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**An Investigation into the Stereotypical Representation of  
Gender Roles in Advertising:  
A Case Study of Advertisements from a Cross-section of  
Popular South African Weekly and Bi-weekly Newspapers**

**By**

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## **Declaration**

I declare that this mini-dissertation is my original work and that all other sources of reference have been appropriately acknowledged.

This mini-dissertation has not been submitted previously by me for a degree at this or any other university.

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**Weldu Ghebreselasie Ghebreyesus**

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## **Abstract**

This study was designed to investigate the representation of gender roles in advertisements in popular South African newspapers, namely, the *Sunday Times*, *Rapport*, *City Press*, *Post* and *Ilanga*. The literature reviewed shows that media play a role in agenda setting and reinforcing existing gender role stereotypes through advertising.

The study focused on the trend towards equal representation of gender roles in advertisements in popular South African newspapers. The research revealed some stereotypical representations of women in the newspapers. Although women were depicted in a variety of professions in the workplace, the advertisements showed some stereotypical depictions. The research also found out that, to some extent, men were depicted performing roles such as beautification and consumption, which have been stereotypically limited to women.

# Introduction

Media perform influential functions in society. Media inform, educate and entertain their audiences. Their functions, however, go beyond the three above-mentioned roles. Media, as part of the dominant means of ideological productions, construct for us images of gender and race (Hall, in Dines and Humez, 1995). Stereotyped representations of groups in the informational and entertainment media productions are commonplace. Be it deliberate or not, media contents reinforce the stereotyped representations of particular groups, which find their momentum within a socio-cultural context.

Representation in the media implies the way people are represented, depicted or portrayed by the media (Nicholas and Price, 1998). Advertising forms an important part of media content and can be cited as one of the ways through which media reinforce the stereotypes of particular groups. Nicholas and Price (1998) exemplify the role of the media in reinforcing stereotypes through advertising as the following: if images presented by the media concentrate on physical attractiveness, this reinforces sexism by encouraging us to think that the way women look is more important than what they do.

Although differences in gender roles primarily and originally emanate from biological differences, they are far more magnified in socio-cultural context culture and advertisements (Goffman, 1976). This can be accounted for by the uses in which media reflect and operate in a socio-cultural context and serve as a mirror. The standardisation, oversimplification and exaggeration become stronger in advertisements which have a profound influence on a society as whole. The qualities and attributes of media as described earlier also hold true for newspapers, in which advertisements often occupy substantial space. It may be true that the degree and extent of gender role representations may not be as influential and profound as those shown on television and published in magazines.

Prior research into the stereotypical representation of women in the media revealed that women were largely limited to domestic roles and portrayed as sex objects. Besides, such research showed that in advertisements women were depicted as children seeking support from the 'strong' man (Buswell, 1989; Courtney; Whipple, 1983).

The metaphor that women are children in advertisements has been shown to be an out-dated stereotype with a growing number of women represented in various positions in the work force previously, positions dominated by men (Guantlett, 2000; Smith, 1999). More recent research showed that there is a growing tendency towards equality in gender role portrayals of both sexes (Croteau; Hoyness, 1997). Despite some perpetuation of stereotypes, women come to represent roles other than domestic and sex roles (Guantlett, 2000; Smith, 1999). The portrayal of women as sex objects is no longer limited only to women but also extends to men (Wernick, in Nicholas; Price, 1998).

In view of the growing tendency towards non-stereotypical representations, this research will focus on the gender role representation of women and men in advertisements in South African popular newspapers. The research will look into these representations in response to social change. It will assess the extent to which popular South African newspapers reflect non-stereotypical representations of gender roles.

The research project studied the advertisements over three weeks in the July editions of five popular newspapers with mass appeal and coverage of all racial groups. The focus was only on these newspapers. This is because newspapers attract broad audiences, while magazines tend to cater to stratified or niche audiences. July was chosen as a random and convenient month to access. The researcher could find access to only the July and August editions of five popular newspapers while doing the research. The researcher initially sampled the August newspapers but, because National Women's Day was celebrated on August 9, it appeared to be an atypical sample.



# Chapter 1

## Media and Advertising

### 1.1. Functions of Media

Mass media or mass communication is the process through which professional communicators use communication technologies to transmit messages over great distances to influence large audiences (Sorlin, 1994). Similarly, McQuail explains that the term mass media is used to denote vehicles of communication activities “that operate on a large-scale, reaching and involving virtually everyone in a society to a greater or lesser degree”. (McQuail, 2002: 4)

Media have important functions to perform in a society. However, the function they provide to a society is unique. One of the distinctive qualities attributed to media industries is that their focus on the dissemination of information, ideas and culture (Croteau; Hoyness, 2001). Media play a significant role in informing the public about current and past events (Sorlin, 1994). Besides this common quality that all media share, their operation is also dependent on the respective societies in which they operate (McQuail, 1994). It is also argued that the function of the media is a social process which is essentially linked to the broader socio-cultural context (Barkin, 1985 in Gurevitch; Levy, 1985). Although media hold a distinctive social institution, their operation is affected and constrained by the rules, practices and norms prevalent in a society (McQuail, 2000).

Thus media are ultimately dependent on society, although they have some scope for independent influence and they may be gaining in autonomy as their range of activity, economic significance and informal power grows. This is a potentially spiralling and self-fulfilling process, driven by ever-increasing estimation of their significance by political and cultural actors. (McQuail, 2000: 5)

Media as communication institutions penetrate every reach of modern society and impact on other institutions in a society: family life, religion, politics, business and education (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). Owners or those in control of media organisations seep into the human activities

through the messages they produce (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). Furthermore, media institutions play a significant role in moulding the cultural life of modern society (Leiss, *et al*, 1986).

They are channels through which information and interpersonal contact can flow and mix, binding together an otherwise dispersed and disparate population. They are also part and parcel of the institutional structure in a capital-intensive industrial economy, putting power and authority at the service of a particular purpose (Leiss, *et al*, 1986: 93).

The general argument is that media play an important role in educating, entertaining and informing their audiences about what is going on around the world. Theoretically, the responsibility of media is to facilitate socialisation of people, to foster democracy and cultivate a common popular culture through free flow of information and a shared use of power in social relations (Yadav, 2001). Newspapers, as a medium, have important political functions; they contribute to the functioning of democracy by informing their audiences and serving as arenas for public discussions (McQuail; Siune, 1998). There are times when media play a negative role by serving as the mouthpiece of political propaganda and channels for amassing profit. For instance, the proliferation of new technology has spurred (commercial) media industries, including print media, to compete for market share disregarding the welfare of society (Doyle, 2002).

### **1.1.1. Media and Agenda Setting**

Although media may not be able to determine what to think, they are “successful in telling us what to think about” (McCombs; Shaw, 1977: 5). Media influence people’s perception of the outside reality. McCombs and Shaw (1977) note that media impact on individuals thinking and cognition and are able to represent, order and organise the world for us. Furthermore, the images and pictures, which audiences internalise in their heads, are images and pictures prominent in the media (Iyengar; Reeves, 1997). Iyengar and Reeves (1997: 237) discuss “the priorities of the media agenda influence the priorities of the public agenda” and that the perpetually emphasised pictures and images are given weight more than the public agenda. Similarly, Lipmann elaborates on the role of the media in setting agendas for audiences. He notes that the pictures we have of the distant and out of sight reality are endowed with more significance over others (Lipmann, 1922).

The issue of agenda setting is relevant to the issue of advertising and representation in that media through advertising shape “the cultural mainstream” (Brants, *et al*, 1998: 138) and influence our perception of and attitudes towards people.

