

Maria Kotseva

**TV commercial representation of women in Italy and Bulgaria in view of the EU  
fight against gender stereotypes**

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## Preface

Maria Kotseva presents a study of television advertising representation of women in Bulgaria and Italy from a gender perspective, which suggests theoretical knowledge in several areas, and in-depth knowledge of the social, cultural and political context of the two countries. The general framework of the EU's attitude to gender stereotypes is the background against which the author outlines specific EU policies on gender stereotypes in the media and advertising.

Given its interdisciplinary scope, the work done in searching, systematizing and analyzing various data, documents and facts describing the phenomenon is impressive. Its relevance becomes clear in the introduction, which precisely states its purpose and necessity – driven by the persistent gender stereotypes in the media and advertising, the latter being "a mirror of the dominant societal values and at the same time 'offering' these values to society as ideas for masculinity and femininity" (p. 2). Also described are the objects of study, the representation of women in television advertising on two national commercial channels (Canale 5 and bTV) with the biggest audience in two EU Member States; its purpose, a comparative analysis of television advertising representation of women in Bulgaria and Italy in view of the EU policies and initiatives against gender stereotypes; and the research objectives: a review of those as they address gender stereotypes – and in particular against derogatory media stereotypes – as major obstacles to achieving *de facto* gender equality, a comparison between Bulgaria and Italy on the images of women in television advertising and the gender stereotypes used, and the method employed to achieve these objectives, a quantitative content analysis.

In the first chapter, Gender stereotypes and the European Union, Kotseva defines stereotypes – in particular gender stereotypes and their relationship with prejudice, and the categories of gender and sex. Her efforts is that of an interdisciplinary study, which construes gender stereotypes as "social, historical, culturally specific norms for the contents of femininity and masculinity acquired in the process of socialization, one of the agents of which are the media and advertising" (p. 8). In line with this, she formulates the main goal of the study: to determine how gender stereotypes in different areas contribute to discrimination against women in the EU, what the attitude of the EU is to the problem as a whole, and in particular how it views the influence and manifestations of gender stereotypes in the media. The chapter reflects the author's detailed knowledge of the contents of many different

documents and EU and EWL initiatives dedicated to equal treatment and gender equality as main principles of the EU. Based on statistical data she gives a general overview of the situation of women in both countries, to which she adds the results of the European Values Survey 2008 and Geert Hofstede's definitions of Italy as a masculine country and of Bulgaria as a moderately feminine one. A detailed review of the existing research on the representation of women in both countries in television advertising, and the existing negative stereotypes about women, are also presented. These make apparent the remoteness of Bulgaria and Italy from the EU's drive to achieve real gender equality.

The second chapter of the work – Content Analysis Results – comprises a review of content analyses of gender stereotypes in television advertising in Europe and the U.S. since the 1980s. Kotseva's consistent and conscientious listing and description of the main content analysis categories according to their significance to gender stereotyping, and her selection of those used in the study, would not be possible without the excellent knowledge she demonstrates of the general characteristics of advertising and the method of content analysis. On this basis, two groups of hypotheses on media representation of women in Bulgaria and Italy are postulated (p. 37): one associated with the advertising images of women in both countries, and another related to the study of the cultural dimension "masculinity / femininity" by Hofstede. Here are presented the results of content analyses of the two separately coded central advertising figures, visual figures and voice-overs, in 126 ads on bTV and 153 ads on Canale 5 broadcast in the period 21-27 March 2011. Following this is a summary comment on the results obtained in the context of similar research, and the relationship between the components of gender stereotypes and certain categories of analysis: professional status, physical characteristics and role behaviors. Some interesting examples of reversal of gender stereotypes are also given. Last but not least, in the comparative perspective of the advertisements analysed the author identifies common characteristics of female advertising figures in both advertising samples, as well as in those of Italian and Bulgarian origin, mostly confirming the hypotheses regarding stereotypical advertising portrayals of women.

The comparative aspect developed by the author and based on television commercials in Bulgaria and Italy is of interest because of the similarities in the political, cultural and media environments in the two countries, although, as she points, it is difficult to find full similarity between Italian and Bulgarian cultures (pp. 66-67), and conclusive evidence of the relationship of gender stereotypes to the Hofstedeian "masculinity / femininity" of a country is not found.

The conclusion of Kotseva's study summarizes the results of the two content analyses as supporting her

main thesis that advertising texts reflect existing societal ideas about gender. At the same time the author uses these findings to highlight the possibility of overcoming the obstacles to a non-stereotypical gender representation, in particular of women – i.e. of changing attitudes and expectations of advertising recipients, a project requiring the joint efforts of civil society, media and other institutions.

The contributions and achievements of Maria Kotseva's analysis include the following:

- Her empirical study is undoubtedly the most important contribution. The categories of analysis are described precisely, based on a sound understanding of the nature of the method and theoretical work on the subject, and the results are interpreted skillfully and professionally;
- The international comparative perspective is carried through based on a common point of reference, a similar – commercial – profile of two television channels and common analytical categories for comparison are used. The empirical research contributes to existing knowledge and provides opportunities for practical application for further comparative analysis of gender stereotypes in the electronic media;
- The topic is current, original, and hitherto unexplored in either country;
- The thesis reflects thorough knowledge and apt reference to many information sources on the subjects, in particular international documents, legal agreements and recommendations;
- It offers a systematic comparative analysis of gender stereotypes, which could serve in the future for coordinating policies and practices, in various countries and cultures, towards achieving greater gender equality;
- The author develops the topic knowledgeably and thoroughly, with good understanding of the media, the cultural and political situation in both Bulgaria and Italy, a fine ability in the research method used, and good knowledge about gender stereotypes in the media and advertising.

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## Abbreviations

EC European Commission

EP European Parliament

EU European Union

EIGE European Institute for Gender Equality

EWL European Women's Lobby

## Introduction

In a number of papers the EU institutions emphasize the need for monitoring and research of gender stereotypes in society, and in particular those in media and advertising. The "European Handbook on Equality Data" says, "Research, again, is a prerequisite for developing and implementing more effective policies" (2006: 25). The Council of the EU encourages EIGE and the different national gender equality bodies "to promote research, studies and analysis to further examine the effect that gender stereotypes have on efforts to achieve real gender equality..." (Council Conclusion on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society, 9 June 2008). A concrete manifestation of this is the need to research the image of women and men in advertising and marketing by the Member States (EP Resolution of 3 September 2008 on How Marketing and Advertising Affect Equality...), the EU (Opinion on the Future of Gender Equality Policy After 2010), and in particular by the EC, urged by the EP in its resolution of 15 December 2010 on the impact of advertising on consumer behaviour to promote "comparative research and documentation among the Member States concerning the image of women being projected by advertising and marketing content and to identify good practices for effective and gender-friendly advertising...", adding to this the need for "more studies about participation of both women and men in media companies (positions, issues dealt with) and about the portrayal of women and men in the media and the effect of this on the audience..." (Opinion on Breaking Gender Stereotypes in the Media, 2011). Not any different is the opinion of the EWL, which calls for the creation of a European Media Monitoring Group, which "should work on common European standards for defining degrading images and sexism..., grant gender equality awards to media and advertising professionals, study and report on women in the media and carry out regular, systematic monitoring of gender images in media content" in order to promote a balanced and diverse representation of gender in the media (EWL 1st Contribution to the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for women and men ..., 12.04.2010).

All these statements speak to the scarce research on the problem and the severity of persistent derogatory media and advertising images of women. According to the EP, "advertising often communicates discriminatory and/or undignified messages based on all forms of gender stereotyping, which hinder gender equality strategies" (EP Resolution of 15 December 2010 on the impact of



advertising on consumer behavior). The problem is not isolated, and fits into the broader context of the EU fight against gender stereotypes in all spheres of society (labour, education, sports, decision-making, etc.), the elimination of which is essential for achieving real gender equality. In the EU context, the term "gender stereotype" is saturated with negative connotations because it presents a distorted and one-sided idea of gender equality, limits the range of life options and is the basis of a gender-based inequality. For the EC, "elimination of existing cultural prejudices and societal stereotypes is paramount for the establishment of gender equality" (COM (2000) 335 final Towards a Community Framework Strategy of Gender Equality). One way that gender stereotypes are expressed culturally is through media and advertising, and eliminating them there is part of eliminating them in society.

Given this need for research, we believe that it is important to carry out an analysis on the ways women are currently represented in advertising. There are two basic positions regarding the relationship between gender stereotyping in media and gender-related values of a society (Eisend, 2009: 421): 1. The "mirror" argument, according to which advertising reflects existing cultural expectations towards gender, and advertisers adapt to the audience's expectations instead of trying to alter its values<sup>1</sup>, and 2. The "mold" argument, which states that advertising is able to mold and shape the values of its target audience (Pollay, 1986), and that hence, advertising gender roles create, shape and reinforce gender stereotypical beliefs and values in a society (Ganahl et al., 2003).<sup>2</sup> In the first case, advertising representation is a simple reflection of social reality, and in the second it plays an active role by offering certain gender representations for identification. We consider advertising, widely present in the Member States Bulgaria and Italy, "a mirror" of the dominant societal values and at the same time "offering" these values to society as ideas for masculinity and femininity. In this sense, we believe it is important to closely examine advertising images, which are far from being neutral: advertising is required and created by men and women, and is aimed at men and women. We agree with the EP, according to which "... advertising and marketing reflect culture, and also contribute to its creation" (EP Resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men)<sup>3</sup>. While the first part of this statement is our thesis, which we could prove with our research

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<sup>1</sup> Advertisers just "conventionalize our conventions, stylize what is already a stylization" (Goffman, 1979: 84).

<sup>2</sup> This position is in line with the arguments provided by cultivation theory (cfr. Gerbner G. et al., 2002).

<sup>3</sup> "Strong arguments have been made suggesting that advertising both reflects and influences cultural values" (Cfr. Albers-Miller & Gelb, 1996).

method (content analysis), the second part is our hypothesis, which could be proved or rejected by analyzing the effects of advertising on the audience, though this is not one of our goals. Actually, one of the biggest debates about the social impact of the media is about the question: does the media have a significant amount of power over its audience, or does the audience ultimately have more power than the media? Although the first idea is not to be rejected, there has been a gradual shift from media power to people power. We should not forget that audiences are not passive receptors of advertising and media messages, could play an active role in construction of meaning, and have a greater ability than previously acknowledged to read those messages critically.<sup>4</sup>

The object of this study is the representation of women in view of the EU fight against gender stereotypes in television advertising in two Member States, Bulgaria and Italy, in the 21st century, and its subject are the TV ads broadcast within a standard TV week (21 to 27 March 2011) on one Italian (Canale 5) and one Bulgarian (bTV) national commercial channel with the largest audiences in these countries. Television advertising is taken as an example of the manifestation of gender stereotypes because, on the one hand, it is repetitive, has a high audience reach and a high communication potential, and on the other hand, analysis of gender stereotypes in TV ads using the content analysis method has a long tradition in the US and Western Europe: some studies content-analyse single countries' ads, while others analyse ads from different countries (the latter showing differences and/or similarities between countries)<sup>5</sup>. While most studies pair Western European countries (Whitelock & Jackson, 1997; Furnham, Babitzkow & Ugucioni, 2000; Furnham & Saar, 2005), or Western European and non-European countries (Furnham & Farragher, 2000; Milner & Collins, 2000; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002; Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002; Nassif & Gunter, 2008), only few of them (Skoric & Furnham, 2003; Furnham & Saar, 2005) compare Western and Eastern European countries. What is more, as Albers-Miller (1996) claims, most advertising research lacks an a priori justification. Milner and Collins (2000), however, compare television advertisements from various countries with specific reference to Geert Hofstede's framework of "masculine" and "feminine" countries.

The present study follows these well-established models, comparing television advertisements in Italy – a "masculine" country, according to Hofstede – and Bulgaria, a relatively "feminine"

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<sup>4</sup> See more about the debate in Gauntlett, 2002 and Livingstone, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> For recent overview of existing research cfr. Furnham & Mak, 1999; Eisend, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Furnham & Paltzer, 2011.

country.<sup>6</sup> This comparison has the additional further benefit of illuminating apparent differences between the situation in an “old European” country, or original member of the EU, and a “new European” country or recent accession from the former Soviet orbit. Any differences that might appear in the analysis could therefore be crucial to understanding continuing tensions within the modern EU itself as its member nations struggle to meet the Union's own mandates for gender equality. Our goal is a comparison between Bulgaria – an EU Member State since 2007 – with one of its founders, specifically the one which has the highest masculinity score among the 6 EU founders.<sup>7</sup> The purpose of the present study will be a comparative analysis of television advertising representation of women in both countries in the context of the EU's policies and initiatives against gender stereotypes. Italy seems to us an interesting example for comparison, not only as a founding member of the EEC, but also given the importance that the problem of the image of women has attained in its public sphere, especially in recent years, when the traditional media and advertising stereotypes of women – a happy mother, a housewife, a sex object – have been challenged by the general turmoil in the country caused by the politicization of women's bodies.<sup>8</sup> It would be interesting to see to what extent similar stereotypes for women are present in post-communist Bulgaria, given the development of a market economy and the

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<sup>6</sup> According to Hofstede, Bulgaria scores 40 on this dimension and is thus considered a relatively feminine society. In feminine countries the focus is on “working in order to live”, managers strive for consensus, and people value equality, solidarity and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation. Incentives such as free time and flexibility are favoured. The focus is on well-being, and status is not visibly displayed // <http://geert-hofstede.com/bulgaria.html> (Jan 2014). Bulgaria continues to be relatively feminine – it scores 46.9 points in 2001 (Silgidzhiyan et al., 2004) and 47.7 points in 2005 (Karabeliova et al., 2008). At 70 Italy is a masculine society – highly success-oriented and driven. Children are taught from an early age that competition is good and to be a winner is important in one's life. Italians show their success by acquiring status symbols such as a beautiful car, a big house, a yacht, and travels to exotic countries. As the working environment is the place where every Italian can achieve his/her success, competition among colleagues for advancing in a career can be very strong. // <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html> (Jan 2014). For more information see also Par. 1.4 of the present study.

<sup>7</sup> According to Hofstede, France (43 p.) and the Netherlands (14 p.) are feminine countries; Luxemburg (50 p.) and Belgium (54 p.) are in between, while Germany (66 p.) is a masculine country.

<sup>8</sup> Cfr. Ardizzoni, 2009; Brancati, 2011; Jones, 2003; Marzano, 2010; Michaels, 2007; Molino, 2006; Povoledo, Donadio, 2011; Soffici, 2010; Ventura, 2009; Zajczyk, 2007; Zanardo, 2010; the documentary Videocracy (2009) by Eric Gandini; <http://www.senonoraquando.eu/>; <http://www.ilcorpodelledonne.net/>; <http://www.pariodispere.org/>; <http://donnedellarealta.wordpress.com/>; <http://comunicazionedi genere.wordpress.com/>; <http://nuovoeutile.it/>; <http://www.zeroviolenzadonne.it/>

onset of new values, typical for western countries, such as individualism and narcissistic consumerism.<sup>9</sup> In addition to this, although there have been studies on the image of women in media and advertising in Italy since the 1970s, we believe that the relevance of such analyses for the country is even greater given the intensive debates in Italian society on the image of women in the media and advertising in recent years. As for Bulgaria, we consider it necessary to fill the gap caused by the insufficient study of the image of women in the media and advertising, and to emphasize the relevance of gender issues in the context of Bulgaria's relatively recent accession to EU membership.<sup>10</sup>

Since advertising images exist in a particular social and cultural environment, it is necessary to look at the sociological and cultural differences between the two countries. In socio-political terms the work is based on the documents of the EU, UN, Italy and Bulgaria related to gender equality, and on official statistics. In cultural terms, we can look at both countries using Geert Hofstede's theory, who defines four basic dimensions of national culture<sup>11</sup>: power distance (PDI), individualism versus collectivism (IDV), uncertainty avoidance (UAI), and masculinity – femininity (MAS). One more look at both countries gives the European Values Study 2008, covering 47 countries and studying several areas: family, work, society, the EU, politics, religion, and wealth.<sup>12</sup>

The objectives of the present study are: a chronological review of EU initiatives and policies concerning gender stereotyping; an analysis of advertising on a Bulgarian and Italian national commercial television channel for a set period of time to determine what stereotypes of women are currently present; a display of the similarities and differences between Bulgaria and Italy on the image of women in advertising and related stereotypes. This study will use the method of content analysis of the sample of ads.<sup>13</sup> We would like to answer the question of to what extent the image of women and

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<sup>9</sup> According to Hristov, 2004 and Georgieva, 2006, there are 2 approaches to advertising in Bulgaria: divergence, i.e. adherence to understandable Bulgarian codes and messages, and convergence, i.e. borrowing of foreign cultural elements, pursuing uniformity between Bulgarian ads and those in other European countries. Cfr. Petrova, 2008, pp. 94-111.

<sup>10</sup> Moreover, except for the 1995 and 2010 GMMP, we are not aware of studies of the representation of women with the simultaneous participation of both countries. Cfr. <http://www.whomakesthenews.org/>

<sup>11</sup> Two more dimensions were added subsequently: long-term (LTO) versus short-term orientation, and indulgence versus restraint. Cfr. <http://geert-hofstede.com/dimensions.html>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.atlasofeuropeanvalues.eu/new/zieeuropa.php?year=2008%20> and <http://www.europeanvaluesstudy.eu/evs/surveys/survey-2008.html> (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>13</sup> In the original text of the dissertation thesis we also carried out a semiotic analysis of 7 ads of Bulgarian and Italian origin, in order to give the analysis a further depth.

their characteristics match the Italian and Bulgarian reality, and to what extent they meet the EU goals to eliminate gender inequality.

The dissertation extract consists of two chapters. Chapter I, Gender stereotypes and the EU, introduces the concepts of stereotype, prejudice, gender and sex, and the EU attitude to gender stereotypes in different areas including media and advertising, focusing on the Community framework strategies, on documents and initiatives over time, and on policies of other organizations such as the UN (Beijing Platform for Action), as well as gives a preliminary insight into the situation in Bulgaria and Italy, including the research on advertising representation of women. Chapter II, Content analyses results, introduces the content analysis categories and their relation to gender stereotyping, the research hypotheses, the characteristics of the advertising samples, the results of content analyses of all recorded ads on both channels and those of Italian and Bulgarian origin, and a discussion of these results, separately and in comparison.

# 1. Gender stereotypes and the European Union

## 1.1. Stereotypes and prejudices. Gender stereotypes

According to the American sociologist Walter Lippmann (*Public Opinion*, 1922) stereotypes are “an ordered more or less consistent picture of the world, to which our habits, our tastes, our capacities, our comforts and our hopes have adjusted themselves. They may not be a complete picture of the world, but they are a picture of a possible world to which we are adapted“. In this regard, our cognitive relation to the environment is mediated by stereotypes in their role of simple and resistant to change forms of mental representation by categorization.

