

Women's role change in advertising : A content analysis of U.S. magazine advertising, 1930-1989

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광고에서 여성역할의 변화 : 1930-1989년간 미국잡지광고 분석

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Abstract

본 연구의 목적은 1930~1989년간에 걸쳐 타임잡지의 자동차광고에서 성에 관련된 의복을 중심으로 하여 여성역할의 변화를 알아보고자 하였다. 광고내용 분석은 과거 60년을 세시기로 나눌 수 있었는데 1930~1959년간은 여성에게서 가정주부, 어머니, 여성적인 외모를 중시하는 전통적 여성관을 강조 하였고, 1960~1979년간은 계속해서 이러한 전통적 여성활동을 중요시 하면서도 자동차광고에서 여성의복이 다양하게 나타나서 여성역할이 다양하게 변화함을 보여주고 있다. 1980~1989년간의 경향은 사람모델을 덜 쓰고 자동차자체를 묘사함으로써 지금까지 자동차광고가 남성중심의 소비에서 여성소비자를 포함시키고 있음을 보여주고 있다. 본 연구의 결과를 바탕으로 앞으로의 연구문제 점들이 제기되었다.

Introduction

The changing role of women in society has been created a challenging task for advertisers-how to portray women in advertisements. Based on content analysis, advertisers have been criticized for overly stereotyping women role portrayals. The purpose of this study was to investigate women's role change in car advertisements from 1930 through 1989.

Traditionally, in American society, women's roles have emphasized homemaker, nurturing, beauty, and dependence to men. Advertising stereotypes of women include the happy and diligent housewife who strives for white wash and shining floors; the beautiful but dependent social companion; and the girl who wishes to be blond,

thin, or have a physical characteristic she does not naturally possess¹⁾. A sexy female model or housewife has been used for decorative function rather than in participating in the product's use in car advertisements.

Now that it is acceptable for women to pursue careers, they face the strain of performing multiple-roles in a type of role-set previously dominated by men. Car manufacturers and advertisers now perceive that women are significant in the car market.

Some research has reported the portrayal of women's roles in advertisements from 1950's through 1970's. Limited research has been done about women's role change concerning sex-specified clothing in advertisements from 1930's through 1989. Social values or norms within a society specify what clothing items are appropriate and inap-

appropriate for males and females to wear. Therefore, socially appropriate clothing for males and females can change over time, often reflecting a change in the relative role of each of the sexes within that society²⁾.

Literature Review

Women's roles widely changed to include career orientation, sexual equality, and independence. In 1963 the Equal Pay Act was passed, outlawing discrepancies in Pay on the basis of sex, and the passage of the Civil Rights Act (Title VII) in 1964 emphasized the placing of more women in governmental positions. Between 1969 and 1971, the Women's Liberation Movement made a noticeable impact on the role of women in our society, and in has been largely responsible for a number of social changes. Because advertising both reflects and communicates cultural values, women as communicator has appeared differently through time.

Courtney and Lockertz(1971) conducted a study in order to analyze the roles portrayed by women in magazine advertising³⁾. Seven general audience magazines were selected, and the results indicated underlying themes in the advertisements : (1) a women's place is in the home : (2) women do not make important decisions or do important things : (3) women are dependent and need men's protection : and (4) men regard women primarily as sexual objects, not as people. Sexton and Haberman (1974) analyzed five magazines to investigated the change of women's role from 1959 through 1971¹⁾. They found that women have generally been shown in situations where interpersonal relations were paramount such as housewives, mothers, and social companions. However, they indicated that the way in which women were portrayed would over time become more diverse and less traditional in terms of society's expectations. For example, women would be less frequently shown as decorative or as obviously alluring and would more frequently be shown in work situations. Venkatesan and Losco(1975) found that the portrayal of women as sex objects had decreased considerably since 1961⁴⁾. However, the women as dependent upon man

theme appeared stable during 1959~1971.

