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A B S T R A C T

This study examines the portrayal of men and women in a sample of Spanish television commercials, attempting to extend past investigations developed in other countries (i.e. USA, United Kingdom and Canada). Traditionally, television commercials have served to reinforce conventional sex role stereotypes. Together with sex role stereotypes, there have been studies of other variables related to the sexist content of commercials. Thus, the present paper focuses on concepts such as gender role, the degree of sexism and the way the central figures inter-relate socially. The objective is to determine whether there is a link among each of these three variables with, firstly, the gender of the central figure of the commercial and secondly, with the type of product advertised.

Keywords: Sexism, advertising, role stereotypes.

RESUMEN

Este estudio analiza la imagen de hombres y mujeres en una muestra española de anuncios de televisión, extendiendo así investigaciones realizadas en otros países como EE.UU. y Canadá. Tradicionalmente, los anuncios de televisión han servido para reforzar los roles tradicionales. Junto con estos estereotipos se analizan el rol de género, nivel de sexismo y el modo en que se interrelacionan las figuras principales de los anuncios. El objetivo es determinar si existe relación entre estas variables y el género del personal principal del anuncio y el tipo de producto anunciado.

Palabras clave: Sexismo, publicidad, estereotipos de rol.

Introduction

The large budget that Spanish companies spend on advertising, 5.030 million euros in mass media in 1999 (Infoadex, 2000), creates a pervasive and persuasive communication environment that reinforces life style as much as it sells products. Its increasing importance has led us to analyse in detail some pertinent points regarding its social repercussions.

Due to the fact that between 10% and 28% of television time is dedicated to commercials, there has been concern and research about the characteristics of the male and female models that are “reflected” along with the product (McArthur and Resko, 1975). One major concern over the last two decades has been the excessive use of gender role in TV commercials. The choices faced by an advertiser in selecting the appropriate gender to be portrayed, and the appropriate role within gender, are many and complex. Should a man or a woman or both be used to present the advertised product? If a woman is chosen, should she be shown in a traditionally stereotyped or more modern role and setting? (Whipple and Courtney, 1985). Traditionally, another point of interest, has been the use of sexual stereotypes, especially of women, even though the use of stereotypes is a general problem, with various specific manifestations such as racism, ageism, in-laws, etc. (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler and Paisley, 1976). The relationship presented between the different figures of the commercial has also been the subject of study in the analysis of advertising material (Sexton and Haberman, 1974).

Despite this, in the twentieth century, gender roles, sexism levels and other characteristics related to the central figures of the commercial, have evolved as a result of many political, economic, and social changes. As the world continues to propel itself into a new age of information technology in the next millennium, new perspectives are opened up for important research into this area, which is concerned with the social repercussions of the use of commercial instruments, and especially advertising, as a form of mass communication widely used in our society.

Spain has not pioneered this type of research. However, with the development of democracy, organisations have sprung up which have concentrated on the problem of sex discrimination in our society, at the same time as women have been striving to join the labour market as equal members of the workforce. In the aftermath of this process, organisations such as the Women’s Institute of Spain (El Instituto de la Mujer) have fostered debates and events dealing with sex equality and in many cases its minimal impact on society and the mass media and advertising. Although people have been sensitised to this idea of gender development, no research has been carried out so far using the methodology described in this

paper, which enables an acceptable degree of objectivity to be reached in line with traditional marketing research standards on this subject.

As researchers on marketing, we need to generate scientific knowledge relative to the macrodimensional repercussions (Hunt 1983) of exchange relationships and the mechanisms used for their generation and development. The potential effects of advertising, such as marketing-mix tool, are too important to restrict them to mere speculation that gives rise to debates like the mirror controversy. (Rotzoll, Haefner and Sandage, 1994; Pollay, 1986; Holbrook, 1987). By fostering this knowledge, not only can help us to provide an answer to the question of whether advertising is a reflection or a mould of society, but also to perceive paths towards effective advertising by examining the emotional responses underlying commercials and the beliefs and attitudes of consumers to advertising in general.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

Gender Role Portrayed in the Commercial

Studies in various media indicate the extent to which the media portray men and women differently (Furnham and Schofield, 1986, Furnham and Bitar, 1993; Ford; Kramer, Honeycutt and Casey, 1998; Nussemeyer, 1999; Milner and Collins, 2000). Specifically, since the 1970s researchers have shown those magazine advertisements, children's books and children's television programmes portray males and females in sex role stereotyped ways (Furnham and Bitar, 1993). So, traditionally, programmes and commercials have promoted and reinforced conventional gender stereotypes. By promoting traditional roles, television has been shown to influence sex role values and perceived life options (Lovdal, 1989).

