

# Gender Stereotypes in Television Commercials for Household Items

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

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**Rodni stereotipi u televizijskim reklamama za proizvode za kućanstvo**

Diplomski rad

Mentor: doc.dr.sc. Goran Milić

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Supervisor: Dr. Goran Milić, Assistant Professor

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## **Abstract**

This paper studies the depiction of genders through stereotypes in television commercials, more specifically, to what extent and how gender stereotypes are presented in modern day television advertising. In the first part of the paper, a brief theoretical background and history of television advertising is provided, along with a list of frequently used advertising appeals and gender specific roles in a nuclear family household and how each of them is targeted by advertisers. The second part of the paper provides two types of television commercial analyses – a survey and case study. The survey gives an overview of 30 television commercials that target both genders and examines, among other parameters, in which gender roles they are presented, and which advertising appeals are used to target them. The case study provides a detailed analysis of 10 television commercials, that are selected from the survey corpus, that best illustrate common examples of gender stereotyping and/or show an alternative way to target based on gender either by mocking gender stereotypes or showing male and female characters in reverse gender roles.

**Key words:** television commercial, gender roles, gender stereotyping, advertising

# 1. Introduction

Ever since man became skilled enough to provide their products or services to others, there has been some form of advertising. While advertising started by word of mouth, making sure the people in town knew what services or products one could provide, it soon “evolved” into printed fliers and newspapers that would be circulated through the populated areas in large quantities.<sup>1</sup> With the invention of the radio and television, more creativity could be implemented in the advertising material. The advertisers had to think about strategies to creatively and efficiently promote their products, and one of those strategies was gender-based targeting of commercials. The paper’s main goal is to explore how gender is presented in modern day television commercials, as well as the prevalence of gender-based stereotypes in these commercials.

This will be done by first providing a brief history of modern media advertising, outlining how TV advertising came to be and what types of TV advertising there are, as well as what strategies (appeals) advertiser use to make a product/service more appealing. The theoretical part of the paper also explores the different stereotypical family (gender) roles in a nuclear family and how advertisers may target those specific stereotypical gender-based roles to promote their products more efficiently.

In the second part of the paper, the survey will analyze 30 television commercials based on their gender representation and gender role division. It will also make note of gender specific use of advertising appeals, after which a short discussion will follow commenting on the findings and its correlation with the theory. The case study will analyze 10 television commercials in detail, showing examples of gender stereotyping, gender-specific targeting and, in some cases, non-stereotypical gender representation.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.britannica.com/topic/advertising> Accessed 6 September 2022

## 2. Modern (Traditional) Media Advertising

Advertising has been part and parcel of the media since its inception. It has made its way into both traditional (newspapers, magazines, radio, TV) and new-age media through the Internet. As far as TV advertising goes, as is the case with all new pieces of technology, there was an adaptation period in which the technology was either too expensive for the common folk or it was hard to come by. Slowly but surely, TVs made their way into almost every modern American household.

The potential audience grew exponentially, and advertising companies took note of this, investing more and more money to have their products promoted publicly. Looking at advertising spending in the U.S since early 20<sup>th</sup> century, total advertising spending in media was 1,9 million dollars and has grown to 279 million dollars in 2007.<sup>2</sup> Although this evidently is a massive increase, the most interesting time period for that growth was in the post war period during the 1950s – the start of TV advertising.

## 3. History of TV Advertising

The years prior to 1920s were dominated by newspapers and radio. Advertising on radio was done in the form of catchy songs or jingles promoting the product or service, and although they were somewhat lucrative in the advertising department, many companies were still cautious of overinvesting in marketing as is evident by advertisement spending during that time. From 1920 to 1940 the entire yearly advertisement spending was firmly on the 1 million dollars mark.<sup>3</sup>

As TVs gained in popularity and were more financially accessible to the common folk, companies were more inclined to invest in advertising spots due to more people consuming the media daily and the advertisements themselves could be more easily manipulated to fit the product and service. The TV advertising business grew from a 1-million-dollar business to 12-million-dollar business<sup>4</sup> and TV networks saw this as an opportunity to sell their advertising

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.galbithink.org/ad-spending.html> Accessed 18 July 2022

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.galbithink.org/ad-spending.html> Accessed 3 August 2022

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.galbithink.org/ad-spending.html> Accessed 20 July 2022

spots to multiple companies. One particular network, The DuMont Network, was the pioneer of the multiple advertisements in one slot trend that we see now on almost all TV networks. The company also sold TV sets, ones that were coveted by all media viewers (Weinstein, 2004).

One interesting phenomenon that came to be are TV networks dedicated solely to advertising such as TopShop in Croatia or its USA equivalent HSN (Home Shopping Network). These networks are a never-ending catalogue of products marketed for home use, mostly advertised towards stereotypical nuclear families (mother, father, children) (Bearden et al., 1996). The advertisements on these networks/channels are usually very predatory in nature and use urgency (“buy now for a discount”, “limited supplies remaining”, “last chance”, “get one free if you order now”) as their main appeal.

In the same vein, the Super Bowl, America’s most popular sporting event of the year, is watched by over 208 million people<sup>5</sup> and its commercial spots are some of the most contested among the competing companies due to its outreach. It is also fascinating to see testimonies of people on forums and social media where they claim to only watch Super Bowl because of its commercials. This hints at the effect advertising can have on people and how it can be used persuade them to buy/request a product/service.

## 4. Types of TV Advertising

While there are many different types and sub-types of TV advertising, most of which are adapted for television use from other media (newspaper, radio, internet, tabloids), there are 4 main types most commonly mentioned in literature:

1. Product Placement – this type is characterized by paid placement of products (brand, logo etc.) within the content played on television. (Homer, 2006) An example of this would be a character in a movie/TV show drinking a can of Coca-Cola. This type can be more or less subtle, depending on the need/want of the company paying for the service. A more long-term sub-type of product placement is brand integration. With brand integration, the content of the media is almost indistinguishable from the brand that is being advertised.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nfl.com/news/super-bowl-lvi-total-viewing-audience-estimated-at-over-208-million> Accessed 20 July 2022

2. TV Commercials – a pre-filmed, pre-recorded audio-visual piece of media inserted in a pre-determined time slot on a TV channel. This time slot is usually filled with other commercials from different companies (or the same company) and can last from 2-5 minutes.
3. Overlay Advertising – a text/short video is overlaid over the content being watched on TV. While an advertising type that does not interfere with watching the content should be less irritating and intrusive to the viewer, a study done by Wang (2020) concluded that Chinese people do not perceive overlay advertisements any more or less intrusive than their full-screen video advertisement counterparts. No similar study has been done in the US market, probably due to the low prevalence of overlay advertising (overlay advertising is mostly used as a next-up information about an upcoming TV show/movie), so the practical use of overlay advertising remains questionable.
4. Informercials – a type of advertising “Long regarded as a form of advertising targeting the gullible and naïve” (Martin et al., 2002). It is characterized by a string of commercials that promote a product or service of a company. The “advertisers” in these commercials are often very persuasive and somewhat predatory in their tone, offering discounts/deals if the viewers “call immediately”. An example of this type would be the Home Shopping Network or its Croatian counterpart – TopShop

## 5. Advertising Appeals

Advertising appeals are simple in their premise. As the name suggests, the goal is to present the product or service to the consumer as “appealing”. To reach this goal, advertisers often use strategies that evoke a certain (negative or positive) response in the consumer and entice them to further consider the product/service that is being advertised. Kotler (1991) mentions two major appeals (and their sub-types) used in advertising:

1. **Rational Appeal** – its goal is to make the purchase of the product/service seem like a rational choice. The focus is usually on the qualities of the product and how that product

can make the customer's life easier. The most stereotypical example when it comes to household items would be cleaning products. The commercials highlight the active ingredients, how well the product cleans, and in some cases, how safe the product is for the environment/children/pets. The male counterpart would be tools. Commercials focus on the specification of the tools; how easy it is to operate and the different circumstances the tool can be used in. The commercials usually star an expert or an ordinary person (a person the viewers can relate to) using/explaining the product/service.

2. **Emotional Appeal** – advertisers use different tactics and strategies to arouse either positive or negative emotional responses, depending on the target audience.

### **2.1 Positive Emotional Appeal**

**2.1.1 Humor Appeal** – use of humor to promote a product, particularly common when the commercial “mocks” gender stereotypes – “...for instance, men could be depicted in domestic roles doing chores, whereas women would be presented in independent roles” (Eisend et al. 2014).

