

Gender Stereotypes in print advertising: historical view from Brazil

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Abstract

Our study focuses on understanding these changes by looking into how women are represented in print advertising. We selected *Veja* magazine, the most important weekly magazine in Brazil for decades. In total, 492 advertisements that portrayed women were collected, between 1968 and 2016, totaling a period of 48 years. The characteristics evaluated were: the number of men and women present in the advertisement and if there is interaction between them, which product is advertised and the market sector, the part of the woman's body present in the image, the clothing she is wearing, the scene and the action being taken, in addition to the target audience of the advertisement. Initially, women were represented in small sizes, in most cases next to a man, lacking independence. Women were mainly shown as mothers or housewife's, reflecting their role in society. Over time, following social and political changes that occurred in Brazil, women started appearing in qualified positions, being used to tangibilize the product or service advertised. Finally, the traditional role of women as mothers and housewife's started to fade, but it's still present. This symbolizes a decrease in the objectifying of women.

Key-words: stereotype, print-advertising, women.

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1. Introdução

Advertising appropriates the social imaginary, ideas, attitudes and values, attributing to them a cultural connotation, and translating that into meaningful practices (Sinclair, 1987). Stereotypes are a common practice in advertising, which are generalizers of reality, and enable more people to identify with advertising communication, increasing its impact and amplifying message adherence. Major stereotypes propagated by the media are the reflection of social roles that are already rooted in the collective unconscious of society. These stereotypes represent a resistance to change that can harm minorities (Oliveira-Cruz, 2017; Conde and Hurtado, 2006). For instance, messages on women are often stereotyped, restricting their roles to mothers, housewives or beauty/sexual figures, roles that do not represent the diversity of the female world (Kang, 1997).

Paradoxically, Brazilian women have been seen as sexual and asexual objects, confined to a few environments – church and the household. Brazilian society is rooted in a colonial slave society, in which white men forced African and indigenous women to serve them sexually. However, the white women who arrived during the Colonial era kept the archetype asexual, weak, submissive, passive, and powerless in the public domain. (De Souza, Baldwin e da Rosa, 2000). Brazil still remains a deeply patriarchal society, where crimes committed against women are common (McCann & Conniff, 1989, apud De Souza, Baldwin e da Rosa, 2000). In addition, Hollywood representations such as Carmen Miranda and the carnival reinforced the vision of Brazil-colony: a tropical paradise with sexually desired women (Beserra, 2007).

Starting in the 1960's, the participation of women in Brazilian society began to change. Our study focuses on understanding these changes by looking into how women are represented in print advertising. We selected *Veja* magazine, the most important weekly magazine in Brazil for decades. We propose that, when society changes, the way women are presented in print advertisements also changes, reflecting both the social status and the new image of women (Kang, 1997).

2. The identity of Brazilian women and gender stereotypes

The Colonial era in Brazil began with European invasions, slavery based trade, with the prominence and authority of the white men over other groups, bringing sexual relations as a way to impose this dominance (Burns 1993, Levine, 1989 apud de Souza, Baldwin and Rosa, 2000). On the one hand, African and indigenous women were taken by force to serve as

sexual objects by Portuguese colonizers, on the other hand, white women were pressured to present themselves asexual persons that have their lives restricted to the church or the household. They were stereotyped as weak, submissive, passive, and powerless in the public arena. Instead of receiving a formal education, they were trained to marry (de Costa, 1985 apud de Souza, Baldwin and da Rosa, 2000), to run the house, raise their children, and tolerate the husband's extramarital affairs with the slaves (McCann & Conniff, 1989, pp. xiii, De Souza, Baldwin and da Rosa, 2000). Da Costa (1985 apud De Souza, Baldwin and da Rosa, 2000) suggests that such connections existed in harmony within the religious precepts of the time, which favored miscegenation.

Brazil still remains a deeply patriarchal society, where crimes committed against women are common (McCann & Conniff, 1989 apud De Souza, Baldwin and da Rosa, 2000). Brazilians have become a commodity in the market of cultural and sexual exoticism since Hollywood used Carmen Miranda to spread the myth of the sensuality and grace of Brazilian women, later fueled by the carnival transmission, especially the parade of the samba schools from Rio de Janeiro. The old myths of the tropical paradise probably inspired and guided the creation of new myths, now also produced by Brazilians themselves to feed the cultural and tourist industries (Beserra, 2007).