In this sense, women were portrayed into a few narrowly defined roles, as unemployed, or employed in traditional female occupations (Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Gilly, 1988), as wife/mother (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler and Paisley, 1976), depend on others and at home (Brett and Cantor, 1988), in decorative roles in relation to the product (Courtney and Whipple, 1983), or as sexual objects (Venkatesh and Losco, 1971). On the other hand, men were portrayed as independent, intelligent, objective decision- makers (Courtney and Whipple, 1974), interviewers, narrators or celebrities (Brett and Cantor, 1988). Also, a large body of research has investigated advertising to children in order to examine sex role stereotyping in television commercials aimed at children, with similar results (Browne, 1998).

The researchers have also related the degree of stereotyping with the types of product commercials in which men and women appeared, finding dramatic differences (Sexton and

Haberman, 1974; Gilly, 1988). So, an association between role portrayals and product classifications seems to exist. Many products traditionally are associated with a particular gender, and such products are generally considered gender dominant (Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham, 1990; Royne, 1998). Most studies found women were more likely to appear in advertisements for home products - products used in the kitchen, bathroom and household (Dominick and Rauch, 1972). Conversely, men are stereotyped with cars (Whipple and Courtney, 1985). Despite the fact that different studies have used rather different product type categories, the results have shown a consistent trend (Furnham and Bitar, 1993). Also, this typing easily translates to services (Royne, 1998).

Because of interest in this topic, there has been a number of comprehensive reviews of the area (Furnham and Bitar, 1993), specially related to sex role stereotyping in television commercials (Murray, Rubinstein and Comstock, 1972; Eisenstock, 1984; Geis, Brown, Jennings and Porter, 1984; Furnham and Schofield, 1986). Recently, women are increasingly shown in working roles (Hollman, Murray and Moser, 1985). However, as most authors would agree, women are still portrayed more often in traditional roles (Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz, 1993). In this sense, Brett and Cantor (1988) did a content analysis of 15 studies that compared male and female portrayals, finding that the differences between the portrayal of the two genders were less dramatic than it was thought. However, males were more likely to be shown having an occupation, to be depicted away from home or outdoors, and to advertise products used outside the home.

All the above comments, related gender role portrayals and type of product advertised, give rise to the following hypothesis:

H1a: Men and women differ in the roles in which they are portrayed in commercials.

H1b: There is an association between the gender role of the central figures of the commercial and the product class advertised.

Sexism perceptions of the Central Actors of the Ad

There is no unequivocal definition of what must be regarded as sex discrimination in an advertisement. For much depends on the ethical and social values applied. However, all those who have expressed their views on this matter, would appear to have realised that any advertisement which clearly expresses the view that man and woman do not possess the same value or should not enjoy the same rights, or which otherwise is grossly insulting to either sex, must be regarded as discriminatory (Utterström, 1977).

Despite the articulateness and diffusion of criticism of sexism in advertising, it is surprising that this variable remains essential to the characterisation of the central figure of the commercial. Five different levels have been identified in its measurement (Pingree, Hawkins, Butler and Paisley, 1976). Levels 1 and 2 are associated with “high sexism levels”, level 3 with “moderate sexism levels” and levels 4 and 5 with “low sexism levels” (Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham, 1990).

This is the only scale of values, which has emerged from the study of existing literature on the subject. It is an ordinal five points scale, where the interpretation assigned to each level is explained in the paragraph dealing with methodology.

Sexism levels are seen as an unhealthy programming of youth. Courtney and Whipple (1983) conclude that it is indisputable that advertising is a major influence affecting the way children and adults view their sexism levels in our society. Both authors have been pioneers in summarising the allegations about advertising sexism, the empirical support, and the implied social effects. They note that research has found evidence of advertising with: portrayals of young girls as being more passive than boys; the use of women in purely decorative, non-functional capacities; unreciprocated serving of men and boys by women; women kept isolated from one another; few women shown active in sports; advertising to doctors showing women as hysterical with exaggerated psychosomatic symptoms; fewer older women than older men; fewer minority women than minority men; belittling of women’s liberation and invasion of privacy displaying more intimate apparel for women than men.

