



AMERICAN JOURNAL OF YOUTH AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT (AJYWE)

ISSN: 2835-3250 (ONLINE)

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1 (2025)



PUBLISHED BY
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

Women in Moroccan Television Advertising: Between Cultural Values and Market Trends

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Article Information

Received: June 28, 2025

Accepted: August 01, 2025

Published: September 24, 2025

Keywords

*Advertisement, Portrayal,
Representation, Stereotype, Women*

ABSTRACT

This article aims to critically examine the pervasive stereotypical portrayals of women in Moroccan television advertisements. Using a mixed-methods approach of qualitative and quantitative research, the study collects data through a semiotic perspective to reveal women's hidden representations. The results indicate that advertising in Moroccan television depicts females in stereotypical roles, for instance, housewives, sexual objects, and in subordinate positions to their male counterparts. This article suggests that the representations noted earlier strengthen and uphold patriarchal systems. To gain a deeper understanding of gender dynamics and representation, additional research should investigate the portrayal of women in diverse formats such as films, video games, and digital platforms. The examination of those stereotypes in various context will help determine whether these stereotypes are perpetuated or abolished.

INTRODUCTION

The world of advertising is a vast and highly prosperous field, with projections indicating that Morocco's traditional television advertising market alone is expected to grow in the future reaching an estimated US\$215.90 million by 2025 (Statista, 2024). As consumers, we are constantly and unconsciously exposed to plenty of advertisements on a daily basis across various media platforms. These advertisements find their way to invade our digital space and connect with us on a personal level. The ubiquitous use of mobile phones among consumers has facilitated the reach of advertisements; this means that ads have found their way to engage us personally via mobile phones on social media, web pages, and even video games.

Most people when they think of advertisements, they directly associate them with television. On average, A Moroccan person watches more than three hours of television daily (Bouchtaoui, 2023), whether on national or foreign channels. According to Maroc Metrie, the organisation responsible for measuring viewership and listenership rates, from 15th to 19th March 2024, an individual aged 5 or older watches an average of 5 hours and 00 minutes of TV per day (Marocmètrie, 2024). This significant viewership shows that Moroccans are exposed to a limitless number of advertisements throughout their lives. These advertisements vary widely depending on the marketed product and the target demographic population. However, advertisements in general often use psychological techniques to appeal to consumers, persuade them, and as a result drive them to purchase products by any means necessary. Among these techniques, the use of women in advertisements, this tradition remains a prevalent and largely unchecked practice. The following article seeks to uncover and critically examine the stereotypical portrayals of women in Moroccan commercials, elucidating how these representations manipulate societal perceptions and compromise cultural norms and values.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Advertising

Definitions of Advertising

The definition of advertising has always been debated among scholars, academics, and experts in the field. One of the reasons is the fact that advertising evolves, changes and adapts its techniques in accordance with the continuous technological developments, particularly in communication, on which advertising relies on. For example, the internet, artificial intelligence, and mobile devices have transformed the way we convey, share or disseminate information. These factors have shifted the elements by which we define this term, leading scholars to be sceptical and uncertain about its precise meaning.

The earliest definition of advertising describes it as "selling in print" (Starch, 1923), indicating that advertising is viewed as a medium aimed at selling products or services through printed media, as print was the dominant advertising medium at that time. To arrive at an academic definition of advertising, Richards and Curran (2002) employed the Delphi Method, a forecasting technique based on several rounds of questionnaires sent to experts via mail or fax. The responses are anonymous and shared with the group after each round. After multiple rounds, and due to the shared answers, the Delphi Method aims to achieve the correct response through consensus. Richards and Curran (2002) established the following definition: "advertising is a paid, mediated form of communication from an identifiable source, designed to persuade the receiver to take some action, now or in the future." (Richards & Curran, 2002). In other words, advertising is funded or sponsored by an individual, a company, or other agencies that utilise media as a form of communication with clients and customers. These forms of communication are often persuasive and influence the receivers by heightening their desire to take action, either now or later.

By conducting a survey involving advertising experts from academia and the advertising industry, Dahlen and

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Rosengren (2016) also reached this definition of “Brand-initiated communication intent on impacting people.” (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016) This definition is inclusive and broad as it allows for various forms of brand communication while maintaining a focus on the intent to persuade or influence audiences.

Features of Advertising

According to the two latest definitions by Richards and Curran (2002) as well as Dahlen and Rosengren (2016), advertising has five features. The first feature is that advertising is paid for. So, who pays for advertising? Producers are not the sole sponsors; others may also be involved. Some of these sponsors include consumers themselves; consumers not only consume products but also pay for advertising, albeit indirectly. Dahlen and Rosengren (2016) state that “Consumers need not be (passive) receivers, but can also be participants, seekers, and even cocreators of the communication (or the value of the product)” (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016). For a company to advertise its products, it first needs to finance its advertisers; this funding comes from the profits of the products purchased by clients. Thus, any expenditure on advertising is recovered or recycled through consumer purchases. In other words, consumers buy products, and the profits from these products finance the advertising of another product, all occurring with the financial intermediation of the consumer.