The change of women's roles has resulted in greater flexibility of clothing for males and females. Both males and females are now allowed to wear certain clothing items once though inappropriate for their sex. Davis(1984~1985) mentioned that females have actually gained more freedom than males⁵⁾. While it is socially appropriate for females to wear more masculine clothing, it is less appropriate for males to wear feminine clothing. Horn and Gurel (1981) reported that despite the increased flexibility in the wearing of sex-related clothing by males and females in Western society, sex differences in clothing are still apparent⁶⁾. Lennon (1990) found that the clothing and appearance of working men and working women became less differentiated as sex roles became less differentiated⁷⁾.

In summary, the purpose of this study was to identify women's role change concerning sex-specific clothing in car ads from 1930 through 1989. The following hypotheses are made about women and men in car ads from 1930~1989 :

Hypothesis I. The frequency of female models in car ads increased during succeeding decades since the 1930's (when mass production of cars was initiated by Ford in the U.S.).

Hypothesis II. The dress of female models in car ads showed fewer traditional gender appropriate styles during succeeding decades since the 1930's

Hypothesis III. Female models in car ads participate more in the product's operation during succeeding decades since the 1930's

Method

The study involved the content analysis of magazine advertising appearing in one publication(*Time*) over time. *Time* is a general news magazine that issued weekly from 1923 and included documentation of social and marketing trends.

Systematic sampling was used for selecting issues. Ten issues for each decade (1930~1939, 1940~1949, 1950~1959, 1960~1969, 1970~1979, 1980~1989) were syste-

matically chosen for each of the ten years representing that decade. Every first full size car advertisement in each issue was selected from each of these issues. In total, 60 ads were used for analysis. This sample size for the study limited for generalization.

The coding was conducted by the author. In addition, an independent person judged the coding whether the coding was objective or not. Hypothesis I was tested by counting female and male models in car advertisements and by computing the ratio of female to male models. If more than 10 men and women appeared in an advertisement, it was considered as one for each sex. Hypothesis II was tested by recording the following categories: masculine clothing (garments stereotypically associated with males such as ties and tailored blazers), feminine clothing (items stereotypically associated with females such as dresses with laces, blouses, skirts and high heel shoes), neutral-casual clothing (items not associated with sex such as sweatshirts, wool sweater, jeans and jogging shoes), and sexy clothing (items such as a deep cut neckline dress and jaguar leather dress). Hypothesis III was analyzed by recording women's position in car advertisements (driver seat, passenger seat, or leaning on car).

Results

Table 1 shows the numbers of male and female models and the ratio of male to female models appearing in car advertisements for each decade.

Table 1. The frequency of male and female in car ads.

Years	No. of male	No. of female	Ratio male to female
1930~1939	25	18	1.4 : 1
1940~1949	19	12	1.6 : 1
1950~1959	12	10	1.2 : 1
1960~1969	7	7	1 : 1
1970~1979	7	8	1 : 1.1
1980~1989	1	1	1 : 1

Male models in car advertisements have outnumbered female models over the first three decades, 1930~1959. In the 1970~1979 period female models outnumbered male models. Since 1980 car advertisements tend to not use human models. Most car advertisements (9 out of 10) though hypothesis I, that the frequency of female models in car ads increased during succeeding decades since 1930's, was not fully accepted, car ads recently tend to become neutral, not sex-related items and more female focused in car ads through the 1970's.

Table 2-1 and Table 2-2 indicate represented roles of male and female models in car ads.

Table 2-1. Represented roles of males in car ads.

Years	Husband & father	Worker	Role not specified	Total for each decade
1930~1939	10	12	3	25
1940~1949	9	3	7	19
1950~1959	10	-	2	12
1960~1969	1	-	6	7
1970~1979	4	-	3	7
1980~1989	1	-	-	1

Table 2-2. Represented roles of females in car ads.