**2.1.2 Love Appeal** – using the feeling of love as a major theme in commercials. Common occurrence in commercials promoting travelling (travelling with a loved one), children care products (mother caring for their children), domestic animals or pets (food, grooming products etc.).

**2.1.3 Happiness Appeal** – using imagery or characters (people smiling, being happy) is also a frequent advertising strategy. The consumer connects the feeling of happiness with the marketed product. An example of this appeal can be frequently found at the end of commercials – a person/family is smiling while using the product/service. This appeal can be used in combination with other appeals.

### **2.2 Negative Emotional Appeal**

**2.2.1 Fear Appeal** – this appeal is frequently used with commercial depicting urgency or call-to-action. One of the ways this appeal is used is in health-related products. The commercial may show imagery of what would happen if the viewers do not put on sunscreen, or if they continue smoking and offer their products as a solution. Another way a commercial may use fear appeal is a call-to-action. This is usually done

by non-governmental organizations, showing pictures and video of a garbage filled ocean and imploring the viewers to recycle/dispose of garbage effectively.

**2.2.2 Guilt Appeal** – similarly to fear appeal, its goal is to evoke a feeling of guilt within the watcher. This appeal is very common in charity advertising. Advertiser will use pictures or video of, for example, starving children in Africa and ask for donations from the viewers. Doing this, the watcher is left with the feeling of guilt if they were to not donate and help.

**2.2.3 Moral Appeal** – another staple in advertisers' repertoire, an appeal "...that is directed to the audience's sense of what is right and proper."<sup>6</sup> A prototypical example would be a police announcement. A police officer would tell the viewers to inform their local police department if they were to see any illegal action happening and telling the audience that this is the "right thing to do". With this last statement, they put direct pressure on the watcher's morality and the watcher is more likely to comply with the indirect order if that order is the moral thing to do.

## 6. Family Roles in Nuclear Families (Gender Stereotypes)

Since the establishment of modern society, one has been encouraged to fit into societal roles and perform social duties to better the society as a whole. Social roles are "the set of attitudes and characteristic behaviors expected of an individual who occupies a specific position or performs a particular function in a social context."<sup>7</sup> These roles are almost exclusively divided by gender - male dominated and female dominated. There were even roles in early Neanderthal societies. Men hunted in packs, "slaughtering mammoth, bison, aurochs and other large and dangerous prey" (Speth et al., 2001), while the women prepared the catch and took care of the young. This is present in almost all (un)civilized societies, although some are more or less lenient in the enforcement of such roles. Ostracizing behavior unfitting for those roles, or in some more extreme cases - banishment, is not uncommon. Although modern society is fighting against such enforcement of roles and is leaning towards a more progressive and accepting

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<sup>6</sup><https://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803100208734#:~:text=An%20appeal%20in%20an%20advertisement,what%20is%20right%20and%20proper>. Accessed 1 August 2022

<sup>7</sup> <https://dictionary.apa.org/social-role> Accessed 2 August 2022

approach to the division of labor in society, many “traces” of the old ways are still very much present today.

With the aforementioned roles being split by gender, gender stereotypes also grew with them. While gender stereotypes can act as a guide, they can also “...produce oversimplified conceptions and misapplied knowledge evaluations, thereby generating misleading evaluations of subjects from a particular social category” (Eisend et al., 2014). While this misevaluation can lead to nothing more than a simple social “hick-up”, it can also negatively affect career development, social interaction etc.

Although there are many purposed divisions of roles within a family, one by Lu and Lin (1998) mentions four major roles – the spousal, parental, filial and worker role.

## **6.1 Spousal role**

The spousal role is the “starting role”. Without it, the family cannot be formed, as the very prerequisite for a family is two consenting adults (whereby consenting to family life is not needed in some cultures) sharing their lives with one another. Both males and females are equally engaged in this role, but sub-roles within this role are mostly clearly divided.

Men were usually the sole breadwinners in the past and spent most of the day outside of the household at work. When they come back from their workplace, they take care of the family’s transportation vehicle and do repairs in and around the house. The women on the other hand, are usually in charge of the household - doing house chores such as washing dishes, doing laundry, cleaning the house, taking care of children etc. This of course, is not always the case. Sometimes (more frequently nowadays than in the past) the woman is the breadwinner, and the man is the one who takes care of the household. One government report states that the number of women being employed while having children under 18 in the US grew from 47.4% in 1975 to 72.4% in 2019.<sup>8</sup> This division of sub-roles has become more of a choice rather than a “duty” it once was before.

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/opub/reports/womens-databook/2020/home.htm> Accessed 23 August 2022



## **6.2 Parental role**

The role of a parent is probably the most important one of all. Before entering the school system, and even kindergarten, the child's only source of "correct" social behavior comes from their parents (and relatives to a lesser extent). It is extremely important for a parent to provide a positive environment for the child to adopt acceptable social behavior and later evolve into a functional social being. With men stereotypically being the breadwinners and spending most of the day away from their children, it is usually up to the women to take care of the children both physically (feeding, changing diapers, taking care of hygiene) and mentally/emotionally (communicating, providing support, engaging in stimulating activities, teaching).

Men traditionally did not interact much with their children, as that was considered feminine and the duty of the woman, but nowadays, more and more fathers make the time to take care of and play with their children in order to form a stronger emotional bond (Cabrera et al., 2000) This however can create tension within the household, as men can struggle to be both the sole earner of the family and be the father they want to be (Shave & Laschewizc, 2016).

## **6.3 Filial role**

This role concerns the children in the household. Even though the children assume quite a passive role in their early childhoods, they use their parents as role models and display much of the same behavior, values, and beliefs. They even imitate societal roles as early as kindergarten and preschool. In a study by Watson and Fischer (1980) the children, when prompted, imitated "most concrete roles that children experience commonly in their daily lives, roles like mother and father, boy and girl, teacher and pupil" (Watson et al., 1980).

When they become more active members of society, the children divide themselves in these same roles and begin developing into functional social beings.

## 6.4 Worker role

The worker role, as previously mentioned, is dominated by men. Even when children are taken into the equation, more than 92.3% of fathers still work in the US after having children. Households with both parents working make up around 59.8% of all families.<sup>9</sup> This again is a direct indication that traditional family roles are still present in today's western society, despite the movement towards a more progressive family environment.

## 7. Target advertising for family roles

Targeting advertising according to a specific demographic is not a new concept. It is one of the frequently used strategies when it comes to any type of advertising, especially product advertising (Plummer et al., 2007). One demographic parameter of particular concern to this paper is gender. As far as product types are concerned, the most common products marketed towards men include, but are not limited to, cars, tools, car cleaning products, shaving related items, deodorants etc. The most common products marketed towards women include, but are not limited to, cleaning products (kitchen, house, garden), baby care products (baby powder, diapers, food), perfumes, decorative cosmetics (make-up, skin care, hair, hair colors) etc. According to a review done by Adeleke (1999) TV commercials use female characters to advertise domestic products in 76.1% of commercials analyzed, while men are used in automotive and outdoors related commercials. In America, men have a predominantly independent role (73%), they are presented more often as professionals, and are less likely to be presented in a parental role (17% vs 32%). According to the same review, women are shown indoors (kitchen, bedroom, living room) while men are portrayed outside of the household.

As far as specific strategies used for marketing to a specific gender demographic, according to a study done by Wolin (2003), a marketing agency OptiMonk.com concluded that when advertising for men “your messages must be concise and to the point and use power words, prove what you say with facts. Provide solutions to problems utilizing the products you are

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.catalyst.org/research/working-parents/> Accessed 28 July 2022

selling.”<sup>10</sup> As far as targeting the female audience, “... your messages should tend towards being descriptive, use disclaimers, and offer softer words and most importantly your message must end in such a way that it gives the feeling that you understand them and that you will support them.”<sup>11</sup> Many similar “tips-and-tricks” can be found on sites of similar marketing competitors.

Advertisers also use advertising appeals in accordance with which gender they want to target. Some advertising appeals work better on men and women, respectively. According to a study done by Noble and colleagues (2014), ( women respond most to negative emotional appeals (guilt appeal, in particular) while men respond slightly better to rational appeal than to positive emotional appeal.

