

Gender Representations in Moroccan Print Advertising

Ahmed Kadiri Hassani Yamani

Cady Ayad University, Morocco

Abstract

Print advertising is a representative means of communication. Not only does it reflect a given culture but it also impacts the consumer attitudes. One of the main attitudes is gender roles, as the individual, hence the society, constantly seek if the representations and the expectations match. This paper explores gender representations in ten Moroccan magazines. Two of these magazines are men's, two are women's while the others are magazines of general interest. The paper also analyses how classical gender roles are still maintained or denied due to the increasing participation of women in the labour market. The findings reveal that there are overly stereotypical gender representations in print advertising. They also suggest that men's and women's magazines are not less gender stereotypic than general interest magazines.

Keywords: Gender roles, gender representation, print advertising, stereotypes.

Introduction

In the last few decades, researchers have focused mainly on women's representations in magazines' advertisements. Most research papers in this field have cast light on the stereotypes adopted to portray men and women, the cultural motives behind using such stereotypes, and the actual repercussions of such representations on society. (Hawkins and Coney 1976; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia 1977; McArthur and Resko 1975).

A typical traditional society would not expect similar behaviours and attitudes from men and women. Girls are, thus, brought up as future mothers and wives, while boys as leaders. Hence, gender is a social construct and behaviour is guided by traditions and culture. Males and females' roles are identified by a set of essential such as social behaviour, expression of emotions, and body language (Carroll, 1996: 163). Men and women are, subsequently, different and these differences determine their social functions.

While trying to understand the representations of men and women in Moroccan magazine advertisements, I have carefully considered visual and verbal messages of promoted pictures from various Moroccan magazines, which particularly focused on men and women, and general magazines. These advertisements are gathered from four magazines which dwell on women and they are Ousra and Lalla Fatima (issued in Arabic), Femme actuelle and Femme de Prestige (issued in French), two magazines which deal with men, namely: Version Homme and Homme de Prestige (issued in French). Added to that are six general magazines, namely: Nichane, Telquel, Le Temps, Eссор, Maroc Magazine and Managers Magazine. Aside from Nichane, all these general intrigue magazines are distributed in French. The chosen issues were issued in May, 2009 while Managers Magazine were released in April 2009.

Men and women representations in magazines

It is noted that women are portrayed with various negative stereotypes in women's magazines (Skallé, 2006). To start with, there is a connection between women and classical roles of the advertised products. They are depicted as mothers, brides or domestic women. In certain contents, women are depicted as being dumb. Some products are applied and used on women's bodies as part of the advertisement content e.g., body care products, fashion wears, mobile devices and house products. Brand consuming and careless driving are two negative stereotypes attributed to women.

In contrast, men are represented positively in advertising (Mulvey, 1999). For most advertisement, men are portrayed to be brilliant and professionals in adapting to any environmental conditions and also in finding solutions to problems. Men are also seen in classical roles such as fathers. They take it upon themselves to teach their sons various ways to be successful and depend less on people. In advertisements that tackle fashion, their bodies are used for decorations.

Men are portrayed as heroes, for instance in branded wristwatch adverts. In adverts that have to do with cars, men are also portrayed as being very adventurous. For fashion adverts, men are usually generalized and presented as being tough and sexy, ready to take on adventures and generally put up mature appearances (Haddad, 1998). Women on the other hand are linked to design roles or with romantic relationships and adverts of consumer products. Adverts that have to do with men and women presents men as being higher than women or as just equivalent to each other. By and by, advertisements which advance sex uniformity are not many in contrast with the ones promoting male's strength over females.

As for general purpose magazines, women again are presented in a negative light, where they are involved in decorative roles, while men, in a totally different way, are linked with accomplishments (Koehemoer, 2004). For advertisements where men and women are used together, they are either depicted as equivalent or the inverse. The point of concern is on gender disparity. With respect to female and male portrayal together throughout Moroccan magazines, a large number of advertisements focus on gender inequality while very few ones promote equality between men and women. The most surprising finding is that all the advertisements which depict women together with men in women's magazines maintain women's inferiority, dependence, and submissiveness.

