

WOMEN IN PORRTUGUESE ADVERTISEMENTS AND GENDER STEREOTYPING

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to identify gender stereotyping in Portuguese advertisement, thus verifying if these stereotypes are conveyed to receivers, especially young people.

We set out to identify which factors lead to the discrimination of women in advertisement, which roles each character take on and what type of instrumental and terminal values are conveyed in Rokeach's perspective (1968, 1973).

We set out to perceive if the person's attitude towards advertisement had influence on his/her analysis. We wanted to know if the person's attitude towards advertisement, especially negative attitudes due to scepticism, influenced or not their perception of discrimination against women in advertisement in comparison to men.

INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of Mankind there has always been a hierarchy between genders, especially in labour divisions, with women left to perform supporting roles. Over the time this differentiation led to distinctive social roles for each gender and later on to a simplification of those roles by gender stereotyping. This simplified stereotype is easily passed on from generation to generation and has been assumed in almost all areas of social living.

In the last six decades, significant changes have occurred within society, starting to invert this hierarchy and often diluting gender stereotyping, especially in what concerns gender-based divisions of labour (Burn, 1996; Shaffer, 2000).

Despite this change, discrimination towards women has not significantly decreased and a large asymmetry still persists in many societies.

There is also an ideal concept of femininity in which women's bodies are perceived as "objects", with physical beauty being determinate in how others judge them (Martin & Gentry, 1997).

The differences between men and women are also revealed in the construction of one's self, as a product of lifelong learning. Some authors (Lerner, Orlos and Knapp, 1976) suggest that a woman's self is partially formed based on the attractiveness of her body to others, especially men. The same authors suggest that men's bodies are perceived as a "process" in which their body functions are more associated to the physical power they can display, thus only influencing the evaluation of their physical self.

Gender stereotypes, as part of our society, are clearly assumed in consumption and especially advertisement, as a reproduction of social and ideological realities (Gofman, 1979).

The aim of this study is to identify gender stereotyping in Portuguese advertisement, thus verifying if these stereotypes are conveyed to receivers, especially young people.

We set out to identify which factors lead to the discrimination of women in advertisement, which roles each character takes on and what type of instrumental and terminal values are conveyed in Rokeach's perspective (1968, 1973) (considering values as an enduring prescriptive or proscriptive belief that a specific mode of behaviour or end-state of existence is preferred to an apposite mode of behaviour or end-state (Rokeach, 1968, 1973). These values are considered important principles that guide a person's behaviour during his/her life.

These values (terminal and instrumental) are relevant for consumption through Kahle's works (1985). We also attempted to relate any background of racial or gender discrimination in the perspective of Ponterrotto et. al. (1995). These attempts to measure the level of intimacy a person could develop with races other than theirs – racial intimacy and gender equality – were aimed at identifying how much gender stereotypes were embedded in society. Multiculturalism was used to measure in what sense people are able to live and fraternize in a multicultural society.

Lastly, we included a factor that could create some variability – the position of each of the interviewees on the relationship between genders in advertisement, in the perspective of Widing, Hoverstad, Coulter and Brown (1991), by using factors used to discriminate women in advertisement. We attempted to identify some of their attitudes towards sexual embeds in advertisement and we divided them in: Objectionable, Moral, and Manipulative.

Finally, we set out to perceive if the person's attitude towards advertisement had influence on his/her analysis. We wanted to know if the person's attitude towards advertisement, especially negative attitudes due to scepticism, influenced or not their perception of discrimination against women in advertisement in comparison to men.

METHOD

Subject of Analysis

We carried out two separate analyses:

- A qualitative analysis of the Sender, by analyzing 220 commercial messages in different media to identify gender stereotypes conveyed by advertisement.
- A quantitative analysis of the Receiver, in which 303 university students with an average age of 20 were interviewed, thus verifying the level of stereotype internalization by young people.

Study of the Sender

In the period under analysis – from the 1st of July to September the 30th, 2005 - we identified 639 messages, including repeated messages, which had characters in all types of media, except radio. We can state that after viewing all the media we identified almost all the messages with these characteristics that were issued during this period. After excluding the repeated messages we found 220 different messages, which were the subject of our analysis, as shown in table 1.

In a first stage we identified the gender of the characters and their features, and in a second stage we verified how they differed, namely in contexts, information, values, etc. This analysis was carried out with a previously built grid and the coding was done by an independent analyst with much experience in research and in advertisement analysis.

