Women’s rights and cosmetics advertising
I. An introduction to the representation of women and men in advertising
II. Women in advertising, and the impact upon women’s rights and gender equality
III. EWL recommendations
I. An introduction to the representation of women and men in advertising
(1) Women’s bodies: an advertising prop
Women in advertising: the visual

- Women are the primary target audience of advertising, but even when men are the target audience, images of women are omnipresent.
- Women’s bodies are the most utilised advertising prop – selling everything from food to cars, to men’s clothing.
‘Selling’ women to men

- (Sexual) Objectification
- Submission
- Violence
(2) Women and men in advertising
For women: the norm
For men: the norm
Side by side (2)
Women: a prime target for cosmetics advertising
Google search ‘cosmetics’
Google search ‘cosmetics ad’
Women in Europe: a prime target of advertising for cosmetics

- The industry for women’s cosmetics is worth €135bn, almost 50 times more than that for men’s cosmetics, worth €3bn.
- Women make up to 85% of household purchases, including of cosmetics products for their partners.
- The EU cosmetics market represents €70bn, a third of the global total.
- Estimates of the number of ads each individual in Europe is exposed to per day vary between 600 and 3000.
- Research suggests the most effective messages are those received without conscious recognition.
I. Women in advertising, and the impact upon women’s rights and gender equality
(1) Selling women on an ideal of beauty
One out of four ads send some kind of ‘attractiveness message’, telling viewers what is and is not attractive.

"With women, you can still touch upon beauty’ and appealing to the opposite sex. That won't work for men" Zuckertnan, president of G-abriella Z Ltd.
Women in advertising - beauty and sex

• Beauty is being:
  • young
  • white
  • tall
  • skinny
  • hairless
  • sexy
  • ...

[Image of magazine covers: Vogue, Elle, Shape]
Cosmetics and unattainable beauty

The body type portrayed in advertising as the ideal is possessed naturally by less than 5% of females
Worldwide, only 2% of women say they feel beautiful
Key message (1): beauty = youth
European women over 60 represent alone 34% of the facial skincare market. On average they buy twice as many products as women under 25 and spend more than 3,5 times the amount.
Up to the age of 34 women represent 79% of television presenters. In the 50-64 age-bracket, they are just 7%.
Key message (2): beauty = skinny
20 years ago, the average model weighed 8% less than the average woman – today’s models weigh 23% less.
Body image and eating disorders

• An estimated one in five women suffers an eating disorder
• An estimated 85-95% of people with anorexia nervosa and bulimia and 65% of people with binge eating disorders are female.
• Each year the U.S. spends over $33 billion on weight-reduction programs, diet foods and beverages. 95% of diets fail.
Body image and young girls

• Young girls think about their bodies every 10-15 minutes
• 86% percent of people with eating disorders report the onset of the illness by the time they reach the age of 20 (by no means is an eating disorder "less severe" when the eating-disordered person is above the age of 20).
• More than 80% of 9 year old girls have been on a fad diet.
• 81% of 10-year-olds are afraid of being fat.
• Young women that have anorexia are 12 times more likely to die than other women their age.
Key message (3): beauty = white
37% of Europeans say that multiple discrimination is widespread
Key message (4): radical change is possible
One step at a time – women as body parts
Almost 20% of females who participated in a recent telephone survey said they have had or think they will have cosmetic surgery at some point in their lives.
• In 2001, more than 8.5 million people had cosmetic procedures in the United States. Of these, 88% were women.
• Over 385,000 people had liposuction in 2001, and over 215,000 people received breast implants.
• According to a recent survey, the thighs are the part of the body that women would most want to change, with 35% of women saying they would change their thighs if they could.
Only about 60% of the women surveyed said that being content with their current appearance is what would prevent them from having cosmetic surgery.
Going the same way as women??
(2) Sexual objectification and violence against women
For men: using women
Selling the male sexual fantasy to women (1)
Selling the male sexual fantasy to women (2)
‘Trivialising’/promoting?? violence
For men: using women
One in five women in Europe is a victim of domestic violence. In France, one woman is killed every 3 days by her partner or ex-partner.
One in 10 women in Europe is a victim of sexual violence, defined as rape or forced sexual acts – victims are often blamed for the assault.

