

# Gender representation in advertisements



## GENDER REPRESENTATION IN COMMERCIALS

Imagine a commercial where a half naked man is bringing a beer bottle to a woman while pouring it all over himself; Imagine a commercial where a loving husband cooks dinner while his wife is watching the television on the sofa. Just imagine. Something does not seem right? That is because society is used to certain types of commercials; ones where women are playing the domestic role and men are strong, needed people. In this essay I will be explaining how different genders are being represented in the TV advertisements and why 'life' from commercials is not something to look up to. Throughout the essay these points will be shown by 'taking apart' commercials that have been on our TVs and we did not even pay attention to the details and signs that were in front of us the whole time.

Firstly, I would like to start from children's commercials because the roles that young girls and boys are playing are very similar to the ones that men and women have in other commercials. In one of the Fisher-price. com[i]ads for a doll house, we can see two girls playing with some of the dolls and they are already placing the 'dad' at the table sitting down while the 'mom' cooks and prepares everything, whilst taking care of the 'babies'. On the other hand, in a Tonka toy[ii]commercial we can see two boys playing with the Tonka toys and they are being portrayed as very simple, not intelligent people as their vocabulary is limited to "This tool rules!" and "Yea". In both of these commercials we can clearly see that our children are being thought from a very young age who has which role in the family and this society. Girls are there to serve the guys and guys are there to give a hand to the helpless girls.

Secondly, we can look at commercials where the main characters are played by teenage girls and guys.

In Bissell commercial[iii]for a vacuum cleaner, we can see a family where the mom and her daughter are very excited about cleaning and the boy in the family offers to get the vacuum for them, but the girl tells him that there is no need because the vacuum cleaner is not even heavy. Cleaning is being shown as something fun and easy, and by this society pushes girls into domesticity from young age. When we take a look at teen males, Axe ad[iv], some people would say that it is just a funny commercial, but others could be very offended by it. There is a need for the sexual desire of the audience, female and male, since women are wearing very revealing clothing and are being shown as sexual objects and are willing to do anything for the attention and acceptance of men. The guy in the commercial is also being shown as just some kind of a sexual object because he is half naked and women are all over him- stereotypes of masculinity.

And finally, let's take a look at how adult females and males are being represented in commercials. In Dyson Vacuum cleaner[v]ad firstly we see a woman in a bikini posing for a photo in some kind of a photo shoot. The photographer is a man, and the staff that brings drinks to the employees are girls. In the next moment we see that a vacuum cleaner is connected to the models back and when the guy who is holding the vacuum cleaner turns it off, the model becomes overweight and much more curvy. She does not look upset by this fact at all, moreover she is totally fine with it and even walks of the set smiling.

This commercial is very downgrading towards women and is very hard to look at and laugh from a women's perspective. For the male adults, I have chosen the Milwaukee's BEST LIGHT[vi] commercials because all of them are sending the same message. Men who are showing affection towards their partners do not deserve to live is the most simple way of putting what this commercial has to show. If there is any sign of caring and loving side in a man, they are not masculine; all men need to behave in a tough guy manor, and if not they get mocked and put down.

All of these commercials show us how society has accepted certain roles in life as normal, where women are portrayed as subordinate to men. This can be connected to Marxism, where the proletariat role have women and men are the bourgeoisie. Gramsci explains that the process by which a power relationship is accepted, consented to and seen as natural or as 'common sense' exists- Hegemony. It is 'normal' that a woman is cleaning, washing, taking care of children, cooking and serving her partner. It is 'normal' that a man is working, bringing the money to the house, fixing things, waiting for everything to come to him, not caring.

Commercials are a part of the media and a lot of people blame the media for everything that the society is doing and thinking. Levin and Kilbourne claim that heavy exposure to media alters the viewers perception of social reality in a way that matches the media world, and they are not the only ones. A lot of very influential people share their opinion, like Germaine Greer, an Australian theorist and academic, who believes that the media upholds an ideal image of beauty in its representation-an image that the women are made to be desperate to conform to. The emphasis on beauty/'sexiness' and <https://assignbuster.com/gender-representation-in-advertisements/>

women in the media has meant that women now believe that if they do not conform to this-if they are not beautiful- they are not successful and are useless. Not only women are the ones who are trying to fit into this picture that has been imposed on us, according to the research done by academics a lot of men feel the same way. There is a lot of focus on muscled and very fit male bodies and it is causing men the same anxiety and personal insecurity that women have felt for decades.

