

# Gender Stereotypes and Their (Non-)Verbal Reflections in Modern-Day Advertising on Social Media

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Studij: Dvopredmetni sveučilišni preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i  
književnosti i mađarskog jezika i književnosti

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**Rodni stereotipi i njihovi ne(verbalni) odrazi u suvremenom oglašavanju na  
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## **Abstract**

Gender stereotyping in advertising is one of the areas of advertising that has attracted the most academic interest and has remained timely and relevant due to the evolution of gender roles in society. This challenged traditional structures of gender hierarchy and raised ethical concerns about the representation of different genders in the media. The literature on gender stereotypes and contemporary social media advertising forms the foundation of this paper. The major aim of this paper is to demonstrate the persistence of gender stereotypes in the contemporary social media marketing. This paper uses a case study as its research model and analyses eleven examples of advertisements incorporating gender stereotypes in various ways on a social networking platform Facebook. By analyzing and scrutinizing various Internet sources, articles, and news portals that described the specific instances of gender stereotypes occurring in those contemporary advertisements on Facebook, this paper focuses on proving that gender stereotypes are still being included in modern advertisements on social media. It shines a light on the evidence showing that gender stereotypes are still prevalent in the advertising business, despite the fact that times have changed, and the sort of media used to promote items has evolved.

***Keywords:*** Advertising, Advertisement, Gender, Gender Stereotypes, Social Media.



## Introduction

While there are numerous types of stereotypes appearing in our general culture, gender stereotypes seem to be the most well-known and frequently mentioned. Unfortunately, gender stereotypes have a long history in our society, but they have been particularly used in the advertising industry. These beliefs that certain traits, attributes, or characteristics distinguish the genders have been displayed in advertisements since the very beginnings of the traditional mass media and are still widely applied today.

The first section or the theoretical section of this paper describes the theory behind the general meaning of stereotypes. It clarifies the term ‘gender stereotypes’ and explains the use of gender stereotypes in advertisement in general. This section also focuses on portraying the use of gender stereotypes in previous centuries. What is explained next are the very beginnings and the development of advertisement throughout the ages. It then depicts the use of gender stereotypes in advertisements from the 19th century by the means of the traditional media. This section further depicts the use of gender stereotypes in advertisements by showcasing numerous examples of the 20th century advertisements containing various representations of gender roles. It lastly describes the advancement in technology and its influence on the advertising industry.

The second section or the practical section of this paper showcases the methodology behind the study that was carried out. It firstly explains the research gap and the problems posed for this study. It then explains the research model which was used for this research and that is a case study, and its importance for this research. This practical part then presents and describes the four hypothesis which were postulated:

H0 Gender stereotypes exist in modern day social media advertising.

H1: Gender stereotypes in social media advertising are more prominent for female population, than male.

H2: Gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media are more subtly incorporated, than before.

H3: Social media advertising promotes gender stereotypes to attract their target groups.

This section then showcases the analysis and elaboration of eleven different modern-day advertisements containing gender stereotypes promoted on Facebook by diverse companies. The final part of this section is the discussion which interprets the findings of this research, further explains the issues behind gender stereotypes in modern day advertisements on social media and states whether the postulated hypotheses were proven.

## **1. Stereotypes**

Throughout human history, people have uncommonly assessed other people based on things, such as their belonging to a certain social or political group, their looks, gender, income, or even their language (Pickering 2015:1). This kind of behavior is called “stereotyping” and it is, unfortunately, often seen in many aspects of human culture and civilization. Stereotyping is generally defined as a way of judging other people in fixed, unyielding terms that resolve around alleged characteristic of the category to which they are assigned, rather than viewing people as individuals with their own personal features and qualities (Pickering 2015:1). Stereotypes are ubiquitous, as they cover different racial, demographic and political groups, genders, and activities (Bordalo et al. 2016:1). They are thoroughly ingrained into our society and have been for a very long time. Since stereotypes produce expectations, which sometimes might offer a helpful orientation in daily life, they are not always viewed upon negatively (Eisend 2010: 4).

Stereotypes, however, can (and often do) produce simplistic notions and incorrect knowledge evaluations, and as a result, incorrect assessments of subjects within a certain social category (Eisend 2010; 4). One of the major issues with stereotypes is that they alter our reactions to the information we received, and as long as stereotypes do not change, people under-react or even disregard on purpose the information inconsistent with stereotypes (Bordalo et al. 2016: 5). Because of this, many people are not even aware that they are judging other people based on the stereotypes they have acquainted and have been exposed to during their lives. Moreover, stereotypes are generally context-dependent in the way that assessment of a given target group depends on the group to which it is compared to (Bordalo et al. 2016: 5). Stereotypes also veritably exaggerate systematic differences between groups, even if these differences are in fact quite small (Bordalo et al. 2016: 6).

Currently, there are many different kinds of stereotypes overflowing our society. Some of the main types of stereotypes include: gender stereotypes (which involve making assumptions about what different genders can and cannot do), race and ethnicity stereotypes (which are prejudgments about people based on their race or ethnicity), sexuality stereotypes (which are prejudices against people based on their sexual orientation), social class stereotypes (which are based on people’s background and income, and can be applied to both working-class and wealthier people), (dis)ability stereotypes (which include

judgements or assumptions that people are incapable due to their physical ailments), age stereotypes (also called ‘ageism’, or prejudgments about someone’s capability based entirely on their age, which can be applied to both younger and older people), nationality stereotypes (which incorporate making presumptions about all people belonging to a certain nation), religious stereotypes (which comprise of fear of people or ‘othering’ of people purely because of their belonging to a certain religious group), and political stereotypes (which are considered as discrimination of people with different political views from our own) (Drew 2022). There are numerous instantiations of stereotypes in general that are already rooted into our society. These are formalized or routinely captured in statements such as: e.g., “Asians are good at math.”; “Republicans are rich.”; “Irish are red-headed.”; “Women are bad at math.”; “Flying is dangerous.”; “Florida residents are elderly” etc. (Bordalo et al. 2016: 4).

### **1.1. Gender Stereotypes**

Among the many types of stereotypes, gender stereotypes are the most commonly known and heard of in the general society. Gender stereotypes have been present since the beginning of human social relationships and have been observed in very much every angle of human culture. These kinds of stereotyping behaviors are primarily described as beliefs that specific features, qualities or characteristics differentiate women and men (Hassanaath Heathy 2021: 46). Gender stereotypes can also be defined as overgeneralized ideas about the characteristics of particular individuals based entirely on their gender (regardless of the unquestionable difference among members of distinct gender groups), which include the observers’ knowledge and expectations about women, men, transgender, and other gendered people (Casad and Timko 2015: 2). These kinds of stereotypes repeatedly relate women to “feminine” characteristics and men to “masculine” characteristics as well as “[i]nform what is understood as femininity and what is understood as masculinity” (Shinoda et al. 2021: 631).

Gender stereotypes are ever-present, and they can come in numerous shapes. Casad and Timko (2015:3) state that stereotypes can be positive or negative, explicit or implicit, and prescriptive or descriptive. As a first differentiation, they can be considered positive in a way that they allot positive characteristics to certain gender groups (e.g., women are seen as warm, loving, and caring, whereas men are seen as confident, firm, and assertive) (ibid.). These positive stereotypes may not seem problematic at first. However, the authors imply that all men and women should have the same positive characteristics associated to their

gender groups and when individuals do not share those qualities or do not comply with those assumptions, they are confronted with negative consequences such as discrimination from society in various areas of life. Negative gender stereotypes, unlike positive gender stereotypes, are much more easily detected and can be seen as problematic or damaging, as they bestow negative qualities on particular gender groups, with examples including e.g., women are overly emotional and incompetent, whereas e.g., men are overly violent and lack empathy.

Another classification of gender stereotypes, provided by the same authors, is if they are explicit or implicit i.e., whether they are consciously or unconsciously controlled by the individual (ibid). The authors explain that explicit gender stereotypes are the ones we consider conscious, deliberate or controlled and they can be freely reported during a conversation or while filling out a questionnaire (ibid). Implicit gender stereotypes, however, are a more insidious form of gender stereotypes which operates implicitly or without awareness, consciousness, or control, and can arouse uncontrollable responses, such as nonverbal behaviors.

Furthermore, gender stereotypes are made up of both prescriptive and descriptive elements (Casad and Timko 2015: 4). Descriptive gender stereotypes are views about how men and women generally behave, while prescriptive gender stereotypes are opinions about how men and women ought to behave, e.g., women are expected to be communal, warm, and sensitive, while avoiding dominance, aggressiveness, and arrogance, whereas men are expected to be agentic, assertive, and independent, while avoiding any weaknesses and insecurities (Koenig 2018: 2). Because prescriptive gender stereotypes denote acceptable (or unacceptable) behavior, they play a crucial role in the way we perceive men and women. When these “prescriptions” are violated, they cause strong reactions in perceivers, which result in feelings of anger and moral outrage because the individual is not acting as they should (ibid.). Contrary to prescriptive gender stereotypes, violations of descriptive gender stereotypes frequently result in surprise because the person is not acting as the perceiver assumed most men or women act (ibid). Additionally, gender stereotypes do not take into consideration specific situational impacts on an individual’s behavior, but instead depict those personality attributes as instinctive and fundamental features of one’s gender (Casad and Timko 2015: 3).

Psychologists Deaux and Lewis (1984: 991) explained that gender stereotypes are best illustrated in the terms of a set of four distinct information components: personality traits,

role behaviors, physical appearance, and occupation. These scholars also emphasized that physical appearance plays a dominant role (ibid: 992). Dr. Martin Eisend (2010: 4) highlights in one of his journals that each one of these four gender stereotyping components can have negative effects that limit and restrain one's options in life and that this notion is especially difficult for women. He gives some examples of negative influences gender stereotyping components can have on a person, as e.g., stereotyping of physical characteristics may result in lower self-esteem and body dissatisfaction; stereotyping of occupational roles may result in disadvantages for women's careers; and stereotyping of role behaviors may result in limited possibilities for self-development (ibid: 5).

Equally important, countless gender stereotypes can be grouped around two key social judgment dimensions: "agency" and "communion" (Casad and Timko 2015: 4). The degree to which a person feels another person is competent and capable of carrying out their motives is referred to as "agency", and the degree to which a person is warm and compassionate is referred to as "communion", and it impacts whether or not others like the individual in question (ibid). The authors Casad and Timko explain that a wide range of gender stereotypes varies on these two dimensions and many people rely on these dimensions to make prejudgments about other people based solely on their gender. Some of the instances to support these dimensions include e.g., cases where stay-at-home mothers are generally recognized as being low in agency but high in communion, in comparison with career women who are viewed as high in agency and low in communion, and in contrast to a typical man who is viewed as high in both agency as well as in communion (ibid: 4). Furthermore, the authors claim that because of these two fundamental dimensions of social judgments, people of different genders are susceptible to different opportunities in their lives. One of the major factors that these two dimensions influence is leadership aspiration, e.g., women are generally not as well regarded for leadership positions by others as men are, meaning that when women do defy conventional gender norms and exhibit agentic behaviors typical of leaders, they are viewed negatively since they are acting in a way that is *inconsistent* with their gender, and there is even evidence that women underpredict their performance when compared to men. According to the authors, inadequate self-esteem, ingrained gender roles, and self-sexism are a few possible causes for this, and since leader effectiveness is preceded by leader self-awareness, this is a particular cause for concern. To put it another way, this could perpetuate the terrible cycle of women's perceived inferior leadership ability.

Moreover, according to numerous studies (and the "what is beautiful is good" myth), people who are more attractive have several advantages over their less attractive counterparts (Casad and Timko 2015: 5). The authors further elaborate that these kinds of appearance biases may be especially harmful for women because men place a greater emphasis on women's attractiveness in partner selection, than women do for men. According to their research, in the United States of America, women are judged more harshly based on their looks, than men (and are expected to put in more effort and devote greater resources to enhance their appearance). This can be especially hurtful in the hiring context where physical appearance and attractiveness play a major role as "[u]n attractive women are the least-preferred applicants after attractive men, attractive women, and unattractive men" (ibid:5).

Hiring discrimination based on gender stereotypes is, unfortunately, a problem which many individuals are encountered with daily. Studies that have investigated applicant gender in conjunction with other aspects (e.g., physical attractiveness, student vs. employee raters, job type, and qualification level) found a preference for male applicants in selection situations, even when equally qualified female applicants applied for the same job (Casad and Timko 2015:5). This means that access discrimination frequently prevents women from entering the workforce or places women in lower-level positions, and this kind of hiring discrimination is even more likely to take place when women apply for jobs dominated by men, especially when raters support traditional gender preconceptions (ibid).

Unfortunately, gender stereotyping is a phenomenon that we as a society can observe quite often, and it generally starts to happen very early in an individual's life. Since childhood, boys and girls are susceptible to different gender stereotypes imposed on them by the adults in their lives and the general state of the society. The current data suggest that there are even prescriptive gender stereotypes for children of elementary-school age, which are consistent with prescriptive gender stereotypes for adults, and they, in most cases, state that boys should be assertive, autonomous, competitive, aggressive, appreciate mechanical devices and enjoy rough play, but should not weep or cry, become upset or frustrated (Koenig 2018: 3). Annie Koenig states that for girls, however, the prescriptive gender stereotypes state that they should be compassionate, soft-spoken, well-mannered, gentle, helpful around the house, and should not be loud or noisy (ibid). It seems preposterous that children who are that young have to abide to certain societal rules based on traditional gender stereotypes just because they belong to a particular gender. This prevents them to

freely enjoy the things they aspire to do as they are for some reason deemed inappropriate for their gender. The author further clarifies that, for instance, children who behave in counterstereotypical ways often face penalties for their counterstereotypical behavior. She adds that it should be noted that boys ages 3 to 8 seem to be criticized more harshly than girls of the same age for behaving in a way that does not conform to traditional gender stereotypes. Koenig illustrates this with an example: while boys who are considered as “sissies” are sternly judged because they present feminine behavior, girls who are considered “tomboys” are not as harshly judged as they present both feminine and masculine traits and do not oppose traditional gender stereotypes as much. Boys who violate traditional gender stereotypes seem to be constrained by tougher rules of gender conformity and are subject to stronger "gender policing" than girls, particularly due to associations between feminine conduct and homosexuality. Therefore, the penalties for breaking stereotypes appear to be particularly severe for them. Today’s society is still considerably intolerant when it comes to accepting people of nontraditional sexual orientations and genders, and homophobia still presents a big issue that in this way impacts even children as young as 3 to 8 years old, who generally do not pay great importance to the meaning of gender roles, sexuality or to gender itself.

