



**GENDER AND MEDIA MATTERS**  
WIDENING THE HORIZONS OF THE FIELD OF STUDY  
**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE**

October 15-16, 2021

Sapienza, University of Rome (online and in-person)  
Department of Communication and Social Research

**PANEL 14**

**GENDER, ADVERTISING  
AND BRAND  
COMMUNICATION**

**Chairs:**

Lia Luchetti (Roma Tre University, Italy)

**Speakers:**

- Mireia P. Sabadell (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain)
- Luigi Monsurrò (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy),  
Paolo Peverini (Luiss University, Italy)
- Maja Rudloff (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)
- Derya Nil Budak (Yeditepe University, Turkey)
- Silvia Cervia (University of Pisa, Italy)
- Mahmoud Farhadimahali (Allame Amini University,  
Iran)



## **Advertising and Menstruation: Presence and representation in Libresse/Bodyform advertisements on YouTube between 2015 and 2020**

Mireia P. Sabadell (Pompeu Fabra University, Spain)

### **Abstract**

Menstruation is a physiological phenomenon that is not of free choice. Even so, in many Western and non-Western cultures, menstruation is accompanied by a strong stigma that, at times, is translated into practices that violate human rights (Human Rights Watch, 2017) and pose a risk to both, the sexual and the reproductive health of menstruating bodies (Women's Voices for the Earth, 2013) and the environment (City to sea, n.d.). In the field of communication, how brands of tampons and disposable pads have represented menstruation in their advertisements has perpetuated gender stereotypes and stigmatized menstrual experience (Tarzibachi, 2017, Przybylo and Fahs, 2020). However, in recent years, there has been an increase in social conversation around menstruation and a resignification of the menstrual experience both in offline countercultural spaces (Guillo, 2014), and in social networks. The purpose of this research is to analyze how this resignification of the menstrual experience has influenced the discourse of the campaigns of Libresse / BodyForm, one of international biggest brands of disposable pads and tampons. This brand has been the first one to use red liquid to refer to menstruation, rather than the common blue liquid, among other important resignifications that are analyzed in this research. In this sense, this study has two main objectives: on the one hand, to analyze the representation of menstruation in the Libresse / Bodyform campaigns published on YouTube between 2015 and 2020 through content analysis. The analysis includes the campaigns: "No blood should hold us back", "Blood Normal", "Viva la Vulva", and "Womb Stories". On the other hand, the second objective aims to study the effects that these discourses have on the menstrual experience of girls and women, from menarche to climacteric. For this purpose, we analyze the content derived from various focus groups held in Barcelona, segmented by age, class, and ethnicity, to have a generational and intersectional perspective of menstrual experience. The analysis delves into the ecofeminist (Mies and Shiva, 2014) and menstrual activism (Bobel, 2010) perspective and pays special attention to the myth of "Mother Goddess" in the representation of the female body suggested by Anne Baring and Jules Cashford (2019).



## **Voice Assistant and Gender Stereotypes: An analysis of branded communications**

Luigi Monsurrò (Sapienza University of Rome, Italy), Paolo Peverini (Luiss University, Italy)

### **Abstract**

Voice Assistants (VAs) are software (often implemented in speakers or smartphones) through which users can interact vocally and through natural language (e.g. Alexa). VAs can easily be anthropomorphised (Gao, Pan, Wang, & Chen, 2018) due to the presence of social cues, including gender (Feine, Gnewuch, Morana, & Maedche, 2019). As these technologies mainly reproduce default female voice, name and an implicit female embodiment (Loideain & Adams, 2020; West, Kraut, & Chew, 2019), companies present and develop VAs as a feminine entity. The fact that VAs are designed to be perceived as feminine raises some issues about the stereotyped representation of women. Indeed, VAs are technologies developed to help and assist the user. These characteristics can repropose the stereotyped image of women as a docile and non-agentive entity (West et al., 2019). Brands communications play a role in this process (West et al., 2019), and the advertising of these technologies in particular is gaining much attention, leading to a “Post-Advertising” condition (Eugeni, 2019). However, although the advertising of this kind of technology contributes to building an interpretative frame of the phenomenon, orienting consumption expectations, prefiguring situations of use, values and narrative roles, a deep focus on advertising about VAs and their representation of gender stereotypes is lacking. In order to fill this gap, an analysis with a semiotic approach of Branded VAs advertising is on the way, with a particular focus on the two major VAs: Google Assistants and Alexa. This exploratory research examines the issue of the relationship between gender stereotypes and VAs starting from a vast corpus of commercials produced internationally (2016-2021). The research, therefore, aims to analyse not only the current ways of representing the issue but also their significant and rapid evolution.



