

The prejudice and gender stereotyping in advertising – the receiver perspective

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Abstract

This research intended to identify how the perception of discrimination against women in advertising can be influenced by gender stereotypes in advertising as well as some attitudes such as sexism and racial discrimination and homosexual. Two models were created, one for sexism influencing the discrimination of women in advertising and one for sexual and racial discrimination. The two models were tested through a quantitative research where respondents consisted in a total of 736 subjects in Spain, in the city of Badajoz, and Portugal, in the cities of Lisbon, Porto and Braga. In conclusion a model where the hostile sexism and gender stereotypes in advertising contribute to the discrimination of women in advertising has been found. It was also found that racial and sex discrimination did not contribute to the discrimination of women in advertising.

Keywords: hostile and benevolent sexism, racial and sex discrimination and discrimination against women in advertising.

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Introduction

Contemporary society is characterized by a social hierarchy that determines the relationships between men and women. This hierarchy is in turn conditioned by national cultures where religions and ideological dimensions determine stereotypical views of certain social groups, such as ethnic, gays and women. Since advertising reproduces social realities, it is intended to understand whether prejudices about women, ethnic groups and homosexuals actually condition the perception that they develop on discrimination against women in advertising. This is an important issue since it allows you to understand how certain basic structures might influence people's views on advertising. The literature review will have a sociological psychological and communicative component. Variables as the benevolent sexism and hostile sexism will be studied from the perspective of Glick & Fiske (1996); racial and homosexual discrimination, from Case, Fishbein & Ritchey (2006) and gender discrimination in advertising developed by Pereira and Verissimo (2006).

In this context, it is expected that the more prejudices prevail in this society, the more easily people will accept favourably conceptualize gender stereotypes in advertising as well as the discrimination of women. Literature review was conducted in order to justify the hypotheses.

Theoretical Background

Gender stereotypes in society

Gender is a social construct, which was designed to distinguish the differences between men and women, at all levels and it applies to all societies (Costa 1994). Genders are based on the collective knowledge of a society that passes on from generation to generation through the stereotypes that are asymmetric since they grant supremacy to men and discriminate women. Gender has been studied by several sciences: psychology, that emphasizes the intrapsychic aspects that characterize both, (Freud, 1905/1930; Kohlberg, 1966; Well, 1981; Markus, et al 1982; Buss & Schmitt, 2011), sociology that focuses on the social structural determinants that help building gender, (Berger, Rosenholtz & Zelditch, 1980; Eagly, 1987a), and the biology seeking reasons for differences in the constitution of each gender (Trivers 1972, Buss, 1985; Buss, 1987). The theory of social cognition seeks to integrate these theories based on a causal structure of events that occur in people's lives and influence the emergence of gender stereotype, (Bandura, 1986, 1997 and 1999). Hence gender is a social structure that is embodied in a relationship that is socially constructed. Gender stereotypes consolidate within society as a simplification used to describe people from a given group and differentiate one from the other (Baker, 1999).

Gender became a labelling for people associated with a set of characteristics, usually negative for a particular group, women, and therefore leads to prejudice and discrimination. Prejudice is considered as a negative attitude concerning a particular group to which it is limited, creating a simplification of the stereotype (Smith & Mackie, 1995). In the past six decades were important changes occurred in society and began to reverse this hierarchy and to soften the gender stereotype, especially in the

division of labour, even though the asymmetry is still quite large in many societies (Burn, 1996; Shaffer, 2000).

There still exists a feminine ideal in which the woman's body is seen as an "object" whose physical beauty determines how others think, (Martin & Gentry, 1997). In this context emerged the so-called modern sexism, Swim, et al. (1995), as opposed to the traditional sexism. According to his new perspective, it is considered that women should no longer be discriminated against. However, some negative feelings were kept in a subtle manner and even positively expressed, as when it is accepted that women must be loved and protected by men. Despite these new forms of sexism and existing social norm stating that most people try to hide their negative beliefs about women through a discourse of gender equality (Tougas et al. 1995), traditional sexism still exists in a hidden way. Two forms of sexism emerge, one form as benevolent and smooth according to which women should be protected, and a hostile form, more conservative, where women should obey men. This perspective is anchored on three components, the patronage, the gender differentiation and heterosexuality (Fiske and Glick, 1995).