Years	Housewife & mother	Worker	Role not specified	Total for each decade
1930~1939	17	1	-	18
1940~1949	10	-	2	12
1950~1959	9	-	1	10
1960~1969	1	-	6	7
1970~1979	4	-	4	8
1980~1989	1	-	-	1

Male models were predominantly depicted as workers such as soldiers, police, and postmen in the 1930~1939 period, while female models were predominantly depicted as housewives and mother in the 1939~1959 period. Only one woman was depicted as a bakery seller in a grocery store. In the 1960~1969 period; women were represented

most often as general "female" than the role of housewife or mother.

The frequency of dress types for male and female in car ads is shown in Table 3-1 and Table 3-2. In the 1930~1949 period all male models were wearing masculine type clothing such as uniforms for soldier, policeman, and postman roles or formal suits and jackets with neckties. At this time period all female models were also wearing feminine sex-specific dress including blouses with lace of bows, long skirts, and shoes with high heels. In the 1950~1979 period sexy dress for women (very short pants, sleeveless tops, deep cut neckline cocktail dresses, and jaguar leather dress) showed in car ads. In addition, since 1950 women in neutral type clothing such as wool sweaters, shirts and pants have appeared more often in car ads.

Hypothesis II, that the dress of woman models in car ads showed less sex specific styles during succeeding decades since the 1930's, are partially supported because woman's dress became diverse and included feminine style, sexy styles, and neutral, casual styles since 1950, compared with wearing all feminine styles before 1950. From a sociological viewpoint, the wearing of socially defined sex appropriate clothing is an overt expression of appropriate sex-role behavior. Davis(1984~1985) mentioned that one means of showing that one is male is by wearing masculine attire and one means of showing that one is female is by wearing feminine attire⁵⁾.

Table 3-1. The frequency of dress type of male.

Years	Masculine	Neutral-casual	Total for each decade
1930~1939	25	—	25
1940~1949	19	—	19
1950~1959	10	2	12
1960~1969	7	—	7
1970~1979	7	—	7
1980~1989	1	—	1

Table 3-2. The frequency of dress type of female

Years	Feminine	Neutral-casual	Sexy	Total for each decade
1930~1939	18	—	—	18
1940~1949	12	—	—	12
1950~1959	5	3	2	10
1960~1969	3	3	1	7
1970~1979	5	1	2	8
1980~1989	—	1	—	1

Therefore, the diversity of female dress implies that women's roles and definitions of what is female also became diverse.

Table 4-1 and Table 4-2 show the frequency of model position in car ads.

Table 4-1. The frequency of male position in car ads.

Years	Driver's seat & just get out driver's seat	Passenger seat	Near car	Home	etc.	Total for each decade
1930~1939	2	2	17	—	4	25
1940~1949	8	—	8	—	3	19
1950~1959	6	—	6	—	—	12
1960~1969	3	—	3	—	1	7
1970~1979	—	—	7	—	—	7
1980~1989	—	—	—	1	—	1

Table 4-2. The frequency of female model position in car ads.

Years	Driver's seat	Passenger seat	Home	Near car	etc.	Total for each decade
1930~1939	3	4	1	8	2	18
1940~1949	—	3	3	3	3	12
1950~1959	1	4	1	4	—	10
1960~1969	1	3	—	3	—	7
1970~1979	—	1	—	6	1	8
1980~1989	—	—	1	—	—	1

More male models were in the driver's seat than were female models in car ads except for the first decade, 1930~1939. Women were considered participating in operation if they were inside and using the car. In the 1930~1939 period women in the driver's seat were with their friends or husband, while in the 1960~1969 period, women were often in the driver seat alone in car ads. Women in car ads were more likely to be in the passenger seat or be at home rather than in the driver's seat during 1930~1969 (see Figure 1, 2, 3 & 4).

