

Television commercials



Television commercials take a huge role to reflect and create gender-stereotyped roles, and these roles change perpetually over time. To confirm this statement, 13 television commercials in food, car and medication categories were selected during two typical weekdays from major TV network channels, ABC, CBS, FOX, and NBC from 4pm to 11pm, and were analyzed on YouTube how men and women were portrayed in them. In addition, two commercials from the same company but different eras were reviewed and criticized gender roles and traits.

“ Cultivation theory suggests that consumers’ perceptions of social reality are heavily influenced by how they see themselves and others portrayed in the media. Many researchers are of the opinion that television ads present idealized (rather than typical) images of appropriate behaviors and roles for men and women, making television advertising an important factor in developing notions of what appropriate behaviors and roles are for each sex” (2011: 208). The theory’s application is to study the effect of Television programs on the attitude and behaviors of the general American public (Miller, 2005). The theory does not study any specific element of television but its general influence on its viewers. Among all the mass media, Television is the most widely used; it therefore forms the basis for most messages and images that are shared by people. It follows therefore, that the influence of Television on the American people’s behavior and attitude is immense. The Television commercials affect the opinions and attitudes of the public, a fact that influences their judgments of the products they will purchase and consume. As observed by Water, “ Women in commercials were typically portrayed as deficient in credibility, product users but not product authorities, most often situated in domestic locations, having no

occupation except homemaker, and demonstrating a dependent role. This is contrasted with men in commercials who were typically portrayed as credible, product authorities, situated outdoors or at work, have an important occupation, and were powerful in their independent roles” (Water 2006: 17). The commercials mostly differ in the way they portray gender characters. They apply the ideal character of the people appearing in these commercials, as opposed to the real character traits. This goes a long way to lure the public to like the products, since they are associated with likeable traits. The role of gender in society is also shaped by these commercials, giving the male gender a more commanding role in products than the female gender, mostly portrayed as dependant. These commercials place women in the domestic roles, portraying them as a gender that is less work oriented. This notwithstanding, the Television commercials goes ahead to disgrace the female gender. According to Giri, “ TV commercials continue to portray the negative image of the gender bias role of females; television ads are a reflection of society; the gender stereotypes are more explicit in television commercials than any other regular programming; and the humiliation of women is nowhere more evident than in TV commercials. The study reveals that while U. S. television commercials continue to present only one aspect of womens life (their relationship to men as wives, subordinates, or sex-objects)” (Giri 1990). He observes that women rarely take any other role in the commercials, other than that of domestic chores, where they command. Men are portrayed as independent and authoritative, always being in a position to determine which products women can purchase. The preference of men seems to take center stage, with women only meant to complement this. Therefore, Television commercials are great influencers of the attitudes

and behaviors of the American public.

Work Cited

Miller, K. (2005). Communications theories: Perspectives, processes, and contexts. New York:

McGraw-Hill.