## **Legitimising sexism in Danish TV advertising**

Maja Rudloff (University of Copenhagen, Denmark)

### **Abstract**

Since the 1960s, cultural and media critics have paid special attention to advertising, especially its visual discourses and effects, noting its powerful influence in hindering gender equality (e.g. Berger, 1978; Gill, 2007; Williamson, 1978, 2003). My research draws on and departs from this important body of work, but rather than looking narrowly at gender representations in advertisements, I am interested in their ongoing regulation and interpretation by the institutions empowered to adjudicate their meanings. Although the question of how the media represents femininity and masculinity remains important in an ever-changing mediascape, the issue of how these representations are regulated, reported and evaluated by the authorities charged with ensuring equal, dignified depictions of all genders remains largely unexplored. Denmark presents an interesting case in this regard since it has a reputation for safeguarding gender equality. In Denmark, the Danish Radio and TV Board (RTB) is an independent regulatory authority responsible for ensuring non-discriminatory advertising by monitoring whether private and public broadcasters are fulfilling their legal obligations and handling complaints from citizens and companies. The board's regulatory practices present a space to explore ideas about gender equality, sexism and discrimination. This paper draws on the RTB's 2001–2021 Internet archives and presents findings from a textual analysis of the RTB's adjudications on complaints of sexism in Danish television commercials. In interrogating the arguments presented in the adjudications, I pay particular attention to how the RTB interprets cases and draws conclusions. By examining the rationales and discourses underpinning the RTB's arguments in evaluating claims of sexism, I demonstrate how discriminatory gender representations can be legitimised, thereby offering insight into how inequality is maintained in the media and the regulatory and supervising institutions designed to prevent it.



## **The Representation of Turkish Woman in Food Communications**

Derya Nil Budak (Yeditepe University, Turkey)

### **Abstract**

The concept of food can be defined as in the context of culture term “the distinctive customs, values, beliefs, knowledge, art, and language of a society or a community. These values and concepts are passed on from generation to generation, and they are the basis for everyday behaviors and practices”.<sup>1</sup> In Turkey, food has been a significant part of culture and local custom for hundreds of years, as well as it has also been an inseparable part of femininity and has become a symbol of femininity. For this reason, Turkish women have firmly committed to traditional gender roles. Being as an indicator, food is deeply related to the construction of one’s identity and it also defines one’s gender role. Moreover, it represents a cultural act, which offers a way of understanding and relating to food and food studies as well. The transformation of food into a phenomenon also shows that the field of food communication is able to re-present a process that shapes the individual and the society in changing structure of gender roles in society from the perspective of postmodernism. In Turkish culture, the most common source of information is media. Turks are most often influenced by advertising when buying food.<sup>2</sup> Perhaps the most obvious way to explore whether food communications can themselves be agents of change would be to look at food advertising<sup>3</sup>. This paper will examine the representation of Turkish woman in food communications through message framing by considering food as a symbol of femininity. The paper will also evaluate the discourses that are framed by gendered messages in food advertising within the context of gender and media matters in Turkey.

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1 American Psychological Association (APA) Dictionary of Psychology, “Culture”. Accessed on May 4, 2021. <https://dictionary.apa.org/culture>

2 The Ministry of Trade, The Consumer Profile and Level of Consciousness Research Report. Ankara, 2018. p. 64- p. 156-157. Accessed on May 5, 2021. <https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/5cca9f5c13b8760c08096092/17-12-2018%20tuketici%20baski.pdf>.

