

Stereotyping Gender in Television and Print Advertisements

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Abstracts

Introductory, this is how i am going to discuss it or talk about the subject. This is what I expect to find from this project, and this is why it's relevant “so what?”

Television and print advertisements have been around for a very long time and serve as a way to entice people into buying products. Most of the population absorbs what is being delivered in the media and acts upon it by internalizing the messages, creating them to become product consumers. The purpose for this article is to share some knowledge on how television and print advertisements are reinforcing stereotypes depending on gender, sex, and sexual orientations. I will be discussing about the subject by analyzing three different advertisements: The All Natural Burger by Carl's Jr featuring Charlotte McKinney commercial, the 'Save the data' Super Bowl ad by T-Mobile featuring Kim Kardashian, and the Budweiser Select “Expect Everything” billboard advertisement. The expectation from this project will help the average person be more knowledgeable about analyzing advertisements and realize its true purpose. Once explained, it will allow the reader to have a better understanding of how the media has influenced society through people's appearances, the behavior according to stereotypical gender roles, and encapsulate all the basic understandings on why this is a major social issue.

Television and print advertisements have been around for a very long time and serve as a way to entice people into buying products. During the 1940's the majority of traditional American families had access to a television or had one in their living room. With commercials constantly being aired, this type of marketing has become very successful throughout the years. Within this industry there are movies, commercials, television shows, magazines and posters of products from businesses that target a multitude of individuals from all over the world. These

products that are being sold, feature some type of connection with an individual. As a consumer of this media, we briefly analyze it and ask ourselves should I purchase it? Is it the latest trend? Or make statements like, if she/he has it, I must have it too. Depending on what is being sold and the subject of the advertisement, it creates an environment that categorizes men and women into groups. Most of the population, absorbs what is being delivered in the media and acts upon it by internalizing these messages and becoming product consumers.

The purpose for this article is to share some knowledge on how television and print advertisements are reinforcing stereotypes depending on gender, sex, and sexual orientations. After analyzing three different advertisements: The All Natural Burger by Carl's Jr featuring Charlotte McKinney commercial, the 'Save the data' Super Bowl ad by T-Mobile featuring Kim Kardashian, and the Budweiser Select "Expect Everything" billboard advertisement. Once explained, it will allow the reader to have a better understanding of how the media has influenced society through people's appearances, the behavior according to stereotypical gender roles, and encapsulate all the basic understandings on why this is a major issue.

These three different types of media all have specific things in common. They have a visual representation of a man or woman, it features a specific product, they all have a connection to the Super Bowl, and lastly, they all hide an interesting message. Some questions to ask yourself while analyzing these media advertisements are why do producers target their audience in this particular way? Why is it that men and women are usually featured to have a certain body type and behave according to their gender or sex? In today's society, there are many factors that have made the traditional studies change certain definitions. Such as, researchers coming up with other definitions to help us better understand the different categorization of people other than the

norms. For example, the cataloging of gender and sex. These terms are used to find acceptance within society. Before this specific topic is broken down let's cover these basic definitions.

According to Jayde Pryzgoda and Joan Chrisler they define these two terms as "Sex" has come to refer to the biological aspects of being male and female. "Gender" typically refers only to behavioral, social, and psychological characteristics of men and women (Pryzgoda & Chrisler, 2000). Not only do these terms help us create structure in society, but they are used as a guide to help society understand who we are.

The study of communication, gender, and culture has focused on how individuals act and what targets them into being influenced. The act of influencing can be caused by social groups, family, friends, peers, but mainly the media. The television industry has focused on reinforcing stereotypes and impact how children and adults behave as a community. With specific theoretical research, many are able to truly find an explanation of why people act a certain way, describe who they are, and explain what type of relationships they can have. Psychodynamic, social learning, and cognitive development theories all share a connection by focusing on interpersonal influences. The psychodynamic theory explains that an individual is influenced by the first person they create a bond/relationship. Social learning theory focuses on learning certain behaviors by imitating others. Surprisingly, according to the article Children's stereotypes of older adults: Evaluating contributions of cognitive development and social learning, mentions "interestingly, these social factors appear to have a larger effect on the beliefs of older than younger children." (Branch & Newcombe, 1986). Even though social learning is practiced more by older children they still reflect on the potential of affecting adults too while cognitive theory plays as a role to help an individual develop their gender. The cognitive developmental theory

postulates that stereotypes emerge and evolve as children mature cognitively (Bigler & Liben, 1993). All of this creates a sense to our life and we begin to find structure to how and why people act the way they do.

