

Gender and Advertising in Southern Africa

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MIRROR ON THE MEDIA

Mirror on the Media
Gender and Advertising in Southern Africa

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Acronyms

AAA	Association of Advertising Agencies
ADMA	Advertising Media Association
AIDS	Acquired Immuno Deficiency Syndrome
AMF	Advertising Media Forum
AMPS	All Media Products Survey
ASA	Advertising Standards Authority
ASASA	Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa
ASC	Advertising Standards Committee
AZA	Association of Zimbabwe Advertisers
BS	Blatant Stereotype
CBD	Central Business District
CE	Code of Ethics
CIAZ	Communications Industry of Zimbabwe
DAB	Day After Broadcast
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GA	Gender Aware
GB	Gender Blind
GEMSA	Gender and Media Southern Africa Network
GL	Gender Links
GMBS	Gender and Media Baseline Study
GMMF	Global Media Monitoring Project
HIV	Human Immuno Virus
IBA	Independent Broadcasting Authority- Mauritius
MBC	Mauritius Broadcasting Corporation
MIC	Media and Information Commission
MISA	Media Institute of Southern Africa
MMD	Movement for Multi-party Democracy
MWO	Media Match Organisation
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
SABC	South African Broadcasting Corporation
SAARF	South African Advertising Research Foundation
SMS	Short Message Service
SS	Subtle Stereotype
TV	Television
ZAAPA	Zimbabwe Association of Accredited Practitioners in Advertising
ZABG	Zimbabwe Amalgamated Banking Group
ZANIS	Zambia News and Information Services
ZARF	Zimbabwe Advertising Research Foundation
ZIM	Zambia Institute of Marketing
ZNBC	Zambia National Broadcasting Corporation
ZTV	Zimbabwe Television
ZWRCN	Zimbabwe Women Resource Centre and Network

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Special thanks also go to focus group participants across the four countries, as well as institutional partners including the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network; Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) in Zimbabwe; Media Watch Organisation (MWO) GEMSA; the Media Monitoring Project of Zimbabwe (MMPZ) and the Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre and Network (ZWRCN).

Rochelle Renere Davidson and later Sikhonzile Ndlovu from Gender Links' research department coordinated the research. Colleen Lowe Morna, Executive Director of Gender Links and Chair of the Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network, assisted by Sikhonzile Ndlovu edited the report.

Foreword



What on earth does the size of a woman's bra have to do with smoking cigarettes? The question, posed by a woman in one of the focus group discussions for this study on advertising in four Southern African countries, is one that could well be asked of many of the advertisements that flash around us each day.

After several studies on gender in news content, this study is the first by GL and partner networks to probe other areas of media content that have an equal if not greater impact on gender relations in society.

It is estimated that each day we are bombarded by some 10 000 images, each sending out powerful messages that are subconsciously embedded in the psyche. Advertisements account for the vast majority of these images.

Unlike news content that must be impartial, considered and fair, advertisers have the licence to play with our minds by accentuating the bizarre; taking us on feel good trips; or lifting us out of our normal space: whatever it takes to catch our attention.

Precisely because of this power over the mind, advertising is a critical area of concern for transforming gender relations. The good news is that women are far more likely to be reflected in advertising than in news content. The bad news is that this is often for all the wrong reasons.

Valued more in society for their physical than mental attributes, women (like the one wearing a Cup D bra in a cigarette advert) are more often than not used as objects to sell merchandise (presumably to a largely male buying audience) than because they comprise 52 percent of potential consumers.

As this research shows, women are more likely to be seen than heard; they predominate in billboards and still images and hardly feature in voice overs; and it is in these still images that we see blatant stereotypes at their worst. When one adds up the gender blind adverts (or instances in which adverts are simply oblivious of female consumers) with those that display either blatant or subtle stereotypes, adverts with one kind or the other of gender bias still far outweigh those that might be regarded as gender aware.

What is interesting about this research, that included separate focus group discussions with men and women on the case studies selected, is that audiences are alive to these biases. Women in particular respond negatively or with ambivalence to the blatant stereotypes while young women resist being type cast as homemakers and cooks.

A surprising number of men, young and old, said they would like to see men in more diverse roles, such as cooking and caring for the family. Women and men warmed to the increasing examples of "gender benders" in advertising. These findings concur with those of the Gender and Media Audience Study (GMAS) conducted by GL and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) as a follow up to the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) on editorial content. GMAS found that across Southern Africa women and men want more human interest and local news with greater gender balance and diversity.

Could it be that by harping on tired old stereotypes, advertisers are losing out on potential new markets? If advertising is meant to capture our imagination, then it should be able to lift us into a more equal, exciting and diverse world. It's time that we as women said: if you want to sell your cigarettes, find some other way to do so than a bra! Come on advertisers, how about really surprising us!

Colleen Lowe Morna
Executive Director, Gender Links.
Chairperson, Gender and Media Southern Africa (GEMSA) Network

Executive summary

This report is part of *Mirror on the Media* series of monitoring reports coordinated by GL with the support of the Open Society Initiative of Southern Africa (OSISA) on gender and 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.

Covering 1650 radio, television, print and billboard advertisements in Mauritius, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe, the study aimed to establish how women and men are represented and portrayed in advertising. 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.