Secondly, advertising is disseminated through various forms of media (mediated). These media can be printed, broadcast, or online. Printed advertising consists of written formats found in newspapers, magazines, signs, posters, and billboards. Broadcast advertising pertains to radio and television advertisements that communicate through sound, action, and colour. Online advertising refers to the placing of advertising commercials on the internet to make it accessible via any device connected to the internet, such as laptops and mobile phones. Consequently, advertising is no longer impersonal, as claimed by Arens (1996): “Advertising is the non-personal communication of information, usually paid for and usually persuasive in nature, about products (goods and services or ideas) by an identified sponsor through various media” (Richards & Curran, 2002). Given its various forms, advertising can target individuals personally and can be integrated into the web pages and social media that we visit, as well as the mobile phones and computers that we own, and even in video games that we play, which is referred to as advergames (Dahlen & Rosengren, 2016). Third, advertising is a form of communication, which means that “communication” is a constituent element of advertising. Communication is the phenomenon that distinguishes advertising from other marketing tools (e.g., pricing, distribution)” (Eisend, 2016). Communication is at the heart of advertising; that is to say, advertising conveys messages to audiences, unlike other marketing tools such as pricing and distribution, which focus on fixing prices or delivering products to consumers. Henceforth, the importance of advertising revolves

around its capacity to communicate ideas and information about brands to influence consumer point of view and behaviour. As such advertisers conduct a plethora of research about consumers to determine what interests them, what bores them, what will encourage them to consume, and which communication techniques will impact them and stimulate their desire to purchase the products. Therefore, such communications are complex and are always in a process of changing.

Finally, persuasion is an important element of advertising; so persuasive language and techniques are employed to deliver the advertisement’s message and inform the audience about an idea and encourage them to buy or take action. We encounter persuasion in nearly every advertisement we view. The following examples illustrate persuasion through phrases that advertisers use: “Pick up the phone today!” and “Free gift for the first 100 callers”. “Hurry up”, “Crazy discounts only today”, “The first hundred people who will call today will get a prize”. “New taste”, “New design”, and “New packaging”, “Free of charge”, “Gift”, “Buy one and get the second as a gift” (Rohach & Rohach, 2021).

Strategies of Advertising

Message strategies are the main reliable methods used by advertisers to communicate the message theme to consumers. These message strategies are based on direct persuasion, and there are three broad categories of message strategies (Clow & Baack, 2021): cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and conative strategies. Each of these strategies includes sub-forms.

Cognitive Strategy

This strategy relies on rational thinking, presenting information clearly to consumers by highlighting the message’s attributes or benefits to influence their beliefs and knowledge. There are five major forms of this strategy:

Generic Messages

Which promote the attributes or benefits of a good or service without claiming superiority, as the company using these messages is the brand leader and dominant in the industry in which it operates. For example, McDonald’s is the brand leader in hamburger fast food restaurants in the world.

Pre-emptive Messages

This type pre-empts the competition by asserting supremacy through specific benefits of a product, service, or an idea being advertised. For example, the OMO ad initiates a competition regarding whiteness and invites other companies to participate in it.

Unique Selling Proposition

Asserts the distinctiveness of a product. For example, Coca-Cola Zero’s ad asserts uniqueness and says “Only Coke Zero gives you zero calories with the same great Coke taste” (Coca-Cola, 2017).

Hyperbole

Relies on exaggeration and is based on claims made without testing. For example, some cosmetic products promise fewer wrinkles in just one minute, which is an exaggeration with no basis in testing.

Comparative Advertisements

Based on a direct or indirect comparison between two brands, services, or goods, inviting competition with the alternative. For example, Pepsi employs this strategy to indirectly compare its product with other Coke products.

Affective Strategy

This strategy manipulates consumers' feelings and emotions in a repulsive manner by exploiting their sensitive side and using it as a strength to align with a product, service, or company to enhance the product's admiration, making the advertisement more comprehensible and indirectly influencing consumers' thoughts while stirring their desire to purchase. This strategy has two forms:

Resonance Advertising

Utilises users' past experiences and associates them with a product to initiate stronger bonds between the product and the consumer.

Emotional advertising

Identifies powerful emotions that can influence consumers like trust, friendship, love, serenity, and happiness, which can lead to product recalling or remembering and choice.

Conative Strategy

This strategy directly prompts action and influences consumers to purchase products, obtain services, or behave in general. There are two forms in this category:

Action-Inducing Conative Approaches

This form transforms the situation of understanding and liking into buying and consuming by incorporating a display or footage of purchases made by consumers.

Promotional Support for Conative Advertisements

This form is intended to support other promotional efforts, such as phone promotions, in the advertisements.

Advertising and Society

Ethics of Advertising

Arens *et al.* (2008) defined ethics of advertising this way: "Ethical advertising means what the advertiser and the advertiser's peers believe is morally right in a given situation" (Arens *et al.*, 2008). In other words, advertising ethics implies a set of regulatory principles and values that govern this domain, especially the communication methods between the seller and the buyer. These ethics can be framed into three specific moral principles: truthfulness, the dignity of the human being, and respect for social responsibility. Arens *et al.* (2008) define social responsibility as "what society views as the best for the

welfare of people in general or for a specific community of people." They also claim that "ethics and social responsibility can be seen as the moral obligation of advertisers not to violate our basic economic assumptions, even when there is no legal obligation" (Arens *et al.*, 2008). The American Advertising Federation (American Advertising Federation, 2025) has adopted eight important advertising ethics and principles that regulate: Truth, Substantiation, Comparisons, Bait advertising, Guarantees and Warranties, Price claims, Testimonials, and Taste and Decency.