Within the media these theories all form a cohesive relationship and many factors influence this type of behavior. Often times women and men are featured in television commercials to target a particular audience. Women are more linked into being featured in television commercials that involves cleaning, cooking, taking care of the family, or making sure you look beautiful. On the other hand, men are found to be featured in commercials that deliver non-domestic products and behavior. For example, commercials involving electronics, heavy machinery, and auto-motive which encapsulate to have a sense of feeling powerful and muscular. Other genres of commercials feature men and women playing an opposite gender role at times but more than likely it can be tied to humorous commercial where it is taken less seriously. Advertisers link into focusing on these formulas to attract the viewers eye and create something that can be easily understood. If an advertisement can be reflective, and the viewer makes a connection with the add, more than likely it is due to stereotyping gender and playing a known gender role.

Carl's Jr created a commercial featuring Charlotte McKinney introducing the "All Natural Burger." While in school Charlotte McKinney she was diagnosed with Dyslexia and was bullied by others due to her physical development. At the age of 17 she had dropped out of school and turned into modeling. She struggled to find modeling gigs and decided to turn to Instagram. She later reached more than 1 million followers and was recognized as being Instafamous.

In this commercial, she is walking around a farmer's market as a beautiful blonde. To the visual perspective of the audience Charlotte seems to be fully "natural" by appearing as if she has no

clothes on. During the whole ad, she is projected as a sex symbol by focusing in her beauty and body. Carl's Jr made sure to have her appear as if she is not wearing any clothes and using fruits like two melons to emphasize on her breast and a tomato to capture the image of her butt. In one particular scene, she is being watched by a man sculpting a figure and shaving a big ice block. He begins to stroke back and forth pushing heavenly on the ice block and the shaved ice is spread out as if it were confetti. The angle from where the video was taken focused on the man stroking heavily and symbolizes a connection to a male making similar body language as "masturbation or ejaculation." Finally, she is featured wearing a small bikini similar to her skin color and biting into the "All Natural Burger." Not only is she biting into this product as is she is making out with it, but she is seen to have a particular non-verbal language giving prominence to teasing and sexual desires.

Stereotypically speaking this ad is clearly demonstrates that men will see a woman as a sex object due to her body. While she is walking around with a two piece draws importance to her figure and objectifies her. This advertisement explains to the viewer that a traditional blonde woman is the center of attention by her looks. Not only is this increasing the stereotypical role but continues to ensure this ideology of self- objectification. While this commercial was featured in the Super Bowl many could agree than this ad was intentionally made to target the male audience. Charlotte McKinney did not see any harm due to the commercial, but a lot of individuals disagreed. This commercial was targeted to be featured in the West Coast markets due to where most of fast-food businesses are and none in Florida, which is Charlotte's hometown.

Another advertisement that was aired during the 2015 Super Bowl, was a commercial by T-Mobile featuring the famous Kim Kardashian. In this video, T-Mobile focused on making sure that they share a message with everyone about the tragedy that occurs when wireless companies take away unused data from customers. Kim reflects on the fact that without having the extra unused data, customers will not be able to see the selfies she posts on social media. The PSA video is featured in multiple settings. The first shot is up in front talking directly to the camera delivering a message with a fully black suit and a crop top showing her abdomen and enlarged breasts mentioning the tragic outcome. Second, she is found taking a selfie in the bathroom, leaning extremely close to the sink claiming she is doing her makeup but clearly emphasizing on her butt. Next, she is at a tennis court also taking another selfie claiming without data you will not be able to see her “back hand,” which clearly targets to her backside. She is delivering this message while two white males acknowledge her due to the attention she has attracted to herself. Fourth, a wardrobe area where she is being fixed by two individuals making alterations to her extremely tight dress. This setting is in a large room with three wall mirrors making sure you see her outfits but mainly her buttocks. Lastly, she is vacationing somewhere where there is snow, she is also taking another selfie while she has two Caucasian men staring at her in the background. In this commercial, the producers for this commercial made sure to make a statement but all focused on Kim Kardashians direct. The way she poses in each clip targets her biggest assets which she is what she is popularly known for.