Hypothesis III, that female models in car ads are more used to participating in a product's operation during succeeding decades since 1930's, was not supported because women were more in passenger seat than in driver's seat. However, it is hard to figure out Hypothesis III, because the car ads tend to not use human models in 1980's ads (see Figure 5).

Table 5 shows the gesture of women in car ads.

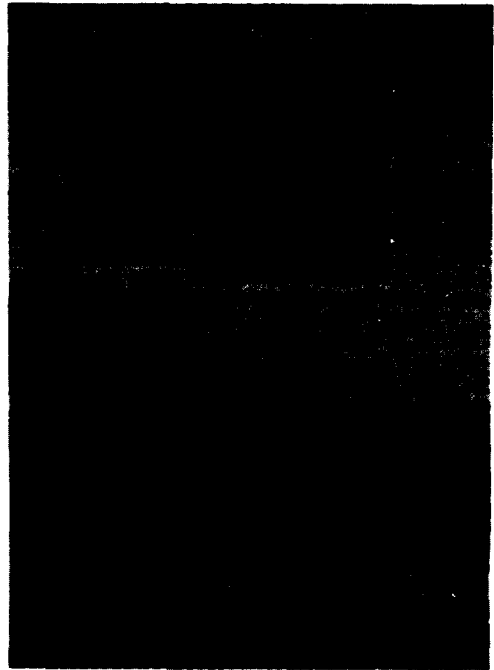


Figure 2. Time, June 7, 1937

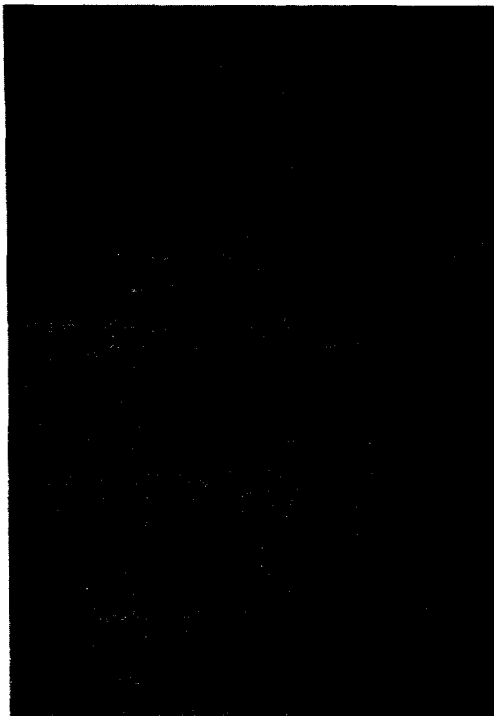


Figure 1. Time, September 12, 1949

IT LOOKS BIG... IT IS BIG...

With Four Features Everybody wants!

1. ROOMY INTERIOR SEATING
2. SURE-FITTING BODY
3. SURETY BEARING SUSPENSION
4. 37% TO 50% LESS GAS & OIL

When you look at "All Three" leading low-priced cars, insist upon getting these four vital features!

Here it is... the new 1935 Plymouth! America's best-selling car... the car that's built to last... the car that's built to give you the most pleasure and satisfaction... the car that's built to give you the most economy and safety... the car that's built to give you the most peace of mind.

Look for these four features when you drive "All Three" Plymouths... the Sure-Fitting Body... the Surety Bearing Suspension... the 37% to 50% Less Gas & Oil... the Roomy Interior Seating.

