
| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Revealing the Influence of Social Media Advertising on Women's Representation in Moroccan Society

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| ABSTRACT

In our society, social media has become an integral part of our everyday life. We cannot dissociate ourselves from its hegemony. Also, we are influenced by what is transmitted across all categories. Advertising, a significant component of media content, occupies a substantial portion of social media platforms. Consequently, audiences are easily persuaded to purchase specific products. Through advertising on social media, it is straightforward to convey messages of gender role degradation and stereotypes concerning women, effectively convincing the audience. This article aims to illustrate the detrimental effects of advertising's targets on women. Social media is everywhere in our lives, and advertisements have a significant impact on our lives through the excessive use of social media. However, Social media advertisements frequently depict women negatively, which can lead to negative perceptions of women. This study has shown that social media advertisements negatively portray women, which is alarming. We should be aware of how these advertisements can influence our opinions and take steps to improve them. Ads that fairly and respectfully represent women can contribute to a more inclusive social media environment for all users, including women. It's important to acknowledge the influence of advertising and work toward improving the representation of women online.

| KEYWORDS

Advertising, Ads, Social Media, Representation, Gender Roles, Stereotypes

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

ACCEPTED: 12 February 2024

PUBLISHED: 03 March 2024

DOI: 10.32996/smic.2024.1.1.4

1. Introduction

Social media has become an essential part of modern communication and connection, effortlessly woven into the fabric of our lives in today's society. Its all-pervasive impact shapes consumer preferences, habits, and perceptions of many aspects of human existence. In social media, advertising is a major player that takes up a large amount of digital space and has a great deal of influence over how consumers make decisions.

People are constantly bombarded with advertising messages as they browse the internet and interact with social media. These commercials, frequently made to appeal to particular target populations and demographics, impact how consumers think and behave when making purchases. The widespread presence of advertisements on social media platforms gives rise to serious worries about how these advertisements may affect cultural norms and views, especially about how women are portrayed.

The article aims to investigate the negative impact of advertising targets on women in this particular environment. This research attempts to clarify how derogatory messages and stereotypes about women are reinforced and magnified using a thorough

analysis of advertising practices on social media platforms. This study aims to lighten the wider socio-cultural implications of gendered representations in digital advertising by examining the underlying mechanisms and implications of various advertising methods.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of technology and, more precisely, social media has led to several new inventions, among which we have advertising. Advertising can be defined as the paid, non-personal communication of a marketing message by an identified sponsor through mass media channels" (Schultz, D.E., Tannenbaum, S.I., & Lauterborn, R.F., 1993, p. 7). This means that Advertising is when a company pays to tell a lot of people about its product or service through platforms like TV, radio, or the Internet. Advertising from another angle of vision is explained by (Belch & Belch, 2020) as the paid promotion of goods, services, or ideas through various media channels to reach and persuade a target audience. It involves the strategic creation and dissemination of messages designed to influence consumer behavior, shape perceptions, and generate sales. However, advertising evolves along with technology, figuring out new methods to connect with consumers where they spend their time on websites or social media, for example. It all comes down to spreading the word and persuading you to do something, such as purchase a good or subscribe to a service. In this sense, social media refers to "websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking" (Merriam-Webster, 2022). It encompasses various online platforms and tools designed for social interaction, content sharing, and community engagement. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) also referred to social media as "*a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content.*" That is, social media is meant to facilitate online connections and the sharing of knowledge, concepts, and experiences. Regardless of distance, it enables people to engage, connect, and remain informed with friends, family, and communities. Social media platforms are online communities where people may interact, express themselves, and create connections using written words, photos, videos, and other types of material. Ultimately, social media's primary objective is to promote global connection and communication between people and groups.