The first principle concerns truth; that is to say, advertising should not deceive the consumer or use false facts to support the advertisement, as this misleads the consumer and undermines trust. Second, advertising claims should be substantiated by accurate and potential evidence. Third, false, misleading, or untrue claims about competitors' products, services, or ideas should be prohibited. Fourth, bait advertising is deemed unethical, as it attracts the consumer's attention with a promise of a sale, only to direct them to a more expensive product once achieved. Therefore, there should be sincerity in advertising. Fifth, advertisements regarding guarantees and warranties must provide consumers with ample information about their principal terms and limitations. Sixth, false advertising price claims should be avoided. Seventh, advertisements featuring testimonials—which are recommendations and formal statements typically made by a celebrity—must be genuine, honest, and reflective of reality. Eighth, advertising should adhere to standards of good taste and public decency.

Women as a Raw Material in Television Advertising

Advertising on television utilises many components and ingredients to ensure its success. One of these components that has recently had a significant impact on the effectiveness of any advertisement is women. Barthel (1988) said that "Advertising is also gendered in that much of it addresses our physical sense of self, our knowledge of the world gained through our bodies. It addresses our need to articulate our social identities through our physical appearances. As John Berger has argued, men create a sense of identity by extending out from their bodies, using it and their evident power to control objects and others. This we see clearly in advertisements for cigarettes, alcohol, stereos, and, especially, automobiles. Women, by contrast, work with and within the body" (Barthel, 1988). Television advertising is characterised by the portrayal of women not in a well-represented manner, but rather through the exploitation of female sexuality, beauty, and femininity, which advertisers manipulate to influence consumers by targeting their instinctive lust. For example, revealing and showing parts of a woman's body such as her legs, face, hair, breasts, and hips can seduce consumers, making the woman resemble a commodity and a raw material that is used in a repulsive way. Barthel (1988) continued and said "The female body communicates not the woman's power over others, but her presence, how

she takes herself. This in turn is reflected in the great emphasis on decoration of the female body, achieved through fashion and cosmetics” (Barthel, 1988). In other terms, the stereotypical use of the female body functions as a new means of communication, usually portrayed as a sex object with one role which is to stimulate and excite consumers, playing on their need for sex, love, or care. We often see the use of the female body represented by celebrities and models, who symbolise perfection in advertisements to sell a variety of products ranging from clothes, shampoo, beauty products, cosmetics, razors, shaving machines, and even cars. The consequences of such stereotypes can be harmful; in other words, “advertising that stereotypes women can foster unconscious and thoughtless attitudes toward women and their skills in society” (Achilleus, 2022).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Approach

This research aims to gain greater insight into how women are portrayed in Moroccan television advertisements, the study is explorative, it often employs qualitative content analysis, so as to enable the researcher to study, describe, and interpret various advertising videos downloaded from the internet after being broadcast on Moroccan TV channels, each ad features at least one female character. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches is used for this study, as the research questions focus on meanings, attitudes, interpretations and also numerical data. The study examines a limited number of advertisements in depth, not with the intent of generalisation, but rather to provide a nuanced understanding of the stereotypes and gender dynamics presented.

Research Questions

the research questions are:

Q1: What are the stereotypes associated with women in Moroccan television advertisements?

Q2: How do visual and verbal elements in Moroccan TV advertisements construct gender roles and as such shape Moroccan female identity?

Q3: Do Moroccan television advertisements reflect or challenge traditional cultural values regarding women?

Research Hypotheses

H1: Women are used more than men in Moroccan television advertisements.

H2: Domestic or beauty-related roles, such as cleaning, cooking, or self-care are the depictions of women in Moroccan advertisements.

H3: Most Moroccan television advertisements represent women in subordinate or passive roles compared to men.

H4: Male voiceovers are used more than female voiceovers in Moroccan commercials in order to reinforce male power and authority.

H5: The stereotypical portrayals of women in Moroccan TV advertisements reinforce traditional gender roles and patriarchal structures.

Data Collection Procedures

For this study, data was gathered using a qualitative non-participant structured observation technique. This approach is suitable as it fulfills the purposes of the research and adds to both the credibility and validity of the study's results.

A non-participant observation was conducted which means that the researcher observes without interaction with the participants; in this case, women portrayed in the commercials. The observation was structured because it adhered to a clear checklist outlining specific criteria for analysis like roles, appearances, behaviours, and narrative elements that represent women in Moroccan TV advertisements.

The collected data (visual and verbal content from commercials) was subjected to content and semiotic analysis. These methods reveal both explicit (denotative) and implicit (connotative) meanings related to stereotypical gender portrayals.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process through which collected data are organised, interpreted, and understood in relation to the research objectives. This study adopts a deductive approach, where analysis proceeds from a general level of focus to specific data interpretation—beginning with hypothesising, followed by data analysis, and ultimately determining whether the hypotheses are supported or not.

