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THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN TELEVISION ADVERTISEMENTS ON SABC3: A REFLECTION ON STEREOTYPICAL REPRESENTATION.

By

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A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the Degree of Master of Arts in Media Studies

University of the Witwatersrand

01/12/2008

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own work. It is submitted for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. I have followed and adhered to the Universities guidelines and rules concerning plagiarism and referencing.

Nerisa Pillay

----------Day of----------2008

DEDICATION

I dedicate this paper to my grandfather, Manicum Pillay

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Completing this study has not been the easiest of tasks that I have undertaken. A Masters study expected more than what I originally entered the degree with. Now that the study has been completed, I know that I would not have been able to complete it and come out at the other end feeling fulfilled without the assistance of the following people…

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ABSTRACT

This study involves an analysis of sampled television advertisements drawn from SABC3. The aim of this study is to explore the ways that female characters are portrayed in South African advertising content and to compare this with how male characters are portrayed. This has been undertaken through a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the advertisements in order to indentify themes and patterns in the representation of women and men. The premise of this study is that female characters are stereotyped resulting in a limited view of women in advertising content. Upon examination of the advertisements it was found that female characters are still stereotyped and portrayed in line with traditional roles associated with women, while a more significant change was found in how male characters are portrayed. In conducting this analysis, this study highlights the importance of continued research in the field of gender studies as a means of measuring the media's representation of women against social change and development.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Media representations of minority groups particularly representations of women has been a popular and contested area of research and an important issue in public debate. The way that the media represents women is a part of women's issues. These issues in South Africa continue to feature prominently in state policy and initiatives that emphasise the point that many of the issues that have faced women in the past require constant revisiting to understand the current state of women in society. This paper will concentrate on the representation of women in advertising content by looking specifically at how female characters are portrayed in a sample of advertisements from SABC3 in order to address the issue of media representation of women.

1.1 Aim

This study will explore the various ways that female characters are portrayed in a sample of advertisements drawn from SABC 3 in order to find out whether portrayals of female characters are fair and accurate representations. It is assumed that female characters are represented stereotypically; this is the overall finding of studies that have also looked at how female characters are portrayed in advertisements. This topic has populated research in the field of Communication Science and continues to be popular. Part of the reason is because findings consistently over the years have found similar if not the same themes and patterns in advertising content. While the aim is to explore how female characters are portrayed, this cannot be analysed in isolation from male characters. Drawing on semiotic arguments of social structure and convention, the only way that the portrayal of female characters can be fully understood is by also having an understanding of how male characters are portrayed. The analysis of advertisements will compare how female characters are portrayed in comparison to how male characters are portrayed in the same advertisements in order to address the aim of this study.

1.2 Rationale

The representation of women is important to consider because of the relative invisibility of women in the media. Studies have shown that women tend to be either under or misrepresented (Courtney and Lokeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch, 1972, Ferrante, Haynes, and Kingsley 1988, Gilly 1988, Janus 1997,

Strinati 2003, Hassim 2006). There is a consistency in the findings of the studies that all confirm that female characters are not realistically portrayed in the media at various times and across different mediums. This is why it is important for continuous study across fields and disciplines, to evaluate the state of women as depicted by and portrayed in the media. Advertisements were selected because of its persuasive and pervasive nature. Television advertising is characterised by the ability of the medium to transmit content to a mass audience simultaneously. An SABC channel was selected because it is the public broadcaster and therefore faces heightened pressure to combat gender inequality though various broadcasting initiatives and policies and to place more attention on the place of women in the media. For this reason it is important to look at advertising content broadcasted by the public broadcaster.

1.3 Hypotheses

H1: female characters are portrayed stereotypically in advertisements

H2: male characters are the dominating characters in advertisements

Extrapolations are drawn from the two formulated hypotheses. These extrapolations will be used in order to identify the themes/patterns of how female and male characters have been portrayed in the sample.

- Extrapolation 1: female characters will appear as central/main characters in advertisements promoting personal/care and beauty, furniture, and appliance products. Male characters will be portrayed as central/main characters in advertisements promoting automobiles, financial services, and security related products and services, and ICT/Telecommunication products.

- Extrapolation 2: female characters will occupy positions as entertainers, celebrities, or models and male characters will occupy positions as high-level executives or professionals.

- Extrapolation 3: female characters will occupy family or sex object roles. In comparison male characters will occupy working, and recreational roles.

- Extrapolation 4: female characters will appear in a domestic setting/environment and male characters will appear in professional and natural/outdoor setting/environment

- Extrapolation 5: male characters will be portrayed in authoritative positions as voice-overs

1.4 Research questions

- How do the advertisements portray female characters in comparison to male characters?
- What meanings are produced in the advertisements?
- What patterns and themes are prevalent in the advertisements?
- Does current advertising content resonate with the findings of earlier critiques of advertising's portrayal of female characters?

2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the key developments in the field of gender studies that are directly applicable to this study of how female characters are portrayed in television advertisements. Areas that are concentrated on include key discourses in studies of women and the media concentrating specifically on advertising content. In line with the aims of this study this chapter offers a critical overview of research and specific studies; as well as popular discourse on the subject of how female characters are portrayed in advertising content.

2.2 Advertising

Bolland (McNair 2005:11) defines advertising as the "paid placement of organisational messages". According to Bignell (2004) research above looking at televised content, also asks the question of who the producer of the message is. This question has opened up many debates in the field of gender studies in which the main cause of women's marginalisation and negative portrayal in the media is believed to be the result of men being the producers of the messages or women producing messages using patriarchal frameworks.

Advertisements are generally characterised by their persuasive nature. Television advertising is characterised by the ability of the medium to transmit content to a mass audience simultaneously (Wilmshurst 1985, McNair 2005, Brierley 2002 McNair 2005, Barker and Angelopulo 2006). These characteristics of television advertising have been the subject of concern, criticism, and continuous study (Jones 1999: 165). Bignell (2004:210) explains that it is the perception that television has connections to the real world of culture and society in which it exists that makes it critical in research. Bignell (2004) also states that television is fascinating to study because it seeks to provide the audience with elements, issues and events that they are currently experiencing. This may perhaps be relevant in a literal sense to such programmes as news but it is more difficult to apply Bignell's (2004) perceptions to issues such as gender where there are obvious discrepancies between media portrayal and social reality.

Most research on advertising content alludes to the pervasiveness of the content on audiences. The key concern is that the messages and meanings encoded in advertising texts will have some effect on audiences. Cook (1992:5) states that, "advertising can tell us a great deal about our own society and our own psychology". Cook (1992) like many other researchers in this field (Gilly 1988, Hilton and von Hippel 1994, Wood 1994, Tuchman 1995, Croteau and Hoynes 1997, Branston and Stafford 1999, Kim and Lowry 2005) acknowledge that advertisements can serve as a gauge of social norms, values, as well as the interests of society.

In South Africa the general concern of gender studies began with a more critical eye on how women were portrayed in media content in line with the popularity of such studies during the 1960s-1980s in the United States and Britain followed by a shift towards how race and class is represented in advertising content post-apartheid. The development of gender issues in South Africa often took a backseat against the backdrop of national and political issues; it was only towards the end of 1980s that more concern was shown about women's issues being instrumental to development and growth. Gender studies has seen a slight move away from concentrating solely on how women are portrayed in media content to include how different forms of sexual orientation and masculinities are portrayed. These shifts in South African studies are illustrative of a move away from Western trends in research (Nyamnjoh 2005:33), to concentrate on local gender issues prevalent in South African society.

Studies that have looked at the portrayal of women concentrated on the following major issues and debates within the field of gender studies; (1) origins of the understanding and representation of gender (2) definitions of gender (3) Western models of gender research and its relevance to developing countries (4) initiatives and change towards gender equality (5) political influences, (6) shifts and developments in traditional discourses such as feminism, (7) and producers of the content.

2.3 Gender studies

Women's studies attempt to make sense of social, cultural, economic, and political trends linking all this back to mainstream ideology and theoretical foundations relevant to the study of gender; and at the same time exploring women's place and context in the time that the research takes place in. The studies that took place globally in the greater part of the period between the 1960s-1980s were significant in bringing to the forefront women's issues especially as they pertained to the media.

During this period a number of studies in line with feminist thoughts on the place of women in society were spurred on as a result of second wave feminism and most pointedly the women's liberation movement. The research concentrated on media content and the media's representation most notably of women. Research was conducted to investigate the depiction of women in gender specific roles many of them concentrating solely on advertising content. The point of these studies (Friedan 1963, Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley 1988, Gilly 1988) was to show that advertising content did not adequately reflect social developments of the time. Findings can be drawn on to illustrate key themes and issues of debate that were of concern at the time. From the aims of these studies the issues of the time become apparent. The major issues were how women were being treated in society versus their actual place and role in society and how they were portrayed in the media; in contrast to how men were treated in society and their actual place and role in society versus how that was portrayed in media content. Another aim of studies in this time was to build onto the body of feminist writings and more particularly to contribute empirical research findings that would support feminist arguments towards liberating women.

In South Africa at this time liberation meant something completely different. Women's issues were sidelined due the political struggle and the goal of emancipation of the nation. Whereas in the United States and Britain at this time, terms such as emancipation, equality and liberation were most notably associated with women's issues, in South Africa these terms were associated

with the political struggle. Hassim (2006:21) characterises women's protests as "sporadic, varied in content, and characterised by an upsurge of political mobilisation around a specific campaign, followed by decline". This is unlike the consistent debate and study of women's issues in Western societies. In South Africa it is claimed that other more prominent issues often took and continue to take precedence over women's issues. Hassim (2006:34) states that

> The dominant position within the ANC until the late 1980s was that the emancipation of women was secondary to and contingent upon national liberation. The task of women activists was to mobilize women for the broader struggle

One can begin to notice the differences in the period between Western trends concerning women's issues and those in South Africa.

Liberal feminists have argued for the emancipation of women from what they perceive to be a male dominated society. Equality for liberal feminists means that women would have an equal place in society alongside men; for example an equal chance in the labour market.

Studies that concentrated on gender specific roles looked specifically at categories of occupation, product relationship, setting/environment, age of the on screen characters, sex of the on-screen spokesperson, and the sex of the voice-over. These categories were considered adequate in obtaining findings to address the major concerns surrounding the portrayal of women at the time. The categories were developed from popular stereotypes that concerned both men and women. For example under the category of occupation the assumption was that women would occupy low-level income jobs as secretaries whereas men would in comparison occupy high-level executive, professional, and semi-professional occupations such as doctors, and managers. The approach to the analysis of how women were portrayed in the media meant that negative meanings were attached to such portrayals. Assumptions of research during this time anticipated negative and reductionist portrayals by the media, influenced mainly by the comparison between men and women.

A quantitative approach was prevalent at the time but recent trends have called for a more qualitative in-depth analysis and understanding of the different ways that women are portrayed. Such recent trends include that of raunch culture, where female characters are deliberately portrayed in a sexual nature either because they choose to or because the portrayal makes a specific point (Rizos 2009). Such developments are notably supported by more interpretative, in-depth techniques such as conducting a semiotic analysis where the embedded or rather different levels of meaning in a text could be explored rather than select aspects as was the critique of a more quantitative approach that may lose sight of more current developments in the field of gender studies. Alternatively Strinati (2003:177) explains that some feminists have also begun to critique the reliance on content analysis because the method tends to neglect wider structures of economic, political and cultural power. This is why most of these studies rely heavily on a theoretical base to address and support these aspects.

Nevertheless a quantitative approach is still relevant to research on gender because many researchers aim to sample as many advertisements for analysis. This was because many of the studies also wanted to identify patterns and themes across television stations or mediums. A quantitative approach supported larger samples. Another contributing factor the relevance of the approach is that representation and the study of gender issues is considered somewhat subjective researchers asserted that by conducting a quantitative analysis that could be supported by pilot tests and inter-coder reliability that would strengthen the validity of their findings.

2.3.1 Demarcating the field

The point of departure in this field is to first define what is meant by gender continuing to more concentrated discussions of women's issues. Gender is generally and simply defined as cultural and social differences between the sexes. In the discipline of gender studies the following streams of feminism, masculinity and sexual orientation are included in women's studies (Fourie 2009).

Demarcating the field of gender studies involves as stated before defining gender biologically followed by more specific arguments on each and/or both sexes. Broadly this can include understandings from various disciplines including anthropology, psychology, politics as well as sociology. These disciplines offer various arguments that can be applied successfully to the study of gender and communication within the context of the study.

For example Van Eeden (2006) in the research she conducted on gender associations with shopping malls uses aspects of geographic space, sociological, anthropological and psychoanalytical aspects in an exploration of media content in the form of advertisements for shopping malls. This multi-disciplinary approach is able to provide a significant semiotic content analysis of advertisements illustrating how shopping as a social and cultural act has been traditionally associated with women. The research cannot be described as a study in communication rather it looks at an aspect of gender exploring how space is constructed and maintained through a media platform.

Despite valid contributions, demarcating the field of gender studies has become quite difficult. It has become more difficult to write about gender and the media without drawing on a multitude of disciplines. This chapter will concentrate specifically on debates and issues surrounding conservative/traditional versus feminist viewpoints on how female characters are portrayed in advertisements and why.

2.3.2 Conservatism versus feminist views

Conservatist or traditional views rely heavily on biological determinism as an explanation for why women occupy very specific positions in society. The central argument is that biologically women are different from men. The biological make up of the sexes is seen as a determining factor that explains why women and men have traditionally been understood according to specific social and cultural roles. Over and above this, conservatism seeks to retain traditional gender specific roles. Anthropological studies on women's issues link conservatist views and feminist concerns by emphasising that social and cultural constructions of gender identities is based on biological difference (Ortner 1974, Gilmore 1990, Moore 1998).

McKay (1987:i) states that "According to the traditional view we are destined to be wives and mothers, to cook, mend, wash and care to be largely excluded from high-status occupations and positions of power". McKay (1987) is speaking from the perspective of being a woman. The study that McKay (1987) conducted looked at the nature of gender roles in South Africa and resonates with findings in American and British studies at the time (Friedan 1963, Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley 1988, Gilly 1988). These same studies looked specifically at those more traditional roles and argued against the conservatist approach critiquing it for being too narrow and deterministic. The conservatist approach accordingly does not accommodate social, cultural or significant political change and the effect of the aspects on gender issues.

Feminism arose primarily to challenge and correct the flaws in the conservatist approach. Though feminism has a long history, discussion will concentrate primarily on the nature of feminist debate from the 1960s to more current debates. An overall concern in feminist debates is the relationship between gender, culture society, and ideology (Meyers 1997:1). Three long-standing streams in feminism can be identified and discussed for the purpose of this study; including liberal feminism which pays particular attention to labour relations as well as the unrealistic and oppressive way that women are represented by the media (Strinati 2003:160). Radical feminism supports the biological differences between women and men but critiques this difference being used to subordinate women. Radical feminism furthermore supports arguments that recognise patriarchy as the dominant ideology operating in society responsible for the repression of women. Socialist feminism also accepts the ideological role of patriarchy in culture and society and argues towards the radical transformation of social norms and practices as the only means to liberate and strengthen women's position in society.

The feminist movement reached its peak in the United States during the 1960s. Attention was given to how the media represented women. The media was seen as being instrumental in communicating ideological messages and it was the origin of such messages that concerned feminists. The perceived

pervasiveness of media content called for continued analysis of the nature of media content. The media was understood to be an intricate part of the socialisation process because of the perceived audience exposure rates (Boyd-Barrett 2002). Increasing changes in the labour market meant that traditional occupations associated with women and men were no longer relevant. Changes in the labour market also resulted in aspects such as space needing to be revisited. Women were no longer solely operating in the private sphere but were also working in the cities; spaces traditionally associated with men. This also meant that roles of wife and mother (for women) and provider (for men) needed to be revaluated. Feminist studies aimed to bring to the forefront the discrepancies between current media portrayal and ideal media portrayals.

Liberal, radical and social feminists argued that televised advertisement's portrayal of female characters still chose to rely on traditional/conservative definitions of occupation, role, and associations with space. These categories were outdated needing to be redefined. Continuous study and research into advertising content during this period showed little change or shift in how advertising content portrayed female characters. Concern was raised over the lack of significant change in media content despite continuous study and exposure. Schneider and Schneider (1979) analysed Australian televised advertisements and noted slight changes in occupational roles assigned to female characters. Female characters were portrayed in professional positions; however this does not mark a significant change when so many other studies did not mirror this change.

Liberal feminists were calling for more equal representation in terms of the air time that women received on the as well as the nature of the portrayals needed to be more in line with social changes (Williams 2003:58). Alternatively radical feminists were calling for change but acknowledged that there would always be differences between the sexes. This stream of feminism argued that some differences needed to be celebrated while those that supported unequal treatment needed to be revisited and publicised (McDowell and Pringle 1992)

Mabandla (1991) argued that significant change would be a result of existing power relations and ideology being addressed and held accountable as the

driving force behind the existing place of women in society and within their specific cultural contexts. It is generally an agreed upon notion in gender studies that power relations operating at a social, cultural, economic and political level is the origin of biased gender representation. Feminist arguments stated that media content to some extent was an extension or projection of existing ideological power relations that operated consistently and continuously on social and cultural level.

Patriarchy is used to encapsulate these power relations prevalent in society. The study, debate and critical evaluation of the concept of patriarchy is an important one in feminism; as the term is adopted to explain why women are treated as the lesser citizens of society not having the same human and social rights that men have. Patriarchy is a term that is found in most studies that look at women's issues because it is relied upon to explain what women's place in society was and continues to be. To this end women's studies are heavily reliant on a theoretical base to contextualise, explain, and validate findings, because so many studies are predominantly content analysis the theoretical base becomes very important.