Over time, once the children are old enough to comprehend their gender roles, that is once they reach puberty and begin learning about dating scripts, they begin to notice and highlight disparities between males and females in ways that were not significant to them as children, and, as a result, both males and females may experience an increase in stereotyped self-perceptions and peer pressure to conform to gender roles during adolescence and young adulthood (Koenig 2018: 3). According to some researchers (Massad, 1981; Galambos et al., 1990), gender role pressures intensify at this age, particularly for boys, who must strive to become men through their public behavior, unlike girls who became women through the process of menstruation and other biological changes happening during this age (Koenig 2018: 3). Nevertheless, other researchers (Hill and Lynch, 1983) claim that a number of factors increase pressures on girls’ behavior (in adolescence compared to childhood) as e.g., ‘tomboys’ are faced with stricter gender norms and a pressure to display the desired feminine behavior and to express an interest to fit in the heterosexual dating sphere (Koenig 2018: 3). Taking both of these schools of thought into consideration, it can be concluded that teenagers and young people who are going through adolescence regardless of their gender are faced with stricter rules of gender related

conduct than children and, they often continue to be oppressed by gender stereotypes throughout their grownup lives.

On the other side of the age spectrum, research has not been particularly focused on investigating prescriptive gender stereotypes in the elderly, but there is some evidence that descriptive gender stereotypes become more similar for elderly targets (in part because men's characteristics become less masculine) (Koenig 2018: 4). Koenig explains that it appears that elderly men have less pressure to prove their manhood and provide for a family, thus making violations of gender roles less severe for them than for younger men (ibid). However, research reveals that, when compared to elderly women, elderly men are still frequently perceived as being more capable, having a higher level of autonomy, and being less dependent, suggesting the continued existence of gender stereotypes (ibid).

As observed, gender stereotyping happens to people of all ages and all genders, but it is more pronounced in some situations and with certain genders. The problem is that gender stereotypes are still very present. A major concern of gender policy and a societal goal in many nations is avoiding such gender stereotypes and obtaining equal life possibilities for both genders in various sectors of life such as e.g., income and career (Eisend 2010: 5). Likewise, research shows that diversity education and self-awareness training are beneficial at reducing gender stereotypes (Casad and Timko 2015: 5). Additionally, people must actively seek to understand how they and the people they care about employ gender stereotypes because gender stereotypes influence how people process different information, and once people are aware of the stereotypes, they can reduce the influence of stereotypes on their judgments. Changes in cultural attitudes toward gender, including a better awareness of ideas like gender fluidity and the drawbacks of employing binary (male/female) definitions of gender, are likely to have an impact on gender stereotypes (Åkestam et al. 2021: 67). Because gender stereotypes are both culturally and temporally dependent, they will change as time passes by and as cultures advance (ibid).

### **1.1.1. Gender Stereotypes in Advertisement**

We currently live in an age where it seems as if we are repeatedly bombarded by constant advertisement in every possible way. However, this is a phenomenon that has lasted since the very beginnings of the traditional mass media. Advertisement by definition is a “paid, mediated, form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the reader to take some action, now or in the future” (Richards et al. 2009: 1).



Advertising can be viewed upon both negatively and positively, depending on the context of individual advertisements, source or the message it is conveying. Generally, advertisers determine our needs for safety, health and well-being, sexual achievement, adventure, good looks etc. (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 5). They then guarantee to assist in gratifying these needs by promising to make us more attractive, fashionable, significant, energetic, as well as healthier, happier, calmer, and so on (ibid).

Advertising directly links to semiotics, or semiology, which is the study of signs and sign-using behavior. Gerda Pongratz states that there is a very firm relationship between advertising and semiotics, as advertisers sell certain symbols in the interest of persuading the consumers into buying their products (14). Advertising uses both textual and visual elements i.e., both verbal and non-verbal signs in order to reinforce certain gender stereotypes (Hassanaath Heathy 2021:54). A good example of semiotics in advertisement was presented in the work of author Judith Williamson who analyzed an advertisement presenting a bottle of a certain Chanel perfume, which was located next to a very famous French actress Catherine Deneuve (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 5). By placing that perfume bottle next to this noticeably attractive and graceful actress, the consumers created a connection between the aforementioned perfume and the elegance of the actress, despite the fact that the advertisement itself claimed no such effect (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 5). From this example, we can observe how easily advertisements can help us make different assumptions and how easy it is to make certain associations between the advertised product and the images linked to it. This also shows how different advertising campaigns can target our attention or how simple products that do not even have a high market value can be perceived as extremely valuable, expensive or attractive, even though without the marketing or advertising campaign this would not be the case.

Images are the primary means of communication in modern advertising, and they may transmit meanings just as effectively as verbal ones, similar to how words work as symbols to create multi-layered meanings that must be decoded in order to be understood, visual images likewise serve this purpose (Kang 1997: 980). It should be noted that stereotypical images, like all images in advertisement, convey certain meanings. Authors Cohen-Eliya and Hammer clarify that these images most often assign characteristics (which include traits, societal roles, physical attributes, or specific behavior) to particular gender and racial groups (2004: 6). They further claim that these stereotypical messages are not the only messages that are transmitted in the same indirect manner (2004:6). Advertisement also

transmits messages about desirable lifestyles and the superiority of the consumer culture in the same way (2004: 6).

Unfortunately, gender stereotypes, often known as gender roles, have a long history in advertising and are still widely applied today (Åkestam et al. 2021: 64). Over the past four decades, a lot of study has been done as a result of several content assessments looking into how gender roles are portrayed in advertising (Eisend 2010: 7). The majority of authors concur that gender stereotypes are still immensely used in advertising (ibid). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the primary goal or the main intention of advertisement is not to use gender stereotypes or to be insulting, but rather that “[a]dvertisers use what consumers believe about gender roles to promote products and services” (Zotos and Grau:759). Reassuring men of their masculinity, and women of their femininity is one of the crucial aspects of advertising, and for this purpose, advertisers use, endorse, encourage, and emphasize certain images (Pongratz 2013: 20). Over the previous decades, there has been a lot of interest in researching the representation of different genders in advertisement. Various studies were commenced with the idea that advertisements frequently demonstrate a male point of view of the world (Eisend 2019:72). This leads to both positive consequences (where e.g., brands that use gender roles in advertising can observe improvement in their brand evaluations and sales), and negative consequences (where e.g., such stereotyped depictions of men and women develop and perpetuate gender stereotypes, putting women at a disadvantage as they push unrealistic standards that consumers simply cannot achieve) (Eisend 2019:72).

Because advertising reaches millions of people every day, it has been a focus for researchers interested in the influence of the women's movement on the media, and it has been accused of stereotyping images of women by presenting the public with messages such as e.g., women are dependent on men, and they need their protection; men primarily see women as sexual objects; woman's place is in the home and similar traditional mother/home or beauty/sex-oriented roles (Kang 1997: 981). Women's representations in advertisement over the previous decades and centuries have not been ideal. When it comes to looks and appearances, women have been particularly inadequately treated. In advertising, men frequently patronize and dismiss women (Pongratz 2003: 20). As a consequence, women in advertisements are commonly depicted as inferior to men or as sexual objects of male attention whose purpose is to be young, beautiful and sexually attractive, and to achieve this they need to use and buy countless beauty products (ibid).

Furthermore, Cohen-Eliya and Hammer (2004: 6) describe that typically, women in advertisement are presented in two ways: the “housewife” type and the “sexy” type. The “housewife” type of woman depicted in the advertisement is described as submissive, unconfident, passive and dependent, as well as very tidy, nurturing and gentle. The authors claim that this type of exaggerated depiction of woman in advertisement is often shown at home and featured in advertisement related to maintaining a home and taking care of a family. They state that the “sexy” type of woman, however, is depicted as young, thin, sexually available, provocative and consenting (ibid: 7). This portrayal of women is modeled on the stereotype which emerged in the 1980s or the notion that women should be attractive and sexually available for men. The authors further elaborate that both of these stereotypical depictions of women in advertisement are problematic as they make the viewers and consumers relate those gender stereotypes to a typical woman’s purpose and worth. For example, a woman depicted as cleaning dishes in an advertisement is likely to make the viewers associate what it means to be a woman with the activity of washing dishes and cleaning, whereas a woman portrayed as “sexy” is likely to have the viewers associate the meaning of being a woman with sexual availability (2004: 8). Hassanaath Heathy (2021: 46) states that, generally, women are faced with worse gender stereotyping in advertising industry as greater importance is given to their appearance and conduct than men’s and the images of women in advertisement impose incredibly high beauty standards, almost impossible for a normal typical woman to achieve. Not only are women in advertisement presented as submissive, irrational, and emotionally charged characters with no authority or influence over events, but they are also depicted with unrealistic beauty and their youthful attributes highlighted (ibid: 47). This means that women in advertisement are usually portrayed as astonishingly attractive, with flawless, fair, smooth skin, wide shiny eyes, full lips, high cheekbones, and a lot of sexual allure.

Additionally, even though stereotypical representations of women in the advertisement typically show thin and lean, attractive women, when it comes to men, those same stereotypical representations tend to place more emphasis on athleticism and muscularity (Åkestam et al. 2021: 66). Exposure to those stereotyped representations of men has similar detrimental impacts on men's sense of body satisfaction, self-esteem, and body image. However, on the contrary to women, men are portrayed in advertisement as very powerful and assertive, usually engaged in dominant positions, showing logic and bravery, but having emotional expression (Hassanaath Heathy 2021: 47). Of course, it is utterly desirable that

men in advertisement are shown as attractive, but not that much importance is given to their appearance, and it is not that they do not need to conform to as many social norms concerning beauty and appearances as women do. Also, counter to women, advertisements favor portraying men as knowledgeable, independent, powerful, accomplished, and tough outside the home and in occupational roles (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 6). Likewise, it is worth noting, that men (unlike women who were mostly shown in advertisement related to housekeeping and beauty), most often displayed in advertisements promoting vehicles, traveling, cigarettes and alcoholic beverages, industrial products and industrial companies, and banks (Hassanaath Heathy 2021:48).

Recently, both advertising research and practice have brought attention to the potentially harmful impacts of utilizing stereotypes in advertising (Åkestam et al. 2021: 85). In his journal, Eisend states that many different aspects of a person's views, perspectives, values, and conduct are uncommonly influenced by the media (2019: 73). Therefore, gender roles in advertising (as a component of media) can have an impact on customers' views and behavior regarding brands as well as non-brand-related and social effects. Researchers in the behavioral and social sciences across disciplines have expressed worry about the social and cultural effects of advertising (Eisend 2010: 2). Gender stereotypes in advertisements are problematic in two ways: first, because they contribute to the development of prejudices in individuals who are exposed to them; and second, because the prevalence of such gender stereotypes results in harm (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 11). In addition, the advertising industry is becoming more cognizant of the possible detrimental consequences that stereotyped gender depictions can have (Åkestam et al. 2021:64). Various studies determined that gender stereotypes had the potential to create harm by inviting preconceptions about adults and children that may negatively limit how they view themselves and how others see them, and thus recommended for restrictions on the use of gender stereotypes in advertising (ibid). Stereotyped depictions are not just hurtful to those of the same gender, but because consumers consider the presumed influence on others when evaluating advertisements, stereotyped advertisements may be rated more negatively, regardless of the consumer's own gender and sexual preferences (Åkestam et al. 2021:64). Thus, both advertising practitioners and researchers should be aware of and comprehend the impact of visual gender presentations in advertisement (ibid). Ignoring the consequences of gender-stereotyped advertising narrows society's knowledge of the current public state.

To add weight to the contemporary findings above and to follow the possible roots, this study proceeds by surveying the historical development of advertising in general and the role of gender stereotyping within, before turning to its own analysis.

## **1.2.A Portrayal of Gender Stereotypes in Advertisement Throughout Previous Centuries**

### **1. 2.1. The Very Beginnings of Advertisement**

The early ages portrayed advertisement mainly verbally as products were advertised through the spoken word, and the principle of advertisement then functioned in a way that those who did a good job got good references and were praised for their work. (Montenegro Morales 2017: 2). Because they did a good job and received even better comments, they could get more customers, expand their businesses and continue working successfully. Montenegro Morales states that if, however, their work received criticism or bad comments, the spoken word would travel very fast, and the situation could very soon be overturned, and their businesses would get shut down. Verbal communication, therefore, had the ability to promote or denote people's companies, businesses, products, and to advertise different goods. The author further states that some research shows that early advertisement was produced even in ancient times in places like Egypt, Babylon and Rome. In different places, advertisements were featured for, in example, promoting gladiator fights, different metals, wine, spices, taverns, and even slaves, and these advertisements were either carved in walls or shown on papyrus posters.