PLYMOUTH \$510

Figure 3. Time, June 3, 1935



Figure 4. Time, September 6, 1963

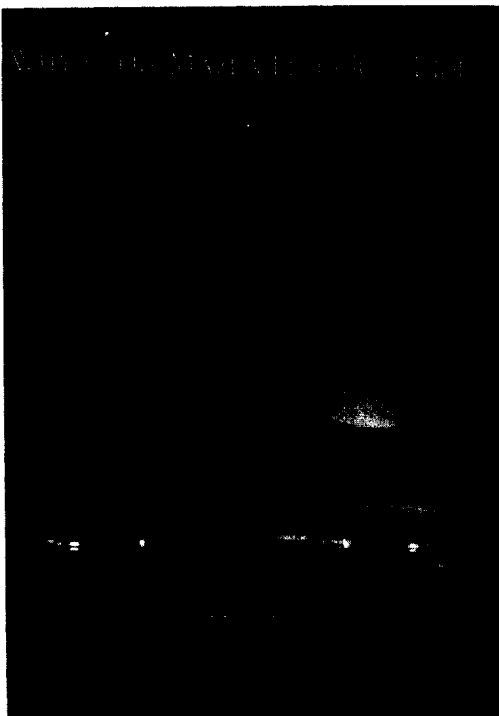


Figure 5. Time, June 2, 1987

Table 5. The frequency of women's gestures in car ads.

Years	Accompany with man	Take care of children	Sexy	Alone
1930~1939	8	4	—	—
1940~1949	5	1	—	—
1950~1959	8	1	—	—
1960~1969	4	—	1	3
1970~1979	2	—	1	1
1980~1989	1	—	—	—

In the 1930~1959 period women usually accompanied men or were shown taking care of children in car ads. In the 1960~1979 period women's gestures were diverse : such as, a sexy pose (see Figure 6) : making independent decision about which car is better (see Figure 7). Even though women accompanied men, she was independent to men in car ads during 1970~1979 (see Figure 8).

Conclusion

The results suggested that women's roles have changed after 1960. The change of women's roles at this time is also supported by historical events such as The Equal Pay Act in 1963, and the women's liberation movement in 1969 and after.

Hypothesis I and Hypothesis II were partially supported, while Hypothesis III was not supported because women were more often in passenger seat than in the driver's seat. The trend toward not using human models in car ads explained that car ads targeted both male and female consumers in the 1980's

Based on analysis of car ads in *Time*, the past 60 years can be divided into three categories to explain the change of women's roles.

The 1930~1950 period

Women's roles emphasized traditional stereotypes of housewife, mother, and feminine appearance. Hypothesis