Gender Stereotypes in Advertising

The ubiquity of advertising in people's lives has become one of the ways that society uses to influence the beliefs and behaviours (Milner & Higgs, 2004), and to influence how gender stereotypes continue to be formed and strengthened. Despite the diversity of studies and the struggle of women's organizations around the world, advertising continues to make use of gender stereotypes with the argument that it must be a breeder of social reality it addresses (Gofman, 1979). Thus, whenever men and women appear in advertising there emerges an indicator to measure the attitudes that exist in society about gender, (Milner & Higgs, 2004). Through gender stereotypes, people form unconscious beliefs about the behaviour of men and women, as much as about their expertise in society (Geis et al. 1984).

This leads people to develop a more favourable reaction to the stereotypical instead of the nontraditional messages (Courtney & Whipple, 1983; Ducker & Tucker, 1977). Advertising, particularly on television, exerts a strong social pressure to promote a stereotypical view of the world and society, mostly stressing the gender stereotypes (Pereira & Verissimo, 2006, 2008 and 2009). Several studies on gender stereotypes in advertising have been recently developed, (Ahlstrand, 2007 Neto and Pinto, 1998 Valls - Fernandez and Martinez - Vicente, 2007, Furnham and Mak 1999, Pereira and Verissimo, 2005, 2006 and 2008, Eisend 2010, Ali et al., 2012, Khraim 2012).

Therefore, according to these studies, advertising conveys two completely different profiles: the masculine and the feminine. The masculine is associated with social activities, work and autonomy, dominant roles, aggressive, rational, assertive, competitive, confident and distant. The feminine role is often associated to the activities as housewife, mother, wife, sexual object, dependent, emotional and irrational, gentle, affectionate, cooperative, sensitive, happy and somewhat assertive. Nevertheless, we have been witnessing a more realistic representation of women over the last 30 years, following the steps that have been given towards gender equality in society (Coltrane & Messineo, 2000; Ganahl, et al 2003; Lowry & Kim, 2005).

Research hypotheses

Model of sexism in society

Considering the division between benevolent and hostile sexism, it appears that this is more conservative and prone to stress gender stereotypes granting women a subordinate position in relation to man, and even discriminating her. Thus the first three hypotheses are formulated as follows, as hostile sexism:

H1. The more people are inclined to develop a hostile sexism, the more they will perceive the male stereotype in advertising;

H2. The more people tend to develop hostile sexism, the more they will perceive the female stereotype in advertising;

H3. The more people develop a hostile sexism, the more they will perceive discrimination against women in advertising;

When people perceive gender stereotypes in advertising, both for men and women, they can more easily accept that women are discriminated by advertising. Hence the last two hypotheses for this model are developed as follows:

H4. The more people perceive the male stereotype in advertising, the more they will be prone to perceive discrimination against women;

H5. The more people perceive the female stereotype in advertising, the more they will be prone to perceive discrimination against women;

Bearing in mind these hypotheses, the model of analysis was built as in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Model of the influence of hostile sexism on discrimination against women in advertising