Findings

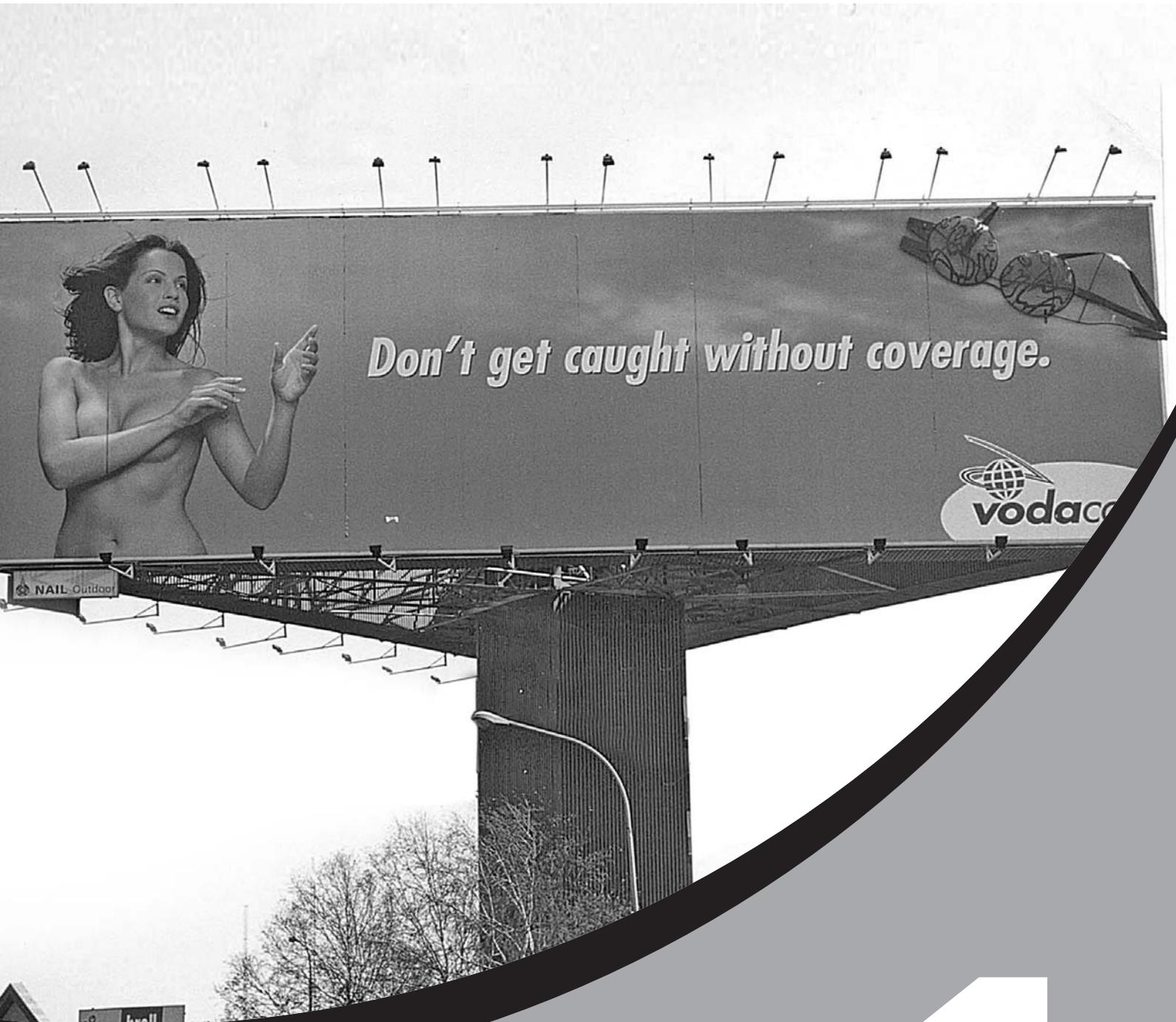
Key findings of the study include:

- **Women are more likely to feature in advertisement than as news sources:** Overall, women constituted 41% of all subjects (those featuring in the advertisements as voices and or images) in the advertising monitoring, compared to the regional average of 19% news sources in the GMMP (2005). Of the four countries in the study, Zambia had the lowest percentage of women sources in the GMMP (17%) but more than double this figure of women subjects in the advertising study (47%). Even South Africa, which had the highest proportion of women sources in the GMMP (26%), had a higher proportion of women subjects in the advertisements monitored (38%).
- **But gender parity is far from being reached:** It is significant, however, that no country in the advertising study had equal numbers of women and men subjects. At 47% Zambia came closest to doing so, followed by Zimbabwe at 43%, South Africa at 38%, and Mauritius at 36%.
- **More women does not mean greater gender sensitivity:** The higher proportion of women in advertisements than as news sources is, 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.
- **Gender bias of one kind or the other is evident in most adverts:** If advertisements that are regarded as gender neutral are excluded (for example a cell phone with no person in the advertisement) 62 percent of the items monitored were classified as either gender blind (regarding women as non-existent) or displaying blatant or subtle stereotypes, with only 38% percent of advertisements classified as gender aware.
- **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 billboards 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. The pattern is the same across countries although Mauritius, at 38%, is above the regional average of 29%. South Africa and Zimbabwe had the same proportion of women voice-overs at 24%). The proportion of women voice-overs in Zambia stood at 30%. Male voice-overs reinforce the stereotype of men being in control and as the voice of authority.
- **The gender division of labour further reinforces stereotypes:** Another way in which stereotypes are reinforced is in the different roles that women and men are portrayed in advertising. For example women constitute 82% of those classified as model/beauty contestant/sex object and 60% of home-makers. Men dominated in business (68%) but with interesting country variations. In Zambia women constituted 61% of those portrayed in business in advertising, compared to 43% in Mauritius, 14% in Zimbabwe and 11% in South Africa.
- **Telecommunications and indoor household goods are the most advertised products:** Telecommunications and indoor household products topped the list of advertised goods. Automobiles, travel and leisure were the least advertised products.
- **Women and men are strongly associated with certain kinds of products:** One of the ways in which subtle stereotypes are reinforced in advertising is through the strong association of certain product types with either men or women. For example household goods, food and cleaning materials are almost always associated with women, while financial services are typically associated with men.
- **Older women are virtually non-existent:** In all countries, and in a pattern similar to the news, women above the age of 36 are virtually non-existent in advertising. Almost all the older people in advertisements are men. This is another way in which subtle stereotypes are reinforced.
- **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.
- **Consumers have a higher degree of gender consciousness than advertisers might imagine:** Women and men focus groups demonstrated a high degree of gender awareness, frequently questioning why women are excluded from certain advertisements, and why women and men are portrayed in predictable ways in advertisements. Women in particular found the tendency to treat women as bodies without brains demeaning and younger women reacted negatively to the traditional domestic roles in which women are often cast. Both male and female focus groups commented that they found the gender aware advertisements refreshing and (in the case of women) more inclusive.