McDowell and Pringle (1992:10) explain that to understand the underlying structures of women's oppression it is important to understand the power relations operating in society. Debates around the issue of patriarchy became quite academic in the sense that many writers (McKay 1987, Ferguson 2004) felt that it was also important to offer different approaches to the understanding of patriarchy. Walby (McDowell and Pringle 1992) for example offered a systems approach explaining that patriarchy was an interconnected system that could be looked at from six different angles. These angles included patriarchy as a mode of production, patriarchal relations in paid work, patriarchal relations in the state, male violence, patriarchal relations in sexuality, and patriarchal relations in cultural institutions. Walby's (McDowell and Pringle, 1992:11) system of patriarchy appears to cover the state, religion, economy as well as the private sphere. Mitchel (McDowell and Pringle, 1992) on the other hand offered a structuralist approach explaining that patriarchy operated on different levels; namely an ideological and capitalist level. Much

time was spent on the intricacies of what constituted patriarchy and how to identify aspects of patriarchy operating in media content.

McDowell and Pringle (1992:12) explain that in the early parts of the 1990s there was a move away from patriarchy and towards gender as a category that may be more useful for ensuring that all social relations are looked at not just sex role stereotyping. This is in part a valid point and has been discussed in many studies at the height of second-wave feminism that concentrated on sex role stereotyping. Gender can be seen as an umbrella term encapsulating issues of feminism, masculinity as well as sexual orientation. Patriarchy is an important aspect in understanding the relationship between women's issues in society as well as issues in masculinity. What McDowell and Pringle (1992) are stating is that when patriarchy becomes the defining ideology drawn on in a study or research initiative the result in most cases is an analysis of sex roles that are linked to patriarchal ideology limiting the scope of studies.

A more holistic approach is being proposed that takes into account other aspects of gender. Yet these studies that have been critiqued for concentrating on patriarchal issues were all relevant in emphasising and adding reliability to the findings of the studies that preceded showing that women were not realistically portrayed in media content. Patriarchy as an ideology is still relevant in current studies, because women's issues in the form of oppression, emancipation and equality are still relevant in research. Studies will in some sense draw on patriarchy to support and explain why women are still on various levels and in different contexts oppressed. Reversely the same ideology is used to address masculinity and traditional expectations placed on men. Martin (Diamond and Quinby 1988: 16) argued this point in the late 1980s stating, "it is imperative that we not dismiss the importance of the concepts of patriarchy and oppression". Furthermore an analysis of sex-role stereotyping is still relevant in current research and across numerous disciplines, this is especially true from a communication perspective that seeks to understand why different forms of media portray parts of society in very specific ways and why women continue to be portrayed in traditional and outdated roles.

2.3.3 Approaches to understanding social institutions of power

Patriarchy has been identified as the main ideological power operating in society and culture that places gendered expectations on both sexes. Arguments that are used to support patriarchal notions are conservatism or traditional approaches that support social and cultural differences between the sexes. There have been key developments in the human sciences that contextualises the development and dominance of ideological structures such as patriarchy. One such approach is to look at the socialisation process.

Interesting trends in communication research has for some time drawn significantly on psychology as a means to better understand social norms and practices. Feminists took an interest in the socialisation process discussed by Sigmund Freud through his theory of the Oedipal complex. Socialisation is recognised as the process though which individuals learn what is expected of them, including social norms and roles associated with each sex respectively.

Socialisation is vital to the process of the individual's entrance into society and acceptance of social standards. However Freud's psychoanalytical approach has been critiqued for being too deterministic placing too much emphasis on the early stages of development. Also the Oedipal complex is completely male cantered explaining the development of the male child. Another critique of the approach is that it expects everyone to go through the same socialisation process (Mabandla 2006). Feminists are against structures that are too deterministic and place certain expectations on the sexes that need to be conformed to.

However Feminists have argued that it is the process of the individual's socialisation that is important in implementing change in how society understands women. Radical feminists would support a more 'radical' change in the socialisation process, thus greater emphasis is placed on understanding the process of socialisation. This can be done by looking at patriarchy's involvement at different stages of socialisation such as through the cultural institutions of school or religion (Fetsha 1997). Men are understood to have majority control over production, state, labour, and cultural institutions. In communication studies this fact is often relied on to help explain why certain

portrayals of female characters that are considered unrealistic appear in advertising content.

2.3.4 Representation and stereotyping in the media

Representation thus far has been alluded to with reference to depiction or portrayal of women in the media. Representation being a heavily loaded word calls for a more in-depth analysis of social structures in order to understand why, how and when the media re-represents certain aspects and events. To understand the underlying concept of representation as a form of portrayal, as well as to provide a link to ideological streams of thought, concepts of semiotics will be looked at.

Semiotics explains the existence of pre-determined structures that are used to make sense of how the world is structured and as a result, how it operates. In order for individuals to co-exist they must be aware of this structure and its rules and conventions. The semiotic approach at first concentrated on language as the ultimate structure but developments in the field from scholars such as Barthes (1972) explored how various semiotic approaches could be used in the analysis of cultural texts that alluded to and represented ideologies operating on a social and cultural level. Barthes (1972) in *Myth today* explained that ideological power was in the hands of a dominant class; the Bourgeoisie. If this is translated into contemporary society it is asserted that there will always be a dominant class that operates, perpetuates and maintains their ideology. In South Africa before democracy in 1994 the dominant class was white, all social institutions were controlled by the state and the ideology operated on a much more superficial level. Gramsci (in Dines and Humez 2003:61) argues that as society develops it becomes more difficult to identify ideology because it operates on a more subtle level. The only way to identify ideology is by drawing heavily on history and theory.

Bignell (2002:37) explains the following about advertisements "what ads are really doing is serving the interests of those who own and control the industries of consumer culture". This argument is linked to arguments that feminists have made emphasising that ownership and thus production control is in the hands of men who perpetuate certain representations of women and

men in the media in order to serve their dominant mode of thinking and to maintain the status quo. Nyamnjoh (2005:41) states, "Continuities thrive on celebration of the status quo by those in positions of power, privilege and comfort". In South Africa the concern has been more for the fact that ownership is in the hands of white men. The concern post apartheid is particularly invested in the portrayal of race and class and Nyamnjoh (2006) is critically arguing that increased black ownership and more black faces in the media have not translated into fair representations in the media. The concern for women's issues based on this is that the control of production is still in the hands of men and the media images of women are still ideologically loaded with negative connotations for women. Bignell (2002) states,

> The semiotic analysis of advertising assumes which the meanings of ads are designed to move out from the page or screen on which they are carried to shape and lend significance to our experience of reality. We are encouraged to see ourselves, the products or services that are advertised, and aspects of our social world in terms of the mythic meanings which ads draw on and help to promote

According to Bignell (2004) who builds on Saussure's understanding of the structure of language and meaning and Barthes (1972) analysis of myths in cultural texts; ideology is encoded into media texts and requires in-depth analysis in order to not only indentify but to also understand the meanings of the content. Semiotic analysis emphasises the ability of media texts to naturalise certain concepts such as traditional perceptions of men and women (Barthes 1972).

A semiotic analysis of advertising content is believed to provide a more detailed understanding of ideology or what Barthes (1972) calls myths in cultural texts. This explains why there has been a greater demand for more in-depth analysis. Previous studies aims were specifically to identify gender representations in the media whereas currently there is a criticism of purely quantitative approaches explaining that while they are more reliable and allow for empirical data to be collected it misses out on some of the underlying meanings encoded in advertising content. In order to identify examples of ideology a qualitative approach is recommended rather than using quantitative data to infer that certain ideological meanings are present.

Hall (1997) argues that the conservatist approach uses biological differences as a basis for women's subordination in cultural and social structures (1997:235). Drawing on the concept of binary opposition, Hall (1997) further states, "we need difference because we can only construct meaning through a dialogue with the other". Binary opposition can be applied to most concepts but applied to the sexes the concept would be that we know what a woman is and ought to be because we are aware of what a man is and ought to be. Hall (1997) also draws on the semiotic approach and the following statement by Bignell (2002) encapsulates Hall's (1997) argument with the following statement "the capacity of linguistic signs to be meaningful depended on their existence in a social context and on their conventionally accepted use in that social context".

Hall (1997) asserted that in order for representations in the media to be decoded and understood, individuals would have to have an understanding of the same system or rather the same conceptual map as Barthes (1972) explained. Stereotyping is considered as the "Maintenance of social and symbolic order" (Hall 1997: 258). There are other analysts that share this view. Hilton and Von Hippel (1994) asked why stereotypes exist (what function do they serve?) Earlier it was stated that most studies especially those that adopted a quantitative approach relied on gender stereotypes or sex-role stereotypes. Sex-role stereotypes are perceptions and generally agreed upon forms of reference, referring specifically to roles that are expected from each sex. Feminists believed the presence of sex-role stereotyping in advertising content the negative portrayal of women in comparison to positive portrayal of men and that patriarchy was still a dominant ideology embedded in media content. Although stereotypes are not always negative in studies, they are usually perceived to be as they are considered the determining factor when trying to find out whether women are portrayed fairly.

Stereotypes have become the most popular means to measuring the extent to which women are misrepresented in advertising content. The ability of a researcher to identify gender stereotypes in advertising content usually infers that that content is lagging behind social change. Three of the fundamental

questions that are asked about stereotypes are (1) how are stereotypes formed, (2) how are stereotypes maintained, and (3) when are stereotypes used.

Lippmann (Kim and Lowry, 2005)) defined stereotypes to originally mean erroneous content that includes pejorative content about groups and minority groups that are simple, rigid and structurally reinforced. Furthermore stereotypes are also a process of otherness and exclusion and therefore linked to power (De Beauvoir 1953). Hall (1997:258) explains that stereotypes are a method that allows for "the maintenance of social and symbolic order." Furthermore "stereotyping tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power". In gender studies this gross inequality was solely used to comment on the inequalities between women and men in society. Hall (1997) uses the concept of otherness to explain how certain groups, not just women, are considered as second-class citizens. The assumption about stereotypes in media content is that they are easily recognisable and therefore considered as a concept that can be identified by the audience member. The reason why stereotypes are so easily recognisable is because "stereotyping is part of an ideological system that is already an intrinsic part of society" attention is now paid to other forms of sexual orientation. For example the study of otherness is often used for the analysis of gays and lesbians as being different from socially acceptable heterosexual couples (Fourie 2009). Generally what can be deduced is that there are groups in society that have over time been considered as operating outside the ideologically acceptable boundaries; as a result these groups are perceived as the other and those that conform to social norms and practices are part of the maintenance and continuance of the dominant ideology. Hilton and Von Hippel (1994) write this about otherness and what they call out-group members

> Out-group members are not only perceived as possessing less desirable traits than in-group members, they are seen as more homogeneous as well. A consequence of the so-called out-group homogeneity effect is that people believe that most out-group members share the attributes of the specific out-group members whom they encounter

Hilton and Von Hippel (1994) are explaining why stereotypes exist. Stereotypes are maintained by a person's ability to recognise the stereotype

and associate it with a specific group. Stereotypes are also maintained through continuous use such as in media content. Recommendations usually call for more accurate representations in the media.

Perkins (1979:78) however argues that Lippmann's (Kim and Lowry, 2005) definition of stereotypes is flawed. Stereotypes are not simple as decoding requires an understanding of social and cultural systems much like what Saussure and Barthes (1972) referred to. This contradicts the assumption that stereotypes are automatically activated. There are obviously numerous understandings of what stereotypes are and how they operate. The most popular is in support of Lippmann's definition.

2.3.5 Popular stereotypes of men and women

The themes of past studies have been mentioned, however it is important to also explore some of the more prominent forms of portrayal through stereotypes. It is generally understood that gender-based stereotypes are a direct result of patriarchal ideologies operating in society. Many of the stereotypes result from preconceived definitions of women and men's role in society. Looking at the traditional roles that are associated with women and men usually provides a backdrop for other categories that are used to analyse representation of women in the media. Traditional roles for women are that of wife and mother. Another addition to the roles of women was sex object due to objectification of women as well as women who did not occupy traditional roles as wife and mother. These three roles are a constant in academic discourse as well as popular debate (Freidan 1963, Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Goffman 1979, Berger 1980, Hofstede 1984, Wood 1994, Tuchman 1995, Perkins 1997, Gilly 1998, Wiles and Wiles 1995, Dowling 2001, Van Zoonen and Meijer 2002, Ferguson 2004, Kim and Lowry 2005, Corrigall 2006, McMahan and Shoop 2006). Furthermore the traditional roles assigned to women and men are also used as basis for the formation of character inferences. Men stereotypically are characterised as being ambitious, hard working, responsible, and dependable as well as being adventurous. These character traits also provide insight into why male characters are associated with certain occupations such as professional sportsman or occupying high-level, professional positions that require

responsibility, hard work, and ambition. Whereas women are stereotypically associated with being caring, emotional, needing guidance and support, and are weak. This is why female characters are stereotypically not associated with high-level occupations, sporting or outdoor activities or the role of provider.

In terms of occupational sex roles this has been a popular category in order to determine whether female characters are being portrayed in occupational roles that mirror the roles that women currently (at the time of study) occupy in the labour market. A distinction is made between high-level executive positions, professional, semi-professional, professional sportsperson, as well as entertainer, celebrity and model, and unskilled positions. For example Hofstede (1984:84) defined men as being ambitious and having a drive for achievement therefore it is assumed that male characters would be associated with high-level executive, professional and semi-skilled positions. It was automatically assumed due to gender conventions that female characters would occupy the lower skilled positions because they would be opposite to male characters (Van Zoonen and Meijer 2002, Corrigall 2006).

As women have been traditionally associated with roles that place them in the home (private sphere) the assumption is made that female characters would feature in a setting/environment that supports the more traditional roles specifically in the home. Male characters would be featured in a professional/working environment or outdoor setting to support the role of provider and worker as well as the occupations that men are stereotypically associated with.

A widely used category is product association. Product association refers to the product types that are stereotypically associated with each sex. This is again linked to role, occupation, and setting. For example if female characters occupy roles of wife and mother, it is assumed that those female characters would be placed in a domestic setting/environment and that they would be associated and used to promote household (furniture, appliances, food, cleaning) products as well as those product types associated with child care. Male characters in comparison would be associated with product types dealing with investment, sport and outdoor activities, automobiles, and work.

From these stereotypical assumptions other assumptions are made about television advertising in particular. Male characters, for example are portrayed pre-dominantly as central/main characters and female characters in comparison are portrayed pre-dominantly as supporting characters. In cases that female characters are portrayed as central/main characters the frequency of this portrayal is not as high as that of male characters portrayed as central/main characters. Over and above this television is a visual medium and advertisements are usually accompanied by an on-screen spokesperson and/or voice-over. The point is to look at the sex of spokespersons and voice-over's by identifying the rate to which men in comparison to women are used as spokespersons and voice-overs as well as to relate this information back to the other categories.

These roles, expectations, and techniques used in television advertising will be used to perform a quantitative analysis much like the studies that have been discussed thus far which will support the more in-depth qualitative analysis of the portrayal of female characters in a sample of advertisements.

2.4 Current trends and themes in South African studies

Dali Mpofu (2006) spoke about the role of public broadcasting in implementing change and uplifting the disadvantaged vulnerable citizens. This marked the start of the SABC'S new vision "Broadcasting for Total Citizenship Empowerment", that aimed to transfer more responsibility onto the media to engage as well as well play an active role in the empowerment of all citizens. Amongst the vulnerable and disadvantaged that Mpofu referred to were women. Mpofu segregated this further, stating that attention needs to also be given to the differences between women, for example the differences between rural and urban women. What Mpofu did was emphasise the importance of context. This is a trend that goes back to the socialisation process of the individual; but also Western models being implemented in Third World countries. To this end there is a need for specific programmes that are clear and actually implemented that aim to work towards gender equality. In a South African context as Mpofu has alluded to equality of women is multi-dimensional, and is recognised as imperative to growth and stability in all spheres of society. The development of women's issues in the

country has an interesting relationship with political issues prevalent at specific times in South African history. At times the ANC has been accused of gender blindness as noted by Hassim (2006). Gender blindness referring to an approach where all

> Human beings are viewed as the same and are seen to be deserving of the same treatment. In the South African context, this approach argues that the Constitutional provision of equality for every individual is enough. This is similar to view that says that because South Africa has achieved formal equality through law…there is no need to address the legacies of the past through redistribution and empowerment" (The need for a gendered perspective: sa)

This approach is obviously flawed because a special consideration for context is imperative for informing future developments and programmes.

The state of women in the continent is considered a human rights concern. Humanitarian organisations publicise quite extensively the numerous human rights violations that occur continuously on the continent, however they are often met with strong and active resistance from government. In an Amnesty International report on Zimbabwe; numerous human rights violations were reported as well as an acknowledgement of numerous unknown cases of violations against women "The humanitarian situation in Zimbabwe reached crisis levels in the period between April and August 2008, mainly because of the government's decision to suspend field operations of humanitarian organisations. The suspension also meant that human rights violations could be carried out without being witnessed by humanitarian field workers". This again emphasises the importance of such initiatives and programmes to be part of legislature and policy.