With the beginning of the Middle Ages, the spoken word, as well as the written word traveled very fast, and with it, the advertisements of many different businesses, companies and vendors. However, the common folk was not well educated, and many were not yet able to read or write, which is why they still believed in the spoken word (ibid:3). Therefore, the sellers, vendors and craftsmen would use signs or images associated with their trade, e.g., a cobbler would use a picture of a boot, a miller would use a picture of a bag of flour, a tailor would use a picture of a hat or a suit, etc. (ibid). In these times, brands appeared as well, and many people wanted to identify their products with their makers, indicating their uniqueness from other manufacturers and allowing for differentiation.

The advertising situation changed greatly in the year 1438 when Johannes Gutenberg created his printing machine and thus began the era of mass communication as printed materials could now be mass produced, instead of being made individually (Montenegro Morales 2017:3). Printing newspapers was now available, easy and cheap meaning that the common, uneducated folk had the ability to learn and educate themselves more. Furthermore, the first English newspapers were printed in 1622, and the first advertisement appeared in newspaper only 3 years later, in 1625. (ibid:4). What is interesting to note, is that those first official advertisements had informative characteristics, and were not at all sensational (Montenegro

Morales 2017:4). Montenegro Morales claims that because advertising soon proved to be very useful and convenient, important laws were necessary for controlling and managing it to prevent possible harm. The author highlights that: “It was around these facts that in the 17<sup>th</sup> century appeared the first law for controlling advertising content because false advertising and so-called "quack" advertisements became a problem” (2017:4). Yet, the 18<sup>th</sup> century proved to be quite fruitful for the development of advertising. ‘The Gazette’, newspaper published in 1729 by Benjamin Franklin, is regarded as marking the official start of advertising in the USA. The author further elaborates that advertisements for ships, books, tobacco, chocolates, wines, bird feathers for writing, etc. were published in ‘The Gazette’ and Franklin is regarded as a legitimate advertising executive, salesman and publisher as a result of its enormous success.

The society in these centuries was centered around a patriarchal system meaning that women of those times were greatly challenged with expressing themselves in this kind of system that generally presents women as inferior to men and refuses to grant merit to their views (*Women in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries* 2022). By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, cultural and political developments brought women's issues, such as education reform, to greater attention and women were becoming more empowered to speak out against injustices. Although there was no modern feminism, many women used a variety of subversive and inventive techniques to express themselves and reveal the situations they faced, albeit frequently in an indirect way, e.g., women of this period often expressed themselves through the ostensibly private forms of letters and autobiographies (*Women in the 16th, 17th, and 18th Centuries* 2022).

The society started to change greatly and “[a]s the world entered the industrial revolution in the 18th Century, the capacity to produce goods and the ability to widely distribute them continued to increase dramatically” (*The Evolution of Advertising*). With the development of the print, newspapers, as well as the improvements of producers, factories, and businesses, came the expansion and progress of society, manners, and the great need for various new products.

### **1.2.2. 19<sup>th</sup> Century and the Traditional Media**

With the new technological advancements and mass production of different goods, the strong personal ties between buyer and seller were severed, and manufacturers started to look for markets far from their factories, sometimes even on the other side of the world, rather than

selling to their local customers (Montenegro Morales 2017:5). Consequently, advertising became necessary. Now, manufacturers needed to describe and endorse their goods to clients they would never encounter in person, brand their products to differentiate them from others and get widespread endorsements in order to support the mass production and consumption paradigm, and this created a tremendous competition between the companies as they sought out distant markets (ibid). It was in these times that advertising started to take on forms that are slightly more recognizable to us now. Due to the increased competition among manufacturers, services, and retailers during that time, advertising became a common component of conducting business, and for most of the 19th century newspapers and later magazines were the media which was the most utilized for advertising (among other formats of those times such as: theater programs, maps, calendars, postcards, menus, leaflets, booklets etc.) (*The New 19th Century Wave of Advertising* 2018). Because of the new technological advances, newspapers were being printed more often, more extensively, for less money and they could now promote more advertisements since they had more pages (Montenegro Morales 2017:6). Up until the middle of the nineteenth century, simple product descriptions and pricing suited their function. However, as technology advanced, advertisements could now include drawings and color, and under the straightforward headers, advertisers began to add content describing their items in detail. During this time, with competition between manufacturers growing, advertising budgets also increased in size, and more products were being advertised to the public, including clothing, home furnishings, culinary products like chocolate and tea, and new inventions such as sewing machines, cameras, and bicycles (Lloyd 2007).

Moreover, during this period, advertisers started to introduce campaigns into their advertisements, and many were seeking to produce evocative taglines and eye-catching imagery that would fix buyers' perceptions of the products (Lloyd 2007). One of the earliest recorded advertisements that embedded gender stereotypes in their “dirty” fun strategy to attract consumers into purchasing their products was the Pearl Tobacco poster from 1871 portraying a naked woman (*Early Sexuality in Advertising* 2013). The poster (presented as Figure 1) displays a woman with exposed breast posing as nothing else than a sexual object of male gaze. It is obvious from the poster that the target audience envisaged for this advertisement was male. This poster was printed in order to promote the company’s tobacco products, and even though it had no connections at all to tobacco, it was something which was never before seen in previous advertisements and therefore it gained a lot of attention and sparked a lot of new sales (*Early Sexuality in Advertising* 2013).





Figure 1: 'Pearl Tobacco' advertisement from 1871 (*Early Sexuality in Advertising*. 2013, November 15. Word Press. <https://mbenisz.wordpress.com/history-of-sex-in-advertising/>)



Figure 2: 'Pears Soap's' advertisement from 1899 (*Early Sexuality in Advertising*. 2013, November 15. Word Press. <https://mbenisz.wordpress.com/history-of-sex-in-advertising/>)

Furthermore, following the steps of cigarette companies, soap companies also started to use this tactic of “dirty” fun in their marketing. A good example of this type of advertisement is a poster for a soap company “Pears Soap’s” (Figure 2) first seen in 1899 featuring an attractive woman posing as a witch and riding a broom stick naked (*Early Sexuality in Advertising* 2013). Once again, a product (in this case soap) was not promoted in any other way than by utilizing an attractive young woman to increase their sales, and this type of marketing products continued and could often be seen further in the early 1900.

### 1. 2. 3. Mass Media and the Key Events Leading to Some Changes in the Representation of Gender in the 20th Century

By 1900, the advertising agency had taken center stage in creative planning, and the field of advertising had become a recognized career (Montenegro Morales 2017:6). Women were still fighting to get the right to vote, and some companies decided to use that to benefit their sales. In 1909, a company named “Shredded Wheat” released an advertisement for their cereal product (Figure 3) portraying a strong women demonstrating how well she can grasp the cereal box accompanied by a headline ‘Her “Declaration of Independence”’ (Tumpich 2017: 8). Despite the fact that the cereal product itself is unrelated to the advertising pitch, it does suggest a woman's identity and the advantages of the product. Regardless of whether the lady serves her family or oversees a servant in the home, the advertisement blatantly disregards the rights that women already had. One would assume from the advertisement that it was meant to make

fun of women's achievements in the battle for greater equality or that by serving packaged cereal for breakfast, the woman could concentrate on herself rather than her family (Tumpich 2017: 8).



Figure 1: An advertisement for a company named “Shredded Wheat” (Penn State Harrisburg Archives and Special Collections. “Shredded Wheat, 1912 Health.”2016. August 23. Flickr, Yahoo!,) [https://www.flickr.com/photos/pennstate\\_harrisburg\\_archives/28898237060](https://www.flickr.com/photos/pennstate_harrisburg_archives/28898237060).

Subsequently, the first advertisement that openly used sex appeal to promote their products was created in 1911 in the United States of America by Helen Lansdowne Resor (regarded by some as the first female copywriter) and it was an advertisement for Woodbury’s soap which used the slogan “A skin you love to touch” (Figure 4) (*History of Advertising* 2014). Helen Lansdowne Resor was one of the first advertising executives to realize that sex sells and that pictures of beautiful young women gaining the admiration of handsome men attract a lot of attention from consumers and therefore increase the profit (*History of Advertising* 2014).



Figure 4: An advertisement for “Woodbury’s soap” (*History of Advertising No 87: The First Ad with Sex Appeal*. 2014, January 16. Campaign UK. <https://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/history-advertising-no-87-first-ad-sex-appeal/1226933>)

Nevertheless, women's rights were evolving thanks to the Women's Suffrage Movement, and in 1920 the 19th Amendment was ratified, guaranteeing women the right to

vote, which meant that finally, women's intelligence was acknowledged. Yet they were still not seen as being equal to men (Tumpich 2017: 9). However, since the 1920s, manufacturers and advertisers have recognized that advertising must do more than simply provide product information, and therefore the marketers started to strive to change people's attitudes toward proper lifestyles and emphasize product consumption as a crucial component of success and happiness through advertisements. (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 4). Subsequently, by the middle of the 1930s, advertisers started marketing products as necessities, rather than luxuries and instead of assuring consumers, advertisements intimidated and hustled them, capitalizing on anxieties to tie their target audience's limited discretionary budget to their brand (Montenegro Morales 2017:8). Because of that, the 'hard sell' strategy became mainstream, and advertisements were brimming with sex, violence and threats, often emphasizing the themes of modernity (i.e., that the private space of home became female, while the public workspace was the male domain) (ibid). Advertisers were at all costs reinforcing various stereotypes and purposefully appealing to women's feelings of inferiority, exploiting women's social values in advertisement for everything from soap to cleaning or beauty products (Tumpich 2017: 10). The following can be seen on the picture below (Figure 5) which shows an advertisement for 'Odor-o-no' (a deodorant company from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century). It portrays a picture of a woman with a caption "Beautiful but dumb" and with a further elaboration at the bottom of the advertisement: "To stay appealing and dainty every girl needs a long-lasting deodorant."



Figure 5: An advertisement for 'Odor-o-no' (Olsson, Luke. 2018, April 15. *A Barebones Visual History of Sexism in Advertising. The Lovepost.* <https://www.thelovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising.>)

In 1945, World War II came to an end, and as men returned home, many women resumed their conventional duties, and advertising started getting crueler and manipulative, and began

aggressively targeting women's hygiene and profiting on their insecurities. Female consumers, who were frequently viewed as subservient or vulnerable, could be led to believe that their marriage or chances of finding a partner in the future might be in peril if they did not smell nice or look appealing, and eventually many women had mental and physical body image difficulties, which may have been directly exacerbated by this kind of manipulation (Tumpich 2017: 10). It should also be noted, that even though the advertisement above for "Odor-o-no" (Figure 5) did receive some negative responses, it ultimately raised the company's yearly profit margin by over 100% (Olsson 2018).

As far as other half of the century is concerned, the American economy was flourishing in the 1950s. Consumer goods were more accessible, economic growth was accelerating, new technological inventions were being sold, and the postwar baby boom encouraged women to return to their homes and resume their traditional roles as mothers, housewives, and shoppers. Shopping, as literature suggests, started to become "a popular pastime, freeing middle-class women of their domestic duties for a small part of their day" (Tumpich 2017: 12). Television was a very popular medium in the 1950s, and it often displayed images of happy, Caucasian, middleclass families who were grateful for their stay-at-home mothers (and wives), who could use all the contemporary conveniences, cook and bake well, and sometimes even drive a car (ibid). Nevertheless, these attractive and trim television sitcom characters were promoting a way of life that made traditional women doubt their own identities and obligations to their families and homes. Household products continued to improve in style and functionality throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which helped women save time while cooking and cleaning, but advertising firms took unwarranted risks to further promote goods by making advertisements for kitchen appliances with innovative technology that were enticing the consumer's desire for modern conveniences, while simultaneously sexually objectifying women. The picture below (Figure 6) is an advertisement for kitchen appliances, and it clearly shows how the society (and advertisers) of that time perceived both women and men. In this example women appear to be infantile and ready to start crying if they do not get what they want, whereas men are shown as strong, assertive providers, who have to take care of their wives and buy them new kitchen appliances unless they want to hear them crying.

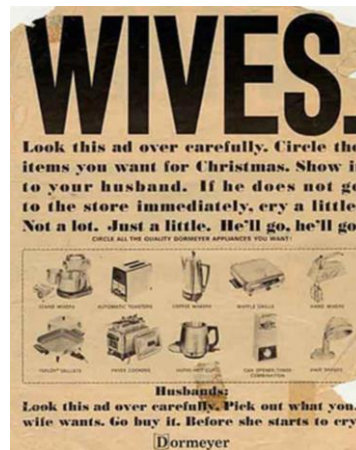


Figure 6: An advertisement for kitchen appliances from a company “Dormeyer” from 1960s that states the following: “WIVES. Look this ad over carefully. Circle the items you want for Christmas. Show it to your husband. If he does not go to the store immediately, cry a little. Not a lot. Just a little. He’ll go, he’ll go. Husbands: Look this ad over carefully. Pick out what your wife wants. Go buy it. Before she starts to cry.” (Olsson, Luke. 2018, April 15. *A Barebones Visual History of Sexism in Advertising. The Lovepost.* [https://www.thelovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising.](https://www.thelovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising/))

As the times progressed, by the 1960s, sex in advertising was being handled subtly all over the place. An advertisement emerged for “Skinless Frankfurters” (Figure 7) with a caption saying: “Skinless Frankfurters are sure to be tender because they have no skins!” (*Early Sexuality in Advertising* 2013). This advertisement was clearly targeted towards women. A comparison could be drawn between the “Skinless Frankfurter” wiener and an uncircumcised phallic symbolism. Examples like these provide an unmistakable yet subtle reference to sex and how it affects women. Because sex was still a delicate topic during that time, these kinds of advertisements were attracting a lot of attention and the sales were booming (*Early Sexuality in Advertising* 2013).