Structure of the report

The report comprises six chapters. The first chapter covers the background and rationale for the study; the methodology used and the overall findings, both quantitative and qualitative. Chapter two to five cover the specific findings and case studies from each country. The final chapter draws conclusions and makes recommendations, including the need for gender and media networks to take up cases of blatant stereotyping and campaign for greater gender balance and sensitivity in advertising.



Chapter One Overview

This first chapter provides background to the research; the methodology used and the overall regional findings. Subsequent chapters cover the specific findings in each of the four countries in the study.

BACKGROUND

Gender and advertising in Southern Africa is the fifth in the *GL Mirror on the Media* series which analyses different aspects of the media from a gender perspective. Previous reports include *Can every day be women's day?* (coverage of Women's Day on 9 August in South Africa compared to the rest of the year); the *Sixteen Days of Activism and coverage of gender violence*; *Who makes the news? Southern African findings of the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP)* and *Who Talks on Talk Shows?*

The *Mirror on the Media* series has its roots in the Gender and Media Baseline Study (GMBS) conducted by GL and the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) with the assistance of the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) South Africa in 2003. The study found that women constituted 17 percent of news sources across Southern Africa and that they are portrayed in a limited range of roles; most often as sex objects; home makers or as victims of violence. Men on the other hand predominate in all topic categories except for gender equality and are portrayed in a much broader range of roles; most often those that convey power and control.

The aim of the *Mirror on the Media* series is both to build the capacity of gender and media networks to conduct quantitative research and media analysis skills as well as expand the horizons of gender and media research. Case material collected in the course of monitoring is stored in GL's Virtual Resource Centre for use by trainers and activists. The studies are used to engage with media owners, managers and practitioners, as well as analysts and activists on the need for greater gender balance and sensitivity in the media.

The Southern African analysis of the GMMP in 2006 as part of this series is one example of how *Mirror on the Media* is used as a monitoring tool. The GMMP regional results showed that overall, compared to the GMBS, women sources in the region have increased to 19%, with some countries exceeding this average (for example South Africa, now at 26%). Although the change is gradual, it demonstrates the power of activist research and advocacy in transforming gender relations in and through the media.

Why advertising?

Advertising plays an important role in socialisation. Apart from influencing what the public consumes, advertising also influences the public's opinion and world view. Yet there has been limited research on this genre and particularly on the gendered nature of advertising in Southern Africa.

Advertisements portray and interpret society's definition of roles for men and women: *"From the earliest years of children, advertisements shape the way of their lives, and what to consume. Many commercials showing boys playing with cars and girls playing with dolls create different tastes and preferences for each sex."* (O'Barr, 2005).

Most advertising seeks to reinforce what is socially accepted behaviour and roles for the two sexes, thus defining what is feminine and masculine. For example men are more likely to be portrayed as figures of authority in business settings while women are confined indoors especially in the kitchen and when they appear in the business world they are restricted to "less challenging" roles like beauty and fashion industries.

Most advertisers make use of mass media to reach their target audiences and therefore advertisements easily find their way to the public. Many people aspire to live like the people or use the products and services that they see in adverts. Advertising creates tastes, some of which are alien to a people's way of life.

Consumers may interpret advertisements differently. According to Katherine Frith (1998) there are three levels of analysis:

- The first one is the surface meaning which consists of, "*the overall impression that a reader might get from quickly studying the advertisement...*"
- The second level is the advertiser's intended meaning which is the "*preferred or expected meaning that a reader might get from the advert, the meaning that the advertiser intends for the reader to take with them.*"
- The third level is the cultural or ideological meaning which, "*relies on the cultural knowledge and background of the reader.*"

The result is that advertising solicits different interpretations from different people. However, an equally important observation is that "*individuals portrayed in the advertisements appear to accept these relationships and they serve to validate the roles described*" (Goffman, 1976). "*Advertisements depict for us not necessarily how we actually behave as men and women but how we think men and women behave*" (Goffman, 1979). This underscores the critical role of advertising in either reinforcing or challenging gender stereotypes.

What other research has found

Studies suggest that gender stereotyping is most pronounced in television because of the distinctive male and female target audiences. In adverts, men tend to be portrayed as more autonomous. They are shown in more occupations than women. Women are shown mainly as sex objects, housewives or mothers. Men are more likely to be shown advertising cars or business products; women as advertising domestic products. Also, men are more likely to be shown outdoors or in business settings and women in domestic settings. Men are more often portrayed as figures of authority. While older men seem to gain authority in advertisements, older women seem to disappear. Other key findings are summarised in the box below.

Key research findings on gender and advertising

- Women's bodies and body parts are portrayed more often in print and television advertising than are women's faces and the opposite is true for portrayals of men. (Studies suggest that facial views are perceived as projecting intelligence and ambition while body views are not). (<http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell6.htm>)
- Women are constructed as subordinate and passive sex objects: through positioning of the body, facial expression etc.
- Female voices are rarely used in voiceovers (one study revealed that only 14% of voiceovers were female and only 8% of radio commercials used female characters).
- Some goods are seen as exclusively masculine or feminine, for instance: household products are separated into kitchen use (cooking utensils) and outdoor use (lawnmowers or building tools).

- Women and men respond differently to the same advertisements. For example, in her study *Gender-pitched advertising: Do men and women see the same things* Melanie Yarborough suggests that “For women, ads often are more detailed. Take for example toiletry advertisements. For one thing, women are more concerned about grooming and appearance. And they appreciate very fine distinctions...Men think in a more macro way, and need to be shown the big picture. Also men are less likely to process complex metaphors.” (<http://village.fortunecity.com/carnival/383/adverts.htm>)
- Constant exposure to demeaning portrayals of women in advertising can lead to socially induced depression and lowered achievement aspirations for women.