In the AD there is a representation of a beautiful woman seeking attention through social media. While men are distracted by Kim’s beauty. This type of commercial delivers a message to all women that there is a possibility of popularity and acceptance if you take selfies, have good

clothes, and have a big ass. Due to the men that were included in the background acknowledges the fact that this standard beauty will have the attention of men. Indicating that you will be a distraction to them.

Kim Kardashian has had over 100 million Instagram and 57 million twitter followers.

Influencing young women and adults to obtain a specific image. Even though she is a very successful business model she is extremely known for her body figure. Many women have compared to her beauty standards and taste in fashion. According to an article titled “This big bum thing has taken over the world’: Considering black women's changing views on body image and the role of celebrity,” they surveyed women and asked over their dieting, body confidence, if they considered themselves attractive or not, and also what type of social media do they engage in? In the studies, young women between the age of 19 to 25 mentioned they focused more on the “hour-glass shaped than anything. “‘Slim thick’ was widely considered to be an ‘unrealistic’ look, as it was so very difficult to achieve, and believed to be largely the product of photo editing and cosmetic surgery in the case of celebrities. This did not prevent those young women and their peers from pursuing this ideal through diet, exercise and fashion.” (Appleford, K. 2016) Based T-Mobile paid KKW a high quantity of money due to her status as a “famous person.” The question is, is she really famous because of her characteristics or because of the beauty standards she holds?

When young women fall under this category and cannot meet these expectations they then tend to turn to get plastic surgery. The American Society of Plastic Surgeons reported a 59% increase in the total procedures carried out between 2003 and 2011(ASPS,2012). In an article, the impact of cosmetic surgery advertising on women’s body image and attitudes towards cosmetic surgery,

the authors stated, “The examined moderating variables were mostly drawn from body image research, but have also been linked to cosmetic surgery attitudes: trait body dissatisfaction, thin-ideal internalization, restrained eating, and appearance as a source of self-worth.”

(Ashikali,Dittmar, & Ayers,(2017). This will help them enhance their physical appearance or begin to use makeup at a very young age to create an image that is similar to the ones being featured in the media. In a study by Anuradha from India confirms that due to her study of gender stereotyping in India children reported to have imitated the characters they saw on television and also made suggestions to their parents to purchase the products they saw on TV. “ This confirms the notion of social learning theory, which emphasizes the socialization through the imitation and cultivation theory that is concerned with television as a powerful mass media.”(Anuradha, 2012)

With the mentioning of the last two commercials being featured in the Super bowl of 2015, this Budweiser commercial was not featured at this grand event. Instead ,the connection this particular AD has with the Super Bowl is due to Budweiser being one of the top beer brands consumed during football games. Statistics show that approximately add stats of beer here of this particular brand is consumed. The question is, how does this influence a person to stereotype and objectify a woman's body? The advertisement was projected in a billboard sign. A billboard sign has been a huge asset to deliver messages as a tool for marketing that is seen by anybody that passes by walking or while driving in a vehicle. The image of a woman displayed on the billboard has a pelvis of a woman showing her abdomen and only her mid-section while wearing a big Budweiser belt buckle shaped as a crown. In an ideal semiotic analogy, a crown usually signifies reign, power, having dominance or authority of some kind. This ad is initially

objectifying the woman's mid-section and is mainly targeting her pelvis/crotch area. Next to her body, there is a bottle of Budweiser Select and underneath the bottle there is a title that reads “Expect Everything.”

What is this image trying to portray? If the audience can truly understand the image, he or she will say that there is a parallel connection between the two. Targeting the female body and objectifying it to imply that while drinking this particular beer, there can be a certain expectation of sexual exchange, and the only way to get in her pants is by consuming this brand of beer. This billboard sign objectifies women by being compared to a beer bottle. The billboard does not focus on showing a face or her full body figure in order to leave race, ethnicity, personality, and other characteristic factors to be imagined by the viewer. This is an ad that is directly targeting the male audience into thinking that if he were to drink this beer, there is a possibility to mark his territory by ruling over her while consuming this particular beer product.

What is the problem? The problem that all of these three-advertisements hold is the fact that they are projecting an objectification of women. Not only does it affect women but it also affects men into painting or creating a picture that will emphasize on what a woman should look like. What type of body language and behavior will they be expecting from other women. All of the media that is being consumed affects the individual by socially constructing a stereotypical character/role.