At first I did approach this topic from a feminist side, but simply because it was quite obvious that men are the one in control and the women were represented as passive objects of the male gaze (Mulvey 1975). University of North Texas professor Steve Craig said that women tend to be represented as rewards for men who choose the right product; these commercials are narratives of playful escapades away from home and family.

Later on, as I was going through even more material, such as Kraft dressing[vii]and Diet Coke[viii]commercials, I realized that a number of ads have represented men as objects for the female gaze. Women viewers are not passive but active and engage critically with these kinds of media texts by selecting texts that have meaning for them. Even though we do blame the media for these impositions, Gammon and Marshment stress the importance of the audience's role in the construction of meaning in media texts and emphasis the range of interpretations that any text offers.

Although these days there are a lot of commercials that are representing men and women differently, one type of commercial has never been made with a female as the customer and the men as the 'bait'- beer commercials.

For this reason I have decided to concentrate on beer commercials and how they affect women and men everywhere. According to Susan Bordo, an academic, men in beer ads are always being portrayed as virile, slim, muscular and powerful, whilst the women are eager for male companionship, weak, vulnerable. Men and beer have gone together for ages. Beer is crafted by men in factories owned by men, sold to men, and consumed by men.

I have done a research in order to see if my suspicions are indeed correct. After gathering the results of my survey, I have found out that a 100% of females asked knew what beer is and have tried it before, 80% of them liked it and would have it again and 48% of them said that beer is their number one drink when choosing to drink alcohol. When talking about just the United States, according to Dr, Bart Watson women account for 25% of total consumption by volume, and 37% of craft-beer consumption in the United States.

Meg Gill has said: "It has gotten better the last few years, but sometimes you hear 'let me pour you something sweet, honey.' Women, just like men, love hops. And women can detect bitterness much better than men."

Women were also the first to turn brewing into a lucrative industry, taking beer out of their kitchens and selling it for a profit around town. In medieval Europe, women known as alewives skirted the discriminatory rules against female ownership of land and business by opening ale houses.

So why aren't there any beer commercials where the women are drinking beer and the men are bringing it to them? Factory-dominated brewing has gone on for so long it seems that society has completely forgotten that beer

was once the domain of women. A lot of people assume that women are trying beer just because their husband or boyfriend offered them once, when in reality women have been drinking beer for a longer time than they have been with their husbands. Gender inequality leads to economic disadvantage for women, gendered violence, exclusion from the higher echelons of power but also from enjoying good beer. Arbitrary and anachronistic feminine stereotypes are internalized essentially by women- Naomi McAuliffe.

If any of the companies do choose to try and sell the beer to the female part of society, they need to be very careful since they are not just telling us what beer we are supposed to be drinking, they are also letting us know what they think about us, collectively, and as individuals. According to Beer Genie the reason that women don't drink as much beer as men is a combination of misconceptions, myopic macho marketing, a lack of knowledge and information and the way it is served. It has nothing to do with the taste, and that is why I think that the commercials are to blame for women being 'afraid' to try beer or even ask for one in a bar/pub.

In order to try and change the view of beer, I have decided to make a beer commercial where the roles will be changed. The woman is going to be the one drinking the beer, and the man is going to be the one handing it to her. I am hoping that by doing this, I will be able to show how by just reversing the 'normal' roles, men and women can be seen in a different light.

If we want to provide males and females with a wide range of possible roles, we need to make sure that they are being thought from the young age that

they are free to explore all the roles. There is a lot of room for improvement when it comes to gender representation in commercials.

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[i]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHy8zMPOa2Q>

[ii]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHImGRhj7vM>

[iii]Look at the attachment

[iv]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V6rAQHa1gmc>

[v][https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t\\_3oly5jAG0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t_3oly5jAG0)

[vi]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGItoKaX0BM>

[vii]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uH1dEWhutm8>

[viii]<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ff-jBpca7Cw>

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- All of these sources are very reliable and up to date. Some of them have been written in more than two years ago, but have been updated fairly recently.