Objectives

This study aimed to establish how advertisements in the mainstream media in Southern Africa reflect women and men through analysing:

- The extent to which women and men appear in adverts.
- The roles that women and men play in advertising.
- The extent to which adverts promote or challenge gender stereotyping.
- How audiences perceive and or are affected by such adverts.
- Whether approaches that reflect women and men more equitably and in a greater diversity of roles are possible, and how audiences respond to these.

Methodology

The research made use of quantitative and qualitative content analysis of advertisements in billboards, print and electronic media (both privately and publicly owned).

Media monitored

Table one shows the spread of media monitored. South Africa is the only country in which the research covered a private TV station as the Mauritius, Zimbabwe and Zambia only have state-owned TV. Zimbabwe is the only country in the study with no private radio broadcaster and in which the monitoring covered only state-owned radio.

COUNTRY	TELEVISION		RADIO		NEWSPAPER		BILLBOARDS
	Private	Public	Private	Public	Daily	Weekly	
Mauritius		MBC 1	Radio Plus	MBC Radio	L'express	Weekend	10 Billboards
South Africa	ETV	SABC 1	Kaya FM	SAFM	The Star	Sunday Times	10 Billboards
Zambia		ZBC TV	Radio Phoenix	ZBC Radio	Times	Sunday Post	10 Billboards
Zimbabwe		ZTV		Radio Zimbabwe and Spot FM	The Herald	Zimbabwe Independent	9 Billboards

Dates

Table two shows the monitoring dates. The dates constituted a “constructed week” meaning that in all monitoring took place on each day of the week, but this was staggered over a two week period from 3 - 16 December 2006. Weekly newspapers were monitored twice. The monitors also randomly picked ten billboards within a 5 km radius of their work station for inclusion in the monitoring.

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Week 1	3	4 x	5	6 x	7	8 x	9
Week 2	10 x	11	12 x	13	14 x	15	16 x

(Note: Dates marked with an X are the dates on which monitoring took place).

Number of items monitored

Table three shows that the monitoring covered a total of 1650 items: 744 from TV; 580 from radio; 287 from print and 39 from bill boards. The most number of items (521) came from South Africa and least (267) from Zimbabwe.

	RADIO	TV	PRINT	BILLBOARDS	TOTAL
Mauritius	221	120	76	10	427
South Africa	162	258	91	10	521
Zambia	120	266	39	10	435
Zimbabwe	77	100	81	9	267
Overall	580	744	287	39	1650

Case studies



Out of all the items monitored, team leaders in each country selected sixteen case studies, one for each media type (print, radio, TV and billboard) for each of the categories: gender aware, gender blind, blatant stereotypes and subtle stereotypes (a total of 48 case studies). Where case studies are referred to in the report, they are denoted by the icon to the left. The classifications are taken from the GMBS and explained in Table four.

Table four: GEM Classification

Blatant stereotype (BS)	Subtle stereotype (SS)
Women are presented in stereotypical roles such as victims or sex objects.	Adverts that reinforce notions of women's domestic and men's more public roles in ways that make this seem normal, e.g. a mother's agony, rather than parents agony over a child.
Men are presented in stereotypical roles such as strong businessmen or leaders.	Adverts in which women are referred to according to personal relationships that have no relevance to the story; e.g. a woman minister is referred to as the wife of someone.
Gender-blind (GB)	Gender aware (GA)
Lack of gender balance in sources (voices)	Gender balance of sources (voices)
Gender biased language	Gender neutral language
Lack of awareness of gender dynamics	Awareness of differential impact
Biased coverage of issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Double standards • Moralising e.g. being judgmental • Open prejudice e.g. women are less intelligent than men etc • Ridicule e.g. women in certain situations • Placing blame e.g. on rape survivors for their dress etc 	Fairness in approach to issue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No double standards • No moralising • No open prejudice • No ridicule • No placing of blame
Perpetuates stereotypes	Challenges stereotypes
Use of jargon and stereotypical gender biased language	Simple accessible gender sensitive language
Aggregated data	Gender disaggregated data
Gives a one-sided view.	Prompts debate on complex issues

Gender blindness refers to the fact that often women are not even seen as a factor because of the assumption that only men matter or take interest; for example in reference to sport. Thanks to "gender blindness", world cup advertisers woke up much too late to the fact that 40 percent of those viewing the World Cup were women, when most of their advertising had been targeting men!

Blatant stereotypes present women and men in obvious stereotypical roles such as woman as victims or sex objects or men as daredevils.

Subtle stereotypes reinforce notions of women's domestic and men's more public roles in ways that make this seem normal and thus reinforce this as the norm. For example women shown cooking and serving their families appears normal yet it subtly promotes the stereotype that this is women's main role.

Gender awareness refers to being alive and responsive to the fact that the world is made up of women and men in many shapes and forms, with diverse interests and in a world where old myths and assumptions are daily being challenged.

Focus groups

After selecting the case studies, team leaders conducted two separate focus groups, one with women and the other with men. The groups comprised six to ten people of varying age, occupation, race and ethnicity. Team leaders conducted discussions with each group on the case studies, noting differences in reactions by women and men.

VRC

Detailed case studies and artefacts (print and electronic) can be found archived in GL's Virtual Resource Centre. To access these go to www.genderlinks.org.za and click the relevant section of the home page. This will lead you to a data base where the case studies are archived by country and according to their GEM classification.

FINDINGS

The section below summarises the key overall findings of the monitoring in the four countries covered. This is examined in terms of the four main categories used to analyse the case studies: gender blind; blatant stereotypes; subtle stereotypes and gender aware advertisements.

