural parts of China, youngsters display their attraction by singing to each other about some innocent and sexually unrelated thing. The ritual of

singing itself symbolizes sexual attraction (Cortese 2008: 37). However, Western culture has abandoned conservative rules of displaying attraction long ago. Here people openly show their interest in others in numerous ways. Advertisers, as loyal copyists of real life, use this in their advertisements. Rituals related to attraction and interaction exist in Western culture as well. The initial step is a smile (Fig. 1.17) as a sign of approval that leads to the next level: communication between the parties involved. As the relationship progresses a couple displays affection by kissing, caressing, cuddling, and sometimes the whole ritual is displayed in one advertisement (Fig. 1.18).



Fig. 1.17 (October 2007) Fig. 1.18 (October 2007)

What has been noticed in advertisements in our corpus of research is that the equality of partners is shown on all levels of the attraction ritual. Women and men are represented as enjoying the ritual in the same way. Women are not shy. Contrary, they are sometimes shown as the initiators of the ritual. Their bodies are positioned on the same level. Submissiveness of one gender in comparison to another is absent. They play the same role in the act; both of them are leading actors. If we remember that in the past representation of gender stereotypes in the media, and advertising in particular, was different, where women's role was to please men, we can conclude that this representation changed significantly in advertising in the new millennium. Now, they are equals. Their roles in life are the same. Women and men have equal rights – to enjoy their professional and personal lives in all aspects.



Fig. 1.19 (April 2006)

Furthermore, advertisers did not abandon emphasizing the importance of stereotypes present from the beginning of time, such as wedding ceremonies (Fig. 1.19), and marriage life in their advertisements.

Also, stereotypes of men as decision-makers and problem-solvers are present in advertisements. Fathers actively play their parental role without disregarding their good looks. Gender stereotypical systems of values are altered in favor of women: women enjoy sexual life, they are partners in parenting, and they influence the wheel of fortune in their men on all levels, physical and emotional. Advertisers present products they advertise as the means for these changes. Moreover, women are now initiators of social changes in society. In the past predominant gender stereotypes in advertisements presented women whose satisfaction evolved around a household. Now, their focus shifted to products that will help them initiate changes in their partners. Advertisements follow and reflect social changes. Although reasons for these changes may not necessarily be to please women's rights demands, but rather initiated to meet capitalistic demands of gaining money, they are present. It appears as an ever-present *Circulus vicious* manner: advertisements reflect social changes and advertisers' approach to represent the mentioned changes influences people's views of the world (Fig. 1.20).



Fig. 1.20 (September 2005)

Goffman (1976) introduced the concept of *relative size* as a visual sign of comparative power and authority. In his findings, he gives examples of advertisements where women are always placed in a lower position in comparison to men. However, in our research, we found that this concept changed in twenty-first-century advertisements. Women are now represented above men (Fig. 1.21). They are always in front of men and unlike in the past, men are serving women now.



Fig. 1.21 (May 2009)



Fig. 1.22 (September 2006)

Traditional occupational roles of women and men also changed in advertisements in the first decade of the twenty-first century. In the past, men were represented as decision-makers, and women as secretaries taking down notes to complete tasks men presented before them. Those roles changed as well (Fig. 1.22). Traditionally, women were hairdressers or beauticians and were interested in occupations related to the fashion design industry. That aspect of professional life accommodated other social modifications as well. In Figure 1.22 we see a man who is helping a woman working as her assistant and another man ready to record that in his notebook. The whole advertisement revolves around a woman who looks pleased with her position and with her work. A woman who uses products advertised will be treated like a queen and will tame men around her in the process.

Goffman (1976) also introduced the concept of *function ranking* to show gender inequality in which a man is playing a leading role in an advertisement. A man was active and a woman was passive. However, in Figure 1.23 men are active in pleasing a woman. She is sitting on a couch which symbolizes a throne carried by two men as her subordinates.



Fig. 1.23 (March 2005)

Unlike what was practiced in the past media representation of gender, men are often mocked in advertisements in the new millennium (Fig. 1.24). In Figure 1.24 a male model is represented in a very embarrassing situation, namely, he is caught naked in a public place and he uses an umbrella to hide himself. On the other hand, a female model is represented as a domineering figure who controls the situation.



Fig. 1.24 (July 2007)

However, some stereotypes will always stay firm. For example, the dominance of male physical strength over women is still represented in advertisements. In Fig. 1.25 a woman and a man are represented together involved in a typically male sports game – rugby. Although they are playing it together as a one-gender mixed team, a man’s muscular power is visible. A woman also has muscles but his power is seen in his ability to lift her lightly which is again shown through the expression on his face – he is smiling while performing the act of lifting her.

The concept of function ranking was represented in differences in race in the past. The members of the African-American community were always represented as passive or submissive in contrast to the domineering Caucasians. Latin Americans were underrepresented appearing in a statistically insignificant number of advertisements either as sexually promiscuous or performing menial jobs (Swann, Langlois, Gilbert 2000). However, we found examples of changes in these trends. Although statistically not present as Caucasians, their role in advertisements altered. Members of different races are represented side by side with Caucasians in the central position embracing them as if sending a message that they finally accept them (Fig. 1.26).