Model of racial prejudice and homosexuality

Prejudice and discrimination continue to shape contemporary societies along various areas, either toward immigrants (African, Eastern and Westerners) or to other social groups such as women, homosexuals and racial groups. Stereotypes and racial prejudices have expressed themselves in western countries, particularly against immigrants. However, in recent times this happens in a more subtle way, (Eberhardt & Fiske, 1994). This subtle form of racism which some authors call the modern racism is characterized by three components, (Sears, 1988): (1) denial of continued discrimination, (2) antagonism against the minority group discrimination, (3) resentment about special favours given to the discriminated group. This racism against minorities also exists in discrimination against women as a social group, historically considered as a low power group (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Racism and sexism may therefore be connected (Dovidio et al., 1989) which means that men and women may differ in their attitude to racial prejudice. Regarding homosexuality, the dichotomy between straight and homosexuals does not exist for many authors, since the desire is produced in the context of social relationships and the construction of identities, (Schwartz & Rutter, 1998). For these authors, sexual behaviours and identities are explained on the basis of social conditions and are not biologically or culturally fixed. Money (1995) argued that human beings are psychosexually neutral at birth. This has led to the idea that the construction of sexual identities is associated with a political construction according which there are legitimate and illegitimate categories of sexual behaviour (Seidman, 2003). Nevertheless there still are trends that continue to advocate that sexuality is biologically determined, not only for heterosexuals, but also for homosexuals, although heterosexual is considered as "normal" and homosexual as "abnormal or deviant ". This has led to homosexuality being considered as a perversion and that these communities may commit sexual abuse, although studies show that most sexual offenses are committed by heterosexuals (Andersen & Hysock, 2009). Despite some mentality advances the prejudice against these groups' remains similar to racial and gender prejudices in the sense of the oppression they endure (Jenness & Grattet, 2001). The gay communities continue to face discrimination in contemporary societies, as well as racial and gender and they are still criminalized in some societies. In advertising, this subtlety remains. Studies conducted in the United States show that the African - Americans are portrayed in only 0.6 % of the journals and the press, but when they do appear they are usually connected with unskilled workers or else when they succeed as athletes or entertainers (Shuey et al 1953, Green 1991, 1992). Although their presence in advertising over the years has increased, it never reached parity regarding their presence in society (Green 1991, 1992).

Assumptions concerning racism and homosexuality may thus be formulated. There seems to be a connection between these three groups with respect to prejudice. In this context, it seems legitimate to draw up a model analogous to the aforementioned and raise the following further hypotheses:

H6. The more there is racial prejudice the more likely people are to consider that there is the stereotype of the male gender in advertising;

H7. The more there is racial prejudice the more likely people are to consider that there is a stereotype of feminine gender in advertising;

H8. The more there is racial prejudice the more likely people are to find that there is discrimination against women in advertising;

H9. The more there is gay prejudice the more likely people are to consider that there is the stereotype of males in advertising;

H10. The more there is gay prejudice the more people are likely to consider that there is a stereotype of feminine gender in advertising;

H11. The more there is gay prejudice the more people are likely to find that there is discrimination against women in advertising;

H12. The more people perceive the stereotype of male gender in advertising the more they will be prone to perceive discrimination against women in advertising;

H13. The more people perceive the stereotype of female gender in advertising the more they will be prone to perceive discrimination against women in advertising;

Bearing in mind these hypotheses, the model of analysis was built as in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Influence model of racism and homosexuality on discrimination against women in advertising

2. Method

Correlational research was developed using structural equations to validate the models.

2.1. Subject

We used a convenience sample of 736 subjects, based on 55.3 % college students and 44.7 % working people. Of these, 55.9 % are women and 44.1 % men, 36,7 % from Badajoz , 36.8 % from Lisbon , 16.3% from Braga and 10.2 % from Porto, thus 36.7 % from Spain and 63.3 % from Portugal.

2.2. Instrument

We built an instrument that could respond to the various streams of our research by collecting previously validated scales of several authors as described: Ambivalent Sexism Inventory of Glick & Fiske (1996), Racial Discrimination Case, Fishbein & Ritchey, (2006), Gay Discrimination Case, Fishbein & Ritchey, (2006) gender stereotypes in advertising on man, of Gofman (1979), Furnham & Mak (1999), Pereira and Verissimo (2008); Stereotypes about women in advertising, Gofman (1979), Furnham & Mak (1999), Pereira & Verissimo (2008) Discrimination of Women in Advertising , Pereira and Verissimo (2008). All items comprising the instrument were mediated through a 6-point scale where 1 represents completely disagree with the statement and 6 completely agree.

2.3. Procedures

The questionnaires were administered between December 2008 and July 2012. Data were analyzed using SPSS 21 and AMOS 21.

2.3.1. Internal consistency of the scales

Confirmatory factor analysis and Cronbach's alphas were performed as shown in table 1.