In the same line, women were more likely than men to be with children (Furnham and Bitar, 1993), dependent, subservient in domestic settings, inactive, indoors, and without authority and expertise (Lysonksi and Pollay, 1990). These sexism levels are felt to limit women’s aspirations, achievement, self-esteem, and equity in compensation. The use of women in high sexism levels might also contribute to the depersonalisation of women and, less directly, men (Pollay and Lysonski, 1993). To sum up, and according to these studies, women are shown in an inferior dominated role (Fullerton, 2000), given that they are presented as attracting and attaining a man, and then serving him (Courtney and Whipple, 1983).

These kinds of studies have been recently carried out in eastern countries and have found that women continue to be shown in high sexism levels (level 1 and 2) as decorations and sexual objects more often than men (Ford, Kramer, Honeycutt and Casey, 1998; Fullerton, 2000).

With regard to the type of product advertised by different actors with different sexism levels, it has been proved that those subjects with low positions on the sexism scale (level 1: “portrayal as a sexual object”; level 2: “keep her in her place”) are less frequently used to advertise expensive goods like cars and appliances (Courtney and Whipple, 1983). On the contrary, they are more frequently related with home product commercials, as Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham (1990) analyse in their women-centred research.

We can conclude, therefore, that certain studies point to the relationship between sexism levels and two variables: the gender of the central figure of the commercial and the type of product advertised. So, two additional hypotheses could be added:

H2a: Men and women differ in the sexism level they show in the commercial.

H2b: There is an association between the sexism level of the central figures of the commercial and the product class advertised.

Social Relationship Among Protagonists

With regard to background, women are mostly portrayed on their own visually with no background, while men are mostly shown with either a predominantly male background or a mixed background where neither, men nor women predominate (Furnham and Bitar, 1993).

Additionally, the relationship between the central figures also seems to vary according to the products advertised (Sexton and Haberman, 1974). So, home product commercials and personal appearance commercials are presented by actors who maintain different relationships to those portrayed in business travel and transportation products advertisements (Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham, 1990).

Accordingly, the social relationship between the main actors and actresses is also related to the product and the class of product advertised. Two final hypotheses are possible:

H3a: The relationship between actor/actress and the other participants in the commercial differs according to gender.

H3b: The relationship between the actor/ actress and the other participants in the commercial differs according to the class of product advertised.

Methodology

This study has considered content analysis as research methodology for the medium of television. (Royo-Vela, 1997). The questions in the questionnaire produced have been based on the different studies analysed, and particularly those of Sexton and Haberman (1974), Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham (1990), Manstead and McCulloch (1981), McArthur and Resko (1975) and that of Furnham and Schofield (1986). Nevertheless, we have borne in mind the different social, cultural and time contexts in which these studies were carried out and have considered it necessary to reconsider and adapt some of the issues under study, especially the ones relating to role and the sexism measurement scale.

The definitive study was preceded by an exploratory stage for two reasons: to test the questionnaire itself, and to determine the frequency with which main and minor characters appeared in the commercial. After examining 144 television commercials, it was decided to scrutinise at most two main adult characters, male /female, male/male or female/female. If there were more than two main characters in the commercial, the couple was chosen at random whether they were of similar or different gender.

As regards the sampling, the bibliography consulted together with the chosen medium, made the use of a probability sample difficult. In fact, it is not unusual to find random samples or limited samples in the studies consulted. It was decided to study a limited population of different commercials broadcast during the course of three weeks, one per channel, from April 2000 on three national channels, a state channel (TVE1) and two private ones (Antena 3 and Tele 5), at peak viewing times, 20.00 to 24.00, from Monday to Sunday. It is standard practice to record commercials at peak viewing times in this kind of research (Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Caballero and Solomon, 1984; Lovdal, 1989; Gilly, 1988; Furnham and Bitar, 1993; Siu and Au, 1997).

A total of 370 different commercials were selected at random. This gave a limited population of 392 characters for analysis, as is shown in table 1.

Table 1. Size and characteristics of the limited population

Type of commercial	Commercials		Characters ¹		
	Frequency	% Vertical	Men	Women	Total
Without characters	73	19,7	-	-	-
Only men	84	22,7	84	-	84
Only women	118	31,9	-	118	118
Men and women	95	25,7	95	95	190
Total	370	100	179	213	392

The two central figures appearing in each advertisement were distinguished, and the following attributes of each central figure were identified: (i) class of product advertised; (ii) role played; (iii) sexism level; and (iv) relationship with the other characters in the commercial. Table 2 and 3 show the different variables and categories examined. It can, therefore, be said that this study looks not only at the manifest but also at the latent content of the commercial (Ferguson et. al, 1990). Table 2 shows the variables that refer to the manifest content, while in table 3 we can see the latent content variable.