Thus, a database was built to describe the characters resorting to descriptive statistics and chi-squared statistics to identify how the gender of these characters differed in each of the stages of the advertisement speech.

Study of the Receiver

We set out to discover how a group of young people perceived gender in advertisement. To do so we chose a convenience sample of 303 university students which attend *Escola Superior de Comunicação Social* of the Polytechnic Institute of Lisbon. The group was comprised of 61,0% (183) women and 39,0% (117) men, with ages between 17 and 40 with ages averaging 20,61.

Instrument

The instrument of analysis was built on two dependent variables, which materialized in the receivers' perception of male and female gender discrimination in advertisement. Two items were used for men: "men are lesser discriminated in advertisement than women" and "men as objects in advertisement"; and for women: "women appear in advertisement as seducers" and "women as objects in advertisement". The independent variables were built from scales: "attitudes towards advertisement" (Luna-Arocas, Quintanilla, 2000), Quick Discrimination Index (Ponterrotto & al. 1995), "Values conveyed by men and women in advertisement", adapting a set of values of the Rokeach scale - Value Survey (Rokeach, 1968) and some parts of the scale on sex in advertisement VASE Scales: Sexual Embeds in Advertising (Widing, Hoverstad, Coulter, and Brown, 1991).

We also used a scale pertaining to social conventions on gender in advertisement. This scale was built using research on gender conventions in advertisement, taking into account Furnham's meta-analysis (1999) on social conventions in various continents and the qualitative study aforementioned.

These independent variables include 6 items for male gender pertaining to the presence of men in advertisement, in social and labour related situations, amongst others, and 7 items for the female gender pertaining to emotions, family and household activities present in advertisement, amongst others. All the scales were graded with 6 points – from 1 to 6, i.e. from 1 in which the person disagrees completely to 6 in which the person completely agrees.

Procedure

The application of the scales took place at *Escola Superior de Comunicação Social*, between December of 2005 and November of 2006, after the subjects were informed on our pretension to evaluate gender stereotypes. Participation was voluntary and we reaffirmed that the answers were confidential and that the data would only be presented as a whole.

In a first moment the data was analysed by using descriptive analyses, with averages and standard deviations, and in a second stage we used average testes to assess gender differentiation.

RESULTS

Study of the Sender

The analysis of the advertisement speech began with the identification of the characters in each of the messages, as stated in table 2.

We were before a body of messages in which the female characters were predominant and mainly urban. Women were mainly in their thirties and men in their twenties, which contradicts Furnham's meta-analysis (1999), which states that women are usually younger than men.

By analyzing the messages we identified the activities carried out by the characters, as stated in table 3.

Thus, we observed a great dispersion of types of activities, with seduction (19,3%) and leisure (15,7%) making up the majority of the activities and having different profiles for the male and female gender, which was confirmed by the chi-squared statistic: 45,11 with $p: 0,006$. If leisure activities are mainly performed by men (59,1%) with women as minorities (22,7%), in what pertains seduction we found the opposite - women lead (70,4%) with men far behind (7,4%). More differences were ascertained in personal

care (83,3% women and 16,7% men) and household activities (70% women and 10% men) both led by women with men trailing behind. The remaining activities were gender balanced.

We also noted that the activities were a key-factor in advertisement story-boards, focusing mainly on daily situations (70,6%), thus establishing a connection to the target audience by using sceneries with which they can relate, as perceived in the results stated in table 4.

There are also significant differences in gender enactment (chi-squared: 17,95 and p: 0,006), especially in sceneries of seduction and mystery. In seduction sceneries women are the majority (75,0%) and men the minority (4,2%), but in mystery sceneries the situation is reverse: men (61,1%) and women (22,2%). In nature-related sceneries men are slightly ahead (46,7%) in relation to women (33,3%).

In what concerns the type of advertisement speech analyzed, in the perspective of Rossiter and Percy (1998), women are associated to campaigns that reveal a transformational (52,1%) and promotional (51,8%) speech and men with a humorous speech (75,0%).

By specifying the contents pertaining to each message, we can see that the messages are not gender-differentiated.

In the appeals conveyed by the messages there is only a significant gender differentiation in what concerns status, in which men are the majority (50,0% versus women's 34,4%).