South Africa has some of the highest numbers when it comes to violence against women (Strebel, Crawford, Shefer, Cloete, Henda, Kaufman, Simbayi, Magome, & Kalichman 2006). In an interesting study that looked at the social construction of gender roles and gender-based violence in the Western Cape, Strebel et al (2006) explore the links between gender roles and gender-based violence specifically concentrating on how women and men constructed their gender identities. The research relies on a social constructionist approach that

asserts, “gender is a system of social classification that influences access to power, status and material resources” (Strebel et al 2006: 517). The findings reveal that communities still associate women and men with traditional gender roles but the participants in the study also realised that gender roles were shifting mostly linked to the active role of women in the labour market. This impacted on traditional perceptions held by men, many of the male participants showed concern that they were not the primary providers. Strebel et al (2006) refer to this as the empowerment of women versus the disempowerment of men and link this to the rise in gender-based violence. In a series of focus-group interviews and in-depth interviews the following main reasons are seen to contribute to gender-based violence (1) women’s empowerment and overturning of traditional gender roles, (2) high rates of unemployment among men leading to loss of self esteem, (3) traditional roles of male domination leads men to think they are entitled to abuse women, (4) and alcohol abuse. It becomes clear that equality is a double-edged sword and equality does not necessarily mean emancipation or freedom for women. The ideological dimensions that are well infused in society makes the successful transition of women from solely occupying traditional roles problematic. Domestic violence writes Le Roux (1999:25)

> Is the most common yet least reported crime in South Africa-as a news priority ranking lower than crimes against property. In a country where the media focuses heavily on crime, this is an eloquent silence

South African studies as well as public debate into women’s issues and specifically investigation into media portrayal can best be described as inconsistent often taking precedence at very specific times such as around women’s month, election time, and specific events such as the Zuma rape trial (Gordon 2008) that brings women’s issues to the forefront in the public sphere. Gongo (sa) writes that “all women are represented problematically in the media” Gongo (sa) further elaborates by bringing context into the analysis stating that some are represented more problematically than others while some are not represented at all. A link is drawn between the problematic understandings and practices in society and the problematic depictions reflected in the media. While Gongo’s (sa) write-up is quite brief some

interesting links between women in Cabinet and the media are drawn. The difficulty with prominent women in the public sphere is that existing social structures are not supportive; this translates into unchartered, contested terrain for the media. Gongo writes "the media have not yet found a way of framing and representing them" (women in cabinet) "within norms of the public sphere". MISA and Gender Links study (2003:31) corroborates this stating that, "what is particularly shocking in this table is that countries that have the highest representation of women in parliament-South Africa, Mozambique and Tanzania-also had some of the lowest proportions of women politicians being accessed as news sources". As Hassim (2006) stated, women's role in politics has always been a supportive one and as a result of this history women in politics are often undervalued, and often used to meet a quota.

This awkward approach by the media in South Africa is emphasised by the comprehensive baseline study. The study conducted by MISA and Gender Links aims to provide a regional overview of gender relations and portrayal in editorial content during 2002. Again the aim of the study is to first bring to light the state of gender in the media and then to place more responsibility on the media to address gender inequality. Chipare and Morna (2003:3) write that

> If the media in Southern Africa can succeed in challenging gender stereotypes, we will have gone a long way towards achieving a region in which women and men are free to realise their full human potential

Key findings of the study are that women's views are under-represented in the media there is a lack of consistency in the media's representation of women and women's issues. Women are still identified according to traditional roles, female politicians are hardly heard or seen, gender equality is not considered newsworthy, men's voices are dominant, female media practitioners on television are predominantly young and also predominant in the soft beats, there are still cases of blatant sexist reporting and majority of stories constitute gender blindness (2003:10-12).

South African studies put forward that women constitute more than half the country's population therefore underrepresentation is a concern and does not reflect social reality. It is important that legislature and policy force the issue

upon society and into the public sphere. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development is such an initiative (Southern Africa. Southern African Development Community 2008). The protocol aims to harmonise gender initiatives in the SADC by compiling a list of standardised objectives relevant to addressing women's issues. The specific objectives of the protocol are to (1) provide empowerment of women (2) eliminate discrimination and achieve gender equality, (3) and to address emerging gender issues and concerns all through the implementation of legislation, policies, programmes and projects that are set according to realistic and accountable deadlines.

The segmentation between initiatives, policy and legislature, academic discourse, and the media is problematic; there is little harmonisation between such ventures. The separation of the various camps makes it difficult to make sense of what is being planned, implemented and what has actually been achieved. The general theme in South African studies is to illustrate the current situation and contrast it to the ideal, however the following are significant changes, first there has been a definite move away from Western models, second studies pay significant attention to context, third while sex-role stereotyping is still significantly popular in studies there is a definitive move away from purely quantitative studies to a more qualitative approach that is able to successfully incorporate the first two points, lastly in South African studies more attention is paid to the importance of legislature and policy in implementing change and many studies incorporate such models for change.

3 METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 outlines the procedure that will be followed in the collection and analysis of data.

Content analysis has been the primary means of analysing stereotypes in advertising content. The following studies adopted and tested successfully the portrayal of female characters in advertising content (Courtney and Lockeretz 1971, Dominick and Rauch 1972, Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976, Ferante et al, 1988, Giles, 1988, Wiles and Wiles 1995, Dowling 2001 Kim and Lowry, 2005, MacMahan and Shoop 2006) these studies all adopted the use of content analysis to explore how female characters are portrayed in advertising content. These studies favoured a quantitative approach. A Quantitative approach was prevalent during between the 1960s and 1980s in studies that were interested in how female characters were portrayed across large samples. Quantitative approaches were also favoured due to the added reliability. This study will use a predominantly quantitative approach but will also conduct a more in-depth qualitative analysis on a smaller sample of advertisements in order to look at the context of the advertisements and the specific ways that female characters are portrayed.

3.1 Time frame

Data collection procedures involved the recording of data onto a hard drive and then transferring the data onto DVD. This process took place during the 4th to 10th June 2007. A pilot test was conducted during July 2008 in order to test the coding sheet and to eliminate problems that may have arisen before the actual coding of the advertisements took place. It was important to conduct a pilot test to establish whether the coding sheet was accurate and able to capture the required data needed to address the main research issue. The pilot test provided an opportunity to train the two external coders that were used in order to achieve inter-coder reliability.

The actual coding of the advertisements was conducted over a period of three days. The coders voluntarily took part in the study and the researcher except for the printing of the coding sheets incurred no additional expenses. The

coding took place at the researcher's home, as this was the most convenient location. After the advertisements were coded a smaller sample was drawn from the already quantitatively analysed advertisements for the qualitative analysis.

3.2 Sampling method

Non-probability sampling, specifically purposive sampling was used. SABC 3 advertisements from 4-10 June 2007 between 19:00 and 21:00 were selected. An SABC channel was selected because it is the public broadcaster and as such the broadcaster faces heightened pressure to combat gender inequality through various broadcasting initiatives and policies to place more attention on the place of female characters in the media. For this reason it is important to look at advertising content broadcasted by the public broadcaster during prime time television.

The advertising content was subject to further purposive sampling as certain advertisements were excluded from the coding procedure. This included advertisements for SABC scheduled programming, advertisements with only kids and no voice-over, and advertisements with only animals and no voice-over. Repeats of advertisements were included as this study is particularly interested in the frequency of certain themes and patterns in the advertising content.

A smaller sample of 15 advertisements was semiotically analysed in order to gain a deeper and more contextualised understanding of how female and characters are comparatively portrayed in the advertisements.

3.3 Quantitative analysis

The advertisements will be coded with the use of pre-coded categories. These categories have been adopted and adapted from studies that have also looked at how female characters were represented in televised advertisements with particular reference to the Dominick and Rauch study (1972).

The pre-coded categories included: central/main and supporting characters, product type, occupation, role, setting or environment, spokesperson, and voice-over. The category for role was not mutually exclusive. A character could occupy more than one role in a single advertisement. This was to accommodate for the multiple scenes within a single advertisement where a character could be shown at work and then shown with a family. In this capacity the character would occupy the working and family roles.

A pilot study was conducted in order to ensure that the categories were accurate and that the coders were able to work with the coding sheet. Once the actual coding was completed the researcher sorted through the coding sheets and entered the data into Microsoft Excel and presented the findings in the form of charts to help illustrate the findings.

3.3.1 Operational definitions

Operational definitions formed an essential part of the coding process. Definitions were provided for the terms used in the coding sheet to avoid confusion and ensure that all the coders shared, for the purpose of this study the same understanding of the respective terms. The definitions are drawn from an understanding of each term with reference to specific studies that also employed the same or similar categories.

Central/main character: defined as the focus of the advertisement and used to promote, sell or advertise the product. The central/main character can also appear as the on-screen spokesperson and is most likely to get the majority of the focus of the camera in comparison to other characters.

Supporting character(s): the supporting character appears in a supporting role and unlike the central/main character is not the focus of the advertisement. The supporting character is often instrumental in creating a particular atmosphere. For example the central/main character may be a mother promoting a particular brand of cheese that she uses to make her kid's sandwiches; the advertisement may end with the image of a child enjoying the sandwich. There may be more than one supporting character.

Couple: a couple is defined as a male and female or two characters of the same gender that carry equal weighting in an advertisement. No distinction can be made between which of the characters is the central/main character and in such cases they can be coded as a couple.

Kids: are defined as infants and kids between the ages of 1 and 12 years. Teenagers have been excluded from this age bracket. Teenagers can be a central/main character as they make up a large percentage of the advertising target market.

Family: a family is applicable in the following cases, when one or more kids are present with either a mother or father figure or both. Although a wife and husband could also be considered a family, for the purpose of this study they would be defined as a couple.

Crowd(s): defined as a group of people of more than 5 gathered in the same physical space. In a crowd there will be no identifiable central/main character. An advertisement may include a central/main character and even a supporting character and then a crowd that will then be coded under the second supporting character box.

Product: what the advertiser is intending to promote. The sub-categories that have been selected are as follows:

- Cleaning: products that are used to make a space or setting clean
- Appliances: products that require electricity in order to operate.
- Furniture: includes man made objects that are used as fixtures in man made structures. These include furnishings for homes, offices et cetera.
- Clothing: attire that is used to cover or conceal the body
- Personal care/beauty products for men: products that are used for the physical appearance and upkeep.
- Personal care/beauty products for women: products that are used for the physical appearance and upkeep.
- Food: products consumed by humans for sustenance

- Alcoholic beverages: include liquid products (made from starch, fruit, and sugar) that have an intoxicating effect on the human body. The defining characteristic of this product is that it is 'not for sale to persons under the age of 18'. Advertisements for alcoholic beverages will be recognisable by this feature.
- Drugs/medicine: products that are used for health or improved physical or mental health.
- Automobiles: products used as modes of transport, more specifically modes of transport that requires an engine to function. Products that used for the upkeep, maintenance and running of automobiles are also included in this category.
- Financial services: products that address monetary planning, maintenance, and upkeep. Within this category are banking and investment services.
- ICT/Telecommunications: information and communication technology. Advertisements that promote information technology, media, or telecommunications products.
- Institutional/public services: services offered by the state and all related agencies. Services that are provided by the state include housing, public education, and transport.
- Entertainment: products that promote leisure and relaxation.
- Accommodation: products that promote a location for customers to reside in. Accommodation can be in the form of holiday destinations, or an alternative location for customers to reside in other than their current place of residence. Examples of such products are hotels, guesthouses, flats/apartments and houses to rent or purchase.

Occupation: defined as a profession or working role that the central/main and supporting characters occupies for the purpose of remuneration. Sub categories under this category are as follows:

- High-level executive: a profession that requires a high skill level (qualification and experience), maturity and authority illustrated by the character. Key indicators of high-level executive position can include an elaborate office, an individual holding a meeting, an individual signing documents (illustrating authority). High-level executive positions include

central operating officers, presidents of commercial entities, board members. This category is defined in a commercial capacity.

- Professional: high qualification and skill level. This category is one below the high-level executive category. Included in this category are managers, lecturers, doctors, and lawyers.
- Semi-professional: semi-skill level not having a highly qualified high-skilled executive or professional occupation.
- Entertainer/celebrity/model: this occupational category involves the service of providing entertainment.
- Professional sportsperson: highly skilled and qualified individual or group that takes part in sporting activity on a professional level; is usually reliant on activity for remuneration.
- Government/institutional/politician: any individual or group on individuals who fulfil a post working for state departments, institutions and organisations.

Role: the role that a character occupies is defined as the function that the character fulfils for the purpose of the advertisement. A character can occupy more than one role in a single advertisement.

- Working role: individual who provides a service for remuneration. Any individual that occupies any of the occupational categories.
- Family role: characters fulfil this role when they play the role of mother or father.
- Recreational role: this is a role that is characterised by leisure and recreational activities.
- Decorative role: character plays a supportive role by making the setting/environment or scene of the advertisement appealing and beautiful. The character portrayed in this role also supports the product in this capacity usually with attention drawn to the physical appearance of the character.
- Provider: role of taking care of others in a financial, security and emotional capacity. This role is defined by characters that provide a combination of these roles to other characters in the advertisement.

- Sex object: stereotypical role that depicts the character in a sexual nature, drawing attention to the physical appearance of the character. The physical appearance of the character is used to promote the product.

Setting/environment: 'The actual background in which the 'scenarios' of the advertisements were placed' (Schneider & Schneider 1979)

- Domestic: this setting will be applicable if the advertisement is set in the character's place of residence. In other words the home environment.
- Professional: this setting will be applicable if the advertisement is set in the character's place of occupation or work.
- Natural/outdoor: this setting occurs in the open area that include parks, fields, countryside, gardens.
- Set: a constructed space for the purpose of the advertisement
- Combination of setting/environments: this type of setting includes a combination of scenes taking place in the advertisement and as such characters can appear in more than one setting. The combination of settings includes combinations of: domestic and professional, or domestic and natural outdoor, or professional and natural/outdoor, or domestic, professional, and natural outdoor.

Voice-over: Off-screen promoter of the product.

Table 1: original coding sheet used:

Date of advertisement---------- June 2007
Advertisement No:

CENTRAL/MAIN CHARACTER

Male	
Female	

SUPPORTING CHARACTER

Male	
Female	

PRODUCT TYPE

Cleaning		Food	
Appliances		Alcoholic beverages	
Furniture		Drugs/medicine	
Clothing (men)		Automobiles	
Clothing (women)		Finance	
Personal care/beauty (men)		Institutional/public services	
Personal care/beauty (women)		Other	

OCCUPATION

High-level executive			Professional sportsperson		
Professional			Government/institutional position/politician		
Semi- professional			Sales		
Entertainer/Celebrity			Other		

ROLE

Working		Decorative	
Family		Provider	
Recreational		Sex object	
Other			

SETTING/ENVIRONMENT

Domestic
Professional
Natural/outdoor
Other

VOICE-OVER

Male	
Female	
Both	
None	

3.3.2 Pilot test of coding sheet

The pilot test was conducted on the 15 July 2008. This date was selected because the researcher had to accommodate the two external coders. The advertisements from the 4th June 2007 were selected for the pilot test. This date was selected based purely on the fact that it was the first day falling in the sample drawn.

Each coder was supplied with stationery, a pack of coding sheets, and a list of operational definitions. The coding sheet and operational definitions were explained. The researcher and external coders coded the same sample of advertisements (53 advertisements). In terms of the reliability the researcher and the coder were in 100 percent agreement for 38 out of the total 53 advertisements. The total reliability was 71 percent. The reason for this percentage in reliability was due to the following problems:

- Difficulties in defining a central/main character in some of the advertisements.
- Problems with distinguishing between a central/main character and a supporting character.
- The original coding sheet (Table 1) only made allowances for one supporting character and in many cases there was more than one supporting character.
- An unforeseeable issue was that of a crowd, kids and animals in advertisements. Initially advertisements with kids, crowds, and animals without a voice-over would be excluded, however the researcher felt that these advertisements should still be coded and recorded and kept as a formal record.

The researcher also realised that coding would take longer than the scheduled two days for the end of July. The pilot test included the coding and recording of 53 advertisements. The pilot test took place between 10:00 and 16:30. With this in mind the researcher scheduled an extra day to conduct the coding.

3.3.3 Amended coding sheet

The coding sheet had to be amended and additions made to certain categories. The new amended coding sheet that was used in the actual coding process can be viewed on Table 2.

The amended coding sheet now makes allowance for couples as a central/main character. This was a necessary addition as a number of advertisements that featured on the 4 of June 2007 included a couple with no other supporting characters. Also both female and male characters received the same amount of attention from the camera and both were used to promote the product. This corresponded with the operational definition for central/main character. The researcher made the decision to include the extra option.

Another column was added for additional supporting characters. The supporting character category was also extended to include kids, family and crowd. This would eliminate the problem encountered with supporting characters.

Additional options for ICT/Telecommunications services, security, insurance, entertainment and accommodation were added. More options had to be made available for the setting or environment of the advertisements. A considerable amount of the advertisements were set in a combination of settings/environments. An advertisement might begin in the natural/outdoors but would end with a domestic scene. The researcher added in combination options. An example was to add an option for a combination of natural/outdoor and domestic setting/environment or a combination of a domestic and professional setting/environment.