The data analysis complies to the Framework Method, this method includes five key stages: first, familiarisation with the data; second, identifying a thematic framework; third, indexing; fourth, charting, and fifth, mapping and interpretation (Ritchie & Spencer, 1994). The data will be sorted accordingly and utilised for descriptive analysis, then a second-order analysis, which includes identifying recurrent themes, recognising patterns, assembling respondents into groups, constructing sequences of events, and then addressing the research questions. This stage leads to the development or refinement of hypotheses.

Since the data to be analysed consists of visual and verbal media material, this study adopts a hybrid analytical approach that combines content and semiotic analysis. Content analysis is employed to categorise and classify verbal or behavioural data for the purpose of summarisation and interpretation (Krippendorff, 2018). The analysis will be conducted on two levels. The first level is descriptive, which addresses the question: What does the data say? The second is an interpretative level, which asks: What meanings do the data imply or convey? In parallel, semiotic analysis will be employed to interpret images and video clips from Moroccan commercials. Semiotic analysis provides tools for decoding both the literal and symbolic dimension of media materials as such it is important for studying media signs and symbols. This method is found in the fundamental theories of Ferdinand de Saussure (Swiss linguist, 1857–1913) and

Charles Sanders Peirce (American philosopher, 1839–1914), who paved the way for modern semiotic theory (Chandler, 2017).

Semiotic analysis uses two concepts which are denotation and connotation; denotation refers to the literal meaning of a scene or image, while connotation stands for the imbedded cultural and ideological meanings implied by that image or scene. These two levels of signification are quintessential for understanding the techniques by which commercials communicate gender roles, political ideologies, and cultural values for audiences.

Limitations

This study is limited to a selected sample of Moroccan television advertisements. To ameliorate the findings, advertisements from various regions or broadcasting periods compose our sample. Therefore, the results provide significant understanding of the portrayal of women in Moroccan commercials, but the findings cannot be generalised over larger Moroccan population because of cultural, demographic, and regional differences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Women and the Transmission of Negative Femininity Women as Housewives



Figure 1: Women as housewives in some Moroccan TV ads

The stereotypes of housewives are predominant in Moroccan television advertisements; the need for housewives and the fact that many women conform to the housewife image have allowed this stereotype to persist, leading to its repetition in numerous Moroccan

ads. The portrayal of housewives in advertisements follows a significant pattern, as we will observe that the majority of ads depicting women as housewives relate to household products such as Mr. Propre, Danone, Tide, Lesieur, Omo, El Kef, Afia, and Fairy.

Table 1: Depiction of Women and Voiceover Gender in Housewife Stereotype Advertisements

Advertisement	Voiceover	Women occupation	Stereotype
Mr. Propre	Male	House cleaning	Housewife
Tide	Male	Washing clothes	
El Kef 1	Female	Modern	
El Kef 2	Female	Washing clothes	
Afia	Male	Cook	
Lesieur	Male	Cook and wife	

This table shows that the “housewife stereotype” is shown in different advertisements related to household chores such as cleaning, washing or cooking products. Women’s roles in these ads are confined to domestic housechores and service to their families ignoring their intelligence and capabilities. Moreover, male voiceover signifies that

although the product is associated with women, men are the voices of instruction and authority.

This figure 2 presents the numerical representation of women in these adverts, that are when coupled with the roles they represent, petrifies the visual depiction of the housewife stereotype in Moroccan advertising.

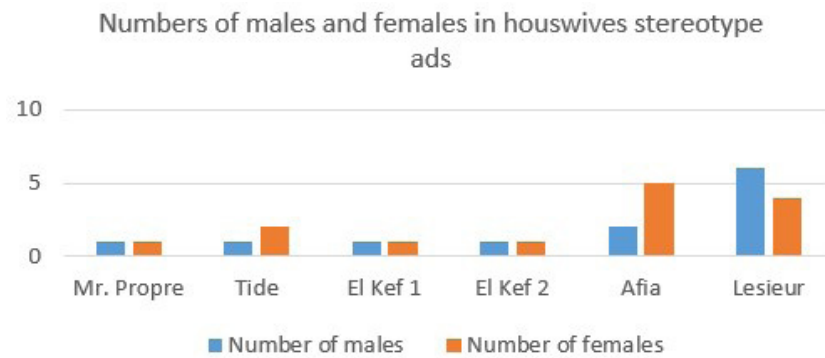


Figure 2: Number of Males and Females Present in Housewife Stereotype Advertisements

Mr. Propre

Mr Propre is an advertisement that positions a female protagonist within the domestic sphere of the kitchen, depicting her in a state of helplessness due to unfinished household cleaning before the arrival of guests. This story is resolved through the intervention of a genie-like figure who takes on a heroic role. The genie provides the woman with Mr Propre's cleaning product, thereby offering a solution to her predicament.

From a semiotic perspective, the denotative function of the advertisement is straightforward: to promote a cleaning agent presented as possessing almost magical efficacy, capable of eradicating dirt through the agency of the genie. However, the connotative meanings of this representation are more complex. The advertisement targets women in a way that reinforces traditional gender stereotypes. By presenting Mr Propre, who signify the masculine personification of the cleaning product, as



Figure 3: Mr Propre Advertisement

the agent who empowers women to fulfil their domestic duties, the advertisement implicitly assigns household cleaning as a primarily female duty.