Firstly, as regards the class of product advertised, we followed the classification of authors such as Schneider and Scheider (1979), and Gilly (1988). Fifteen product classes were identified and these were grouped in such a way as to avoid too many empty boxes in some contingency tables.

Secondly, the roles played by the central figure of the commercial were treated as proposed by Sexton and Haberman (1974). The reason for this lies in the use of this classification in subsequent studies (i.e. Gilly, 1988; Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham, 1990; Siu and Au, 1997).

So, ten types of products were coded in connection with the central figure as shown in table 2. The central figure was classified according to his/her every day role in life in which he/she was cast. Following McArthur and Resko (1975), three main groups were identified (Table 2): (i) roles that defined the character in terms of his or her relationship to others (i.e. spouse, parent, girlfriend, housewife); (ii) roles that defined the character independently of others (i.e. worker, professional, celebrity, interviewer); and (iii) other roles.

Thirdly, we included information of the social relationship held by the central figure and the other characters featured in the commercial; different alternatives can be seen in table

¹ Unlike the results obtained by Browne (1998) in the USA and Australia, in Spain commercials contained more female than male figures.

2. Thus, in line with research by Sexton and Haberman (1974), and Ferguson, Kreshel and Tinkham (1990), three social relationships were identified (family, social and business), as well as the possibility that there was no social relationship and no characters.

Table 2. Latent contents. Analysis of product class and attributes of the characters in the commercial

Variable	Classes
Product class	Food and non-alcoholic drinks Alcohol and tobacco Toiletry and perfumes Clothing and accessories Cleaning Products Transport Leisure and culture Organisations Telecommunications Other sectors
Character role	Husband/wife Parent Fiançé(e) Boy/girlfriend Housewife Office worker Professional Celebrity Presenter Others
Social relationship between the main character and the other characters in the commercial	Family Social Business No relationship There are no other characters

Fourthly, with regard to the central figure's sexism, we followed the guidelines outlined by Pingree, Hawkings, Butler and Paisley (1976). We should point out that the original scale had to be adapted to the Spanish cultural context, as recommended by Emakunde (1997) and Juaristi (1998). Five levels were identified as shown in table 3.

Table 3. Manifest contents. Sexism scale.

Level	Description
1	Put her/him down (sexual object, dumb blonde, decorative object)
2	Keep her/him in her/his place (women and men shown mostly in traditional roles)
3	Give her/him two places (traditional and non- traditional)
4	Acknowledge that women and men are equal (multiple roles)
5	Non-stereotypic (true individuals, not judged by sex)

In order to guarantee the objectivity of the results, the following steps were taken (Kolbe and Burnett, 1991): (i) analysts and judges were given training prior to the content analysis, (ii) analysts and judges were independent of each other. (iii) analyst and judge were of opposite gender, and (iv) the different categories of the analysis were pre-tested.

Regarding reliability, two independent coders (one male and one female) were used to establish the intercoder reliability. The judge codified fifteen per cent of the randomly chosen commercials, in which characters appeared. Two agreement indices were calculated: the percentage agreement proposed by Holsti (1969) in order to establish the reliability of the categorisation of the nominal variables, and Krippendorff's Alpha for nominal data (Krippendorff, 1980), which corrects for chance agreement (Kang, Kara, Laskey and Seaton, 1993). The findings show (table 4), with indices consistently higher than 0.8, a high degree of agreement which ensures reliability regarding the categories of analysis proposed.

Table 4. Intercoder agreement indices

Categorised variable	Intercoder agreement index	
	Percentage Agreement	Krippendorff's alpha
Role	0.96	0.85
Sexism	0.91	0.84
Social relationship	0.97	0.90

Results and Discussion

As regards hypothesis 1.a, Table 5 shows the percentage frequencies of male and female roles. The chi-square analysis shows significant differences between men and women in terms of role portrayals. This result is consistent with those obtained in previous studies

(Siu and Au, 1997) and we can, therefore, assert that there are significant differences between genders and the roles shown in the commercial.