In most cases, when considering women alone in women, men or general purpose magazines, they are either connected with conventional or beautifying roles, or presented as having childish tendencies or consumers who accept anything (Jhally, 1995). Men, in a different vain, are associated with the traits of accomplishment, knowledge, experience or valor. Very few men and women magazines portray men as being used for beautifying roles in adverts. As regards to how males and female are depicted all through Moroccan magazines, it is noticed that most advertisements are based on gender imbalance while few others in a way promote equality between men and women. A key finding showed that advertisements which focus on men and women obviously portrayed women as being inferior, reliant and submissive.

Concerning advertisements which showcase women in conventional roles, it is observed that women's importance to the well-being of the family is being mothers or wives (Ghissassi, 2006). Moroccans are amongst the peoples in the world that are referred to as being more connected to each other. For this reason, family relationship is held in high esteem in the magazines used for this analysis. Most Moroccan advertisements lay emphasis on the relationship that exists between mothers and children. As observed, mothers are mostly seen to be very busy with caring for their children's needs. While the relationship that exist between father's and children takes a different dimension as fathers do more in teaching their sons on ways they can end up becoming successful in life and have an autonomous life, they also engages more with fun filled experience with their children.

Domestic role

With respect to the relationship between husband and wife, husbands are depicted as having this controlling mindset in the family, as they are referred in most cases as the leader of their families. They are most times the ones that drive cars, ride bikes and pet their wives. Wives in, another vain,

are depicted as being dependent and submissive to their husbands. They constantly rely on their husband's for support, they sit and discuss with their husbands on issues that relate to their family well-being, and women too in most cases appreciate their husband's pampering and playing with them. Families in the Moroccan societal setting are seen as being male centric (Chijoke, 2006). It is a key in keeping up female reliance and male strength. In the butter advertisement in figure 1 below, the verbal message overly displays the woman's devotion to satisfy her family members. Through this image the advertisement enhances the cultural and expected role of the mother.



Figure 1



Figure 2

In Moroccan advertisements, women's portrayal as wives that take care of their spouses or doing house chores is drastically decreasing. Just a

single advertisement portrays a wife fixing her husband's tie, which is a sign of her love and care for him. With respect to cleaning items, they are once in a while promoted in magazines. Just two advertisements are seen to boost such products in women's magazines. Besides, these items are publicized alone without the nearness of women. The abatement in this type of advertisements is because of technological inventions in the design and production of machines which are of extraordinary assistance to women. Hence, women have more opportunities to think and care about their spouses or kid's welfare, provide their needs, and do recreational exercises. The negative interpretation of these cleaning products, which are seen as diminishing and publicized distinctly in women's magazines, shows that men are not engaged in family cleaning activities. Considerations like these are stressed in the Moroccan culture since women's activities in the family are progressively constrained to the home and family.

Figure 3 below shows that thanks to technology the woman has enough time to work, take care of her children or exercise.



Figure 3

In Moroccan society, women are considered as being accountable for the family and in taking care of their spouses and children. Furniture advertisements make an association between these considerations and convictions and the items advertised. Furniture's are promoted in women's and general intrigue magazines with the presence of women alone. These women often make the most out of their furnishings and in communicating their euphoria, and are seen to be playful in some cases. Therefore, the fundamental role of women is seen to be predominant in the house, in as much as they can be housewives or they work. Men are not observed in being actively involved in these activities.

Women, beauty and body products

For consumable products, women are represented as main consumers of various types of products. This generalization is predominant in all the three types of magazines in fashion and accessory advertisements. In magazines for women and men, consuming of products is associated with certain activities or qualities. For example, in advertisements found in women's magazines, consuming the products found in them can be considered as a way of taking part in certain social and environmental activities such as: fighting against cancer, providing access to literacy for children, and contributing to the green peace. Figure 4 below suggests that women can use this product to get rid of black heads to meet the expected image.



Figure 4

On the other hand, advertisements in men's magazines are most times likened to products that promote romance. If for instance a husband gifts his wife such a product, it shows that he loves her.

