

Gender and Advertisement: Analysis of Aptamil Baby Formula's Television Commercial

Abdulrahman Aldada and Austin Mardon, Ph.D.*

Antarctic Institute of Canada, 103, 11919-82 Str. NW, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. T5B 2W4.
University of Alberta, 116 St 84 Ave. NW, Edmonton, Alberta. Canada.

E-mail: abdulrahman.aldada@ryerson.ca
amardon@yahoo.ca*

ABSTRACT

This paper provides a critical analysis of an Aptamil advertisement for follow on milk (baby formula) aired in numerous markets across Canada and Europe in the 2019-2020 time frame (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuR9aogKBhQ>).

The authors examine this advertisement, looking at gender, lifestyle, and related social issues addressed in it. Our analysis shows that gender stereotypic issues still exist in many advertisements that air almost daily. Media advertisements are depicted as the only source of social reality as it mirrors the societal perception of the world we live in.

(Keywords: gender stereotypes, advertisement influence on society, Aptamil baby formula)

INTRODUCTION

Advertisement is a business-oriented activity that functions to capture public attention in attaining its commercial goal. It communicates the values and norms of the surrounding society. A very small error can have a huge impact on society. Much of media advertisements instead focus much on their commercial success forgetting to consider the advertisement's socio-cultural effect. In doing so, an advertisement is made interesting to win the public's trust emphasizing much of sociological biases that the public is trying to get away from. In as much as society expects media advertisements to put into consideration social issues, media advertisements mirror the reality of our cultures. This paper, therefore, provides a critical analysis of Aptamil follow on milk advertisement aired in numerous markets across Canada and Europe (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DuR9aogKBhQ>), looking at gender, lifestyle, and related social issues addressed in it.

Media advertisements largely influence consumer's perceptions, attitudes, and emotions (Eisend, 2019). Most of the tv advertisements tend to put much emphasis on gender roles in society, influencing the viewer's perception of gender. Looking at the baby milk advertisement video, it is seen that girls become ballerinas, and boys become scientists. On the social outlook, women in society are associated with the world of entertainment while men venture into scientific innovations.

The video raised a lot of debates and questions concerning the stereotypic future professional paths of girls and boys. The concern led to the various bans on advertisements that featured harmful gender stereotypes that led to the rise of serious offenses (NEWS 2019). A Media advertisement influences the whole world around us and can have a great impact on how we interpret the world and understand ourselves.

ANALYSIS

The advertisement shows a boy growing into a mountain climber creating the ideology of men being associated with complicated and difficult jobs. This creates a negative social perception of men in the society where men are supposed to go be the primary risk-takers in professional life. This is something that has taken the order of the day where women need not necessarily go to work, whereas men must go to work to thrive in an economically competitive world. This is related to how men in the world today are associated with difficult and hard work because they are viewed as being strong and masculine. Rollero and Tartaglia (2015) argue that "gender stereotypes specify which gender role is appropriate for each gender." According to the

BBC news article, gender stereotypes in advertisements could contribute to inequality in society and could also limit children's potential and aspirations. For example, boys would only aspire to acquire the most important jobs in society, like becoming a doctor and not just a mere dancer.

The baby milk advertisement is mainly focused on lifestyle matters such as wealth, good relations, and future admirations of the children. Their main intention is to make their product known public using matters that touch much on lifestyle. The advertisement shows a happy and playful child with great aspirations. This tries to send a message that good parenting and care to a child brings happiness in the family. Giving a child good care from the start influences his/her whole life both psychologically, socially, and academically. It also tries to address parental responsibility for childcare. Choosing healthy foods for your child makes him/her a very happy child; in doing so, the brand influences or changes the public attitude towards their product.

The advertisement is also stuck on the traditional belief of men being successful academically as opposed to women. The advertisement shows a man as a great mathematician and the baby boy aspiring to be like the father. Ideally, the advertisement creates an image of male domination in academics where education is seen as more important to men than women.

Also, it shows a boy aspiring to be like his father. This is gender stereotyping because, in modern society, men get good jobs, and now children in the family always aspire to become like their father. Eisend (2019) states that men are more often depicted as playing much more important roles in the advertisements, whereas women are more frequently presented as subordinates to men. In as much as the advertisement draws a picture of a good relationship between the parents and the child, gender roles and stereotypes in the society reveal themselves.