As can be seen in table 5, the highest percentage belongs to the “others” role, which entails, more often than not, the use of advertising models, men and women, to whom none of the roles considered in the analysis, could be assigned. However, our attention is directed towards the remaining roles and differences between men and women.

If we begin by analysing the roles played by men in the commercials, we see that they are professional (17.9%), followed by the role of spouse (11.2%) and the role of worker (10.6%). As far as female roles were concerned, females characters were often portrayed as homemakers (15,0%), mother (13,1%) and professional (11,2%).

These results highlight the fact that Spanish advertisers assign different roles to men and women. In this way, men stand out as being working professionals and spouses. On the other hand, tallying with results of studies carried out in other countries (i.e. Lysonki and Pollay, 1990; Furnham and Bitar, 1993), women stand out in the commercials as being in charge of the house and the children. However, it is interesting to point out the professional role allotted to women. This could be due to changes in Spanish society, as a result of making themselves more readily available on the labour market. This economic trend in the labour market has its commercial repercussions. Women workers and professionals have become centres of increasing interest for advertisers in their drive to enlarge targets and market shares.

Table 5. Relation between roles and gender

Role	Characters		% Vertical	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Husband/wife	20	17	11,2	7,9
Parent	17	28	9,5	13,1
Housewife	8	32	4,5	15,0
Office worker	19	10	10,6	4,7
Professional	32	24	17,9	11,2
Celebrity	11	9	6,1	4,2
Presenter	13	10	7,3	4,7
Fiançé(e)	15	16	8,4	7,5
Others	44	67	24,5	31,7
Total	179	213	100	100

$$\chi^2 (8 \text{ d.f.}) = 24.10 (p < 0.01)$$

The results shown in table 6, enable us to corroborate hypothesis 1.b. We can, consequently, assert that men and women appear more or less frequently in the commercial in accordance with the class of product advertised.

Table 6. Relation between product class and gender

Sector	Characters		% Vertical	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Food and non-alc. drinks.	41	45	22,9	21,0
Alcohol and tobacco	7	10	3,9	4,7
Toiletry and perfumes	11	37	6,1	17,3
Clothing and accessories	7	7	3,9	3,3
Cleaning products	10	29	5,6	13,6
Transport	21	12	11,7	5,6
Leisure and culture	6	6	3,4	2,8
Organisations	40	33	22,3	15,4
Telecommunications	18	7	10,1	3,3
Other sectors	19	27	10,1	13,0
Total	179	213	100	100

$$\chi^2 (9 \text{ d.f.}) = 31.11 (p < 0.01)$$

Thus, the highest percentages of men (22.9%) and women (21.0%), correspond to food and non-alcoholic drinks. These results are similar to those obtained by Fullerton (2000), where it is observed that the food/non-alcoholic drinks sector is the subject of most commercials, featuring men, women or both. Following on from this, men appear more frequently in the sector named “organisations” (22,3%), which include commercials relating to, for example, banks, retail outlets, institutions, and electric companies. Women are used more in commercials showing toiletry and perfume articles (17.3%).

We can say, then, that with the exception of commercials for food and non-alcoholic drinks, where men and women feature to a large extent, these results highlight the fact that Spanish advertisers fall back on the male figure to advertise service goods, ideas and cars, while women feature more widely in commercials for toiletries, perfumes and household cleaning products. These findings demonstrate that advertisers and advertising agencies use and give greater credit to the appearance of men in commercials for products which require greater or lesser involvement, or which are the consequence of rational motivations. Women, by contrast, are used to a greater degree in advertising products with the same lesser or greater involvement, but which arise from emotional motivations.

That rationality is a male trait while emotion is essentially a female one, can be considered as being socially traditional opinions. However, we have to bear in mind all we know about purchasing decision processes, the roles in family shopping and the quality of shopping motivation. This knowledge is a necessary condition, though by no means sufficient, in effective advertising, which is, to all intents and purposes, a reflection of those decision factors, buyers and/or consumers actually present in society.

As mentioned previously, we used the Pringee et al (1976) sexism scale in order to corroborate the hypotheses 2.a. and 2.b. The results of this process are shown in tables 7 and 8. In both cases the chi-square values were significant, and allows us to accept their validity, and generically more so, the second one. It is, therefore, possible to state that the sexism level differs substantially as regards gender and the class of product advertised.