Out of all the items monitored 30% were deemed neutral (often these showed only the object being advertised, without any human dimension). Gender blind (16%), blatant stereotypes (9%) and subtle stereotypes (18%) constituted 43% of the total, compared to 27% regarded as gender aware. This suggests that a high proportion of advertisements have a gender bias of one kind or the other. This conclusion is drawn for the overall regional sample because of its size, but not for individual countries, which had a much smaller size.

Gender blindness in advertising

A basic test of gender blindness (or awareness) is the extent to which women and men are represented in content as compared to their representation in society.

As illustrated in Figure 1.1 overall women accounted for 41% of those who featured in advertisements (as images and or voices and images) compared to 59% in the case of men.

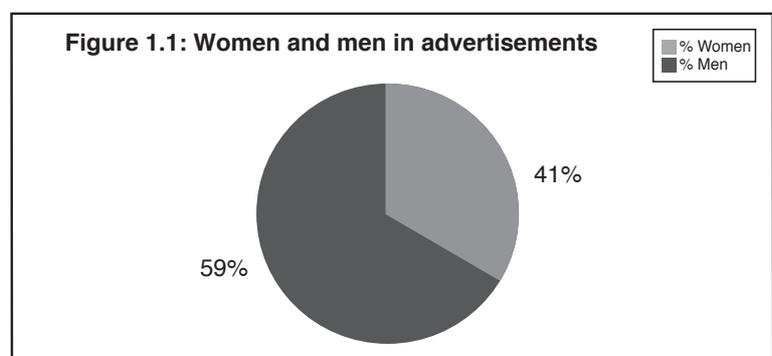
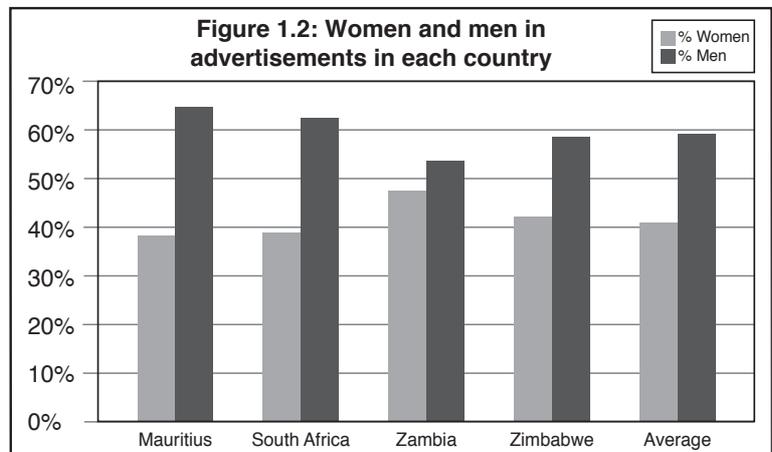
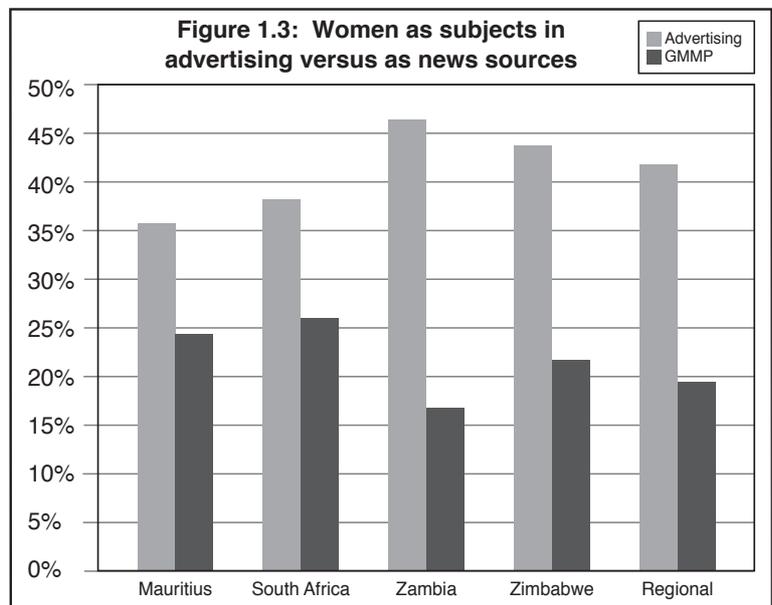


Figure 1.2 shows that at 47% Zambia had the highest proportion of women subjects in its advertisements, and Mauritius (36%) had the lowest, with South Africa (38%) and Zimbabwe (43%) in between.



Women feature more prominently in advertising than in news content in all four countries. On average, women in the study constituted 41% of subjects compared to the regional average of 19% women sources in the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP 2005). The difference is especially glaring in the case of Zambia which had 47% women subjects in the advertising research and 17% women sources in the GMMP. South Africa which, at 26% had the highest proportion of women sources in the GMMP, had a considerably higher proportion of women subjects in its advertisements (38%). However, it is significant that there is no country in the study in which, overall, women featured as prominently as men in advertisements.



The blind spot in advertising



Several of the case studies illustrated how men dominate in and are the target of certain kinds of advertisements, even where women are an existing or potential market. Four out of the sixteen examples of gender blind advertising concerned financial advertisements, like mobile banks; loan facilities for small business and foreign exchange bureaux in which women are invisible, despite the fact that they predominate in small enterprise, use banks and go on holiday. All three sports case studies had a heavy male bias, despite the fact that women play golf, comprise 40 percent of soccer audiences, etc. In Mauritius, a radio advertisement by an NGO concerned with HIV and AIDS inviting the public to its tenth anniversary had no female voices, despite the work of the organisation having a strong focus on women.

Stereotypes

As in the case of news content, gender biases in advertisements are not just about whether women and men are present or absent, but also about how they are portrayed. Many examples suggest that the reason women feature more prominently in advertising than in news content is not because their views are valued more but because their physical attributes are used as a marketing ploy.