### **1.1.2. Media and Advertising**

Advertising has been part of the historical process of media and communication. It is a major component of print media. Through collecting advertising revenue, media owners maximise their profits to sustain their operations. Creedon (1989: 149) defines advertising as “a shorthand form of communication that must make contact with the consumer immediately, establishing a shared experience or identification”. The historical development of media institutions and communication activities gave rise to the development of advertising as a component of media that has a profound impact on society and culture. (Leiss, *et al*, 1986) The origin of the establishment of commercial media and the development of advertising is traced as far back as the nineteenth century. (Leiss *et al*, 1986) Since the nineteenth century, “advertising has become the key to the operation of the media, as the largest generator of its revenue” (Leiss, *et al*, 1986: 95). Thus the prime objective of commercial media was to compete for broader target audiences. Advertising has since then significantly influenced the contents and operation of media targeting audiences in terms of their social, temporal and spatial qualities (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). The reason behind the infiltration and incorporation of advertising is to get profits, a tendency, which has become a distinguishing feature of the modern society (Zadeh, 1998). Despite some criticisms from different perspectives, advertising tries to justify itself, for it serves as a source of revenue and subsidy for the wide, efficient and cheap diffusion of media (Sinclair, 1987). This explains the fact that advertising impacts on the contents of media. Sinclair elaborates on the power of advertising to influence media and its operation:

One approach regards it as an economic mechanism, emphasising the advertisers’ alleged power to directly influence media content by giving their business to those media which provide them with ideological compatibility and favourable editorial treatment, and to ensure this environment by withdrawing their advertising, or at least threatening to do so. (Sinclair, 1987: 69)

Print media, such as newspapers and magazines are also highly commercialised communication channels, since the majority of publications are greatly dependent on advertising to improve and enhance their operation (McQuail, 2000). As a medium, newspapers also are involved in dual-market production: they produce cultural contents and audience (Doyle, 2002; Stevenson, 1995). Audiences are differentiated in terms of their income, wants, age, sex and class and sold to advertisers along with airtime (radio and television) and space (newspapers) (Doyle, 2002; Stevenson, 1995). Therefore, it goes without saying that advertising is likely to influence the content of publications. For example, a beer producer may put pressure on a magazine or newspaper in which it buys space for advertisements not to print articles on the dangers of drinking.

### **1.1.3. Advertising and Its Effects in Society**

The contention, which revolves around advertising, is that it is a powerful mechanism designed to create demands among consumers (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). Sinclair (1987) argues that advertising as an industry is inextricably linked to marketing and production process. Similarly, Williamson (1978) explains that advertising holds virtually an independent existence with tremendous impact in social and cultural life; its autonomous existence and immense influence result from its ability to permeate every medium of communication.

The purpose of advertising is not only to sell goods but also to create meanings and representations through images and words (Williamson, 1978). The images and words embedded in different advertisements are given meanings and permeate into norms and beliefs of a society (Sinclair, 1987). Moreover ideas, attitudes, motivations, dreams, desires, and values inherent in advertisements get their “cultural form through signifying practices...” (Sinclair, 1987: 1). Images, ideas and words intrinsic in advertisements are potent to distort societies’ values and priorities, and to deceive people into the private pursuit of material satisfaction in a way neglecting the public and common concerns (Leiss *et al*, 1986). Though advertising, to some extent, serves some important purposes, unbridled advertising, with its messages of “half-truths and untruths” (Zadeh, 1998) tends to denigrate and misrepresent a social reality through its messages. Arguably, advertising plays a negative role in reinforcing and reproducing social inequalities, such as the depiction of women as dependent on men and child-like (Schudson, 1984). Inherent in the language of advertising is insincerity and

manipulation; advertising assumes that “that is taken for granted” (Luhmann, 2000: 44). Similarly, Pollay (1986) observes that advertising appears to have deep consequences, for it keeps a society preoccupied with material concerns as the source of happiness and key to solving human needs and problems.

This state of mind seems natural or rational because this persuasion also provides a worldview with a value scheme that rationalizes such behaviour and presents itself as commonplace. Commercial persuasion appears to program not only our shopping and product use behaviour but also the larger domain of our social roles, language, goals, values, and the sources of meaning in our culture (Pollay, 1986: 21).

From an economic perspective advertising is seen as a driving force for economic growth and creation of job opportunities (Sinclair, 1987). Advertising, by encouraging consumption, guarantees economic progress and sustainability (Galbraith, 1967). Galbraith’s argument is that the industrial system cannot exist unless people consume and need more products. Leymore 1975 advocates that advertising encompasses not only the positive sides of life but also its miseries and problems. It, as such, tries to solve these problems to restore happiness, life, and success. However, criticisms of advertising outweigh its positive side. McLuhan (1953) forwarded a counter argument to that of Leymore and argues that advertising is the source of anxiety, self-contempt, unhappiness, denigration, and envy, because it tries to engage consumers emotionally and capture their intellectual faculty. Advertising in such a way tries to block individuals’ critical perception of messages by its powerful emotional and persuasive appeal. Advertising moreover “addresses itself to the spiritual desolation of modern life and proposes consumption as a cure” (McLuhan, 1953: 73). Moments of sadness, desolation and dejection seem to have no place in advertising.

Typification and idealization are the modes by which advertisements are produced. There is no intention of capturing life as it ‘really’ is, but there is every intention of portraying social ideals, representing as ‘normative’ those relatively rare moments of bliss, special-ness, or a dream-like satisfaction (Schudson, 1984: 220).

Critics from different perspectives also propound the argument that advertising has negative consequences in a society. The neoliberals side, for instance, argue that advertising is unnecessary for a social welfare, notwithstanding the desirability of a controlled economy

(Leiss, *et al*, 1986). The Marxist philosophy also holds the view that advertising is an exploitative mechanism employed by capitalists to maintain their control over market and amass capital (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). The Marxist argument is that advertising is an ideology, which hides reality behind false promises and illusions; it is a marketing strategy, which rather encourages spending than saving (Sinclair, 1987). It is a 'weapon' for manufacturers through which they 'produce' an adequate consuming market for their products: they create false needs in people (Jhally, 1987). Advertising has therefore its own discourse of control and manipulation generated by producers to create desires for goods for which consumers have no real need.

Advertising involves testing a product for quality and acceptability, packaging it, distributing it, and selling it through different promotional processes, which include the communication process of advertising (Stott; King, 1977). In the advertising process, advertisers are more interested in selling the product than in the well being of the audience. To sell more products, advertisers rely on advertising agencies and the mass media to make consumers aware of their products and to create an increased demand for it (Stott; King, 1977). Advertising, according to Fox (1984 in Creedon, 1989), has the potential to influence the adaptation and changing habits and ways of life. Fox draws parallels between advertising and institutions such as the church and school in their social influence and ability to mould attitudes and set standards. Williamson agrees with Fox in that advertising is one of the major "cultural factors" (Williamson, 1978: 11) which shapes and reflects our life.

Some critics argue that advertising tends to keep the status quo and reinforce the prevailing ideology (Nicholas; Price, 1998). This accounts for the approach advertising takes, which depends on multiple stereotypes and representations.

(<http://www.mediaknowall.com/Advertising/adideol.html>).

Advertising is not only about managing consumer demand, but about managing social consciousness. Generally there seems to be agreement that advertising which relies on images is inevitably laden with cultural values, and that values are conservative in terms of wanting to leave things as they are and resisting change (Nicholas; Price, 1998: 181).

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<sup>1</sup> There are various competing definitions of what an ideology really is. In this case, by ideology, I mean "a representation of the imaginary relation of individuals to the real condition of existence" (<http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/ideology.html>).

Of all the media representations of women, advertising holds the centre stage in the debate about women stereotypes. Advertising sells images of women in such a way as to reinforce our perceptions of women as limited to domestic, child-care and beatification roles (Buswell (1989). Despite changing of roles of women, images prevalent in advertising are often debasing stereotypes of women and men (Courtney; Whipple, 1983). Therefore, it seems evident that advertising mirrors the existing socio-cultural situation and its stereotypes (Creedon, 1989).

## **1.2. Representations and Stereotyping**

Representation, be it in speech or writing, is the creation in any medium of features of 'reality' such as people, places, objects, events, cultural identities and other abstract concepts (Chandler, 2002). Chandler further suggests that representation includes the way media represent and construct identities and how people from different localities and cultural backgrounds receive those identities. The term representation is not limited only to the construction of meanings through language or other signification but also inclusive of "the significance and consequence of the ways in which people, regions, ideas and knowledge are represented" (Pietikaine; Hajanen, 2003:255). It is a symbolic process involving "new ways of organizing, clustering, arranging and classifying concepts, and of establishing complex relationships between them (Hall, 1997: 116-17). Representation, like stereotypes, is not resistant to changes and has profound effects on people's beliefs, lives, and position in a society (Pietikaine; Hajanen, 2003).