Figure 7: An advertisement for “Skinless Frankfurters” (*Early Sexuality in Advertising*. 2013, November 15. Word Press. <https://mbenisz.wordpress.com/history-of-sex-in-advertising/>)

The 1960s saw even more social and political transformation for both American women and men, at home and at work, as more women started pursuing higher education and establishing careers and more men were being involved in childcare and household chores. Tumpich (2017: 13) states that as the century went on and women started breaking free from the stereotype of the homemaker, advertisements started to target this "new woman", while taking advantage of her sensuality and exaggerating her perceptions of beauty and body image. From printed publications and marketing materials to television commercials, the advertising industry had reached new heights, more businesses wanted to advertise, and advertisements started to eroticize women through graphic imagery and sexual innuendos. As more women were starting to work, traditionalists were becoming afraid of the loss of traditional values and gender roles. The 1970s were an age of the second-wave feminism where women demanded equal pay for equal work and a chance to work at those jobs that were traditionally reserved for men, which was something many men feared (Olsson 2018). Consequently, the advertisement industry reflected this fear of the loss of masculinity or the loss of men's power through very insulting advertisements, extremely belittling towards women. For example, the advertisement shown below (Figure 8) is an advertisement for "Mr. Leggs" slacks which depicts a man literally stepping on a woman's head.



*Figure 8: Advertisement for "Mr Leggs" with the title "It's nice to have a girl around the house." and with a further elaboration below the title: "Though she was a tiger lady, our hero didn't have to fire a shot to floor her. After one look at his Mr. Leggs slacks, she was ready to have him walk all over her." (Olsson, Luke. 2018, April 15. A Barebones Visual History of Sexism in Advertising. The Lovepost. [https://www.theLovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising.](https://www.theLovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising))*

As the century continued, women moved away from the stereotype of the housewife, and advertisements began targeting to working women while continuing to exploit their

sexuality by portraying them in exposing stances with sexual implications (Tumpich 2017: 20). Many advertisements of that time mixed traditional roles with objectification and often portrayed women in erotic and sensual poses, wearing clothes that were barely covering their bodies and usually followed by a ‘catchy’ caption (Olson 2018). The following can be observed on an advertisement for the “National Premium Beer” brewing company (Figure 9) which shows a woman wearing a bikini and holding a fishing pole and a net, followed by a caption “Premium catch!”. What is uncanny, is that even children were sexually objectified during those times. Figure 10 shows an advertisement for a company “Baby Soft” which promoted their products by exhibiting a picture of a child with a caption: “Love’s Baby Soft. Because innocence is sexier than you think.”

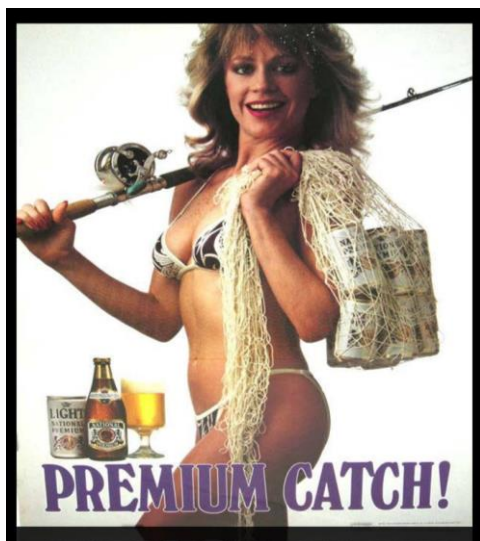


Figure 9: An advertisement for the “National Premium Beer” brewing company (Olsson, Luke. 2018, April 15. *A Barebones Visual History of Sexism in Advertising. The Lovepost.* <https://www.theLovepost.global/identity/articles/barebones-visual-history-sexism-advertising.>)



Figure 20: An advertisement for “Baby Soft” (Heilpern, Will. 2016, April 18 *awful vintage ads from the 20th century that show how far we have progressed. Business Insider.* <https://www.businessinsider.com/vintage-sexist-and-racist-ads-2016-4#baby-soft-was-not-worried-about-sexualizing-children-in-the-1970s-11>)

Through the creation of digital technology and improved computers, new trends in advertising and mass marketing altered communication modalities from 1980 until the end of the century and advertisements remained prevalent in various mediums including television, radio, billboards, and periodicals, but the Internet phenomenon brought them online (Tumpich 2017: 18). Employing computer programs, allowed for faster and more frequent advertising to a large global audience, and ad designers could creatively incorporate photo editing to improve a picture and produce images that many people often modeled themselves after.

Despite the fact that it was typical for women in advertisement to be thin and attractive in the early years of the century, by the later years, women had been exposed to advertisements

that promoted the very ideal of female beauty, which was a slim, curvy figure with perfect skin (Tumpich 2017:20). Tumpich further states that as the century rolled around, men were no longer immune to the struggles posed by body image or attractiveness in advertisement. Now, there were many more advertisements including naked men, and if men wanted to be featured in advertisement or other areas of modern media, they would also need to spend money on treatments or cosmetic operations (ibid). With time, more men started to appear in advertisements, portrayed in a similar way women were, and this trend continued throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> and early 21<sup>st</sup> century, meaning that “[t]he male body has been exposed and has become sexualized, exploited, retouched, and more men are concerned about body image/perfection, fashion and beauty, physical fitness, and even plastic surgery.” (2017: 23).

Few domains in advertising have received such abundant academic attention as gender portrayals in advertising. Due to the evolution of gender roles in society, which challenged traditional structures of gender hierarchy and raised ethical questions about the representation of women in the media, the study of gender stereotypes was first undertaken in the 1960s, driven by feminist thought, and it has since continued to be timely and relevant (Tsiehla 2020). The likes of advertising changed and adapted to its audiences and the age it was occurring. The 1960s and the 1970s opened up a new area for advertising with strong, sexually driven marketing campaigns and the 1980s and the 1990s also featured this type of marketing. This whole century was remarkable because of the incredible advertising boom. It finally became possible to analyze advertisements by decades which could not have been done ever before. However, because of its rapid growth, it brought on new dangers and social issues. Many things that were before considered impossible have begun to become reality as a result of the adoption of technology and digital surroundings.

#### **1.2.4. The Internet and the Social Media Invention and the Changes They Brought to the Advertising Industry**

As early as in the 1990s, many people started to acquire the view that the Internet would be the next cutting-edge relationship marketing tool. Advertising has been compelled to reinvent itself as a result of technology disruptions in order to keep up with changing markets and trends. Nowadays, advertising is more pervasive and touches practically everyone (Bolaños Melgar and Elsner 2016:69). Ohajionu and Mathews (2015: 337) explain that the creation, discussion, modification, and exchange of user-generated content is now made easier by social networking sites (SNS), which are web-based applications and interactive platforms that have



changed the focus of Internet services from being consumption-based to becoming more interactive and collaborative, and that have opened up new opportunities for interaction between businesses and the general public. The authors further state that social media has gained attention in many industries due to its benefits in connecting businesses with end users directly, quickly, and affordably. It does this by facilitating a variety of marketing activities, including promotions, marketing intelligence, sentiment research, public relations, marketing communications, as well as product and customer management (ibid).

Social media has significantly impacted society since the early 2000s and has opened up new channels for marketing and sales potential (Stonesifer et.al. 2020: 1). Ohajionu and Mathews (2015: 337) additionally clarify that the technique of using advertisements on social networking sites including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, blogs, and others is known as social media advertising. Furthermore, to make social media advertising more successful, businesses are using customer interactions on social media platforms to analyze consumer behavior as social media delivers real-time data on who is connecting with an organization's social media accounts and when these interactions are happening, making it an outstanding tool for the study of consumer behavior (Stonesifer et.al. 2020: 2). Almost all social networking platforms provide users access to information about their profiles, including things like age, gender, location, hobbies, and occasionally even purchasing patterns which is very important data to advertisers aiming to market their products and others claim that companies can not only use tools to track how their own content is performing on social media, but they can also use tools to see how their competitors' social media posts are performing (in a way that they can see each post made by competitors, when they were published, and the responses each post is receiving) and they can then use this data to influence what they will post in the future, including full-scale social media marketing campaigns (ibid: 3). The authors further elaborate that the companies can fully monitor their progress while running these campaigns, and they may use the results to inform future marketing and sales choices, which was not possible before with the traditional marketing strategies (ibid). In the past it was incredibly difficult to precisely determine how the advertisements were performing and in turn it was tougher to make future changes, whereas today, if a given campaign is unsuccessful, the company can clearly see this and alter (2020: 3).

Additionally, the authors elaborate that companies still require someone to push and promote their products on social media platforms through social media marketing, and social media influencers are the ideal candidates for the position. Many businesses have opted to engage more and more influencers since many consumers would like to hear about a product

from a third party that uses it. The authors describe a social media influencer as a person with a sizable following across one or more social media platforms, who integrates product advertising for a business into their regular postings. These posts may be obvious advertisements for certain companies, but they can also be more refined, in a way that the influencers subtly incorporate certain products into their posts, and, as many influencers have hundreds of thousands or even millions of followers, they are providing businesses with a fantastic chance to connect with consumers they may not have previously identified as their target market.

Moreover, several studies have shown that women outnumber men in the use of social networking sites, contrary to the norm in traditional media, where men commonly prevailed (Dasgupta 2018: 45). In general, research has shown that women utilize social networking sites to nurture their social ties more than men do, and it has been observed that women typically use social media to communicate with others, share photos, and write posts (ibid). Dasgupta explains that despite these facts, social media still reinforces gender stereotyping, as advertisements that appear on social networks are the biggest sources of gender stereotyping. The author claims that similarly to the traditional advertisements, advertisements today also portray women as object of sex, and that women are commonly depicted in advertisements for cosmetic and domestic products, while men are frequently shown in advertisements for cars, investments or business products (ibid: 47). The author states that another important aspect of advertisements nowadays is that they typically display full-body pictures of women, while at the same time, generally displaying close-up pictures of men. According to the author, displaying full female figures objectifies the female body, whilst the latter evokes favorable associations, and “[t]hus culturally constructed gender roles and relationships continue to remain same element in both mainstream and social media” (ibid: 47).

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1. Research Gap**

In these modern times, a social media post containing an advertisement can be deleted as fast as it was posted. Many advertisements containing gender stereotypes or portraying men and women in positions and settings that are unacceptable have been deleted just as fast as they were posted and that posed a problem for this research. People, though, do not soon forget if they saw such a post containing an advertisement that should undoubtedly not occur in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There will always be a person who took a picture/ screenshot of that post, and in many instances, such sexist posts and advertisements will become apparent and public because either the users will complain about the issue on their social networking accounts, which will lead to the scandal being covered by online news sources, or the user will send a picture of the sexist advertisement in question directly to the online news organizations, which will then publish the story. Hence, the search for the modern advertisement containing gender stereotypes on the social media platforms is problematic as most of those advertisements get deleted and the only way of uncovering them is by reading about them in the articles that covered those cases. That is why this study focuses on researching individual ‘scandals’ related to advertisement on social media containing gender stereotypes or being gender stereotypical by analyzing and examining various Internet sources, articles and news portals, which described the individual cases of gender stereotypes happening in modern advertisement on social media. This study focuses on these exact sources because in this way it is possible to examine how the media world responds to gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media and in which way does it direct the perception and the reaction to (what is perceived as) gender stereotyping.

### **2.2. Research Model**

This research opts for case studies as its research model. A case study is a type of qualitative research one and one of the earliest study methods employed in methodology (Rebolj 2013: 29). In a qualitative research, objects are studied in their natural contexts with an interpretative, naturalistic perspective on the world in an effort to make sense of or to explain occurrences in terms of the meanings individuals assign to them (Patnaik and Pandey 2019: 163). An interpretative paradigm, which stresses personal experiences and the meanings they hold for a particular person, is what distinguishes a qualitative piece of research. Therefore, the study findings are significantly influenced by the researcher's personal opinions and subjective

views of a given situation (Rebolj 2013: 30). Case study research has been established as a method of effectively studying a phenomenon, and when doing a case study, the researcher serves as the primary tool for gathering and analyzing data, employing an inductive investigative approach, and producing a richly descriptive final result (Patnaik and Pandey 2019: 164). Rebolj states that “Case studies are generally strong precisely where quantitative studies are weaker” (2013: 36). When comparing case studies to quantitative methods, case studies have the following advantages: they have the potential to achieve high conceptual validity, have robust procedures for fostering new hypotheses, are helpful for carefully examining the hypothesized role of causal mechanisms in the context of specific cases, and can address causal complexity. Designing effective case studies and equitably gathering, presenting, and analyzing data are the two main objectives of case studies. Consequently, the case study's meticulous design has great significance (Patnaik and Pandey 2019: 166).

This research will harness some of the above strengths of a case study as a method to analyze and study in depth several cases related to gender stereotyping happening in contemporary advertisement on social media. Case study surfaces as the method of choice for its ability to explore in detail the cases which were explained in individual articles found on the Internet. This research will gather the advertisements from one of the oldest and most used social media platforms, Facebook, and elaborate the problematic aspects of each individual advertisement depicting gender stereotyping in numerous ways, i.e., this research will encompass eleven cases of modern advertisements on Facebook containing gender stereotypes or being gender stereotypical in various approaches. This study mainly focuses on cases which happened on Facebook as it is one of the more traditional and most used platforms and therefore an advertisement containing gender stereotypes is more likely to happen there. Also more examples can be found of gender stereotyping on this social media platform (compared to the others). Facebook is a social networking site that allows users to make their own profiles, share photos and activity feeds, which leads to a sort of cooperation that produces new material when people post their personal information, share it with others, and get knowledge about other people's lives (Ohajionu and Mathews 2015: 338). The average Facebook user spends 32 minutes each day online, and many users sign in at least once every day, which makes Facebook the perfect platform for advertisers to market their product. Advertisers on Facebook use the following ad formats to increase their revenue. The first is the Facebook power editor, which is a Google Chrome plug-in, which increases the production options for ads by featuring over twenty various ad-types, including sponsored offers, sponsored articles, general newsfeed

promoted pages, and sponsored posts, which the advertisers may utilize this to produce various advertisements (ibid: 339). The second is the fact that Facebooks uses partner categories, which focus on lifestyle data gathered by outside parties e.g. paperwork that customers filled out when buying different products. These businesses sell the data to Facebook, which in turn makes it easily accessible to advertisements.