Table 2: amended coding sheet:
Date of advertisement---------- June 2007
Advertisement No:

CENTRAL/MAIN CHARACTER

Male	
Female	
Couple	

SUPPORTING CHARACTER 1

Male	
Female	
Kid	
Family	
Crowd	
None	

SUPPORTING CHARACTER 2

Male	
Female	
Kid	
Family	
Crowd	
None	

PRODUCT TYPE

Cleaning		Alcoholic beverages	
Appliances		Drugs/medicine	
Furniture		Automobiles	
Clothing		Finance	
Personal care/beauty (men)		ICT/telecommunications	
Personal care/beauty (women)		Institutional/public services	
Food		Security	
Insurance		Entertainment	
Other			

OCCUPATION

High-level executive			Professional sportsperson		
Professional			Government/institutional position/politician		
Semi- professional			Other		
Entertainer/Celebrity/Model					

ROLE

Working		Decorative	
Family		Provider	
Recreational		Sex object	
Other			

SETTING/ENVIRONMENT

Domestic		
Professional		
Natural/outdoor		
Set		
Combination of domestic and professional		
Combination of domestic and natural/outdoor		
Combination of professional and natural/outdoor		
Combination of domestic, professional and natural/outdoor		
Other		

VOICE-OVER

Male	
Female	
Both	
None	

Comments:

3.4 Qualitative analysis

A semiotic analysis will complement the quantitative findings and will allow for a more in-depth understanding of the portrayal of male and female characters in the sample of advertisements. The semiotic analysis draws from Barthes's (1972) three levels of meaning, namely the denotative, the connotative, and the ideological level of meaning. Each advertisement will be individually transcribed, analysed with the purpose of identifying themes and patterns.

Denotative: for the purpose of this study a denotative analysis comprised of identifying the following elements in the advertisement: gender of character, product type, setting/environment, occupation, as well as the role of the character. In the denotative analysis these elements are only identified and described.

Connotative: the connotative analysis took the elements identified in the denotative analysis and provided a more in-depth analysis linking the elements identified in the denotative analysis and how the individual elements once analysed as a whole produced certain meanings.

Ideological: the final step was the linking of the denotative and connotative information to ideological ideas and possible social meanings discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework such as patriarchy, feminism and gender stereotypes.

4 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

The following is a discussion of the findings and is used to address the hypotheses and research questions. The hypotheses were broken down into five extrapolations that drew heavily on stereotypes associated with female and male character portrayal in televised advertisements. The first extrapolation looked at product type associations, this was based on the assumption that both female and male characters have traditionally and stereotypically been associated with specific product types. The second extrapolation assumed that female and male characters would be characterised by appearing in specific occupations that would confirm stereotypical character traits assigned to each sex. The third extrapolation addressed role and it was assumed that female characters would appear predominantly in the family or sex object role and that male characters would appear predominantly in working and recreational roles. Based on these assumptions the fourth extrapolation stated that since female characters would not be associated with professional positions, working, and recreational role that they would appear predominantly in domestic settings/environments whereas male characters who were assumed to be associated with professional, and working, as recreational roles would appear in professional or natural/outdoor settings/environments. The final extrapolation was based on the assumption that female characters would not be given the responsibility and authority to be a voice-over and that male characters would feature predominantly as voice-overs. These extrapolations were used to address the hypotheses that female characters are portrayed stereotypically and that male characters are the dominating characters in the advertisements. These extrapolations assumed that male characters would be associated with products that placed them in the public sphere, would be portrayed in the more prestigious occupation positions, would occupy the more credible roles, and would appear authoritatively as voice-overs at a higher rate than female characters.

The answers to the research questions would be dependent on the findings obtained from addressing the extrapolations. The quantitative aspect of this study was structured in such a way that the coding sheet correlated with the extrapolations making it easy to address the extrapolations and in turn provide

answers to the research questions. This chapter will then provide a breakdown of what was found both quantitatively and qualitatively and in the process will relate this back to the hypotheses and research questions to address the aim and main research issue of how women are represented in advertisements.

4.1 Product breakdown

An overview of the distribution of the different product types that were advertised across the sample of advertisements is provided in Figure 1. The product types that appeared frequently were automobiles at 21 percent followed by food, finance, and security all at 11 percent, personal care/beauty for men, and alcoholic beverages contributed to 10 percent of the sample. The products that did not feature at a high rate were ICT/Telecommunications, personal care/beauty for men and women at four percent, appliances at three percent, drugs/medicine, institutional/public services, insurance, and accommodation only claimed two percent across the entire sample.

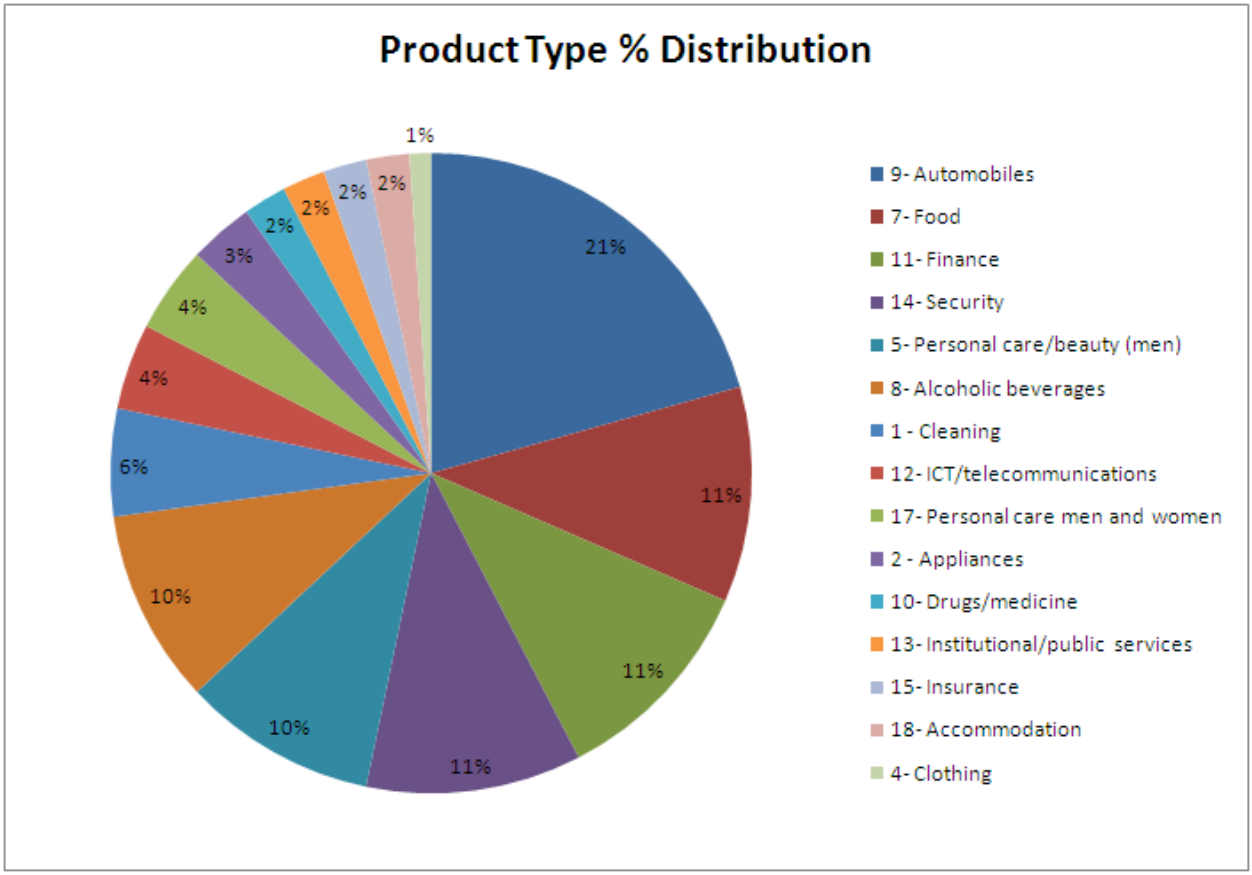


Figure 1: distribution by product type

The following sections explore the relationship between the different product types, the gender of the characters, as well as the categories of occupation, role, and setting/environment that the advertisements were set in.

4.1.1 Central/main characters and product association

The coding procedure made a distinction between central/main characters and supporting characters. As the term suggests central/main characters are meant to be the focus of the advertisement as key promoters of the product being advertised. It was anticipated that male characters would feature at a higher rate than female characters as central/main characters and the data supports this. Figure 2 indicates when a female character was portrayed as a central/main character and the product that was advertised. Extrapolation 1 made the assumption that female characters would feature predominantly as central/main characters only in the advertisements promoting personal care/beauty products, cleaning products, furniture products, and appliance products.

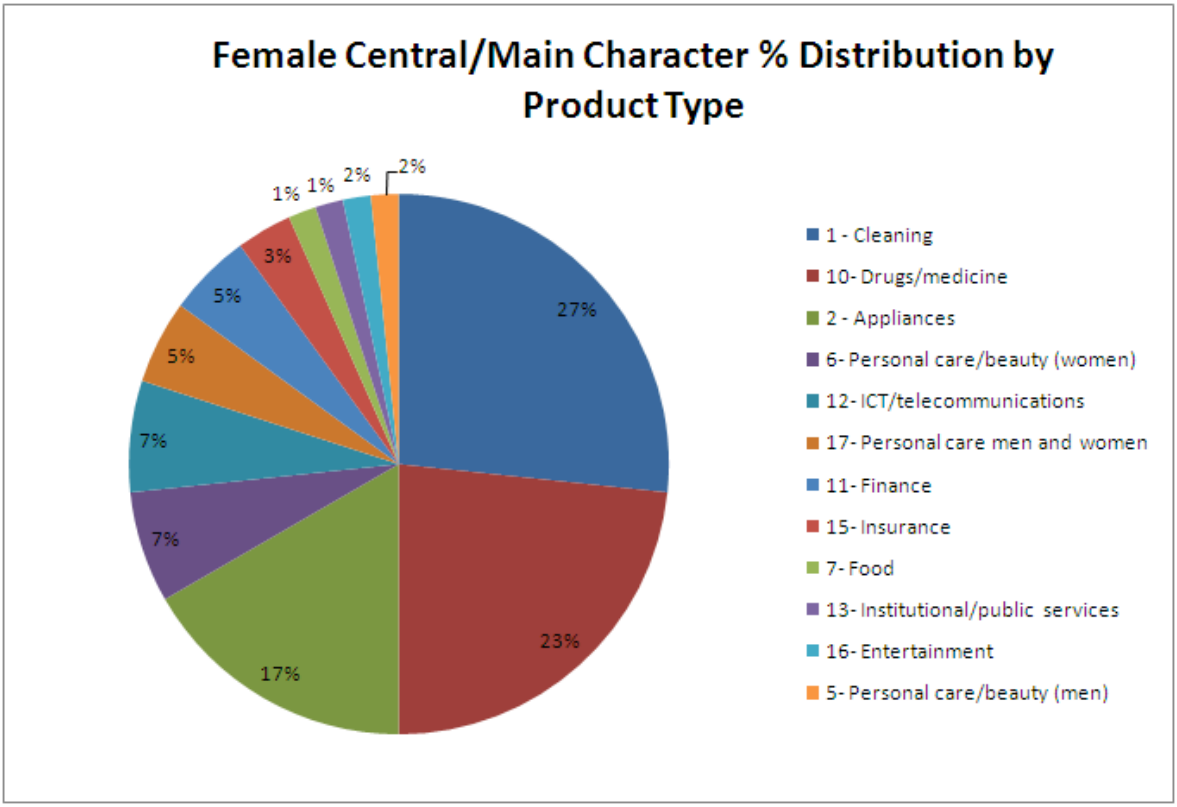


Figure 2: distribution by product type and central/main female characters (some products do not feature in this figure. The products that were excluded did not have female characters as central/main characters).

Female characters appeared predominantly in advertisements promoting cleaning (27%), drugs/medicine (23%), appliances (17%), personal care and beauty for women (7%), and ICT/Telecommunications (7%) products. Based on the findings of previous studies that have been discussed in the literature review and theoretical framework, the high percentage allocated to ICT/Telecommunications products had not been anticipated. Stereotypical portrayals would have associated female characters with predominantly cleaning, drugs/medicine, appliances, personal care/beauty, food and perhaps entertainment products. Figure 2 indicates a slight shift in product associations. Earlier studies indicated a significant relationship between female characters and food products. This was interpreted as a result of female characters being portrayed in the traditional roles of wife and mother and as a result associated with the domestic setting/environment and in effect the private sphere. Advertisements that featured a female character in the role of a wife and/or mother preparing a meal for her family would be an example of the more traditional associations with product and gender. This example

would support the stereotype that a woman's place is in the home. Although female characters featured at a higher rate than male characters promoting food products it was not at a significantly high rate.

The data then only supported the first extrapolation in so far that female characters featured as central/main characters at higher percentages in cleaning, appliances, and personal care/beauty products in comparison with other products but not in comparison to male characters. Figure 3 reveals that male characters featured as central/main characters at a higher rate than female characters in cleaning, appliance, and ICT/Telecommunications products. Although male characters gained higher percentages, as central/main characters in those advertisements this does not take away the fact that female characters in isolation from the rest of the data were predominantly the central/main characters in cleaning, appliances, and personal/care beauty products.

Overall male characters were more likely to be featured as central/main characters than female characters. This is a significant finding as it points to the dominance of male characters in the sample of advertisements. Male characters are now dominating in product categories originally thought to be associated with female characters. This points to the underrepresentation of female characters across the sample of advertisements. Patriarchal ideology asserts the dominance of men and in this case male characters dominated across the sample. Central/main characters are meant to be the focus of the advertisements and this implies that because there were more male central/main characters that the focus was predominantly on the male characters. This is more evident in figure 3; here the dominance of male characters can be seen across the different product types. There were 17 product type categories and male characters dominated as central/main characters in 13 of these categories.

4.1.2 Comparative overview of central/main characters by product type

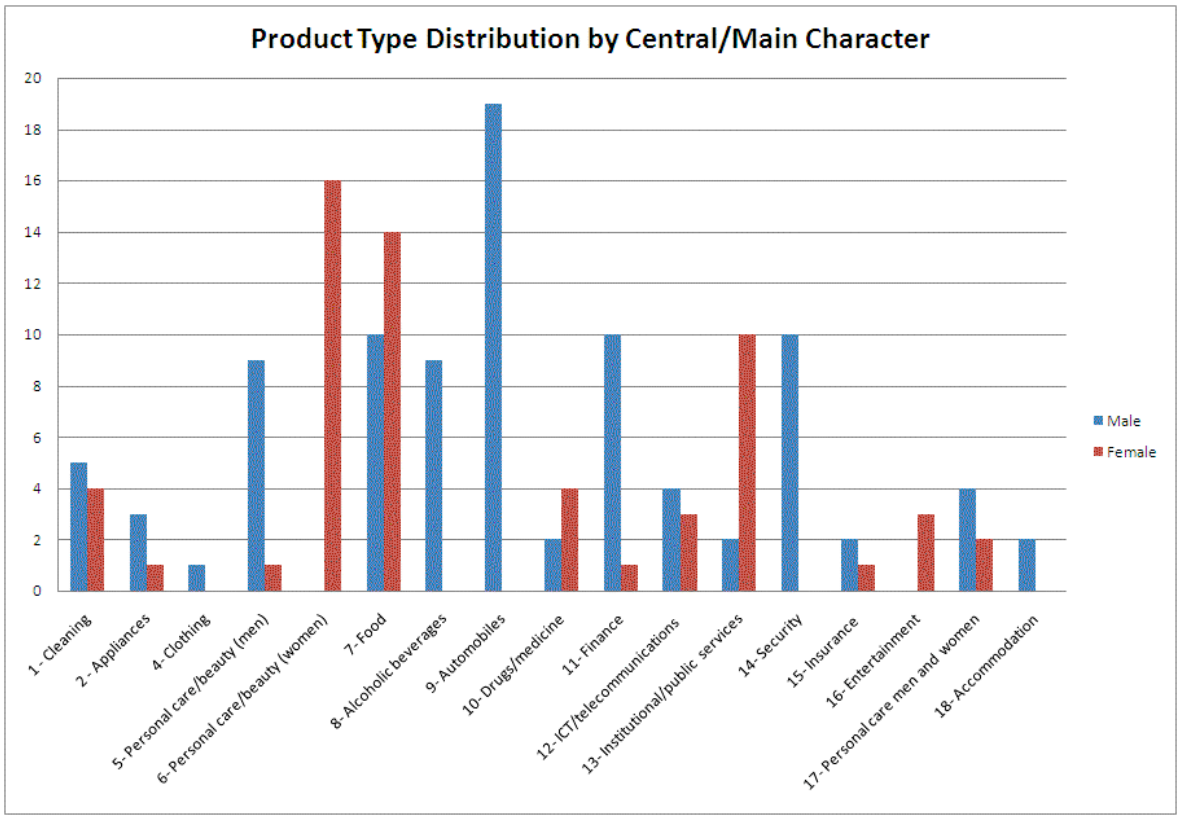


Figure 3: distribution by product type, a comparative view of female and male central/main characters

Interestingly male characters feature at a higher rate in comparison to female characters in cleaning, appliance, clothing, personal care/beauty for men, alcoholic beverages, automobile, finance, ICT/Telecommunications, security, insurance, personal care/beauty (men and women), and accommodation product types. This supports the second part of extrapolation 1 that male characters would be associated with automobile, financial services, security, and ICT/Telecommunications. Male characters did however feature at a lower rate in comparison to female characters in the following: personal care/beauty for women, food, drugs/medicine, institutional/public services, and entertainment products.

4.1.3 Supporting characters and product type

Significant differences between central/main characters and supporting characters were found. Supporting characters were segmented into five sub-categories namely male, female, kids, family, crowds, and none that was applicable only when there were no supporting characters present in the

advertisement. Figures 4 and 5 provide a breakdown of the distribution of supporting characters according to product type.