The present study takes into account two views of stereotypes: that of their falsity as justifying discrimination, and that of the "grain of truth" in them in their role of saving mental efforts.<sup>14</sup> However, although there are some attempts to counter negative stereotypes in the media, we should not underestimate the role of stereotypes as generalizations, creating and supporting inequality of values, power, wealth, opportunities etc. between socially constructed and based on common features groups, and as a core of xenophobia, racism, sexism and discrimination. Thus, they are associated with prejudices, which are defined as “unfairly or unreasonably formed negative opinions, assumptions and/or feelings towards a group of people”, which “...typically represent faulty or incorrect generalizations or rigid and inflexible attitudes” (Makkonen, 2006: 18). The cognitive component<sup>15</sup> of prejudice are negative stereotypes – “standardised mental pictures held in common by members of a group about another group or phenomenon”, representing “typically oversimplified or overgeneralized opinion...” (ibidem). Although discrimination is not always a result of internalized stereotypes and prejudices, the latter “arguably determine the overall tendency of a person to discriminate, but cannot predict specific single acts with much accuracy” (idem, p.19).

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<sup>S</sup> Cfr. Mazzara, 1997; Stangor, 2009, pp.1–22

<sup>15</sup> The other 2 components are negative feelings (affective component) and behavioural patterns, such as keeping of social distance (behavioural component), which reinforce each other: “In general... negative feelings lead to social distance (avoidance of contact), which on its turn creates the necessary space for the maintenance of negative stereotypes, which then again serve to reinforce negative feelings” (idem, p. 19).

The EU is particularly concerned about the negative effects of gender stereotypes on women and men. At EU level gender refers to "...the social differences between women and men that are learned, changeable over time and have wide variations both within and between cultures", in contrast to sex, which refers to "...the biologically determined differences between men and women, that are universal".<sup>16</sup> We consider gender as a social and cultural construct to be relevant to the content of masculinity and femininity in a culture. In this context, gender stereotypes appear to be "beliefs and attitudes about masculinity and femininity" (Brannon, 2005: 160).

There is no consensus on the question of how ideas of masculinity and femininity are created and reproduced, and scholars from different theoretical positions attempt to explain the process of formation of gender identity.<sup>17</sup> Our approach is primarily sociological - though also interdisciplinary. The focus of our study is on the idea of gender stereotypes as social, historical, cultural specific norms for the contents of femininity and masculinity acquired in the process of socialization, one of the agents on which are the media and advertising. We are interested in how gender stereotypes contribute to discrimination against women in the EU, and what is the attitude of the EU towards the problem as a whole and in particular, towards the influence and manifestations of gender stereotypes in the media and advertising.

## 1.2. The European Union and gender stereotypes

The problem of gender stereotypes in view of the EU policies is relevant, for gender stereotypes concern issues such as equality (of opportunities), democracy, discrimination and women's rights (as human rights). To clarify the content of gender stereotypes in the EU context, we must emphasize the role of equal treatment and gender equality as a fundamental right and principle of the EU, adopted for the first time by the EC in art. 141 (former 119) of the Treaty of Rome (1957) as the right of "equal pay for equal work." Over time there has been a gradual movement from focusing on the purely economic aspects of gender equality to a focus on its social dimensions (Donà, 2006: 21-42, 2007: 57-79).

A key moment in this process is the Fourth World Conference on Women (UN, Beijing 1995), which brought together representatives of over 180 countries, the EC and many women's organizations, including the EWL. In the adopted Beijing Platform for Action, 12 areas of concern for female progress

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<sup>16</sup> *A guide to gender impact assessment*, Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, EC, 1998, p.3.

<sup>17</sup> Cfr. Macdonald, 2003, p. 11-40; Wood, 2007, pp. 37-59.

were outlined, and special attention was paid to the integrated approach to gender equality: gender mainstreaming, through which the interests and needs of women and men should be systematically sought in the implementation of all government policies and programs.<sup>18</sup> According to Rees (1998) (cit. in Donà, 2006: 64) at the base of gender mainstreaming lie 3 principles: 1. The conception of the individual as a whole, i.e. avoiding of stereotypes and the adoption of a global vision of men and women; 2. The principle of democracy; 3. The equal distribution of resources between men and women. We could see two ideas here that underline the importance of gender mainstreaming: the policy of gender equality is associated with the theme of social justice, i.e. the problem is not only nature; and a women's issue is a gender issue, i.e. it is not considered by itself but is relevant to gender relations.

### 1.2.1 Community Framework Strategies and Roadmaps

The importance of eliminating gender stereotypes in order to obtain *de facto* gender equality as one of the key priorities of the EU is found in the Community Framework Strategies and in the Roadmaps for gender equality:

✓ Community Framework Strategy for Gender Equality 2001-2005 (COM(2000) 335 final): this deals with gender equality in civil, political, economic, and social life, equal participation and representation, and change of gender roles and stereotypes, and is based on the dual approach: gender mainstreaming and specific measures. Part 3.5, "Promoting change of gender roles and stereotypes", highlights "the need to change behavior, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society through education, training, the media, arts, the culture and science", and clearly states that "Elimination of existing cultural prejudices and societal stereotypes is paramount for the establishment of gender equality". The negative impact of stereotypical portrayal of women (particularly in the media, in advertising and in educational materials) is considered an obstacle to the realization of women's full potential, and the media and culture industries – opinion formers and means of shaping values – are able to "contribute to changing gender stereotypes in the public perception and to

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<sup>18</sup> The approach is defined as "The systematic integration of the respective situations, priorities and needs of women and men in all policies and with a view to promoting equality between women and men and mobilizing all general policies and measures specifically for the purpose of achieving equality by actively and openly taking into account, at the planning stage, their effects on the respective situations of women and men in implementation, monitoring and evaluation" (COM (96) 67 final of 21/02/96).



presenting a fair portrayal of gender in changing gender stereotypes and in the realistic depiction of both sexes”. The EC proposes concrete actions to realize two operational objectives: raising awareness about gender equality issues, and overcoming gender stereotypes in and via relevant Community policies.

An expression of the EC’s priority for 2001-2005: gender stereotypes was the EQUAL Community initiative (2000-2008) and its strategy to eliminate traditional gender roles and stereotypes, thanks to which media campaigns and practical training were carried out in many EU countries in order to overcome the traditional model of the working man (breadwinner) vs. superwoman (reconciling professional and family life).<sup>19</sup> Another interesting initiative was the Framework of Actions on Gender Equality by the European social partners<sup>20</sup> (22.03.2005). One of its priorities was addressing gender roles, for “gender roles and stereotypes have a strong influence on the existing division of labour between men and women, in the family, the workplace and society at large, producing and reproducing gender gaps”.<sup>21</sup>

✓ A Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010 (COM (2006) 92 final): this indicates six priority areas for action, among them elimination of gender stereotypes,<sup>22</sup> which contribute to gender inequality despite the progress made. To overcome their persistence, the strategy of gender mainstreaming should be reinforced in each of six areas. The Roadmap indicates the following areas in which gender stereotypes appear: a) Education, training and culture: women often follow traditional education and training paths, which have less value than men’s. Combating stereotypes should start from an early age through awareness training for teachers and students, encouraging men and women to explore non-traditional educational paths; b) Labour market: women still face vertical and horizontal segregation. Their entry into non-traditional sectors should be

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<sup>19</sup> Cfr. [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/equal\\_consolidated/](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equal_consolidated/) (accessed Jan 2014), Farewell to the male breadwinner model? EQUAL Strategies to dismantle traditional gender roles and stereotypes, 2004, Dismantling Gender Stereotypes. Good practices and strategic lessons from EQUAL, 2008 and many others.

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/areas/industrialrelations/dictionary/definitions/europeansocialpartners.htm>

<sup>21</sup> Key elements to fight stereotyped gender roles on the labor market are identified: promoting non-gender-biased education, attracting girls and young women into technical and scientific professions, promoting entrepreneurship as a career option for both women and men, etc.

<sup>22</sup> The other five areas are: Equal economic independence for women and men, the reconciliation of private and professional life, equal representation in decision-making, the eradication of all forms of gender-based violence, the promotion of gender equality in external and development policies.

facilitated, anti-discriminatory laws enforced, and incentives and training provided; c) Media: these can have a crucial role in combating gender stereotypes, presenting skills of men and women in a realistic and non-offensive way. Dialogue with stakeholders and awareness-raising campaigns should be promoted at all levels.

On 23/24 March 2006, the first European Pact for Gender Equality (7775/1/06 REV 1) was adopted, through which the Council of the EU called on the Member States to support the objectives of the Roadmap, and stressed the need for measures to combat gender stereotypes, especially in the labour market. It is not coincidental that gender stereotypes were seen as obstacles to gender equality and thus related to democracy and human rights. On 26 November 2008 the Mid-term Progress Report on the Roadmap (COM(2008) 769 final) was released, in which the EC reiterated that "stereotypes of women and men are the cause of many cases of inequality" (p. 6). Gender equality, according to it, should be included in youth policies, and is included as a specific priority for Community programs in the field of education. The EC launched awareness-raising campaigns in the business sector in order to eliminate stereotypical views about women's role therein.

The fight against gender stereotypes is a major thread linking various EU papers concerning gender equality. "Gender stereotypes" was the intertwining theme of the Trio Presidency (Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) in its work on gender equality, and it affirmed in its Declaration of 15-16 May 2007, "Towards Gender Equality in the EU": "Gender-based stereotyping can be found in all areas of society as a determinant factor and smallest common denominator for gender inequalities and unbalanced participation". Among the declaration's priorities was encouraging the Member States to eliminate all forms of gender stereotypes in education and training, culture, media, the labour market and decision-making, and to empower young women in society. The Portuguese EU Presidency organized the European conference of experts on gender equality, "Employability and Entrepreneurship - Gender Stereotypes", held in Lisbon on 3 and 4 October 2007, in order to exchange best practices between the Member States. Gender stereotypes were analysed "considering [their] transversal nature which influence social representations of male and female roles". The conference highlighted the role of civil society, governments, social partners, research and education, and regional and local authorities in "searching [for] solutions and implementing policies and measures to promote women's employability and entrepreneurship and combat gender stereotypes".

Another European conference, organized by the Slovenian Presidency in Ljubljana on 29 and 30 January 2008, with the catchy headline "Elimination of Gender Stereotypes; Mission (Im)possible?",

dealt with the process of stereotyping of male and female gender roles at different stages of life and in every aspect of society - family, political, cultural, educational, and economic. In "Introduction to gender stereotypes" (pp.17-28) Naomi Finch, looking at the idea of women as "natural" carers and men as breadwinners, highlighted the need to challenge gender stereotypes actively at each stage of life, as well as the need for a change in male identity by making men participate in "feminine" activities. Gender stereotypes as one of "the most obstinate causes of inequality between women and men in all areas and stages of life", according to Marjet Cotman, lead to the need for "... an integrated, connected and coordinated strategy, clear guidelines for further work and more efficient measures for sensitization of all actors, who play a decisive role in the socialization process" (ibid., p. 29).

The elimination of gender stereotypes can be successful only if it is supported by the EU, which, as we have seen, pays particular attention to the problem as a particular challenge for its policies. It is not enough simply to change legal regulations to overcome gender stereotypes; "it is necessary to change the public's deep-seated opinions in support of equal opportunities for women and men as a foundation stone of every democratic society and a basic condition of that society's successful development". The latter was stated at the European Conference "New ways in Overcoming Gender Stereotypes", held in Prague on 27 May 2009, at which tools and methods were offered to overcome stereotypes as a major obstacle to gender equality in three areas: media, decision-making and childhood.

The EC Report on equality between men and women 2008 (COM(2008) 10) reaffirmed that "Stereotyping constitutes a barrier to individual choice for both men and women" (p.11). The EC was convinced that that "It is necessary to remove cultural barriers in order to facilitate access for women and men to non-traditional occupations," and that "The media as a whole must participate in efforts to tackle stereotypical images of women and men and must promote a realistic image of their abilities". This underlines the need for Member States, together with civil society and social partners, to strengthen their efforts to tackle gender stereotypes in education, employment and the media, as well as the role of men in promoting gender equality.

On 9 June 2008 the Council published its Conclusion on Eliminating of Gender Stereotypes in Society, stating that "Gender-stereotyping is one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life", and from a very young age particular attention should be paid to the mechanisms and structures that reinforce traditional gender roles and stereotypes. One of these mechanisms is the media and the advertising industry, which "contributes to the reproduction of culturally transmitted stereotypes and images of women and men". The Council encouraged the

development of policies and programs to eliminate gender stereotypes, including training of teachers, students, and parents, and an analysis of the impact of stereotypes on efforts to achieve equality.

Elimination of gender stereotypes in the workplace was the theme of the toolkit for consultants and HR managers “Break gender stereotypes, give talent a chance” (2008), which showed the relationship of vertical and horizontal segregation to gender stereotypes. Behind the first lies the idea that women are not suited to being managers, for they do not have leadership skills and enough time (due to family responsibilities), and behind the second is the idea of women as unfit to have "male" occupations, because they lack necessary skills, physical strength, time and motivation. Such unsubstantiated allegations have real consequences for women and are contrary to the objectives of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs (2005) and the renewed Social Agenda (2008).<sup>23</sup>

Affirmation of human dignity, democracy, freedom, equality, primacy of law and respect for human rights is the basis of the EU, and this is written in the Treaty of Lisbon (01.12.2009). The EU will combat all forms of discrimination (Art. 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU), and the principle of equality is enshrined in Art. 2 and 3 of the Treaty on EU and in Art. 8 of the TFEU. By approving the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU (2007), the Community acquired a 'catalog' of social, political, economic and civil rights, binding EU institutions and Member States legally. To the EU, “Combating persisting gender inequalities in all spheres of society is a longer-term challenge, since it entails structural and behavioural changes and a redefinition of the roles of women and men” (Report of the Commission for Equality between Women and Men 18.12.2009, COM(2009)694 final). This statement emphasizes the need for a new content of gender roles, different from the traditional, in which there are reconciliation of private and professional life of women and participation of men in family responsibilities. One of the steps to this, according to the EP, would be launching of similar campaigns, as well as campaigns aimed at combating persistent sexist stereotypes (EP Resolution on equality between women and men in the EU 2009, 10.02.2010, (2009/2101(INI))).

Commitment at the EU level to achieving gender equality<sup>24</sup>, the main obstacle to which are gender

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<sup>23</sup>Cfr.<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0412:FIN:EN:PDF>, <http://www.infra.kth.se/cesis/documents/WP106.pdf> and <http://www.euractiv.com/innovation/growth-jobs-relaunch-lisbon-strategy/article-131891> (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>24</sup> The Charter defines the following principles of gender equality underlying the actions of the Commission for the period: equal economic independence, equal pay for equal work and work of equal value, equality in decision-making, dignity, integrity and an end of gender-based violence, and gender equality beyond the Union.

stereotypes, was confirmed by the EC in its Women's Charter (05.03.2010, COM(2010) 78 final).

One of the barriers to women's economic independence indicated were stereotypes in education that lead to career choices bound to traditional expectations. According to an EC study on how 29 European countries dealt with inequality in education (June 2010), traditional stereotypes remained the biggest challenge for gender equality in the field, and one of the shortcomings of the policies to combat gender stereotypes in career choices is the lack of strategies aimed at boys and men.<sup>25</sup>

Giving priority to the principle of equality in all EU policies and the fight against gender stereotypes in the Member States in all spheres – especially in education, science and technology, vocational training and the media – was recommended by Spain, Belgium and Hungary in their Trio Presidency Declaration on Equality between Women and Men (Valencia, 26.03.2010). The problem of gender stereotypes was also addressed in the EP Resolution of 17 June 2010 on assessment of the results of the 2006-2010 Roadmap for equality (2009/2242(INI), which highlighted the limited progress toward gender equality thus far. According to the EP, gender stereotypes, manifested in multiple areas, including the media, are “one of the most persistent causes of inequality between men and women, affecting their choices in the field of education, training and employment, the distribution of domestic and family responsibilities, participation in public life and participation and representation in decision-making positions, and their choices regarding the labour market”. There was a need for awareness-raising campaigns (especially aimed at men) and for concrete policies to promote gender equality.

✓ The Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 (COM(2010) 491 final) – this inherits the Roadmap, and like it is based on an integrated approach and on the European Pact for Gender Equality. The Strategy seeks to translate the principles enshrined in the Women's Charter into concrete measures and identifies five priority areas: equal economic independence; equal pay for equal work; equality in decision-making; dignity, integrity and an end of gender-based violence; and gender equality in external actions. In "Horizontal issues" it claims that “rigid gender roles can hamper individual choices and restrict the potential of both women and men” (p.10), hence it is important to

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<sup>25</sup> Bulgaria did not take part of the survey. Italy was considered a country without policies in gender equality in education. Cfr. Gender Differences in Educational Outcomes: Study on the Measures Taken and the Current Situation in Europe, 7 June 2010, [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic\\_reports\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/thematic_reports_en.php) (accessed Jan 2014).

promote non-discriminatory gender roles in all spheres of life and men's active contribution to gender<sup>26</sup> equality. Achieving gender equality therefore concerns not only women but gender relations. The Strategy re-affirms the great influence of gender roles on the socio-economic development of Member States – they influence individual decisions on family, career, education, working arrangements and fertility, which in turn affects the economy and society (p. 3). Among the activities in the Strategy Implementation we find encouragement of women to choose non-traditional occupations (e.g. those in technical and scientific fields), communication campaigns to raise awareness about stereotypes in career choices, promoting gender equality in education, etc. The goal is to move from *de iure* to *de facto* gender equality in all spheres of life and to achieve the objectives of Europe 2020.<sup>27</sup>

In the New European Pact for Equality between Women and Men for the period 2011-2020 of 7 March 2011 the Council, in the context of the new strategy, invited the EU and the Member States to eliminate gender stereotypes and promote equality at all levels of education and in working life. The strong language used in relation to gender stereotypes, promoting equal participation in decision-making, and the fight against all forms of violence against women was welcomed by the EWL in its Statement on the Pact (16.03.2011), together with a number of criticisms: the issue of equality is not put in the framework of human rights, no binding concrete measures are foreseen in the Pact, issues of social protection and notably pensions, health, human rights, media and environment are not mentioned at all. We should also note that, according to the EWL, the EU commitment to equality should be implemented immediately, which means that "gender mainstreaming necessitates real political will, planning and resources (expertise, training, knowledge) in order to be truly transformative".

In its Resolution of 8 March 2011 on Equality between Women and Men in the EU – 2010 (2010/2138(INI)), the EP called for a European debate to combat stereotypes linked to gender roles, and stressed the importance of organizing awareness-raising campaigns in schools, at the workplace and in the media. The same urge for actions was expressed in its Resolution of 12 March 2013 on

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<sup>26</sup> In the Commission's Background document accompanying the Strategy, gender roles were defined as "learned behaviours in a given society/community or other special group that condition what activities, tasks and responsibilities are perceived as male or female" (p. 54).

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:52010SC1080:EN:NOT> (Jan 2014)

<sup>27</sup> The Europe 2020 strategy is about delivering growth that is: smart, through more effective investments in education, research and innovation; sustainable, thanks to a decisive move towards a low-carbon economy; and inclusive, with a strong emphasis on job creation and poverty reduction. [http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm) (accessed Jan 2014)

Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in the EU (2012/2116(INI)), where it underlined the negative impact that gender stereotypes have on both men and women and their presence in every aspect of life: media and culture, education and training, the labour market, and economic and political decision-making. The EP was rather critical towards the EC and the national governments because, as it pointed out, “there is a severe lack of progress on honouring the commitments made both by the EU and by various governments as part of the Beijing Platform for Action,” and “despite the EU's commitment to equality between men and women, there is still a gap in legislation providing for non-discrimination against women and gender equality in the areas of social security, education and the media, employment and wages”. In this regard, concrete measures were listed to be taken by the EC and the Member States in each of the critical areas subject to gender stereotypes. To these other actions were added, including legislative and non-legislative measures, awareness-raising, education and training campaigns to combat discriminatory cultural norms and tackle the prevalent sexist stereotypes and social stigmatization, etc.