Table 1. Internal consistency of the scales

It appears that only discrimination against women in advertising presents a low alpha, but in confirmatory factor analysis there is already an adjusted model.

3. Results

3.1. Correlational analysis

Models were tested for their adjustment through structural equations in order to meet the hypotheses. The first was related to hostile sexism.

3.1.1. Hostile sexism

About the first five hypotheses it is confirmed that hostile sexism has impact on discrimination against women in advertising, either directly or indirectly, as in the model of structural equations with GFI: 0.881, PGFI: 0,743; CFI: 0.836, PCFI: 0.760, RMSEA: 0.069 and Chi square 1431.667

p:0.000. The variance for the discrimination of women in advertising is 34.6 %. The indirect effect of hostile sexism, discrimination against women in advertising is 0.203.

Figure 4. Model of the influence of hostile sexism in discrimination against women in advertising
Hostile sexism has a positive impact on the stereotype of men and women in advertising. The more people perceive gender stereotypes in advertising the more they are likely to consider that women are discriminated in advertising. Therefore hostile sexism has a positive impact on gender discrimination in advertising through gender stereotypes. However, hostile sexism has a direct and negative impact on woman's discrimination in advertising. People who have a higher hostile sexism perceive less woman's discrimination in advertising. Hence, H1, H2, H4 and H5 hypotheses are validated, but not H3.

3.2.2. Racial and sex discrimination

Hypotheses 6 to 13 demonstrate that racial and homosexual discrimination has no impact, either directly or indirectly on the perception of discrimination against women in advertising. The model tested by structural equation after removal of outliers contains the following indicators Chi square: 2117.783 p 0.000, GFI: 0.847; PGFI: 0.727, CFI: 0.822; PCFI: 0.822 and RMSEA: 0.074. In relations between the variables only hypothesis thirteen is significant with p: 0.000. The variance of discrimination in advertising according to this model has an explained variance of 38.1%. The model shows no consistency so the hypotheses are not confirmed.

Conclusions

The model of hostile sexism shows that this does not have a direct impact on discrimination against women in advertising because the relationship is negative but it has an indirect impact through gender stereotypes in advertising, both relating to men and women. The more people are likely to discriminate against women in society, the less they do it regarding advertising. When people are directly confronted with discrimination against women in advertising they deny this reality which emerges through gender stereotypes in advertising. These results suggest that the advertising appears to be a different reality. For these people women in advertising are not the same as in personal relationships. Factors based on the subject of homosexuality and racism make people behave differently, not interfering with the discrimination of women in advertising, or in gender stereotypes in advertising.

Hence although homosexuality and racism do not interfere with the discrimination of women, discrimination against women in society is significantly reflected in the discrimination of women in advertising. It appears that people who are prone to discriminate against women in their social life also do it in advertising. However, when directly confronted, they deny it by trying to demonstrate that advertising is a different world and does not reproduce social realities.

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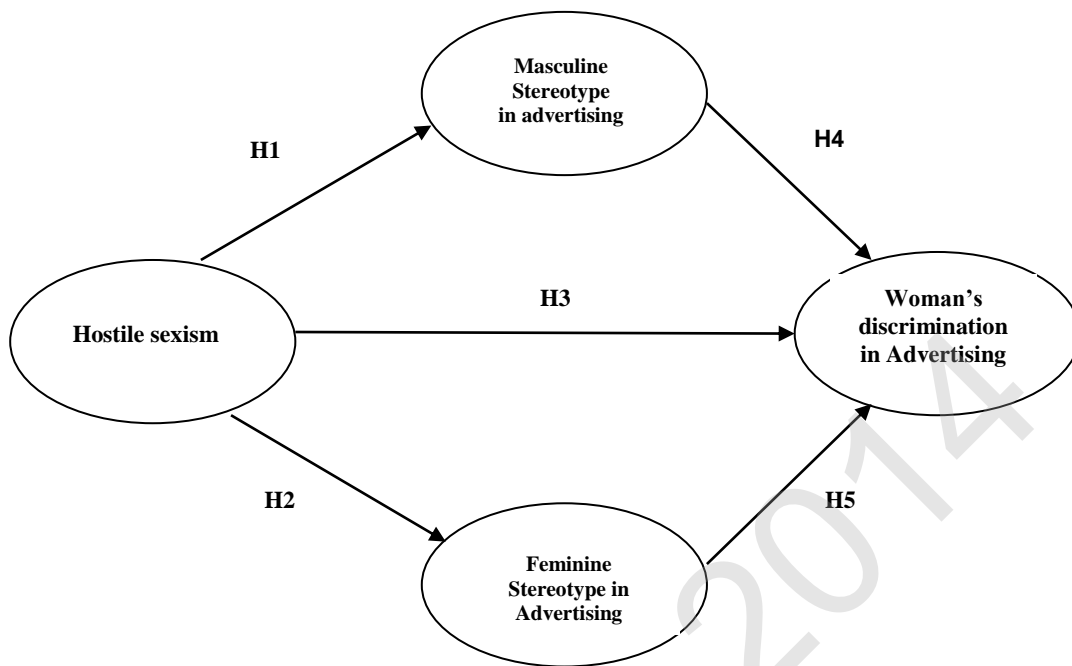