As mentioned, this research will use the data described in news articles, and by doing that, it will point out the more shocking and non-subtle advertisements depicting gender stereotypes, i.e., the prime examples of gender stereotypes in modern advertisement on social media will be presented. However, a few of the more ‘subtle’ advertisements will also be shown which will serve as a comparison to other advertisements.

### **2.3. Hypotheses**

This research strongly bases on the literature about gender stereotypes and modern-day social media advertising. The main aim of this research is to prove that gender stereotypes still occur in modern advertisements featured on social media. Because this phenomenon has not been as studied before, it is necessary to scrutinize it as much as possible to give a framework for future research. Therefore, there are four hypotheses that need to be inspected and/or proven. The first or initial hypothesis is based around the basic theory that gender stereotypes occur:

H0 Gender stereotypes exist in modern day social media advertising.

Since the initial underlying hypothesis can basically be taken for granted and it is self-evident that gender stereotypes exist in modern advertisement, based on previous research, this research expands on it by postulating three more hypotheses. The first of those hypotheses revolves around the age-old notion that advertisement, and with it also social media advertisement, containing gender stereotypes impacts women more than it impacts men, and that it is more noticeable for the female population, which is something that has been observed in the previous centuries. The first hypothesis is then postulated:

H1: Gender stereotypes in social media advertising are more prominent for female population, than male.

Because the current digital environment and social media prominence allow for an abundance of content being sent and presented to various audiences around the globe, today it is extremely

viable to feature advertisements much faster than before. Not just that, but the advertisement featured everywhere does not only always have a clear message from the beginning. The advertising process has now had centuries to develop and to advance, meaning that new advertisements can be more subtle, and with it more deceptive in its message. This research aims to see if the social media advertising is different than advertising before. The second hypothesis is then postulated:

H2: Gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media are more subtly incorporated, than before.

The third and the last hypothesis is set on finding out if social media is as profit-driven, unsensitive and scheming as it is believed. What is to be studied is if the social media advertisements are created and presented in a way that they/it are belittling one gender group to promote the desired products to the other. As it was seen in the example advertisements from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century, this is not a new process and had just managed to show that sex, undervaluing and disrespecting the other gender was used to help sell more products to the target gender. This is why the third hypothesis revolves around the targeting aspect:

H3: Social media advertising promotes gender stereotypes to attract their target groups.

### 3. Analysis of Gender Stereotypes in Social Media Advertisements Nowadays

#### 3.1. Case Study 1: Bosch Windshield Wipers Advertisement



Figure 11: Facebook advertisement by 'Bosch' company (Lim, Shawn. 2019, August 29. Bosch Takes down 'Sexist' Ad Promoting Windshield Wipers. *The Drum*, [https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/08/26/bosch-takes-down-sexist-ad-promoting-windshield-wipers.](https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/08/26/bosch-takes-down-sexist-ad-promoting-windshield-wipers))

The picture above (Figure 11) shows an advertisement which the 'Bosch' company posted on their Facebook page in Singapore. This picture and explanation of the scandal concerning this advertisement was posted on the Internet portal 'The Drum'. This advertisement was chosen for this research as it is a representation of a sexualized portrayal of women, which dates back as early as the 19th century. The advertisement presents an image of a woman's posterior viewed from a car windshield on which the rain is falling, but the part of the woman's back can be clearly seen as that part is free of rain drops because of the new 'Bosch' windshield wipers. At first glance, it may seem as if there is nothing wrong with this picture because this woman is properly dressed and the picture is not openly sexualized (compared to the plethora of sexualized pictures flooding the Internet, which are considered normal in the 21<sup>st</sup> century). However, upon closer inspection, the intended message becomes obvious. The creators of the advertisement added a caption on the picture: "Don't you wish to see this clearly"? It is undoubtable that this caption is invoking gender stereotypes, in this case a stereotypical

representation of a woman as a sex object that is here purely to satisfy the male gaze. The company further elaborated their intended message by putting a description above the advertisement saying: “The best wiper gives you the best view”. It is obvious that this company was trying to target male audience by placing a picture of a woman’s behind and claiming that ‘Bosch’ will grant you a better view of attractive women in your proximity. Many users complained about ‘Bosch’ using this advertisement, and of course, this post was very quickly deleted from company’s Facebook page and the company publicly apologized saying: "We do not tolerate discrimination of any kind and regret the posting. Therefore, we have also realigned with the responsible associates to ensure that future issues are avoided” (Lim 2019). This kind of unsuitable social media advertisement poses a few questions: Why would this advertisement have to portray a picture of a woman’s behind to accomplish their desired result? Why did they even use a picture of a woman or a human in the first place? Could an image of a beautiful, picturesque landscape in the background not have achieved their desired effect? It seems obvious that the creators of this advertisement purposefully placed a picture of a woman specifically to attract their target audience and this purpose was even further reinforced by the question which was phrased in such a way.

### 3.2. Case Study 2: The UK Government’s Lockdown Advertisement



Figure 12: Facebook advertisement made by Government to convince people to stay home during the Coronavirus pandemic. (Hampson, Laura. 2021, January 28. Government Removes 'Sexist' Stay Home Ad That Shows Women Cleaning and Homeschooling. Yahoo!. <https://uk.style.yahoo.com/government-removes-sexist-stay-home-ad-women-cleaning-homeschooling->



*162010818.html?guccounter=1&guce\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce\_referrer\_sig=AQAAACRK5-YvflPtU0nDNMNCKUay0asF9YZW11maV\_sT\_p9VB4u9JmUIsCUhBme5SuN81LPGTtRu6yVB-emx5-8b5mFBWTjwrypvBemxWCgdYIt9RBoHljtVTQmbjxd7K-MnyB5sK0YYLNBCT\_VUDi-uWhcJ3zck9Hop\_MAJHDEvTOq.  
Accessed: 15 August 2022..)*

This advertisement (Figure 12) was chosen for this study as it shows that even the government can (and does) post advertisements which contain gender stereotypes in them and that gender stereotypes are still a part of our society that can be observed even with these kinds of institutions. The government is undoubtedly one of those places that clearly should not contain stereotypes or gender stereotypical images. Nevertheless, this advertisement is evidence that it often does.

The advertisement was initially uploaded on the United Kingdom's government's Facebook page but has since been taken down as it was branded as 'sexist' and received a lot of negative feedback on social media (Hampson 2021). Many Internet news portals (e.g., Independent, BBC, Daily Mail, Business Insider etc.) wrote about this specific issue as this advertisement was posted by the United Kingdom Government. It seems unimaginable that a government would post an advertisement clearly stereotyping women on their official pages. The advertisement was meant to advise people to stay home and not to spread the virus as the Coronavirus pandemic was raging through the country. However, it was executed in a completely mishandled way.

To an everyday social media user, the stereotypical issues in this advertisement might have gone unnoticed, as this advertisement superficially seems like any other advertisement in the time of the Coronavirus pandemic. The advertisement features a bold caption: "Stay home. Save lives." Most of the advertisements advising on health and safety during the pandemic featured similar captions so an everyday person could easily dismiss it, thinking it is just one of those advertisements. However, upon careful evaluation, the gender stereotypes become obvious. The advertisement features four small pictures showing four different houses. In the first picture, or 'house', a man, a woman, and a child are lounging and relaxing. In the second picture a woman is taking care of a small baby, and an ironing board is neatly placed right next to her. In the third picture a woman is shown homeschooling and teaching her children. And in the fourth picture a woman is teaching her daughter how to mop the floors or do the house chores. It is interesting to point out, that a picture of a man in the home is presented only once in this advertisement and the only thing the only man in this advertisement is doing is laying on the couch and relaxing. The rest of the pictures show women in the traditional roles, cleaning,

taking care of children and teaching them and showing them how to clean, while men are nowhere to be seen in these houses. It was not enough that in the second 'house' a woman was shown taking care of a child, but the creators of this advertisement had to put an ironing board next to her to additionally emphasize that a woman's place is in the house and that her only obligations are to take care of the children and the house. Even worse is the last 'house' in which a woman is teaching her daughter how to clean or mop the floors. The emphasis in this advertisement is on the traditional gender roles and this advertisement is a clear example of the advertisement portraying women as the previously explained 'housewife' type depicted in earlier advertisements. It is interesting that the creators of this advertisement started the advertisement with a picture of a family, so why did they not continue in the same way? Or at least put another male figure in the whole picture? It seems that the creators of the advertisement intentionally integrated gender stereotypes in this advertisement.

The advertisement received harsh criticism on social media, from those who claimed it reinforced archaic gender stereotypes, and the government spokesperson reacted to this by saying the advertisement had been withdrawn because "it does not reflect the government's view on women" (Colson 2021). The question then remains, why was this advertisement posted on the official United Kingdom Government's Facebook site in the first place?

### **3.3. Case Study 3: Advertisements for Various Mobile Game Applications**

Mobiles games and applications presenting consumers with choices which lead to different outcomes have been particularly popular in the previous years and most social media users have encountered advertisements like this in numerous social media platforms as they are very commonly advertised today. Three advertisements for these kinds of games of choices have been included in this study: "Love Island: The Game 2", "Choices: Stories You Play", and "Chapters: Interactive Stories". Advertisements for these kinds of games can often be seen as insulting, hurtful and sexist in nature, particularly towards women. These three advertisements were selected as they are the perfect representation of gender roles in advertisements for mobile games, and because they and many similar mobile game applications use gender stereotypical advertisement to allure customers. They all work on the same principle or *viz.*, the shock factor, which is an issue that needs to be discussed. The article which included the pictures of the advertisement for these games on Facebook and described their problematic, states that these kinds of games purposefully choose gender stereotypical advertisements which incorporate

sexist captions, causing shock and fury, because people often remember those kinds of advertisements for longer, and that is, of course, the main objective of advertising- to make us look at something and remember it. (Mustafa 2022).

The first picture is an advertisement for a mobile application called “Love Island: The Game 2”. It portrays a woman who is uncertain about what she should wear and is presented with three options. The caption on the picture says: “What should I wear tonight to win my man back?”. This wh-formulated question serves to naturally support the presuppositions that the woman in the advertisement should wear something (and that it's an important preoccupation for women) as well as that she should win her man back (as the purported purpose of getting dressed).



Figure 13: Facebook advertisement for a mobile game “Love Island: The Game 2” (Mustafa, Tanyel. 2022, April 16. Game App Developers Are Using Sexist Adverts to Reel in Players. Metro. <https://metro.co.uk/2022/04/16/game-app-developers-are-using-sexist-adverts-to-reel-in-players-16196794/>. Accessed: 17 August2022.)

Furthermore, this advertisement is problematic for multiple reasons. Firstly, this advertisement insinuates that if a woman is attractive enough, she might be able to attract a man. It yet again presents a stereotype of a woman only concerned about her looks and the ways she can use her looks to get the attention of men. Secondly, it poses a statement that the only thing women are thinking about is good appearances and clothing, and that this is the only thing a woman can change about herself if she wants to improve. This is visibly presupposed in the way the question is formulated. Thirdly, this advertisement openly objectifies women and presents them

in a way that their sole purpose is to look attractive and appealing for the men. This advertisement presents the “sexy” type of the already existing stereotypical depictions of women. It uses the same gender stereotypes used in previous centuries to belittle women and make them appear as if their only goal in life is to be looked at as a sex object.

The second picture included in this paragraph (Figure 14) is an endorsement for a mobile phone game called “Choices: Stories You Play”. This advertisement features a woman thinking about how to get a man’s attention, presented with a caption: ‘But how do I get him to notice me?’.



Figure 14: Facebook advertisement for a game “Choices: Stories You Play” (Mustafa, Tanyel. 2022, April 16. Game App Developers Are Using Sexist Adverts to Reel in Players. Metro. <https://metro.co.uk/2022/04/16/game-app-developers-are-using-sexist-adverts-to-reel-in-players-16196794/>. Accessed: 17 August 2022.)

This advertisement seems more subtle than the previous ones, as it does not directly sexualize a woman, nor does it classify her as the traditional ‘sexy’ or ‘housewife’ sort of stereotype. The woman on the picture is asking herself how she could get the attention of the man she desires. This is problematic because it indirectly indicates that the woman in the advertisement thinks that she is not good enough the way she is now, and that if she is not getting the attention from a man she likes, she must change something about herself. This advertisement, even though it seems subtle at first, is a direct strike to a woman’s self-esteem, because it presents a message that women should work on themselves (mostly on their physical appearance) to be noticed by men. It makes it seem as if a woman is not complete without a man, and her only goal in life is to get a man’s attention. If she does not succeed in that, she is worthless. The woman on the advertisement also shows an unhappy, heartbroken facial expression, which only further adds

to the notion of women being miserable unless they can attract a man. The man is, as it usually goes with advertisements containing gender stereotypes, shown in an assertive, dominant role, as someone who the woman must try her best to impress.

The third picture presented in this paragraph (Figure 15) is an advertisement for a game called “Chapters: Interactive Stories”. This advertisement is the most shocking of the three as it directly uses a gender stereotype and an extremely offensive and derogatory attitude towards all women.



Figure 15: A Facebook advertisement for mobile application “Chapters: Interactive Stories” (Mustafa, Tanyel. 2022, April 16. Game App Developers Are Using Sexist Adverts to Reel in Players. Metro. <https://metro.co.uk/2022/04/16/game-app-developers-are-using-sexist-adverts-to-reel-in-players-16196794/>. Accessed: 17 August2022.)