Fig. 1.25 (July 2009)

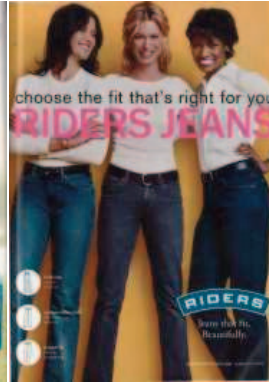


Fig. 1.26 (March 2005)

Again, some stereotypes are retained. Thus, African-Americans are usually represented as athletes, and Latin American women as interested in improving their looks to be more attractive. Furthermore, we must note that we did not find any examples of interracial couples. Thus, we can conclude that although other races (other than the prevailing one) entered the world of advertising and gained new roles, advertisers still display a conservative view over the process of mixing different races. As if they want to send a message that they only cohabit but do not live together. Advertisers are still more pro-traditional than the society proclaims. This is the case due to several reasons but the more important reason may be that they do not want to offend those potential buyers who still have conservative views of the world. (Swann, Langlois, Gilbert 2000)



Fig. 1.27 (September 2009)

Goffman (1976) introduced another concept – *licensed withdrawal*. This he explains is displaying people in advertisements who are psychologically absent from the situation. They may be either surprised, shocked, or sad (Fig. 1.27). However, unlike Goffman, in our corpus, we did not find many examples of women’s instability. The reason for this may lie in the fact that women are not to be represented as unstable in a magazine for women. This may be understood as offensive, and advertisers dread insulting their customers in any way. Women are now in possession of disposable income that they are willing to spend on products that will improve them in every aspect. However, an offended woman would not even consider spending her money on something that would make her feel uncomfortable. Advertisers relay their advertisements on findings of contemporary psychology (Schiffman, Kanuk 2004) and are well aware of these facts.

So far, we have analyzed women alone in advertisements, and women and men together, and we must accept that we found no advertisements of two or more men in our corpus. However, we did find men alone in advertisements and they are always portrayed as self-assured, in charge of the situation, fulfilling the standards of metro sexuality – neat, elegant, well-mannered, and successful heterosexual man (Fig. 1.28).

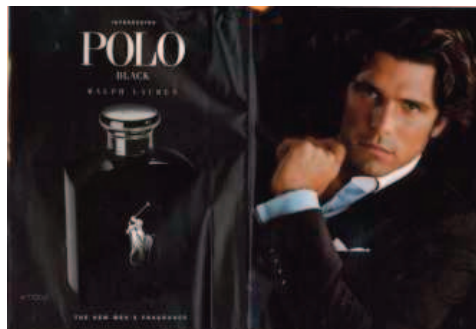


Fig. 1.28 (February 2008)

In the past, only women were pressured to conform to the ideal of beauty. Nowadays, the same pressure is put on men as well. Today, men are expected to have muscular bodies, thus, they are expected to invest some time in shaping their bodies in the gym. Men are also expected to smell nice, and to be dressed fashionably, thus, advertisers represent men in advertisements enjoying while they are purchasing their products. Advertisers take the traditional stereotype of a man being a successful professional and alter it in a way that helps them sell their products. Now, the success of a man is measured by his looks – a successful man wears fashion designer’s suits,

and shoes, goes to the gym, and goes to beauty salons. What is more, a successful man is more attractive to women. Success must be visible to the man; it cannot just be spread by word of mouth. This is just one example that adds to our theory that the advertising industry is only in the service of capitalistic demands to sell and gain money. In this process, advertisers will use all the knowledge and information of the world and people.

Angela Goddard (2003) discusses the notion of anthropomorphism as the process of giving human shape to inanimate objects. One of the reasons why people are doing this is because they want to fear less of the world around them. She lists examples of people's activities in this manner such as speaking spoons in cartoons, hurricanes, and other misfortunes are given names (i.e. usually women's names to catastrophes e.g. hurricane Katrina in New Orleans). Men are especially weak towards their vehicles and usually give them women's names. The effect that women have on men is equal to the effect of their cars and boats. Thus, very often they refer to their vehicles giving them female gender. Spender (1980) in Goddard (2003) claim that men give their vehicles female names and characteristics because they see them as status symbols that are traditionally male-controlled. Thus, once again language is a reflection of our perspective of the world. In Figure 1.29 we see a man embracing his car and at the same time he was hit in the back by an arrow. This arrow symbolizes Cupid's arrow that when once hits a person then that person is hopelessly in love with another person. However, in this case, a man feels the same affection towards his car.



Fig. 1.29 (May 2006)



Fig. 1.30 (May 2006)

Advertisers once again count on their customers' knowledge and ability to read the messages they send them. In Figure 1.30 apart from visual messages advertisers send a verbal one as well. They use the same adjectives to describe a car as they

would use to describe a woman standing next to that car: ***CURVY, SEXY, STYLISH... YOU ARE WHAT YOU DRIVE.***

The major characteristic of our time is speed. People eat fast food, drive fast cars, telephone while driving, doing two or more things at the same time to meet the demands of the time they live in. Advertisers, as professional recorders of the world around them, offer products that conform to the speed of their customers' time.