These results coincide with the current trend in target advertising towards gender stereotypes. For example. products that are targeted towards females (sunscreen, wrinkle fighting creams) all use, to some extent, guilt appeal (e.g., wearing the brand’s creams reduces the effect of aging). In targeting men, the advertisers use rational appeal, listing specifications of the products, the qualities of the product and how easy the product is to use.

## **8. Methodology of the Survey**

As mentioned in the theoretical part, gender based targeted advertising is a staple in any advertiser’s repertoire. The survey aims to explore to what extent gender stereotypes are present in a sample of TV commercials and if the gender representation fits within common gender stereotypes.

For the purpose of the survey, parts of the commercial will be analyzed using the parameters mentioned in the review paper by Adeleke (1999). Some parameters that are mentioned in the original review paper are omitted as they are not needed for the scope of this analysis. Along with the parameters, the table will differentiate between males and females (or both).

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.optimonk.com/gender-targeting-the-differences-between-men-and-women/> Accessed 28 July 2022

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.optimonk.com/gender-targeting-the-differences-between-men-and-women/> Accessed 28 July 2022

The parameters that will be used are the following:

1. **Credibility** – which gender is using the product (user), and which is presenting the product (authority)?
2. **Role** – which gender is being portrayed in which role? (Spousal, parental, filial and worker role)
3. **Location** – where is the commercial taking place? (Home, occupational, outdoors etc.)
4. **Age** – are the characters young (<35 years), middle-aged (35-65 years) or old (>65 years)?
5. **Product type** – which product (type) is being advertised? (Body, home (repair, improvement), food, auto/sports (toys), childcare)
6. **Advertising appeal** – which advertising appeal is used and why? (Rational or emotional)

Finally, after the analysis, the findings, as well as the implications in advertising, will be discussed.

## 8.1 Survey of 30 TV commercials

30 TV commercials advertising household items made for the American market were sourced from YouTube (all the links to the commercials can be found in the Cited Sources section of the paper). The commercials are a re-upload of original TV commercials and were originally produced for American national television.

The corpus consists of commercials filmed and published from 1980s to early 2020s, to see if there is any difference in gender representation and stereotyping. The only criteria for corpus selection are that the commercials feature either a male or female speaker/character (or both) and they advertise products which fit into one of the abovementioned product types (body, home (repair, improvement), food, auto/sports, childcare).

The survey results are as follows (Table 1):

Parameters	Female (N=31)	Male (N=26)	Both
<b>Credibility</b>			
User	22	10	4
Authority	9	16	1
<b>Role</b>			
Spousal	21	18	13
Parental	17	10	8
Filial	6	5	4
Worker	5	17	1
<b>Location</b>			
Home	24	13	10
Occupation	2	4	0
Outdoors	5	19	2
<b>Age</b>			
Young	6	5	2
Middle-aged	17	14	10
Old	4	4	3
<b>Product type</b>			
Body	7	3	0
Home	4	6	2
Food	4	4	3
Auto/sports	0	3	0
Childcare	3	1	1
<b>Advertising appeal</b>			
Rational	4	10	2
Emotional	13	6	3
Positive	10	5	2
Negative	3	1	0

Table 1: Survey of the corpus along the parameters by Adeleke (1999)

## 8.2 Discussion of the Results (Survey)

Although the sample of commercials is quite small, the results of the survey support what has been stated in theory. There was no noticeable difference in gender stereotyping between commercials filmed and published in the early stages of the commercial TV (1980s) and now. This limited sample of commercials confirms that the most common gender tropes are present in almost all commercials, apart from the ones that are clearly made to be progressive or mock

gender stereotypes as a whole, which pertains mostly to a small fraction of the newer commercials (2013 and up).

The women in the commercials are most often presented as users and rarely as an authoritative figure. The difference in credibility representation in men is smaller, although it is skewed somewhat towards them being the authoritative figure. In many commercials featuring the male gender, especially the ones advertising tools, the men are both the user and the authority.

As far as gender roles go, both men and women are shown in parental and spousal roles (women slightly more) and children are equally represented by gender. The children most often appear as brother and sister (both genders represented at once). One thing of interest is when both genders are portrayed as parents in the commercial. The male character often feels “tacked-on”, and it seems like the commercial would function just fine without the character. In this way, the male character feels out of place and unnatural, simply put in the commercial to curry favor of the more progressive audience (much more present in the commercials from 2000s and up). The biggest difference is in the worker role. The men are more often portrayed in a working role (explicitly said or implied) rather than a supporting role.

The characters of both genders are most often middle aged. Older couples are rare and mostly appear in commercials dealing with health (issues).

The product types advertised to men are most frequently associated with the home improvement/fixing category as well as auto/sports category. Products most often advertised to women fit into the body category and all other categories (other than auto/sports) somewhat equally. Childcare category advertising further proves the point of the male characters feeling out of place. The only time the male character appears in this category was in a baby body wash commercial. The male character just stands by while the female character washes and plays with the child, making the whole scene unnecessarily uncomfortable.

Both the rational and emotional appeal are used when targeting either gender. The rational appeal is slightly more often used when targeting men, and the emotional appeal is slightly more frequently used when targeting women. The positive emotional appeal to target women appears in the form of love and happiness appeal, while in men humor appeal is most often used. The negative emotional appeal is almost exclusively used for targeting women, in the form of guilt appeal.

Ultimately, the commercials follow the strategies outlined by OptiMonk.com, and many similar marketing agencies. Men are targeted by using factual messages that are clear and to the point, while women targeted commercials use a softer, more reassuring tone using less clear-cut messaging (more descriptive, rather than factual) <sup>12</sup>. These will be illustrated and addressed in the content analyses to follow.

## 9. Methodology of the Case Study

The case study of several examples found to be indicative of the abovementioned general tendencies aims to gain more in depth understanding of how and why each gender is represented in modern media marketing and to exemplify how the general tendencies presented are realized in practice. The chosen material consists of ten TV commercials picked from the corpus for their representativeness in advertising household items for the American market. The material will be evaluated in more detail based on the parameters introduced above and suggested by Adeleke (1999).

Firstly, a brief explanation/description of the TV commercial will be given, along with a picture taken from the commercial.

Secondly, the TV commercials will be analyzed with respect to the same parameters used in the Ad Survey (see Chapter 8) with detailed comments.

Lastly, there will be a short discussion of the findings pertaining to the commercial. Some of the key points that will be discussed include:

1. Who is the target audience of the commercial?
2. Which advertising appeal(s) were featured in the commercial and does the use match the gender that was the target audience of the commercial?
3. What gender stereotype(s) were featured in the commercial?
4. How is language being used to advertise the product (slogans and wordplay)?

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.optimonk.com/gender-targeting-the-differences-between-men-and-women/> Accessed 3 September 2022

## 9.1 Clorox – Cleaning product<sup>13</sup>

A prototypical female audience is predominately targeted in the cleaning product commercial, featuring many gender stereotypes and uses of advertising appeals that are present in many of the cleaning product commercials featured in the survey.

This cleaning product (bleach) comes from a very popular brand by the same name – The Clorox Company. The commercial features a timeline going from, presumably, the 1920s (when the brand first started) to the modern day. In the commercial, there are multiple shots of women doing the laundry, using different technique, machines etc. The only constant, as the commercial mentions, is Clorox – “the bleach most trusted to keep whites - white.”



Image 1: Clorox commercial

Regarding the **credibility**, the commercial features almost exclusively females. There are mentions of males, only in a humorous manner. The narrator (a female) mentions mothers, grandmothers and all women before doing laundry and adds a sarcastic “maybe a man or two.”, implying that men rarely do house chores such as doing laundry. All the female characters

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TZeQUxSjHwU> Accessed 20 August 2022



shown in the commercial are portrayed as non-speaking users, using the cleaning product (Clorox) that the commercial advertises. The only somewhat authoritative figure would be the female narrator. The vast majority of both the female and male characters are middle-aged, around their 30s or 40s. There are shots of young children (both male and female) and of older individuals (grandmother/grandfathers).

The female characters are portrayed in a spousal and parental **role**. In the commercial, one can see children being around the mother while she is doing the laundry, presumably either playing or “helping” with the laundry. Men are portrayed either coming home from work (car arriving) or fixing in the background. The male characters would therefore be featured in a worker role, and to a lesser extent, spousal role.

The **location** where the commercial takes place is in the home. More specifically, in the shots that depict the earlier periods of laundry washing, the basement and garage, and in the shots that present modern times, the kitchen, which is where the advertised product should be used (according to the commercial).