It shows a picture of a hostile, angry man yelling at a woman and includes a caption saying: “Go and cook for me, stupid woman”. This advertisement does not only openly insult all women, but it directly, without a hint of subtlety, imposes gender stereotypes. The woman is shown wearing an apron and crying, which is something many advertisements from the previous century used, while a man is giving her orders and offending her (which is something that was also common in the previous century and already generally ingrained into our society as stereotypical.). This advertisement presents a misogynistic perspective of the world in which a man is the boss, who commands a woman, and the woman is expected to serve him and to tend to his every need by cooking, cleaning, and looking good. Unlike some of the previous advertisements it does not present the ‘sexy’ stereotype of a woman, but rather presents the public with the ‘housewife’ type. In case that the average user did not understand the intended

message and realized that this advertisement includes gender stereotypes from the caption, the creators of the advertisement further elaborated the intended message by showing the woman wearing an apron, which is a stereotypical representation of a ‘housewife’ type. To additionally degrade the woman in the advertisement, she is portrayed as though she is crying. The depiction of a woman crying makes her seem infantile and childish, as if her only responses could be crying if she does not like something or smiling if she likes something.

The author of the article which featured these Facebook advertisements, explains that Facebook users often expressed their opinions in the comment sections below these advertisements. She highlights that most of the comments were negative and gives a few examples of those comments: “This is so toxic”; “I hope that no young girl decides to play this horrific and degrading game”; “Let’s play a game which seems to encourage body shaming, low self-esteem and bullying all in one place” and “What an insulting and pathetic message” (Mustafa 2022).

The surprising thing is that according to the players of the game and some ex-employees who worked at one of the companies that created one of those games, these advertisements do not match up to the reality of the game, as the game itself does not contain sexist and misogynistic sentences like that, and even includes many strong female characters and positive story lines (Mustafa 2022). This type of advertisement only serves to lure the players and the consumers in with the shock factor, even though the actual game does not include gender stereotypes. These three mobile game advertisements are proof that even in 2022, sexism still sells.

### 3.4. Case Study 4: AirAsia Cheap Seats Advertisement



Figure 16: A Facebook advertisement for ‘AirAisa’ (Sexist’ Ad Pulled from Facebook by AirAsia Following Wave of Criticism. 2019, September 3. Branding in Asia Magazine. <https://www.brandinginasia.com/sexist-ad-airasia/>)

The picture above (Figure 16) demonstrates a Facebook advertisement posted by a company called ‘AirAsia’. This advertisement was chosen for this research due to the highly sexualized and gender stereotypical representation of women in it. The picture, at the first glance, looks like a ‘clickbait’ and an average user would hardly think that this is an advertisement for an airline company. The picture makes it seem as if the woman in the advertisement is naked and her breast are showing. Her mouth is open, and the woman is generally shown in a pornographically objectifying way. The advertisement features a headline saying: “OMG! (tap to see)”. This kind of advertisement takes advantage of the basic human instinct and human curiosity by urging the consumers (in this case social media i.e., Facebook users) to open the picture and see it in its entirety. This advertisement also uses the ‘shock factor’ which further persuades the consumer to open the picture, and finally see what is below. Once the users follow the instructions and tap it to further open the picture, they can see the whole advertisement:

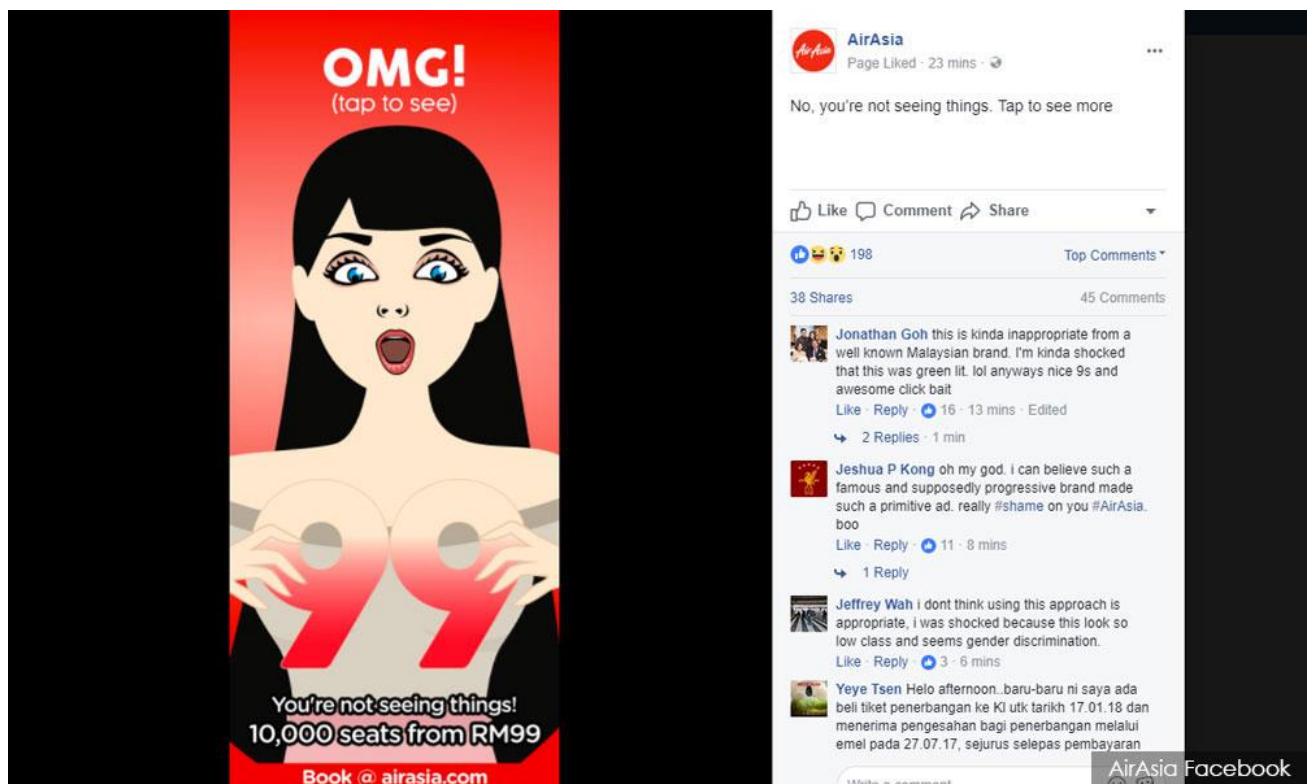


Figure 17: The whole picture of the ‘AirAsia’ advertisement on Facebook, which can be seen once the users tap the picture ( ‘Sexist’ Ad Pulled from Facebook by AirAsia Following Wave of Criticism. 2019, September 3. Branding in Asia Magazine.

<https://www.brandinginasia.com/sexist-ad-airasia/>

After a Facebook user has opened the whole picture, it reveals the intended advertisement (Figure 17). It now becomes visible that the woman in the advertisement is not naked but rather that she is holding in her hands the number 99. There is a caption underneath the number saying:

“You’re not seeing things! 10,000 seats from RM99” signifying that there are around 10,000 available airplane seats that can be bought for as cheap as 99 Malaysian Ringgits (which is approximately 22 United States dollars). The woman’s mouth is open because she is ‘surprised’ at this great offer the company has presented. This kind of advertisement substantially sexualizes and objectifies women. The portrayal of a woman holding the numbers seems completely unnecessary and only serves to catch the attention of everyday consumers who do not expect an airline company to be promoted in such a way, and because of the intriguing small picture shown above, the users feel urged to open the whole advertisement and see what it is about. If the primary goal of this advertisement was to sell seats, this advertisement could have been made just as effectively by simply showing a picture of the number 99 and explaining that there are 10,000 cheap flight seats that can be bought for RM99, which is a very inexpensive price and could attract many users just because of that. This kind of portrayal of a woman was completely unnecessary and showed that the creators believed they could not only get away with using gender stereotypes in their advertisement, but that it would undoubtedly boost their sales.

The comment section for this advertisement can also be observed on the image above. The Facebook users seem disgruntled and stunned that ‘AirAsia’ would use such a sexually objectifying depiction of a woman and openly use gender stereotypes in their advertisements to promote their affordable flights. This post received 323 comments and 122 shares in the hour since it was published, with the majority of netizens criticizing the advertisement's content (*AirAsia under Fire* 2017). Some individuals justified the advertisement by claiming that it was an unconventional kind of marketing, and that people were simply exaggerating their reactions, but the majority of users argued that the low-cost airline might have utilized different methods to promote itself (*AirAsia under Fire* 2017). Of course, this advertisement was removed from Facebook practically as quickly as it was posted due to the considerable number of complaints because of gender discrimination.



### 3.5. Case Study 5: The Bic Women's Day Advertisement

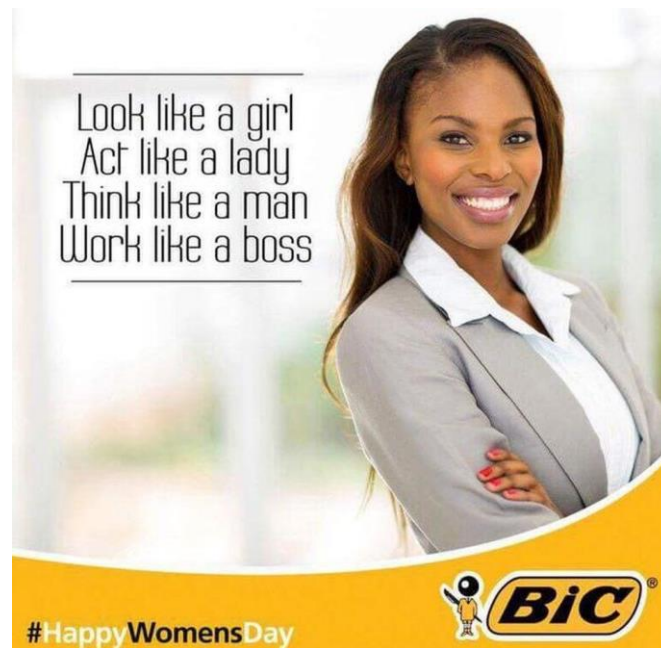


Figure 18: A Facebook advertisement for 'Bic' (Davies, Caroline. 2015, August 11. Look like a Girl ... Think like a Man': Bic Causes Outrage on National Women's Day. The Guardian, Guardian News and Media. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/aug/11/look-like-a-girl-think-like-a-man-bic-outrage-south-africa-womens-day>)

This Facebook advertisement for the 'Bic' company (Figure 18) was selected for this research as it perpetuates different gender stereotypes in a set of sentences presented in writing. Unlike the previous advertisements analyzed in this section, this advertisement does not symbolically use an image of a woman to encompass different gender stereotypes, but rather directly presents statements involving gender stereotypes i.e., the proper ways a woman should look like, act, think and work.

The advertisement itself shows an image of a woman dressed professionally and smiling with her arms crossed. Four statements are written on her left, and it is hard to decide which of the sentences incorporated in this advertisement is worse. The first sentence which states: "Look like a girl" presents the opinion that women should look as young as girls in order to appear alluring and attractive. It shows us that the creators of this advertisement aim at the infantilization of women, which is a significant issue of the modern civilization. Our society already places a great enough emphasis on the fact that women should be young to be considered attractive by promoting various skin care products, make up products, cosmetic surgeries, health supplements, fashion accessories etc., all created specifically to make women appear younger. These kinds of marketing behaviors cause severe problems for women as they downright strike their confidence and persuade them that when they start to age, they do not

look as attractive as they used to and that they now have to use a whole array of products (or undergo cosmetic surgery) to be considered appealing. Even though aging is a natural process which cannot be reversed and should be accepted and honored as it is, marketing brands are exploiting it. Advertisements like this only further worsen this situation for women and impose on them this concept of youth as a measure of ones' beauty. This sentence again presents the concern postulated previously that women should look attractive and young just to satisfy the male gaze.

The second sentence: "Act like a lady" presents a perspective that a woman has to act polite and 'ladylike' in order to be successful and well liked in her society, and that it is inappropriate for a woman to behave in any other ways. This kind of sentence limits and shames women for acting in any other way than 'ladylike' and restricts them from behaving in a way they desire. This notion was described by Lakoff, who addressed the issue of the impact of the linguistic use of 'lady' in her seminal work within the dominance approach and explained that if a woman refuses to behave like a lady, she is ridiculed and subjected to criticism as unfeminine (1973: 48).

The third sentence "Think like a man" shows us that the creators of this advertisement believe that in order for a woman to be efficient and to appear intelligent she has to think like a man, because thinking like a woman is, based on this advertisement, wrong. i.e. supports the view of 'hegemonic masculinity'. It presents an opinion that women are not as intelligent as men, and that in order to appear smarter, they should 'think like a man'. This type of sentence openly undermines women's intelligence and creates a problem for younger women and children who may view these advertisements and generally believe that women are less intelligent than men.

The only sentence that seems positive (or rather neutral) in this whole advertisement is "Work like a boss" as the noun boss is a completely gender-neutral noun and imposes no gender issues for neither men nor women. However, taken together with the previous sentences, it might tacitly presuppose that the position of a boss (as a general position of power) is reserved for a man, and is something the woman must work hard to achieve (by behaving in previous ways) and does not have yet.

To make matters worse, this advertisement was made specifically for the International Women's Day (Davies 2015). The creators of this 'Bic' advertisement even include a hashtag in their advertisement: #HappyWomensDay. The irony of the whole situation is that the

company could not even apologize in an appropriate way. After ‘Bic’ has deleted the original post, they tried to explain that the sentences presented in the advertisement were taken from a “women in business” blog and that this advertisement was made “in the most empowering way possible and in no way derogatory towards women” (ibid). After that ‘apology’ did not work, they have deleted that post as well, and replaced it with the following words: “Let’s start out by saying we’re incredibly sorry for offending everybody – that was never our intention, but we completely understand where we’ve gone wrong. This post should never have gone out. The feedback you have given us will help us ensure that something like this will never happen again, and we appreciate that” (ibid).