For products intended for family or domestic use (medicines, food and cleaning products), women are considered the primary target audience for the message, and the figure of the "queen of the home" woman, a zealous mother, who cares for her family. In the case of products primarily aimed at the male audience, such as automobiles and alcoholic beverages, women appear as "objects of desire", portrayed as a coadjutant or premium associated with the consumption of the advertised good (Dominick and Rauch, 2010).

Heldman (2012) developed a test to identify sexual objectification in diverse images. For her, the objectification of women is established in advertisements that focus only on the sexual or physical attribute, without any other kind of emotional appeal (Heldman, 2012). She pointed out that objectification is present in symbolic constructions such as: the image only shows parts of the person's body; when its head is covered to appear only parts of the body; the person is used as support for objects; a sensual image of someone is used without purpose, like to sell a product, for example; the image conveys the idea of the violation of the physical integrity of a person without their consent or of another type of violence, demonstrating vulnerability; the image shows a person being displayed as a commodity; the person's body is used as the screen for transmission of a message (Heldman, 2012).

3. Method

To achieve the objective of this study, a qualitative method of historical research in marketing was adopted (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). Historical research can be constructed from facts and clues left in documents that may come from different sources (Witkowski & Jones, 2006). Belk and Pollay (1985) added that advertisements in the media can be important documents to analyse if advertisements have changed as they consider the consumer profile, values and social or cultural aspects involved (Belk & Pollay, 1985). A content analysis was made in the digital platform of *Veja* magazine, the largest printed news vehicle in Brazil and one of the largest in the world. The collection contains all editions of the magazine. According to the magazine's website, there are 862,000 copies in circulation every week, reaching more than 6 million readers each week.

Randomly, 59 issues were selected from among the 2541 issues that were available in the digital archive in August 2017. For each issue, all ads containing the photograph of at least one woman or part of her body were analyzed. In total, 492 advertisements were collected, aimed at the public of both genders, between 1968 and 2016, totaling a period of 48 years.

Ads were analyzed in five different periods. The ads were grouped according to the decade of publication: Pre 1979, which gathered 93 announcements; From 1980 to 1989, which brought together 113 ads; From 1990 to 1999, which brought together 79 announcements; From 2000 to 2009, it gathered 81 ads and finally from 2010 to 2016, which brought together 126 ads. This break was made so that the different periods were compared, trying to evaluate if it is possible to perceive the change between the images present in the ads with the passage of time.

Table 1 - Number of advertisements analyzed per decade and ad target audience

Decade	Number of ads	Focus on the female audience	Focus on the male audience	Focus on both genders
Before 1979	90	15	5	70
1980 - 1989	116	24	4	88
1990 - 1999	79	12	7	60
2000 - 2009	81	11	3	67
2010 - 2017	126	12	5	109

Source: Data analysis

The characteristics evaluated were: the number of men and women present in the advertisement and if there is interaction between them, which product is advertised and the market sector, the part of the woman's body present in the image, the clothing she is wearing, the scene and the action being taken, in addition to the target audience of the advertisement. Some categories are created for the identification of the use of gender stereotypes based on

Goffman (1979) and Simone Fernandes and Rosa Cabecinhas, done in 2014. In addition, the category of the image of the woman, that is, if her image is used simply as an ornament, to call attention to the advertisement, or if it had the function of making the product, service or its consumer more tangible. These categories allowed to observe the frequency of a type of image during the analyzed period, as well as the increase or decrease of the use of these representations with the passage of time in the reviewed magazine.

4. Findings

Before 1979, an average of 16% of the ads in an edition took on the figure of a woman. Over the next two decades, from 1980 to 1999, this number grows to 17% of all ads. From 2000 to 2009, the percentage is 28%, while from 2010 until today, this figure reaches 30%.

The analysis made it possible to observe that at the beginning of the period evaluated, most of which contained the image of a woman also had a man. Over the years, more advertisements appear with the figure of women alone, while the number of ads portraying couples decreases. This is because ads for products whose target audience are both genders (which are the majority), start to use the image of women alone more often, and begin to use less the figure of couples.

Table 3 - Number of Advertisements With Target Audience Of Both Genders Containing Image Of Single Woman Or Couple

Decade	Product Target Audience	Number of ads	Ads containing just one woman	Ads containing a couple	Ads Containing Other conformation
Pré 1979	Both	70	18 (26%)	33 (47%)	19 (27%)
1980 - 1989	Both	88	38 (43%)	26 (30%)	24 (27%)
1990 - 1999	Both	60	21 (35%)	18 (30%)	21 (35%)
2000 - 2009	Both	67	27 (40%)	22 (33%)	18 (26%)
2010 - 2017	Both	109	51 (47%)	24 (22%)	34 (31%)

Fonte: Data analysis

The increase in female figures alone in advertisements corroborates the increased use of female figures to make the product or service advertised more tangible. Consequently, they appear prominently in the advertisement, since their presence in the image has some relation to the advertised product, rather than just being used to beautify the ads.