The product that is being advertised is a cleaning product and fits into the home **product category**. The commercial covers both women using the product (doing laundry) and shots of the product itself.

The commercial features a variety of **advertising appeals**, with the main one being the rational appeal. In the commercial, the narrator mentions that this cleaning product has been used for generations, so if it was good enough for “our” mothers and grandmothers, it must be good enough for us. The commercial also depicts the changing of times, how everything changes around the “Clorox” cleaning product, but the product remains unaffected. This portrays to the consumer that buying this product is a rational choice, as the product must be of great quality if there was not any need to change it. There are also hints of humor appeal (mentions of “a men or two” doing the laundry (sarcastic)) and well as, love appeal (women playing with children/loved ones).

The **target audience** for this commercial was most certainly female. The advertisers used a lot of imagery appealing to the (stereotypical) female audience: using an almost all-female cast, the characters doing a stereotypically “female job”, women playing with children etc. The use of appeal also fits the target audience. Using a mixture of rational appeal (product quality) and positive emotional appeal (humor and love) provides a potent advertising piece of media.

The **gender stereotypes** present in the commercial are women doing chores and taking care of children, while men are working and fixing something around the household.

The **language used** in the commercial is quite standard for a commercial of this type. The main message that the advertisers use is that a lot has changed throughout the years of laundry washing (“The machines, the detergent, the clothes themselves”), however one thing has not, the product that will “Keep whites, white.”. This is done to indicate the quality of the product, as it has clearly stood the test of time, and can still prove its capabilities after all these years.

## **9.2 Swiffer – Dusters and sweepers<sup>14</sup>**

This example features an interesting way for a product to highlight its accessibility features (using a disabled person) and goes against the stereotypical gender division of chores in the household.

The commercial advertises a line of dusters and sweepers, made with (as the commercial implies) accessibility in mind. The commercial features a nuclear family of four (mother, daughter, son and father) that give testimonies about their day-to-day cleaning troubles. The father is an amputee and therefore finds the usual assortment of cleaning devices troublesome to use and the mother is simply not “made to sweep”, as she puts it.

One day, the doorbell rings and in front of it is a package containing the new Swiffer lineup of dusters and sweepers. The father and mother are then shown in different situations using the products and showcasing its capabilities. In the final scene, we can see the family hanging out on the couch, smiling and being happy.

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<sup>14</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jjeIH8Y6XM> Accessed 22 August 2022



Image 2: Swiffer commercial

In respect to the **credibility**, both genders are equally presented as both users and the authority. In the first half of the commercial, the family is shown using the “old” cleaning equipment and having trouble cleaning effectively. Once the new equipment arrives, the family is still depicted as users (using the new product), but they also take on an authoritative role and state the equipment’s qualities, how easy it is to use, and how easier their life is because of it. The family featured in the commercial is mentioned by their real-life name (Rukavina), and by doing this, the family is putting their names “on the line”, as if the product is of low quality, they could be at fault for promoting it. This mixture of both user and authority role, as well as presenting the family by name, boosts the commercial’s credibility, as it not only gives the product that is being used credibility, but it also makes the commercial more believable and natural. As for the **age**, adult female and male characters are middle-aged, around their 30s or 40s. The children are both smaller, the male being around 3 or 4 years old, while the female is still an infant.

Both the male and female characters (excluding the children) are presented in parental and spousal **roles**. They both clean and do chores around the house and engage with their children. The father is presented as more competent in cleaning, which goes against the common gender stereotype of the women being in charge of cleaning. The father even mentions that despite only having one hand he still does a better job than the mother. The children (male and

female) are shown in filial roles. One of the male children even offers to help his father with cleaning and pretends to clean in the background, which shows the imitation of societal roles children most commonly see (Watson et al., 1980).

The **location** where the commercial takes place is in the home. One thing of interest is that the female character only cleans in the vicinity of the kitchen (stove, fridge, kitchen counter), while the male character is shown cleaning other parts of the house. This may or may not be intentional, however it might be to appeal to the common stereotype of women being in the kitchen, cleaning and cooking for the family.

The product being advertised is a line of dusters and sweepers, which would fit into the home **product category**. Both female and male characters are shown using the product, the only difference being is that the male character presents the product's qualities (how it extends, not being forced to use a step stool, the product being a dirt magnet etc.) while the female uses a more emotional, descriptive approach (expressive voice tone, "That is crazy!" etc.). This again coincides with the strategies presented by the advertising agency featured in the theory.

The main **advertising appeal** being used to target the male audience is the rational appeal. Through the first half of the commercial, the male character struggles while using the "old" equipment, and once he receives the new "Swiffer" duster and sweeper, he raves about how much easier it is to use, about its features etc. One, somewhat controversial, opinion could be the potential use of guilt appeal. The male character is an amputee (missing a hand due to cancer), and he still helps with the dusting and cleaning in the household, which might provoke a feeling of guilt in the men watching at home. Seeing him still try to help his wife, despite his health situation, is a powerful emotional image, one which may invoke similar feelings in the viewers. We can also see a bit of emotional (love) appeal being used, because the father is depicted as a loving and caring parent (playing with his children).

The advertising appeals being used to target the female audience is positive emotional appeal, more specifically, humor appeal and love appeal. The woman mentions "not being made to sweep", the cleaning being frustrating with the old equipment, and upon receiving the new equipment, she can finally clean the, how she humorously puts it, "danger zone" (fridge area) and adds a "That is crazy!" upon seeing the results of the new cleaning equipment. The love appeal is present with the female character, in almost all scenes, being shown carrying, caring for or playing with her children. The use of advertising appeal coincides with the theory, with the male audience being targeted with rational and humor appeal, while their female counterparts

with love and humor appeal. One use of advertising appeal that is not typical when targeting males would be the guilt appeal, but it is unclear if this example would be representative of that advertising appeal.

The **target audience** for this commercial can be claimed to be both the female and male audience. The commercial shows a real family going through difficulties with chores any regular person may face in the household, difficulties that new cleaning equipment might fix.

The number of **gender stereotypes** present in the commercial is quite low. The commercial even goes against the common gender stereotype (women cleaning while men work) and has the main male character doing most of the cleaning. The woman in the commercial is also depicted as “bad” at cleaning, which also goes against the “norm”.

The **use of language** is best showcased when the characters describe the products. Calling the new equipment, a “dirt magnet”, really seizes the effectiveness of the product. The commercial also ends with a rhyming slogan “Give cleaning a new meaning.”, purposing that cleaning does not have to be a tiring activity and can transform (if you use their products) into one the whole family can enjoy.

### 9.3 Makita – Cordless outdoor power equipment<sup>15</sup>

This case was chosen as a prototypical example of a male targeted commercial, containing the same gender stereotypes (with one exception) and use of advertising appeal as almost all examples of the male targeted home product type in the survey corpus.

This commercial features a new lineup of battery powered outdoor maintenance equipment by a well-known industry leading manufacturer of power tools – Makita. The commercial starts off with a man in his garage getting ready to trim the lawn. He takes the trimmer off the tool rack and proceeds to insert the new LXT battery into the trimmer. While he is trimming the lawn, the narrator lists the specifications and qualities of the trimmer, and as the commercial slows down, the inner workings of the product (how the motor functions) are presented. The man then goes from trimming to drilling and finally, to mowing, showcasing all

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ueKBF1mV4U> Accessed 27 August 2022



the different types of outdoor maintenance equipment that can be used with the new battery system. The commercial even features a female character (only 2 seconds) filmed mowing the lawn. With each new type of equipment, the narrator continues to list specifications of the products. The commercial then shows a group of, presumably, gardeners using their products, proving that their products can also be used for professional business purposes. Finally, there are shots of men using the new hedge trimmer and chainsaw, both powered by the new battery system.



Image 3: Makita commercial – inner workings



Image 4: Makita commercial – female character

Regarding the **credibility**, the male gender is presented as both the users and authority in the commercial. There are multiple shots of men using the advertised products, even for professional purposes (which can further prove the credibility of the product). The whole commercial is also being narrated by a professional sounding male narrator (authoritative figure) who lists the products qualities, giving the advertised product more credibility. The female gender barely makes an appearance, only a short 2 second shot of a women mowing the lawn is included, which again feels forced and tacked-on. A much better alternative would be to feature an all-female cast (just like this commercial features an all-male one) in the same roles as male represent and would give a commercial a much more natural feel. The male and female character(s) are all middle-**aged**, around their 30s and 40s.