Besides, the idea of social media, which includes websites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, has permeated every aspect of our everyday existence. It acts as a platform for global content engagement and connections between users. However, the integration of advertising is a significant feature of social media. Social media platforms are employed by ads to reach their target audience through sponsored posts, paid promotions, and targeted adverts. Ads are, short for advertisements, as messages or promotional materials presented through various media platforms, including television, radio, print, online, and social media. These communications are intended to inform, persuade, or influence audiences about products, services, or ideas. (Wells et al., 2011) Nevertheless, it is important to understand that advertisements on social media can inaccurately show women, reinforcing stereotypes, gender roles, and negative representations of women. This phenomenon emphasizes how advertising methods need to be scrutinized and held more accountable, particularly in the digital age when content may reach millions of people with just one click.

Representation, stereotypes, and gender roles are essential concepts in understanding societal dynamics and the construction of identity. Representation refers to the portrayal or depiction of individuals, groups, or ideas in various media forms, influencing perceptions and shaping cultural narratives (Hall, 1997). Stereotypes are oversimplified beliefs or assumptions about a particular group based on characteristics such as race, gender, or ethnicity, often perpetuated by media and cultural norms (Devine, 1989). Gender roles encompass societal expectations and norms regarding behaviors and attributes deemed appropriate for individuals based on their gender identity, contributing to the perpetuation of gender inequalities (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). In other words, Gender roles refer to the societal expectations, norms, and behaviors associated with individuals based on their perceived gender identity. These roles encompass a wide range of attributes, responsibilities, and characteristics traditionally assigned to men, women, and non-binary individuals within a given cultural context. Gender roles are dynamic and may vary across different societies, evolving to reflect changes in social attitudes and perceptions (Marecek, 2016).

3. Methodology

A mixed-methods strategy is suggested to thoroughly examine how women are portrayed in social media advertising and its consequences. The study aims to undertake a qualitative content analysis of advertisements on diverse social media platforms to discern prevailing themes, stereotypes, and messages about women. Concurrently, quantitative techniques like surveys are used for 60 participants to evaluate their attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors in response to various ad kinds. The intended audience comprises a broad range of social media users who interact with or are exposed to advertisements on social media platforms, spanning many demographics such as age, gender, and socioeconomic level. Targeting a heterogeneous audience and combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, the study attempts to offer thorough insights into how women are portrayed in social media advertising.

Moreover, the research procedure was conducted with great attention to ethical issues. Every participant gave their informed consent, and precautions were taken to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The study complied with ethical standards to protect participants' rights and privacy.

3.1 Objectives of the study

The current study aims to tackle that social media's widespread use has given advertising a more significant role, especially when it comes to how women are portrayed, where stereotypes and demeaning messages are common. The widespread influence and reach of social media platforms exacerbate this issue by restricting women's responsibilities and upholding detrimental gender stereotypes. Understanding the underlying mechanics of these depictions and their wider socio-cultural ramifications is crucial to addressing this issue. The purpose of this article is to investigate the way women are portrayed in social media advertising.

3.2 Questions of the study

Through this study, we are going to answer the following research questions:

