

## **The inferiority of women in ads**

At a semiotic level, there is disparity in the portrayal of men and women in popular advertising. I agree with several “Gender Studies” in which, a deep analysis of ads, shows that, when men and women appear in ads together, the women are depicted as weaker than men. It is also evident when females appear alone, in fact the stereotype of the female is always fragile and unintelligent. As we unfortunately see in all forms of media, the roles of women in print advertising are stereotypical and limited. Other studies such as Courtney and Whipple (1983) and Barthel (1987) confirm that the association of women and specific domestic roles has been solidified in popular culture, particularly in advertising. Courtney and Lockeretz’s important analysis of magazine advertising (1971) indicated that women have been portrayed as domestic providers who do not make significant decisions, are dependent on men. What is more is that they often become an “object” whose the ultimate benefit of product usage, is to give men pleasure, indeed the ads imply that the product’s main purpose is to improve the user’s appeal to men.

On the contrary, males appear strong and cultured, they always seem to act tough and hide their emotion.

Taking everything into account, in my opinion an evident message of female inferiority is always sent.

I know that it is hard to understand without proper analysis tools, but behind an ad there are months of hard studying and planning realised by psychologists and experts.

A quick and superficial look doesn’t give people the opportunity to catch it.

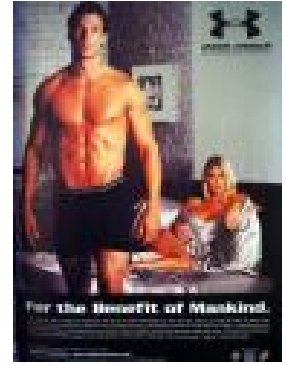
And now let us analyse different advertisements in which different situations are portrayed.

The first shows man and woman together:

### 1)The woman is portrayed as weaker than man.

The composition of the scene helps us to understand this.

A muscular male is standing in underwear in the foreground, whereas the female is reclining in the background. Background and Foreground are here the “key-words”.



### 2)Man is depicted as more important than woman.

Standing in the foreground also means to be more important. Moreover the man is *muscular and virile*, as result he appears confident and strong.

The woman is in the background and due to it she doesn't appear as important as the man.

What's more, the man standing means that he is controlling and dominating her, and as a consequence she is serving him. It is clear that **who dominate is the most important**. Background, Foreground, Standing are here the “key-words”.

### 3)Power dimension.

The different positions also indicate the power dimension in society; because of them a powerful man who takes the control in our society is clearly represented. This ad is absolutely supporter of a society with a chauvinist background. The woman is a passive observer to the man's active presence.

Last but not least, the spot says: **”For the Benefit of Mankind”**, phrase whose one ideological meaning is that “mankind” is the superior race. Due to that men are the ones who benefit.



As a result, the roles generally offered to women are very limited. Women are **confined to the** domestic sphere—caring for children, cleaning the house, shopping for groceries **and making** meals for husbands.



Furthermore, we usually see several representations of ingenuous, stupid and helpless women, which portray women as intellectually inferior. In popular advertising this trope is expressed visually —as women's faces are composed in

such a way as to suggest stupidity.



As well as linguistically, women are seen saying stupid things or being portrayed as unable to think for themselves without the assistance of a man, and as I told you before the worst role is to satisfy men's pleasure.

We could find many other pictures confirming this thesis.

To conclude, I think that a not so deep analysis could help people to understand the women's role portrayed in ads and in media in general; such a role that in my opinion shows a cultural heritage and demonstrates that our society is still pretty chauvinist.

References:

<http://www.genderads.com/>