### **1.2.1. Representation, Media and Stereotyping**

Representation and media are inextricably linked to each other, as media provide the vehicles for different images from across the world, and people spend many hours consuming media: watching television, listening to the radio reading newspapers and magazines and surfing the Internet. Today, we come across different images in television broadcasts, dramas, news, game shows, documentaries, life style programmes, films, soap operas, music videos and more (Gauntlett, 2002). Media as such

represent a reconstructed image of the real world, which audiences “edit, revise, and reformulate” (Barkin, in Gurevitch and Levy, 1985: 187). Research on media channels reveals that media are “extremely powerful sources of stereotyped images.” (Stott; King, 1977: 45). Stereotyped images, which find their way through media (contents), reinforce or challenge our understanding and ideas of gender and representation. (Gauntlett, 2002).

The media show us situations and relationships from other people’s point of view- indeed, it is part of the eternal fascination of drama that we can see ‘how the world works’ in lives other than our own. This could hardly fail to affect our way of conducting ourselves and our experience of other people’s behaviour (Gauntlett, 2002: 2).

Different audiences around the world make sense of the transmitted messages by using shared symbols and signs. Barkin, in Gurevitch and Levy (1985) argues that the messages coming through different media outlets are subject to multiple interpretations, for audience reception involves a selection of contents which impinge on experience. Similarly Stott and King (1977) also argue that media reinforce the continuous development of identities through a variety of represented models which are potent to mould our behavior and identities. The argument is that audiences are not passive listeners of media contents and involve interpretation, filtering and rejecting in relation to their socio-cultural context, beliefs and experiences. Stott and King (1977) further contend that in the process of reception, shaping of attitudes and behavior involves audiences’ rejection and acceptance or copying. Moreover the differences in reception result from “audiences’ “direct experience” and dependence on media as a source of specifying information” (Barkin, in Gurevitch and Levy, 1985: 185). The media communicate with their audiences through familiar communication signs like the language. Media through this process represent reality (Jones and Jones, 1999).

Media representation produces identities, because representation “includes signifying practices and symbolic systems” (Woodward, 1997:14). Symbolic systems, Woodward (1997) discusses, produce meanings and help define identities and make sense of our experience. The



meanings produced by representations are the lenses through which we experience the world and ask ourselves who we are (Woodward, 1997).

Representation as a cultural process establishes individual and collective identities and symbolic systems provide possible answers to the questions: who am I? what could I be? who do I want to be? Discourse and systems of representation construct places from which they can speak (Woodward, 1997: 14).

The process of media representation cannot be said to be equitable in that it focuses on some groups rather than others (Jones and Jones, 1999). Similarly, media representation is ideological in nature in that “media give us images, ways of imagining particular groups which can have material effects on how those groups experience the world, and how they get understood or even legislated for by others” (Branston; Stafford, 1996: 78). Since media reflect and perpetuate the dominant values of a society, the represented images of particular groups are considered as accepted truth and appropriate (Prinsloo, 1996). It is in this way that media ‘support’ stereotypes and encourage audiences to “internalise them” (Prinsloo, 1996: 41).

The effects of stereotyped representations are clearly observable in children. Beliefs, attitudes and behaviours reinforced by parents, peer groups and other influential groups are believed to have a profound influence on childhood period, as children grow with the stereotyped representation of particular groups (Bem, 1981). Cuneen; Sidwell (1998) citing Sulzby (1985) contend gender related images in advertising have deep impact on children, as they understand the images more easily than texts. Gunter and McAleer (1990) discuss that children are vulnerable to television commercial advertising more than anybody else. Besides, children are quick to associate meanings to images as they as young viewers lack the necessary “cognitive skills” (McAleer, 1990: 105) to understand the real message hidden behind the skilful, subtle, and persuasively presented image. The issue of representation and media takes us to the discussion of stereotypes.

Stereotyping is a contentious term. Although there is generally no agreed upon definition, many researchers and scholars refer to the following definition coined by Lipmann. Lipmann (1922) used this term to identify beliefs about groups. Kasi; Dugger (2000) citing Lipmann note that stereotypes are pictures we have of particular groups and are developed within and by culture.

Stereotypes serve as codes by which audiences form a common understanding of a person or particular group of people usually in terms of their class, ethnicity or race, gender, sexual orientation, social role or occupation. 2 The image we have about particular groups of people is not direct or based on certain knowledge, but based on the image they make themselves or given to them (Lipmann, 1922). Thus we react to, not the real world but to its reconstructed image (Lipmann, 1922). Stereotypes involve not only cognitive generalisation and understanding of particular groups but also an emotional ingredient (Lipmann, 1922 Allport, 1954). The cognitive generalisations, which people involve in stereotyping, develop within a specific cultural context, for culture as a source provides the momentum (Katz and Braly 1933, 1935).

The term stereotype and its study are relevant to media and communication, as media reinforce standardised information (Holt, 1998) and the stereotypical representation of different groups of people, such as women. Lipmann (1922) discusses that stereotypes are also simplified images of the big and complex environment. Stereotypes are not only inaccurate and second-hand information about the real, but also simple and not amenable to face changes (Lipmann.1922). Lipmann's definition is not without criticisms. His definition of stereotype seems insufficient and too generalised. Perkins (1979: 140) identifies some misleading assumptions about the concept of stereotype and criticises Lipmann's definition of stereotype in light of the following assumptions. Lipmann assumes that stereotypes are:

Always erroneous in content

Pejorative concepts

About groups with whom we have little or no social contact; by implication therefore, stereotypes are not held about one's own group;

About minority groups (or oppressed groups)

Simple

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Media Stereotyping- Introduction (2003). Visited at [www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/index.cfm](http://www.media-awareness.ca/english/issues/stereotyping/index.cfm) – 35.<sup>2</sup>

Rigid

Do not change

Not structurally reinforced

People either 'hold' stereotypes of a group (believe them to be true or do not)

Because someone holds a stereotype of a group, his or her behaviour towards a member of that group can be predicted.

Perkins (1979) draws parallels between stereotype and ideology as having the same structure and qualities of truth and falsity. Perkins (1979) further counter argues that stereotypes are both simple and complex and second- handedness is not an attribute of stereotypes, exclusively but also of a majority of other concepts. Perkins's last reservation on Lipmann's concept of stereotype is that stereotypes are not rigid and always resistant to modification. It is however undeniable that stereotypes are "strong concepts and this maybe a distinguishing feature" (Holt, 1998: 34). Perkins (1979:145) departs from her reservations on Lipmann's definition and forwards the following more exhaustive concept of stereotyping:

A group concept: it describes a group. Personality traits (broadly defined) predominate;

A group holds it. There is a very considerable uniformity about its content. One cannot have a 'private' stereotype;

Reflects an inferior judgemental process (but not therefore leading to necessarily to an inaccurate conclusion). Stereotypes short-circuit or block capacity for objective and analytic judgements in favour of well-known catch-all reactions. To some extent all concepts do this. Stereotypes do it to a much greater extent;

b and c give rise to simple structures which frequently conceal complexity (see e). High probability that social stereotypes will be predominantly evaluative; and a concept and like other concepts it is a selection, cognitive organising system, and a feature of human thought.

Despite the differing arguments and definitions given, the general consensus on the concept of stereotype seems that that it is an oversimplified and generalised image about a person, group of persons or minorities (Grobman, 1990). Lack of enough information and knowledge about particular groups or situations results in unfair perception and judgement (Grobman, 1990). However, not all stereotypes are negative or positive. The same stereotype, for instance, can

be considered negative or positive depending on a group's perception and point of view (Holt, 1998).

### **1.3. The Representation of Women in Advertising**

Despite changing gender roles, (Croteau and Hoyness, 1997) mass media reinforce the stereotypical representation of gender as well as showing women as less active, decisive, courageous, intelligent and resourceful than men (Gauntlett, 2002). Gender role stereotypes are endowed with validation by the media and audiences tend to internalise these stereotypes (Prinsloo, 1996).