Table 4 - Number of advertisements that bring the woman as an ornament or as a way to tangibilize the advertised property

Decade	Number of advertisements	Ads containing women only as embellishments
Pré 1979	90	20 (22%)

1980 - 1989	116	21 (18%)
1990 - 1999	79	29 (37%)
2000 - 2009	81	16 (20%)
2010 - 2017	126	16 (13%)

Source: Data Analysis

In the first decades evaluated, we could perceive a greater percentage of ads that brought the figure of the women only like adornment or decoration. According to Belk and Pollay (1985), commercials exist as an attempt to arouse the interest of consumers to purchase a particular type of product and service. Thus, more and more, the figure of women in advertising exists with the purpose of arousing interest for the good offered, and less as decoration or just as a way to garnish and draw attention to the advertisement.

This may be related to the presence of women in the labor market. According to the Carlos Chagas Foundation (2000), in 1970, 18% of Brazilian women worked, and by 2007, this number reached 52.4%. In that same year, according to the Ministry of Labor, when we only observed the formal market, women accounted for 40.8%; in 2016, they now occupy 44% of the vacancies. In this way, the role of women within their family is altered, since their income has gained more importance in the support of their family, which also altered their role as a consumer. According to Portal Brasil (2017), in 1995, 23% of households had women as reference people. Twenty years later, by 2015, this number has reached 40%.

Table 5 - Number of advertisements by the target audience of the advertised product

Decade	Number of ads	Percentage of ads targeting both sexes
Pré 1979	90	70 (78%)
1980 - 1989	116	88 (76%)
1990 - 1999	79	60 (76%)
2000 - 2009	81	67 (83%)
2010 - 2017	126	109 (87%)

Source: Data Analysis

At the same time, with the passing of the years over the period evaluated, it is possible to observe that the number of ads containing products destined for only one or the other genre also decreases, which means that advertising messages are increasingly concentrated in the products for both sexes. In the early decades, the advertising messages disclosed were more clearly divided, between products whose target audience is the female, and products intended for the male consumer. For example, for products intended for family or domestic use (medicines, food and cleaning products), women are considered the main target audience of the message (Correa and Mendes, 2005).

According to Brasil Website (2017), the number of Brazilian households headed by women is growing, and grew by 17% between 1995 and 2015. Relevant information is also

that women-headed households are not exclusively those in which they do not there is the male presence: in 34% of them, there was a man present, and yet the role of head of the family was with the woman. With the changing role of women within the family, this change is also reflected in the messages and images present in advertising, and advertising agencies increasingly feel the need to separate transitional messages to consumers based on their gender, since increases equality and diminishes the dichotomy of their roles.

Simone Fernandes and Rosa Cabecinhas, in 2014, evaluated that in the Brazilian and Lusitanian television commercials, the situation of submission of the female gender prevails, from which the female references of "queen of the home", "object woman" or "slave of beauty". For the analysis of the role of women in advertising, we apply the references listed by the authors, using the class of "object" which refers to the figure of women represented as sexual objects, and the prize for the consumption of the product. In addition, we have also included the classification of empowered women to evaluate ads that bring women into the workplace and as their own.

Table 7– Woman as prizes vs empowered

Decade	Ads containing woman as prize	Ads containing empowered women
Pré 1979	22 (25%)	7 (8%)
1980 - 1989	4 (3,5%)	12 (10%)
1990 - 1999	3 (4%)	9 (11%)
2000 - 2009	5 (6%)	14 (17%)
2010 - 2017	6 (5%)	22 (17%)

Source: Data analysis

In the evaluation of women's figures as prizes for the consumption of the product or service, it was possible to observe that the use of this gender stereotype in advertisements has diminished. In the time cut pre 1979, 22% of the evaluated ads represented women as prize. According to Correa and Mendes (2005), in the case of products primarily aimed at the male public, such as automobiles and alcoholic beverages, women appear as "object of desire", portrayed as a coadjutant or premium associated with the consumption of the product advertised. According to The advertisements have long been accused of contributing to the silencing of women's desire to present women primarily as objects for male consumption and pleasure (Gil, 2008). Femininity, centered on the body as cultural capital, and masculinity, anchored in status and power (Smiler, 2004), define the organization of relations between women and men.