Furthermore, certain iterations of this advertisement feature a young girl, seemingly learning domestic practices (Bluegreen broadcast, 2011). Including a young girl in such ad serves to normalize and perpetuate the idea that domestic labour is the destiny of women from an early age. The heroic role is assigned only to Mr. Propre, who is celebrated for his battle against dirt. This heroization can be interpreted as an attempt to raise the status of the housewife in the viewers' eyes, perhaps even attracting the sympathy of female members of the audience who dream of such a level of autonomy and recognition. Nonetheless, the direct link between women and the kitchen with cooking and cleaning roles clearly perpetuates the image of woman being confined to the role of housewife.

This pattern extends beyond the Mr Propre advertisement. That is to say, soap powders and detergents ads such as

Tide, Surf, Magix, Fair, and Downy frequently feature female characters, a consistent inclusion that places women within the domestic context. Brands like Tide and El Kef soap products similarly utilise advertising strategies that portray women as intrinsically linked to household duties.

Tide

Although advertisements change and transform, Tide advertisements have used the same rhetorical strategies to not lose their relevance. One strategy involves the same scenario of a man who usually expresses his dissatisfaction with the level of whiteness of his clothes; this dissatisfaction is remedied by his wife's use of Tide. Another common strategy is comparative advertising, in which the products are compared and the rival products are always portrayed as inferior to Tide's superior cleaning power. However, a repetitive strategy within Tide's advertising campaigns is the use of women engaged in the act of washing clothes often by hand.



Figure 4: Tide Advertisement on Moroccan TV channels

Denotatively, this visual representation explicitly depicts women performing a domestic task. Yet, this literal portrayal is superficial as the connotative implications reflect and construct traditional gender roles within society. These ads, in other words, constitute a form of psychological manipulation as they work to confine

women to domestic house chore activities. The repetitive imagery these ads share could be seen as a subliminal cultural message that influence viewers to subconsciously believe that laundry is a female responsibility.

El Kef



Figure 5: El Kef Advertisement on Moroccan TV channels

El Kef soap advertisements often connect female figures to domestic labour roles, such as maids and laundry workers, and as symbolic representations of the obedient housewife. This advertising method uses convincing techniques to attract the attention of consumers. One the common strategies used by this ad is conducting on camera interviews with real people about the product, the positive feedback is designed to show the extent to which the product is successful.

The target audience for these commercials are women, and they are often presented in stereotypical ways. For example; 'Modern' women in El Kef advertisement are using the product to reinforce the idea that traditional domestic roles can also be fulfilled by modern women.

In contrast, 'traditional' women are linked to the domestic sphere through visual cues, such as traditional aprons and headscarves, confining them to roles as homemakers. These portrayals in El Kef soap advertisements perpetuate stereotypes of women in domestic roles.

Lesieur and Afia

Advertisements such as Lesieur and Afia are also dominated by the typical housewife stereotypes. The Lesieur advertisement pervasively reinforces the notion of women occupying domestic roles. Throughout different video shots, the advertisement presents a series of depictions that when put together construct a specific image of female identity. The sequence starts with a young woman engaged chatting, followed by glimpses of a man in contemplation and women preparing food and setting the table in the kitchen. Later, a woman pours oil into a tagine; this is then followed by a scene of a young girl greeting a man coming home from work or travel.

The narrative then moves to a woman in a public act of domesticity feeding her husband from a tagine. Another scene from the same ad depicts a woman cooking couscous with the help of a little girl; this latter adds oil and garnishes to the couscous then the woman serves it to her family.



Figure 6: Lesieur advertisement

This advertisement reinforces traditional gender roles by showing a family scene in which the young daughter wears an orange dress similar to her mother's and the son wears a white jellaba and red turban like his father. A wedding celebration is shown at the end of the ad, and then a picture of a woman who looks like the bride serves a roasted chicken to her happy husband. His grateful expression highlights how well she completed her household responsibilities then the product's logo appears at the end of the commercial.

This advertisement is replete with stereotypical depictions of women with one main duty that is to



Figure 7: Afia Advertisement

serve their husbands by cooking, cleaning, waiting, and being obedient wives. What is more problematic is the incorporation of the mother figure who teaches her daughter to cook, such portrayal perpetuates these traditional ideas of femininity. Associating the daughter with her mother who excels at being a good housewife and the son with his working and travelling father, the advertisement transmits gender portrayals and influences how society views and constructs each gender.