Table 7. Relation between sexism and gender

Sexism level	Characters		% Vertical	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Level 1	4	25	2,2	11,7
Level 2	98	82	54,7	38,5
Level 3	7	6	3,9	2,8
Level 4	67	83	37,4	39,0
Level 5	3	17	1,7	8,0
Total	179	213	100	100

$$\chi^2 (4 \text{ d.f.}) = 25.45 (p < 0.01)$$

With regard to hypothesis H2.a, women more frequently obtain higher percentages than men do at all levels of the sexism scale used, except at levels 2 and 3. In almost half of the cases (54.7%), men play roles with which they are traditionally associated, while women do so to a lesser extent (38.5%).

The high percentage value at level 4 for women (39.0%) is worthy of mention. This level affirms that women are fully equal, that women act in multiple roles. As we underlined when discussing the results of the first hypothesis 1.a, Spanish advertisers make use of advertising as a reflection of social change in Spain. Accordingly, women are presented not only in their traditional roles, as shown in level 2, but also in roles displaying greater equality between men and women (levels 4 and 5).

Despite these considerations, table 7 shows, at level 1, that there is a higher percentage of women (11.7%) than men (2.2%). This does indicate that the Spanish advertising industry uses women more than men as a sexual or decorative object, or in other ways, as is evident at level 1. Men appear in similar situations only on four occasions, whereas women appear twenty five times.

As table 8 figures show, the different product classes differ significantly in sexism levels associated with men and women who appear in the commercials. (H2.b).

Table 8. Relation between product class and sexism

	Character (frequencies)					Percentage horizontal					Total
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	
Food and non-alc. drinks	5	46	4	30	1	5,8	53,5	4,7	34,9	1,2	100
Alcohol and tobacco	1	3	0	11	2	5,9	17,6	0,0	64,7	11,8	100
Toiletry and perfumes	6	16	0	24	1	12,8	34,0	0,0	51,1	2,1	100
Clothing and accessories	1	4	0	4	5	7,1	28,6	0,0	28,6	35,7	100
Cleaning products	1	31	2	5	0	2,6	79,5	5,1	12,8	0,0	100
Transport	1	17	0	14	1	3,0	51,5	0,0	42,4	3,0	100
Leisure and culture	2	3	0	6	1	16,7	25,0	0,0	50,0	8,3	100
Organisations	3	31	3	34	2	4,1	42,5	4,1	46,6	2,7	100
Telecommunications	0	14	1	7	3	0,0	56,0	4,0	28,0	12,0	100
Other sectors	9	15	3	15	4	19,6	32,6	6,5	32,6	8,7	100
Total	29	180	13	150	20	7,4	45,9	3,3	38,3	5,1	100

$$\chi^2 (36 \text{ d.f.}) = 96.87 (p < 0.01)$$

After analysing the different product classes and the highest percentage levels in each sexism level, it is possible to identify two large groups: those with a sexism level of 2 and those with a sexism level of 4. Only in the category “other sectors”, do we find similar results in levels 2 and 4 (32.6%). The reason for this may lie in the breadth of products taken into account in this section. Food and non-alcoholic drinks (53.3%), cleaning products (79.5%), transport (51.5%) and telecommunications (56.0%), belong to the first group. In the above categories, men and women appear in traditionally male and female roles.

The second group encompasses the categories of alcohol and tobacco (64.7%), toiletry and perfumes (51.1%), leisure and culture (50.0%) and organisations (46.6%). In these categories, commercials show men and women as equals, in more roles than traditionally allotted to men and women and they reflect the concept of gender equality.

We should like to highlight the clothes and accessories category, where level 5 reaches the highest percentage (35.7%) when compared to the other levels. No male or female stereotypes are portrayed here, nor are men and women judged by reference to gender.

Finally, the results confirming hypothesis 3 (H3.a and H.3.b), as can be seen in tables 9 and 10, reveal that an actor's or actress' social position vis á vis the other characters in the commercial differs significantly in gender (H3.a) and in the type of product advertised (H3.b).

The results of table 9 show the differences between men and women set against the relationships they have with the rest of the characters of the commercial. Men appear more frequently in individual settings, where they do not relate to other people (27.9%) and in family settings (25.7%). The highest percentage for women arises from situations where there are no other characters in the commercial (27.1%), followed by family settings (26.6%). Family settings display a similarity of results for both men and women.

On analysing situations where men and women obtain higher percentages compared to the opposite gender, men appear on a larger number of occasions in social and business settings, while women are used more often in family settings and in situations where no other characters appear. These findings confirm the conclusions of previous hypotheses.