The majority of the male characters are shown in a spousal **role**. They are shown taking care of the yard, mowing the lawn and fixing the fence, a stereotypically male “job”. The rest of the male representation is shown in the worker role. They are either gardeners, blowing fallen leaves into piles in a public place, or woodsmen, cutting trees with a chainsaw. The only female character is shown in a spousal role, mowing the lawn, which, arguably, goes against the common gender stereotype of outdoor maintenance being the man’s job. Again, the shortness of the female appearance in the commercial indicates that the advertiser’s goal was to appeal “inclusive”, rather than send an anti-stereotype message that females could also be the ones in charge of yard work

The entire commercial takes place outdoors. The **locations** where the advertised product is shown being used: are a backyard (man/woman fixing, mowing and trimming), public place (gardeners blowing leaves, trimming the hedge, and the woods (lumberjacks cutting a tree with a chainsaw.

The product being advertised is a new line of battery powered outdoor maintenance equipment, which would fit into the home **product category** (outdoor maintenance). The product is most often advertised towards male and, hence why the majority of characters being shown using the product are male.

The main and only **advertising appeal** being used to target the male audience is rational appeal. The narrator has a constant stream of information about the product, how much better it is against the competition/last year’s model and how easy it is to use. There are even shots of the inner workings of the new equipment, showing the traits the equipment hides under its attractive

outer shell. The gardeners being shown using the equipment for professional purposes also portray that if the product is good enough to be use in a work environment, it must be more than adequate for home use. The use of advertising appeal ultimately fits the common practice of targeting the male audience with the rational appeal, with the product's qualities and characteristic being stated.

The **target audience** for this commercial was primarily men. Although the commercial does shortly feature a female character, it feels as though it is simply an inclusivity tactic, rather than an attempt to go against the common gender stereotype of men being in charge of yard maintenance.

The two main **gender stereotypes** featured are men being responsible for yard work and men doing (somewhat strenuous) physical labor.

The commercial showcases its **use of language** through buzzwords/sentences such as: "40 years of cordless innovation", "modernizing the work outdoors", "unstoppable power", "get the speed you need", "ready to work anytime, anywhere". It ends with the new battery system's catchphrase: "One system. Endless possibilities." This highlights the products ease of use (multiple equipment can be used with one battery) and all the different outdoor jobs that can be completed with them.

## 9.4 Dodge Challenger – car <sup>16</sup>

One of the best examples in the corpus of how humor appeal is used to target one of the common male gender stereotypes - their love of cars.

The commercial starts off with melancholic sounds of a violin accompanied by a shot of a young British soldier running rapidly through the woods. He arrives on a battlefield where his fellow men in arms await battle. Upon readying their rifles, they hear a loud roaring sound in the distance. The camera turns to a fleet of Dodge Challengers (instead of horses) driving through the field carrying American flags. The British men cower and start to retreat. We are left with a

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<sup>16</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqWxgCZ1TQE> Accessed 27 August 2022



shot of George Washington next to a Dodge Challenger with the narrator saying: “Here are a couple of things America got right. Cars and freedom.”



Image 5: Dodge Challenger commercial

As far as **credibility** is concerned, only the male gender appears in this commercial, mostly in the form of users. We can see shots of a man (George Washington) driving/using the new Dodge Challenger model, as well as a couple more cars of the same brand in the field, all being driven by men. The only authoritative figure would be the narrator who speaks at the end of the commercial. He mentions that America “got a couple of things right”, one of which being cars and freedom, implying that the car in the commercial is a sound buy. Most of the male characters are young men, around 20 and 30 years of **age**, as was common among soldiers in the war. Some of the characters are older, in their 50s and up, but they mostly represent the leaders (generals, officers etc.)

All the men in the commercial are shown in the worker **role**. On the British side, they are depicted as soldiers carrying rifles and preparing for war. On the American side, the soldiers are charging into battle (in cars). Being a soldier was a common “job” during times of war, with some individuals even creating careers out of it. The soldiers appear competent at their jobs, while following the commanders’ orders to ready their weapons.

The commercial takes place outdoors, more specifically, on a battlefield. Although an unconventional **location** in advertising, this was a common “workplace” during times of war.

The product being advertised is the new Dodge Challenger model, which would fit into the auto **product category**. This product type is almost exclusively targeted towards men, which would also be the case in this commercial. The commercial features only men using the car, in a rather unusual environment, highlighting the capability of the product.

The main **advertising appeal** used is undoubtedly the positive emotional appeal (humor appeal). The first half of the commercial seemed quite normal – ordinary. But when the viewers see the cars being used instead of horses to traverse the rough terrain and George Washington’s face as he makes his way across the battlefield, even though the situation (war) in which the commercial occurs is quite serious, it will certainly bring a smile or two to their face. One more possible use of advertising appeal would be rational appeal. During the shots where the cars drive on the battlefield, one can see that the terrain is quite uneven. This can subtly hint at the viewers that the car’s suspension system works well, as it can handle terrain that difficult. The use of advertising appeal coincides with the findings in the survey. The main appeal used is the humor appeal (commonly used with men) and, to lesser extent, rational appeal (also common while targeting men), with the product’s potential qualities being subtly demonstrated.

The **target audience** for this commercial was primarily men, as there is no female gender in the commercial and the main narrator is also a man. The product type is also one that is almost exclusively targeted towards the male audience.

The two male **gender stereotypes** seen in the commercial would be that men are all interested in cars and that they should be soldiers/generals. Both stereotypes are challenged often today, as more and more women (publicly) take in cars and become successful members of the military forces.

The **use of language** is quite toned down, as the characters in the commercial can barely be heard through the music. However, the few words the narrator leaves us with are quite potent:

“Here are a couple of things America got right. Cars and freedom.” This implies that one of the good things about America are their cars (manufacturers), one of which is featured in the commercial.

### **9.5 Blazy Professional - Dishwashing Liquid<sup>17</sup>**

A very representative example of a commercial that starts as non-stereotypical, however spoils its purposed efforts at the end.

The commercial starts off in medias res, with a modernly styled sink emerging from the floor. Approaching the sink is a man carrying a briefcase. He opens the briefcase to reveal the advertised product – Blazy Professional dishwashing liquid. He then proceeds to wash a couple of greasy, hard-to-clean dishes and forks with ease using the product, showcasing the product’s qualities. The entire commercial also features a male speaker who speaks about the product and its specifications. In the final scene, the man slides the briefcase with the dishwashing liquid to a woman at home with a message “Professional results at home.”

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TE6IIRLgkyc> Accessed 28 August 2022



Image 6: Blazy Professional commercial



Image 7: Blazy Professional commercial – female character

Concerning the **credibility**, the male gender appears in both the user and authority role. The main male character is shown using the product to clean the dishes. Moreover, he seems to be an expert at the job, giving him a somewhat authoritative feeling as well. The main

authoritative figure is the male narrator, talking in detail about the qualities of the product (the antibacterial formula, brilliant results with little effort, perfect cleaning in difficult to reach areas). The female gender appears in only the last 2 seconds of the commercial, depicted as a user. As the main male character hands her the briefcase, she is seen smiling, presumably using the advertised product in the future. Both the male and female characters are young/middle **aged**, in their 30s.

There are two possible interpretations of the gender **role** assigned to the male character. On the one hand, he could be interpreted in the worker role, considering the man is dressed quite professionally and seems to handle the dish washing with ease. One may believe he does dishwashing for a living. On the other hand, we could describe him in a spousal role, doing the dishes for the entire family. The interpretation is ultimately left to the audience, which is most likely intentional. The female character is depicted in the spousal role, as she is shown in the kitchen, presumably getting ready to wash the dishes for the household.

The commercial features two **locations**. The first one is the modernly styled room where the elegant sink is displayed and where the man washes the dishes. The other location is the brief shot of the kitchen in the home of the women that is being handed the briefcase with the dishwashing soap.

The product that the commercial advertises is a dishwashing liquid, which would fit into the home **product category**. This product type is mostly targeted towards women, as is the case with this commercial (presumably). The male gender is primarily being shown using the product, but the commercial does feature a short snippet of a female character holding the product.