Women as Sex Objects

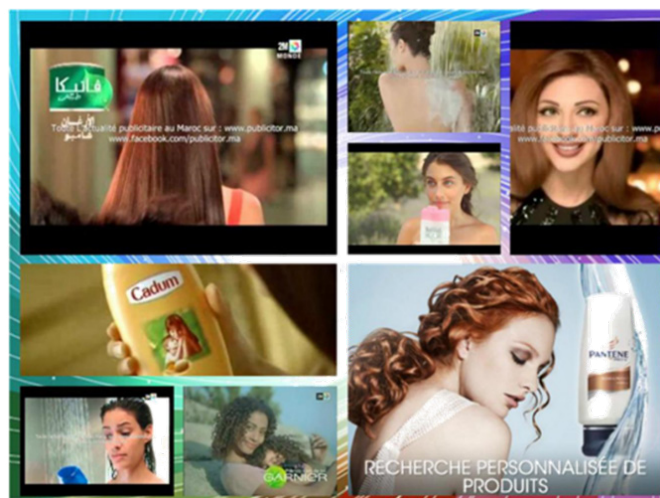


Figure 8: Women as sex objects in some Moroccan TV ads

Women's objectification in advertising is also prevalent as they are reduced to the status of sex objects, this objectification restricts their role in society to giving men pleasure. This tendency is best illustrated by a number of Moroccan ads, especially those that advertise cosmetics, fragrances, shampoos, hair oils, and feminine hygiene items like Pantene, Garnier, Always, Dettol, Head and Shoulders, Vatika, Sunsilk, Nivea, Cadum, Oriflame, Wella, and Taous. These advertisements often depict women's bodies as commodities to be evaluated and viewed in accordance with male lust. This tactic, which is supposedly appealing to both male and female consumers,

stems from the widespread perception among many advertisers that "sex sells" which leads to the exploitation of female bodies for financial gain.

This strategy is used based on the assumption that the imagery will arouse the sexual desires of male viewers. Whereas female viewers will aspire to achieve a comparable standard of beauty. As a result, advertisers deliberately play with the audience's psychological needs. The subsequent analysis will explore the denotative and connotative dimensions of specific advertisements that employ the stereotype of women as sex objects.

Table 2: Portrayed Role of Women and Voiceover Gender in Sex Object Stereotype Advertisements

Sex Objects Stereotype			
Advertisement	Voiceover Gender	Portrayed Role of Women	Stereotype
Nivea	Female	Playful, take care of their body.	Sex object
Dettol	Female and Male	Take care of their body and beauty.	
Oriflame	Female	Take care of their beauty.	
Le Petit Marseillais	Female	Take care of the body.	

This table indicates the “sex object” stereotypes in Moroccan TV commercials that mainly deal with beauty and body care products. The table shows that in the majority of these ads, female voiceover dominates which accentuates the idea that women are both the speakers

and the subject of the narratives. However, even when male voices are included (as in Dettol) women are still portrayed as care takers of their bodies and beauty. The portrayals devalue women and reduce them to sex objects with a narrow appearance-based identity.

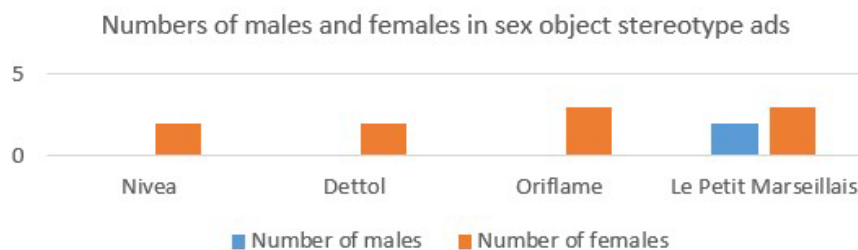


Figure 9: Number of Males and Females Present in sex object Stereotype Advertisements

This figure shows the presence of males and females in advertisements that portray women as sex object stereotypes; in this figure, women presence dominates men presence in beauty related products which accentuates the idea of gendered objectification in advertising.

Nivea

Nivea advertisements support the stereotype that women focus more on their physical appearance than anything else. When looking closely at the superficially harmless scenes, the ad objectifies women and treats them as sex



Figure 10: Nivea TV ad in the Moroccan Channel 2M

objects. The commercial progresses through multiple depictions. In the first scene, a woman is shown putting cream on her skin in a natural environment as her daughter observes. After a playful exchange on a swing, there is a scene on a porch with a view of the beach where the daughter imitates her mother by putting Nivea, “Nivea my dearest possession,” appears as the mother

and daughter run happily on the beach in later scenes before the mother kisses her sleeping daughter as they head to bed.

This commercial implicitly reinforces a stereotypical view of women; this skin cream advertisement subtly imply that women’s top priorities should be taking care of and maintaining their physical bodies. Nivea’s opening scene

maybe seen as attributing women's bodies with delicacy and in need of continuous attention like a delicate natural element. This focus on taking care of the body is normalized, sustained and passed by through the daughter's observation and imitation of her mother's skin care routine. Furthermore, the inclusion of the swing scene in the ad is not innocent play but can be interpreted as infantilizing adult women, portraying them as playful and childlike lacking intellectual depth. The porch and the beach scenes highlight the importance of skincare from a young age and also emphasize the stereotype that women are carefree and flirtatious especially when women are seen laughing and running across the beach. The bedtime scene at the end of the ad, featuring the daughter in bed and the slogan 'Nivea my dearest possession' is significant. That is to say,

Nivea's association with a "dearest possession" implies that a woman's skin, and consequently her physical form, is her most valuable possession, thus directly connecting the product to the female body. The idea that women are primarily appreciated for their physical attributes is further supported by this. In conclusion, although Nivea's planned scenes and final tagline may look harmless, subtly support the objectification of women by emphasizing their physical attributes and implying that their bodies are their most valuable possession, a "possession" that should be maintained with Nivea-like products. The inclusion of the young daughter further normalises this focus on self-objectification from an early age.