Figure1. Model of the influence of hostile sexism on discrimination against women in advertising

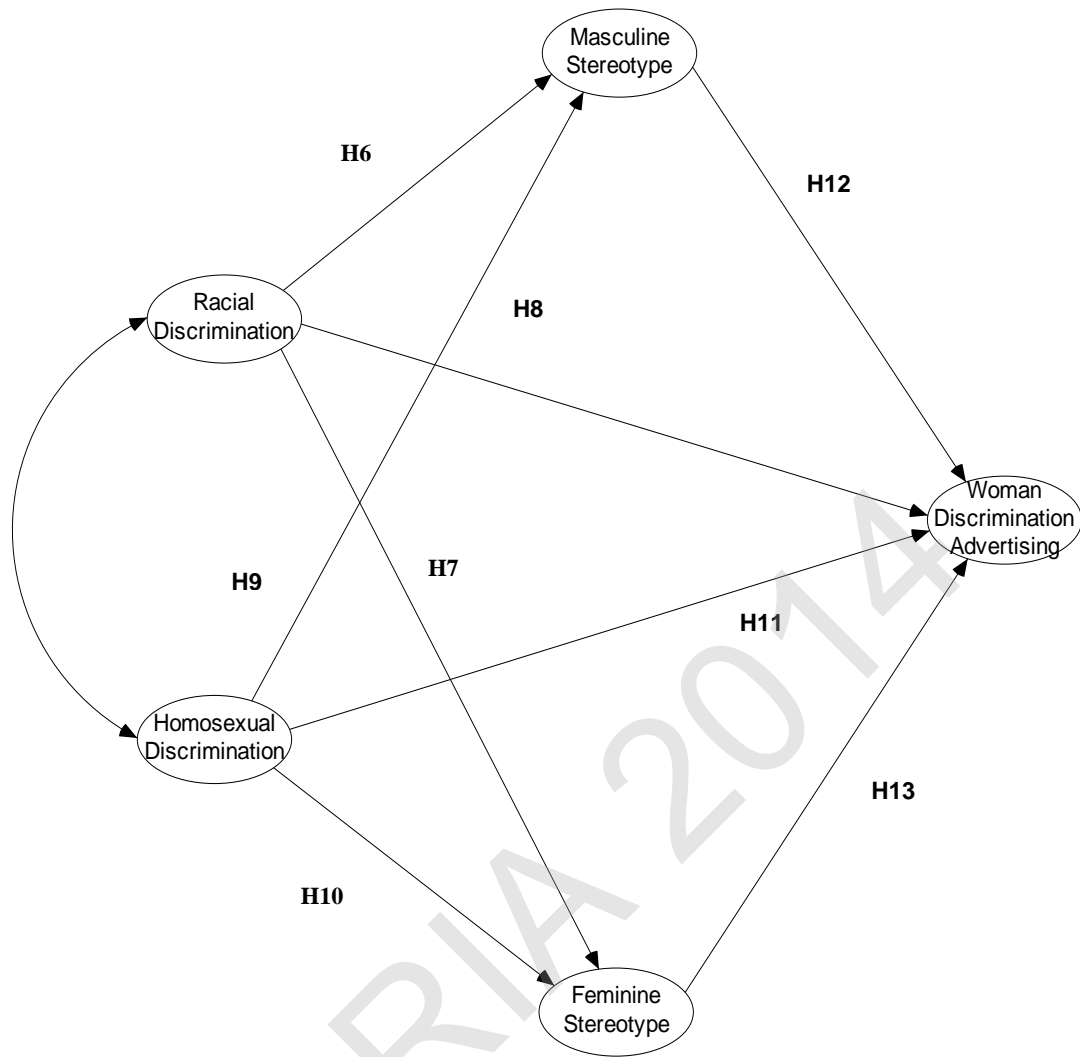


Figure2. Influence model of racism and homosexuality on discrimination against women in advertising

Table 1. Internal consistency of the scales

Scales	Subscales	Alphas	Fator Analysis
Ambivalent sexism	Benevolent sexism	0,884	Chi square 1026, 584; p: 0,000 CFI: 0,885; GFI: 0,877; RMSEA: 0,075