In most Moroccan magazines, men are usually linked with being intelligent, possess heroic characteristics and generally adventurous. It is observed that men's intelligence and professionalism enable them to be able to come to terms with their environment and solve problems, some of which are difficult for women to handle. Creativity exhibited by men helps in strengthening them as it is a contributory factor to their privileged status in society. All of these qualities make men the center of attention and respect in the society and in their individual families. In some advertisements, men are

portrayed as being fearless; they are willing to take risk which sometimes also involves risking their own life's to achieve set goals. Although in few instances, men are presented in fashion advertisements as useless. These advertisements are not common. In relating men to intelligence, heroic acts and well known bravery is well known to the general populace in Morocco. Attributes like this are drawn from the understanding that men are superior to women. The fact that advertisements promote generalization like these are common in Moroccan magazines, and it implies that this is because men are behind Moroccan advertising industry. Men maintain such representations in a bid to have a societal standing that keeps them at the top.

Male strength is common in the Moroccan society. Men have more significant levels of education and according to Michelle Moreli, the author of "A Case Study of Morocco: How Have Women Become Parts of Labor Market?", they are utilized in more elevated level, more lucrative positions, and they keep on being supported by the nation's laws. These components along with the confidence in the prevalence of men empower them to have an added advantage over women. Most of the commercials in Morocco that have to do with women and men focus on making men predominant and women are portrayed as obedient to the call of men. Stereotypes like these have being written earlier in this analysis. Women's obedience to men and their show of inadequacies are reflected in their grins, as they tend to spend time with men talking and seating or sitting passively by their sides. Also, men are driving and acting in an infantile way or being the object of the male look. This shows that men apply authority over women and that women are reliant and agreeable to men.

Few advertisements in Morocco depict gender parity. These commercials show men and women in the light of equals, especially through deep understanding, knowledge, independence and achievement. Some advertisements showcase parity between men and women in a way not easily understandable. A work-related advertisement in a radio broadcast showed that men are more than women. In another advertisement about a tea, they were seen enjoying the drink while they had an on-going conversation. Despite the fact that these two advertisement advance sexual orientation uniformity, they demonstrate that autonomy, accomplishment, and advanced understanding are confined to an extremely predetermined number of females, and that communication is more exhibited by women. These reluctant endeavors to make gender balance reflect in Moroccan magazines shows the opposing connection between the endeavors to improve women privileges and social customs that hinder certain women from having social freedom. The fact that most magazines in Morocco do not show the importance of sexual balance has gone a step further to make women acknowledge mediocrity and reliance.

With respect to the items promoted in women, men's and general interest' magazines, women's magazines vary in both the measure of advertisements offered and their categories. The greater part of the advertisements investigated are extricated from women's magazines. Moreover, a few advertisements that relate to beauty products and style are copiously publicized in these magazines. Furthermore, advertisements about fashion are more in men's magazines, particularly in Homme de Prestige. Furniture advertisements are seen in women and general intrigue magazines. In the last mentioned, furniture and banking commercials make use of women who are seen to put up acts in children-like manners. They delineate them as incapable to limit their sentiments. With respect to adverts that dwell on cars, phones and accommodation, they share the same sentiment all through the three magazines.

As expressed before now, women's magazines are loaded with beauty care advertisements, as women are increasingly portrayed in terms of their magnificence and endowment. It appears that women have this understanding that they are undesirable or clumsy except if they put forth attempts to keep up an alluring appearance.

Products that beautify the body are commonly promoted with mostly nude women. Despite the fact that Moroccan women are not permitted to dress indecently, this is not respected as seen in most beauty-enhancing adverts where women end up showing their uncovered shoulders or legs. A few advertisements center around explicit body parts like the lips, eyes, or legs. These advertisements which generalize ladies are inconsequential in number. However, concentrates on women's bodies and generalizing them is unsafe to women's public image.

Women and fashion

In regards to fashion advertisements, women's bodies are portrayed as decorative objects that can be used to wear fashion accessories and cloths such as underwears. What is interesting is the fact that women's underwear are promoted in Moroccan magazines the same way they are being promoted in western magazines. It is a common fact that women in Muslim societies dress unobtrusively and that they are not permitted to show their body parts out in the open or at home within the sight of outsiders. What this kind of advertisements now means is that it's surprising to see women in Moroccan adverts wearing underwear. Nevertheless, men appreciate to see women naked, most especially if they are not from morocco and those who view this magazine have an affinity for western culture. They are considered to have accepted the influence of western culture.