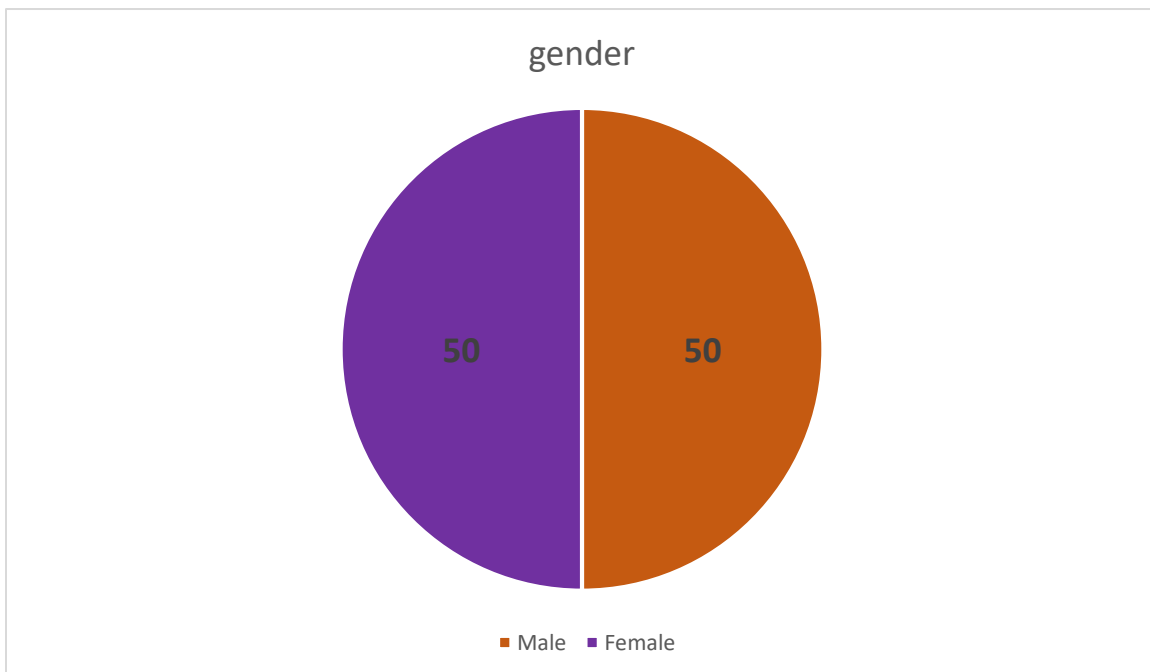
1. In what ways does social media advertising reinforce demeaning messages and stereotypes about women?
2. What are the fundamental methods and techniques used by marketers to communicate these messages to their intended audiences?
3. What social and cultural impacts does advertising on social media have on women?

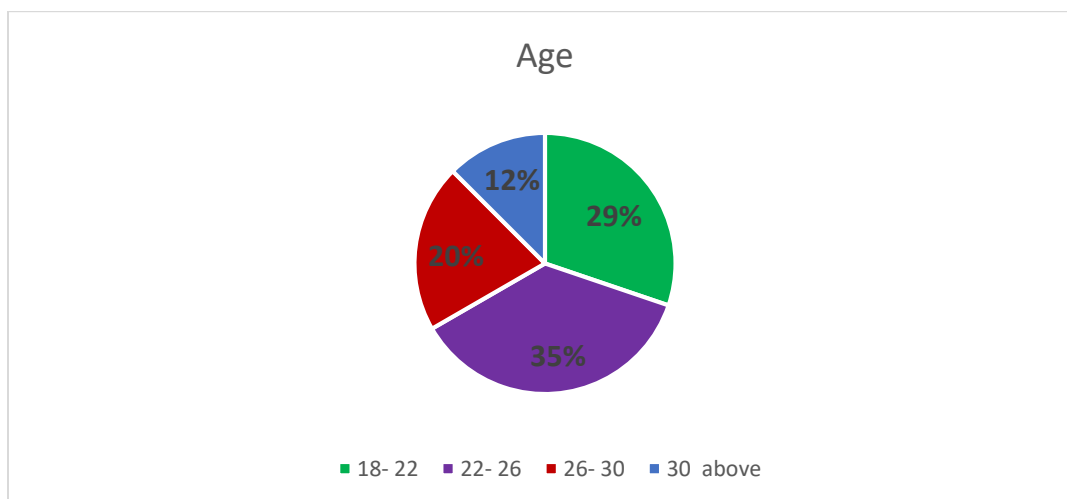
4. Results and Discussion

This chapter aims to examine and interpret the qualitative and quantitative data related to the depiction of women and the perpetuation of stereotypes in social media advertising. The chapter is structured into four key sections. The first section focuses on profiling the respondents, providing insight into their demographics and perspectives on social media advertising. The second section delves into how social media marketing reinforces harmful messages and stereotypes about women. The third section explores the fundamental methods and techniques employed by marketers to convey these messages to their target audiences. Lastly, the fourth section examines how advertisements on social media platforms depict women and discusses the potential social and cultural effects of these portrayals. Through these inquiries, the chapter seeks to provide valuable insights into the complex dynamics of gender representation in social media advertising and its impact on society.