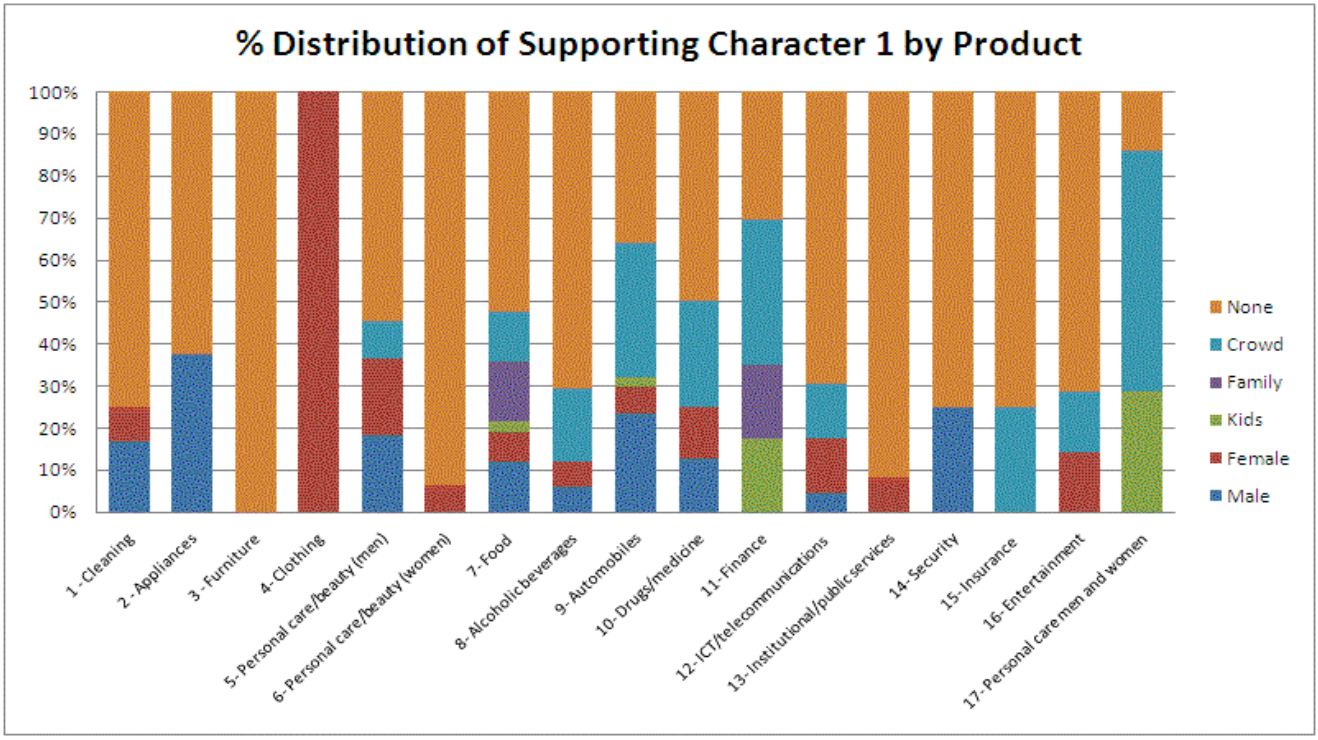


Figure 4: distribution by product type and supporting character 1

Male supporting characters featured at a higher rate than female supporting characters promoting the following product types: cleaning, appliances and food products. In comparison female-supporting characters featured at a higher rate in ICT/Telecommunications, institutional/public services, entertainment, and accommodation.

Figure 5 highlights the placement of supporting character 2 in relation to product type. Male central/main and supporting character 1 both illustrated higher percentages in cleaning and appliance advertisements, however Figure 5 in comparison is interestingly more in line with the first extrapolation. Female supporting characters 2 featured at a higher rate than male supporting characters 2 in cleaning with four percent and male characters at zero percent. The same change is seen in appliances with female supporting characters at 19 percent and male supporting characters not featuring in this category.

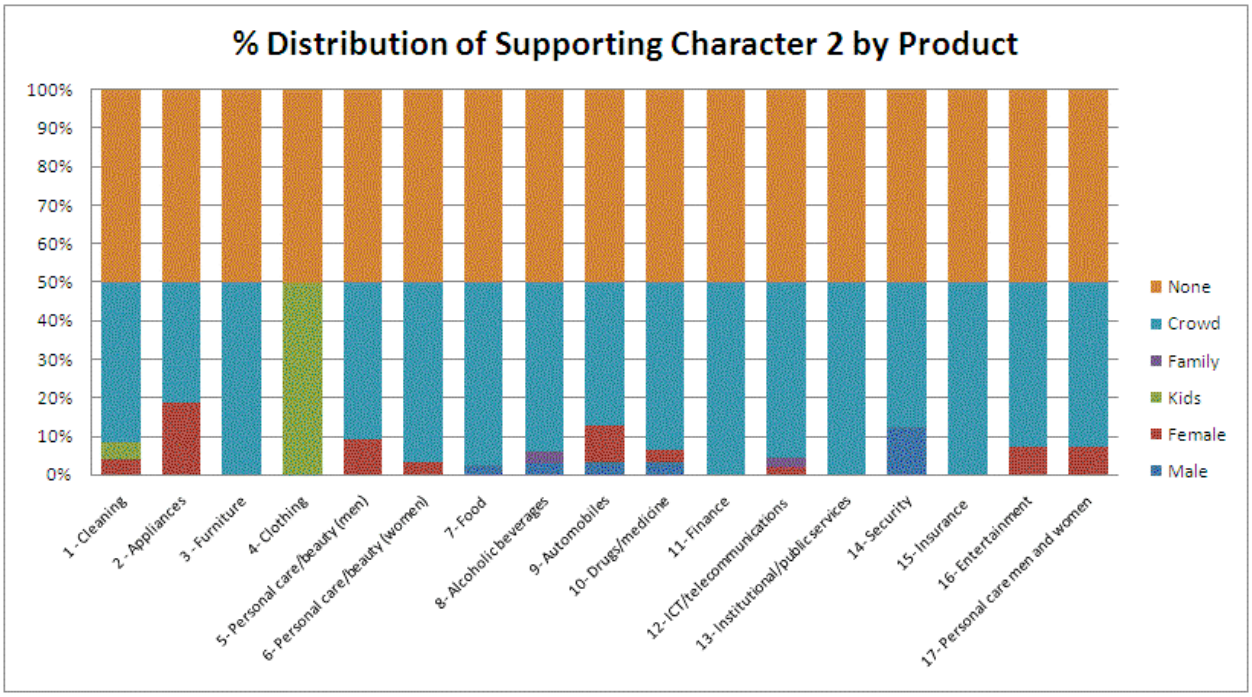


Figure 5: distribution by product type and supporting character 2

4.2 Occupation

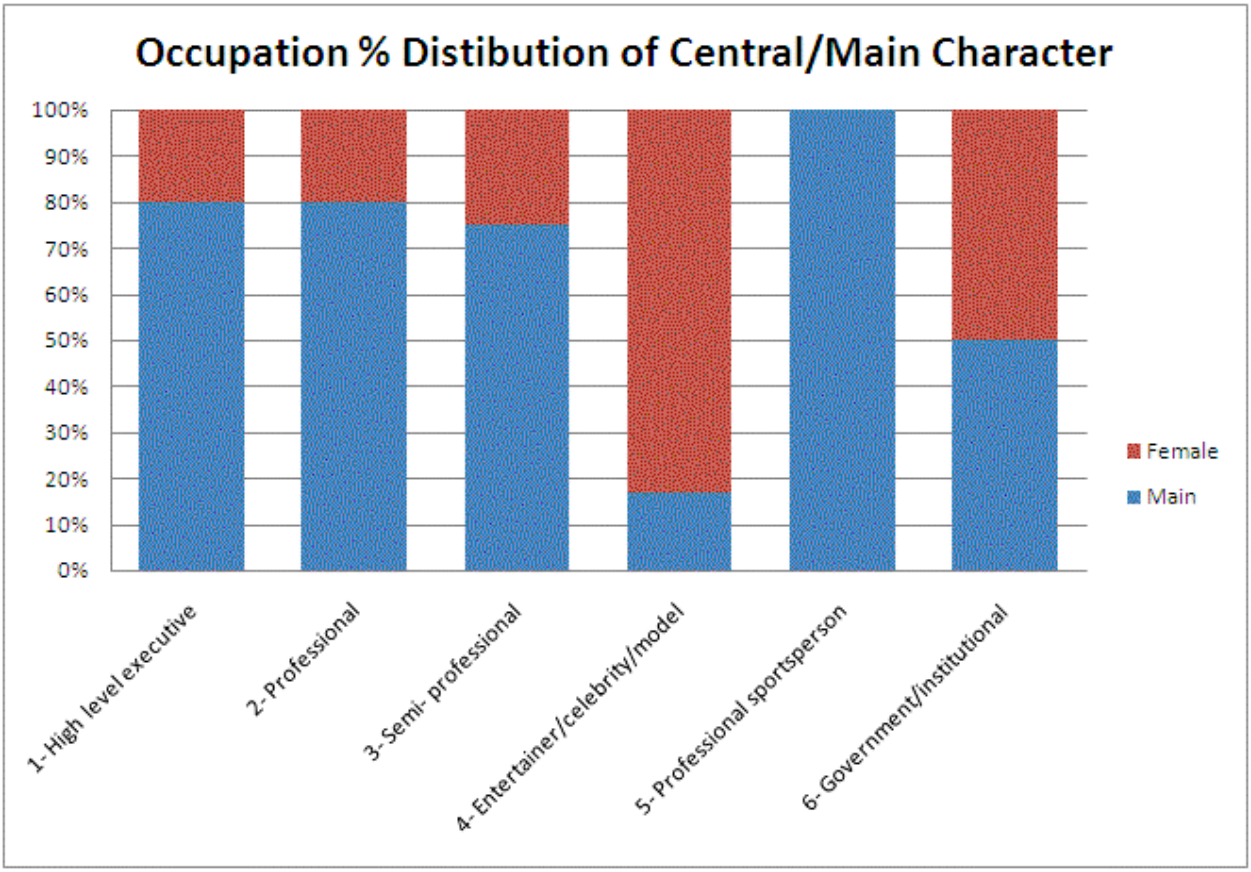


Figure 6: distribution by occupation, a comparative view of female and male central/main characters

Male central/main characters were portrayed in the more prestigious positions. Female central/main characters in comparison hardly occupied high-level executive or professional positions. Male central/main characters claimed higher percentages being portrayed as high-level executive (80%), professional (80%), semi-professional (75%), and professional sportsperson (100%). In comparison female central/main characters only occupied a higher percentage portraying entertainers, celebrities, and models (83%).

Extrapolation 2 assumed that female characters would be more likely to appear as entertainers, celebrities, or models. The data supports this extrapolation with female characters claiming 83 percent in comparison to male characters at only 17 percent. The same extrapolation assumed that male characters would be the most likely to occupy high-level executive, and professional occupations. The data supports this extrapolation with male

characters claiming 80 percent for both these categories. Male characters also claimed higher percentages being portrayed as semi-professionals (75%) and professional sportspersons (100%).

Similar trends are noted in Figures 7 and 8 when the findings are compared to Figure 6. Male supporting character 1 also occupied a higher percentage than female supporting characters for professional and semi-professional occupation categories.

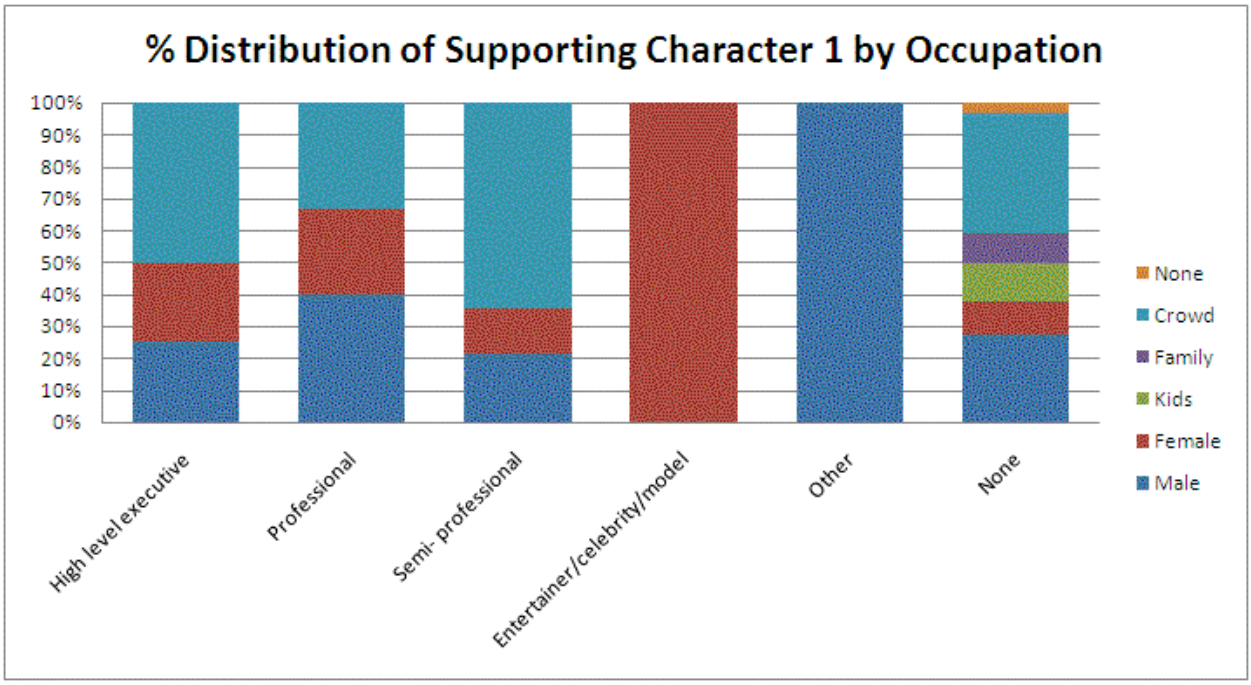


Figure 7: distribution by occupation and supporting character 1

Figure 6 and 7 both indicated that female characters dominated as entertainers, celebrities, and models. The findings for supporting character 2 however indicated completely different findings that do not correspond to Figures 6 and 7. Male characters as supporting character 2 were not portrayed as high-level executives, whereas female characters and crowds accounted for 25 percent each in this category. Female characters also had higher percentages for professional and semi-professional occupations and the percentage rate that female characters had originally claimed as entertainers, celebrities, and models dropped to seven percent with crowds claiming the highest percentage in this category with 43 percent. Female characters were more likely to be

portrayed in professional occupations in supporting roles and not as central/main characters

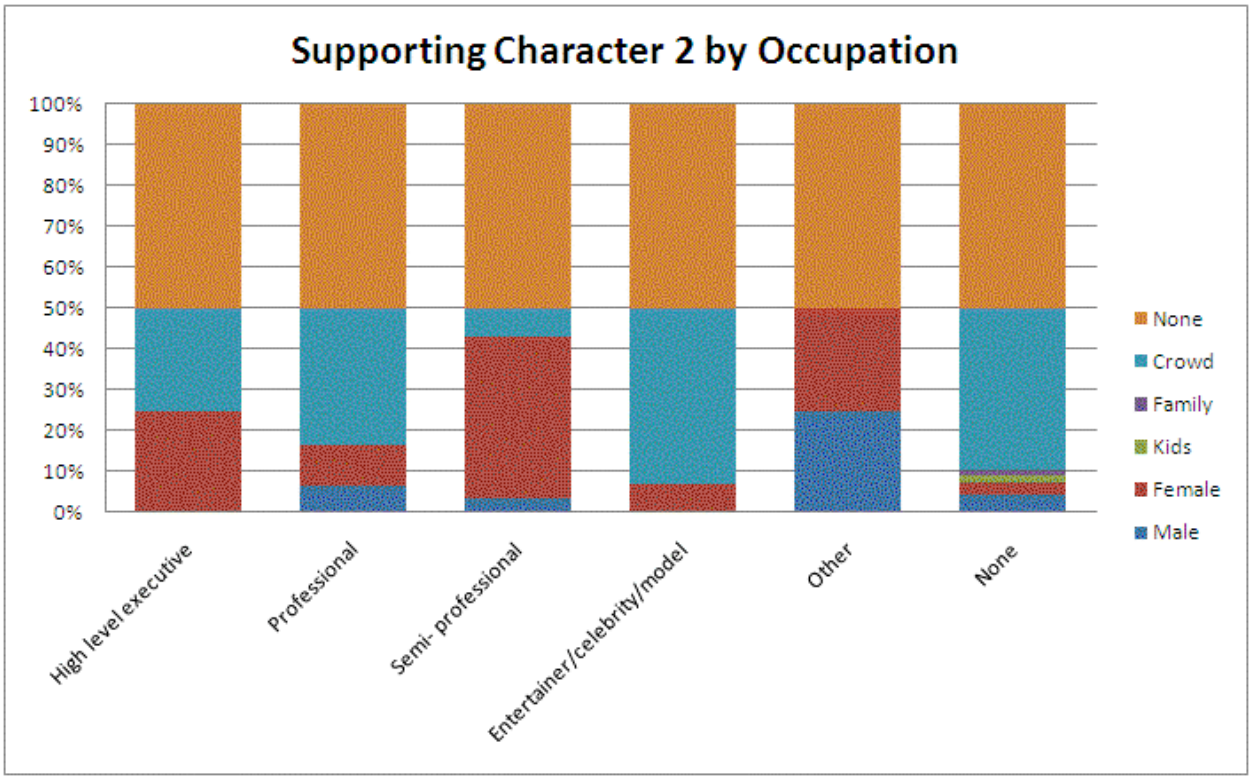


Figure 8: distribution by occupation and supporting character 2

Qualitative analysis

Out of all the advertisements that were analysed only two advertisements (Verimark Genesis and McCarthy) actually portrayed female characters clearly in a working role. The Verimark Genesis advertisement's opening shot depicted a female character worn out and tired at her desk implying that the character finds it difficult to find the energy to complete her work and is therefore in need of the product to provide her with a healthier diet. A male voice-over is used to discuss how the female character can improve her performance and lifestyle. Thus the female character lacks power and authority in the advertisement and authority is immediately transferred to the voice-over. The Standard Bank advertisement alludes to a female character in a working role however the only indicator was that the character was dressed in business attire. The Nederburg advertisement included two female characters as cleaners therefore as unskilled workers and not as professionals. None of the advertisements clearly portrayed female characters in high-level

executive, professional, and semi-professional positions. Male characters in contrast were portrayed as professional or semi-skilled workers. In the Nederburg advertisement for example the argument is made that making decisions around harvesting is a responsibility. The knowledge of nature and the industry is vital if the right decisions are to be made. These characteristics of responsibility and independent thought are stereotypically attributed to men and not to women. Both Nederburg advertisements featured pre-dominantly male characters alluding to harvesting and agriculture being an area traditionally associated with men. Female characters in the advertisements analysed were also portrayed as lacking independent thought, as needing guidance and support these are not characteristics that are associated with professional occupation positions. The quantitative findings support these findings in the following ways; first male characters were found to portray professional positions and in comparison female characters were found to only portray such positions as supporting characters.