From this review of EU documents concerning gender stereotypes, we can conclude that the EU sees their elimination as essential for achieving gender equality. Despite the progress in this area, however, de facto equality has not been achieved yet, and the EU and the Member States have to deal with many problems, including the persistence of gender stereotypes in all spheres of life (education, media, the labor market, etc.). Not surprisingly, when tackling gender stereotypes, strong words like "eliminate" and "fight against" are used. This "war" terminology seems to put us on a battlefield where social, cultural, economic and political norms must be challenged and changed by the active participation of the EU and national institutions, NGOs, men and women, social partners etc., through an integrated, coordinated and intertwined strategy at the national and European levels.

### 1.3. Gender stereotypes in the media and advertising and the EU (1995-2013)

‘Women and the media’ is one of the 12 areas of concern outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (1995), which urged on the national governments, the NGOs, the national and international media and advertising associations a range of actions aimed at two strategic objectives: “J.1. Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication, and J.2. Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media”. Section J envisages some important issues, such as negative and degrading media portrayals of women, a lack of women’s participation in decision-making in the media, the need

for gender mainstreaming in the field of communication, the importance of media self-regulation etc., issues also continuously addressed in the subsequent EU papers.

The idea of advertising and media stereotyping as one of the factors in gender inequality was expressed by the Council of the EU in its Resolution of 5 October 1995 on the image of women and men portrayed in advertising and the media. However, since “advertising and the media can play an important part in changing attitudes in society by reflecting the diversity of the roles and potential of women and men”, they were encouraged to implement voluntary self-regulatory codes, recognize the negative effects of gender stereotypes on the physical and mental health of the public, and formulate new ideas reflecting the diversity of gender roles.

Two important initiatives were carried out within the Fourth Community Action Programme on Equal Opportunities (1996-2000). The three-year project "Screening Gender" featured a comparative study of male and female participation in the programmes of six public TV channels, confirming the stereotypical nature of women's representation and participation. An audiovisual training toolkit for journalists, directors, cameramen and others was created in order to give concrete examples and positive alternatives to the stereotypical gender portrayals for both broadcasters and their audiences.<sup>28</sup>

In 1999 a report, *Images of Women in the Media*, was published that gave a useful insight into the existing research on media representations of women in 15 European countries.<sup>29</sup> According to this report, despite the increased number of women journalists, women still did not occupy leadership positions in media organizations, television images of women were stereotyped, and most programs aimed at them are entertainment.

In its Resolution of 6 October 1997 on discrimination against women in advertising, the EP pointed out the inadequacy of the European and national legislation on derogatory images of women and clearly stated that sexist advertising stereotypes<sup>30</sup> violate human dignity, thus connecting sexist media portrayals of women to gender discrimination and human rights. To avoid gender stereotypes and instill

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<sup>28</sup> Cfr. <http://yle.fi/vintti/yle.fi/gender/index.html> (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>29</sup> It suggested creating a EuroMediaWatch to study the role of the media in how women politicians are perceived, the possibility of the influence of women in the media on their content, and patterns of access to information for women of different ethnic minorities.

<sup>30</sup> However, as the rapporteur on the resolution, Marlene Lenz, correctly pointed out, the idea of (advertising) ethics is unstable and subject to different interpretations according to gender, the cultural characteristics of a country, its laws, institutions and NGOs. Thus, the unambiguous definition of an ad as sexist becomes difficult.



a more responsible attitude to advertising content, according to the EP<sup>31</sup>, both the work of the self-regulation authorities and codes of conduct were needed.

One of the objectives of the Community Framework Strategy on Gender Equality (2001-2005) was aimed at changing “behaviour, attitudes, norms and values which define and influence gender roles in society, through education, training, the media”. A manifestation of the priority for 2004: Changing gender roles and overcoming stereotypes was the project “Gender News Good News” (2005),<sup>32</sup> aimed at communication professionals, with the goal to promote equal opportunities in the labor market, raise awareness of mass media operators on gender roles, analyse the situation in the four project partners – Italy, Malta, Spain and France – and develop guidelines for television programming and corporate communications aimed at overcoming gender stereotypes.<sup>33</sup> However, as of 2005, according to the EWL, “Women and the media is one of the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action that is the most neglected by the EU” (Beijing+10, 2005: 72): a serious imbalance exists in the European media sector, i.e. discrimination in access to employment, working conditions, participation in decision-making etc., while male norms define journalistic culture; the stereotypical image of women – married, young, victims of violence, etc. continues to be a source of discrimination; there is difficulty in passing legislation on gender equality in the media, and existing ethical codes of conduct lack of social gender measures. The EWL called for the integration of gender equality in all EU policies and programs related to the information society, as well as zero tolerance for degrading images of women in the media.

The elimination of gender stereotypes in the media as a part of the elimination of those in society was one of the objectives of the Roadmap for Equality between Women and Men 2006-2010, in which the EC underlined the role of the media in combating gender stereotypes, the need for awareness-raising campaigns and a dialogue with the partners. In regard to this, the Council of the EU recognized the media’s responsibility for both culturally reproducing stereotypical gender images and fighting against

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<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&reference=A4-1997-0258&language=EN>

<sup>31</sup> As the Beijing Platform claimed, the media, and in particular the advertising industry, have a real potential to influence social behaviour and are a tool for combating racism, sexism and discrimination, changing public attitudes through positive media images of equality.

<sup>32</sup> Cfr. Cornero, 2006.

<sup>33</sup> The working groups are shown parts of television programs related to gender stereotypes, which are identified and modified in order to avoid negative representations.

them by creating non-discriminatory images, and it called on the EC and the Member States to carry out awareness-raising campaigns, and for a media dialogue and exchange of best practices aimed at realistic gender portrayals (Council Conclusions on Eliminating Gender Stereotypes in Society, 2008). In its Resolution of 3 September 2008 on how marketing and advertising affect equality between women and men (2008/2038(INI)) the EP stressed the continued, widespread presence of gender stereotyping and discrimination in the media despite the numerous recommendations and measures to tackle the problem. It condemned the role of the media in the creation and dissemination of gender stereotypes as part of gender discrimination and an obstacle to an egalitarian society, and urged them to give an example of a gender perspective in order to show that positive change is possible. Given the role of the media in the socialization of children and the impact of degrading and unrealistic images on young people, the Council, the EC and the Member States were required to study gender images and, through training and information campaigns, help children from an early age develop a critical view of them. Besides continuous training and dialogue with media professionals, the Member States were urged to set up more strict legal measures and ethical standards, use the media to disseminate best practices on gender equality, give prizes for non-stereotypical ads, etc.

Despite the EU's good intentions to eliminate gender stereotypes in the media, the problem, according to the EWL, continued to be one of the most neglected in the EU after 2005 (Beijing +15). Based on the results of GMMP 2005, the EWL highlighted the lack of visibility of women in the European media, their widespread stereotyping in the images of victims, housewives and sex objects, and their scarcity in leadership positions. It made several important proposals to the EU for overcoming the existing gaps: system monitoring of the image of women in the media, finance and development of training programs for media professionals on gender stereotypes, awards, gender mainstreaming in all European programs and policies for the information society, and many others.

On 21 September 2010, the Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2010-2015 was adopted, which promoted the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. In the same year the EP Resolution on the impact of advertising on consumer behavior (2010/2052(INI)) was released. According to the EP, on one hand "advertising can be an efficient tool in challenging and confronting stereotypes and a lever against racism, sexism and discrimination", and on the other, it "often transmits biased and/or derogatory messages which perpetuate stereotyped prejudices regarding gender, thereby undermining equality strategies aimed at eradicating inequalities". Again, the EC and Member States

were called upon to take measures to ensure respect for human dignity without discrimination based on sex, religion, belief, disability, age and sexual orientation in the media, and all four of these require cooperation between the EC, the Member States, civil society and advertising self-regulatory bodies. The problem of gender stereotypes in the media is not isolated but is situated within the broader context of gender equality as a fundamental principle of the EU. The continuous calls for action to the Member States, the EC and the media to improve the status of women in the media, both as workers in them and as subjects of representation, are impressively numerous. The media were one of the priorities of the Irish presidency of the EU (January – June 2013), which is the first presidency to address the presence of women in decision-making roles in media organizations. At its request, a study measuring women's presence in senior roles in a sample of private and public print and electronic media in all Member States was carried out in 2012 and was published by EIGE in 2013.<sup>34</sup> According to this, women continue to be significantly under-represented in decision-making in media organizations, both at operational levels as senior managers and at the strategic level, as chief executive officers and board members, and mechanisms promoting gender equality (gender-equality plans, diversity policies and codes of conduct) are scarce.<sup>35</sup>

According to the Council of the EU (Conclusions on Advancing Women's Roles as Decision-makers in the Media, 20-21 June 2013), the increased presence of women in decision-making roles in the media could lead to presenting more balanced pictures of women's and men's lives, which would have a positive impact on public policies, private attitudes and behavior. In line with the findings in the EIGE report, the Council called on the EC and the Member States to take measures to foster gender equality at all levels, including women's advancement in decision-making roles and enhancing awareness of gender equality in the media sector. It firmly asserted that "The media has enormous capacity to contribute positively to the achievement of gender equality at all levels, for example by promoting balanced and non-stereotyped portrayals of women and men, including in advertising, and by

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<sup>34</sup> EIGE has developed indicators to measure the progress in each of the areas of the Beijing Platform for Action, including Women and media. Cfr. <http://eige.europa.eu/internal/bpfa/results#/123/description> (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>35</sup> There is a significant difference between the private and public media sectors. In public media organisations, the ratio of women to men occupying strategic decision-making position is only 1 in 5, whereas in the private media organisations it decreases to only 1 in 10. Within the decision-making boards of media organisations women represent only 25% of all members. In Italy the ratio women-men in decision-making posts is 10% vs 90%, while in Bulgaria it is 32% vs. 68%. As for women and men on the boards, we have 13% women vs. 87 % men in Italy and 9% women vs. 91% men in Bulgaria.

portraying women in decision-making roles and in positions of power”.

#### 1.4. Italy and Bulgaria: a general overview

We could look at both countries through the lens of statistics, which show some similarities and differences between them due to social, political, cultural and historical factors. For comparison:

- Bulgaria does not have an Equal Opportunities Law, and despite the 2004 Law on Protection against Discrimination. Such a law (Codice delle pari opportunità) has existed in Italy since 2006, and was amended by Decreto legislativo n. 5 of 25.1.2010;
- The total population of Bulgaria, according to the last census of 2011, is 7.364.570 people, of whom women are 3.777.999, or 51.3%. There is a similar proportion of women in Italy in 2011 – 51.6% out of total 59.433.744 people;<sup>36</sup>
- In both countries, women surpass men in life expectancy: the women in Bulgaria, according to the 2009-2011 data, live on average 77.4 years, and those in Italy in 2011 – 84.5 years;<sup>37</sup>
- The working women in Bulgaria, according to 2010 Eurostat data, are 56.4% of the population compared to only 46.1% in Italy;<sup>38</sup>
- Both countries have a negative birth rate, and the women in Bulgaria give birth earlier than the women in Italy – at an average of 26.6 years compared to 31.1 years in Italy (EU 3th Demography Report 2010);<sup>39</sup>
- According to the data compiled by the Inter-parliamentary Union in November 2013, Bulgaria is in 48<sup>th</sup> place out of 188 countries in representing women in its Parliament, and Italy is in 28<sup>th</sup> place;<sup>40</sup>
- According to the Gender Equality Index by EIGE<sup>41</sup> Bulgaria scores 37% and Italy 40.9% compared to the EU average of 54%. The domain of knowledge is the one where both countries have an equal

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.istat.it/it/files/2012/12/comunicato-stampa.pdf> <http://dati-censimentopopolazione.istat.it/http://www.nsi.bg/census2011/> [http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Население\\_на\\_България](http://bg.wikipedia.org/wiki/Население_на_България) (accessed Jan 2014)

<sup>37</sup> <http://noi-italia.istat.it/> <http://www.president.bg/docs/1352302457.pdf> (accessed Jan 2014)

<http://www.nsi.bg/sites/default/files/files/pressreleases/Population2011.pdf> (accessed Jan 2014)

<sup>38</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics\\_explained/index.php/Employment\\_statistics](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Employment_statistics) (accessed Jan 2014)

<sup>39</sup> [http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY\\_OFFPUB/KE-ET-10-001/EN/KE-ET-10-001-EN.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/cache/ITY_OFFPUB/KE-ET-10-001/EN/KE-ET-10-001-EN.PDF) (Jan 2014)

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm> (accessed Jan 2014)

score (32%). Italy score less than Bulgaria in only one domain: power (18.6% vs. 33.8%), while Bulgaria scores less than Italy in the domains of work (49.9% vs. 60.6%), money (40.7% vs. 68.2%), time (17.3% vs. 33%), and health (84.5% vs. 90.8%).

- According to the Global Gender Gap Index of 2013, Bulgaria is in 43rd place and Italy in 71st place out of 133 countries, and the greatest gap between them is in the economic participation of women (Italy is in the 97<sup>th</sup> place, and Bulgaria in 49th) and health (Italy – 72<sup>nd</sup> place, Bulgaria – 34th);<sup>42</sup>

Some additional information is given to us by the data of the European Values Study 2008, according to which family and friends are quite important for 100% of Italians and 99% of Bulgarians. The Bulgarian respondents largely agree with concepts, such as: women need to have a child to feel satisfied (75 % vs. 57% of Italians), what a woman wants most is to have a home and children (72% vs. 57%), parents' duty is to do their best for their children even at the expense of their own well-being (87% vs. 82%), being a housewife is just as satisfying as having a paid job (42% vs. 52%). They also agree with some more "unconventional" ideas, such as: fathers can care for their children as well as mothers (71% vs. 72%), work is the best way for a woman to be independent (89% vs. 82 %), men need to take a responsibility for home and children like women (94% vs. 91%), and the key to a successful marriage is sharing housework (71% vs. 91% of Italians). As we see, in both cultures coexist traditional and non-traditional ideas of gender roles.<sup>43</sup> In view of Hofstede's theory Bulgaria<sup>44</sup> has a high PDI, a very high degree of UAI, is a collectivist society (individualistic in 2001, according to Silgidzhiyan et al., 2004), and is relatively feminine. Italy has a moderate PDI, which increases in southern Italy, an individualistic culture, especially in the largest and richest cities of the north, which is reduced in the South, a high degree of UAI, a short-term orientation, and is a masculine society.<sup>45</sup> Important to our study is the "masculinity versus femininity" dimension: "A society is called masculine when emotional gender roles are clearly distinct: men are supposed to be assertive, tough, and focused

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<sup>41</sup> It provides a measure of how far (or close) each Member State was from achieving gender equality in 2010 and consists of six core domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power, health and two satellite domains (Intersecting inequalities and violence). <http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-equality-index>

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.weforum.org/issues/global-gender-gap>

<sup>43</sup> To a small extent abortion is tolerated in Italy for married couples (only 33% compared to 41% of Bulgarians), and abortion is justified by only 28% of Italians. The latter is likely due to the importance of the Catholic religion (to 76% of Italians religion is important, compared to 54% of Bulgarians).

<sup>44</sup> Cfr. <http://geert-hofstede.com/bulgaria.html> Cfr. also Andreveva & Karabelyova, 2008, Silgidzhiyan et al., 2004.

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. <http://geert-hofstede.com/italy.html>

on material success, whereas women are supposed to be more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life. A society is called feminine when emotional gender roles overlap: both men and women are supposed to be modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (2010: 140). On his website (<http://geert-hofstede.com/>) Italy is defined a masculine country (70 points), highly oriented and driven by success, as demonstrated by the purchase of luxury goods. Bulgaria is a relatively feminine society (40 points): the focus here is on welfare, i.e. on "working to live". According to Silgidzhiyan et al. (2004: 37-44), in Bulgaria there is no clear distinction of gender-specific roles, the ambitious spirit and individual distinctiveness are not appreciated, there is a high level of jealousy of successful people and the index of masculinity is more common for women. In this context of ideas Italy appears to be a more traditional country in terms of gender roles than Bulgaria, although in Bulgaria feminine qualities have made their way into traditionally Western male characteristics.<sup>46</sup>

#### 1.4.1. Analyses of advertising representation of women

There is a significant lack of research on women’s representation in advertising in Bulgaria, which on one hand is surprising given the importance of the issue at a national and international level but, on the other, is understandable given the post-communist, relatively recent consumer-based Bulgarian society.<sup>47</sup>

In his book “The Image of Women in Advertising” (1998) Kaftandjiev analysed print advertising in view of psychological and physiological characteristics of women and of their semiotic, social and demographic aspects. As the author pointed out, however (p.7), the book was based mostly on Western ads, i.e. on the expectations of Western consumer groups, and not all stereotypical images of women would meet the expectations of Bulgarian consumers.

Ibroscheva (2007) carried out a quantitative content analysis of 127 ads aired within 2 weeks in July 2004 on the national channels bTV, Nova TV and Kanal 1, in which she claimed that "overall, sex role stereotypes and sexualized depictions of women dominate Bulgarian TV ads" (p. 415). In the analysed ads no women, but 21.6% of men, were voice-overs. Further, 66.7% of women were shown visually not speaking (compared to only 29.7% of men), 78.9% of them were portrayed as product users, and

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<sup>46</sup> Cfr. Andreeva & Karabelyova, 2009, pp. 133-136.

<sup>47</sup> Most studies deal with women’s representation in printing press and in magazines, e.g. Danova, 2006; Ibroscheva, 2006, 2008, 2009; Ibroscheva & Raicheva-Stover, 2009; Kasabova-Dicheva, 2004; Monova, 2005; Nedjalkova, 2003; Petrova, 2008, 2011, Popova, Petrova & Balabanva-Stoicheva, 2008; Tabakova, 1995.

only 10% were authorities (vs. 45.9% men). Almost half of women (45.6%) were in dependent roles, as stay-at-home mothers or caretakers (compared to only 2.7% of men), and 30% of them were displayed in autonomous roles – as workers, professionals, celebrities (compared to 83.8% of men). 36.7% of women (vs. 21.6% of men) were presented at home, only 10% of them (vs. 24.3% of men) were in occupational settings, and 48.9% of women (vs. 45.9% of men) were in leisure settings. Women advertised more domestic products (body, home, medicine and food – 65.5.%) and products used both at home and away (31.1%) than men did (59.5% and 24.3%), while men were featured advertising auto and sport products, and products used away from home, more often than women were (16.2% vs. 3.3.%). Only 3.3% of women used the product to acquire social approval (vs. 13.5% of men), 32.2% of them (vs. 48.6% of men) promised self-enhancement, 30% offered a practical reward (vs. 18.9% of men), and 34.4% of women offered pleasure or other rewards (compared to 18.9% of men). Most of women (81.1% vs. 62.2% of men) were presented as young, 18.9% of them (vs. 37.8% of men) were middle-aged and old, 46 % of women were in a physical contact with someone (vs. 29% of men), and while 75.6% of men were portrayed in demure clothing, only 41.1% of women were portrayed so (in the other cases they are displayed in suggestive dress, partially clad or nude). Although these findings should be interpreted with caution, as Ibrosocheva said (p.416), they gave a glimpse into the gender-role portrayals in the growing advertising industry in a former communist country.