It is important to note yet again, that advertisement is a very competitive field and that, as it usually goes, one company will try to profit on the errors of their competitors. This time, a competing firm “Stabilo” decided to highlight ‘Bic’s’ mistake and make their advertisement more appropriate and in that way to ensure that their product gets advertised (*Bic apologises* 2015). The company featured an advertisement (Figure 19) that was posted on their social media pages which featured a photograph of their product (highlighters) and above the image they put the caption: “Look how you want. Act how you want. Think how you want. Work like a BOSS.”.



Figure 19: ‘Stablo’ advertisement on Twitter profiting on their competitor’s mistake (‘Sexist’ South African Advert. 2015, August 12. BBC News, BBC. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-33893386>.)

The company took their advertisement one step further, by using a sentence containing a pun in the picture description saying: “Sorry to *highlight* your mistake, Bic, but we thought this was more appropriate...” (as this company promoted their highlighters). This shows that a good advertisement can be made properly without the unnecessary use of gender stereotypes. This example also presents a variant of comparative, or the so called “bandwagon advertising” as “Stabilo”, got on the bandwagon’ and used “Bic’s” advertising mistakes to promote their product in a very clever way, both linguistically and in the terms of marketing.

### 3.6. Case Study 6: Dr. Pepper’s ‘Ten’ Advertisement

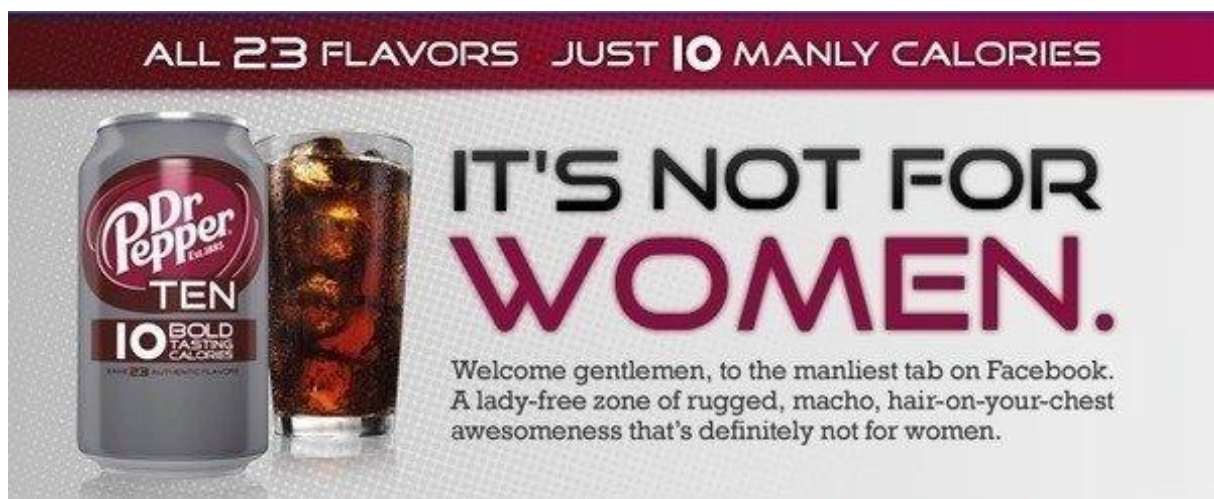


Figure 20: "Dr. Pepper's" Facebook post promoting their new drink made specifically for men (Dr Pepper's 'Not for Women' Ad Campaign: Sexist? 2015, January 15. *The Week*. <https://theweek.com/articles/481103/dr-peppers-not-women-ad-campaign-sexist>)

The picture above (Figure 20) displays an advertisement for the famous American soft drink company ‘Dr. Pepper’. This image is a part of the advertisement for promoting their new drink as a part of their new campaign marketed specifically towards men. This example was chosen for this research because it openly states that it is made only and explicitly for men, as it clearly states on the image “it’s not for women”. It is also important to note, that unlike other advertisements presented in this paper, which were posted on their companies’ official Facebook sites or have been part of a sponsored advertising on Facebook, this advertisement is different as ‘Dr. Pepper’ company created a whole Facebook page dedicated to their new drink.

The company decided to launch a new drink called ‘Dr. Pepper Ten’, which was named ‘Ten’ as it is a diet drink which only consists of ‘ten manly calories’ and promoted this new drink on a TV advertisement and on the completely new Facebook page dedicated specifically

to advertisement of this drink (Pynchon 2011). The advertisement on TV presents men behaving as though they are in an action film by shooting lasers, punching snakes, and jumping off cliffs while drinking the new 'Dr. Pepper Ten' and telling women that "they should drink their girly diet sodas and watch romantic comedies instead" (Pynchon 2011). It was not enough for this company to make a very gender discriminatory advertisement on the television, but they had to reinforce their new campaign by creating the Facebook page to promote the 'Dr. Pepper Ten'. The first image a Facebook user could see upon entering the new 'Dr. Pepper Ten' Facebook page is the image shown above which includes a big, bolded title: "It's not for women.", along with a description below it stating: "Welcome, gentlemen, to the manliest tab on Facebook. A lady-free zone of rugged, macho, hair-on-your-chest awesomeness that's definitely not for women." In no way do they explain why this drink is considered so 'manly' and why women should stay away from it. A Facebook page for this drink also lists the 10 so-called "Man'Ments", which include statements or commands such as: "Thou shalt not pucker up. Kissy faces are never manly" (*Dr Pepper's 'Not for Women'* 2015). It seems implausible for a company which produces soft drinks (which should be considered a gender-neutral product) to purposefully lose half of the population by intentionally targeting only male consumers. Although if that was indeed their intention, they could have done it in different, more appropriate ways. It imposes a question: Why is there a need to say it so many times that this drink is not for women? And what is so different about this drink that only men can drink it? This kind of advertisement does not only insult women or make them seem 'unworthy' of the new drink, but it also presents a similar issue to the men who do not embody the traditional masculinity. This type of promotion appeals only to a certain type of men by insinuating that a man must be manly or 'macho, have a lot of body hair and generally enjoy the things a 'traditional' man would such as action, cars weapons, fighting and similar 'traditional' male interest fields. This presents a problem for the men who do not see themselves as traditionally manly or 'macho' and it inflicts on them the feeling that they are not good enough or 'man' enough if they do not behave in such a way. This advertisement highlights masculinity in a very disrespectful, ignorant and primitive way. Men's self-esteem is being manipulated here, as this 'macho-man' advertisement mocks anyone who does not exhibit the same patterns of behavior and states that 'appearing 'girly' is something men need to worry about (*Dr Pepper's 'Not for Women'* 2015).

Similarly to what the advertisers did in the 1970s when men were afraid of losing their masculinity as more and more women were starting to get employed and educated, this

advertisement forces the same kind of ‘toxic’ masculinity, which arises from the fear of the loss of traditional values and the traditional patriarchal society as more and more women nowadays are getting their education and being employed in places that used to be considered as ‘men-only’ sectors of business. Gender issues enter into our modern culture in strange ways, and the use of gender stereotypes presents unabashed gender profiling for both women and men, but its standard representation of males may be symbolic of a broader problem—the male identity crisis that is sweeping our society (Pynchon 2011).

### 3.7. Case Study 7: Al Rifai Advertisement for Nuts



Figure 21: Facebook advertisement for ‘Al Rifai company promoting various nuts’ (Moawad, Nadine. 2013, February 14. Al Rifai Removes Sexist Ads from Facebook Quickly: ‘Because He’s Got Brains, Because She’s Got Curves’, Twitter, <https://twitter.com/nmoawad/status/302033416583540736>)

The next advertisement chosen for this research is a set of two pictures (Figure 21) promoting nuts for a company called ‘Al Rifai’. It was chosen for this research because it includes both examples of male and female gender stereotypes in a single advertising campaign. The company ‘Al Rifai’ posted a set of pictures on their official Facebook page in which they promoted their diverse types of nuts, as a part of their Valentine’s Day campaign (Ad Critique 2013). The image on the left shows a photograph of a walnut with a description underneath it: “Because he’s got the brains”. The picture on the right, however, shows a photograph of a cashew nut and is accompanied with a description underneath it: “Because she’s got the curves.” Both images include the phrase: “Happy Valentine” below the mentioned captions.

This advertisement directly uses traditional gender stereotypes to promote their products. It is unclear as to why the creators of this advertisement would incorporate gender stereotypes in their campaign to promote something as gender neutral as nuts. Based on this advertisement, it is obvious that its creators believe in the traditional gender roles where men are seen as the dominant, assertive and logical thinkers, whereas women are tender, not so intelligent beings focused only on their external appearance. This advertisement again openly affects both men's and women's confidence, self-esteem and their perspective of their own value as human beings. According to this advertisement, the value of a man can be determined only by his intelligence, and those men who do not see themselves as 'traditionally book smart' can feel affected by this advertisement. Whereas, for women, this advertisement, as many others before it, perpetuates the constant concept that has been overflowing our society for hundreds and hundreds of years, and that is that women's worth is measured by their physical appearances and attractiveness.

Just after the release of this set of advertisements, the campaign faced sexist accusations coming from their large Facebook community (*Ad Critique* 2013). The irony of the whole situation is that this company along with the two afore mentioned advertisements (shown in Figure 21) released some more pictures promoting their products which were examples of good advertisement and were perfectly fine and correct regarding all genders. The image below (Figure 22) shows one of those advertisements released in the same campaign, which does not use gender stereotypes to promote the products but rather advertise their product by showing a picture of a nut with a simple, catchy slogan next to it, which is much more suitable for Valentine's Day than the two previously mentioned advertisements. This also shows us that the company *knew* the difference between an advertisement using gender stereotypes and the one not using them and decided to post both of these types of advertisement regardless.

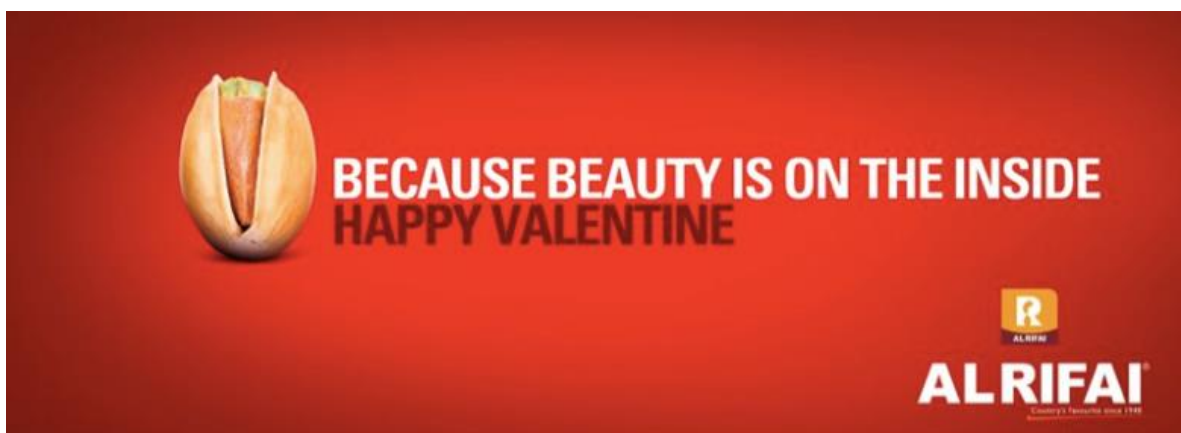


Figure 22: An example of the advertisement in the same campaign which does not use gender stereotypes (*Sexist AD*. 2013, February 16. *Brofessional Review*. <https://brofessionalreview.wordpress.com/tag/sexist-ad/>)

### 3. 8. Case Study 8: Giordano Family Clothing Line Advertisement



Figure 23: An advertisement for a new family line of clothing by 'Giordano' (Knott, Kylie; Reinfrank, Annie. 2021, May 4. Hong Kong Fashion Brand Giordano Removes Sexist Ad after Backlash. South China Morning Post. [https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/2147224/hong-kong-fashion-brand-giordano-remove-sexist-ad-after.](https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/fashion-beauty/article/2147224/hong-kong-fashion-brand-giordano-remove-sexist-ad-after))

A fashion brand, 'Giordano', posted a picture (Figure 23) on their Facebook page to promote the new line of clothing named "Team Family Series", which outraged numerous users with some users vowing to boycott the store (Knott and Reinfrank 2021). This advertisement was selected for this research as it openly and unashamedly uses traditional gender stereotypes and a demeaning representation of women through the endorsement of their new clothing line. It takes us back in history, by portraying similar depictions of family values to those from the 20th century, where men were shown as the strong providers of the family often placed in the work sphere performing crucial tasks, whereas women were portrayed in home environments doing household chores such as cooking and cleaning.

The advertisement (Figure 23) features a photograph of a family wearing a matching family clothing line. The male model on the picture presents the father of the family, who is wearing a white shirt with the word "work" on it. The mother is wearing a shirt with the word "cook" on it, while the children are wearing shirts with the captions "play" and "cry" on them. The advertisement was posted on Facebook and selected as a cover photo for the company's Facebook page. After it was published it had sparked fury among scores of angry individuals online with users posting comments such as: "Unforgivable for a modern brand to stereotype men and women in such an awful way. Shame on you and get a grip – it's 2018, not the 1950s.", and: "I just had to unshackle myself from the kitchen and break from my 'cooking' duties to let



you know that the 1950s called, they want their attitudes back. How on earth do you call this ‘family time’?” (Knott and Reinfrank 2021). The company had been forced to remove this advertisement and had issued a public apology on their social media sites (ibid).