3 Nathalie Cooke, “Lessons from Generations Past: Timely and Timeless Communication Strategies of Some Canadian Cook of Note”, Food & Communication, Proceedings of the Oxford Symposium on Food and Cookery, ed., Mark McWilliams, Prospect Books: Great Britain, 2016, p.134.



## **Gender, stereotypes and media representation: the case of social advertising campaigns against gender-based violence**

Silvia Cervia (University of Pisa, Italy)

### **Abstract**

The presentation will examine how male violence against women is presented in Italian social advertising campaigns as “cultural object” (Griswold 1986) produced by institutions which are not neutral, being characterized by a clearly oriented system of values and norms specifically for gender but also for the other axes of social differentiation (Connell, 2006).

This relational and culturalist approach to gender as social relation allows to identify meanings and shared significance embodied in form, considered as smaller parts of the interrelated, larger social system, and to identify the persistence of stereotypes and prejudices that become the bearers of unequal gender relations preventive that social advertising should promote a paradigm shift to reflect the complexity of the phenomenon and encourage a different social perception of it.

An analysis of the Italian campaigns (N=18) promoted by various institutional bodies and not-for-profit organizations – across a 15-year period – against gender-based violence is used to identify the social representation of femininity, masculinity and violence and its constructions all over the time.

The analysis has been conducted by using the Goffmanian ‘canon’ of gender advertisements integrated by the variables that seem typical of twenty-first century European representational styles (Kress, Van Leeuwen 2020), allowing us to identify how male(s), female(s) and their relations were represented in the social scene ritualized by the advertising.

From the analysis of the Italian campaigns, we have identified as female, and women survivors are the main target but recently there have been some attempts at addressing men. In the first case the communication code is still heavily influenced by the private, intimate, and heterosexual model, the male gaze remains dominant. The analysis of the campaigns targeted to men seems to fail the attempt to introduce a different imaginary about male and female responsibility against violence (i.e. the campaign by *Maschile Plurale* and *Officina*). Even if the aim is to show the male figure as both the target of and the active agent against violence against women (Coco 2013), the persistence of material and symbolic domination still remains in traditional code of representing intimate relationship along the axes of social differentiation: men vs. women, individual vs. groups, public vs. private scene, and ordinary people vs. celebrities, etc..



## **The Role of Female Iranian Instagram Beauty Influencers in Altering Iranian girls Makeup**

Mahmoud Farhadimahali (Allame Amini University, Iran)

### **Abstract**

Influencers are sub-celebrities who have not been able to shine as brightly as celebrities on social media, but successful examples of influencers have been able to establish their own brand and guide all of their production content. One of the areas in which influencers work is the field of body and beauty. In recent years, with the development of Instagram, the activity of Beauty Influencers in the field of beauty and women's bodies on Instagram has also seen a lot of growth. The present study seeks to answer the question of what are the characteristics of Beauty Influencers and what style of life do they take in Instagram space? In addition, by creating a two-way communication in cyberspace, an attempt has been made to answer the question of how Iranian female users on Instagram view these people's activities. To answer this question, the netnographic method was used. The activities and feedback of the most important Instagram pages of the activists have been reviewed and online interviews have been conducted with 25 followers of these pages. The results of this study show that the style derived from the activity of biotechnology influencers is focused on the four main axes of body display, leisure, follower attraction, business and specialization. Regarding the interviewees, the two main axes of attractiveness and sexual orientation have been the most emphasized among the followers of these pages. Finally, the analysis of the activities of biotechnologists and their feedback among followers shows that female biotechnologists openly disrupt the accepted characteristics of Femininity, so that it can be called a gap in the characteristics of Femininity. The feedback that these people receive is also a confirmation that we consider these people to be the forerunners of the disconnect in understanding sexuality and gender actions.