The study by Pesheva (2010) analysed the basic messages in advertising of the alcoholic summer liquor /mastika/ “Peshtera”, which, she argued,<sup>48</sup> contained discriminatory elements forming a perverted and unreal image of the contemporary woman – outside her social roles and activities and depicted mainly as an object of exaggerated sexual desires. We should bear in mind that the latter has been typical for advertising representation of women in Bulgaria in recent years, especially but not only in alcohol ads, due to the popularity of the pop folk music, or the so-called “chalga” typical for the Balkan region, that has influenced advertising aesthetics by aggressively oversexualizing women’s bodies.<sup>49</sup>

In her book “Advertising, Sex, and Post-Socialism” (2013) Ibrosocheva explored the role of advertising and the consumption it promotes in changing cultural perceptions of sex and femininity across the

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<sup>48</sup> Pesheva was invited as a media expert before the Commission for Protection against Discrimination to present her expert testimony on the advertising campaigns "The season of watermelons" and ‘Crystal passion’, which proved to be too offensive and discriminatory for a group of Bulgarian women, who filed a complaint with the Commission (but unfortunately, did not win).

<sup>49</sup> About the music and the way of life it offers cfr. Ibrosocheva, 2009; Trankova, 2010; Todorova, 2008.

Balkan region. The author considered how the marketing of gender identities that had taken place in the years of post-socialist transition had fundamentally affected the social, economic, and political positioning of women, and provided a look at the mechanisms whereby post-socialist norms of sexual behavior were being engendered and what role media played in that transformative process.

In comparison, there has been a tradition of research on women's representation in advertising in Italy since the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> In her book "La donna oggetto in pubblicità" (1977), Pellegrini listed some stereotypes of women and men (the always happy and perfect mother – homemaker and carer, the working father, happily taken care of, the sophisticated grandmother, the expert – a housewife or a professional, the teenager, the romantic couple), and showed the ways women were objectified in Italian print ads.

Buonanno in "Cultura di massa e identità femminile" (1983) studied information and cultural programs, fiction, and TV commercials broadcast for 14 weeks in 1981, and her main question was what is the relationship between the media and society in terms of gender roles. She tried to overcome Tuchman's reflection hypothesis,<sup>51</sup> and suggested that there is a mutual influence between the media and society. In her quantitative-qualitative analysis of 50 ads Buonanno examined the role of women primarily as housewives, and the relative "feminisation" of men by their appearance in the private sphere. She noticed a fundamental problem of such representation: men entered the private sphere in the role of fathers and unskilled homemakers, but the analogous representation was not present for women in the public sphere.

Di Cristofaro Longo in "Immagine donna" (1985) analysed women's representation in a month in 1985 in the Italian print press and in print and TV advertising. She believed that the media reflect the culture, whose manifestation they are, "esprimono il sistema dei valori complessivo rispetto al quale in quel determinato periodo si ritiene che esista consenso" (p. 13).<sup>52</sup> The main question behind her research

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<sup>50</sup> There are a lot of pieces of research on women's representation in TV, e.g. Buonanno, 1983; Di Cristofaro Longo, 1985; Bolla & Cardini, 1999; Di Cristofaro Longo, 1992; Piazza ed., 1991; Cornero (a cura di), 2001; CNEL, 2002; Caprettini ed., 2004; Ancorpari et al. (a cura di), 2004; Ardizzoni, 2009; GMMP (Azzalini, 2006); Cares & Cnel, 2002; Lasani & Richeri, 1996; Poggio (a cura di), 2002, <http://www.osservatorio.it/>

<sup>51</sup> "Media reflect dominant social values" (Tuchman, 1978, pp. 3-38).

<sup>52</sup> "express the overall system of values that it is believed that there is consent in a certain period " (my translation).



was<sup>53</sup> what model(s) of woman are transmitted by the media and whether they contribute to or hinder change, given their highly dichotomized messages. Di Cristofaro Longo concluded that despite the achievements of feminism, Italian media of the 1980s still presented women in a subordinate position, with roles that were seemingly new but unchanged at their core (p. 16).

In their article “Gender Stereotypes in Italian TV advertisements” (1989), Furnham and Voli content-analysed 333 TV commercials broadcast in September 1987 on Canale 5 in view of the time of broadcast (morning, afternoon, and evening), and compared gender representation with results from the British researchers Manstead and McCulloch (1981) and the Americans McArthur and Resko (1975). The results showed that males (64.3%) were about twice as likely to be central figures as females (35.7%), and more likely to appear as voice-overs, to give pleasure, self-enhancement and other rewards, to offer an end comment, and factual arguments, to be presented as authorities, associated with food or other products, in independent roles (professionals, interviewers, narrators, celebrities), in occupational settings, against a predominantly female background. Females were more likely than males to be portrayed visually, as users, in dependent roles, at home, to be associated with body and home products, and to give social approval and practical rewards.

Another attempt at analysis of ads, this time comparative, was Giacciardi’s (1995), which studied the evening TV ads aired on RAI 1, RAI 2, Canale 5 and on the British ITV and Channel 4 between October 1988 and March 1989, offering an insight into the social construction of reality in and by TV ads. Giacciardi claimed that gender differences in the Italian ads were sharper than in the British (p. 122), women usually played a subordinate role and were suitable authorities only for information on a product’s benefits for the individual – which is a part of the ‘nurturant ethos’ – while men were the authorities even on domestic duties. Even when cosmetic ads showed women as active subjects, having fun experimenting with their own identity, voice-overs and end comments brought the representation back within the more traditional frame of female subordination (p. 124).

The instrumentalisation of women in Italian advertising (as a sexual object and a housewife) and the disapproval of this by some Italians were addressed in “La donna dei media” (1992, 1993), which analysed the image of women in the media, and the signals sent to Sportello Immagine donna.<sup>54</sup> The study emphasized that advertising “ha un enorme peso nella proposizione e riproposizione dei modelli

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<sup>53</sup> She claimed the media and television restrict women's presence and offer a stereotyped image, thus contributing to the reproduction of symbolic conditions of female marginalization.

culturali” (p.196),<sup>55</sup> offered incentives for corporate advertising that promotes a culture of equal opportunities, and advocated a bill to ban the image of women as an object and a housewife as the only possibilities, as well as references to any alleged physical, mental or intellectual inferiority of women (p. 197). However, such negative attitudes to advertising as representing stereotypical female images, inconsistent with reality, according to Lasagni and Richeri, are only one pole of views concerning the representation of women on Italian TV (1996: 148-154). Some of the media professionals they interviewed argued that this simplification is a must for advertising, which has little time to influence consumers, and that advertising language itself leads to stereotyping (p. 152); others "justified" TV, arguing that it merely reflects the distorted male and female roles in reality, or on the contrary claimed that it had become increasingly modernized compared to the past – more female journalists were employed and it had adapted itself to changes in reality (pp. 153-159).

Such ambiguity can also be found in the content of TV programs and ads. Capecchi (2002: 114-120), referring to some studies by Italian researchers on the image of women in the media, noted some changes since the 1970s: in addition to the images of wife/mother/homemaker and sex object were present those of working woman, masculinizing woman, a woman confident in her seductive force, and men had been feminized (they took care of their body, expressed their feelings, etc.). However, she emphasized that among many simple and conflicting views of women, including those which “potenzialmente spingono il pubblico femminile verso l’emancipazione professionale e stimolano l’adozione di comportamenti, atteggiamenti e stili di vita simili a quelli maschili in nome di una presunta parità tra i sessi” (p. 118),<sup>56</sup> we continued to find well-known stereotypes: the housewife, the mother, the myths of beauty, thinness and youth. The latter is especially true for women, for whom it is important to self-discipline their bodies: as emphasized by Bolla and Cardini in their study of the

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<sup>54</sup> It is an initiative of the group "Women and Media" at the National Commission on Equality and Equal Opportunities between Men and Women, of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. Key topics in the section are: cultural transmission (the woman as mother and as sister), the housewife (obsessed with cleaning, and eternally cheerful), youth (appearance holds first place; creating false expectations), women and violence, the female body (female sex objectivisation, the temptress, body dismemberment), the ‘minus’ woman (she is lower), etc.

<sup>55</sup> “has a huge role in offering and re-offering of cultural models” (my translation).

<sup>56</sup> “potentially push the female audience towards professional emancipation and stimulate the adoption of behaviours, attitudes and lifestyles similar to those of men in the name of a supposed gender equality” (my translation).

representation of the body on Italian TV, “Carne in scatola”,<sup>57</sup> “sottigliezza, levità, snellezza del corpo sono sinonimo di femminilità, mentre applicati al genere maschile assumono una connotazione diminutiva, se non dispregiativa” (1999:121). In a similar vein we have the book by Brancati, coincidentally bearing the title “La pubblicità è femmina, ma il pubblicitario è maschio” (The advertising is female, but the advertiser is male) (2002), in which she pointed that advertising is a woman “perché la donna è ancora vittima di una visione molto retrograda, in quanto soggetto preferito degli spot o dei cartelloni. Tanto meglio se nuda, sexy o ammiccante” (p.7).<sup>58</sup> Brancati interviewed Italian advertisers and gave us an insight into Italian advertising in the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, pointing out that despite the changes in the character of the woman (e.g. the presence of more modern women along with the traditional housewife), “anche quando il contenuto dell’immagine sembra diverso dal passato, è possibile che la sostanza sia la medesima” (p.113).<sup>59</sup> According to Panarese (2013),<sup>60</sup> the woman in the TV ads in Italy is “una femmina piuttosto distante da quelle reali e certamente poco realistica. Banalizzata, probabilmente, dalla natura ipersintetica della forma comunicativa che la ospita. Una figura utilizzata dalla pubblicità a suo uso e consumo, molto lontana dalla complessità delle donne che popolano il mondo” (p.52)<sup>61</sup>. In her content analysis of 573 TV commercials broadcast on 6 national TV channels – Italia 1, Canale 5, Rete 4, RAI 1, 2 and 3 – on February 14 and 22 and on March 2, 2011, Panarese showed that television advertising replicates, to a large extent, the trends of gender portrayals in print advertising, and reproduces the same “defects” as the ones noticed by Goffman in his book *Gendered advertisements* (1979), “contribuendo a diffondere immagini di donne pubblicitarie ipersemplicate e stereotipiche” (p. 21).<sup>62</sup> Women were the figures who prevailed both as main and as relevant characters, while men prevailed as background figures.

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<sup>57</sup> “thinness, lightness, slenderness of the body are synonymous with femininity, but when applied to the male gender they take on a diminutive, if not derogatory connotation” (my translation).

<sup>58</sup> “because the woman is still a victim of a very backward vision, as a favorite subject of commercials or billboards. So much the better if naked, sexy or flirtatious” (my translation).

<sup>59</sup> “even when the content of the image looks different from the past, it is possible that the substance is the same” (my translation).

<sup>60</sup> For the numeric results cfr. [http://www.aiart.org/public/web/documenti/Slide\\_Paola\\_Panarese.pdf](http://www.aiart.org/public/web/documenti/Slide_Paola_Panarese.pdf) (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>61</sup> “a woman rather distant from real women and certainly unrealistic. Trivialized, probably, by the nature of the oversynthetic form of communication that hosts it. A figure used by advertising for its own use and consumption, far away from the complexity of the women who populate the world” (my translation).

<sup>62</sup> “helping to disseminate oversimplified and stereotypical images of women in advertising” (my translation).

Even if more women than men were the first characters to appear, i.e. as those who function was to introduce and contextualize the advertising narrative, this was not a privileged role, but rather a function of the enhancement of certain types of products of which they are considered to be consumers or responsible for the purchase (hygiene, food, domestic, etc.). They often accompanied the images, noticed the author – to decorate the environment, especially when their presence was associated with products aimed at male targets, such as cars or electronics. It was also striking that women were more numerous among the endorsers of different products and among the common people, but not among the authoritative figures. Less than 15% of dentists, doctors or researchers who appeared on TV with a function of guaranteeing the quality of a product are women. According to Panarese, this seemed to show that female characters in advertising may be common consumers or endorsers selected for their beauty, but not competent and experienced professionals. When women were not represented in domestic settings and in the role of mothers/wives/housewives or average consumers, they were portrayed as sexually suggestive celebrity endorsers, and parts of their bodies were often emphasized. Female characters tend to be younger than male, while the latter were shown older than female. 82.2% of women (vs. 17.8% men) were slim, and 79.4% of female faces were beautiful (vs. 20.6% male), which showed that female attractiveness was a pull factor and certainly not a factor of information and help in rationalizing purchasing and consumption. The results also showed that women in advertising continued to have “un ruolo ancillare rispetto all’uomo e una funzione prevalente di esche comunicative” (p.49)<sup>63</sup>, similarly to what had been found in the 1970s, and that as undelined further by the fact that 66.5% of voice-overs were male (vs. 32.7% female), which seemed to be the authoritative guidance for the advertising audience.

It becomes clear that there are some old and new stereotypes of (advertising) women in both countries, and it would be interesting to find out the similarities and differences between them, and whether they are (still) present in the advertisements on bTV and Canale 5.

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<sup>63</sup> “an ancillary role compared to men and with a dominant function of communicative bait” (my translation).

## 2. Content Analysis Results

### 2.1. Sample of Advertisements<sup>64</sup>

We analysed ads broadcast on the Bulgarian national commercial channel bTV and on the Italian national commercial channel Canale 5, each of them being the most watched commercial television channel in the country. The recording duration was one week - namely that length is used in numerous analyses of gender stereotypes in television advertising. As the beginning of the week, we considered 00.01 am on Monday, March 21 2011, and as its end, 23.59 pm, Sunday, March 27 2011. We tried to choose a "standard" period, i.e. a period not characterized by religious or other holidays in any of the two countries that could distort the normal broadcast and scheduling, and to carry out simultaneous recordings on both channels. Due to the limitations of our study, it was impossible to carry out an analysis over time, but we will make such an attempt in the future. Our goal was to select the two most-watched national commercial channels in Italy and Bulgaria, with the biggest advertising revenue in the country and with a polythematic profile aimed at a family audience.<sup>65</sup>

Only television advertising was analysed, as defined by the Audiovisual media services Directive 2010/13/EU (Chapter I, art. 1i): "...any form of announcement broadcast whether in return for payment or for similar consideration or broadcast for self-promotional purposes by a public or private undertaking or natural person in connection with a trade, business, craft or profession, in order to promote the supply of goods or services, including immovable property, rights and obligations, in return for payment", and not other forms of audiovisual commercial communication, such as

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<sup>64</sup> The ads can be found on [http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0AiaXLV3YEVBTmK\\_8OJvGdmV3Cc9tAP](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0AiaXLV3YEVBTmK_8OJvGdmV3Cc9tAP) and <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL0AiaXLV3YEUrKL4VK4fNqKnKF2Vfgx2e> (accessed Jan 2014).

<sup>65</sup> bTV (<http://www.btv.bg/english>) is the first national private TV station in Bulgaria, broadcast in 2000, and currently part of Central European Media Enterprises. It is the absolute innovator on the Bulgarian market that sets the trends in TV programming, and has the biggest audience in Bulgaria (cfr. <http://alpharesearch.bg/en/>). Canale 5 (<http://www.mediaset.it/canale5/>) is an Italian private television network of Mediaset, the media branch of Fininvest, and was the first private television network to have a national coverage in Italy in 1980, based on a local channel, Tele Milano. It is the second most watched TV channel in Italy after the public RAI 1 (cfr. Auditel) but has the biggest advertising revenues.

sponsorship, teleshopping and product placement.

When selecting a sample of ads, we excluded: 1. The repeat ads, with an exception of the ones that appeared on both television channels. Exclusion of repeat ads is a global trend, as the table by Eisend (2010: 428) shows, although some researchers (as Gilly 1988, Milner & Collins 2000) analyse them. We did not take into consideration the shorter versions of the same ads either, unless they were the only available. We regarded as repeat ads the ads of the same product with the same message, and analysed the first recorded version. 2. The ads with a child, animal or a fantasy/cartoon character as a central figure, similar to McArthur & Resko (1975), Furnham & Voli (1998), Furnham & Bitar (1993), Neto & Pinto (1998), Furnham & Saar (2005) and many others. 3. The ads with only children or those obviously aimed at a young audience. Although it would be interesting to see how the children, for example girls, carry out stereotyped activities typical for the adults (e.g. for the mother) that were not included in our study. 4. The ads with hardly identifiable central adult characters, similar to Furnham & Saar (2005), Neto & Pinto (1998), and others, i.e. the ads with many adult characters appearing for a very short time. However, unlike those authors, we did not exclude homogeneous groups (i.e. composed of male or female subjects), but only groups with mixed sexual content due to the inability to put their characters into the categories of male / female.<sup>66</sup> 5. The ads showing products only without any adult(s) appearing, or one appearing but not codified. Out of the 191 ads recorded on bTV we selected 126 ads with a total length of around 53 min.<sup>67</sup> 91 of them (72.2%) were foreign and 29 (23%) Bulgarian. Out of the 257 ads recorded on Canale 5 153 ads were selected with a total length of around 54 min.<sup>68</sup> 67 of them (43.8%) were of foreign origin and 83 (54.2%) of Italian.

## 2.2. Coding procedure. The relationship of coding variables to gender stereotyping

When determining the categories of analysis we have taken into account those used in a number of

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<sup>66</sup> That was a compromise: on one hand, we partly stuck to what had been done by other authors, on the other we kept the homogeneous groups, because we hoped to find gender stereotypes.

<sup>67</sup> Cosmetics and hygiene products 34, food 27, detergents 12, drugs 24, banks and insurance 10, nonalcoholic beverages 8, children's goods 3, cars and accessories 3, alcoholic beverages 4, and electronics 1. We did not determine the origin of 6 ads.

<sup>68</sup> Cosmetics and hygiene 31 ads, food 34, detergents 13, drugs 21, children's goods 4, other domestic products 5, banks and insurance 2, nonalcoholic beverages 7, cars and accessories 10, alcoholic beverages 3, telecommunications 5, electronics 5, clothing 6, and others 7. We did not determine the origin of 3 ads.

content analyses of gender stereotypes in television advertising, a general overview and comparison of which can be found in the articles by Furnham & Mak (1999), Eisend (2010), and Furnham & Paltzer (2010). Most are based on the categories of analysis used by the American researchers McArthur & Resko (1975) in their content analysis of the portrayal of men and women in American commercials broadcast in 1971. They chose a maximum of two main advertising characters, encoded by: sex (male, female), credibility (who is the product user, either visually or by explicit verbal cues, and who is the authority, i.e. who gives the information about the product), role (spouse, husband/wife, parent, homemaker, worker, professional, real-life celebrity, interviewer/narrator, boy/girlfriend, or other), setting (home, store, occupational, other), argument (the reason why the product should be preferred: scientific (factual), nonscientific (opinion)), type of reward, i.e. advertising appeal (social approval - approval from the opposite sex, friends, family, self-enhancement - improvement in appearance, health, self-esteem, practical - saves money, time, efforts, or other), and type of product (for the body, home, foodstuffs, other (cars, accessories, sport products, pet food and insurance)). Several other categories were added later by other researchers: mode of presentation (speaking or silent), background (i.e. the non-essential people who are the background for the central figure), end comment,<sup>69</sup> and age (under 30, 31-50, and over 50 - but the content may vary).