### 3.9. Case Study 9: The Trustco Group Holdings Advertisement



Figure 24: An advertisement posted on Facebook by the “Trustco Group Holdings” searching for a new board member (Ngutjinazo, Okeri. 2018, March 26. Trustco Waffles Sexist Ad 'Apology'. The Namibian. <https://www.namibian.com.na/175799/archive-read/Trustco-waffles-sexist-ad-apology..>)

The next image (Figure 24) presents an advertisement that was published on Facebook for an open position on the ‘Trustco’ company's board (Ngutjinazo 2018). This advertisement was chosen for this research as it flagrantly ridicules transgender people and uses gender stereotypes aimed at transgender people to advertise an open position on their board. The web advertisement featured Caitlyn Jenner, a recognized American transgender reality TV star, standing next to men in business suits, who were shown in the background. The image included a caption saying: "Some will do anything to get a seat." It directly insinuates that ‘some people’ are willing to go as far as to change their gender to get a position on the company’s board. This advertisement does not only publicly offend Caitlyn Jenner, but it openly insults the whole transgender community through her depiction followed with the afore mentioned caption. Like with many previously shown advertisements, the intended message in this advertisement was

also meant to be humorous, but the creators of those advertisements obviously do not realize that gender stereotyping is not a way to achieve this. The situation for transgender people in our society is difficult enough without companies making fun of them or using them to promote their products in a humorous way. Another clue that this advertisement was created by a completely unprofessional team or an individual, is that instead of stating that the company was searching for a 'board member' on the advertisement, it stated that the company was searching for a 'broadmember', which is completely illogical.

The founder of Trustco Group Holdings Quinton van Rooyen issued an apology for the sexist advertisement in question through a lengthy video posted on Facebook, in which he apologized (Ngutjinazo 2018). The public, however, expressed discontent with the company's apologies in the comments that followed the video, alleging that Van Rooyen had apologized for everything else but the controversial advertisement. (ibid).

#### 4. Discussion

The term "gender stereotype" can be defined as an overgeneralized idea that specific features, qualities or characteristics differentiate women and men which includes the observers' knowledge and expectations about women, men, transgender, and other gendered people (Hassanaath Heathy 2021:46; Casad and Timko 2015: 2). Gender stereotypes are ever-present and can take on many different forms, so accordingly, gender stereotypes can also be observed and found in the advertisement industry. Many gender stereotypes have been observed in the advertisement industry, especially during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which was illustrated in this paper with numerous examples featured in the case studies done. Most of those stereotypes were more directed towards women and multiple studies were done by analyzing various advertisements from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Many studies concluded that women's representation in advertisements during the previous centuries have not been ideal and researchers have realized that advertisement typically displayed women either as the "housewife" type or the "sexy" type, and usually featured women in advertisements for housekeeping and beauty (Cohen-Eliya and Hammer 2004: 6). Contrary to women, men in advertisements were often shown as extremely strong and outspoken, frequently occupying prominent positions, displaying courage and rationality while also expressing emotion (Hassanaath Heathy 2021: 47). It is also important to note that men were more frequently seen in advertisements for banks, cars, travel, cigarettes, alcohol, industrial items, and industrial firms (Hassanaath Heathy 2021: 48). The advertisers in history used traditional media such as newspapers, magazines, radio and television to promote their products. With the growth of the Internet and the new media, advertisers opted for more modern means of advertising and decided to use various social media platforms to market their products. However, many previous studies found that gender stereotypes are still often used in advertising nowadays despite their lengthy history in our society and the supposed improvement of the overall state of society (Åkestam et al. 2021:64).

The primary goal of this study was to demonstrate the persistence of gender stereotypes in contemporary social media marketing. To accomplish that, this research used the case study as its primary research model and has analyzed eleven cases of gender stereotyping happening on social media in these modern times. This study was carried out by analyzing eleven cases of advertisements containing and using gender stereotypes to market their products on the social networking platform Facebook. Unlike, other studies revolving around existing advertisements, this study focused on examples of advertisements on Facebook which were flagged as sexist

and inappropriate by the society and taken down from the platform. The outcomes of this research have provided an insight into the modern-day situation regarding the use of gender stereotypes in current advertisement occurring on social media. The results in this research suggest that gender stereotypes still occur in modern day advertisements featured on social media, in this case the social networking site Facebook. All of the eleven example advertisements (Figures 11-16, 18, 20-21,23-24) shown in the third part i.e. the analytical part of this paper display advertisements containing gender stereotypes. Thereby, the initial underlying hypothesis (H0), which states that gender stereotypes exist in modern day social media advertising, was confirmed and it is evident that this type of stereotyping still occurs in these modern times.

Throughout this paper numerous examples of gender stereotypes occurring in advertisements were featured. From the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 21<sup>st</sup> century, most of the examples shown were especially disrespectful towards women. Ten out of eleven examples this study analyzed (Figures 11-16, 18, 20-21,23) displayed gender stereotypical representations of women or attitudes that were insulting towards women simply because of their gender in different ways. Many of those examples have presented women as either the “housewife” type, the “sexy” type or the combination of the two. Both of these stereotypical depictions of women in advertisement are problematic because they lead customers to associate the stereotypes with the value and function of the average woman. The "housewife" type of a woman in advertisement is an exaggerated representation of a woman frequently shown at home and featured in those advertisements related to maintaining a home and taking care of a family, and it is typically described as submissive, unconfident, passive and dependent, as well as very tidy and gentle. This representation of women can be specifically observed in the United Kingdom’s Government’s advertisement (Figure 2), which presents women doing various household chores, taking care of children, homeschooling them or teaching them how to do housekeeping tasks, while the only man in the advertisement is relaxing. This advertisement yet again makes the connection between women and the house. This type of behavior can also be noticed on the advertisement for a mobile application “Chapters: Interactive Stories” (Figure 15) which shows a woman wearing an apron, who is crying and a man commanding her to do household chores, additionally backed up with a caption: “Go and cook for me, stupid woman”. The “housewife” type of stereotypical depictions of women in the advertisement can also be seen in the advertisement for a new family line of clothing by the company ‘Giordano’ (Figure 23), which portrays a family, all wearing t-shirts with different captions on them. The ‘father’ of the family

is wearing a shirt with the caption 'work', whereas the 'mother' is wearing a shirt with the caption 'cook' which directly imposes the traditional gender roles. Furthermore, advertisements depicting women as the "sexy" type of a woman or the young, thin, sexually available, provocative and consenting type of woman who should be attractive and sexually available for men are visible in the analytical part of this study. The advertisement for the company 'Bosch' (Figure 11) uses a clear, sexist view of women and the notion that women are sex objects to promote their new product by showing a woman photographed from behind with a caption "Don't you wish to see this clearly?". Another example of the "sexy" type of a woman depicted in advertisement can be observed in the advertisement for 'AirAsia' (Figure 16) which uses a direct sexualization and objectification of women to promote their products. This type of stereotypical representation of women can also be observed in maybe not such a direct way in the advertisement for 'Al Rifai' company (Figure 21) which shows a cashew nut and a caption below it saying: "She's got the curves", insinuating that a woman should be sexually attractive. Other advertisements included in the analysis do not directly use these two types of the stereotypical representations of women in the advertisements, but rather measure women's worth in different gender stereotypical ways. The two advertisements for mobile games "Love Island: The Game 2" (Figure 13) and "Choices: Stories You Play" (Figure 14) insinuate that women should work on their looks in order to be attractive for men, and that women are dependent on men's approval. The advertisement for the 'Bic' company (Figure 18) indirectly insults women's intelligence and tells women how to behave properly in order to be successful. Dr. Pepper's" Facebook post (Figure 20) promoting their new drink made specifically for men implies that women are not worthy of drinking it and should stick to their 'girly' drinks. With this, the first hypothesis (H1) which states that gender stereotypes in social media advertising are more prominent for female population, than for the male population was confirmed.

The advertisement industry during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century was not as well-regulated as it is nowadays and many advertisements openly and unashamedly incorporated gender stereotypes, often in very disrespectful ways. With the advancement of the human society and the many fights for human rights, these types of advertisements were progressively more condemned by the society. Therefore, the advertisements, which use gender stereotypes to promote their products today have become much more subtle and incorporate gender stereotypes in more insidious ways. This can be observed in the advertisement for the company 'Bosch' (Figure 11) which did not directly sexualize the women nor shown her naked or wearing allusive clothing. They did use an objectified representation of a woman to market their

new product. However, they have done it in a more subtle way and the typical user could have overlooked it. This phenomenon can also be noticed in the Facebook advertisement made by the United Kingdom Government (Figure 12), whose intention was to advise people to stay home during the Coronavirus pandemic, but they ‘accidentally’ almost only portrayed just women being in the house either doing house chores or taking care of children. The average user might miss the fact that the advertisement in question incorporated gender stereotypes, as this advertisement looked similar to many advertisements of that period, and this was perhaps the initial intention of the advertisement. This specific issue can also be seen in the advertisement for ‘Al Rifai’ company (Figure 21) in which it was not directly stated that “men are smart (and women are not)” or “women are sexually attractive (and men are not)” but this message was rather masked with the captions “he’s got the brain” and “she’s got the curves” in order for it to look better i.e. more humorous and less insulting. An advertisement by the “Trustco Group Holdings” (Figure24) also highlights this particular concern. The advertisement, searching for a new board member, featured a known American transgender reality TV personality Caitlyn Jenner with a capture “Some would do anything to get a seat”. The creators of the advertisement did not directly say: “Some people would even change their gender to get a seat at the board”, but rather insinuated this in an indirect way. They did use the mockery of a transgender person to market their product in a ‘humorous’ way, although they did not say those words openly, which makes it more subtle compared to the earlier eras. Unlike the advertisements from the previous centuries, which literally insulted and belittled people by using gender stereotypes in their promotions, the modern advertisements have had to moderate the occurrence of this gender stereotypical behavior. Thereby, the second hypothesis (H2), which states that gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media are more subtly incorporated than before, was confirmed.

As previously mentioned, one of the crucial aspects of advertisement is to reassure men of their masculinity, and women of their femininity. Advertisers’ major objective or main purpose is not to offend or utilize gender stereotypes. Instead, their fundamental intention is to sell as many products or services as they possibly can, and if incorporating gender stereotypes into their advertisements will help with their sale numbers, they will willingly do so. If using gender stereotypes will enable the advertising companies to target a certain group of people most likely to use the products they promotes, they will do it. This instance can be noticed in the advertisement for the company ‘Bosch’ (Figure 11). It is clear that the creators of the advertisement used a picture of a woman’s posterior and to get the attention of their target

group, which was male. They further allured their target group with a question: “Don't you wish to see this clearly?”. A similar attempt at using gender stereotypes to attract the male target group was the advertisement for ‘AirAsia’ (Figure 16) which used a sexualized and objectifying picture of a woman to attract attention of their male consumers. It was also specifically noted in “Dr. Pepper’s” advertisement (Figure 20) which promoted their new drink, that this drink is made only for ‘manly’ men, by containing only ten ‘manly’ calories. This company targeted a particular type of man, the one who enjoys the things that any "traditional" man would, such as action, vehicles, guns, fighting etc. by incorporating gender stereotypes in their advertisement. Moreover, an advertisement by a Hong Kong company ‘Giordano’ (Figure 23) which was promoting their new line of clothing by showing a man wearing a shirt with the caption “work, and a women wearing a shirt with the caption “cook” seems to focus on attracting families i.e. homemakers. Since the gender depiction of women is unfavorable in Hong Kong, many advertisers take advantage of that by adding conventional or traditional gender roles into their advertisements. Accordingly, the third hypothesis (H3), which affirms that social media advertising promotes gender stereotypes to attract their target groups, was confirmed.

The results of this case study confirmed that gender stereotypes still occur in modern day advertisement on social media. They have also concluded that it does not matter if the company promoting itself or their products by using gender stereotypes is a company that sells stationary equipment, clothing, airplane seats, drinks, or even promotes an official message from the government. Gender stereotypes are still a big part of the advertising industry, even though the times have progressed and the type of media promoting the products has changed. These types of stereotypes are still used in many advertisements to attract the target groups the advertising companies desire, and are nevertheless particularly degrading towards women, even though they are more subtle than they were in the previous centuries.

## **Conclusion**

This paper aimed to explore the use of gender stereotypes in modern-day advertisements on social media. To accomplish that, it used a case study as its research model. The study was carried out by assessing eleven examples of advertising on the social networking site Facebook that contained and used gender stereotypes to promote their products. By carefully analyzing and examining these eleven examples, the findings of this case study proved that gender stereotypes are still present in contemporary social media advertising. They have also concluded that the type of company employing gender stereotypes to promote itself or its goods plays no role in this behavior as gender stereotyping is seen in various sectors of the advertising industry. This study also postulated and proved four hypotheses through the analysis and the discussion part of this paper. They are the following:

H0 Gender stereotypes exist in modern day social media advertising.

H1: Gender stereotypes in social media advertising are more prominent for female population, than male.

H2: Gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media are more subtly incorporated, than before.

H3: Social media advertising promotes gender stereotypes to attract their target groups.

It is necessary to investigate the occurrence of the usage of gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media as much as possible to provide a foundation for future studies because this issue has not been as thoroughly explored in the past. This matter should be investigated more because gender representation in social media marketing is a concern in today's culture. Studies could be conducted using a thorough content analysis throughout various social media platforms to concur the prevalence of gender stereotypes in different advertisements to see if they indeed differ from those presented in the previous centuries and on the more traditional media. The occurrence of gender stereotypes in advertisements on social media in the 21st century is something that should not happen, and further research could reduce this phenomenon.



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