	Hostile sexism	0,899	
Discrimination	Racial	0,869	Chi square: 663,031 p:0,000 CFI: 0,902; GFI: 0,895; RMSEA: 0,077
	Homossexual	0,898	
	Women advertising	0,678	
Gender stereotypes in advertising	Feminine	0,734	Chi square: 140,504 p: 0,000 CFI: 0,950; GFI:0,961 RMSEA: 0,063
	Masculine	0,774	

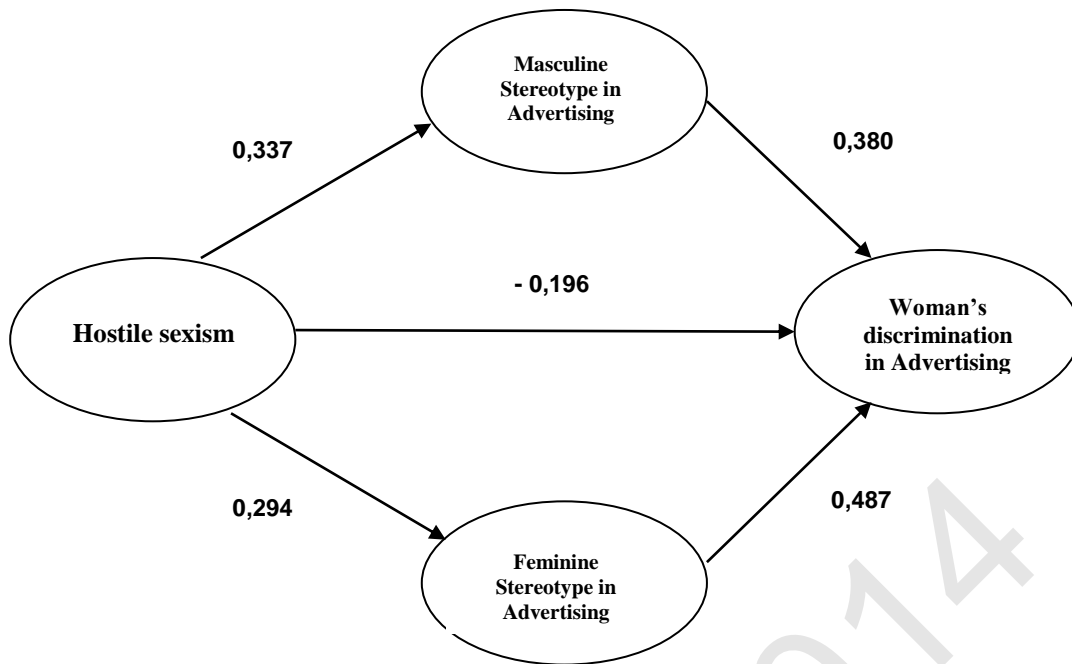


Figure 4. Model of the influence of hostile sexism in discrimination against women in advertising