4.3 Role associations with central/main characters

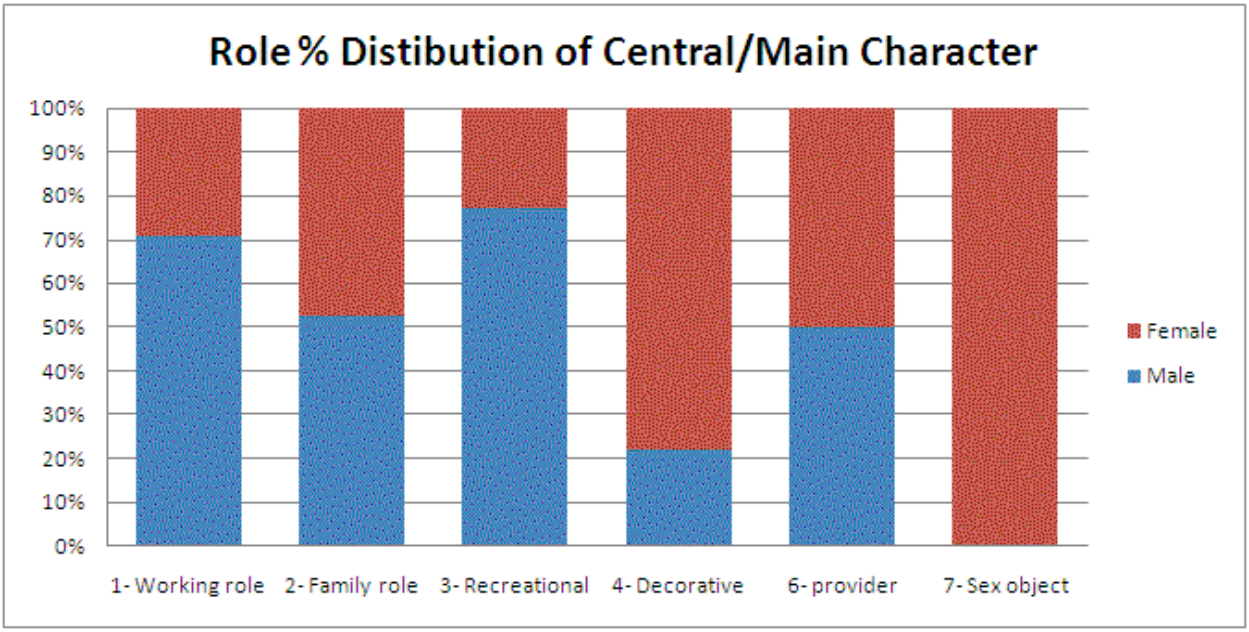


Figure 9: distribution by role, a comparative view of female and male central/main characters

Male characters were more likely to be featured in working roles (71%), and recreational roles (77%). Male characters were portrayed as professionals it therefore makes sense that male characters dominated in the working role.

Male characters were also the only characters to be portrayed as professional sportspersons this correlates with the findings here that male characters should be the characters to be predominantly portrayed in a recreational role.

Female characters received higher percentages for decorative (78%), and sex object roles (100%). The close proximity of the percentages for a family role was not supported by the literature reviewed. It was iniatially assumed that female characters would obtain a much higher percentage than 47 percent. Stereotypical roles would have meant that female characters would have featured at a higher percentage rate in this role furthermore it was interesting that male characters received a higher percentage (53%) for this role.

The third extrapolation was formulated with consideration of product association and occupation. It was assumed that female characters would be used to promote personal care/beauty, cleaning, furniture, and aplliance products and that female characters would be less likely to occupy working roles this would most likely place female characters in the home in a family role or oppositely as sex objects in decorative roles as entertainers celebrities or model. The data supports this extrapolation in so far that female characters were portrayed more frequently in decorative, and sex object roles; however female characters did not dominate in the family role because male characters were portrayed at a higher rate than female characters in this category.

This marks another significant shift away from stereotypical gender associations. Not only are male characters used to promote what is understood to be product types stereotypically associated with female characters but also that male characters occupy a family role at a higher rate than female charcaters. It was assumed that if female characters were to feature predominantly in the family role then male characters would feature predominantly in working and recreational roles. The data fully suppports this assumption as male characters claimed higher percentage rates than female characters for working (71%) and recreational (77%) roles.

4.3.1 Supporting characters and roles

Even as supporting characters male characters still claimed higher percentages in working and recreational roles. Female characters featured predominantly in family, decorative and sex object roles. The findings strongly support the third extrapolation.

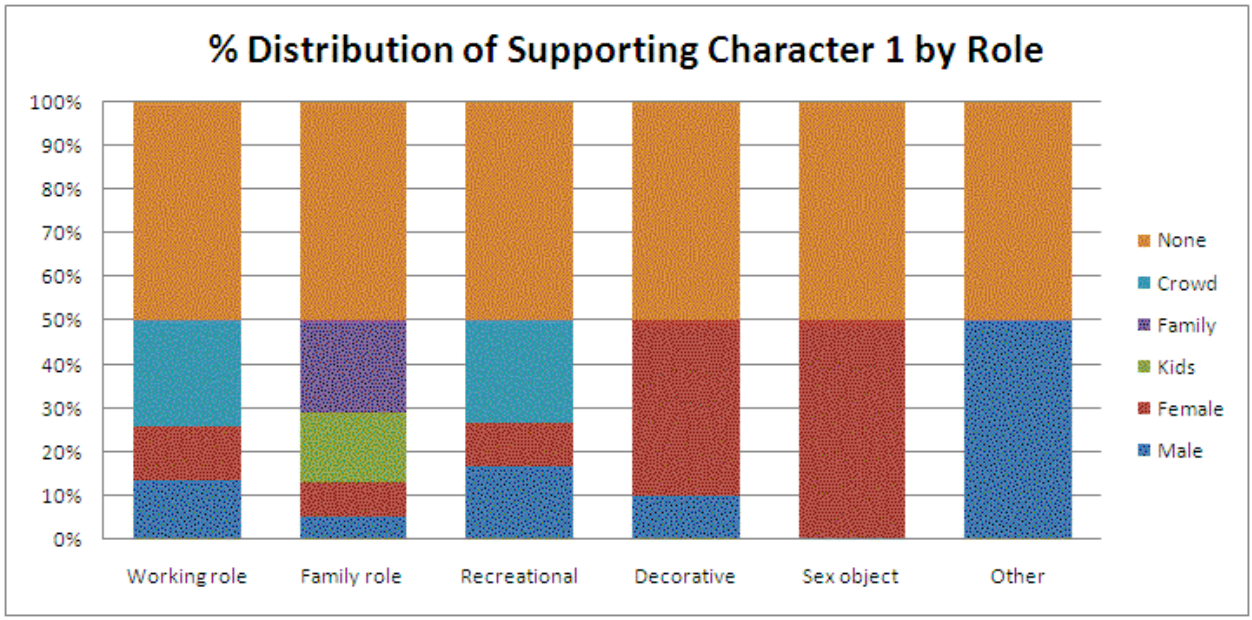


Figure 10: distribution by role and supporting character 1

Figure 9 revealed that male characters were more likely to appear in a family role at 53 percent in comparison to female character at 47 percent. Female supporting characters 1 featured at a higher percentage rate in the family role.

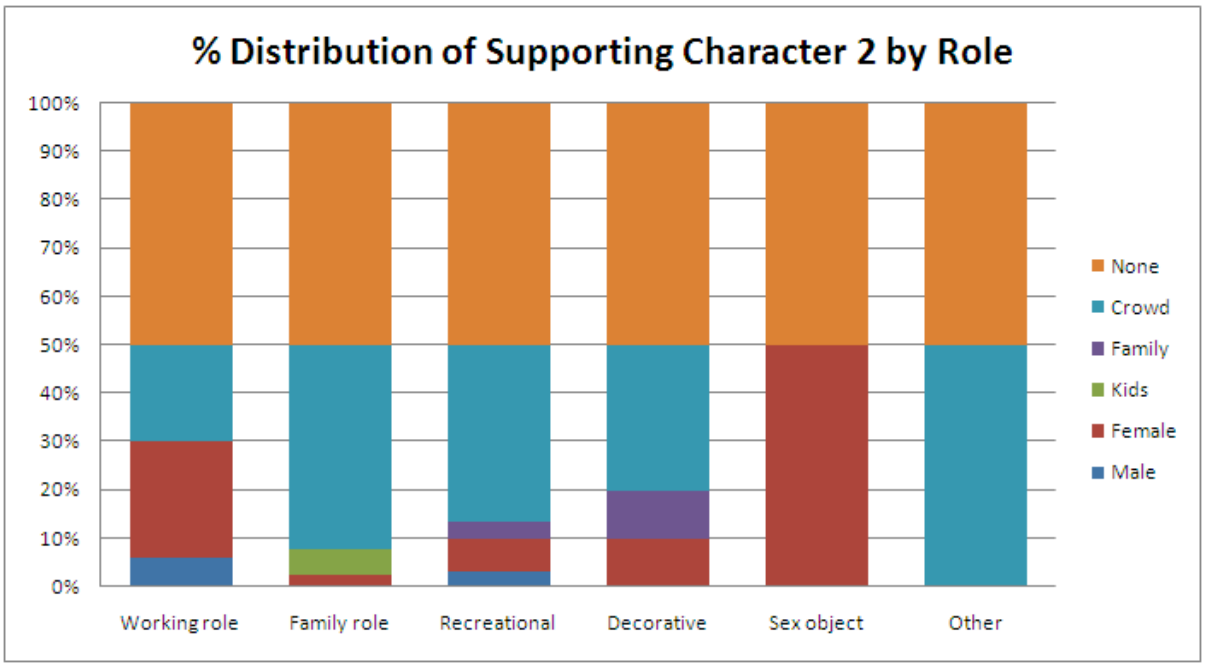


Figure 11: distribution by role and supporting character 2

It is interesting to notice how advertisers represent supporting characters in opposition to central/main characters. It was not surprising that female characters in Figure 11 dominated in working and recreational roles. First it is a supporting role, second it is at low percentages, and third and last female characters still dominated in decorative and sex object roles. These findings indicate no significant changes in the portrayals of role.

Qualitative analysis

Indirectly male characters take on the role of providers by being voice-overs that offer guidance, direction, support, and information. There were three clear examples of females characters portrayed as sex objects and two clear examples of females characters in a decorative role. The Axe advertisement is a prime example of the objectification of women. The advertisement deliberately portrays the female character as a sex object. The character is dressed in a revealing mini dress and demonstrates how to unhook a bra to male onlookers. The Sprite Zero advertisement also depicted the female character as only wearing under garments and there is also an element of voyeurism involved in this advertisement although it is not as obviously applied as in the Axe advertisement. The Valentino Rock n Rose advertisement also portrays the female character as a sex object. This

conclusion is reached based on the female character being bare chest and clutching rose petals to her bare chest, her hair is tousled and has an out of bed look, and she looks seductively at the camera. All these factors contribute to the female character being portrayed as a sex object. The decorative role is more difficult to identify, but conducting a qualitative analysis makes it clearer why female characters were coded in the quantitative study as fulfilling the decorative role. In both the L'Oreal and the Verimark Genesis advertisements the female characters serve the function of demonstrating how the product works yet they are following the instructions of the voice-over and in effect they serve to decorate the 'set'.

4.4 Central/main characters and setting/environment

Figure 12 illustrates the settting or environment that the advertisement was filmed in. In most cases the advertisement will be produced on set or with the use of graphic animation. This was taken into account after the pilot study was conducted additional sub-categories had to be added onto the original coding sheet to accommodate the various settings and environments that advertisements took place in. The findings displayed in Figure 12 will be used to respond to the fourth extrapolation, looking at the findings for setting and environment. The assumption was made that if female characters are assigned to the domestic setting male characters will appear predominently in the professional and natural/outdoor environment. This in turn is linked to the the third extrapolation: male characters are more likely to appear in working and recreational roles.

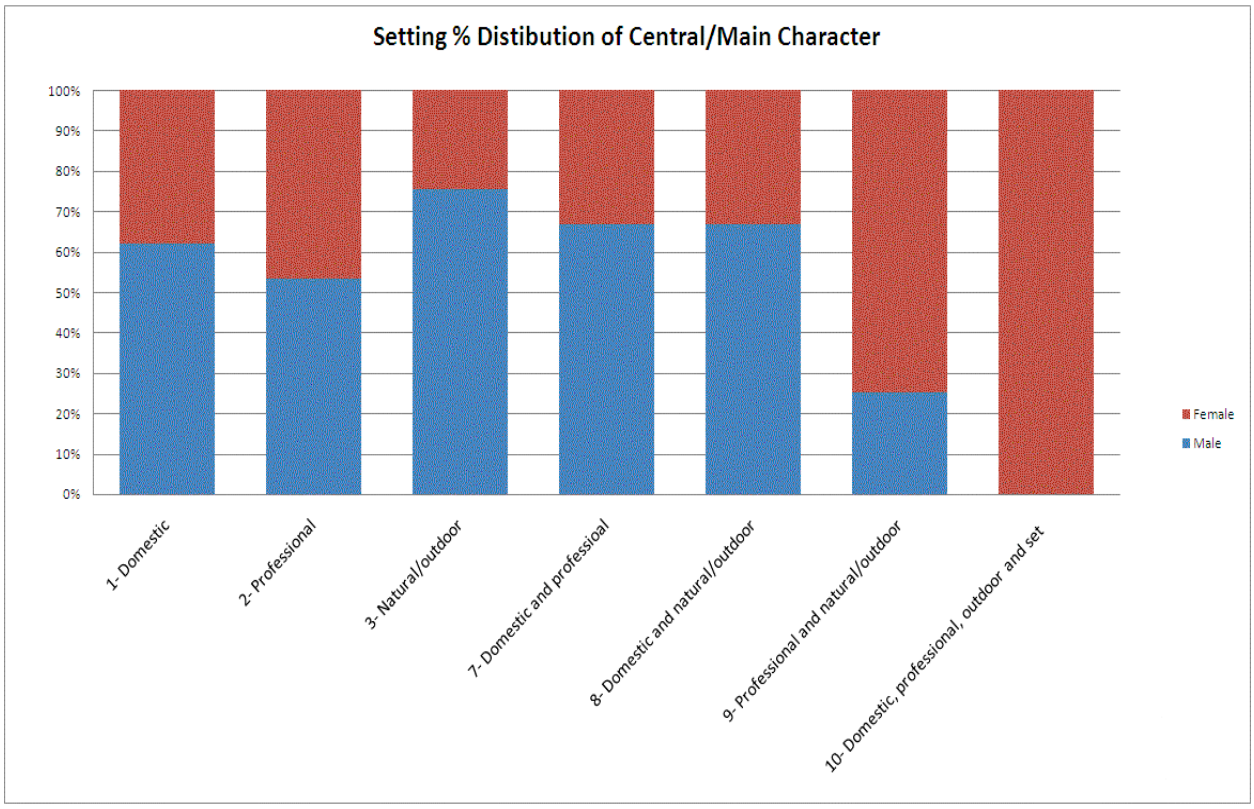


Figure 12: distribution by setting/environment, a comparative view of female and male central/main characters

The percentages allocated for male and female characters in a domestic setting are of particular interest. Male characters claimed a higher percentage at 62 percent than female characters at 38 percent; these findings do not support extrapolation 4 (female characters are more likely to appear in a domestic setting). The fact that male characters occupied a family role at a higher rate than female characters must be taken into account because it then makes sense that male characters would be featured in a domestic setting more frequently than female characters. Female characters appeared at a higher percentage in the combination setting/environment categories; professional and natural/outdoor and completely dominated in the combination domestic, professional, outdoors and set. Male characters claimed a higher percentage (53%) for appearing in the individual categories of professional setting, and natural/outdoor setting (75%). This relates to male characters appearing predominantly in working and recreational roles.