Furnham & Mak (1999) analysed 14 content analyses of gender stereotypes in TV advertising, some of which from European countries - Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), Denmark and France (Furnham, Babizkow & Ugoccioni, 1999), Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1996), and the UK (Furnham & Skae, 1997). Furnham and Paltzer (2010) analysed 30 content analyses published in 2000-2008 in over 20 countries around the world, some of which concerned European countries: Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007), Austria (Ahlstrand, 2007), Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2002), Spain (Valls-Fernandez et al., 2007, Royo-Vela et al., 2008), the UK compared to Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005) and Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2002), and European countries compared with non-European ones: Sweden, Russia, USA and Japan (Milner & Collins, 2000), Great Britain with New Zealand (Furnham & Farrager, 2000), Japan (Furnham & Imadzu, 2002), and South Africa (Furnham & Spencer-Bowdage, 2002). The authors came to the following conclusions regarding the gender content of different categories of analysis:

- Mode of presentation. There is a general world trend for men to be voice-overs and women to be portrayed visually. This rule applies to Europe, where, however, there is "an east-west split with fewer

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<sup>69</sup> Could be the brand name only, the brand and the slogan, or the brand and a sentence composed specifically for the ad.

sex differences in the east" (Furham and Paltzer, 2010: 217), i.e. differences between the results from Turkey, Poland and Serbia, where both men and women were almost equally voice-overs, and Austria, the UK, Italy, Bulgaria, Portugal, Denmark and France, where the voice-overs were mostly male.

- **Credibility.** Globally women are portrayed as users of the products advertised and men as authorities, even in ads for products aimed at women or for gender-neutral products. In the ads in Sweden, Poland and Bulgaria, 80% of women were users, but men were equally as likely to be either authorities or users. In earlier studies, analysed by Furnham and Mak, men were often portrayed as authorities (Italy, Portugal), even when both men and women were users (Portugal, Denmark and France).
- **Role.** Globally women in advertising are portrayed in dependent roles (e.g. familial), and men in autonomous roles (interviewer/narrator/professional). This difference is particularly obvious in the analyses of ads from Bulgaria, Poland, Italy, France, and Portugal, whereas those from Austria, Serbia, Spain and Turkey did not show very significant differences in gender roles
- **Age.** According to Furnham & Paltzer, all content-analytic studies from Europe (Russia, Turkey, Sweden, Poland, Bulgaria and Austria) showed a significant difference between age groups, with women often featured young.<sup>70</sup> This category is "one of the best indicators of sex-role stereotyping" (Furnham & Mak, 1999: 432) and is typical for the earlier content analysis of television ads in France, Portugal, the UK and Denmark.
- **Argument.** Furnham & Mak consider this category to be the least prone to gender stereotypes due to the often contradictory results: i.e. while women in the Italian ads more often than men did not give any argument and men were more often associated with facts, in the Danish ads there was no difference between them, etc. However, according to Furnham and Paltzer, globally the facts are given by men more often than women, while opinions are equally given by both genders, or more often by one of them; finally, women do not often give any argument, i.e. they are more likely to be shown as models.
- **Reward type.** Globally women offer social approval and self-enhancement, while the pleasure reward shows contradictory results. In the ads in Italy, women tended to give social approval, and men more often than women gave self-enhancement and pleasure. Self-enhancement was typical of women

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<sup>70</sup> This is true even if the different content analyses use various subcategories of analysis, making the comparison between them more difficult.



in the Portuguese, Danish and British ads, and pleasure was typical for men in British, Italian, Danish and Portuguese ads. Social approval and self-enhancement were given by women more often than by men in the Polish, Turkish and Bulgarian ads.

- **Product type.** According to Furnham & Paltzer (2010: 221), the home, body and food products are advertised more often by women, and the ads for cars, sporting goods and alcohol by men. Body products were advertised by women in the Spanish (2007), Austrian, Turkish and Polish ads; non-domestic products by men in Bulgarian ads, and domestic products by women in Serbian ads. Food products were advertised more often by women than by men in the Polish ads, but this type of product can be advertised by both men and women. We see this trend in the Italian ads too, in which 50% of women and only 30.8% of men advertised body products, while men most often advertised food products, cars and sporting goods.
- **Background.** According to Furnham & Paltzer, at a global and at a European level it is more common to represent women, as opposed to men, with children. In other cases, the background figures vary by country, e.g. men were shown against a mixed (male/female) background in the Polish ads, and women in Serbian ads; men were depicted against a male background in Turkish ads, and women in Polish ads.
- **Setting.** Furnham & Paltzer (2010) notice a trend for women to be depicted at home more often than men, who are depicted in leisure settings (which is particularly true for the Polish ads) and at the workplace (in the Bulgarian and Spanish 2007 ads). Representation of women at home and men in diverse locations is a trend noticed in previous analyses, and although the results of these may vary, according to Furnham & Mak (2010: 432), location is “a good indicator of gender stereotyping”.
- **End comment.** This category is not particularly sex-linked. Results from the European countries both support (Turkey, Serbia) and go against (Poland) this claim. According to Furnham & Mak, however, the end comments are still “highly indicative of sex-stereotyping” (1999: 433), since men usually make end comments in ads, and this is particularly true for Italy, Denmark, the UK and Portugal.

In his 1975-2007 study of 64 content analyses of gender roles in advertisements, 57 of which were TV commercials, Martin Eisend (2010) connects the categories of analysis with three of the four elements of the stereotypes that, according to Americans Deaux & Lewis (1984), people use to differentiate men from women: professional status, physical characteristics, role behavior and traits. Eisend skips the traits, since he believes that they are not directly observable by means of content analysis. He connects:

professional status with "role" and "location"; physical characteristics with "age"; role behaviors with "mode of presentation", "credibility", "argument", "type of product", "end comment" and background". Based on the idea of EU gender stereotypes as limiting life opportunities, particularly those for women, Eisend sees the categories of analysis in the context of equality of opportunities, and concludes that: "Taken together, the more the depiction of certain characteristics in advertising deviates from the objective of equality, the higher is the degree of stereotyping across the components of role behavior and occupational status, as well as regarding age as a particular physical characteristic" (2010: 420). Thus, Eisend places in a social context those categories of analysis which are associated with professional status and role behavior, and he relates the physical characteristic "age" to the representation of all age groups according to the age distribution in society.

In the context of Eisend's ideas, an indication of gender stereotyping would be the over- representation of women compared to men in the following respects:

- visual / silent representation (vs. voice-overs);
- user of the product (vs. authority);
- dependent on other subjects (vs. independent);
- portrayed at home (vs. portrayed at work);
- young (vs. middle-aged / old);
- giving a nonscientific opinion or argument (vs. facts / scientific argument);
- advertising products such as cosmetics, food, or household goods (vs. cars, financial services, sport goods, leisure goods);
- giving an end comment (vs. not giving);
- background of mainly women and children (vs. background of men).

The above-mentioned categories of analysis related to gender stereotyping are similar to those used by Furnham & Mak and Furnham & Paltzer. However, Eisend gives us interesting guidelines for seeking expressions of gender stereotypes in the content analysis variables in relation to equality of opportunities as a key objective of the EU. Based on the results of his statistical analysis, he concludes that the highest degree of stereotyping is by professional status (2010: 440), which does not correspond to the changes in the development of gender equality – the latter being the area of major concern for gender policy. In his analysis Eisend supports the idea of gender stereotypes in advertising as dependent on the development of gender equality in society, and not vice-versa.

### 2.2.1. Categories of analysis used in the present study

Considering the observations of Furnham & Mak, Furnham & Paltzer and Eisend we used the following categories of analysis:

- General features of the ad: 1. An ID number: the number of the ad broadcast on one of the two TV channels on a certain day of the analysed week. 2. TV channel: bTV or Canale 5. 3. Date of broadcast: between March 21 and 27, 2011. 4. Day of broadcast: the day of the week. 5. Time of broadcast: each of the time spans into which is divided the TV programme schedule.<sup>71</sup> 6. Advertiser's name: the name of the person ordering and paying for the ad. 7. Product name. 8. Advertising locality (territorial scope): international or national, i.e. whether the ad is broadcast in different countries or in Bulgaria/Italy only. So we can find out if there is convergence or divergence of the ads (cfr. Hristov, 2004; Georgieva, 2006), and any differences in cultural expectations between Italy and Bulgaria.
- Central advertising figure. According to McArthur & Resko (1975: 211), it is a female or a male with a major role, either speaking or with prominent visual exposure. Dominick & Rausch (1972) define it as "the one visual character who appears on the screen longest, but for no less than 5 seconds." According to Schneider & Schneider (1979), this is the adult male or female characters in the ads with on-camera appearances of at least 3 seconds and/or at least one line of dialogue. Analysts usually choose one or two most prominent central figures, with or without voice-over included among these. Based on the above definitions, in our analysis we took into account a maximum of two visual figures with the most prominent presence in the ad, speaking or not, and a voice-over if present. We stuck to the separate coding of visual and sound central figures made by Furnham & Farragher (2000), based on Harris & Stobart (1986), which eases the work and refines the coding of the two main types of advertising figures. However, when comparing our results with those of other researchers, we bore in mind that a lot of them coded the advertising figures (visual and voice-overs) together. Therefore, we were able to compare with accuracy the categories sex, product type, argument, reward, and end comment, since we had used them in coding both visual figures and voice-overs. As in previous studies, chi-square analyses were carried out to establish the level of relationship between the sex and the variables.

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<sup>71</sup> These are: 7-9 am (early morning), 9-12 am (morning), 12-15 pm (lunch), 15-18 pm (afternoon) 18:30-20:30 pm (early evening), 20:30-22:30 pm (prime time), 22:30-2:00 pm (late evening) and 2-7 am (night) (Ancorpari, 2004, p. 250).

- The visual central figure was coded into: 1. Sex: male or female. 2. Product type.<sup>72</sup> Based on a pilot study on bTV and Canale 5 ads and in accordance with the division of Bretl and Cantor (1988), we used the following categories: a. Domestic (products for the home and body): food (snacks, groceries, cornflakes, chocolate, candy, milk, soups, pasta and meat products, ice cream, etc.), cosmetics (perfumes, deodorants, mascara, lipsticks, hair dyes, shampoos and conditioners, etc.) and personal care products (chewing gum, toilet paper, toothpaste, sanitary napkins, shaving gel, etc.), cleaning products and detergents, drugs (including supplements), baby products (diapers, drinks, food, toys, etc.), other (appliances and furniture); b. Non-domestic (products used outside the home): banking and insurance services (credit cards and insurance, except car insurances), cars and accessories (including car insurance); c. Both (products / services used at home and outside of it): soft drinks (tea, coffee, energy drinks, fizzy drinks), alcoholic beverages (beer, wine, brandy, vodka, etc.), telecommunications and media, electronics, clothing and accessories (bags, shoes, jewelry etc.); d. Other. 3. Mode of presentation: speaking/singing or silent. 4. Credibility: user, authority, or neither. 5. Argument: facts,<sup>73</sup> opinion, or none (the product simply displayed or used). 6. Reward: social approval, self-enhancement, practical, pleasure (fun or completely "sensual" reward), mixed, other, or none. 7. Role: a. Dependent on others: partner (husband/wife or boy/girlfriend, including relationships between friends), parent, son/daughter, homemaker, model illustrating the product; b. Independent: VIP (real or imaginary), professional (businessman/woman, lawyer, doctor, dentist, politician, soldier, scientist, architect, actor, etc.), worker (office employee, clerk, waiter, journalist, sportsman/woman, etc.), narrator / interviewer – describing the product / service (if not professional), other (including unknown). 8. Setting:<sup>74</sup> a. Private (home spaces – living room, bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, children's room, yard, or other (garage, ceiling, stairs, hall)); b. Occupational (office (including medical office),

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<sup>72</sup> Different content analyses have proposed different classifications by product categories, which vary in number and content. We could assume that some products, like most cosmetic products, detergents and cleaning products, are aimed primarily at a female audience (and advertised more often by women); others (like beer, sporting goods and cars) are aimed mainly at the male audience; and others are gender-neutral. According to Furnham & Paltzer (2010: 220), this category is problematic for testing, since the number of advertised products and services is quite large and content analysis should identify categories that may be too large or too small. Furthermore, cultural traditions, laws and existing products / services determine what is advertised, when and for whom.

<sup>73</sup> We have adopted a broader content for the subcategory “facts”, not only statistics, research, verifiable facts, expertise etc., but any information about the quality and function of the product.

<sup>74</sup> When several settings are present we take into account the dominant, i.e. the one with the longest presence of the figure.

laboratory, or other; c. Open: relaxation areas, places for improvement of appearance, public open space with other features, provided that they are not workplace, nature (river/sea, mountain, field, desert etc.), stadiums, playgrounds, streets/ squares, or other; d. Closed: relaxation areas and spaces with other functions, if not workplaces, bank, hospital, shop, supermarket, beauty salon (including hairdresser's), bar/restaurant, hotel, or other; e. Imaginary. 9. Communication with<sup>75</sup>: man/men, woman/women, child/children, mixed (man and woman, man and child, woman and child, man, woman and child), or missing. 10. Age: teen (13-18 years), young (18-30), young to middle-aged (30-45), middle-aged to old (45-60), old (over 60-65), or mixed (by groups). 11. Weight. We recognize that the category is problematic, for it can be easily influenced by personal perception of coding. However, given the claims that women are usually portrayed as slim, we take the "risk" coding persons as: rather slim (weight similar to that of the models), rather overweight (slightly or very obese), neither (similar to normal weight). 12. Clothing: casual, working (office – jacket and tie, skirt and shirt, uniform, coveralls, apron etc.), suggestive (skirts /pants, short dresses, backless dresses, tight-fitting shirts/jerseys, etc.), semi naked (towel, swimsuit, lingerie), or other (including sportswear, formal wear, pajamas or unclear). 13. End comments: present, or absent.<sup>76</sup>

- The voice-over is "the voice that cannot be attributed to any of the characters present on the screen, heard for the longest time" (Bretl & Cantor, 1988: 605). We excluded voices that only sang (if not relevant to the argument). We also considered voice-overs the voices expressing the thoughts of the main advertising figure, even when he/she obviously did not speak. It was coded for: 1. Sex: male, or female. 2. Product type: domestic, non-domestic, both, or other. 3. Argument: facts, opinions, or none. 4. Reward: social approval, self-enhancement, practical, pleasure, mixed, other, or none. 5. Type of product: domestic, non-domestic, both, or other. 6. End comment: present, or absent.

### 2.2.2. Coding reliability

The ads were coded by two coders. The first of them - the author of this work, encoded the whole samples of ads, and her assistant, after training, coded every fifth ads in the samples, consisting of randomly arranged spots in the product categories, or a total of 25 ads in the bTV sample and 30 in Canale 5. Both encoders were 100% agree on which advertising figures should be coded, as well on their sex. Agreement (bTV) was lowest for the following variables: visual figures' credibility (80.4%),

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<sup>75</sup> As for the central-figure groups, only their communication with people outside the group is coded.

<sup>76</sup> When it was not heard, it was usually written, and we coded it as absent.

argument (82.9%), social relationship (80%), and reward (71.4%). As for Canale 5, it was lowest for the visual figures' age (87.8%), weight and reward (90.2% each). Overall, all categories combined, the inter-coder reliability was 93.4% for bTV and 97.6% for Canale 5. The coders analysed the ads together and after a discussion and reached consensus.

### 2.2.3. Research hypotheses

Based on observations of Furnham & Mak, Furnham & Paltzer, and Eisend, and what we stated in par. 1.4. about the media representation of women in Bulgaria and Italy, we postulated the following hypotheses concerning the representation of women in the ads broadcast in Bulgaria and Italy:

- H1: Women will be less likely than men to be portrayed in independent roles and in settings outside the home;
- H2: Women will be more likely than men to be portrayed young, slim and in suggestive clothing;
- H3: Women will be more likely than men to be portrayed as users and to give opinions, and the latter will also be true for voice-overs;
- H4: Most women will advertise domestic product, will often be portrayed in home settings, communicating with children, more often than men will be;
- H5: The number of male voice-overs, will exceed those for female;
- H6: The end comments will mostly belong to men;
- H7: Women more than men will give, for rewards, social approval and self-enhancement.

Based on the research of Geert Hofstede on different countries' masculinity and femininity, we assumed that gender stereotyping in advertising on the Italian TV channel would be greater than the on the Bulgarian TV channel.<sup>77</sup> Milner and Collins (2000) studied gender roles in the ads in two masculine countries (Japan and the US), and in two feminine countries (Sweden and Russia). The authors showed that the gender of a country can be associated with the display of the links to male and female figures, and that the feminine values "are revealed in a culture's advertisements in a manner that allows cross-cultural sex-roles portrayals of relationships to be predicted" (p.75).

We offered the following research hypotheses:

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<sup>77</sup> An example for such cross-cultural research is that by Gilly, 1988, who analysed gender roles in TV ads from Australia, the USA and Mexico. She assumed that the Australian and the Mexican ads would present negative stereotyping of women as compared to those from the US. However, her results suggest that the "Australian ads show much less gender differences, and the Mexican ads show more differences compared to the US" (p.75).

- H1: The women in the ads on Canale 5 will be displayed in dependent roles to a greater extent than the women in the ads on bTV.
- H2: The women in the ads on bTV will be shown to a greater extent than the women in the ads on Canale 5 interacting with others.
- H3: The women in ads on Canale 5 more often than the women in the ads on bTV will be displayed in suggestive clothing, young and slim.
- H4: The women in the ads on Canale 5 more often than those in the ads on bTV will advertise domestic products and will be portrayed at home.

## 2.3. Content analysis results: Bulgaria<sup>78</sup>

### 2.3.1. Visual central figures and voice-overs

- Sex. Of all 269 coded figures 137 or 50.9% were women, and 132 or 49.1% were men, i.e. there was an equal distribution by sex and lack of statistical significance.
- Product type. There was an extremely high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 24.204$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). 90.5% of all female central figures and 65.9% of the male figures were depicted in ads for domestic products. Most male figures were found in ads for cosmetic products and drugs, and they were missing in ads for children's products, while the female figures were mainly depicted in ads for cosmetic products and food products. Men were dominant in ads for non-domestic products (18.2% compared with 4.4% women) and in those for both types of products (15.9% compared to 5.1% women).
- Mode of presentation. Most female figures were presented visually (73.8%), while male figures were dominant as voice-overs (51.5%). We discovered very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 15.965$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- Argument. 45.3% of women gave opinions compared with 25% of men who were dominant in giving facts (39.4% vs. 20.4% women). There was very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 15.965$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- Reward type. In giving the rewards of self-enhancement and social approval males (37.8%) were about half as well represented as females (68.4%). However, males dominated significantly in giving

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<sup>78</sup> Only the results for all ads in the advertising sample are presented here. For the ads of Bulgarian origin cfr. Tables I & II.

the mixed self-enhancement/practical reward and practical reward (32.6% compared to 12.9% females), and outnumbered females in giving the pleasure reward (19.7% vs. 12.4%). The overall analysis showed very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 28.774$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).<sup>79</sup>

- End comment. 53% of males and 35% of females made end comments. We found very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 8.84$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.005 < 0.002$ ).