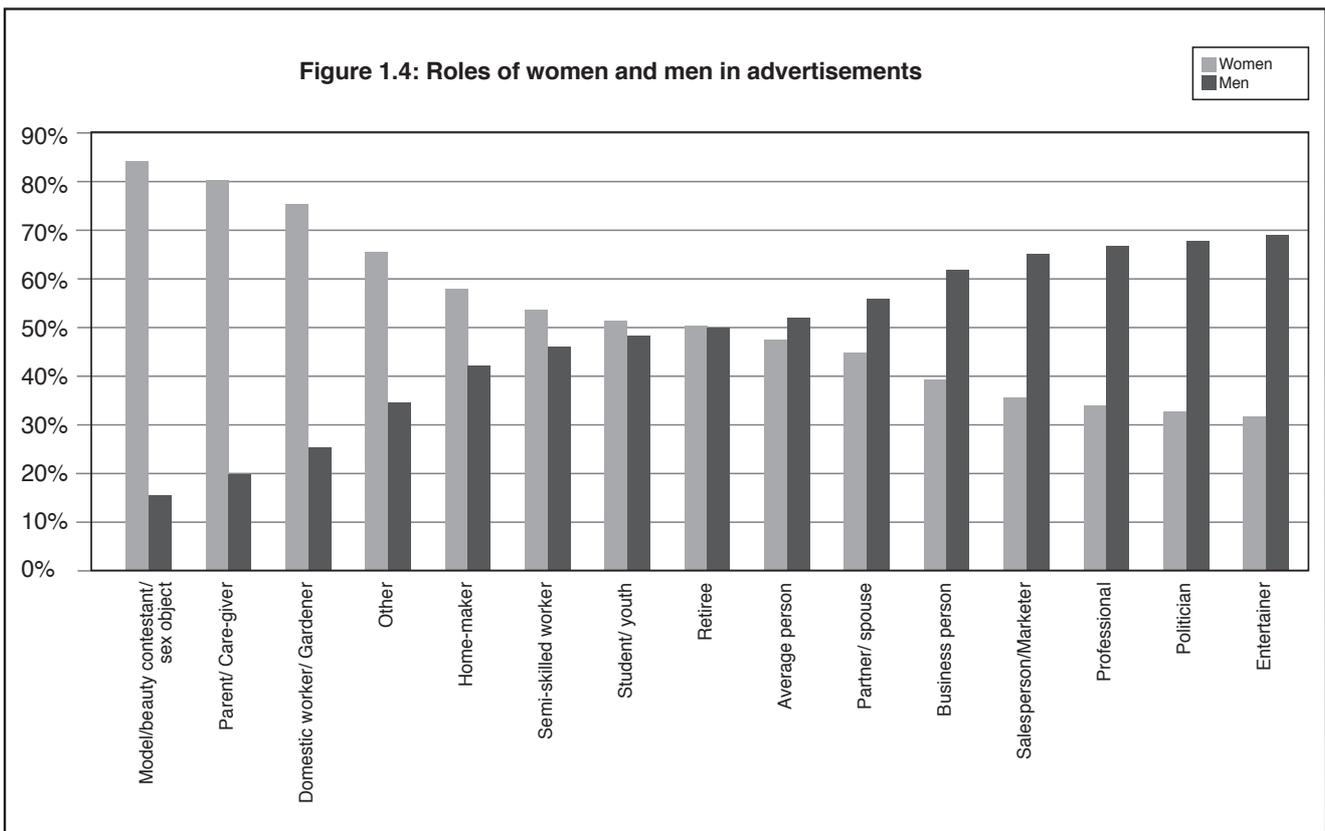


Figure 1.4 shows that women in advertisements predominate in the roles of sex worker; model/beauty contestant; parent/care giver; domestic worker; homemaker and semi-skilled worker while men predominate in business; as spokespersons/marketers; professionals; politicians; and entertainers.

The gender division of labour above (very similar to that found in news content) is a key indicator of how gender stereotypes are reinforced in advertising. These stereotypes may be blatant or may take more subtle forms.

Blatant stereotypes

Although the broad categorisation of items monitored suggests that the more blatant stereotypes are not as numerous as either items regarded as gender blind or perpetuating subtle stereotypes, the fact that they still exist at all is a concern. Moreover, these tend to be the kind of advertisements that catch the eye.

Powerful men, feeble women



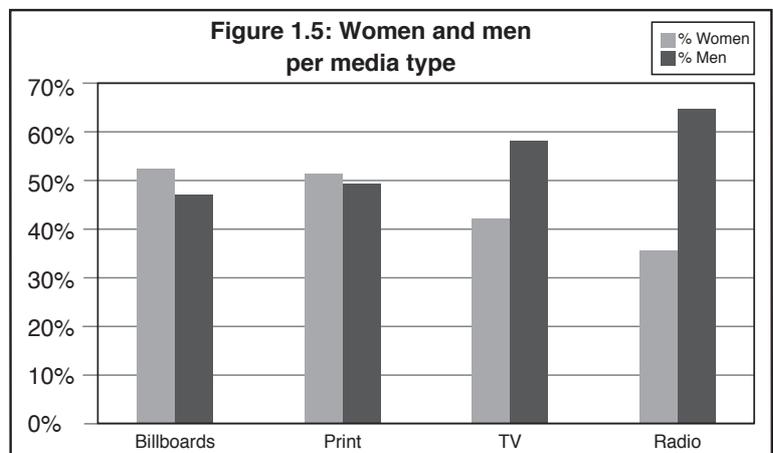
Invariably, as the case studies show, the advertisements classified as blatant project women as feeble physical objects and men as power figures. Women in fashion show advertisements are paraded as “eye candy” for men while men in motor rallies hold up the “V” for victory sign. The “customer is king” is turned into a roaring lion wearing a crown with a male voice in a cell phone advert. A man in another mobile phone advert sits behind a power desk and occupies one quarter of the advert while a woman secretary answers the phone in a little corner at the bottom.