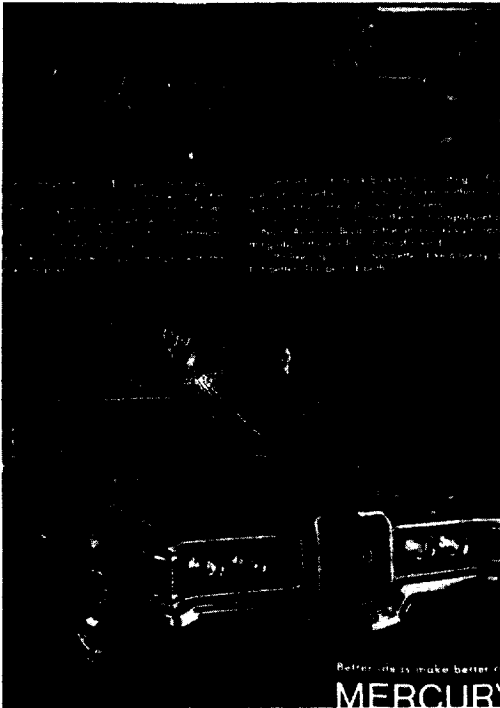


Figure 6. Time, June 7, 1971

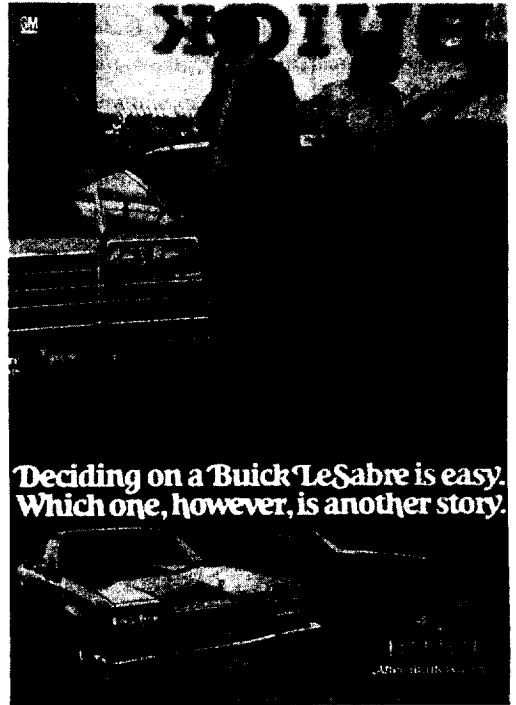


Figure 8. Time, June 4, 1979

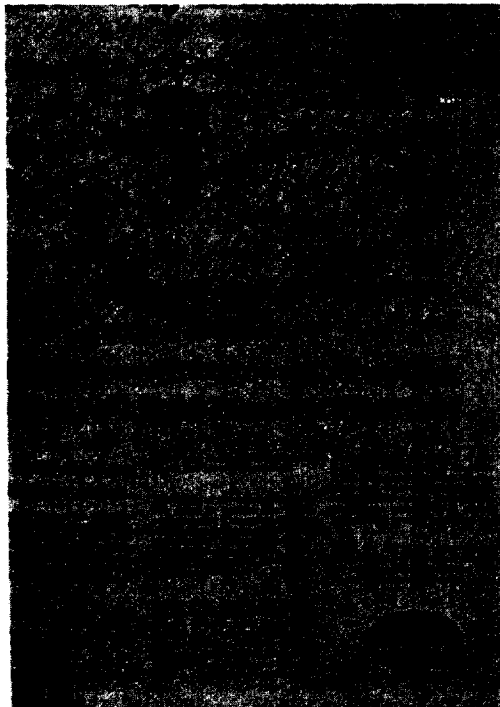


Figure 7. Time, June 2, 1961

I, II and III were rejected in the 1930~1959 period. Woman models appeared less than male models in car ads. The woman's position in car ads more frequently was in the passenger seat rather than the driver's seat. Women's dress was feminine and all women accompanied men over the first three decades.

The 1960~1979 period

Even though women's roles still emphasized housewife or mother activities, female models appeared mostly in no-specified roles in car ads during the 1960~1979. Hypothesis I and II were supported at this period. The frequency of female models outnumbered the frequency of male models even though the total number of models(male and female) decreased compared with the number of models during 1930~1959.

Women's dress became more diverse and included feminine, neutral-casual, and sexy styles at this period. Women's gestures also became more diverse : models accom-

panied men, were sexy, and were alone. It could be explained that as car manufacturers targeted not only men but also women, the portrayal of woman diversified in car ads. Sexy female models in car ads could be use as persuasive communicators for male, while females also in car ads could be used as the communicators for female consumers. Some research supported that the communicators of opposite sex were more effective than same sex communicators^{8) 9)}. There was no sexy gesture male models in car ads.

Hypothesis III was rejected because female models were more often in the passenger seat rather than in driver's seat in car ads.

The 1980~1989 period

The recent trend in car ads is to show human models less often. Nine of 10 ads depicted the car itself in car ads during the 1980~1989. This may imply that car manufacturers targeted both male and female consumers in the same ads.

Based on findings, future research questions are suggested : 1) The car ads were related to virility in the past. Males were mostly depicted as operating the car or sexy female models were used as persuasive communicators for males. Since 1980, the car ads are changing to neutral item(not emphasizing sex of target consumer) by not using human models in ads. It would be helpful to compare how male's and female's roles are changing in traditionally female dominant product ads such as for housework and cosmetics ? 2) Male's dress is less changed over time rather than women's dress in car ads. How is male's dress

changed in non-traditional male's product ads ?

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