4.1 Profile of Respondents

Given the emphasis on how women are presented in social media advertisements, the study includes a heterogeneous sample of professionals who use social media platforms across many Moroccan cities: 50 women and 50 men. The following data shows that the participants' ages range from 18 to over 30 years old:





4.2 The impact of social media marketing on reinforcing demeaning messages and stereotypes about women

Social media advertising uses a variety of techniques to spread negative attitudes and prejudices about women. This is well illustrated in the chart below:

Negative attitudes	Percentage
Objectification	19%
Sexualization	23%
Inferiority	16%
Idealization	29%
Submissiveness	13%
Total	100%

The above graphic provides an extensive analysis of the different unfavorable attitudes and prejudices about women that are spread through social media advertising. Women are clearly portrayed as objects of desire rather than as autonomous, respectable people, as evidenced by the 19% objectification rate. Furthermore, the high rate of sexualization (23%) highlights the widespread practice of reducing women to their physical characteristics, which feeds negative stereotypes and unattainable beauty standards. The study also shows that 16% of respondents experience inferiority, which reinforces gender-based biases by showing women as less qualified or competent than males.

Besides, Idealization, which has the greatest number (29%), indicates how common it is to promote unachievable beauty ideals, which can lead to body dissatisfaction and problems with self-esteem in women. Furthermore, the 13% submissiveness score indicates that women are portrayed as docile and subservient, which perpetuates old gender norms and power dynamics. All things considered, the graphic highlights the intricate interaction between unfavorable attitudes and preconceptions present in social media advertising, mirroring larger societal issues about discrimination and gender inequality.

4.3 Methods and techniques employed by marketers to communicate demeaning messages and stereotypes about women

The way women are portrayed in advertising is still a complicated and sensitive topic. In order to convey messages about goods and services to their target audience, advertisers use a wide range of tactics, frequently capitalizing on cultural conventions and gender stereotypes. This calls into question the basic strategies and techniques used by marketers to spread messages that could reinforce harmful preconceptions and biases about women. The obtained data is summarized in the table below:

Techniques	Percentage
Language	21%
Visual images	36%
Narrative storytelling	15%
Sounds/ music	28%
Total	100%

The information provided demonstrates how commonly advertisers employ a range of strategies and tactics to propagate negative messages and stereotypes about women in advertising. With visual representations accounting for 36% of the total, it is clear that how women are portrayed in media greatly contributes to the persistence of gender stereotypes and biases; this is clearly stated by one of the respondents, *"The bodies of women are used in advertising to draw in viewers. Women are always objectified in advertising, as though their only purpose is to satisfy sexual desire."* Another added, *"Commercials are focused on making money, not on the feelings of women. Advertising thus seeks to demean and manipulate women."* Furthermore, the high percentage of language, 21%, highlights the significance of linguistic decisions in forming attitudes and sustaining cultural norms related to gender. The substantial usage of music and sounds at 28% implies that auditory aspects are also purposefully used to reinforce gendered narratives and elicit particular emotions. Furthermore, narrative storytelling's 15% share shows how frequently storytelling strategies are used in advertising to promote gendered themes and conventional gender roles. In general, the research emphasizes how intricately marketers use a variety of strategies to reinforce negative stereotypes and biases about women, underscoring the necessity of critically analyzing and changing advertising tactics.