The 'language' of the media and advertising, pregnant with symbols and images, emphasises the gender role differences of both sexes by linking certain characteristics and behaviours with a particular gender in a way influencing people's perception of 'maleness' and 'femaleness' (McDonald, 1989). For instance, according to previous research, men were generally more likely than women to be shown in working roles, whereas the majority of female characters were depicted in non-working roles (Wulf, *et al*, 2003). Sexism, characteristic of most advertising, highlights the differences by depicting men as serious and committed about their work, "no more is required of women than that they should be handmaidens to efficiency, never planners or decision-makers" (Stott & King, 1977: 52). McDonald (1989) observed that the emphasis and reinforcement made by media and advertising hamper change and create rigid concepts of behaviours and qualities of gender roles. Moreover, the "standardising, exaggeration and simplification of gender roles and qualities is more prevalent in commercials than in actual life" (Goffman, 1976:84). Goffman (1976) suggested that images in advertising implicitly or explicitly communicate different concepts about gender and underpin existing stereotypes. Stereotypes in advertisements emanate from the association of possessing or buying a product with personal values.

Ads are related directly to behaviour; a message is encoded and a tangible product is pursued and perhaps purchased. The association of the message with the purchase act and subsequent material possession of a product may tend to produce stronger reinforcement of the message than would be the case had the message been observed passively. (Cuneen & Sidwell, 1998: 41)

The representations and depictions of both genders in media advertising tend to frame societal values and norms in respect to their roles (Klassen, *et al*, 1993). In other words, advertising images see both genders through the lens of a society and the vice-versa (Barthel, *et al*, 1988). Similarly, articles and advertising in women's magazines, for instance, depict women as passive objects ready for the male gaze; this representation, through advertising, reinforces this notion and stereotype (Nicholas and Price, 1998).

In the case of women, some argue that if images presented by the media concentrate on physical attractiveness, this reinforces sexism by encouraging us to think that the way women look is more important than what they do. This affects our attitudes to others and how we think of our own bodies and personalities. (Nicholas & Price, 1998: 43)

Advertisements are skilfully designed and produced and have an ideological function which is linked to their economic function (Allan-Reynolds, 1997). Allan-Reynolds (1997) further notes that women are contained and defined by patriarchal representations found in print advertisements. The objectification and sexualisation of the female body leads to stereotyped portrayal as sex objects designed to serve men's needs.

The inequality that women still face in society as a whole is clearly reflected in advertising (Croteau and Hoyness, 1997). Goffman (1976) discusses that advertisements are quite often a highly ritualised version of the parent-child relationship, with women treated largely as children. For example, women's hands are usually portrayed as caressing or barely touching an object, as though they were not in full control of it, whereas men's hands are shown strongly grasping and manipulating objects (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). Moreover, in advertisements involving women and men in contact, women are shown as physically and mentally dependent on men as if they are under the protection of the 'strong' men (Leiss, *et al*, 1986). Leiss, *et al* (1986) liken it to children seeking protection and comfort from their mother. Buswell (1989) places the image of women in advertisements in three categories: the *maternal* in which women are depicted as caretakers of family members; this includes preparation and serving of food, grocery shopping and laundry. *House-keeping* in which women are represented as taking care of the household furniture; and *aesthetics*, in which women serve in beautifying the user of a product neglecting the utilities and price of products. The *aesthetic* aspect of advertising usually includes the employment of sensuous women as sex objects to persuade men to purchase products and services.

Advertisements have depicted women as limited to domestic roles and largely absent in roles which need decision-making (Buswell, 1989 & Gauntlett, 2000); pictures of women have shown implicitly or explicitly their dependence on men for protection and as sex objects (Heslop, *et al*, 1989). Such stereotyped representations are, however, becoming outdated as “modern society is generally happy for the relationship to be dissolved” (Giddens, 1999, in Gauntlett, 2002: 3). It is common to see men and women working side-by-side, as equals, in hospitals and schools. Gauntlett explains, “advertisers have by now realised that audiences will only laugh at images of the pretty housewife, and have reacted by showing women how to be sexy at work instead” (Gauntlett, 2002: 57). Smith (1999) also observes that the stereotypic representation of women and their “lesser” roles seem to be resolved. Smith (1999) further concluded that many women appear in the labour force and as such gender roles are becoming homogenous between husbands and wives. Gauntlett (2002) also observed that today there is virtually equality between men and women in advertisements.

More recent literature also asserts that gender roles represented in advertisements are not so stereotypical. Gender roles represented in advertising are tending to reflect changing gender roles in society and the workplace (Gauntlett, 2002). Women’s images in advertising are changing in conjunction with the entry of far more women into the workforce (business, politics, and government), the increasing number of women with higher educational qualifications and feminist anti-discrimination efforts (Simpson, 1996; and Gripsrud, 2003). Wernick in his research (in Nicholas & Price, 1998: 182) also showed that men are entering the roles, which have been traditionally attributed to women. He outlined his finding as follows:

- Men have become more involved in actually buying things;
- They are having more products targeted at them (personal care products and leisure goods);
- They are no longer being seen as the exclusive breadwinners;
- They are no longer being automatically predominant in public life;
- They are more often being seen as the prey rather than the hunter in sexual relations; and
- Homosexuality is becoming more acceptable as a life style.

Recent research, generally, reveals that men and women are performing roles, which were stereotypically and traditionally limited to one gender. The old notion that men are

characterised by their dominance in a family is leaving the space for a new notion, that is the entrance of men in the roles traditionally limited to women and vice-versa.

# Chapter 2

## 2.1. Objective of the Study

As discussed under the literature review, earlier research has found that women in advertisements are primarily portrayed within a domestic or housewife setting (Croteau and Hoyness, 1997; Gauntlett, 2002 and Prinsloo, 1996). The secondary role that women were portrayed as is as sex objects. Prior research also showed that women are rarely seen representing roles other than domestic or sex roles. It is also Allan-Reynolds's (1997) view that the predominant roles of South African women reflected in advertisements in the print media have been as mother/homemaker, beauty, or sexual object. A study of southern African women showed that women were primarily depicted as victims of violence or objects of beauty, despite the advances by southern African women in the political and legal spheres. Although media have the potential role to play in the "liberation of the mind", they have more often than not been part of the problem rather than of the solution.<sup>3</sup>

However, more recent research as discussed later in the literature review, reveals that there seems to be fewer stereotypical representations of gender roles. Departing from this argument, this research will investigate gender role representations in print media advertisements. The research will look into these representations in response to social change and growing tendency towards equal representation of both genders (Croteau and Hoyness, 1997:149). The purpose of the research is to investigate the representation of stereotypical gender roles in advertisements in popular South African newspapers and to assess whether there is a tendency towards these becoming less widespread.

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Gender Links (2003) <http://www.genderlinks.org.za/>.<sup>3</sup>



## 2.2. Limitation of the Study

The researcher examined numerous advertisements with male and female central figures in popular South African newspapers which could be used to analyse the representation of men's and women's roles. The number of advertisements with depictions of men and women was less than expected. This maybe due to the fact that newspapers are not preferred by advertisers in terms of lifestyle characteristics (Heerden, 2003). The bulk of newspaper advertisements, therefore, tend to be retail-oriented. Besides, despite wide market coverage, certain target or market groups are not frequent readers (Wells, *et al*, 2000). Wells *et al* (2000) further explain that some products should not be advertised in newspapers and others are overlooked. The researcher, however, has found it viable to study the advertisements and to reach conclusions.

## 2.3 Methodology

**The following newspapers were analysed:**

### **City Press**

July 6, 2003; July 13, 2003; July 20, 2003 and July 27, 2003.

Average Issue Readership: 2 463 000 (AMPS<sup>1</sup> 2002b)

Sunday national African interest newspaper, in English

### **Post (Wednesday edition)**

July 9, 2003; July 16, 2003; July 23, 2003 and July 30, 2003.

Average Issue Readership 340 000 (AMPS 2002b)

Bi-weekly Indian Interest newspaper, in English.

### **Rapport**

July 6, 2003; July 13, 2003; July 20, 2003 and July 27, 2003.