Figure 5

In a bid to round up this analysis, commercial adverts that use women to promote beauty products or underwear do not in any way show what Moroccans represent in respect to the true tradition of Moroccans, as conventional Moroccan culture restricts the possible advertisement of an indecent society. The representation of women in such a manner can be annoying. Be that as it may, visual broadcast media like televisions advertisements are increasingly well-known for mirroring the truth about women lives and their actual roles in the eyes of the people. This would clarify the tremendous distinction that exists in Morocco as regards to education and the economy. These two components assume a key role in differentiating the interests of Moroccans, which can then result in the production of several commercials.

In Morocco, the use of veil has been an issue of debate and to the rest of the Muslim world. Muslim women are required to cover their body using veils, where ever they go to, as a sign of a strict conviction of their Islamic faith. Although another circle of thought proposes that ladies are not obliged to wear the scarf at all times to prove that they are religious. In any case, the prevailing conviction is that Moroccan Muslim ladies should dress humbly out in the open. Be that as it may, this standard is not applied in Moroccan magazines as women are not seen putting on their veils in commercials. Just two exceptional cases can be seen in abiding to the proper Islamic dress code and they are when women are seen in traditional dresses promoting new designs and when women are used for furniture adverts. The idea behind the use of scarf stands out like the use of veil. In addition, it is acceptable to write that the Moroccan government has not done enough in encouraging women to regularly wear veil. Also, the public perception of veiled women has led to employers not being comfortable to employ women who wear veil. It is worthy to note that the way most women wear veils in morocco as a representation of the people's culture and, in recent times, has opposed the thoughts and beliefs of the people.

In recent times, new advertisements have been added to Moroccan magazines. These adverts cut across wellness clubs, spas, weight reduction items, and voyage. The last don't portray women as going for business trips, but rather as a means for relaxation. Few adverts are used to promote the consumption of alcohol in as much as it is prohibited for Muslims. These advertisements, notwithstanding, are targeted to a known class of Moroccan populace. Secondly, some of the advertisements in these magazines especially in women's magazines do not reflect the reality of the Moroccan women either in habits or the dress code. The last point is that a large number of the Moroccan people cannot afford to buy the products advertised in these magazines. This means that these advertisements do not even reflect the economic capacities of Moroccan people. To summarize, Moroccan women, men and general intrigue magazines vary concerning their target audience, they relate with one another based on points they share together. Notably, the format used for life style is seen as almost the same in advertisements appearing in all these magazines. In most cases, they combine images in products and formats the writer prefers, which is also the best way of accomplishing individual goals, desires, and wants. Furthermore, it has been observed that some advertisements even in women magazines don't tend to portray the reality of an ideal Moroccan woman dressing. Also, countless Moroccans cannot afford to pay for advertised products in magazines because they are expensive. This implies that advertisements do not mirror the financial strength of a larger number of Moroccans.

Conclusion

Women are represented either as confined to traditional roles or as decorative bodies for the products. Men, on the other hand, are portrayed most of the time as intelligent and successful. The portrayals of men and women together reflect men's superiority and women's inferiority.

To summarize, this analysis has demonstrated that issues bothering around gender and product advertisements are extremely perplexing and are twisted together. They impact each other as they relate to other cultural and social components in the society. The manner in which females and males are delineated is more often than not comparable all through the Moroccan magazines. Women are represented either as being limited to customary roles or as possessing bodies that can be used to test and subsequently use beautifying products. Men, in an opposite way, are depicted more often than not as brilliant and achievers. The depictions of both men and women reflect men's supremacy and women's inadequacy.

Ladies are delineated as bound to customary roles or as people that can be used to satisfy sexual desires. A few commercial adverts are few in number especially when comparing them with other adverts that relate to beauty and body products. Women's bodies are used to promote beauty products. Sometimes, women are portrayed as being childish and unfit to control their sentiments. Such delineations are meant to portray women in a negative perspective and which can decrease their status in the public arena.