4.5 Voice-overs

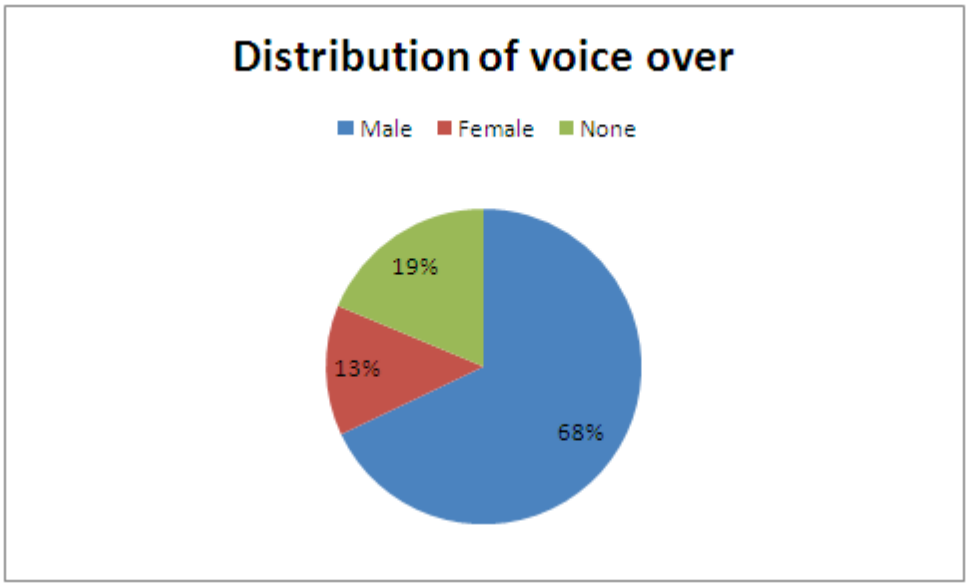
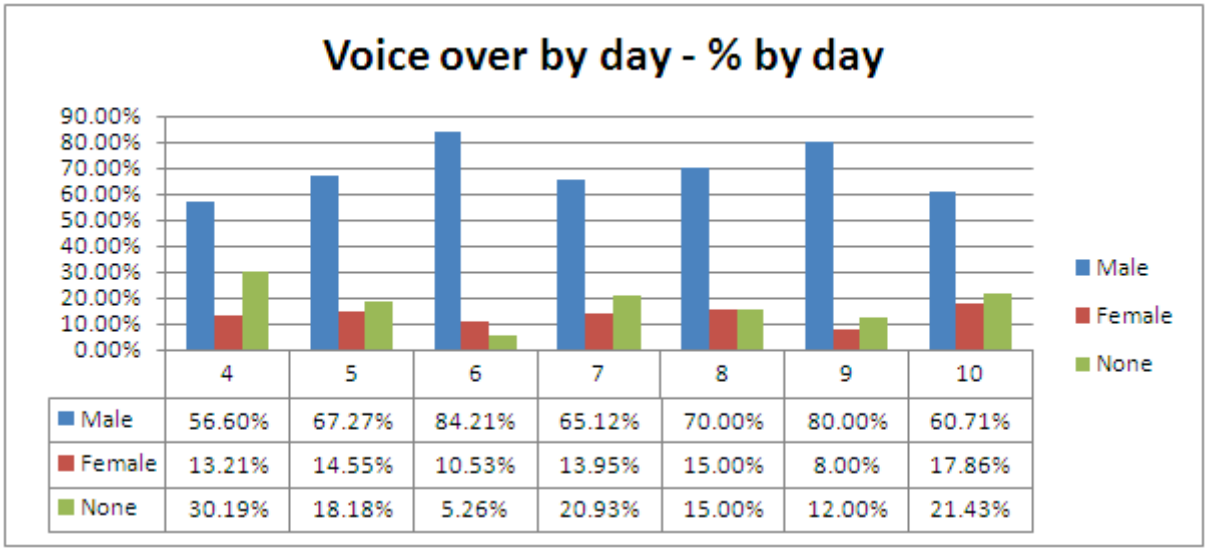


Figure 13: distribution by voice-over

Figure 13 immediately highlights the fact that male characters dominated as voice-overs. Male characters contributed to 68 percent of total voice-overs across the sample. Female characters in comparison only accounted for 13 percent. An advertisement was more likely not to have a voice-over (19%) than to have a female voice-over.



	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Male	56.60%	67.27%	84.21%	65.12%	70.00%	80.00%	60.71%
Female	13.21%	14.55%	10.53%	13.95%	15.00%	8.00%	17.86%
None	30.19%	18.18%	5.26%	20.93%	15.00%	12.00%	21.43%

Figure 14: distribution by voice-over across the sample

Figure 14 provides a more comprehensive breakdown of the distribution of voice-overs over the ten days on which the sample of advertisements was

drawn. Male voice-overs dominated across the ten day period, followed by advertisements with no voice-over and finaly female voice-overs at a considerably lower rate.

The findings fully support the fifth and final extrapolation. This extrapolation assumed that male characters would be the more likely to occupy positions of authority as voice-overs. Oppositely female characters would not feature at a high rate as voice-overs. Both figures serve to illustrate that male characters are more likely to be used as voice-overs than female characters.

Qualitative analysis

The qualitative analysis illustrated the importance that the voice-over serves in an advertisement. Voice-overs are used to bring clarity to the advertisement and to make sure that the message intended is delivered. The Allan Gray advertisement for example used a complicated concept that would not make sense if the voice-over did not explain the context of the advertisement. The majority of advertisements that were analysed included male voice-overs; female characters were only used in four of the advertisements furthermore the quantitative analysis showed that an advertisement was more likely to not have a voice than to have a female voice-over. Possible connotations of this are that a voice-over carries with it a certain amount of responsibility and power. For example in the Nutriday advertisement the male voice-over is the authoritative active figure informing the female character what aspects in her life need fixing and how it can be fixed. In this particular advertisement the voice-over is an active element and the actual character that the audience can see is passive. Another example of this is the L'Oreal advertisement in which the male voice-over discusses the complexities of the product and explains how the product should be applied. The female character serves as a demonstration model illustrating how to use the product as the male voice-over dictates instructions. The female character in this sense does not serve a purpose other than to demonstrate how the product should be used, the actual information and facts about the product are provided by the male voice-overs.

4.6 Qualitative findings

The following section provides a more detailed account of the findings related only to the qualitative analysis. In the previous section a qualitative analysis was also provided on specific points, however this section serves only discuss the more in-depth analysis of a smaller sample of the advertisements.

Nederburg (4 June 2007)

Product type: alcoholic beverages
Central/main character: Male
Supporting character: crowds
Voice-over: none

A male character portraying a harvester walks along the side of the road and salutes a male character driving a tractor in the opposite direction. The shot changes and two female characters portraying cleaners are shown cleaning a farmhouse. The shot changes again and the harvester is seen walking through a field passing two groups of workers, the first group portraying farm workers are only male characters and the second group containing both male (four male characters) and female characters (two female characters). The harvester progresses to a wine field and tastes a grape, stands up and shakes his head. This is to signify that the grapes are not ready for harvesting. The tractor and the workers begin departing to emphasise this point. A bottle of Nederburg slightly askew is placed against a black background and the harvester straightens the bottle to show how dedicated to perfection they are at Nederburg.
Central/main character: *Everyone here at Nederburg can tell you a different story about these old vines, but my story begins the day we decide to harvest then the clock starts and I have three months to create something I must live with for the rest of my life. One day too soon or too late can be the difference between a good wine and a great wine, but this piece of Paarl valley has taught me one thing it will be when nature is ready and that won't be today.*

The advertisement displays some interesting gender stereotypes when it comes to occupation. Majority of the workers are male and only two female characters forming part of a group of workers are seen as part of the harvesting team. The only clear

indication of female characters as workers is seen in the shot depicting the farm house with two female characters cleaning; this being informal unskilled labour. The central/main character is the harvester and the responsibility that is placed on him to decide when the grapes are ready to harvest is emphasised when he says, "*I have three months to create something I must live with for the rest of my life. One day too soon or too late can be the difference between a good wine and a great wine"*. This role has not been assigned to a female character as stereotypical associations infer that female characters are often depicted as lost in thought, in need of guidance and not capable of fulfilling positions that require independent thought. This also makes inferences to why female characters featured at such a low rate in a working role or even in professional positions.

Nederburg (4 June 2007)

Product type: Alcoholic beverages
Central/main character: Male
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: none

A farmhouse is shown with its lights on set during the evening. The shots alternate between the vineyard and the farmhouse. A male character portraying a harvester walks among the barrels of wine in a cellar and decants a glass of wine from one of the barrels. The harvester goes through the motions of swirling the wine and finally tasting it.

Central/main character: *At Nederburg the end of the day doesn't mean the end of the work crushed grapes don't stop fermenting at 5 o clock, barrels don't stop shedding their ancient flavours its like natures doing her bit too without anyone really knowing she's here… except me someone's got to keep an eye on her.*

A bottle of Nederburg slightly askew is placed against a black background and the harvester straightens the bottle to show how dedicated to perfection they are at Nederburg.

This advertisement builds on to the concept of the first Nederburg advertisement. It is much shorter and does not explain the entire concept of a harvester using his knowledge and respect of nature to decide when is the best time to produce the perfect wine. This advertisement unlike the first does not include any female characters and

again the message that is communicated is that wine making takes time, precision, and responsibility, character traits not stereotypically associated with women.

McCarthy (5 June 2007)

Product type: automobiles
Central/main character: couple (male and female)
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: male

The opening shot depicts a male character sitting on the couch dressed in casual attire, and watching television. A female character, dressed in business attire and carrying a bunch of flowers enters the room.
Male character: *hi how was your day?* Continues to watch television

Female character: *It was just meeting after meeting.* Places the bunch of flowers down and reaches for the vase on the counter "*You won't believe what happened in the Maxwell case"*

The male character closes his eyes in annoyance in response to what the female character is saying and continues to change the channel.

Female character: *how they get away with it I don't know…so by the way did you find me a new car?*

Male character: *oh you won't believe my day that's why I'm so tired*
A flashback scene follows where the male character is seen dressed in the same clothes, sitting on the couch searching the McCarthy website.

Male voice-over: *thousands of new and used vehicles each with a trust worthy McCarthy guarantee waiting for you on the Internet or on the phone*.

A white background appears with McCarthy details
The scene shifts back to the couple, the female character sits next to the male character with a glass of wine, which the male character takes away from her. The female character looks on in shocked amazement

Male character: *ooh what a day*

Male voice-over: Trust McCarthy call a car to make it so simple

Although the advertisement is trying to emphasise the simplicity of using the McCarthy website in order to find a new or pre-used car the underlying message is still that men are associated with automobiles and women are not. It is also interesting that the female character walks in with a bunch of flowers; women are considered closer to nature. Other connotative meanings that can be drawn from this advertisement is that the female character has a professional occupation and is the chief support system in the household, however she still needs to rely on the male character to arrange a car for her.

Glade (4 June 2007)

Product type: cleaning
Central/main character: male
Supporting character 1: male
Voice-over: female

The opening shot is of a dull looking male character driving a car

Female voice-over: *using an ordinary car freshener can make you feel ordinary, instead use new glade auto sport and glade ladies sport for designs and fragrances that make your whole car reflect how different you really are. New glade auto sport and lady sport. Glade how refreshing.*

When the word *instead* is used the music in the background changes to a more upbeat sound and a new brighter coloured car with a youthful male character dancing as he is driving is shown.

Glade (4 June 2007)

Product type: cleaning
Central/main character: female
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: female

The female character walks around a house spraying glade, as she sprays light pink rose petals appear and begin to float around the room.

Female voice-over: *for a fragrance that lasts and lasts introducing glade air infusions infuses the air with a subtle blend of national scents with ultra last technology so the fragrance lasts up to one hour.*

Here it is interesting that with cleaning products a female voice-over is used, yet the quantitative findings show that an advertisement is more likely to not have a voice-over than to have a female voice-over. The first advertisement that promotes glade for the car has only male characters, yet a female voice-over is used. A cleaning product is stereotypically associated with female characters in advertising content. Another point to consider is that the product is specifically about fragrance and making a space smell better, this is also associated with women.

The second advertisement features a female character as the central/main character and is set in a domestic setting/environment that is another stereotype with women. Over and above this the use of rose petals appearing wherever the product is sprayed also lends itself towards femininity.

Sensodyne (10 June 2007)

Product type: drugs/medicine
Central/main character: male
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: female

The first shot is a black background with the following words *A dentist talks about sensitive teeth*. The next shot includes a dentist's theatre including a shot of an overhanging operating light. The male character is portraying a dentist.

Central/main character: *sensitivity is a very common problem influenced by our diet that we take in*

A black background appears again with the following words: *What does he recommend?*

Central/main character: *I've been recommending Sensodyne toothpaste for many years its been clinically proven to reduce sensitivity. With regular use of Sensodyne you just bring back the smile again.*

Female voice-over: *Sensodyne recommended selling price now R9.99*

Drugs and medicines are always interesting to analyse as a product type because they usually rely on a factual approach to illustrate how the product would be of benefit to the audience. Sometimes an emotional approach is used and this usually involves the use of a female character portraying a mother with an ill child. These approaches

carry interesting connotative meanings. The two examples selected for analysis are prime examples of advertisements that make use of a factual approach. In this advertisement a male character portraying a dentist is used. This is done deliberately as the product being advertised if for teeth, the dentist is used to add credibility to the product. This argument is strengthened when the dentist says that he has been recommending the product for many years. The factual approach is also strengthened by the fact that the dentist is wearing a white coat and the advertisement is set in a dentist's room. No female characters are used in this advertisement except for the female voice-over, yet no scientific or factual argument is made by the voice-over with regards to the actual performance of the product. It is the male character that makes reference to diet and sensitivity of the teeth. The voice-over usually serves the important function of explaining the context of the advertisement or adding additional information yet in this advertisement the voice-over is used to provide the selling price of the product.

Bio Strath (5 June 2007)

Product type: drugs/medicine
Central/main character: none
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: male

Images of blue and yellow pie charts are shown that indicate the percentages for each of the finings that the voice-over states. These colours are used because it is the colour of Bio Strath's packaging. A male voice-over is used to discuss Bio Strath and the findings based on an international study.

Male voice-over: *A study in Switzerland to test Bio Strath shows astonishing result. 85% of the children showed improved concentration. 88% of the children showed a healthier immune system and a staggering 90% handled learning disabilities better. This is the power of Bio Strath 100% natural with no side effects. Your choice is obvious think about it.*

This advertisement includes a stronger factual or scientific argument than the Sensodyne advertisement. This is achieved by first making reference to a study that took place in Switzerland. This immediately adds credibility to the product. It is

reassuring to know that the product has been tested as well as the fact that this study has taken place in a First World country. Another factor that contributes to the factual approach is the use of visuals. The voice-over does discuss what ever appears on the screen but the audience member also has the visuals in form of pie charts illustrating the findings of the study. In this advertisement no female characters are used. This might be because no emotional argument is made. The approach in this advertisement is clearly a factual one. The connotation is that women are not associated with research.

Nutriday (4 June 2007)

Product type: food
Central/main character: female
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: male

A female character lands on a green field with both arms out stretched in an attempt to balance. A ringing clock, mug, computer, and iron fall on one hand tipping her balance. The screaming of children can be heard in the background.
Male voice-over: *Life can make it difficult to get the balanced nutrition that you and your family need. Let Nutriday help restore it; it has the goodness and nutrients of milk and nutri-plus cultures making it a convenient and tasty way to help give you and your family the daily nutrition to lead a more balanced life. Why have an ordinary day when you can have a Nutriday?*
As the male voice-over discusses how Nutriday can add balance to your life a container of Nutriday lands on the female character's free hand and she is now able to regain her balance. Images of the female character and her family are shown eating Nutriday and then enjoying a day outdoor setting/environment.

Food products are stereotypically usually associated with female characters yet the quantitative findings indicated a lower association than was initially assumed. Yet this advertisement has some interesting points worth discussing and serves to illustrate how female characters are portrayed when they are used in food advertisements. The female character leads an imbalanced life filled with the responsibilities of managing a home this can be deduced from the kids in the background, the clock ringing indicating that she has a schedule, a mug that can be associated with the kitchen and

cooking, and an iron that can be associated with household chores. The female character is also depicted as unable to manage her life. This is a popular stereotype perpetuating the idea that women are not capable of leading a life in the public and private spheres. A woman is traditionally associated with the home and being a wife and mother; this argument is strengthened by the appearance of husband and two children at the end of the advertisement. There is also the relationship between food and women it is the woman's responsibility to make sure that in terms of diet her family is well nourished. The underlying message in this advertisement is that women need assistance and support to manage their lives. The voice-over is male and this can be interpreted as the male providing the female with the support that she needs. Again this is an example of active male and passive female.

Sprite (4 June 2007)

Product type: food
Central/main character: female
Supporting character: male
Voice-over: none

A female character dressed in her under garments stands in front of her wardrobe, holding a can of Sprite Zero in one hand while she uses her free hand to search through her outfits. It is obvious from the numerous outfits that she holds up and then discards that she cannot make up her mind. Outside a male character sits in his car and hoots, the female character crosses to the window and stares down at the male character who points at his wristwatch to emphasise that they are running late. The female character rolls her eyes and continues to hold up various outfits in front of her trying to make a decision. The male character hoots again this time for much longer. The female character looks around annoyed, leaves her Sprite Zero on a table, grabs her bag and marches out of the house and to the waiting car, dressed only in under garments and a pair of stilettos. The male character looks on in shock as the female character gets into the car and says, *"lets go"*
The slogan: *Zero sugar, Zero Limits* appears on the screen

Although this advertisement is at first glance trying to illustrate how drinking Sprite Zero can give you the courage to live life without limits there are subtle nuances of gender stereotypes. First the female character is dressed only in under garments and

leans towards a decorative or a sex object role, this is emphasised by her obvious obsession with physical appearance as looking good in the right outfit trumps being on time as well as not keeping her male companion waiting. There is blatant disregard for social etiquette in the rolling of her eyes when the male character points to his wristwatch attempting to communicate that they are either running late or already late. There is also reference to the fact that the female character cannot make up her mind and is therefore not capable of making a decision. The fact that she cannot decide what to wear also leans towards the fact that she did not prepare in advance and is therefore also not dependable. In comparison the male character obviously managed to dress and be at the female character's house in time.