Average Issue Readership 1 508 000 (AMPS 2002b)

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<sup>1</sup> The All Media and Products Survey (AMPS) collects information on the readership of newspapers and magazines, television viewing, radio listening, cinema going and on the acquisition, possession, or use of selection or products and services, together with extensive demographic data  
<http://www.nrf.ac.za/sada/ahdetails.asp?catalognumber=0045>

Sunday national newspaper, in Afrikaans.

**Sunday Times**

July 6, 2003; July 13, 2003; July 20, 2003 and July 27, 2003.

Average Issue Readership 3 528 000 (AMPS 2002b)

Sunday national newspaper, in English

**Ilanga (Monday edition)**

July 7, 2003; July 14, 2003; July 21, 2003 and July 28, 2003.

Average Issue Readership 637 000 (AMPS 2002b)

Bi-weekly African interest newspaper, in isiZulu.

These newspapers have mass readerships: all are widely read newspapers in South Africa. They were selected because of their comparability and their coverage of different demographic groups and issues.

All advertisements from these newspapers were assessed over a period of three weeks (from July 6, 2003-July 30, 2003). In this research project, content analysis was used as research instrument.

Content analysis was used to classify patterns of similarities and differences. Content analysis is traditionally applied to textual materials, but it can also be used to analyse images (Gaskel and Bauer, 2000). It is a research method used to measure and analyse some form of communication. Content analysis may be applied to almost any form of communication such as books, magazines, poems, newspapers, songs, speeches, letters, laws and constitutions (Babbie and Mouton, 2002). Researchers who utilise the technique of content analysis advocate that it saves money and time for the researcher (Babbie and Mouton, 2002). In content analysis there is no need for special equipment to deal with analysis of data or findings (Babbie & Mouton, 2002). Similarly, Berger (1998: 116-117) outlines some of the advantages of content analysis:

It is inexpensive

It is usually relatively easy to get material

It is unobtrusive (and thus doesn't influence people)

It yields data that can be quantified

It can be used to examine current events, past events, or both.

However content analysis is not without criticisms. Babbie and Mouton (2002) and Berger (1998) identified some of the disadvantages associated with the technique of content analysis. Firstly, it is likely that the studied sample may not be representative. Secondly, the analysis is limited to recorded communications, be it oral, written, or graphic. Thirdly, it is very difficult to get a good working framework and definition of the topic under discussion. Fourthly, a measurable unit is difficult to establish, and fifthly, it is likely that the conclusion made based on this method may not be correct and proved with ease.

Despite the above-mentioned disadvantages and limitations associated with the technique of content analysis, the researcher found it viable in the analysis of the representation of gender roles in newspaper advertisements.

The content analysis examined the incidence of women and men in advertisements to assess the gender role representation of women in relation to that of men. Content analysis helped the researcher to draw out categories of the various ways in which women were represented in newspaper advertisements *vis-à-vis* men. An analysis was undertaken to determine whether there were differences between the representations amongst the various publications, which cater for different demographic target market and whether specific product or service categories use similar representations of women and men in their advertisements.

## **2.4 Sample of Advertisements**

The research considered all display advertisements in the newspapers. Those advertisements without representations of men or women and loose advertising inserts and classified advertisements were excluded from the analysis. Newspapers shared an abundance of advertisements without images of men or women. Besides, classifieds took up much more space than display advertisements. The study recorded the incidence of the use of men and women as central figures in each advertisement. 682 advertisements were compiled from the five newspapers. Out of 682 advertisements, 52 advertisements (7.6%) included depictions of men as central figures and 70 advertisements (10%) included depictions of women central figures. The number of men and women central figures is very small in comparison with that of non-applicable advertisements and advertisements without pictures of women. (see table

2.1) This may be due to the reason that advertisers prefer magazines and television to newspapers in terms of advertising lifestyle characteristics (Heerden, 2003). 83 advertisements (12%) included depictions of men and women (non-applicable), in which it was not possible to isolate a dominant central figure, save one central figure (man), who appeared to be dominant among other men. The researcher chose advertisements with only one person depicted for both men and women and avoided advertisements where people were depicted in groups. The reason was to minimise the problem of identifying a central figure in the advertisements.

Newspaper	Male	%	Female	%	Non-applicable	%	Without Pictures	%	Total
Sunday Times	19	2.7	32	4.7	31	4.5	193	28	275
City Press	11	1.6	6	0.9	9	1.3	73	11	99
Rapport	10	1.5	16	2	22	3	76	11.2	124
Post	7	1	8	1.1	11	1.6	70	10	96
Ilanga	5	0.7	8	1.1	10	1.5	65	9.5	88
Total	52	7.6	70	10	83	12	477	70	682

**Table 2.1** Male and female as central figures and advertisements without depictions of men and women in five newspapers.

### 2.5 Coding Procedure

A coding system recorded the gender of the central figures represented in the advertisement, the product or service being advertised and the publication in which the advertisement appeared. The everyday role being played by the characters in the advertisement was classified. This was done by using semiotic analysis and a study of the visual cues within the image. The roles identified and used by Furnham, Pallangy and Gunter (2001) in their analysis of gender roles in Zimbabwean television commercials were used as a guideline. The researcher analysed advertisements for the following characteristics of each central figure

depicted in the advertisements: gender of central figure, credibility basis, role, location, argument, and product/service.

### **2.5.1. Central Figures**

The coding process classified the central figures in the advertisements in terms of the sex of central figure, credibility basis, role, argument, and product type.

### **2.5.2. Credibility basis**

Based on Furnham, Pallangy and Gunter's (2001) classification, the central figures were categorised into one of the following three classifications: *user*, where the central figure was portrayed mainly as a user or consumer of the advertised product or service; *authority*, where the figure was depicted as a source of information about the advertised product or service; and *other*, which includes roles such as aesthetics, sex object, housewife and symbolism.

### **2.5.3. Role**

The central figures were classified according to the everyday role they played in the advertisements. Those roles were classified into one of the following categories: professional, homemaker (housewife), sex object, aesthetic and symbolism. The researcher used the term, symbolism, to classify those central figures who represented quality of a product or service.

### **2.5.4. Location**

The coding process identified three locations in which the central figures appeared. The locations are home, work place and leisure. In this context, the term 'leisure' included anywhere 'out of work place' and home in order to avoid confusion that may arise from the classification of people in the home categories.

### **2.5.5. Argument**

The coding procedure classified the central figures according to the type of argument given for using the advertised product or service. Those within the category of *factual* contained scientific/technical evidence of advertised products and also policies of institutions and suppliers. The advertisements within the category of *opinion* included non-scientific testimonials and individual views supporting or promoting the advertised product or service. Any advertisements, which do not consist of *opinion* and/or *factual* were classified as none.

### **2.5.6. Product type**

In the coding process, a typology or classification of products and services was identified as being advertised. The products and services were classified into the following categories: clothing, telecommunication, education (career advancement), banking, sale of hardware, car and related hardware, media and managerial services.

# Chapter 3

## Research Findings

### 3.1. Central figures

Male	Female	Total	Non-applicable	Without Pictures	Total
52	70	122	83	477	682

**Table 3. 1.** Total number of central figures, nonapplicable advertisements and advertisements without depictions of male and female central figures.

Out of the hundred and twenty-two advertisements for products and services, fifty-two men (42%) and seventy women (58%) were portrayed as central figures. The figures show that newspaper advertisers used more women than men as central figures.

### 3.2. Credibility Basis

Gender	Source of Information (Authority)	%	User	%	Other (Aesthetics, sex object, housewife and Symbolism)	%	Total
Male	37	30	5	4	10	8	52
Female	26	21	36	29	8	7	70
Total	63	51	41	33	18	15	122

**Table 3.2.** Number and percentages of male and female central figures in terms of sources of information, user, aesthetics, sex object and symbolism

According to the coding procedure, the following results for each central figure were identified: thirty-seven men (30%) and twenty-six women (21%) as sources of information; five men (4%) and thirty-six women (29%) as users: and ten men (8%) and eight women (7%) fell under aesthetics, sex object, house-wife and symbolism. The above figures show that women were portrayed mostly as users and for beautifying advertised products and services. This will be discussed in detail under the *discussion* section.