The main **advertising appeal** used is the rational appeal. The commercial's narrator is constantly listing the products qualities and specification to the user. Moreover, the main male character is shown cleaning with the product with such ease, that it showcases to the viewers that the product is of great quality and could be even used for professional use (hence the slogan "Professional results at home"). One other potential advertising appeal could be humor appeal. The whole commercial is quite serious in tone, seeing as a professionally dressed man using professionally "sourced" equipment is doing an ordinary, everyday job such as dishwashing. Some viewers may find this amusing, which could entice them to purchase the product. The use of advertising appeal matches the findings in the survey. The main appeal used to target men is the rational appeal (listing the products qualities) and humor appeal (man professionally dressed washing the dishes). The female audience is targeted with a mixture of rational appeal and

positive emotional appeal (happiness appeal), with the main female character shown smiling while holding the product.

The **target audience** for this commercial could be both men and women, seeing as both are featured in the commercial. However, the last shot with the man handing the woman the briefcase with the dishwashing soap could be interpreted by some viewers as him handing the dishwashing job to her. Consequently, this would mean that the main target audience could potentially be female as the product is “intended” for them.

The commercial is quite contradictory as far as **gender stereotypes** go. On the one hand, the commercial features a man doing the dishes (seen as a stereotypically female job) which would go against the stereotype. However, on the other hand, the final shot of the commercial features a woman in the kitchen holding the dishwashing liquid, potentially indicating that she will do the dishwashing for the family, which conforms to the stereotype.

The **use of language** is most prominently featured through the narrator. He uses catchwords such as: “key to professional dishwashing”, “impeccable washing performance”, “brilliant result” etc. The commercial ends with the product’s slogan: “Professional results at home.”, indicating that the product is of “professional” quality, but can be used in the household.

## 9.6 Aveeno - Daily Moisturizing Lotion<sup>18</sup>

An example of an anti-stereotype female targeted commercial that features a celebrity (to boost credibility) in an independent, non-supportive role.

This body care commercial, starring Jennifer Aniston, features an independent female figure as she goes about her day. In the first half of the commercial, we can see Jennifer waking up and starting her hectic day, leading conferences, appearing in talk shows etc. Once her day is over, she relaxes by having a shower and applying the Aveeno moisturizing lotion the commercial advertises, all the while listing the product’s qualities.

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<sup>18</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBBEDDd\\_CIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UBBEDDd_CIE) Accessed 27 August 2022





Image 8: Aveeno commercial – Jennifer Aniston



Image 9: Aveeno commercial – Jennifer Aniston using the product

The commercial boosts its **credibility** by using a celebrity as the lead character. Jennifer Aniston is also the “face” of Aveeno, which helps subconsciously motivate the viewers to buy the product when they spot it on store shelves. Celebrity endorsement of a product shows the

viewers that the product must be of high quality if its good enough for a famous persona such as Jennifer Aniston. The female gender appears as both the user and authority. Jennifer Aniston is simultaneously applying (using) the product and listing the product's characteristics. Additionally, there is a short audio track of a female authoritative voice also describing the product. The male gender appears only once, in a side, supporting role. Both the male and female characters are middle **aged**, in their 40s.

The main female character is depicted in a worker **role**, which is quite an uncommon occurrence in advertising, as shown in the survey's results. She is portrayed as a particularly busy businesswoman, being involved in multiple jobs such as conference leading, participating in talk shows/interviews and leading a business. The only male character is depicted in the worker role. In one scene, Jennifer's microphone box gets stuck in the seat and, while getting up from the chair, she rips it out. The male audio technician then enters the stage and helps her out.

The commercial features a plethora of **locations**, in and out of the household. The locations featured are: bedroom, closet, bathroom, studio and conference room/hall. The main location however would be the bathroom, as this is where the main female character uses the advertised product.

The product that the commercial advertises is a moisturizing lotion, which would fit into the body **product category**. This product type, specifically body care, is mostly targeted towards women, as is the case in this commercial. Only the female gender is featured using and talking about the product.

The main **advertising appeal** to target the female audience is the positive emotional appeal (happiness appeal). The entire commercial features shots of a celebrity smiling and being happy as she goes about her day-to-day tasks. What is more, once she starts applying the advertised product, she goes from being tired and weary from the busy day to smiling radiantly at the camera. This implies the relaxing and soothing nature of the product. Two other advertising appeals could be noted. One of them, rational appeal, can be heard from Jennifer Aniston, as she mentions how well the product works at moisturizing and "improving skin wellness." The other, much less noticeable, would be humor appeal. In the scene where Jennifer's microphone gets stuck, she acts as though it was an accident. This is probably put into the commercial to make the celebrity character more relatable, as celebrities can often seem "unrealistically perfect" to many viewers. The last advertising appeal of note could be guilt appeal. The commercial boasts its natural ingredients a couple of times, indicating to the viewers



the product's "nature consciousness" mantra. This may or may not guilt the viewers into buying the eco-conscious product over the "bad chemicals" competition. The use of advertising appeal matches the findings in the survey. Advertisers use a mixture of happiness appeal (celebrity smiling), rational appeal (product qualities) and, to some extent, humor appeal (celebrity seeming more relatable) and guilt appeal (buying natural products).

From the main character being an independent businesswoman to the product type itself, the **target audience** for this commercial is most definitely female. What is more, the commercial uses a celebrity to endorse the product, a common occurrence in commercials targeting the female audience.

The commercial goes against the common **gender stereotype** of women being in a supportive role. The viewers are shown a day-in-the-life of a famous female celebrity who worked hard on her career to create a business that brings a steady income for her family. In this way, the commercial portrays a woman in the "breadwinning" role, a stereotypical male role.

The **use of language** is most prominent with the use of rational appeal. The celebrity, in combination with the female narrator, lists the product features such as: "active natural formula", "locks in moisture", "skin wellness in just one day" etc. In the last second of the commercial, Jennifer Aniston also repeats the company's new slogan – "Naturally beautiful results", indicating the natural formula used, as well as the beauty amplifying aspect of the product.

## 9.7 Dove Men+Care – men skin care<sup>19</sup>

One of the most intriguing commercials in the corpus is one which directly mocks most male gender stereotypes, but still uses them to an extent to advertise the product. This commercial was also featured in the ad spot during Super Bowl, a sports event, which is watched by many purely to catch up on the commercials that are viral at the time. One similar commercial (also included in the survey corpus), one which goes against the modern stereotype of a man not showing his sensitive side can be found here<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>19</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t-Lc9Mhi9l0> Accessed 1 September 2022

<sup>20</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QoqWo3SJ73c> Accessed 1 September 2022

This male body care commercial features a life of a typical man, going through life and facing all the challenges a man may encounter in his life. Through catchy lyrics common male societal expectations are featured in the commercial: being good at sports, being strong both physically and emotionally (not showing “sensitive side”), going out with friends but also being a cavalier, getting married and having a family (trimming the lawn, checking on strange noises (while not being afraid), opening jars etc.). Once we see the man reach a point in his life where he has fulfilled all those expectations, we can finally see him relax and embrace being a man. He becomes comfortable with who his is, so his skin (while using the Dove Men+Care product line) should be comfortable too.



Image 10: Dove Men+Care – man using the product



Image 11: Dove Men+Care – getting married (societal expectation)

As far as **credibility** is concerned, the male gender appears in the commercial as both the user and the authority (to some extent). In the final shots of the commercial, we can see a man taking a shower using the Dove shower gel the commercial advertises. The authoritative figure is presented through the narrator, who presents the product verbally while a video showcasing the new line of skin care plays in the background. The female gender appears in a passive role, as a side character. As the commercial features a timespan of a life of a man, we can see him depicted in all **age** groups (young, middle-aged and old). Most of the other male characters are middle aged, in their 30s and 40s. The female characters are also young and middle-aged, in their 20s, 30s and 40s. There are even children featured in the commercial, all of whom would fit into the young category.

The main male character is shown in a parental and spousal **role**. He is depicted as a parent to two, three children of his own and has a wife of whom he takes care of (checking scary noises, opening jars, doing yard work). Other side male characters are shown in a worker role, as doctors/nurses delivering the baby (main character). The main female character is shown in a spousal role, more specifically, supporting role. She is depicted as quite inept, as the male character does all the “nasty” work: changing tires in the rain, going in the dark to check on scary noises etc. Other side female characters are shown in a worker role are also shown, as doctors/nurses delivering the baby (main character).

The commercial features an overabundance of **locations**, in and out of the household. The locations include: a hospital, sports field, gym, club, a wedding reception and finally, many locations inside of the household (kitchen, bathroom, yard, bedroom, living room etc.). However, the product that the commercial advertises is to be used in the bathroom.