4.4 The social and cultural effects of social media advertising on women

Social and cultural effects	Percentage
Inequality	18%
Unappreciation and devaluation	19%
Low self-esteem	21%
Depression and anxiety	23%
Sense of unsatisfaction	19%
Total	100%

Based on the chart above. It sheds light on several disturbing patterns and provides insights into the social and cultural impacts of social media advertising on women. The rate of depression and anxiety that women can feel because of social media advertising is especially alarming, at 23 percent. This shows that women's mental health may suffer significantly as a result of the constant pressure to live up to the idealized standards of success and beauty that are promoted by advertising. Moreover, the data suggests that a significant proportion (21%) suggested that women may suffer from low self-esteem due to social media advertising. This demonstrates how widespread and harmful the messaging about beauty standards and societal expectations can be, making women feel inadequate and self-conscious. 19% of participants expressed that women may sense a kind of dissatisfaction, which is indicative of a larger concern with social media advertising's perpetuation of cultural norms and expectations. This discontent could be a result of the unrealistic representation of bodies and lifestyles that are out of reach for a lot of women, which exacerbates feelings of isolation and isolation. Furthermore, the study underscores the problems of inequality (18%) and the undervaluation/unappreciation (19%) that women can encounter in the context of social media advertising. These results imply that detrimental prejudices and gender inequities may be reinforced by advertising material, further marginalizing women in society.

In conclusion, social media advertising has a wide range of negative social and cultural effects on women that are quite concerning. These effects include problems with mental health, low self-esteem, discontent, and the maintenance of inequality and devaluation. To address these problems, there needs to be a concentrated effort made to eliminate false narratives and advance equitable, strong, and positive portrayals of women in media and advertising.

4.5 Discussion

The way women are represented by social media advertising exposes a complicated web of issues and implications for societal well-being and gender equality. The research presented in this article highlights the serious issues with mental health, self-esteem, and social standards, underscoring the ubiquitous impact of advertising content on women's views, attitudes, and behaviors. The data highlights the significant psychological impact of social media advertising, with women exposed to the unattainable beauty standards and gender stereotypes promoted by advertising experiencing high rates of anxiety, sadness, and low self-esteem. The results also shed light on the structural injustices and devaluation that women face in advertising narratives, which serve to marginalize women in society and reinforce negative gender norms. Nevertheless, among these difficulties, chances for improvement present themselves. This study's mixed-methods approach provides insightful information about the nuances of gender representation in advertising, opening the door for well-informed interventions and advocacy initiatives. We may endeavor to create a more powerful and equitable media landscape for women by opposing damaging stereotypes, encouraging inclusive depictions, and fighting for gender equity in media and advertising.

5. Conclusion

To conclude, social media is everywhere in our lives, and advertisements have a significant impact on our lives through the excessive use of social media. However, Social media advertisements frequently depict women negatively, which can lead to negative perceptions of women. This study has shown that social media advertisements negatively portray women, which is alarming. We should be aware of how these advertisements can influence our opinions and take steps to improve them. Ads that fairly and respectfully represent women can contribute to a more inclusive social media environment for all users, including women. It's important to acknowledge the influence of advertising and work toward improving the representation of women online.

5.1 Recommendations

The study's conclusions lead to several recommendations for encouraging constructive modification of advertising practices and the advancement of more inclusive depictions of women. The first is that diversity and inclusivity in advertising must be strongly promoted, with a focus on supporting the representation of women of different backgrounds and body types. Altering conventional gender stereotypes needs to be a top priority, encouraging representations of women in a range of roles that go beyond accepted social norms. Initiatives aimed at raising awareness and educating the public can enable both consumers and advertisers to identify and combat damaging stereotypes in advertising material. To guarantee adherence to the values of equality and respect, it is also necessary to develop strict enforcement procedures and ethical advertising standards.

Funding: No specific grant was given for this research by public, private, or nonprofit funding organizations. Without outside funding, we carried out this work on our own to advance academic understanding in the realm of technology.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this research. We have no financial or personal relationships with any individuals or organizations that could inappropriately influence or bias the content of this work. Our primary objective is to contribute to scholarly discourse and advance knowledge in the field without any competing interests.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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