In another advertisement, a woman and man looking like a gangster meet on the stairs. Scared out of her wits, she misses a step, falls and drops a power drink that she was carrying. He picks up the drink and starts to drink it while she lies sprawled at the foot of the stairs. A beer advertisement shows a man in a bar manoeuvring his way confidently across the office to a bar and then to his back yard where he brags about always making the right choices; including who to share his life with. The man’s partner latches onto his arm; smiles in agreement and does not utter a word. Again, the advert reinforces the notion of powerful and confident men and the women who live in their shadows.

Women who are seen but not heard

One of the ways in which blatant stereotypes are reinforced in advertising is that women are more likely to be seen than heard, and it is in billboards and print advertisements that the majority of blatant stereotypes are to be found.

Figure 1.5 shows that when the subjects in advertising are analysed according to type of media, the two areas in which women predominate are in billboards (54%) and in print (51%). Women are less visible is TV (42%) and least heard in radio (35%). The pattern varied across countries, from 61% women in billboards in South Africa; to 56% in Mauritius; 52% in Zimbabwe and 33% in Zambia. The pattern with regard to print is more consistent with 57% women subjects in print advertisements in Zimbabwe; 52% in South Africa; 48% in Zambia; and 47% in Mauritius. However, in all instances women are more likely to feature as pictures than as voices.



“Eye candy” and objects for men’s pleasue



Many of the most graphic examples of blatant stereotypes came from billboards. A high proportion of these featured women placed in the picture merely as a lure or decoration, with no relationship whatsoever to the product advertised. These took the form of a woman with a sensual look in front of a car; a scantily dressed young woman with a “thumbs up” for a new SMMS service; the “storm in a D Cup” woman in a bra with a packet of cigarettes that she is not even touching barely showing in the background despite the fact that they are the main subject of the advertisement. Another billboard example is an advertisement of women’s underwear. Rather than appealing to women, the subject is lying down and “ready to bare”, projecting her as an object for the pleasure of men.

The authoritative male voice

Just as women’s voices are less likely to be heard in radio, they are also less likely to be used in voice-overs. Across all countries, men are the voice of authority in advertising.

While women comprise, on average, 41% of all subjects in advertising, Figure 1.6 shows that they constitute only 29% of voice-overs in radio and television compared to men. Voice denotes authority and the ability to express one’s self. In advertising it is clear that the male voice is seen as a symbol of authority; hence its dominance over the female voice.

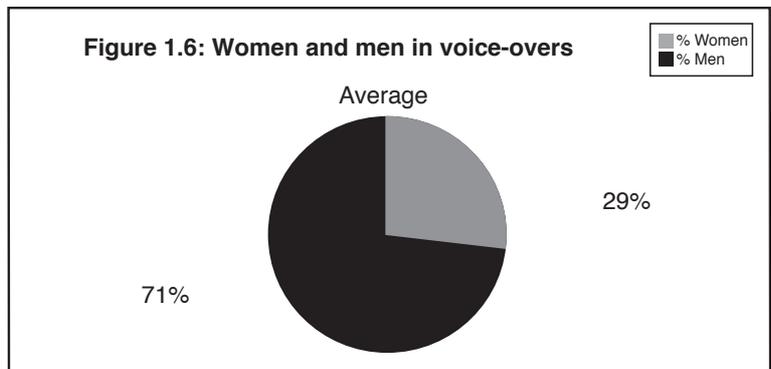
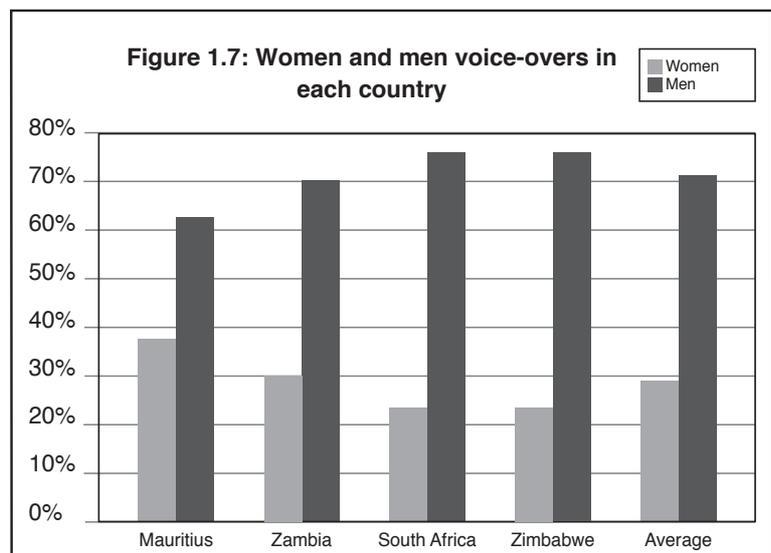


Figure 1.7 shows that this pattern is the same across countries although Mauritius, at 38%, is above the regional average of 29%. South Africa and Zimbabwe had the lowest figure of women voice-overs (24%).





Examples of male voice-overs ranged from the male voice advertising a private school in Zambia and creating the impression that it is for boys only, to a condom advert in Mauritius in which the role of the secretary is to say “yes” while a male voice-over explains the product and its merit.

Subtle stereotypes

As blatant stereotypes gradually recede, subtle stereotypes are emerging as potentially the greater concern. Because these reinforce traditional and familiar roles they are potentially more challenging than the more obvious forms of stereotyping.

Product associations

Among the most common form of subtle stereotypes are the products that women and men are associated with. In the romance languages, products are either masculine or feminine. In advertising, these lines are firmly fixed and rarely crossed.