5. Conclusions

The objective of the present study was to evaluate the representation of women in the images present in the ads evaluated, intended for consumers of both sexes and to analyze if, over the years, there have been changes in the way women are represented in advertising.

In the first decades evaluated, it was possible to perceive that the use of the figure of the women in the advertisement was smaller, mainly alone. In most cases, when his image was published, it was next to the image of a man, representing a couple or groups of people. Prior to 1979, only 16 percent of the evaluated ads carried the image of a woman, of whom only 24 percent appeared alone. At the beginning of the evaluated period the woman was hardly represented in the announcements as an independent person, owner of herself and her own choices, but with a man, as if unable to exist without him. Likewise, in the first decades evaluated there are also more ads bringing messages that put women in the role of mother or housewife, responsible for household chores and zeal with the family. This is a reflection of the discrimination of women against work in the society of the time, which defined that the woman's place was taking care of the house and the children, depriving it of the labor market.

The sample evaluated shows a change in relation to the role of women, since it increases the number of ads bringing the woman alone and in a qualified position, being used to tangibilize the product or service advertised. As of 2010, 30% of the ads evaluated had a female figure, almost two times higher than the period prior to 1979. In addition, 48% of this sample was for women appearing alone, whereas before 1979 appeared alone in only 24% of the ads. In the last decade, the number of ads containing women to make the product, service, or consumer more tangible has increased by 9% over the first decade of the 1970s. At the same time, we can see a decrease in ads bringing woman as mother and housewife, and an increase of the figure of this woman in situations of empowerment in the labor market. These changes can be related to the increase of the presence of the female gender in the labor market, the growth of their income and their representativeness within society and the home. According to the Carlos Chagas Foundation (2000), in 1970, 18% of Brazilian women worked, and by 2007, this number reached 52.4%. In this way, the role of the woman within her family is altered, since her income has gained more importance in the sustenance of her family. According to Portal Brasil (2017), in 1995, 23% of households had women as reference people. Twenty years later, in 2015, this number reached 40%, and not only in homes where there is no male presence. These alterations experienced by the women can be evidenced in the advertising communication from the evaluated sample.

Over the years, however, we can see in the sample evaluated a decrease in the objectifying stereotypes of women in the ads evaluated. This is because the women's movement has gained

momentum since 1980, putting pressure on advertisers about sexist content. In the context of cultural changes and values experienced in the last decades, which reflect the position of women seeking equal rights, the transmission of messages considered sexist are widely condemned and opposed by the general public (Oliveira-Cruz, 2017). In addition, the ease of access to information through the Internet and the dissemination of information through social networks has spread the ideas of the feminist movement, allowing more people to know these concepts and identify with them. According to Oliveira-Cruz (2017), the re-signification of information production spheres and the increasing diffusion of messages by consumers, makes the response of the public faster, and reaches significant proportions for the brand image. With social networks, the response of the public to the way the female is portrayed has been rapid, and the criticisms and denunciations spread with speed and gain greater proportions, reaching significant proportions for the image of the brand. With the rise of the feminist movement, consumers became less tolerant. This may be justified by the increase in denunciations made to Conar about ads considered sexist. According to UOL, the processes related to machismo judged by Conar grew 87.5% in ten years, between 2006 and 2016. The data reveal that the consumer is now monitoring more the messages conveyed by the press, becoming less tolerant to gender stereotypes. In 2016, consumers gave rise to 14 of the 15 cases that were tried on sexism.

In this way, brands need to pay more attention to the discourse they take to the media. This is because, if the company appropriates a gender role that no longer represents the reality of its consumers, it will be difficult to communicate with them and succeed in the transmission of their message, since women will not identify with advertising communication. In addition, consumers are becoming less tolerable and sensitive to human rights issues. According to Rodrigues (2012), technological developments have created a model where consumers have ceased to be passive recipients of traditional mass communication, and have become more informed and have access to a larger offer, which has increased their expectations and their level of demand and lowered its tolerance. In this way, companies need to keep pace with this change that consumers are making to ensure that they identify with their advertising and thus ensure that they are able to speak directly to them in their messages. At the same time, by adapting their discourse to the more current reality of values and ideals shared by their customers, corporations can avoid consumer discontent and revulsion while preserving their brand power and preventing negative spreading of their image.

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