Dettol



Figure 11: Dettol TV advertisement on the Moroccan Channel 2M

Dettol's advertisement uses the sexual objectification marketing strategy; in fact, the ad shows a semi-naked woman showering with the product. In different terms, Dettol's ad seems to focus more on the sexualization and degradation of women on the expense of selling the product.

The advertisement starts with a sequence very much like the Nivea ad, showing the lady walking all sensually through a field of flowers, her long hair animatedly flowing in the wind. This is followed by the woman lying down on the dirt while caressing herself. The advertisement then changes to the scene of the woman and the little girl touching each other's faces gently from close proximity. After showing the ingredients of the product, we are taken back to a scene of the woman showering semi-nude under a waterfall, concluding the ad with the woman and the girl lying on what is dubbed as 'virgin ground.'

Just like in the Nivea advertisement, the Dettol advertisement sets up an association of women with nature, which can be interpreted as granting them attributes of frailty and vulnerability. Nevertheless, with the Dettol advertisement, the perceived fragility gets mixed with outright sexuality. The floral setting, often associated with delicacy, is contrasted against the

woman's sensual walk, deliberately drawing attention to her physicality.

This sexual scene is further heightened in the shot where the woman slowly reclines and caresses her own hand creating a very sexualized image. The next scene of the intimate facial contact between the woman and the young girl is particularly troubling, as it can be interpreted as the sexualization of a minor or the inappropriate sexual imprinting of a child with adult sexuality. While the evident aim of this commercial is to suggest that the product is gentle on a child's skin; the visual language it chooses is overtly sexual and potentially exploitative. The sexual objectification instances become obvious in the scene where a woman in showering semi-nude under a waterfall; placing the woman in such a vulnerable and seductive pose dehumanizes her and reinforces the patriarchal view of a woman existing only to please and appeal to men. This visual rhetoric, therefore, projects a social structure wherein women are considered objects, with their bodies turned into commodities for male consumption.

Oriflame and Le Petit Marseillais



Figure 12: Oriflame TV ad



Figure 13: Le Petit Marseillais TV ad

Oriflame and Le Petit Marseillais advertisements also display characteristics of sexual objectification where women's bodies are inserted in a deliberate sexualized way to promote the products regardless of the harmful stereotypes they perpetuate.

Oriflame makeup commercial begins with a woman applying bright red lipstick in a very seductive way. This woman then moves walking outside in a pink dress, where her movements and gestures were exaggerated to highlight physical qualities, before having her friends praising her. This ad goes beyond selling makeup; it reinforces stereotypes about women's behaviour and presentation. The way the woman applied the lipstick, walked and acted in the whole ad is portrayed as overtly sexual; this contributes to the normalization of a narrow and objectified image within society. The portrayal thus systematically locks women into a "sex object" frame.

In a similar vein, Le Petit Marseillais advertisement promoting a bath product always shows a woman taking a shower while partially nude. The visual strategy of

exposing the female body for public consumption and assessment without regard for moral limits or gender representation highlights the female body sexual objectification. Thus, it can be interpreted that such advertising practice serve patriarchal interests and satisfy male voyeuristic gaze.

The Depiction of Women as Inferior to Men

The stereotype of woman as inferior to men is manifested in various ways in Moroccan advertising. This inferiority or hierarchical positioning is evident in advertisements featuring both sexes, where women are depicted as physically weaker or limited to household duties or activities. For instance, housewives' advertisements depict women as being obedient to men and dependent on them. However, even when shown alone in ads the inferiority stereotype persists for women. Ads for beauty products, which usually objectify women for male consumption depicting them as weak, naïve, or infantile, are a clear example of this. Therefore, whether or not men are

present, ads that feature women frequently convey a message of female inferiority.

This stereotyping that defines women in relation to men hinders women's professional accomplishments, creative endeavours, independence, and variety of life roles. This

stereotype is further accentuated by the dominance of male voiceovers in commercials and also the inclusion of a male voiceover even in situation where a female voiceover is present. The analysis that follows will focus on particular ads that portray women as less valuable than men.

Table 3: Voiceover Gender, Men and Women's occupation and place in sex objects Stereotype Advertisements

Women as Inferior to men				
Advertisement	voiceover	Men's occupation and place in the ad	Women's occupation and place in the ad	Stereotype
Genova	Song + male	Waiters and Main dancers in the foreground and background	Dance in the foreground	Inferiority to men
Colorado	Song + male	Main dancers in the foreground	Dance in the background	Inferiority to men
Sunsilk	Male + female	Scientists and experts	Helpers and scientifically ignorant	Inferiority to men

This table focuses on women as inferior to men stereotype advertisements and it illustrates how gender roles are distributed unequally. Genova, Colorado, and Sunsilk are the three ads that perpetuate this stereotype; men in the ads are depicted in dominant roles (e.g., waiters, scientists, main dancers), while women occupy secondary positions such as background dancers or passive assistants. For voiceover, male voiceover dominates the ads except Sunsilk

ad where both male and female voiceovers are present yet the visual hierarchy still privileges male authority and knowledge. Traditional patriarchal structures are reflected in this imbalance as the male presence signifies expertise and leadership, while female presence is decorative for the male gaze. The stereotypes as such reinforce social norms that associate men with competence and control and reduce women to objectified supportive roles.