Taboos are usually avoided topics for public discussion. Media and especially the advertising industry refuses to openly talk let alone propagate what is socially marked as taboo. However, together as society changes, taboos change as well, and what is once considered a taboo in time may become a norm. Such was the case with products and issues related to women's hygienic needs. Sanitary pads, menstruation, and cramps have been considered to be taboo for a long time in advertising and the media in general in the past. However, we found several examples in our corpus of advertisements promoting sanitary pads of different brands (Fig. 1.31) as well as pills against menstrual cramps. This means that women are finally permitted to talk about biologically influenced issues.



Fig. 1.31 (September 2005)

5. CONCLUSION

The one stereotype that stays firmly embedded is the male physical strength over women and it is represented in advertisements in English corpora. Men are taller, heavier, more muscular, and physically dominant over women. First, this stereotype developed influenced by biological reasons: men are stronger than women. Finally, this stereotype is nourished via media as a response to women's growing power in

the world of finance and politics. Women earned their authority but men are still physically dominant.

The pressure of the ideal body in women and men is represented in Western culture. Men are expected to fulfill the demands of ideal beauty just as women are. They are encouraged to buy beauty products that will make them look better, smell nicer, and dress fashionably. Also, they are encouraged to invest time and money in their gym classes to build muscular bodies. The reason for this is that healthy bodies will reproduce, and reproduction is both a biologically and socially predominant factor. Thus, healthy and nice-looking women's and men's bodies with immaculate skin is a stereotype that is promoted in all cultures with the same aim: to prolong their species.

Members of all races are represented in advertisements and women of all races are given power in advertisements which reflects their entrance into the business world in reality. Furthermore, women are represented as stable, decision-makers equally participating in both professional and private spheres.

Aging is taboo. It is not discussed or represented in advertisements. We found very few advertisements with aging models. Youth and health promise reproduction and prolonging of life and, thus, aging is denied in advertisements. Further, a healthy young body as a sign of sexual appeal is celebrated. The process of mating is openly represented. Thus, signs of health and youth such as full lips and long hair in women and the triangular shape of broad shoulders and narrow waist in men are constantly repeated in advertisements in Western culture. Further, long-established stereotypes such as wedding ceremonies, marriage, and family life are also represented in advertisements.

It is interesting to point out that the majority of women's bodies are chopped in advertisements only one of men's. This adds to our claim that women are represented as less able physically and intellectually in society. Women are represented as objects that serve certain purposes, e.g. if a woman's head is not represented in an advertisement, then it implies that she has no mental abilities, or if a woman's legs are represented without the rest of her body, then that is a sign of her inability to think but to please men sexually. In the corpus, we found one example of chopping a male body with the lower part of the body in focus as a symbol of his only function – to reproduce.

This research is limited to 31 advertisements displayed in a magazine for women *Cosmopolitan*. The recommendation would be to conduct the same type of research on a larger body of corpus to establish how stable the conclusions are on gender

stereotypes in printed advertisements in a women's magazine. Also, one of the recommendations would be to analyze the representation of gender stereotypes in advertisements in magazines of different genres, i.e. political, sports, and gardening, and to compare and contrast them with the ones received in this research.

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ČITANJA RODNIH STEREOTIPA U ŠTAMPANIM REKLAMNIM PORUKAMA

Sažetak:

Semiotika opisuje načine pomoću kojih reklamne poruke manipuliraju vezom između 'značenja' i 'stvarnosti' i to tako što istražuje način na koji se već određena značenja pripisuju datim proizvodima, te tako uspostavlja metode dekodiranja njihovog istinskog značenja. Stoga, centralna tema semiotičkog pristupa reklamiranju jeste uspostavljanje veze između značenja i realnosti. Utoliko semiotika kao nauka o znakovima nije nikakvo apstraktno učenje, već odražava bit društvenog života naglašavajući višeslojni i dinamički karakter stvaranja značenja. Reklamne poruke, stoga, imaju onoliko značenja koliko imaju 'čitalaca'. Cilj ovog istraživanja bio je uspostaviti vezu između rodni stereotipova i reklamnih poruka, odnosno ukazati na glavne rodne stereotipove prikazane u reklamnim porukama, te utvrditi da li je u novom stoljeću došlo do promjena u načinu i kontekstima prikazivanja žena i muškaraca u reklamama u odnosu na prikazivanje istih u prošlosti. Ispitana je 31 reklamna poruka prikazana u časopisu za žene. Sprovedena je detaljna analiza vizualne reprezentacije ženskih i muških tijela, simbola, pozicioniranja tijela i proizvoda. Poruke su direktne i otvorene. Ljudska tijela se glorifikuju stavljanjem akcenat na zdravo, lijepo oblikovano, njegovano žensko i muško tijelo kao simbol produžetka vrste. Također je zabilježeno da reklamne poruke odražavaju promjene u društvu i društvenim očekivanjima kod pripadnika oba pola.

Ključne riječi: rod; stereotip; reklamna poruka; semiotika

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