### 2.3.2. Visual central figures

- Sex. Of all 165 visual central figures, women were 101 or 61.2% and men were 64 or 38.8%. The importance of the difference between these numbers was confirmed by the very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 8.297$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.005 < 0.001$ ).
- Product type. There was very high statistical significance, which confirmed the significant association between sex and product type ( $\chi^2 = 18.304$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Women were more likely than men to advertise domestic products (88.1% vs. 59.4% men), while men were more likely than women to advertise non-domestic products (about 4 times more), and both types of products (3 times more). Men more often than women advertised banks and insurance companies, car accessories, drugs, soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. Women more often than men advertised food, cosmetics, cleaners and detergents, and children's products, and in the last two categories they were absolute leaders.
- Mode of presentation. Our analysis did not find an association between sex and mode of visual presentation ( $\chi^2 = 0.05$ ,  $df = 1$ ). Both genders were equally presented as speaking (59.4%) and silent (40.6%).
- Credibility. The majority of men and women were represented as users of the product, and here women outnumbered men (75.2% vs. 62.5%). The latter outnumbered women as authorities (18.8% vs. 13.9%), and the small number of advertising figures depicted as authorities was impressive: only 18.8% of men and 13.9% of women were such, and we had a similar result in "neither" subcategory. Overall, the results were not statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 3.235$ ,  $df = 2$ ).
- Argument. In most ads men and women gave an opinion, or did not bring any argument. If giving an opinion, women outnumbered men by 20%, and in bringing facts they were outnumbered by men by 8%. The chi-square test showed some statistical significance both in the three subcategories ( $\chi^2 =$

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<sup>79</sup> These results were based on the collapsed 3 subcategories of analysis: self-enhancement, social approval/self-enhancement and social approval, or on the collapsed 2 subcategories: self-enhancement/practical reward and practical reward.



8.026,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ), and between the subcategories "opinion" and "facts" ( $\chi^2 = 6.093$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ), which revealed an association between sex and argument. Women more often than men were portrayed as giving an opinion, but men more often than women did not give an argument, or gave facts.

- **Reward.** Significant differences were noted in the subcategory "self-enhancement and practical reward" where men substantially outnumbered women (25.0% vs. 12.9%), in "self-enhancement and social approval" where women outnumbered men (68.4% vs. 36%), in the "pleasure reward" (23.4% men compared to 12.9% women), and in the subcategory "other / none" (15.6% of men vs. 5.9% of women).<sup>80</sup> There was very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 17.012$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- **Role.** The overall analysis revealed very high statistical significance in both the 2x3 contingency table ( $\chi^2 = 15.611$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ), and in the 2x2, i.e. in the "dependent" and "independent" role subcategories ( $\chi^2 = 13.505$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). In 74.3% of the cases women were portrayed in dependent roles – usually as models, mothers, followed by partners and housewives - while 43.8% of men were depicted as models and as parents (similar to women) and in any case as taking care of home and family. Furthermore, twice as many men as women were portrayed in independent roles – usually as workers and professionals (40.6% vs. 17.8%). However, even when a woman was depicted as professional, she was represented stereotypically,<sup>81</sup> which revealed the level of stereotyping. In addition to that, only four women were depicted as workers.<sup>82</sup> However, ten women were featured in an independent role – as VIP, especially in cosmetic products ads, which is likely due to the contracts of some top models and actresses with certain brands.<sup>83</sup>

- **Setting.** In 51.2% of the cases women were shown at home (compared with 26.7% of men), and in only 5% of the cases were they portrayed at the workplace.<sup>84</sup> No similar difference was found in the closed spaces, in which men and women were equally represented (10.9%). Men outnumbered women by

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<sup>80</sup> We collapsed the subcategories of "social approval", "self-enhancement" and "mixed – social approval and self-enhancement"; the subcategories "practical" and "mixed – self-enhancement and practical"; the subcategories "other" and "none".

<sup>81</sup> In one ad only - as a sexy blond beauty in a military uniform.

<sup>82</sup> Two office employees, a down-to-earth shop assistant, and a sexy bartender.

<sup>83</sup> We found a lot of foreign celebrities (2 Hollywood female stars and 2 female top models) and 2 imaginary ones (Hollywood stars), as well as some Bulgarian celebrities (a sportswoman, a footballer, an actress and an actor, a man singer and 2 women singers). 6 of them were found in cosmetic product ads and 5 in food ads.

<sup>84</sup> The beach bar and the film set in two cosmetic product ads, and the office and the shop in two food product ads.

5.8% outdoors, probably because that category incorporated different locations in previous analyses by other authors (for leisure or different outdoor locations – street, restaurant, park, store, supermarket, hairdressers and others), which we collapsed in our analysis, similar to the subcategories "private" and "work". The overall 2x6 analysis showed significant differences ( $\chi^2 = 16.207$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p > 0.01 < 0.005$ ), and these were further highlighted by the 2x2 analysis including only the subcategories "private" and "work" ( $\chi^2 = 14.212$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- Communication. The conducted 2x7 test revealed very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 38.14$ ,  $df = 7$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).<sup>85</sup> Women more often than men communicated with men (26.7% vs. 20.3%), but something similar was also true for men, who more often than women interacted with women (34.4% vs. 12.9%) or with groups of men and women (18.8% vs. 6.9%). As for communicating with children, or with a child and an adult, and it was typical for 19.8% of women and for 13.1% of men. Some statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 5.143$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.025 < 0.01$ ) was found, which confirmed that women related to children to a greater extent than men. Another impressive factor was the lack of communication in a very high percentage for women, 33.7%. This most often occurred in the advertising of cosmetic products (13 cases), of drugs (8), and of detergents (7).

- Age.<sup>86</sup> The conducted 2x4 test showed very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 27.321$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). 61.4% of women were shown young in comparison with 23.4% of men. Although the latter outnumbered women in the subcategory "young to middle-aged" (48.4% vs. 30.7%), the overall percentage of female figures depicted as young or middle-aged was likely to be significantly higher than that of men. The almost total lack of old women and nearly old women was impressive – they were only 4% vs. 21.9% of men.<sup>87</sup> Discrimination in advertising is aimed not only at women, who are not allowed to be old, but generally at old people, who are rarely found (in our analysis they were only 1%).

- Weight. The majority of women (91.1%) were portrayed slim, and they significantly outnumbered men (15.6%) depicted mostly with an average weight (73.4% compared to only 5.9% of women). The association of sex and weight was confirmed by the very high statistical significance from the 2x3 test

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<sup>85</sup> To some extent we could compare "communication" to the category "background", used by many other authors, although the latter concerns figures which are not central in the ads.

<sup>86</sup> Due to the low values of the subcategories "middle-aged to old" and "old", they were collapsed.

<sup>87</sup> The only old woman in the commercials was a Bulgarian folk singer in an ad for adhesive dentures. There were minor female figures, not coded, who were old, like a retired old lady in a snack ad and the 3 old ladies in a coffee ad.

( $\chi^2 = 95.757$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ). Furthermore, we noticed a scarcity of overweight people in the analysed ads – 6.1%, of which only 3% were women.

- Clothing. Casual wear occurred more frequently on men (62.5%) than on women (57.4%). The 2x5 test still showed very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 30.734$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ) and the association of all types of clothing with sex. The most significant differences were found in the "suggestive" clothing subcategory, where women were 29.7% compared with 0 men; in the subcategory "work clothing", where men outnumbered women more than 4 times (17.2% vs. 4%); and in the subcategories "semi-naked" and "other", in which men outnumbered women nearly twice.<sup>88</sup>
- End comment. 15.8% of women made end comments, versus 9.9% of men. Women most often made comments in ads for cosmetic products (8 cases), and were missing in ads for banks and non-alcoholic drinks, while men were often heard in advertisements for cleaning products, children's goods and cosmetics. There was some albeit small statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 4.18$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.05 < 0.025$ ).

### 2.3.3. Voice-overs

- Sex. Of all coded 104 voice-overs, 68 (65.4%) were male and 36 (34.6%) were female, in contrast with what we found in the analysis of the visual central figures, where women outnumbered men. Apparently, the use of male voices was considered more authoritative and was most often found in ads for drugs (14 male voices vs. 7 female), banks (no female voices found here), soft drinks (the ratio was 6:1), alcohol (2:0) and cosmetics (18:11). The association between sex and voice-over was confirmed by the very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 9.846$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.002 < 0.001$ ).
- Product type. 97.2% of female voice-overs were used in ads for domestic products, and these were about 25% more than male uses. In contrast, voice-overs in ads of both domestic and non-domestic products were male. In ads for non-domestic products the female voice-overs were missing, and in the ads for products used at home and outside of it the female voice-overs were only 2.8% compared to 13.2% male. There was a significant association between the sex of the voice-over and the product type ( $\chi^2 = 9.817$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ). The results were similar to those for the type of product advertised

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<sup>88</sup> The first two results were expected given the fact that women more often than men were portrayed as users, mothers, models, or at home, and are not very different from the findings of Ibroscheva, where 59% of women were shown in sexually suggestive clothing. Although the third result was surprising at first sight, the six cases of men in underwear or in a towel were relatively small compared to their total number, and probably such a result implies the use of men as product models, although significantly less often than women.

by the visual central figures, and particularly impressive was the lack of female voice-overs in typically "male" ads like those for banks and cars.

- Argument. Significant differences were found in the subcategory "opinion" in which women, like their visual representations, exceeded male voice-overs (36.1% to 22.1%) and in the subcategory "none", where the female voice-overs were 2.8% vs. 14.7% male. The overall analysis revealed a lack of statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 5.511$ ,  $df = 2$ );
- Reward. Similar to the results from the analysis of the visual central figures, the most frequently given rewards in the voice-overs were self-enhancement and social approval. Male voice-overs more often than female promised practical convenience or pleasure, while female voice-overs more often than male promised self-enhancement and social approval.<sup>89</sup> There was some statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 16.188$ ,  $df=6$ ,  $p>0.02<0.01$ ).
- End comment. Unlike the results in the analysis of the visual central figures dominated by women, the end comments were made by male voice-overs (94.1% vs. 88.9% female). The difference was not big and there was no statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 0.906$ ,  $df = 1$ ).

#### 2.3.4. Discussion

The results of this study showed that the men and the women in bTV ads were depicted in several different ways, most of them in accordance with the traditional gender stereotypes. We found very high statistical significance ( $p>0.01$ ) in 8 of 13 categories of analysis of the visual advertising figures: sex, product type, reward, role, setting, communication, age, weight, and clothing; in 1 of 6 categories of analysis of the voice-overs: sex; and in 5 of 6 categories of analysis of all the advertising figures: product type, mode of presentation, argument, end comment, and reward. In one of the categories of analysis of the visual figures, setting, and in two of the voice-overs – reward, and product type we also found some statistical significance ( $p>0.02<0.01$ ). The statistical significance was missing in the "mode of presentation", and "credibility" of the visual figures, in the "argument" and "end comment" of the voice-overs, and in the category "sex" in the overall analysis of all figures. Generally speaking, this shows that the representations of men and women, and the relationship of sex to the mode of presentation, are not neutral.

On one hand, the tendency of equal numerical presence of men and women as central advertising visual

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<sup>89</sup> The subcategories for analysis were collapsed as with those of the visual central figures.

figures and voice-overs (132 male and 137 female) is positive and in line with the actual statistical division by sex in Bulgaria, where women, according to the last census from 2011, are 51.3% of the whole population.<sup>90</sup> This fact is in contrast with the results of the analyses done by Ibroscheva (2007), where the female figures significantly outnumbered the male ones, and by Furnham & Voli (1989) and Panarese (2012), where the female figures were outnumbered by the male ones. On the other hand, by coding separately the advertising figures, we noticed the superiority of female visual figures and the inferiority of female voice-overs. This result is similar to what was found in other studies, including that of Ibroscheva, and probably shows the tendency of women to be put on display.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the well-known tendency to prefer male voice-overs, highlighted by Furnham & Voli (1989), Panarese (2012), Ibroscheva (2007), Neto & Pinto (1998), Furnham & Saar (2005) and others, associated with the belief that they are more authoritative and persuasive, was also found in our analysis, mainly in ads for banking and cosmetics. Most male voice-overs were also found in ads with female visual central figures, either speaking, or silent. The differences in representation of men and women visually or as voice-overs correspond to those in other studies of European TV ads: Austria (Ahlstrand 2007), Serbia (Skoric & Furnham 2003), Turkey (Uray & Burnaz 2003) and others.

We did not find significant differences in the mode of presentation of male and female visual figures. The most common use of silent female figures was found in ads for cosmetics and food, where, logically, the argument and/or the reward were given by male or female voice-overs. A particular case were the ads combining a female voice-over with a silent male figure, which was rarely met, and when it was, the man was often ridiculed. Compared with what was found by Ibroscheva, we notice some "progress" in the ads on bTV in terms of equal presence of both genders as speaking or silent. However, this feature should not be viewed apart from the others, and from what the advertising figure says, in what role he/she is depicted, etc.

We noticed gender stereotyping in the type of advertised product/service for all central figures, with females traditionally related to domestic products such as food, cosmetics and children's goods. Although certain products (e.g. some cosmetic products) are aimed at female users, and more women than men would be shown in their ads, the more general category "domestic products" includes products whose users are found among both men and women. As Eisend says, "An equality baseline

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<sup>90</sup> <http://www.nsi.bg/EPDOCS/Population2011.pdf> (accessed Sept 2012)

<sup>91</sup> In our analysis this was most often found in ads for cosmetics, food, drugs and cleaning products/detergents.

would further imply an equal sharing of power in decision-making for products of a specific product category. The baseline of equal sharing of decision-making is not only a social goal but also in line with data of the changing roles of women regarding the products they choose to buy” (2010: 425), and he also highlights that 50% of all buyers of cars (often a male product) are women. We did not find male visual figures in ads for children’s products, and only one of them advertised washing powder (but as an authority); in contrast, 5 male voice-overs were shown in cleaning products ads. Ibroscheva notices the preference for female figures in domestic products ads, and this is consistent with the findings from other European studies of ads: the UK (Manstead & McCulloh, 1981), Austria (Ahlstrand, 2007), Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2003), Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2003), Furnham & Mak (1999) and others. The only category of domestic products in which male outnumbered female voice-overs (twice!) was the drugs category, and that is not by chance – the "seriousness" of the advertised product required the authority of the male voice. Female voice-overs were "unwanted" in alcohol, banks, cars and soft-drink ads.<sup>92</sup> Our analysis shows a clear division: men advertised "male" products – cars, banks and alcohol; and women "female" products – cosmetics, children’s products, and cleaning products and detergents.

The bTV advertising women were shown primarily as product users, most often in ads for cosmetics, food, and cleaning products and detergents, and only 13.9% of them were depicted as authorities. Even though the category does not show statistical significance, we must emphasize that the female users were 75.2%, a finding similar to those of other studies (Ibroscheva, 2007; Furnham & Voli, 1989). The low percentage of women authorities shows that female advertising figures are not seen as a reliable source of information, and they are such mainly in certain categories of domestic products. However, the 18.8% of male authorities in 12 ads from different product categories is not high, because similarly to women they are shown mostly as users – in contrast to the results of Ibroscheva, and similar to those of Furnham & Farragher (2000). Thus, advertisers depict central figures, regardless of their sex, rarely as giving product information and more frequently as users. Compared to Ibroscheva’s results we notice here a more equal degree of credibility between women and men, the percentage of women authorities being closer to that of men – but this in itself could hardly be a sign of equality of opportunities, and we should look at the question in relation to the argument.

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<sup>92</sup> Except of the sensual female voice in the Lavazza ad.

It is important to note that only 6 female visual figures,<sup>93</sup> gave facts as an argument; almost half of them gave an opinion, and almost another half did not give either facts or opinions. However, female voice-overs "compensated" for this shortcoming by offering facts in 61.1% of the cases, mostly (and again) in domestic products ads – for cosmetics, food and drugs. If we look at all central figures, we can see that half of female figures gave an opinion, and only 1/5 of them gave facts, while males gave facts in 39.4% of the cases, and an opinion in 1/5 of the cases. These results are similar to the findings in the ads in Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998), and Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2002), and with the general worldwide trend noticed by Furnham & Paltzer (2010: 220), according to which facts are given mainly by men, and opinions by women. However, some studies like those of TV ads in Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005), Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2003) and Denmark and France (Furnham, Babizkow & Ugoccioni, 1997) show, similarly to our findings, that many of the central figures of both genders give no argument to an equal extent, and in our study that was true for 1/3 of the cases for each sex. Furthermore, due to the fact that more than half of women were depicted visually and speaking, they usually gave an argument, except for 9 ads, and in 7 of these ads the argument was given by male voice-overs.

In the bTV ads almost 70% of female visual figures and voice-overs gave, as reward, social approval and self-enhancement, significantly outnumbering male at 37.9%, and the same was found by separate coding – a result similar to the findings in advertising trends in Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2003), Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), the UK (Manstead & MacCulloch, 1981), Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998) and Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005). This result shows women offering the satisfaction of the need for self-esteem, i.e. the idea that the product / service leads to a greater sense of self-satisfaction and self-confidence. In our analysis this reward was found most often in ads for cosmetic products (39 figures), drugs (23) and food (22), but this result was expected given the function of these products – to improve health and the sense of self – and given the fact that we found most female figures mainly in these 3 categories. The result is in contrast to that of Ibroscheva, where men more than women gave such rewards,<sup>94</sup> but actually her findings are in contrast with the general world trend. It is difficult to determine whether the stereotype is present or not in a chronological plan given the contradiction between our results and Ibroscheva's. As for the other types of rewards, it should be noted that 32.6%

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<sup>93</sup> In 2 ads for food, 2 for cosmetics ads and 2 for drugs.

<sup>94</sup> We collapsed the results from the self-enhancement and social approval categories, which she had shown separately.

of all male visual figures and voice-overs gave the collapsed self-enhancement/practical reward, compared to 14.6% of females – similarly to the ads in Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998) and in the UK (Manstead & MacCulloch, 1981), and in contrast to those in Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007), Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2003) and Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005). It seems that male figures are more likely to be considered authorities and people with commonsense by advertisers (and audiences) than the emotional female figures<sup>95</sup>, who are focused on health, beauty and approval by others. Similarly to the ads in Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), Great Britain (Furnham & Skae, 1997), Denmark, France (Furnham, Babizkow et al., 2000) and Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998), the reward of pleasure in our ads was given less often by female figures, and mostly in ads for food (9 visual figures and voice-overs) and soft drinks (4) – in contrast to the ads in Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 1997) and Britain (Furnham & Bitar, 1993).

The analysed ads showed that in the majority of cases women were portrayed in dependent roles: that of caring for the family and the partner housewife, mother and wife, and that of the model illustrating the product (especially in cosmetics ads); and only 10 figures, were in independent roles, especially that of VIP. These results confirmed the trends found in the ads in Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), France (Furnham, Babizkow & Ugocioni, 2000), the UK (Manstead & MacCulloch, 1981) and Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007). The women in our ads, 2 or 3 times more than the men, were shown as parents, models and housewives, while men outnumbered women 7 times as professionals, 5 times as workers and 2 times as narrators. The only autonomous role where women outnumbered men was that of VIP. Besides indicating the "unwillingness" of advertisers to reverse gender roles, our study showed quite traditional areas of female domination. The housewives appeared in 8 ads for cleaning products and 4 food ads; as mothers, women were found in 9 food ads, in ads for drugs, cleaning products and children's goods (3 figures each), and in one bank ad; women as models were present in cosmetics ads (14 figures), food ads (3), ads for drugs, alcohol and soft drinks (1 figure each); and as partners in all ads.<sup>96</sup> As for the independent roles, women were workers in 2 food ads, and in 1 ad for cosmetics; as

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<sup>95</sup> As we had assumed, male voice-overs gave a practical reward in banking ads, but surprisingly also in 4 cleaning products ads where the housewives were depicted as users.