Why is this so important? Due to the studies and research, television is a \$250 Billion-dollar industry. This industry has a huge power over the consumers. According to Business Insider, Advertisers are paying Super Bowl XLIX broadcaster NBC between \$4.4 million and \$4.5 million to air a 30-second commercial during this year's matchup between the Seattle Seahawks

and the New England Patriots. (O'Reilly, 2015). The super bowl is one of the biggest events during football history. Not only do men watch this but families as a whole. There are many people that only tune into the game to watch these commercials. Most of the time during thanksgiving one of the main things that is being featured is the game. During a thanksgiving feast you are surrounded by family and friends and mainly children. These kids consume the media and begin to develop due to the influences of their parents, peers, and constant repetition of the media.

These creators and franchise produce what is being watched by individuals such as children, teens, and adults all over the world. "The event has the potential to create significant increases in "brand capital" because ratings average over 40 percent of households and ads are a focal point of the broadcast, it appears Budweiser places a particularly high emphasis on advertising during the NFL season and playoffs, although it is still the leader in advertising post-Super Bowl."(Hartmann, W. R., & Klapper, D. 2015). Not only does this industry want to continue to be profitable, but the power it has according to how they influence the community is extremely overwhelming. The main focus the television industry has on here is - money.

Categorizing by gender is what influences these traditional stereotypes. Which reinforces those roles of what a gender should reflect? Stereotyping on sex and gender is what sells and with it selling them, it becomes the most profitable for the industry. Advertisements are featured everywhere. They are seen on TV, public spaces such as schools and bus stops, even on billboards and magazines. The average person in the United States consumes at least 3,000 different ads per day. People are not as aware of how this type of marketing is influencing us in our everyday behavior. Generally speaking the consumer of the ad, analyzes and processed in

the brain. Little do they know that only 8% of the ad is understood and the rest is still being processed. Subconsciously speaking, many people are not aware of this type of environment we are in.

In the environment of commercial advertisement, it creates a sense of what the ideal person should look like and behave according to their gender or sex. The commercials and advertisements that are being aired are subconsciously analyzed by the viewer. In result creates a negative setting for the mind, body, and soul. Young girls and boys who watch these Ad's retain those messages and influence them into believing that they must meet these ideal images to consider approval by society.

The population of the United States is at 325 Million. A majority percentage of these individuals consume multiple ads per day. This dominance and type of advertisements objectifies women into thinking that the only they are good for is having sex, cleaning, taking care of families, and while doing all of this make sure they look good too. They go into extremes to try their best to obtain a certain image and stereotype them to not believe in themselves.

Advertisers focus to make women believe that they are able to get somewhere due to their beauty and assets. Statistics from Park Nicollet Melrose Center reported 50% of American girls reported to not like their body and by the time they reach 17 it increased up to 70%. Women are featured in ads as a weakness compared to how they portray men. While focusing to meet these ideal characteristics a child or woman will be more than likely to fall under depression. Reports of women having eating disorders have increased due to self-objectification.

There has been a huge increase in different advertisements being created where the traditional male and female role is played differently. "Perspectives on a woman's role have

changed significantly worldwide because of women's increased entry into society, and cross-gender ads have begun to reflect social changes in ads in response to changes in women's social status" (Paek, Nelson, & Vilela 2011). They are switched and played by the opposite sex or there are a few that target specific sexual orientations. Even though there has been a breakthrough within advertisers creating stereotypical work, there is still an issue with setting a specific body image. More than anything men are resulting to obtain a certain body type as well to be considered manlier. Making sure they are muscular, tan, and hairless is something that has been increasing in the past couple years. The show Jersey Shore male cast made this extremely popular by coining in the acronym "G.T.L" referring it to making it a daily priority to attend the gym, go tanning to make yourself look darker, and make sure you do your laundry to have clean clothes. This is a perfect example on how young teens and adults are influenced by what is being fed through the media.

In conclusion, roles in society have been developed through the aspect of social learning or social construction. Now some days we are able to understand these stereotypical structures and due to social media individuals are able to create awareness. Being able to analyze these commercials will add value to your knowledge and reduce the amount of media you are consuming. When you come across an advertisement make sure that you consciously analyze it. By supervising children's media exposure and being able to explain this particular concept can help reduce the number of children and adults feel less attractive and help each other to minimize stereotyping.

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