In a different vein, men are portrayed as representing insightful, successful and audacious members of the society. Their psychological build along with physical strength makes them unbeatable. They can deal with their condition and take care of the most issues. Even as they take up roles of fathers, men are depicted to give over their experience to their children.

In most cases, men and women are often used in advertisements and for instances where this is the case, gender imbalance is obviously indicated. Most times, men are portrayed as over possessive, in as much as they still stand as the source of security and care to women. Although women are still seen as being dominating, submissive and childish, there is still that need for men to ensure they are protected and guided.

Usually, gender balance is seen to be more pronounced in some advertisements, especially the ones that appear in men and general intrigue magazines, while it's not same for women inspired magazines. In as much as advertisements are not limited, the number of women who are achievers and also independent is less than that of men. In a way, these suggest that although changes have been made in improving the life of women in the society, men are still favored more than women.

Worrisome is the fact that newly introduced advertisements in Moroccan magazines portray women in the light of sexual objects. The way

their body looks and their beauty seem to be the focus of most adverts, and it is the only feature they possess that makes them happy. It is obvious to also note that some of these adverts portray women in the light of sexual commodities with high market values. For men, they are regarded as being unable to think beyond their physical appearances. This sought of representation is limiting and can be seen in men's magazines such as *Homme de Prestige* and in new commercials which are about travels, fitness clubs and liquor. These commercials do not portray what a Moroccan society is all about. It's observed that few Moroccans live like westerners.

It reflects the Moroccan women's reality in relation to the male's authority and their concern for their husbands and children's welfare. Nevertheless, it introduces new cultural values imported from the western culture. It is noticed that there is a drive towards representing women as sex objects by depicting young, thin and attractive female models in almost all advertisements. Men too are represented in some fashion advertisements as stupid; yet, such representations are infrequent. These illustrations affirm that the Moroccan society is a contradictory or double-faced society where traditional roles and western values, freedom and obedience go hand in hand.

The media has been used to assume a significant role in keeping up and encouraging sex stereotypes. It mirrors a few stereotypes just as it changes others as the case with the conventional and beautifying roles of women. It mirrors Moroccan women's existence as it corresponds to man power and their anxiety to properly care for their spouse and kids. Although it presents new social qualities imported from the western culture, it is noticeable that there is the desire to refer to women as sex objects by portraying young, slender and alluring female models in practically all advertisements. Men also are regarded as dumb although such portrayals are rare. It can be concluded that the Moroccan society is two-faced with the ability to accommodate both traditional Muslim beliefs and western values, freedom and obedient to laws and order.

References

1. Chijoke, R. (2006). Culture and Customs of Morocco. Greenwood Publishing Group, inc.
2. Ghissassi, F. (2006). Stéréotypie, Image et Représentation des Femmes en Milieu Rural et Urbain. Kénitra. Publications de chair de L'UNESCO.
3. Haddad, Y., Esposito, J. (ed). (1998). Islam, Gender and Social Change. New York Oxford : Oxford University Press.
4. Inglehart, Ronald (2003), Islam, Gender, Culture, and Democracy. Finding from the world values survey and the European values survey. Canada : De Sitter.
5. Jhally, S. (1995), Advertising and Popular Culture. In Dines, G. & Humez, J.M. Gender, Race and Class in Media. A Text Reader. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
6. Koehemoer, L. (LD). (2004). Marketing Communication. Juta and Co LTD, South Africa.
7. Mulvey, L. (1999). Visual Pleasure in Narrative Cinema. New York: UP.
8. Sadiqi, F. (2002). Women, Gender and Language in Morocco. Boston and Leisen. Brill Academia Publishers.
9. Skallé, L.H. (2006). Through Local Prism: Gender, Globalization and Identity in Moroccan Women's Magazines. Roman and Littlefield Publishers, INC.
10. Wagner, A. (1993). Literacy, Culture and Development : Becoming Literate in Morocco. Cambridge University Press.
11. Pongratz, G. (2003). Female Stereotypes as Reflected in English Advertising. Diplomica Verlag GmbH.