### 3.3. Role

According to the coding procedure, out of one hundred and twenty-two central figures, two women (2%) and no men (0%) were depicted as housewives, thirty-seven men (30%) and eighteen women (16 %) were depicted as professionals, no men (0 %) and nine women (7%) were used in an aesthetics function, ten men (8%) and four women (3%) were used as symbols, no men (0%) and one women (1%) was depicted as a sex object and five men (4%) and thirty-six women (29 %) were depicted as users in the newspapers advertisements. The above figures show that women were mostly depicted as users. This suggests that women were mostly limited to home as users and consumers. Based on the results in connection with roles, the majority of roles of men and women can be classified as professional, aesthetic homemaker/housewife, sex object and symbolism.

Gender	Housewife	Professional	Aesthetics	Symbol	Sex Object	Users	Total
Male	0	37	0	10	0	5	52
Female	2	18	9	4	1	36	70
Total	2	55	9	14	1	41	122

**Table 3.3.** Number of male and female central figures in terms of roles: housewife, professionals, aesthetics, symbol, sex object and users.



Gender	Housewife	Professional	Aesthetics	Symbol	Sex Object	Users	Total
Male	0	30	0	8	0	4	42
Female	2	16	7	3	1	29	58
Total	2	46	7	11	1	33	100

**Table 3.3.1.**Classification of male and female central figures in terms of roles in percentage.

### 3.4. Location

Sex	Home	%	Workplace	%	Leisure	%	Total
Male	0	0	34	27	18	15	52
Female	2	2	21	18	47	39	70
Total	2	2	55	45	65	54	122

**Table 3.4.** Classification of male and female central figures in terms of location.

The three identified locations where images appeared are the home, the work place and leisure. No men (0%) and two women (2%); thirty-four men (27%) and twenty-one women (18%); and eighteen men (15%) and forty- seven women (39%) were depicted in the home, workplace and leisure categories, respectively. The great difference between women and men in the leisure category reveals that much fewer women than men were shown in the workplace. A negligible number of women were identified in the home category.

3.5. Argument

Sex	Factual	%	Opinion	%	Non	%	Total
Male	16	13	24	20%	12	10	52
Female	28	23	30	25%	12	10	70
Total	44	36	54	45	24	20	122

**Table 3.5.** Classification of male and female central figures in terms of arguments given about products/services.

The procedure identified the central figures in terms of the arguments given about the products or services. The scientific/technical evidence here included the services given by institutional services, such as financial and education services. Based on the procedure, sixteen men (13%) and twenty-eight women (23%) gave scientific/technical evidence of products and services. This set of figures shows that more women than men were shown to be giving evidence. Twenty-four men (20%) and thirty women (25%) gave personal opinions about products and services. An equal number of men and women (10%) were found to have given neither evidence nor opinion.

3.6. Products and Services

Products	Gender	
	Male	Female
Clothing, accessories and household	2	22
Auto (spare parts, such as tyre)	1	0
Telecommunication Products	1	8
Financial and Educational Services	1	6
Total Number of Users	5	36

**Table 3.6.** Classification of products and services

The variety of products identified in the advertisements were collapsed to form the following categories of products and services:

***Clothing, Accessories and household (in one incident)***

***Institutional services:*** education, banking, hardware (auto and others), telecommunications and managerial services.

# Chapter 4

## Discussion of the Findings

### 4.1.General

The results revealed a tendency towards gender role stereotyping in popular South African newspapers. For convenience of the discussion, the gender role representation will be discussed in terms of the coding procedures listed above.

#### 4.1.1. Credibility Basis

Out of one hundred and twenty-two advertisements, seventy women (58%) and fifty-two men (42%) were used as central figures in the newspaper advertisements. This shows that advertisers tend to use more women than men to sell more of their products in the hope that their products and services might appeal to a specific social group or a specific sex (Katz, 2001). (See table 3.1).

If seen from the perspective of the user category, more women than men were likely to be portrayed as product users (4 % men and 29 % women) (see table 3.2). Out of the total number of users (41), women were depicted as users of clothes, accessories and household products (54%) and telecommunication products (20%) more than educational and financial services (15%) (See table 4.1, next page). The percentage of men depicted as users is very low in comparison with that of women: 5% as users of beauty products, 2% as users of auto spare parts, 2% as users of telecommunication products and 2% as users of financial and educational services. The depiction reinforces the stereotyped attitude that women are concerned with appearance.

The difference in percentage between women users and men users (29% women and 4% men) reinforces the traditional stereotype that women are consumers; men are the dominant figures and the breadwinners and producers. It reveals that advertisers depict women as being more concerned about beauty and cleanliness than career achievement. The portrayal of women as consumers of beauty products rather than services is equivalent to say that advertisers give the

message that the way they (women) look is not attractive and if they buy the advertised product, they will smell better, be less hairy, be sexier, that they will be closer to the airbrushed ideal we are to believe men desire (Grisso, 2001). Moreover, the emphasis on female appearance shows that their physical appearance maybe more important than their intellectual and emotional selves. The depiction of men as users of beauty products and services (4%) shows that men are also targets of products/services and are concerned with appearance. This is, therefore, evidence that men are no longer depicted in advertisements only in association with decision-making, intelligence, power, control, and reasonableness.

Products	Gender	
	Male	Female
Clothing, accessories and household	22	22
Auto (spare parts, such as tyre)	1	0
Telecommunication Products	1	8
Financial and Educational Services	1	6
Total Number of Users	5	36

**Table 4.1.** Classification of central figures and products/services.

In the newspaper advertisements analysed, more men than women central figures were depicted as sources of information (30% men and 21% women). This suggests that advertisers employ men as product authorities and as confident in making rational decisions in buying products and using services.

The difference in the use of men and women in aesthetising products/services and signifying messages in association with the use of products/services (symbolising) is less apparent (8%

men and 7% women). This will be dealt with in more detail under the analysis of each newspaper.

#### **4.1.2. Role**

There was a difference in involvement of women in the workforce (as professionals) in contrast to men. More men (30%) than women (16%) were depicted in the workforce as professionals (see table 3.3). The stereotypical depiction reflects a gender role difference between men and women by portraying more women than men outside the work force. The tendency reinforces the traditional stereotype that men are predominant figures and breadwinners in the society. It is also indicative of men's association with career advancement and women with self-enhancement. Despite the stereotypical portrayal of women, the depiction of women in the workforce (16%) shows that women are becoming achievement-oriented and professionals with varied abilities. Moreover, the representation of women in the workforce suggests their involvement in decision-making, finance and management. This may be related to their achievement in higher educational qualifications, involvement in different workforces and feminist anti-discrimination (Simpson, 1996; and Gripsrud, 2003). The aforementioned achievements seemed to have influenced advertisers and newspaper publishers not to depict women as sex objects. Besides, advertisers may have become aware of their audience and may portray gender roles differently as they think appropriate. Only in one incident was a woman depicted as a sex object.

#### **4.1.3. Location**

The representation of women and men in terms of location revealed a difference between men and women (See table 3.4). The portrayal of more women (39%) than men (15%) in leisure or out of the workforce and less women than men in the workplace (27% men and 18% women) suggests that men are more active and busier in jobs which need decision-making than women.

Advertisers in the popular South African newspapers seemed to be wary of depicting women doing housework. Only in two cases were women shown with their children as users of *Ultimate* weight loss and energy products. This may be considered a change in roles women

have made in line with their involvement in different professions, achievement in educational qualifications and efforts for equality.

#### **4.1.4. Argument**

In the advertisements analysed, 23% of women central figures used factual arguments whereas 13% of men did. This shows that women were dominant in giving more factual arguments than opinions about products and services. This reveals that women dominated as experts, authoritative and knowledgeable about practical reasons for buying a product or using a service. Previous research shows on one hand that women tended to give more opinion than factual arguments about products and services (Furnham, *et al*, 2001). On the other hand, 20% of men and 25% of women gave opinion about products. This suggests that women were shown as consumers of products, giving their own views for buying a product and using services. It tends to show that there might be less confidence in women in making practical decisions in buying products and using services. Besides, it reveals men's status as experts, professionals and knowledgeable about products and services. However, it is undeniable that more women central figures (58%) than men central figures (42%) were used in total sample of advertisements to advertise products and services. This shows on one the hand, that advertisers tend to use more women than men in the promotion of their products and services in the hope that the use of women could help enhance the appeal for their products/services to a specific social group or a specific sex. This likely reinforces the traditional stereotype that more women than men are portrayed in the promotion of products and services and more concerned with the social significance of purchasing a product (Furnham, *et al* , 2001).