The product that the commercial advertises is a line of men skin care products, which would fit into the body **product category**. This product type, specifically body care, is mostly targeted towards women, however, there has been a recent trend (last 10 years) of men body care lines appearing from all popular skin care brand, such as Dove, Nivea etc. They feature streamlined, simple packaging that would more appeal to the male audience and generally shy away from the overuse of perfumes in their products. Only the male gender is featured using and talking about the advertised product.

The main **advertising appeal** to target the male audience is undoubtedly the positive emotional appeal (humor appeal). The commercial features a timelapse of a man's life, who goes through the same "difficulties" most men face, presented in a humorous way through the song and the lyrics. The video portion of the commercial also features the male character doing amusing activities/failing at the activities, furthering the comical tone of the commercial. One other, slightly less obvious, advertising appeal could be the happiness appeal. In the shots where the male character using the advertised product, we can see him smiling and being happy, indicating to the viewers that they also may feel happiness when using the product. The use of advertising appeal matches the results of the survey. The commercial features humor appeal (very common in male targeted advertisements) and happiness appeal (people smiling while using the product).

From the main character being an everyday man, going through everyday hardships to the product line specifically being targeted towards men, the **target audience** for this commercial is most definitely male.

The commercial somewhat mocks the most commonly seen male **gender stereotypes**. Men being inherently good at sports, having to be physically and emotionally strong, having a family to support, doing physical chores around and outside the house are all stereotypes being listed in the song. Through this, the commercial raises awareness to the fact that it is perfectly acceptable to not always feel comfortable in your own skin and to not always try and fit in societal expectations.

The **use of language** is predominantly present in the song. While it does not feature any mentions of the product, it does list common male gender stereotypes in a humorous way. The commercial also includes two slogans- “Isn’t it time for comfortable skin?” and “Be comfortable in your own skin.” Both slogans imply that it’s “finally” time for men to be comfortable in their skin, both physically (moisturizing and cleaning the skin) and mentally/emotionally (being satisfied with who they are).

## **9.8 Pampers Swaddlers – diaper/childcare brand<sup>21</sup>**

The quintessential version of a modern-day childcare commercial that checks all the right boxes, this commercial is a fine example of how a diaper commercial should be filmed.

The commercial starts off with a baby being delivered and consequently given to the mother. The mother holds the baby close as the narrator starts talking about the diaper brand that is being advertised. We are then presented with a shot of the product, as well as a short clip of the diapers being put on a baby. Subsequently, the commercial cuts back to the hospital with the mother and father watching and caressing the baby. Finally, the camera zooms in on the baby as they lovingly gaze at their mother.



Image 12: Pampers Swaddlers commercial – love appeal

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<sup>21</sup>[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF15\\_YSwrh0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zF15_YSwrh0) Accessed 2 September 2022



Image 13: Pampers Swaddlers – closing statement

With respect to the **credibility** in the commercial, the female gender appears as both the user and the authority. There are shots of the mother (main female character - user) putting on the diapers on her baby. The narrator is also a female, who appears in an authoritative role, comparing the Pampers diapers to the competition, stating its qualities etc. The male gender appears in a supportive, passive role, as a side character. The female characters (nurse and mother) are young, in their 30s. The male character's **age** is quite difficult to determine, but for the sake of this analysis, we can place him in the young category as well. The commercial also features a newborn baby, who would fit into the young category.

The main female character is shown in the parental **role**, holding the baby, taking care and changing the baby's diaper. There is also a female character who appears in a worker role, as a nurse handing the baby to the mother. The side male character is also shown in a spousal and parental role, as he remains at the mother's and baby's side to comfort them.

The commercial features two main **locations**: the hospital and the home. The home would however be the most prominent location as that is where the product is being showcased in the commercial.



The product that the commercial advertises is the Pampers Swaddlers line of diapers, which would fit into the childcare **product category**. The only gender shown to be using the product is the female gender, as is usually the case with this product category.

The main **advertising appeals** used in the commercial are positive emotional appeal (love appeal) and rational appeal. The commercial features multiple shots of the mother, father and baby exchanging loving looks towards each other, giving the commercial a very pleasant and caring atmosphere. The rational appeal emerges in the form of statistics given by the narrator that showcase the product's superiority over the competition ("Number 1 choice of Hospitals, Nurses and Parents." The happiness advertising appeal could also be spotted, as there are some shots of the mother smiling and being deservedly happy after giving birth and subsequently holding her baby for the first time. The use of advertising appeal is also in line with other childcare commercials. The main advertising appeal used is the love appeal, with rational appeal aiding with giving the viewers added information about the product.

Although the commercial is quite neutral as far as the **target audience** goes, it leans ever so slightly towards targeting the female audience, purely because of the main character being female and being the one who does the diaper changing.

The commercial is fairly gentle with its **gender stereotyping**. The only two possible (highly ambiguous) gender stereotypes would be the nurse being female (more and more males also decide on nursing as a career choice) and the mother being the one changing the diapers instead of the father. However, this may purely be a choice that had to be made by the advertisers and may not be indicative of any gender stereotyping at all.

The **use of language** is quite prominent in the commercial. Right from the start, the narrator mentions the advertised product being the "#1 Choice of Hospitals" and compares the product with everyday brands, stating that the new Pampers line is "2x softer". There is also a small hint of guilt appeal in what the narrator says next: "Everything that touches your baby should be this comforting." This could guilt the viewers into wanting the best for their child and buying the name brand, in this case Pampers, instead of the generic brand. The commercial closes out with the company's slogan "#1 Choice of Hospitals, Nurses & Parents.", indicating that the product must be of high quality if it is publicly endorsed by both experts (hospitals, nurses) and everyday people.

## 9.9 Jennie-O Oven Ready Turkey - food<sup>22</sup>

Many of the food commercials chosen for the survey use humor appeal as their main advertising appeal, and this commercial is no different, being among the most original ones in the corpus.

The viewers see a woman preparing a dish in the household's kitchen. When she finishes chopping up the vegetables and washing her hands, she goes over to the turkey that has just been washed. Seeing as the turkey is still wet, the woman is unable to get a proper grip on it, and while trying to wrestle it out of the sink, the turkey finds itself on the floor. The woman releases a sigh and goes to pick up the turkey off the floor. When she picks it up, she tries to forcefully lift the turkey up to the sink and the turkey goes flying out of the window, hitting a man watering the lawn on the head. The commercial then cuts to a slogan of the product "Tired of wrestling with turkey?", as well as a picture of the product.



Image 14: Jennie-O Oven Ready Turkey commercial – struggling with the turkey

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<sup>22</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0OZvjeMiUM> Accessed 3 September 2022





Image 15: Jennie-O Oven Ready Turkey commercial – man getting hit by the turkey

As far as **credibility** is concerned, this commercial does not truly feature any gender as either user or authority. The main female character featured in the commercial is struggling (using) with a real, uncooked turkey. The commercial instead “recommends” that instead of hassling with an uncooked turkey, the audience should use (assume the user role) the premade, ready to cook turkey the commercial advertises. This is quite an unusual occurrence, as food commercials tend to put an emphasis on the actors eating and enjoying the product that is advertised to entice the viewers to also want to consume the product. Both the female and male characters are middle aged, around their 40s.

The main female character is shown in a spousal **role**, preparing the meal for the household. She is seen partaking in activities such as: chopping up the vegetables, washing and preparing the turkey etc. The main male character is also shown in a spousal role, taking care of the lawn and watering the household’s front yard.

The commercial features two main **locations**: the front yard and the kitchen. The kitchen is however the focus of the commercial, as that is where the advertised product should be used.

The commercial advertises the Jennie-O oven ready turkey, which would fit into the food **product category**. Neither gender is shown using the product, however the packaging features a female model and the main female character being the one struggling with the “competition’s” product.

The main **advertising appeal** used in the commercial are positive emotional appeal (humor appeal). The majority of the commercial seems quite normal, with nothing out of the ordinary happening, when suddenly the turkey goes out the window hitting the unassuming man on the back of the head. The humor of the situation is quite a potent advertising appeal, as is evident by the overwhelmingly positive reception that can be found in the comments below the video. The use of advertising appeal is also in line with many of the food commercials in the survey, with the main one used being the humor appeal (situational comedy).

The main **target audience** would be female, as the main female character is the one who should “replace” the product she is currently using with the one that is being advertised. Moreover, the product packaging features a female model holding the advertised product in her hands, also indicating that females are the ones who are the main target of the product.