Turn “no” into a “definite maybe.”

Apply generously to your neck so that he can smell the scent as you shake your head “no”.
Eroticisation of young girls, vulnerability and violence
Drugs??
III. EWL Recommendations
Practitioners in every sphere share an interest in seeing that marketing communications are welcomed and trusted by their audience; unless they are accepted and believed they cannot succeed. If they are offensive or misleading they discredit everyone associated with them and the industry as a whole.

Surveys make it clear that consumers do not feel ads stereotyping women (their bodies or roles) or showing women as inferior or sexual objects are acceptable.
Encouraging women to feel good about their bodies works! When the Australian magazine *New Woman* recently included a picture of a heavy-set woman on its cover, it received a lorry-load of letters from grateful readers praising the move.
too old to be in an anti-aging ad.
☐ wrinkled?
☐ wonderful?

Will society ever accept ‘old’ can be beautiful? Join the beauty debate.

campaignforrealbeauty.co.uk Dove
☐ ugly spots?
☐ beauty spots?

campaignforrealbeauty.ca  Dove

EUROPEAN WOMEN’S
LOYBY
EUROPEEN DES FEMMES
fat?

fab?

campaignforrealbeauty.ca

Dove
(1) Time for change – the case for regulation
Women’s rights, the protection of human dignity and gender equality are fundamental European values; all societal actors have a duty to comply with these rights and values, and governments to promote them!
• Only some countries have adopted general laws on discrimination in advertising
• Only a few countries have public bodies monitoring complaints against discriminatory advertising
• Rules on advertising are rarely concerned with bans on sexual discrimination or the avoidance of stereotypes
• The degree of protection differs considerably from country to country
• The number of complaints received and dealt with when public monitoring bodies exist remains very low
• Develop and enforce a system of effective sanctions penalising the promotion of degrading images of women in all media
• Establish a European Media Monitoring Group with a specific gender equality branch and expertise to receive and consider complaints and monitor media content
• Empower independent national authorities able to receive and respond to complaints from the public, and enforce judgments
• Promote awareness-raising campaigns aimed at women and girls, and the general public
• Promote gender equality as a module for marketing training and studies
(2) Time for change – Self-regulation
(Self) regulation – Ensure general provisions + precise examples of sexism and stereotyping in advertising

• The roles of women or men are represented in a stereotyped manner which calls into question gender equality
• A form of submission or service is represented suggesting toleration of acts of violence or domination
• A person represented serves as a prop, has a purely decorative function
• A person represented is compared or confused with the product advertised
• A person is reduced to a given role (e.g. seductress or doll) or characteristic (e.g. stupid, servile or passive)
• A person is represented as sexually available, a sexual object
• Children or adolescents are represented in a manner incongruent with their young age
(Self) regulation – Ensure specific standards for representation of beauty ideals

• Represent a diversity of ages, body shapes, sizes and ethnicities
• Use realistic and natural images (and inform of digital manipulation)
• Use models of an appropriate age (over 16)
• Do not use underweight models
• Refrain from representing bodies as parts, objects

⇒ Promote diverse and balanced pictures of women and men
Self-regulation – some recommendations

• Develop standards and codes of conduct, monitoring, review and sanctions in collaboration with women’s organisations and women’s rights experts
• Integrate a gender equality dimension in quality strategies
• Devote resources to projects and independent research on the impact of advertising / media on women’s rights / gender equality and body perception
• Promote feedback from consumers and public
• Develop media monitoring projects in collaboration with women’s organisations and women’s rights experts
• Institute and promote positive action programmes / best practice awards
• Ensure strategies cover all media, including new media
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

For more information visit www.womenlobby.org