## 4.2. Differences in Representation Among Newspapers

### 4.2.1. Central Figures

Newspaper	Male	Female	Non-applicable	Without Pictures	Total
Sunday Times	19	32	31	193	275
City Press	11	6	9	73	99
Rapport	10	16	22	76	124
Post	7	8	11	70	96
Ilanga	5	8	10	65	88
Total	52	70	83	477	682

**Table 4.2.** Number and percentage of central figures, non-applicable and advertisements without pictures in each newspaper.

Most of the advertisements studied came from the *Sunday Times* (51,42%). This is due to its big volume and wide coverage of issues. Besides, advertisers used more women than men (32 women and 19 men) in the *Sunday Times* (see table 4.2). The *Rapport* ranked second in using more women than men as central figures. The number of men central figures in the *City Press* exceeds the number of men used in the *Rapport* by one man. Although, the *Post* and *Ilanga* used equal number of women central figures, they differ in use of men central figures. The difference in the number of men and women central figures may be tied to the total number of pages of each newspaper.

### 4.2.2. Credibility Basis

Newspaper	Source of Information		User		Other	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sunday Times	15	15	0	15	4	2



Rapport	7	0	3	13	0	3
City Press	7	3	1	3	3	0
Post	3	3	1	2	3	3
Ilanga	5	5	0	3	0	0
Total	37	26	5	36	10	8

**Table 4.3.** Central figures in each newspaper classified in terms of sources of information, user and other (aesthetics, symbolism, housewife, sex object).

Although the number of men and women is equal in terms of product authorities in the *Sunday Times*, women were much more likely to be portrayed as product users (see table 4.3). The equality in the number of men and women in the *authority* category mitigates the old stereotype that women are simply targets and consumers of products. It is, however, undeniable that advertisers in the *Sunday Times* relied on the use of women more than men in promoting their products and services (19 men and 22 women). The stereotype is evident in the *Rapport* in which only men were portrayed as having an authority on products. The *Rapport* ranked below the *Sunday Times* in portraying more women than men as product users. The *City Press* followed the *Rapport* in portraying more men as product authorities and more women as users. Women were more than men likely to be portrayed as product users and less than men likely to be portrayed as product authorities. In the *Post* and *Ilanga* the number of men and women in the authority category is equal. This shows that women are not simply consumers or targets of products. However, the *Post* and *Ilanga* differed in the use of men and women in the user category. There seem to be more stereotypical portrayals in *Ilanga* than in the *Post*. In the *Post* the difference in the number of women and men users is too small to say there was a considerable stereotypical portrayal of women. The category *other* is dealt with in detail under roles.

4.2.3. Role

Roles	Professional		Sex Object		Housewife		Aesthetics		Symbol		User	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Sunday Times	15	12	0	1	0	0	0	4	4	0	0	15
Rapport	7	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	3	3	11
City Press	7	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	3	0	1	3
Post	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	3	1	1	2
Ilanga	5	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5
Total	37	18	0	1	0	2	0	9	10	4	5	36

**Table 4.4.** Number of male and female central figures in each newspaper classified in terms of roles.

As discussed above under central figures, the majority of men and women central figures came from the *Sunday Times* newspaper (see table 4.2). In the *Sunday Times*, the difference in depiction of women and men as professionals is negligible and shows that women are performing the roles which were stereotypically limited to men. However, only women were portrayed as users in the *Sunday Times* newspaper. There seemed to be more stereotypical representation in the *Afrikaans Rapport* than in the *Sunday Times*. Advertisers in the *Rapport* used only men as professionals. In addition, more women than men were used as users. In the *City Press* only men were depicted as professionals, signifying stereotypical portrayal of women out of the professional realm. Besides, only women were depicted as users in the *City Press*. Advertisers seemed to be aware of their audiences regarding the depiction of women as sex objects.<sup>4</sup> Only in one incident in the *Sunday Times* was one woman portrayed as a sex object. This may be attributed to the reason that the editorial environment of a news paper is generally serious; newspaper advertisements don't have to be catchy to attract the attention of its audiences or readers. Therefore, the depiction of a single woman as a sex object is too negligible to draw stereotypical representations of women in terms of women sexual objectification in the newspaper advertisements.

#### 4.2.4. Aesthetics<sup>5</sup> and Symbolism<sup>6</sup>

Advertising, aesthetics and semiotics are inextricably linked to each other. Semiotics is employed especially by “the image rich-world of advertising”.<sup>7</sup> Signifier and signified are fused together into advertisements of different products and services. Moreover, the codes of advertising and signs are full of aesthetic values and customs.

The association of a product with personal values and desires embedded in codes and signs is quite fascinating. Nevertheless, portrayals of personal values in association with usage of products and services in the newspapers were not pervasive as has been found in television commercials and magazine advertisements. Advertisers, to some extent, used signs in the newspaper advertisements. In the *Sunday Times*, elegantly dressed men were portrayed as symbols of perfection, by drinking brandy, while women were depicted in beautifying telecommunication products. Other strong looking men in two incidents were also portrayed as symbolizing the attractive appeal of winning the Lotto.

With regard to telecommunication products, women were shown dancing and others smiling with some parts of their bodies (chest, legs and waists) exposed. The meaning encoded here is that ownership of such products is a source of beauty, happiness, success, confidence and grace. The stereotype is evident here. Pictures of women's body parts appear more often than men's in the advertisements; they are used to beautify products and lure buyers to buy products/services, while men's body is used to signify personal integrity and male perfection. With regard to the institutional services, women were shown smiling and showing bright faces to promote services such as educational and career advancement. The manipulation of women's smile and body parts was associated with the reward users may get from the use of products and services.

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The term “Sex Object” refers to the portrayal of women as object of sexual gratification.<sup>4</sup>

The term “aesthetics” is used to denote the depiction of men or women as beautifiers of products or services so as to attract potential buyers.<sup>5</sup>

The term “symbolism” is used to denote the depiction of men or women as representing qualities of products or services.<sup>6</sup>

The Art and Culture Network (1999-2003). Visited at [www.artandculture.com/arts/movement? movement=564](http://www.artandculture.com/arts/movement?movement=564)<sup>7</sup>

The depiction of women in the *Rapport* to symbolize the power and strength of Nokia 5110 may soften the stereotyped attitude towards women. Quite often, most advertisements use strong men in connection with the strength and power of products. Most men used in promotion of products/services usually have 'perfect' and muscular bodies, whereas, women have slim bodies. Moreover, very often men's attraction is often signified through allusion to power or wealth, while women's attraction is indicated through reference to beauty. Therefore, it follows that the stereotype is less strong in the *Rapport* than in the *Sunday Times*, although no men were used as beautifiers in the *Sunday Times* and the *Rapport*. In the *City Press* women were also portrayed as beautifiers of telecommunication products and services such as financial and educational institutions, while men were depicted as symbolising perfection upon drinking brandy. In the *Post* two women out of eight were used as beautifiers of services and products, while three strong men were depicted as symbols of the strength of a brand of tyre. Women were depicted as though they were not in full control of products, while men were depicted as muscular and well built to embody strength and power of products. The use of women more in beautifying and less in standing for power and strength of products reinforces the stereotype that women are weaker and less energetic than men in terms of physical strength. This may have resulted for the most part from the stereotypical portrayal of women as powerless in the media (Grisoo, 2001). The stereotypical depiction of women as powerless and less energetic than men and as confined more to beautifying products/services may influence audiences' attitudes towards women's personalities.