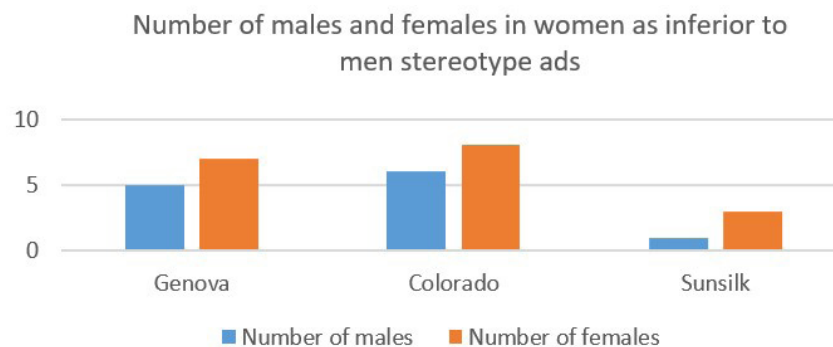


Figure 14: Number of males and females in women as inferior to men stereotype advertisements

The figure indicates that although women outnumber men in all three ads, their numerical presence does not translate into power or prominence. This reflects a common advertising strategy whereby female visibility is high, yet their representation reinforces inferiority to men

through role allocation and special positioning, as will be examined in the analysis of these ads.

Genova

Genova and Colorado advertisements are prime examples



Figure 15: Geneva TV advertisement on the Moroccan channel 2M

of how women are portrayed as having inferior roles to men. Men are frequently in the foreground of these ads, while women are frequently cast in stereotypical background roles. The distinct roles and spatial placement of men and women in the Genova commercial successfully convey this inferiority dynamic. In particular, the commercial shows people of both sexes dancing. A male dancer is situated in the foreground, while

numerous women occupy and dance in the background. This placement prioritizes the male figure over the female figure; which communicates a hierarchy of importance. Consequently, the message of female inferiority is conveyed subtly and effectively and also normalized in the minds of viewers through repetition.

Colorado



Figure 16: Colorado TV Advertisement in the Moroccan Channel 2M

Colorado advertisement foregrounds the inferiority stereotype through the positioning of men and women who dance in the advertisement to promote the product. In other words, visually women are placed in the background and men are in the foreground attracting all the attention. In fact, women are perceived as inferior to men and in a subordinate position and this draws all the focus to men rewarding them with an implicit sense of authority and status. Whereas, women are relegated to the role of followers who mirror and imitate the steps by their male counterparts. Furthermore, Moroccan advertising involves the use of male voiceover, even for women related products with female actors.

This practice suggests a persistent need to assert male presence and perceived superiority. For instance, a Moroccan commercial for Activia (Bluegreen broadcast, 2011a) features nine women of varying ages, yet concludes with a male voiceover. In comparison, Vatika (Bluegreen broadcast, 2014) is a beauty advertisement centered on women, but the producers use a male voiceover to comment on the product despite the irrelevant presence of men. This use of male voiceovers even in contexts that focus on women reinforces the stereotype of female inferiority.

Sunsilk



Figure 17: Sunsilk TV Advertisement in the Moroccan Channel 2M

The stereotypes of female inferiority can also be found in the limitation of women's mental capacity, as women are represented to have decreased capabilities of complex thought and thus deserving reduced social authority and status. An example of this is found in the Sunsilk advertisement that featured two women and a man. The two women in the advertisement are occupied with the aesthetic concern of their hair, and they are reliant on some external 'fix' to achieve the desired smoothness. The man, on the other hand, is advertised and portrayed as the scientist, the expert, and the only one who can provide a solution. This portrayal restricts the women's cognitive capacity to mere aesthetic concerns while the man has been portrayed as having high-level, abstract and sophisticated thinking. This is intended to reinforce the authority and status of men in society by simultaneously taking away that status and authority from women and therefore, perpetuating the stereotypes of women's intellectual inferiority.

CONCLUSIONS

This article has explored the portrayal of women in a selection of Moroccan television advertisements, through semiotic content analysis. The advertisements are broadcast on Moroccan national channels such as 2M and Al Aoula; the goal of the article was to make viewers aware of the different ways advertising reinforces gender stereotypes and transmits ideological messages that shape public point of view of women and Moroccan culture. The research elucidates that the primary portrayal of women in Moroccan advertisements are either as housewives, sex objects or inferior to men. The article concludes that these portrayals are not incidental or innocent, they contribute to the normalization of gender inequality and as such they are part of a broader discursive and ideological frameworks that both reflect and emphasizes patriarchal norms. That is to say, although they might look harmless, these portrayals are loaded with ideology as they influence how gender roles are internalized by viewers, especially young viewers which can contribute to women's marginalization. The consistent use of old, traditional, and limiting roles suggests an alignment of advertising practice with hegemonic and cultural ideologies. On the Whole, the research pinpoints that Moroccan TV advertising is a space for the reproduction and legitimization of gender norms and calls for advertisers, policy-makers and media producers to adopt a more holistic, inclusive and empowering portrayals of women which reflect the complexities of Moroccan society.

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