Table 9. Relationship with characters and gender

Relationship with the other characters in the commercial	Characters		% Vertical	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Family	46	57	25,7	26,6
Social	42	46	23,5	21,5
Business	15	13	8,4	6,1
No relationship	50	40	27,9	18,7
There are no others	26	57	14,5	27,1
Total	179	213	100	100

$$\chi^2 (4 \text{ d.f.}) = 11,77 (p < 0.05)$$

The results of table 10 enable us to accept hypothesis H3.b and affirm that the social relationship between an actor/actress and the rest of the cast in the commercial is different according to the class of product advertised.

Advertisers, thus, choose to a greater degree, socialising contexts for advertising food and non-alcoholic drinks (29.1%), alcohol and tobacco (70.6%), and clothes and accessories

(50.0%). Transport, leisure and culture, and telecommunications are advertised more frequently in contexts where there is no relationship with other characters in the commercial, 33.3%, 33.3%, and 40.0% respectively.

For toiletry and perfume articles (36.4%), cleaning products (33.3%), and in “other sectors” (33.3%), only one actor/actress is usually used. Finally, only the category relating to organisations uses family settings (43.8%) more than any other in its commercials.

Table 10. Relation with the characters and product class

	Characters (frequencies)					Percentage horizontal					Total
	Fami-ly	So-cial	Busi-ness	No relat.	No others	Fami-ly	So-cial	Busi-ness	No relat.	No others	
Food and non alc. drinks.	23	25	6	18	14	26,7	29,1	7,0	20,9	16,3	100
Alcohol and tobacco	0	12	3	1	1	0,0	70,6	17,6	5,9	5,9	100
Toiletry and perfumes	12	11	2	6	17	25,0	22,9	4,2	12,5	35,4	100
Clothing and accessories	1	7	1	4	1	7,1	50,0	7,1	28,6	7,1	100
Cleaning products	12	3	0	11	13	30,8	7,7	0,0	28,2	33,3	100
Transport	5	9	2	11	6	15,2	27,3	6,1	33,3	18,2	100
Leisure and culture	2	1	2	4	3	16,7	8,3	16,7	33,3	25,0	100
Organisations	32	10	6	17	8	43,8	13,7	8,2	23,3	11,0	100
Telecommunications	6	2	2	10	5	24,0	8,0	8,0	40,0	20,0	100
Other sectors	10	8	4	7	15	22,2	17,8	8,9	17,8	33,3	100
Total	103	88	28	90	83	7,4	45,9	3,3	38,3	5,1	100

$$\chi^2 (36 \text{ d.f.}) = 90.57 (p < 0.01)$$

Conclusions

As Scheneider and Scheneider found (1979), media advertising is reflective of the underlying value system of the society in which it exists. That is, it is possible to measure value systems and shifts therein by examining advertising.

As these results show, we consider advertising to be not only commercial in character, but also reflective of, rather than shaping the society for and in which it is created. This viewpoint brings us closer to the ideas of Holbrook (1987) and takes us further away from Pollay’s premises (1986) on the mirror controversy debate.

The content analysis carried out in the television medium allows us to extrapolate a series of conclusions for the Spanish context. These conclusions can be categorised into three different groups: the gender role, the sexism level displayed by the central figure of the commercial, and the social relationships among the main characters.

Firstly, as regards gender role and other results arising from a content analysis of television advertisements, men are more often portrayed as professionals and workers, than women; and women were more likely to be portrayed in the home than men, as homemakers and mothers. That is, in contrast to Nussemeyer (1999), women have been portrayed in the diversity of roles that they take on in society and they are not used too often for purely decorative purposes. That is to say, advertising shows women in professional roles and not simply as spouses and mothers. This has arisen as a result of socio-cultural changes in Spain during the past few decades which have created positions for them within the labour market and consequently as objects of commercial interest. Women's purchasing powers and economic independence have gradually turned them into spenders and consumers and thus potential targets for advertisers. To a limited extent the notion of product/model congruency was empirically tested, supported by the data in the present study. Analyses of those advertisements containing the female model appeared more frequently when the product was related to house and personal care.

By contrast, men appear to be linked more closely to organisational products (banks, institutions, electric companies etc.), and cars. Their responses are characterised more by cognitive processes, more conscious effort in the shopping process and greater financial sacrifices.