Allan Gray (5 June 2007)

Product type: finance
Central/main character: Male
Supporting character 1: Male
Supporting character 2: crowd
Voice-over: male

The advertisement is shot in black and white. The central/main character is male portraying a man who upon hearing the dripping of rain comes to his netted door frame and peers out and up at the sky. Confirming that it has rained the male character rushes back into his house and hurries out to his van carrying a bag. The male character begins driving and passes first another male character riding his bicycle that also appears to be in a rush, passes by a house where a couple are rushing to open their gate and get into their car. The central/main character progresses into the town and crowds are seen leaving shops getting into their cars or rushing down the street. A chef is left holding two plates of food in his hand with no customers left in the restaurant. The focus comes back to the central/main character still driving out of the town headings towards the hills on the outskirts of the town, passing a couple pushing a wheelbarrow hurriedly in the same direction. The central/main character parks the van, gets out, and runs up the hill. All the towns people it appears are arriving and running up the hill stopping when they spot a rainbow which is the only shot in the advertisement that is in colour. Once the town's people believe that they have found the end of the rainbow they stop and look anxiously around. A supporting character points and shouts out "*There it is*". The characters stop and then begin to pursue the end of the rainbow again. It becomes clear at this point that they are searching for the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow; this is why the central/main character carried a bag with him and that is why the town's people were all in rush because they wanted to beat each other to the gold.

A male-voice: *Some people spend their lives chasing instant wealth; we've learnt that patience is handsomely rewarded*

The central/main character is male and so is the supporting character as well as the voice-over this serves to emphasise the quantitative findings of product type and gender association. Hardly any female characters are focused on in the advertisement

with the exception of the two female characters depicted as part of heterosexual couple. Once again the voice-over serves the most important function of explaining the meaning behind the advertisement.

Standard Bank (5 June 2007)

Product type: finance
Central/main character: none
Voice-over: male

The advertisement includes a series of images of characters accompanied by a male voice-over. The opening shot depicts four male and one female character dressed in business attire sitting on deck chairs on board a MSC Carrier

Male voice-over: *When all is said and done you don't look back on the customised financial solutions, you celebrate new opportunities, you don't worry about multiple time zone challengers or engage in optimal strategy sessions, you think big.*

The next shot is of an aeroplane landing during the evening and the lights of the runway are shining. The next shot is of an empty boardroom with computers and a fish tank. On the wall there are four clocks each with a different time this seems to tie in well with voice-overs reference to multiple time zones. The following shot shows a crowd of people dressed in business suits at a long table in a restaurant enjoying sushi. A male character stands up from the table and greets another male character that has just arrived; both males are dressed in business attire.

The final shot is of a dam wall with water flowing out.

Male voice-over: *Its not time sacrifices made that matter its getting the job done and while some say here's to successful and timelessly completed financial projects we simply ask what's next*

The advertisement ends with a blue screen and the Standard Bank name and the slogan: *inspired, motivated, involved*.

In this advertisement there are more male characters than female characters. When female characters are used they are depicted as part of group or crowd. More concentration is placed on the aeroplane, empty boardroom, and dam wall than on female characters. Emphasis is placed on making the male characters noticeable. In the opening shot one female character is placed in-between four male characters and in the restaurant scene only the two male characters greeting are focused on.

It was assumed that female characters would not feature significantly in finance advertisements. This is more significant in the Allan Gray advertisement than in the Standard Bank advertisement, however even though female characters were used in both advertisements they actually had no significant role. The quantitative findings indicated that male characters featured at a higher rate than female characters as central/main characters in finance advertisements. This was anticipated because financial issues are traditionally understood to be part of the public sphere and thus associated with men. The voice-overs were also male and it must be noted that without the voice-overs both advertisements would not have made sense.

Verimark Genesis (10 June 2007)

Product type: home appliance
Central/main character: female
Supporting character: none
Voice-over: male

A female character is shown in the office, her head resting on her desk looking worn out. The male voice-over begins to discuss the benefits of using the Genesis Nutri-Plus. The female character is shown demonstrating how to use the product and makes various juices and alcoholic beverages as well as easy to prepare food. These images are synchronised with what the male voice-over is discussing.

Male voice-over: *feeling tired and worn out? Boost your health today with the new Genesis Nutri-Plus from Verimark. The only commercial quality blender that converts to a high extraction juicer instantly for the freshest vitamin rich juice and with more than one horse power and quadtech cutting system you'll crush ice for delicious sorbet or even refreshing cocktails so now you can whip up tasty meals with revitalising juice. Enjoy healthy living get your complete Genesis Nutri-Plus from your nearest Verimark store now.*

The opening shot that portrays a workingwoman tired and worn out has the connotation that work leaves women worn out and that they need assistance of some sort to feel more energised. This product is the Verimark Genesis that promises to help provide the character with energy rich, nutritious food. This is similar to the Nutriday advertisement where the female character requires assistance to have a balanced life.

The female character is also used to demonstrate how the product works and this like the L'Oreal advertisement that will be discussed below uses the female character as a demonstration model. As the male voice-over dictates and discusses the various aspects of the product the female character just follows the instructions and illustrates how the product works and what the product can do. Again this is another illustration of active male, passive female. The female character does not have any control in the advertisement.

Axe (4 June 2007)

Product type: Personal care and beauty for men
Central/main character:
Supporting character 1: crowd of male characters
Supporting character 2: Female
Voice-over: none

The first shot is of nine male characters sitting in an aeroplane, they appear relaxed. The characters either have a look of awe, surprise, shock, or pleasure on their faces. The next shot shows a female character portraying a flight attendant however she is wearing a mini dress that reveals her cleavage and her hair is left open. The female flight attendant is illustrating how to unhook a bra.

Female character : *Please pay attention to our special requirements.*
Introducing the new future of air travel…axe jet

This is a perfect example of the objectification of women. The female character is dressed in a revealing mini dress and is illustrating how to unhook a bra. The female character does not have any role but that of sex object and decorative role. The concept of the advertisement is that the airline is offering what men want, yet the concept is degrading. This is a simple argument of women are sex objects and this places women in one box.

Valentino rock n rose (4 June 2009)

Product type: Personal care and beauty for women
Central/main character: Female
Supporting characters: none
Voice-over: female

A female character portraying a model for the perfume is seen dancing in a loft-like-apartment. The female character moves to sit on a chair she is topless and clutches pink rose petals to her bare chest, her stomach is exposed, her hair is tousled and she stares directly at the camera.

Female voice-over: *Rock n Rose, the new fragrance from Valentino*

This advertisement depicts the female character as a sex object in a decorative role. The female character has a bare chest that she covers with rose petals and stares seductively at the screen. The advertisement uses a female voice-over however it is just to repeat the name of the perfume. This is another example of the objectification of women in advertising content.

L'Oreal (4 June 2007)

Product type: Personal care and beauty for women
Central/main character: Female
Supporting characters: None
Voice-over: male

Actress Andie McDowell portrays the central/main character and is used to endorse the product. The advertisement depicts the female character discussing the state of her skin and how to avoid wrinkles and aging in the eye area. The advertisement has a male voice-over making a scientific argument.

Female character: *At the blink of an eye it happens, the sagging all those signs of aging*
The female character touches her eye area to draw attention to the wrinkles in her eye area and to emphasise what has just been said.
Male voice-over: *Introducing new L'Oreal Revitalift double lifting eye. Double action technology in just one step, enriched with Pro-retinol A and Latexyl it reduces the appearance of wrinkles and tautens skin in the upper lifting eye*
A bottle of the product appears on screen, alongside the bottle the words "NEW" in capital letters and red to emphasise that it is a new product and also implies benefit. The female character illustrates where and how to apply the cream.
Male voice-over: *New L'Oreal Revitalift*
Female character: *We're worth it*

The scientific argument is made by the male voice-over even though the female character is the on-screen spokesperson. The female character to some extent is objectified and serves the purpose of a demonstration model. What is depicted here is a classic active male, passive female scenario, in which the male is actively explaining the complex nature of the product and the female character acts according to what the male voice-over has dictated. An example of this is when the male voice-over explains how the product works and the female character emphasises the point my touching her eye area. The product being promoted is also a product that targets women as its primary users, yet the male voice-over and not the female character hold the authoritative position.

Department of housing (4 June 2007)

Product type: Institutional/public services
Central/main character: female
Supporting character 1: female
Supporting character 2: crowds
Voice-over: male

The advertisement depicts a female character as the central/main character receiving a key from another female character it is set in an outdoor area that can be identified an informal settlement because of the tin shacks. The female character leaves the informal settlement and continues to walk alongside the road. As the female character progresses on her journey a group of children approach her and she bends to great them, one of the children reaches out to touch the key and this act draws attention to the key. The female character continues passing a construction site where male characters are building houses. Eventually the female character arrives at a house and hands the key over to another female character the words *6 months later* appears on the screen and a male voice-over explains the context of the female character's journey

Male voice-over: *In spite of the challenges we have built over 2.3 million houses since 1994 and have enhanced the dignity of more than eight million South Africans of all races. The Department of Housing; working towards houses, security and comfort for all.*

The female character is a worker for the Department of housing and her journey took six months and is meant to signify the six months that the house took to be completed. What is interesting about this advertisement is the fact that the entire advertisement concentrates on the journey of the female character, also supporting characters in the advertisement is another female character or crowds as supporting character 2 (children, construction workers) yet without the explanation from the male voice-over the advertisement would not make sense. The role of the female character is to deliver a key but other than this the character has no significant role according to the categories applied in the quantitative analysis. The male characters that are depicted although appearing as supporting characters are portraying construction workers. This indicates a working role in semi-skilled position. None of the female characters in the advertisement are depicted directly as workers. The persona of the Department of

Housing takes on a male persona with the male voice-over and again authority is transferred to the male character.

4.7 Concluding remarks

In conducting both a quantitative and a qualitative analysis insight into how advertisements represent gender has been gained. This study set out to investigate how female characters were portrayed in a sample of advertisements through an analysis of both male and female characters. What can be deduced is that women are under represented in the media, women are also misrepresented in the media and this has resulted in rather narrow limited views of women as portrayed by the female characters in the advertisements. Hall (1997) explained that stereotypes are deliberately used to maintain the current social order. The findings indicated that there are gross underlying inequalities of power in how female and male characters were portrayed in the advertisements. The social order based on Hall's argument in South Africa is that women are subordinate to men. Studies such as the Gender Links and MISA study (2003) have also made similar deductions based on findings that show a general under and misrepresentation of women in media across Southern Africa. One can only conclude that there is a gross discrepancy between media initiatives and policy towards gender equality and what is actually being portrayed in the media.

The advertisements still relied on gender stereotypes in portraying female characters and similarities between this study's findings and earlier studies were evident especially with regard to occupation and role. Female characters continued to dominate as sex objects and being portrayed in the decorative role. There were clear examples of female characters deliberately being objectified for the purpose of communicating concepts that centred on male desire and pleasure. Van Zoonen and Meijer (2002) explain that images of female characters lack credibility as opposed to male characters and this was found to be the case in majority of the advertisements. In many advertisements on-screen female characters took on a passive role whereas male characters were active.

Chapter 2 discussed popular stereotypes commonly associated with each sex and these character traits were evident in the advertisements. Male characters were characterised as being ambitious, hard working, responsible, and dependable and at the same time could also be adventurous. These character traits came through in the quantitative findings in the dominance of the male characters in the professional occupation categories. Female characters in comparison were hardly portrayed as professionals and only featured significantly in these categories as supporting characters. The fact that a male character was more likely to be portrayed as a central/main character and a female character as a supporting character is a cause for concern. It points to the underrepresentation of female characters and to the dominance of male characters in the advertisements. Over and above this male characters continued to be associated with the same character traits that were found in previous studies and are now also associated with more products, occupying more roles, being placed in more settings and environments, as well as occupying more positions. Male characters dominated the advertisements either in the capacity of character, occupation, role, or by used as voice-overs. Female characters in comparison were stereotypically understood to be caring, emotional, needing guidance and support and are weak. The findings from this study to a large degree can confirm this in terms of portrayal of female characters.

Earlier studies had proven that female and male characters were stereotyped in advertising content. The findings in this study resonate with the findings of these earlier studies as female characters continue to be stereotyped. Female characters were still associated with the same products, although minor changes were recorded these are actually not significant changes. Furthermore female characters were portrayed predominantly in the occupational category of celebrity, entertainer, or model. This is hardly an improvement on previous studies' findings, and in no way presents an accurate representation of the female working population. In a nutshell portrayals of female characters have not changed significantly. The representations are reproductions of the same stereotypical associations that have been assigned to women in the past.

Another point to consider is if understanding around how male characters are portrayed is changing why not for female characters? This may be due to the fact that the same formulas are being relied upon where female characters are concerned. In the production of advertisements the dominant ideology coming through in the content is patriarchal. Male characters are evolving in product associations, role portrayal and even by dominating in the home environment, this has left female characters as being depicted as inadequate in the private and public sphere while male characters are depicted as thriving in both. Women are the out-group members that are homogenised by being portrayed in the same way consistently that works to reinforce the stereotypes associated with women (Hilton and Von Hippel 1994).

Stereotypes are employed as a method used to misrepresent women and place them in direct opposition to men. It is obvious that stereotypes are limited and rely heavily on preconceived knowledge of the subject, concept, and issue. Advertising content relies on stereotypes to make contact with an audience in a limited time frame. Yet this still does not explain why male characters are afforded more freedom and female depictions remain to a large degree the same. The advertisements adopt hegemonic definitions from a dominant ideology (patriarchy) and mirror these back to society reinforcing old definitions of women and promoting new associations with men at the same time making sure that the definitions of men do not lose the stronger character associations.

The sample of advertisements was taken from SABC3 and while the broadcaster did not produce the advertisements attention needs to be drawn to the fact that the advertisements are aired on the channel. There are examples of objectification, sexism and misrepresentation of female characters and this works against the initiatives, policies and studies conducted by organisations such as Gender Links and MISA for gender equality. It is worrying that the findings of this study correlate with findings from studies conducted in the 1960s and 1980s. This time period was significant because of the mass interest in media portrayals and studies were significant in bringing to the forefront the

gross under and misrepresentation of women in the media. No significant changes in the portrayal of female characters were noted in this study and while portrayals of male characters are moving significantly towards social reality depictions of female characters are lagging behind. Advertising is considered somewhat separated from media in the sense that it is understood to be the funding behind the media, yet more emphasis needs to be placed on reviewing the advertising content that is being aired and the meanings that are produced. This study illustrated this point in the in-depth analysis by bringing to the forefront the possible meanings that advertisements can have. South Africa has yet to separate women's issues from political issues and today it is considered an issue on the presidential agenda yet the importance afforded to women's issues in national debate and legislature is not mirrored in the media's actual approach to women's place in the media.

5 CONCLUSION

This study was an exploration of how women were portrayed in advertising content. The general point of departure of this study was grounded in the prevalence of women's issues in the country set against the backdrop of the under and misrepresentation of women in the media. This study found that women were stereotypically portrayed in the advertisements confirming the hypotheses and resonating with the findings of previous studies that looked at similar issues of media representation of women in advertising content.

This is worrying as those hypotheses were the result of a review of previous studies many of these studies were international studies that were conducted between the 1960s and 1980s. It was expected that that more of a significant shift in representations would be found in this study. Second these studies sampled advertising content from international television channels, again it was expected that advertisements sampled form South African media would not register such a close correlation as it did to the findings of these studies.

Similarities were found in every category that had been used to code the sampled advertisements as well as in the more in-depth analysis of selected advertisements. The findings of this study corresponded with those of the international studies that had been included in this study. The sampled South African advertisements can then be said to be in line with advertisements produced between 1960 and 1980. This is in no way a true reflection of social trends and developments that have occurred.

A note on the industry and an exploration of possible solutions

There is an obvious need to address the nature of advertising and the ideological streams still prevalent in advertising content. The Advertising content does not accurately represent society, nor does it adopt fair, unbiased representations of women. Research continually exposes this fact but it is obvious that little or no change has occurred.

The ideal solution would be to dispose of the use of stereotypes completely, however this will take away one of the key techniques that advertisers employ to make contact with audiences. A more realistic approach is to call for more accurate representations or rather more positive stereotypes. Not all stereotypes are negative and advertisers can employ these to counter-act the use of negative gender stereotypes.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

A wider sample should have been used in this study, as these findings are significant yet they cannot be generalised to the wider population. More concentration should have also been given to performing the qualitative analysis on a larger sample of the advertisements.

Future research must work towards creating a more balanced account of both male and female. This research proved that separating the two is next to impossible. The result would be a more holistic study that takes into account in equal measures both the sexes. If a more detailed study were to be undertaken, separate extrapolations would have to be formulated in order to adequately address supporting characters. This study attempted to integrate both however this is complicated as supporting characters serve a different purpose.

Future research might also consider a longitudinal study in which advertising content looks at representations across a certain period. A longitudinal time frame would accommodate any changes in trends and patterns in South African advertising content.

Concluding remarks

While the representation of women by the media still remains an area of concern there is obviously room for change based on the fact that the representation of men has significantly changed indicating that if undertaken

representations of women can also change to reflect social reality rather than traditional social norms.

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