The advertisement also shows gender stereotypes in showing the kind of jobs suitable for men and those suitable for women as perceived by society. It shows that men can study and become mountain climbers while women only need basic skills in learning to dance. Women in northern America remain underrepresented in many job opportunities, including higher-level business opportunities, engineering, and natural

sciences (Gaucher, Friesen, and Kay, 2011). According to their research, less than 20% of undergraduate engineering and an average of only 9% of professional engineers were women.

The advertisement begins with the baby girl becoming a ballerina creating a good mood and arising emotions. This is related to the place of women in society concerning pleasure. Women create an atmosphere of good emotions, feelings, and moods. As much as this role is good and suitable for women, on the other hand, they have been depicted as being objects of pleasure and entertainment. This is greatly related to sex issues as being one of the biggest concerns in society today.

The milk being advertised is artificially produced, but then the media advertisement draws much attention to the baby's breast milk. This is due to society's perception of breast milk based on scientific research. The video, therefore, could have shown a baby drinking the artificially produced milk instead of it being breastfed by the mother drawing out gender issues. They then did not focus on gender issues but only on the success of their advertisement. Its main goal is to influence the public's perception into trusting that the produced brand has a similar effect to that of a mother.

The advertisement is mainly a play, two children, a boy, and a girl, each aspiring to like the corresponding sex. The advertisement, in some percentage, tried to consider gender issues by using both genders in an advertisement. Society perceives that women should be put first, and looking at the advertisement, a baby girl is shown first and then a boy at the end.

The video shows the mother breastfeeding her child in the house. Breastfeeding is only related to women, but this just shows the loving care that women do have for their babies. Looking at the world today, most women tend to assume the role of a housewife that is taking the entire care of the baby as the father goes to work. It is not bad for a mother to care for her baby, but if we look at our societies today, most men tend to evade that role of caring for the child and leave it for their women.

Association of men with love and caring is also evident when looking at gender roles concerning advertisement settings. In most cases, women, as seen in the baby milk advertisement, tend to

remain in the home setting and are associated with the in-house chores and good care of the baby. According to Prieler and Center (2013), most Philippine televisions tend to show a woman in a home setting.

The video shows a picture of a woman ballerina at the very beginning of the advertisement. Let's assume it was meant to capture the public attention more, so men just like most advertisements do. Looking at the girl side, most women would love to become ballerinas, become popular and even get advertising jobs. Though becoming a ballerina calls upon having a slim and fit body. This, therefore, has brought about a big issue in society as all women want to become fit. Stigmatization has dominated over the whole issue as girls with fat bodies are seen as not suitable for becoming ballerinas. This whole point then leads to social isolation. Shameful talks, blaming and body size stigma occur everywhere at work, school, and offices (NEDA, 2018).

CONCLUSION

The analysis above was based on a single video of Aptamil baby milk in which many gender issues have been raised. Gender stereotypic issues still exist in many advertisements that air almost daily. Media advertisements are depicted as the only source of social reality as it mirrors the societal perception of the world we live in.

REFERENCES

1. Eisend, M. 2019. "Gender Roles". *Journal of Advertisement*. 48(1)
2. Gaucher, D., J. Friesen, and A.C. Kay. 2011. "Evidence that Gendered Wording in Job Advertisements Exists and Sustains Gender Inequality". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 101(1). 109. DOI:10.1037/a0022530
3. Nassif, A. and B. Gunter. 2008. "Gender Representation in Television Advertisements in Britain and Saudi Arabia". *Sex Roles*. 58(11): 752-760. DOI:10.1007/s11199-008-9394-6
4. NEDA. 2019. "Weight Stigma". Retrieved from <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/weight-stigma>
5. NEWS. 2019. "Harmful Gender Stereotypes in Adverts Banned". <https://www.bbc.com/news/business-48628678>
6. Prieler, M. and D. Centeno. 2013. "Gender Representation in Philippine Television Advertisements". *Sex Roles*. 69(5-6): 276-288. DOI:10.1007/s11199-013-0301-4
7. Tartaglia, S. and C. Rollero. 2015. "Gender Stereotyping in Newspaper Advertisements: A Cross-Cultural Study". *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*. 46(8): 1103-1109. DOI:10.1177/0022022115597068

SUGGESTED CITATION

Aldada, A. and A; Mardon. 2022. "Gender and Advertisement: Analysis of Aptamil Baby Formula's Television Commercial". *Pacific Journal of Science and Technology*. 23(1): 98-100.