<sup>96</sup> Except of the ones for children's goods, alcohol and cars. In the "electronics" category the female visual figures were missing.



professionals they were featured as an athlete and a military person, and as narrators in 3 ads.<sup>97</sup> Last but not least, the VIP role was found in 6 cosmetic products ads, as well as in a few other ads. Except of the role of VIP, even in autonomous roles women did not tend to occupy a prestigious place in the public sphere.<sup>98</sup>

In half of the cases, women were shown at home, most often in the living room (16 figures, often in ads for food and drugs) and the kitchen (13 figures, mainly in ads for food). 1/5 of all women were portrayed in open spaces: a park (7 figures), a street (6 figures). 1/10 of women were in an enclosed settings – in the shop (4 figures) and the supermarket (3 figures). 5 of them were set in a fictional location (4 of which in ads for cosmetics). Only in last place did we find the workplace (office, beach, shop and other) and the mixed location, with 5 figures each. The enclosure of women in the private sphere was obvious, especially if we compare it to representations of men, which were divided between the private sphere, the workplace and the open settings (about 25% each). Apparently, men in the bTV ads are found everywhere, while women stay mostly at home. Our results corresponded to those of other analyses of European TV ads – in Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998, Valls-Fernandez et al., 2007), Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007) and Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005), and worldwide (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010: 221-222), according to which, men to a much lesser extent than women are displayed in private spaces.

The analyses of the communication showed that about 30% of women did not communicate. This fact was noted by Furnham & Paltzer for both genders (2010: 221), except that in our analysis men did not communicate in 14.1% of the cases. Most often women communicated with men (26.7%) and with groups of children or adults with children (19.8%), which confirms the emphasis on family and social relationships. Since we did not use the category "background", it is difficult to compare the results to those from other studies.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Women workers: an office clerk, a shop assistant, a beach barmaid. Professionals: a colonel, and a sportswoman. Storytellers: the ordinary person - endorser, a group of singing girls, and a woman in the traditional image of a young, thin blonde in a short tight dress.

<sup>98</sup> The VIP role is a different case because it relies on the testimony of the (real or imaginary) celebrities.

<sup>99</sup> According to Furnham & Paltzer, 2010, p. 221, there is "a clear distinction [by gender] in regard to children in the advertisement background". In our analysis the gender gap in communicating with children was the following: 3.1% of men vs. 8.9% of women communicated with children only; 6.9% of men vs. 0% of women communicated with women and children, 0% of men vs. 10.9% of women communicate with men and children, 3.1% of men vs. 0% of women communicated with men, women and children. Hence a total of 13.1% of men vs. 19.8% of women.

As for the physical characteristics of women, the ads on bTV shows a well-known image: in 61.4% of the cases young, in 30.7% of the cases at an age closer to the average (i.e. under 45 years) and slim in 91.1% of the cases. It is obvious that advertisers are offering Bulgarians an idealized object to follow: a young and perfect (thanks to the product) beauty who, even in her role of housewife and mother, looks begotten out of a glossy magazine. The age of the women in the ads of course did not meet the actual distribution by age of Bulgarian women, inasmuch as those under 45 years are about 1/3 of the population, and this mismatch was consistent with results from other European analyses (cfr. Furnham & Paltzer, 2010: 219). However, men were shown at all ages, and in almost 22% of the cases as old or nearly old. Probably male age as accumulation of years means gaining experience and greater authority, while for women it means destruction of their essence – their attractiveness. In only 1 case did we find a woman whose age could be described as old, and in 3 cases the depicted women's age was nearly old.<sup>100</sup> Older women were not often seen with much respect because they had problems with their dentures, the teen sex, or the laundry/cleaning (if not using the product). To the young age we could add the slim body type of 91.1% of women (compared to 15.6% of men), and compare this to 3 overweight ladies in ads for cleaning products and for a denture adhesive. As for women's clothing, our results confirmed those of Ibroscheva: although more than half of women wore casual clothes, 29.7% of them were seen in what was called by Ibroscheva "sexually suggestive" clothes,<sup>101</sup> compared to 0% of men. This way of dressing is associated with youth and thinness, and it was most common in advertisements for cosmetics, most of them non-Bulgarian.

Finally, the end comment was given by only 35% of all female figures (compared to 55% of male), similarly to ads in Italy, where men gave an end comment much more often than women (Furham & Voli, 1989, Panarese, 2012). Although, according to Furnham & Paltzer (2010: 218), the end comment does not seem especially related to sex, such a relationship was present in our study. This is even more

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<sup>100</sup> The Corega ad: the folk singer Valya Balkanska, complaining about her denture problems. There were a few uncoded figures of old women: the grotesque retired old lady, telling off 2 teens, the two "aunties" in the funny coffee ad, a nice-looking granny taking care of her granddaughter in an ad for soup in a cup, and three Bulgarian folk singers presented as a stronghold of tradition in an ad for pie. Old" in 3 cleaning products ads.

<sup>101</sup> In her final results she collapsed suggestive, partially-clad, and nude dress into the category "sexually suggestive" clothing. In our analysis "suggestive clothing" is a separate subcategory from the subcategory "half-naked", but even when combining these we got results similar to hers: 33.7% of women vs. 9.4% of men, compared to 58.9% of women vs. 24.3% of men in Ibroscheva's analysis.

obvious if we look at the advertising figures separately: the visual female figures are more likely to give an end comment compared to men, while we found exactly the opposite in the voice-overs. This implies a connection between the visual female figures and the end comment, and between the end comment and the male voice-overs. The end comments given by men were in ads for all product categories – cosmetics, banks, food, drugs and others<sup>102</sup> – while the women's end comment was found in ads for domestic products.

We could make the following observations concerning Eisend's idea (2009: 423) about the relation of certain categories of analysis to the components of stereotypes:

– Professional status: Women in the bTV ads are presented primarily in dependent roles, and at home, which does not reflect the full range of opportunities that they would have under real gender equality. Portraying them as housewives, mothers, etc., although accurate to the real life of many Bulgarian women, does not reflect the fact that many of them work outside the home (61.2% according to Eurostat survey 2011) and could find life realization in other ways. Along with this, such depictions reinforce the relationship of women with the private sphere, with all the ensuing consequences. Advertisers should provide a diversified range of roles and spaces to meet the challenges posed by the idea of gender equality. Unfortunately, we do not see any man dealing with household chores, but instead we notice men who play sports, drive cars, work as doctors, etc.

- Physical characteristics: The representation of women as mainly young is meant to make us believe that youth is the only guarantee of success for women. The few old women in the ads are boring and grotesque rather than exemplary. Unfortunately, in this respect, we do not find a difference between Western and Bulgarian ads, which probably means that in Bulgaria we have the same tendency toward worship of youth. Moreover, in the ads on bTV there is discrimination by age, because old people are rarely seen. It would be better for women to be represented at all ages instead of focusing solely on youth and appearance.

- Role behaviors: No statistical significance is found in the "mode of presentation" and "credibility" categories for the visual advertising figures, which does not allow us to draw any firm conclusions about who has the "advantage" and how it relates to sex. In terms of "credibility" the male and female visual figures are depicted equally as silent and as speaking – but this is not the case in the analysis of both visual and voice-over figures, where the focus is on women's visualization and on men's

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<sup>102</sup> Except for 2 ads for children's goods.

speaking. As an example of the latter, we can point out the prevalence of male voice-overs and visual female figures in making an end comment. Moreover, the emphasis on the importance of communication and family relationships for women – and the portrayal of women as mainly expressing opinions and, to a lesser extent than men, facts – highlights their supposedly "natural" predisposition to caring and emotion. Not least, it is known that some products are aimed at women, e.g. cleaning products, and it is not surprising that ads for these products present housewives. However, the ads on bTV reaffirm the idea of the division of the public and the private, and the association of women with the private sphere and with home/body products. Male figures, according to advertisers, seem to fit much better in the ads for products used both at home and outside of it.

Last but not least, there were several attempts to overcome gender stereotypes, noted on a content analysis level:

- Eko oil station. A man and a woman as central visual figures. The man is ridiculed and the woman – a Bulgarian pop folk diva – is depicted as a VIP, confident in her sex appeal and driving an expensive car. However, gender stereotypes are only partially overcome: she is slim, young, expresses an opinion, and is a user of the product.
- Libresse sanitary napkins. A man and a group of women are central figures. The man is ridiculed for his clumsiness, he is silent, slim, at a young to medium age, and working as a waiter.
- Rexona deodorant. Female central figure. She is depicted as a VIP, giving facts as an expert, but also as young, thin, sexy and giving the self-enhancement reward. A similar case is thead for Verea yogurt with the Bulgarian sportswoman Lily Ignatova.
- Prostamol Uno drug. Male central figure. Depicted in the private sphere of the home, giving an opinion, in the dependent role of the husband, and in a family relationship. Expresses fear of losing his sexual potency and, consequently, his self-respect and self-esteem.

In our analysis we found only a few ads where men were ridiculed (e.g. the ads for Easycrredit, Espumizan, Libresse, Kanepor) or presented in dependent roles (as a parent or partner in Western Union, Unicredit, and Nivea 3 ads, and as a model, especially in Gillette ads).

## 2.4. Content analysis results: Italy<sup>103</sup>

### 2.4.1. Visual central figures and voice-overs

- Sex. Out of the 328 coded advertising figures, males were 142 (43.3 %) and females 186 (57.7%). The category had some statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 5.902$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ).
- Product type. We found a considerable statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 20.24$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ), which showed the relationship between sex and the type of product advertised. As we might expect, there was a significant presence of female figures in ads for domestic products (79% vs. 57.7% of men), especially in ads for cosmetics and foods. Male figures exceeded female in the ads for products used outside the home (13.4% vs. 4.3% females) and for those used both at home and outside of it (21.8% males vs. 14.5% females).
- Mode of presentation. Half of the male figures were presented as voice-overs, compared with 31% of females. In contrast, the female figures were presented visually more frequently than males (69.9% vs. 50%). There was very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 14.562$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- Argument. The opinion was given almost equally by both genders, and males were twice as likely as females to give facts. There was high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 11.631$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.005 < 0.002$ ).
- Reward.<sup>104</sup> Social approval and self-enhancement were typical for female figures (65.1% vs. 38% males). The male figures exceeded female more than twice over in giving the mixed self-enhancement and practical reward and by 7% in giving the reward of pleasure. The relationship between sex and reward was proven by the very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 33.094$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- End comment. It was given by 54.8% of all male figures compared to 31.2% of females. There was very high statistical difference ( $\chi^2 = 18.709$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

### 2.4.2. Visual central figures

- Sex. Out of all 201 coded visual central figures, women were 130, or 64.7% and men 71, or 35.3%. The high significance of such a difference was confirmed by the chi square test ( $\chi^2 = 17.318$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- Product type. Men predominated in ads for non-domestic products (14.1% vs. 4.6 % females), in ads for both domestic and non-domestic products (21.1% vs. 16.2% of females), and in the "other"

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<sup>103</sup> Only the results for all ads in the advertising sample are presented here. For the ads of Italian origin cfr. Tables I and II.

<sup>104</sup> Cfr. note 80.

subcategory (9.9 % of men vs. 2.3% of women). Women exceeded males only in ads for domestic products (76.9% vs. 54.9 % of males). Overall the differences had a great deal of statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 13.13$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.005 < 0.002$ ). Men more often than women advertised cars, alcohol, electronics, telecommunications and media, and women more often than men advertised cosmetics, detergents, children's clothing and other domestic products.

- Mode of presentation. We did not find statistical significance here. Visual figures of both genders were presented speaking and silent almost equally, although there was a slight predominance of male speakers (53.5% vs. 45.4% of female).

- Credibility. Women (87.7%) significantly exceeded men (62%) as users of the product. The latter dominated in the subcategories "authority" and "neither", where, as in the ads on bTV, men outnumbered women. There was very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 18.192$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- Argument. More than half of men and women did not give any argument, and that was true primarily for women (65.4%). Moreover, unlike those, here both genders almost equally gave an opinion. There was a difference in the subcategory "facts", where men outnumbered women by more than 7%. Statistical significance was absent ( $\chi^2 = 4.554$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

- Reward. The most common rewards given were self-enhancement and social approval, typical for ads for cosmetics, foods and drugs, and was given by women almost twice as often as men (62.3% vs. 33.8%). Men more often than women gave the reward of pleasure (23.9% vs. 12.3%), the combined self-enhancement-practical and practical reward (21.1% vs. 10.8%), and other/no rewards (21.1% vs. 14.6%). while females almost twice as often as males gave the rewards of social approval and self-enhancement (62.3% vs. 33.8%). Overall, there was considerable statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 23.382$ ,  $df = 5$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- Role. Most men (36.6%) were portrayed in dependent role, mostly as partners (male homemakers were missing), and most women (63.1%) were models illustrating the product, partners, parents and homemakers. Unlike dependent roles, in which women predominated, only 19.2% of women were in independent roles, which were dominated by men (43.7%), most often portrayed as workers, narrators and celebrities. Apart from these expected differences, whose statistical significance was highlighted by the 3x2 tests made ( $\chi^2 = 15.923$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ), there was an impressive presence of celebrities

in the ads. This fact is probably related to the popularity of well-known faces from the small and big screen in Italy, which, according to advertisers, are likely to attract more users of the product/service.<sup>105</sup>

- **Setting.** Most advertising figures were shown in the private space of the home, and there was a 8% difference in favor of women, supported by some, albeit small statistical significance of the 2x2 test which included both occupational and private spaces ( $\chi^2 = 6.014$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.025 < 0.01$ ). We found a similar difference (8%), but in favor of men, in the workplace. Similar differences were found in the subcategories "open" and "closed" spaces, where we found about 5-8% more men than women, but these did not have statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 0.101$ ,  $df = 1$ ). There was an impressively low<sup>106</sup> percentage of women displayed in the workplace: 3.8%, or only 5 female subjects. However, twice as many women as men (14.6% vs. 7%) were displayed in imaginary spaces, most often in ads for cosmetics. We did not find statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 10.491$ ,  $df = 5$ ).

- **Communication.** In most cases it was missing. Women more often than men communicated with men (26.9% vs. 14.1%), while men more often than women interacted with women (38% vs. 13.1%).

Communication with children, whether in the company of an adult or not, was a priority for women (13.9% vs. 4.2% men). There was considerable statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 28.708$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- **Age.** The 2x4 test showed high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 13.312$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.005 < 0.001$ ). Most visual figures were young, and that was particularly true for women (60% vs. 33.8% of men). Men dominated in the subcategories "young to middle-aged" (39.4% vs. 26.9% women) and "middle-aged to old / old" (25.3% vs. 12.3% women). Apparently, the old, especially old women were quite undesirable advertising faces in the ads on Canale 5. In contrast, youth was highly attractive, especially for women, and only 2 females were depicted as old<sup>107</sup> compared with 5 adult men.

- **Weight.** Women were absolute leaders in "slim" subcategory (83.8% vs. 18.3% men). Overweight people were not preferred in the ads – they were only 6%, while for women this percentage was even smaller – 1.5% (compared to 14.1% men). There were only 2 cases of overweight women,<sup>108</sup> compared

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<sup>105</sup> We found many real celebrities: Italian (4 actresses and 7 actors, 3 male and 7 female TV hosts, 2 female top models, and a footballer) and foreign (a Brazilian footballer, and 3 Hollywood actresses).

<sup>106</sup> The beauties in the office in the Dove Invisible Dry ad, the Italian TV host Raffaella Carrà in the TV studio in the Danacol ad, the Japanese journalist on the filming set of the Ponti ad, and the actress in AZ toothpaste ad, and the attractive TV anchorwoman in the studio in the ad for IziPlay.

<sup>107</sup> In the US Ones prunes ad and in the Vitasnella mineral water ad.

<sup>108</sup> In the ads for Polident denture adhesive bandages and for Tena Pants incontinence sanitary napkins.

with 10 such men. While women were most often portrayed slim, 69% of men had a normal weight. The relation between weight and sex was confirmed by the very high statistical significance of the 2x3 test ( $\chi^2 = 82.919$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

- Clothing. Most advertising figures (62.7%) wore casual clothes, and this fact was particularly true for men (69%) and to a lesser extent for women (59.2%). However, the latter were often presented in suggestive clothing (15.4% vs. no men), or semi-naked (11.5% vs. 5.6% men). Not least, it should be noted that only 3.1% of women were depicted in work clothes, compared to 14.1% of men. The 2x5 test showed very high statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 21.317$ ,  $df = 4$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).
- End comment. Although there was not a statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 0.154$ ,  $df = 1$ ), the comment was most often given by men (16.9% vs. 10.8% women).

#### 2.4.3. Voice-overs

- Sex: Out of 127 coded voice-overs, 55.9% were male and 44.1% female. The authority of male voices was most often used in advertising for food (17 ads), drugs (11) and cosmetics (9), while female voices were most common in advertisements for cosmetics (19 ads), food (11) and drugs (8), and were missing in advertising for banking services, alcoholic beverages, electronics, telecommunications and children's goods (!). There was no statistical significance.
- Product type. Similar to the results of our analysis of visual figures the male voice-overs more likely than female were found in ads for both domestic and non-domestic products (22.5% vs. 10.7% female), and in ads for non-domestic products, while female voices were mostly found in ads for domestic products (83.9% vs. 60.6% male). The 2x4 test showed a certain degree of relationship between the sex of voice-over and the type of product advertised ( $\chi^2 = 8.525$ ,  $df = 3$ ,  $p > 0.05 < 0.025$ ).
- Argument. Statistical significance was missing ( $\chi^2 = 1.137$ ,  $df = 2$ ). However, in all three subcategories we noticed some differences: male voice-overs had a slight advantage over female in giving facts or in not giving any argument, while female voice-overs more often than male gave opinions.
- Reward. Generally speaking, the results here resembled the ones from the analysis of visual figures. Significant differences were found in the subcategory "no reward": 11.3% of male voice-overs compared to only 1.4% of female did not give any reward; the combined "self-enhancement/social approval, self-enhancement, and social approval", where female voices (71.5%) significantly outnumbered male (42.3%); and in the combined "self-enhancement and practical / practical" reward,



where male voices prevailed (32.4% vs. 10.7% of female). There was a big statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 16.951$ ,  $df = 6$ ,  $p > 0.01 < 0.005$ ).

- End comment. The last words in the ads were men's (93% vs. 78.6% of women's). There was some statistical significance ( $\chi^2 = 5.589$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ).