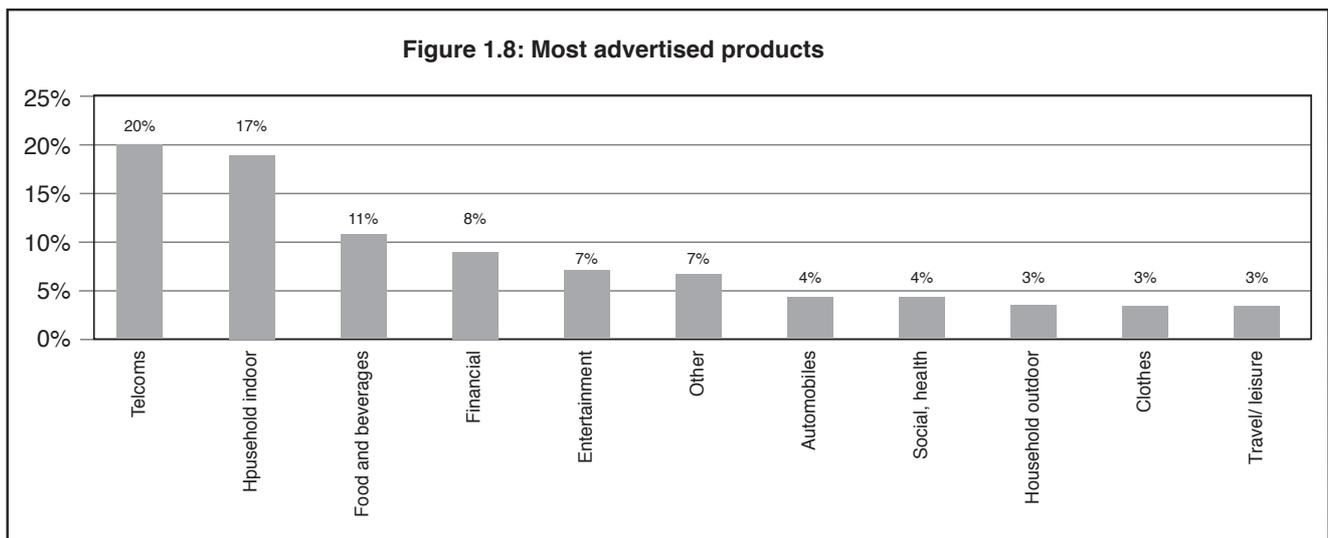


Figure 1.8 illustrates the top ten products advertised during the monitoring. It shows that telecommunications (20%) followed by household indoor (17%) food and beverages (11%); financial services (8%) and entertainment (7%) featured most prominently, with household products used out doors, travel and leisure and automobiles at the lower end of the scale.

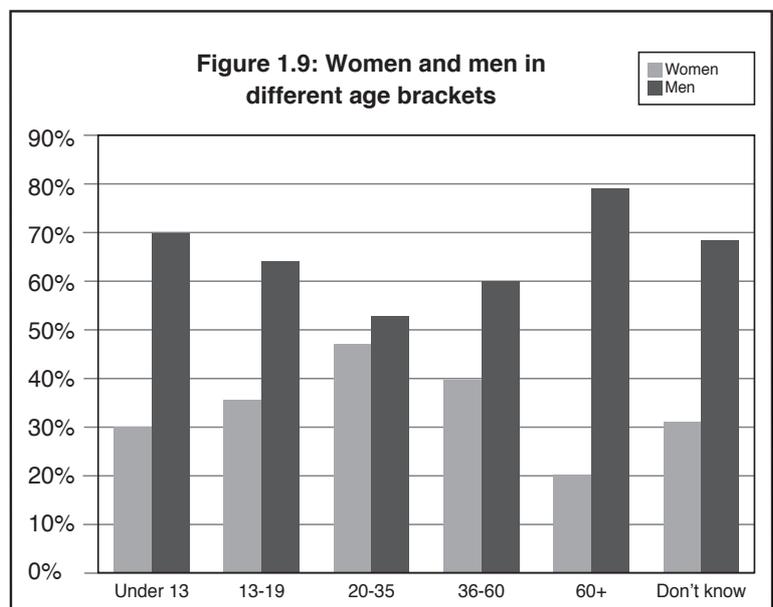


One of the ways in which subtle stereotypes are reinforced in advertising is the strong tendency for certain products to be associated with either men or women. The qualitative monitoring showed for example, that women featured exclusively or as the central focus in all advertisements that featured food and household products. These ranged from spices to breakfast cereal to salads. In one case a woman is lying next to a packet of milk with a caption “get a boost” and a sub-caption about how milk is also good for cooking and baking. Women are also associated with washing powders and clothing. Adverts on “outdoor” household products like paint feature men. Among the subtle stereotypes that run through the adverts are that women are more addicted to shopping than men.

Invisible older women

Another way in which subtle stereotypes are reinforced in advertising (similar to news content) is in the way that older women are made virtually invisible.

Figure 1.9 shows that there are roughly equal proportions of women and men in advertisements up to the 20-35 age groups. From 36-60 the proportion of women drops, and after sixty the proportion of women dwindles to 20%. Men on the other hand continue to feature in adverts through to over the age of 60.



No matter what the product, from eye glasses to food, advertisers make use of young women. In one especially telling case detailed in the Mauritius report, three generations of a family sit down for a meal. The grandfather is shown playing with his grandchildren. But one of the young women serves the food, while the mother cooking in the background is like wall paper.

Gender awareness

Despite the many gender biases highlighted in both the quantitative and qualitative monitoring, monitors picked out several examples of gender aware advertising. These may be categorised as:

- Communication adverts that show that women and men of all ages, have communication needs.
- Educational institutions targeting women and men.
- Financial services that target male and female clients as well as families.
- Shopping, entertainment and spiritual activities for the whole family.
- Shared products and shared dreams, like the mattress featuring a woman and man not about to have sex but rather to sleep, and dream, comfortably together.

As the monitoring took place during the Sixteen Days of Activism on Gender Violence in November/December, it also featured cases of social awareness advertisements, like the community in Zambia that refuses to stand by and condone a case of domestic violence. These examples are in sharp contrast to the more blatant stereotypes and suggest that some advertisers are becoming more conscious of women consumers. Turning a deaf ear to 52% of the potential market cannot be good business, whether your product is indoors, outdoors, educational or financial!