In what concerns values associated to the advertised product, results suggest that the valorisation of the products is split in various nuclear believes, as symbolism (35,9%), efficiency (24,5%); innovation, (21,4%) and healthiness (17,7%). In the ads analyzed, whose results are in table 5, we found values such as usefulness, practicality and simplicity (16,8%), trustworthiness (16,4%) and the sociability of who uses it (16,4%).

In the comparison by gender, completely different profiles emerge depending if the character is female or male. Thus, if the character is female the product being healthy (76,0% female, versus 12,8% male), efficient (70,4% versus 14,8%), innovative and modern (53,2% versus 38,3%), trustworthy (69,4% versus 19,4%) and of good quality (69,0 versus 20,7%) are valued. When the character is male, values such as product symbolism (48,7% versus 38,0%), usefulness, practicality and simplicity (37,8% versus 27,0%), sociability (63,9% versus 22,2%) and bestowing distinction to those who use the product (42,9% versus 35,7%) are valued.

We were before a type of advertisement that values outdoorsy and socially driven male characters, while female characters remain associated to individual dimensions such as the product's quality and trustworthiness.

In this analysis of the advertisement speech, we can clearly see that the speech conveys gender stereotypes, placing males and females in two completely different sets, in agreement with the results of other researches, namely those of Gofman (1979) and Furnham (1999), although with some adaptations to Portuguese reality.

Study of the receiver

When studying the receiver we tried to identify how young receivers analyze advertisement, in order to confirm or deny gender stereotyping.

In a first stage we tried to perceive young people's positions in terms of the enactment of seduction/ sex in advertisement and in regards to some discriminatory factors present in society.

We must also refer that in the attitude scale pertaining to advertisement there was an internal consistency of 0,674 of the alpha of Cronbach. The scale on seduction/ sex in advertisement also showed, in its three dimensions, high internal consistencies, all with alphas above 0,702. On a discrimination scale only the dimension of racial intimacy presents a high level of consistency with an alpha of 0,737, while equality and multiculturalism factors do not go beyond alphas 0,535 and 0,513.

Some considerations on young people

We verified that young people, as a whole, have a slightly favourable attitude towards advertisement in general, positioned a bit above the average of the scale (3,5) with a 3,95 value (SD: 0,689), showing likeness to advertisement as it is presented today.

On seduction/ sex in advertisement, they consider it slightly questionable from a moral point of view (average of 3,68 (SD: 0,860)), but that it should not be objectionable (average of 3,35 (SD: 0,923)), although it is manipulative (average of 3,89 (SD: 1,07)). Men (4,05) emphasizes more manipulation factors than women (3,78), for a p: 0,02.

On discrimination factors, young people consider that they can develop good racial intimacy (average of 4,42), but they consider that other races are not well integrated in our society (average of 3,54). Finally, they consider that there are some gender inequalities within society (average of 4,42).

We are before a matrix of young people that consider that there is some gender inequality, but that show likeness for advertisement although with some reserves to the presence of sex enactments.

Gender discrimination in advertisement

In what concerns gender discrimination in advertisement the subject population considered that women are more discriminated than men (average of 4,57 (SD: 1,19)). By gender, women (4,81) consider that they are more discriminated than men (4,19), that their bodies are more exploited in advertisement (average of 4,75 (SD: 1,15)) and that they are more objectified (average of 4,54 (SD: 1,06)).

All the research confirms this trend of women being more discriminated, although men have also started to be used as sexual objects in advertisement, as noticeable in cosmetics' campaigns and others directed at a female target audience.

Women are used much more than men in situations of seduction in advertisement, which confirms to a certain extent these perceptions.

Gender stereotypes in advertisement

As we know society sets out gender stereotypes that are reproduced in advertisement (Furnham, 1999). The subject population, when interviewed on some dimensions of those stereotypes, revealed that they perceive women in advertisement as being largely above the scale's average (3,5) associated to emotions (4,73), gestures of tenderness demonstrating happiness (4,70) and linked to family and children (4,73). In what concerns men, their perception is that men appear accentuating the power dimensions of the product (3,77), in festive social situations, namely parties and fraternizations (3,91) and in symbolic situations associated to status (3,84).

Women in advertisement are also perceived as being associated to promotions (4,02), revealing trends (4,22), and in situations in which they convey trustworthiness to the product (3,95). These results demonstrate that young people perceive women and men as having different roles in advertisement; that women are connected to family and men to social and outdoor situations. These results confirm the logic in advertisement (Gofman, 1979).