Quite often, the employment of young, sexy and attractive women is aimed at persuading men to purchase products and services (Buswell, 1989). Advertisers used one sexy looking woman in the advertisements for a nightclub to attract men by showing sexually revealing parts of her bodies (thighs and chest). Advertisements such as these try to direct us to what the norm is, as gender roles are socially constructed (Goffman, 1976). However, the depiction of only one woman as a sex object in advertisements in popular South African newspapers is very small to make a swift generalization.

Besides, in one incident in the *Post*, advertisers used a woman to symbolise the country (India) and its people. The same situation holds true in Eritrea and Ethiopia. Eritreans and Ethiopians use the pronoun 'she' to refer to their respective country as a 'mother' endowed

with motherly qualities of care, sympathy and love. The portrayal of countries as women may generate positive or negative implications depending on cultural context.

With reference to aesthetics and symbolism, women were more likely than men to be portrayed in the beautification of business services, the purchase of telecommunication products, such as Nokia and Motorola and entertainment services.

In terms of the women-users category, the *Sunday Times* depicted the greatest number of women as users. Therefore, it is apparent that much of the stereotype in terms of consumption came from the *Sunday Times*. In the *Rapport* more women than men were depicted as users. Besides, the *Rapport* held a primary position in portraying women as users more of beauty products than institutional services, such as financial and educational services (see table 4.7). The depiction tends to reinforce the existing stereotype that women are more concerned with appearance than with professional expertise. The portrayal of men as users in the *Rapport*, though far less than the number of women, indicates that men also are becoming consumers and targets of products/services. This hints a tendency towards non-stereotypical representations of both genders in different roles.

#### **4.2.5. Location**

In terms of location, advertisers in the *Sunday times* depicted the greatest number of women and men in workplace and in leisure locations (31% of the total number of women and 15% of the total number of men were depicted in leisure). The figures show that women are twice than men likely to be portrayed out of the workplace. On the other hand, though more women than men were depicted out of the workplace, the depiction of men in the leisure category may mitigate the existing stereotype towards women. The difference in the depiction of men and women in the workplace is very small (see table. 4.5). This shows that women were also performing professional roles, which have been quite often limited to men. This may be related to growing number of women's achievement in educational qualifications and anti-discrimination efforts. Besides, it shows that the depiction of men only in association with logic, authority, rationality and power is becoming outdated. In the *Rapport*, more men than women were portrayed in the workplace. In the *City Press*, although the difference in the portrayal of men and women in leisure is negligible, more men were depicted in the workplace. In the *Post*, more men were portrayed in the workplace. The same situation was

observed in *Ilanga* regarding the depiction of men and women in leisure, although there was a minor difference in portrayals of men and women in the workplace. Generally speaking, despite some stereotypical depiction of women more in leisure than in the workforce, the figures show that women are making their way into the workforce as professionals.

Location	Home		Leisure		Workplace	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sunday Times	0	0	8	22	11	10
Rapport	0	2	6	12	4	2
City Press	0	0	2	3	9	3
Post	0	0	1	5	6	3
Ilanga	0	0	1	5	4	3
Total	0	2	18	47	34	21

**Table 4.5.** Number of male and female central figures in each newspaper classified in terms of location.

#### 4.2.6. Argument

Argument	Factual		Opinion		Non	
Gender	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sunday Times	6	12	10	13	3	7
Rapport	4	10	3	4	3	2
City Press	1	1	6	4	4	1
Post	3	1	3	6	1	1
Ilanga	2	4	2	3	1	1
Total	16	28	24	30	12	12

**Table 4.6.** Male and female central figures in each newspaper classified in terms of arguments given about products/services.

With regard to the argument given about the products and services, the *Sunday Times* used the greatest number of men and women. Based on the coding, more women than men gave factual arguments about products in the *Sunday Times*. Similarly in the *Rapport*, women were more than twice than men likely to give factual arguments. This maybe due to the large number of women used in both newspapers. With equal representation in the *City Press*, the reverse situation was observed in the *Post*: more men gave factual arguments. In *Ilanga*, women were twice than men likely to give factual arguments.

A similar situation was also observed with regard to the *opinion* category. In the *Sunday Times*, the *Rapport* and *Ilanga*, the number of women slightly exceeds the number of men in giving opinions. In the *Post*, more women than men were likely to give opinion. Quite the reverse trend was experienced in the *City Press*, in which more men than women were likely to give opinion. Generally speaking, women dominated in giving opinions and factual arguments about products and services. This maybe due to the use of a great number of women in the newspapers, especially, in the *Sunday Times* and the *Rapport*.

#### 4.2.7. Product/Services and Users

Newspaper	Household, Clothing and accessories		Auto		Telecommunication		Financial and Educational Services	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sunday Times	0	7	0	0	0	5	0	3
Rapport	2	11	0	0	1	0	0	2
City Press	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	0
Post	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0
Ilanga	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
Total	2	22	1	0	1	8	1	6

**Table 4.7.** Number of central figures in each newspaper classified in terms of use of products/services.

In terms of the products and services identified in association with the central figures, out of the total number of men and women users (41), women were found to be users of clothes, accessories and household (in one incident) more than institutional services. In the *Sunday Times*, only women were depicted as users of clothes, telecommunication products and institutional services rather than beauty products. In the *Rapport* women were more than five times more likely than men to be portrayed as users of the above products (see table 4.7). Besides, only women were depicted as users of financial and educational services. The result drawn from the *Rapport* shows that women are more concerned with appearance than with career advancement. Only one man as a user of auto spare parts and two men as users of hair growing product were depicted. Compared to the total number of women users in *Rapport*, it is very small. Women were also depicted as users of telecommunication products more in the *Sunday Times* than in the *City Press*. In no other newspapers were women depicted as users of telecommunication products. The *Post* and *Ilanga* depicted an equal number of women (no men) as users of the household, clothing and accessories. The number of men and women in terms of consumption of the second, third and fourth categories of products and services in the last two newspapers is too small to draw conclusions.

The general conclusion drawn from the figures in table 4.7 is that women were more likely to be portrayed as consumers of beauty products, telecommunication products and educational and financial services. The absence of many men central figures in the user category reveals men's high status as experts, professionals and product authorities and women's low status in the afore-mentioned qualities stereotypically attributed to men.



# Conclusion

This research revealed some stereotypical representations of women. Although women are making their way into workplace, the advertisements in the newspapers showed some stereotypical depictions of women, particularly in terms of using a variety of products and services. The depiction of women as users and outside of the workplace suggests that women are consumers rather than professionals and decision-makers. In comparison to the Zimbabwean television advertisements study (Furnham, Pallangy & Gunter, 2001), however, the stereotype in South African newspaper advertisements was much less: Out of one hundred and ten advertisements, the previous study yielded 80% of women as users and 20% of them as product authorities and 53% of men as users and 47% of them as product authorities. More men than women (32% of men and 14% of women) were depicted in the workplace (66% of men 49% of women, in Leisure).<sup>5</sup> The stereotype seems less marked in this study than in the previous study in terms of the depiction of women in the workforce in comparison to men, because the depiction of women in the workforce in the current study was 4% higher than in the previous study. In the South African study only 2% of women and 0 % of men were depicted in the *home* category. In the Zimbabwean study, however, women were more than eighteen times than women in the South African newspaper advertisements (2%) likely to be depicted at home (37% of women and 2% of men).

Therefore, notwithstanding some stereotypical representations, the depiction of women in the workforce might be considered a change and a small leap in the long way towards equal representation of gender roles in advertisements; it may be related to women's achievement in higher educational qualifications, involvement in different workforces and their efforts towards equality. Regarding gender equality, Frene Ginwala, Speaker of Parliament, cited by Mutume (1998) said "I feel very proud of South Africans because over four years we have made encouraging gains".

To some extent, men were also depicted as beautifiers and users of (beauty) products and services. This shows, despite the depiction of more men in the workforce, that men are no

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The usage of the term 'leisure' in this study is different from its meaning used in the Zimbabwean study. In this study it is used to show the depiction of men and women outside of the workplace and recreation.<sup>5</sup>

more the only predominant and exclusive breadwinners in the family (Wernick, in Nicholas & Price, 1998); they are targets of products/services. This hints a trend towards non-stereotypical representations of men and women in different roles.

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