As stated previously, men's association with rationality and women's association with emotion may be considered traditional, but from a commercial point of view, this truth is of paramount commercial importance and a reflection of consumer behaviour in present-day society. Moreover, the increasingly greater role of emotional processes compared to cognitive reactions means that individuals' emotional responses are regarded as being more socially positive.

As for sexism levels and gender, it is possible to state that advertising recognises the increasing state of equality relating to women and men's social standing in Spanish society. Proof of this can be seen in the high number of cases in which women are at levels 4 and 5 on the sexism scale. Nevertheless, women appear more frequently than men at sexism level 1. This level indicates that women are seen as sexual or decorative objects or dependent on men when used in advertising. However a 10% value does not allow us to conclude that this quality is reflected in television advertising.

Likewise, the different product classes also show differences among themselves as regards the sexism level of the people used to advertise them. In other words, certain products (alcohol and tobacco, perfumes, leisure and culture etc.) stand out as being publicised by actors and actresses with low sexism levels, reflecting less traditional and more modern values. Other products, such as food, non-alcoholic drinks and cleaning products, are usually presented from more traditional standpoints as evinced by the higher sexism levels underlying the commercial.

Finally, the third group of conclusions alludes to the social relationships among the main characters in the commercial by analysing the gender of the actor/actress and the class of product advertised. In both cases there are significant differences.

Men, therefore, appear on a larger number of occasions in social and business settings, whereas women appear in family settings and in situations where no other characters feature. The conclusion is that men's roles are considered to be more prominent than women's. This is due to the fact that from a commercial stance, women are seen as consumer objects for food and household care and cleaning products and are presented in family settings or by themselves as housewives.

We can also see that the different product classes differ in the social relationship displayed by the people who advertise them. In fact, some product classes (food, drinks, clothing, accessories etc.) are associated with social backgrounds, while others (transport, leisure, culture etc.) are associated with backgrounds where no social relationships exist among the characters in the commercial.

In short, as has been pointed out, men and women differ in the roles they portray in the commercial as regards sexism levels and the social settings in which they are shown. The underlying message is that, although social reality shows that women still need to catch up with men in terms of equality, in the world of advertising, seen as a reflection of society, such equality cannot exist. In commercials men are still related with traditionally more authoritative, independent attitudes, playing parts such as professionals and workers and in social and business settings. On the other hand, women dissociate themselves from traditional roles to a greater degree than men and take on roles, which are not traditionally female, and at sexism levels which reflect a lack of discrimination and gender equality. In spite of this, they still maintain their traditional, decorative, sexual object roles in family and home settings.

The different product classes advertised also follow the same pattern. While household and food products rely on women playing traditional roles, with low sexism levels, in family settings or unrelated to the other actors/actresses in the commercial, those articles that entail

greater purchasing risk or decision-taking (e.g. cars or banking products) are usually presented by men in their traditional professional working role, displaying low sexism and in business settings. Together with this traditional distinction, advertising also includes product classes such as alcohol and tobacco, toiletry and perfumes, and leisure and culture, in which sexism levels are low and roles are removed from tradition for both sexes.

Implications

As has been observed, neither the principal actor's/actress' gender, nor role, nor sexism level, nor the way he/she relates to the other characters are homogenous in all the commercials. On the contrary, light has been shed on certain patterns designed to make advertising more effective. The implication is that not just any actor or actress is effective in the advertisement of a given product. These patterns should not be considered as entailing sex discrimination, but seen only as a projection of the underlying commercial dictates.

To conclude, the results obtained are a reflection, albeit in flux, of traditional male and female roles in society, as well as patterns of more modern and less traditional values which are already present.

Limitations

As for the limitations of this research paper, we should mention that data were collected over just three weeks on prime time viewing hours. Although other studies have also developed the same methodology (Lovdal, 1989; Gilly, 1988; Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Caballero and Solomon, 1984), a broader time frame was thought to be important to complete the results (Gilly, 1988). A specific period of the year was chosen (April) when advertising does not focus on the sale of seasonal items. However, it would be interesting to examine the contents of advertisements for other periods, such as winter (e.g. toys) or summer (e.g. travel or ice cream).

This paper has focused on the medium of television, without taking into account that there are numerous studies based on advertising in the printed media. Our study may be extended to the printed media by carrying out an analysis of advertising material in magazines of wide-ranging readerships in order to compare the results obtained for both media.

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