

## Mirror on the media

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The Mirror on the Media project aims to extend the Gender and Media quarterly trends survey that has been developed on a pilot basis so that this can serve as a monitoring tool, in between major research studies, for measuring progress in achieving gender balance in the media. Previous studies include *Who talks on radio talk shows* and *Who makes the news*, an analysis of the 2005 Global Media Monitoring Project

(GMMP) results in Southern Africa.

In 2006/2007 GL conducted a ground breaking monitoring project on advertising that will be used in the ongoing debates and engagement with the advertising industry. Monitoring took place over a two week period in December 2006, followed by separate male and female focus group discussions on selected case studies that are used in this report to amplify the quantitative findings.

### Outputs

The study yielded a regional overview and three country reports covering 1650 radio, television, print and billboard advertisements in Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

### Outcomes

Key findings of the study include:

- **Women are more likely to feature in adverts than as news sources:** Overall, women constituted 41% of all subjects (those featuring in the adverts as voices and or images) in the advertising monitoring, compared to the regional average of 19% news sources in the GMMP (2005).
- **More women does not mean greater gender sensitivity:** The higher proportion of women in advertisements than as news sources is, however, not a measure of greater gender sensitivity in this area of media practice, but a reflection of the fact that advertising still relies heavily on women's physical attributes as a marketing ploy.
- **Women are often ignored even where their consumer muscle counts:** An upshot of "gender blindness" is that women are often treated like they do not exist, even where their consumer muscle counts. For example sport advertising has a heavy male bias even though women often constitute a high proportion of the spectators at such events.
- **Women are more likely to be seen than heard:** One of the ways in which gender stereotypes are reinforced in advertising is the fact that women are far more likely to feature as images than as voices in advertisements. In the study, women comprised 54% of subjects in billboard followed by 51% of the subjects in print advertisements. In contrast, they comprised 42% of TV and 35% of radio advertisement subjects.
- **Billboards display the highest proportion of blatant stereotypes:** It is significant that women not only constitute the highest proportion of subjects in billboards but that these also have the highest proportion of

blatant stereotypes, often using women as mere objects to attract attention, with no relationship to the actual product (like a woman in a scanty top advertising air time or standing next to a car).

- **Men are the voice of authority:** On average women constituted only 29% of all voice-overs. Male voice-overs reinforce the stereotype of men being in control and as the voice of authority.
- **But there are interesting examples of gender aware advertising emerging:** Despite these biases, the study found an interesting array of advertisements classified as "gender aware". These included advertisements that portray women and men as equal partners; with similar educational and economic aspirations; as well as advertisements that challenge traditional roles of both women and men.

### Next Steps

- Launch of the report in the four case study countries
- Engagement with advertising standards authorities on developing gender codes as part of the gender in media regulation project.
- Link to GEMSA alerts project for raising complaints and getting action taken on sexist alerts.