The commercial is quite stereotypical with its gender role representation. The female **gender stereotype** is featured through the female character being in charge of the cooking and preparing of the Thanksgiving dinner. Meanwhile, the male character takes care of the lawn by watering the grass, also a stereotypical male job in the household.

The **use of language** is fairly toned down, as is often the case when humor appeal is present. Nonetheless, the commercial does feature two phrases at the end to entice the viewers to buy the product: “Tired of wrestling with turkey?” and “From freezer to oven to perfect.”. Both phrases indicate the product’s superiority, in both ease of use and quality, over the competition.

## 9.10 Maple Leaf Ready Crisp Bacon - food<sup>23</sup>

Much like the previous food commercial, this one features a plethora of gender stereotypes and is a terrific example of humor appeal to advertise the product.

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<sup>23</sup><https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh32iscOdpl> Accessed 5 September 2022

The commercial starts with a “classic, busy mom”, going around the house and taking care of chores. She has 3 kids and a somewhat uninvolved husband who all participate very little in the cleaning and taking care of the house. This forces her to take care of the vast majority of the work herself, all while being employed herself. One day, while she is preparing a BLT (bacon, lettuce and tomato) sandwich, presumably using the bacon the commercial advertises, she notices her husband changes the lightbulb as soon as she asks him. The next day, she makes a salad with the same bacon and asks her family to set the table, which they have already done before she even ended her sentence. She looks at the packaging of bacon and utters “Oh!”, as she realizes the bacon is the reason they are “behaving” so nicely. The commercial then has a narrator uttering the phrase “Change your life with Bacon.”, as well as a picture of the packaging and a freshly made BLT sandwich with the bacon that is being advertised. In the background of the last shot, we can hear the woman asking the man to mow the lawn, and before she can even finish the sentence, the lawnmower is powered on.



Image 16: Maple Leaf Ready Crisp Bacon commercial



Image 17: Maple Leaf Ready Crisp Bacon commercial – packaging and product

Regarding the **credibility**, the commercial features the female gender in the user role. The mother is shown in multiple different circumstances using (preparing) the product for the family to eat. The male gender is shown in both the user and authoritative role. Although not shown explicitly, the father and two sons use and enjoy (consume) the product, hence the sudden change in behavior. The narrator (authoritative figure) that utters company's slogan ("Change your life with Bacon") is also male. The grown male and female characters are middle **aged**, around their 40s. The children would fit into the young category, both being around 7-8 years old.

The main female character is shown in a spousal **role** and parental role. For the majority of the commercial, she is the one who does all the chores around the house and takes care of the children. Additionally, it is specifically stated by her that both her and her husband work, so she could be presented in a worker role. The main male character is presented in the worker role, spending most of the day outside of the household at work. Those later changes, as he adopts (at the influence of the advertised product) both the spousal and parental role and helps with the chores and the children. The children are shown in a passive, filial role, either being taken care of or even helping their parents with chores.

The **location** of the commercial would be the household itself, where the kitchen would be the primary focus of the commercial, as this is where the product is primarily used/consumed.

There are shots of rooms around the home such as: bedroom, kitchen, laundry room, kids' room etc. There is also a shot of the backyard, but only for a fraction of a second.

The commercial advertises Maple Leaf Ready Crisp bacon, which would fit into the food **product category**. Both genders are seen using the product, the female gender however uses it explicitly and the male gender's use of the product is simply implied.

The main **advertising appeal** used in the commercial is the positive emotional appeal (humor appeal). Although not quite as apparent as in the previous example, the commercial features plenty scenes the watches may find humorous: children spilling cereal over the table, husband trying his hardest to not have to take out the garbage, racoon in garbage bin etc. Apart from these, the main two scenes where the family suddenly has a change of behavior are also quite amusing. Both the father's and children's facial expressions as they await the meal prepared with the advertised bacon are at the same time uncomfortable and hilarious. The use of advertising appeal is comparable to many of the food commercials in the survey, with the main one used being the humor appeal (situational comedy).

The main **target audience** would be female, as the main female character is the one who should use the product, and the one whose "life will change" if she continues using it. However, one could argue that both genders are the target audience as the male characters are clearly infatuated with the product.

The commercial features many **gender stereotypes** for both males and females. The female stereotypes present are: mother preparing breakfast for the entire family, cleaning stains on shirts, cleaning after the children make a mess, doing laundry, and preparing meals again for the entire family. One thing of note would be that the mother is also employed, which would go against the stereotype of women being in a supportive role, but she still has to take care of the vast majority of the chores, despite both of the parents being employed. The male stereotypes shown in the commercial are: man going to work and leaving the household, being lazy and not wanting to take out the trash, changing a lightbulb (being responsible for fixing things in the household), mowing the lawn etc.

The commercial features quite an interesting **use of language**. In the scenes where she asks the husband to change the lightbulb and the family to set the table, she does not finish her sentence for dramatic effect ("Can you change the light...?" and ("Can you set the t..."). This use

of aposiopesis<sup>24</sup> is quite common in TV commercials and here it is present to convey the sense of shock the mother feels when she finally gets some help from her family. This may spark interest in the viewers and maybe even entice them to buy the product, thinking that it may have a similar impact on their life. The commercial's male narrator also supports this previous assumption with its slogan: "Change your life with Bacon."

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<sup>24</sup> "...speaker's deliberate failure to complete a sentence. Aposiopesis usually indicates speechless rage or exasperation..." <https://www.britannica.com/art/aposiopesis> Accessed 6 September 2022



## 10. Conclusion

The results of the both the survey and case study coincide with what was stated in the theoretical part of the paper, as far as gender roles and advertisement targeting for those specific roles are concerned.

The female gender is primarily shown as users and consumers of the product, even if the product type is targeted towards males. Consequently, they are hardly ever shown as a true authoritative figure, and even when they are, they often appeal to the emotional side rather than the rational. They are almost always presented in stereotypical supporting roles of a spouse or mother, and scarcely in the worker role, even though there has been a massive surge in women and even mothers in the workforce. Even the advertising appeals used are very stereotypical in nature, with the positive emotional appeal (love and happiness), featuring a smiling women surrounded by loved ones or children, being the most frequent one in the corpus. Moreover, even if the rational appeal is used, it very closely resembles the strategies laid out by OptiMonk.com, with using a descriptive approach rather than stating factual information about the product.

The male gender is shown as the user and the authority, most often both in the same commercial. The commercials frequently feature a male authoritative figure, one who uses strong statements and bold claims to advertise the product. Men are presented frequently in both the worker and spousal role, with a slight trend upwards of being presented in the parental role as well. The most frequent advertising appeal used to target the male gender is rational appeal, showing the product's characteristics and how it can make life easier and better, and positive emotional appeal (humor appeal), jokingly presenting the product's qualities.

The product types are also very gender specifically targeted. Some product types such as cars/tools (male) and childcare (female) very rarely feature the opposite gender, and even if they do, they do so in a mocking, humorous way and the commercial still targets the original, stereotypical gender. What is more, these kinds of commercial often feature backlash from the community, as can be noticed in the comment section below the YouTube videos. This implies that the community, at least a part of it, is not satisfied with the current trend in gender targeted advertising.

The impact gender stereotypes on the way advertisers produce and target their television commercial has changed very little in the past four decades. While there are some companies

making strides to change the current stereotypical gender representation in commercial (mostly through gender stereotype mocking or showing genders in reverse roles), and they should deservedly be praised for their efforts, they are few and far between. Even with this in mind, the positive, non-stereotypical examples featured in the analyses were cherry-picked and represent a troublingly small percentage of all gender targeted TV commercials. It was made abundantly clear, both in the survey and case study, that advertisers seldom go against the advertising theory covered in this paper and refuse to transition to a more progressive advertising climate.

Nevertheless, with all this in mind, the advertisers would not use the same, almost stale advertising techniques to target based on gender, if the advertised products did not subsequently sell well. Which begs the question, could the viewers be the ones to blame for buying the products after seeing such gender stereotyping in the brand's commercials?

It would be very interesting to see how the television commercial business handles gender stereotyping in the next few decades. Based on the findings in the analyses, optimistically speaking, we could predict more and more companies adopting the more progressive, non-stereotypical gender representation some of the competition is already using. However, one could not expect the entire industry to shift as most companies have specific profiles of their target buyers, most of whom are pleased with how the TV commercial industry functions now.



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