Social values

In advertisement women are perceived – more than men – as being associated to social values as self control (4,16 versus 3,91), responsibility (4,66 versus 4,13), living in a world of beauty (5,40 versus 3,56).

In advertisement men are perceived – more than women - connected to social values like joy (4,31 versus 3,97), ambition (4,92 versus 3,37), social recognition (4,79 versus 3,85) and fulfilment (4,62 versus 3,91).

Once again we found gender stereotypes, in which men appear clearly associated to social dimensions and status, to joy and fraternization, and women appear more self involved, with more sense of responsibility, but searching for more hedonic scopes, associated to a world of beauty, very similar to the one found by Gofman in his study (Gofman, 1979).

CONCLUSIONS

After these two analyses we reached the following conclusions:

The study of the sender reveals enactments in which men and women are presented as two large and different groups.

Women appear in activities related to seduction, with a transformational and promotional speech associated to the efficiency and quality of the product. The goal is to make the product trustworthy. Women convey social values pertaining to self-control, responsibility, a world of a beauty and a comfortable living.

Men as characters appear associated with leisure activities, emphasizing symbolic dimensions of social distinction, status and prestige.

The data pertaining to the sender show an evolution in regards to Furnham's works (1999) and are in agreement with the most recent works (Kang, 2005 and Hovland, 2005), demonstrating that gender stereotypes are disappearing from advertisement.

The study of the receiver shows us that women and men present themselves as two different groups in the same logic as that of the gender stereotyping by the sender.

Women are perceived as being more discriminated than men in advertisement, as having their bodies more exploited, as being used to convey trends, to do promotional work and to grant credibility to the product, appearing in family-related situations connected to affection and emotions. The interviewees consider that women convey social values of responsibility, control, and a world of beauty in order to aspire to a more comfortable living.

On the other hand, men are perceived as being associated to more symbolic and hedonic aspects, conveying values of ambition, joy, fulfilment and social recognition. We also verified that young people already internalised some gender stereotypes and consider that the same stereotypes are reproduced in advertisement, although there is not an unabridged reproduction of Furnham's meta-analysis (1999). The results of the sender are in agreement with the ones observed in the perspective of the receiver.

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Table 1. Number of registers per media

		Type of media				Total
		Television	Press	Billboards	Internet	
Final number of registers	1	40	42	0	6	88 (88)
	2	22	25	7	0	54 (108)
	3	6	20	4	0	30 (90)
	4	8	9	0	0	17 (68)
	5	2	4	1	0	7 (35)
	6	0	4	0	0	4 (24)
	7	4	1	1	0	6 (42)
	8	1	3	1	0	5 (40)
	10	1	2	0	0	3 (30)
	12	0	1	0	0	1 (12)
	14	0	2	0	0	2 (28)
	15	0	1	0	0	1 (15)
	28	0	1	0	0	1 (28)
	31	0	1	0	0	1 (31)
Total in each media		84	116	14	6	220 (639)

Table 2. Gender of the character in this advertisement

		Frequency	Percentage
Valid	Female	108	49,1
	Male	79	35,9
	Both	33	15,0
	Total	220	100,0

Table 3. Activities carried out by the characters in this advertisement

		Frequency	Valid percentage
Valid	Seduction	27	19,3
	Leisure	22	15,7
	Multiple activities	19	13,6
	Fraternization	12	8,6
	Personal care	12	8,6
	Household activities	10	7,1
	Sports activities	9	6,4
	Working	7	5,0
	Eating	7	5,0
	Shopping	6	4,3
	Resting	4	2,9
	Travelling	3	2,1
	No activity/ non identified	2	1,4
	Total	140	100,0

Table 4. Sceneries of this advertisement

		Frequency	Valid percentage
Valid	Daily scenery	137	70,6
	Seduction/ sexy scenery	24	12,4
	Bizarre/ mysterious scenery	18	9,3
	Nature scenery	15	7,7
	Total	194	100,0

Table 5. Values conveyed by the messages associate to the products

	Frequency	Valid percentage
Symbolism	79	35,9
Efficiency	54	24,5
Innovation	47	21,4
Healthiness	39	17,7
Usefulness, Practicality, Simplicity	37	16,8
Trust	36	16,4
Sociability	36	16,4
Manufacturing quality	29	13,2
Distinction	28	12,7
Economical	28	12,7
Accessible	11	5,0