#### 2.4.4. Discussion

The analysis of ads broadcast on Canale 5 shows, similarly to the analysis of ads on bTV, that there are different kinds of representation of men and women in accordance with traditional gender stereotypes. There is very high statistical significance ( $p > 0.01$ ) in 9 of the 13 categories of analysis of visual advertising figures – sex, product type, credibility, reward, role, communication, age, weight, and clothing, and in 5 out of 6 categories for analysis of all figures – product type, mode of presentation, argument, reward, and end comment, and in 1 category for analysis of voice-overs – reward. We have moderate statistical significance ( $p > 0.02 < 0.01$ ) in 'sex' for all advertising figures and in 'end comment' for voice-overs, and low statistical significance in 'product type' for voice-overs. The categories with no statistical significance are: mode of presentation, argument, setting and end comment for the visual figures; sex, and argument for the voice-overs. Unlike the ads on the bTV, where all central figures were equally distributed by sex, in the ads on the Italian TV channel the female figures dominated, comprising 57.7%, similarly to what was found in the ads in Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2003), Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005), Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007), Spain (Royo-Vela et al., 2008), and France (Furnham, Babitzkow et al., 2000). This distribution by sex, however, is in contrast to the results from previous studies of Italian ads, like the one by Furnham & Voli (1989), where the male central figures were twice as many as female, and in contrast to some other analyses of ads in Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2003), Austria (Ahlstrand, 2007), Denmark (Furnham, Babitzkow et al., 2000) and Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998), which probably indicates some "progress" in the representation of women. Considering the fact that Italian women are 51.7% of the population (according to preliminary data from the 2011 Census), and that women are predominantly responsible for purchases of the products, the increased use of female advertising figures is understandable. However, if we look at the figures separately, that is to say, as visual figures or voice-overs, we will see that 64.7% of visual figures are women, which supports the emphasis on visual representation of women pointed out by Furnham & Voli. There are also some differences by sex regarding voice-overs, which, similarly to what was found in the ads on bTV and by Furnham & Voli (1989) and Panarese

(2012), were primarily male. Visual female figures, like those in Bulgarian ads, were most often found in ads for cosmetics (28 figures), foods (31), drugs (19) and detergents (13). Male and female voice-overs were preferred in ads for cosmetics, foods, and drugs, and female voices were missing in ads for children's clothing (?) and in ads for "male" products – banks, liquors, electronics and telecommunications.

Similar to the results from the analysis of ads on bTV, here we did not find significant differences in the mode of presentation of the genders, but there was a slight predominance of visual male speaking figures (53.5% compared to 45.4% women), which contrasts with the results of Furnham & Voli. Silent female figures were most often found in ads for cosmetics, foods and drugs, where the voice-overs were female, e.g. in the ads for women's cosmetics (shampoos, sanitary napkins, perfumes), foods for women (croissant dough, dietary crackers and muesli), drugs and others, or male, e.g. in ads for cosmetics (perfume, toothpaste), foods, drugs etc., and we hardly ever found female voice-overs in ads<sup>109</sup> with silent male visual figures.

Gender stereotyping exists in the "product type" category for all central figures: female figures, similarly to what was found in the ads on bTV, were displayed in ads for domestic products – cosmetics, foods, drugs, children's clothing and other products for the home. Visual female figures outnumbered male figures in each of the subcategories of domestic products, and the same applied for female voice-overs with the exception of food, drugs and children's goods (!), where male voice-overs were preferred. The analysis did not find visual male figures in ads for children's goods and clothes, but on the other hand, 4 such figures appeared in 4 ads for detergents. The relationship of the type of product with sex was confirmed by the analysis of Furnham & Voli, where women more likely than men were associated with body products and a by a small margin with domestic products.<sup>110</sup>

Women in the ads on Canale 5 were presented mostly as users of the product and quite rarely as authorities, only in ads for domestic products.<sup>111</sup> Unlike the ads on bTV, the category of analysis here is characterized by a statistical significance and shows that, similarly to what was found in the analysis of Furnham & Voli, women more often than men are depicted as users and less than half as often as men. A similar trend of unequal distribution of expertise by sex was noted in a number of European Studies

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<sup>109</sup> This combination was most commonly found in ads for cosmetics (only in 3 out of 7), for food (only in 2 out of 6), drugs (only in 1 out of 4), and cars (in 1 out of 6).

<sup>110</sup> The authors use the following subcategories of the category "Product": body, home, food and otherwise.

<sup>111</sup> In 8 ads: 3 for food, 2 for cosmetics and 1 for drugs, chemicals, children's goods.

of men and women in TV ads: Italy (Furnham & Voli), Denmark, France (Furnham, Babitzkow et al.), Portugal (Neto & Pinto), the UK (Manstead & MacCulloch), Bulgaria (Ibroscheva), Sweden (Milner & Collins), Turkey (Uray & Burnaz), Poland (Furnham & Saar), Denmark (Furnham, Babitzkow et al.), Portugal (Neto & Pinto). We still do not see women and men come nearer in their frequency of occurrence as users, and the differences between them in the ads on Canale 5 are even bigger than those in the ads on bTV.

We obtain interesting results in the "argument" category for the figures of both genders: visual figures expressed an opinion and voice-overs gave facts almost equally. Inequality between them can be seen in "facts" by the visual figures and in "opinion" by the voice-overs. Female voice-overs, like those in the ads on bTV, outnumbered male, and this occurred most frequently in ads for cosmetics (5 cases) and food (6). Only 3.8% of female visual figures, even less than the ones in the ads on bTV, gave facts.<sup>112</sup> This percentage increases up to 17.7% for all 185 female figures – 47.8% of them, similarly to the results of Furnham & Voli (53%), did not give any argument.

In the ads on Canale 5 62.3% of the female visual figures and 71.4% of the female voice-overs gave the reward of self-enhancement and social approval, similarly to what was found in the ads on bTV. Again, it was women who are the ones that offer satisfaction of the need for self-esteem and being liked by others, and this, as we may suppose, was found in ads for cosmetics (35 ads), foods (22) and drugs (23), where female figures prevail. Furthermore, female visual figures or voice-overs were outnumbered by males 2-3 times in giving the mixed "self-enhancement and practical" reward, and by two times as visual figures in giving the reward of "pleasure." The latter was a priority of male voice-overs, and of male visual figures and voice-overs. The practical reward (saving time, effort and / or money) as a priority of male figures is in contrast with the results of analyses of advertising in Bulgaria (Ibroscheva, 2007), Poland (Furnham & Saar, 2005), and Serbia (Skoric & Furnham, 2003), but is similar to those in Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998), the UK (Manstead & MacCulloch, 1981), and Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989). 10.8% of female visual figures gave a practical reward, especially in ads for detergents, compared with 16.9% of male visual figures, who gave this reward in different types of ads.<sup>113</sup> There are big differences by voice-overs too: female voice-overs gave practical rewards in 4 ads

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<sup>112</sup> In 3 ads for foods, one of children's clothing and 1 for cosmetics.

<sup>113</sup> The 16.9% includes only the subcategory "practical" reward, and this percentage increases to 21.1 when collapsed with the mixed self-enhancement/ practical reward.

(7.4%) and in 2 ads this was combined with the self-enhancement reward, and male voice-overs gave the practical reward in 20 ads and in 3 ads this was combined with self-enhancement.

The analysed ads show that 63.1% of women were displayed in dependent roles, and although this percentage is slightly less than the one found in the ads on bTV, it is equally impressive. However, here we see more women in independent roles – 19.2%, especially in the role of VIP, where we have 14 cases. We do not find a change over time in the roles of women in comparison to the study of Furnham & Voli, where we had 66.7% women in dependent roles, and our results are similar to the ones by Panarese (2012). Here women 2-3 times more often than men were shown as models illustrating the product (16.9% vs. 4.2 %), parents and daughters (8.5% vs. 1.4 %), and homemakers (9.2 % vs. 0). Men and women were almost identically portrayed in the role of partner, and men outnumbered women in all independent roles. The traditional role of housewife was found in the ads for detergents (6 cases) and food (4), and that of the mother in ads for foods (9). We found women as models and partners in ads for cosmetics (10 and 8 times), and working women in 2 ads for drugs, and in one ad each for cosmetics, for food, for electronics and for other products.<sup>114</sup> Women as narrators appeared in 3 ads, and we found one woman professional only<sup>115</sup>. The role of VIP was the preferred independent role for both men and women: the majority of these are famous Italian entertainers, actors/actresses, athletes etc., which may be caused by the love of Italians for them.

As with the ads on bTV, here the majority of women (43.8%) was situated at home, identically to what was found by Furnham & Voli, and by Panarese. Women were most often shown in the living room (23 of them, mostly in ads for foods, detergents and drugs), or in the kitchen (18 cases, mostly in food ads). 16.2% of women were depicted in open settings, most often in the street (mainly in the ads for drugs) and in nature (especially in ads for drugs and cosmetics). 14.6% of women were located in imaginary settings (mostly in ads for cosmetics, where we have 8 cases), and 13.8% of them were displayed in closed settings – supermarkets (mostly in ads for cosmetics – 8 cases, and for food, 5 cases). The private space of the home as typically female contrasts with male predominance in the open, closed and work settings. However, it should be noted that the private setting is the most prevalent, and 35.2% of men were displayed there, a rate higher than that found by Furnham & Voli (2.4%). We may explain

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<sup>114</sup> A postwoman (Polident), a university lecturer (Supradyn), an office employees (Dove), a journalist (Glassa Ponti), a shop assistant (Euronics), a TV journalist (Iziplay).

<sup>115</sup> The actress in the ad for AZ 3D White toothpaste.

this fact by the accent on family and social relations in Italian advertising, where the main topic is the relationship between men and women.

1/3 of women did not communicate, but if they did, they communicated mainly with men (26.9%). This implies the power of the male-female relationship, which, according to Giacciardi, is "one of the most pervasive sources from which a range of positive attributes is drawn by the Italian advertisers, provided that the theme is dealt 'respectfully', that is, within a traditional framework" (1995: 118). Almost equally, women communicated with women (friends or relatives) and children (13.1%), or with groups composed of adults and children (13.8%), in the latter case outnumbering men by around 8% – a difference similar to the one in the ads on bTV.

In our analysis, as in the analysis of ads on bTV, the predominant physical characteristics of the women were: young (60%) or middle-aged (26.9%), slim (83.8%), and of a middle or high (VIP) class. Here we find again an idealized female image where old age is undesirable. Unlike Bulgarian ads here, however, we found here 16 old women and women whose age tends older. The old women were only two: one in the American ad for Ones plums (ordinary people endorsement) and the grandmother in the ad for Vitasnella<sup>116</sup> mineral water, the latter being indicative of the typical portrayal of old people in advertising<sup>117</sup> as parody figures in a world of eternal youth. Alongside this, female advertising figures are of an age that tends to be old in ads for cosmetics and drugs (4 figures each), drugs (5) and a marketing website (1). Some of these women were in danger of skin withering (and therefore need the face cream Garnier Ultralift), of impaired health (and therefore have to eat the dairy products Danaos, Danacol and Valsoia), of incontinence (needing the special napkins Tena Pants and Lines Perla), of bad dentures (needing Polident Algasiv glue), of corns (Epitact), of joint pain (Voltaren drug), and of weight gain due to menopause (Ymea drug). It appears that female age in advertising on Canale 5 is associated with a series of unpleasant problems which need to be kept under control by every woman through the use of the advertised products. Female youth is accompanied by low weight, which was characteristic of 83.8% of women, and we had only 2 overweight women.<sup>118</sup>

More than half of advertising women wore casual clothes but 15.4% of them were in suggestive clothing (compared with 0% men), 11.5% were half-naked, and only 3.1% were in work clothing.

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<sup>116</sup> Its rejuvenating qualities were not enjoyed by an old couple of Italian emigrants returning from America and meeting their ever-young classmates and teacher – a tragicomic situation.

<sup>117</sup> They were only 7 here.

<sup>118</sup> They were found in the abovementioned ads for Teena Pants and Polident.

In the present study, similarly to the results of Furnham & Voli, and of Ibroscheva, women did not prevail in making the end comment, and it was mainly localized in ads for domestic products, and they were missing in ads for children's goods, banks, liquors, electronics, telecommunications and clothing. Although the percentage of women making an end comment had increased from 24.8 to 31.2% compared to that in the analysis of Furnham & Voli, it was still not high. The two Italian researchers suggest that the relation of the end comment to the sex of the central figures would depend on their relationship with the mode of presentation and / or credibility (1898: 182). Probably the fact that women are visually depicted as silent more often than men – while men more often than women are voice-overs, i.e. speaking and / or authorities – affects who makes the end comment.

We could make the following observations regarding the relation of certain categories of analysis to the components of stereotypes (Eisend, 2009: 423):

- Work status: Like those in the ads on bTV, women in the ads on Canale 5 are depicted most often in dependent roles and in home settings. Obviously, there are similar ideas about women operating, attributing to them a natural tendency to care for others and to express themselves at home. Similar concepts partly correspond to the ideas of women's roles in Italy, especially in the South, where there is a large number of non-working women (due to the inability to find a job or to a certain mentality). However, these ideas do not correspond to the reality of women in northern Italy, many of whom work and try to reconcile a family life with a career. The ads on Canale 5 hardly ever show men busy with chores, with a few exceptions.<sup>119</sup>
- Physical characteristics: the ads on Canale 5 do not correspond to the reality of the female audience. The few old women are depicted as people with current or future health problems, and generally speaking we hardly ever find old people in the ads. We should note, however, that in Italy since the 1980s, with the development of commercial television, there has been imposed a certain image of a woman – young, challenging, whose body is her main capital. Youth and perfection are the obsession of Italian advertisers, and this corresponds to the present situation in the country. This model is absorbed by many young girls who compete to be *velinas*<sup>120</sup> and want plastic surgery as soon as they

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<sup>119</sup> The grotesque figures of the man using the spaghetti sauce Buitoni, the man who purchased thousands of Dash cubes, or the model demonstrating how the Viakal detergent works.

<sup>120</sup> In the Vocabulary of the Italian language Zanichelli 2012 "*velinism*" (*velinismo*) is defined as: "in journalistic language: the diffusion of the presence of young TV assistants and their ascension to the model of success", and *velina* is "a young television assistant, presenting herself in sexy clothes during a programme" (Zanichelli 2012, my translation). Recently,

become adults. The accent that ads place on youth reinforces the need for it, given the hot issue this is in the Italian public space.

- Role behaviors: we find a statistical significance in almost all categories included here except the end comment, the mode of presentation and the argument – the latter having, though, significant relevance for all advertising figures. If for a moment we exclude these categories, we have the following picture: the female visual figures and voice-overs most often give as rewards self-enhancement and social approval, highlighting their relationship with others. The primacy of reason over feelings is not characteristic of visual women, who give evidence only in 3.8% of cases, but there are signs of a change as far as voice-overs are concerned. The emphasis on the visual representation of women points up the predominantly masculine nature of the discourse. The focus is on women's social and family relationships, and communication with others is seen as their natural predisposition and obligation.

There were some attempts to overcome gender stereotypes:

- Ads with male homemakers. In the ad for Gran Ragù Star, the man prepares and serves the food for his pregnant wife; he is presented as a product user, in the dependent role of partner and in the kitchen. There are two attempts to involve men in housework: in the ad for Rio mare per pasta (where, however, the man is a parody figure) and in the ad for Viakal detergent (the husband is a homemaker, but he gives information about the product and explains how it works to two women).
- The ad for Mellin baby milk, with a female central figure. There is an attempt to present a woman who conceals her research careers and parenting. However, it is only partially done – the woman is a researcher, but on a baby product.
- The ad for Danacol dairy, with the famous TV host Raffaella Carrà in a celebrity role, in a television studio, in a business relation with others (colleagues), speaking, in everyday clothes and of an age tending to old.

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“velina” has become synonymous with a woman on television, and the term has a negative connotation, denoting an easy career in show business that provides young and beautiful women with economic prosperity and easy fame. Cfr. Morvillo, 2003; CNEL, 2001; Soffici, 2010, the TV programme *Striscia la notizia* on Canale 5.

## 2.5. Bulgaria and Italy: comparative perspectives

Based on the results we obtained, we have confirmed the following hypotheses about the ads broadcast on bTV and Canale 5:

H1: Women in the ads, to a lesser extent than men, are displayed in autonomous roles and in settings outside the home.

H2: Compared to men, they are shown young, slim and in provocative clothing.

H3: They more often than men are portrayed as product users and give opinions (the same is true for voice-overs).

H4: Women mostly advertise domestic and body products, they are often presented in home settings, and communicating with children more often than men.

H5 Male voice-overs outnumber female.

H6: The end comment is mainly male.

H7: Women more likely than men give the rewards of social approval and self-enhancement.

The content analyses of the ads broadcast on bTV and Canale 5 make it obvious that there are stereotypical images of women. Perhaps the use of stereotypes by advertisers is an easily accessible way to reach the target audiences. They are used not only in the ads of foreign origin, but also in the Bulgarian and the Italian ads<sup>121</sup>. The number and variability of ads on Canale 5, including those of Italian origin, exceed those of ads on bTV, and so does the reaction to the problem: there has been a strong debate about the representation of women in Italy for the last few years, a debate in which many NGOs, media, institutions, public figures and ordinary Italians have taken part; there is also a wide range of documentary sources about women's representation: protocols, codes of conduct, declarations, guidelines etc., and considerable research on the image of women in the media and advertising. By contrast, little has happened in Bulgaria concerning the image of women – there have been only sporadic public debates on the issue, and we were not able to find as many studies over time of the image of women.

The advertising sample on Canale 5 exceeds by 65 units that on bTV, and we find a similar situation in

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<sup>121</sup> See the table in the Appendix.



both voice-overs (127 compared to 104) and visual central figures (201 compared to 165). A similar difference exists in the ads of Bulgarian or Italian origin.<sup>122</sup>

Based on our data we could draw the following conclusions on the relation of the categories of analysis to the components of stereotypes concerning the female visual central figures:

✓ Professional status: Most women in the ads broadcast on bTV and Canale 5 are presented in dependent roles, and this occurs to a much larger extent than for male figures. The dominant role for women is that of a partner, followed by the role of a model. Although there are some differences between the two nations' ads for the rest of the roles,<sup>123</sup> the advertisers' preference for the presentation of women as wives/girlfriends, or as models illustrating the product, is obvious, thus highlighting the emphasis on their visual presence and the importance to them of interpersonal relationships. To these features could be added women's settings: in the ads on both channels women are located mainly at home, and they are less likely than men to be located in the workplace. Similar trends are observed in the 102 Italian ads and in the 39 Bulgarian ads, where almost half of female figures are depicted at home, and their representation in the workplace is very small and much lower than that of men. Not any different is the type of role, and its relation to sex is obvious: the dominant role of women in advertising is dependent, and this is more common in the Bulgarian ads.

✓ Physical characteristics: youth is the feature of advertising figures and is particularly common for women: approx. 60% of women in the ads on bTV and Canale 5 are young. The same is found in the Bulgarian and the Italian ads, in which half of women are young. Youth is associated with the idea of attractiveness and beauty, and often emphasizes the properties of the advertised product / service. In other cases, however, it is not relevant to the product / service, which shows that youth is a part of the semantic core of femininity. To women youth means to be desirable and liked by men, by themselves and by other women. Beauty, a part of which is youth, is equivalent to the term "feminine", which incorporates features like helplessness, passivity, narcissism etc., translated into 'feminization' of culture with its emphasis on women's bodies. In the Western culture it is considered normal for women to be narcissistic because their value is based on their faces and bodies: one of the norms of femininity is the excessive concern about appearance, and similar values have entered the Bulgarian culture too. Naomi Wolf in her 1991 bestseller "The myth of beauty: how images of beauty are used against

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<sup>122</sup> Called here "Bulgarian ads" and "Italian ads". Visual figures: Bulgarian ads: M 27, F 29, Italian ads: M 38, F 70. Voice-overs: Bulgarian ads M 23, F 8, Italian ads M42, F 23.

<sup>123</sup> E.g. housewives in the Italian ads are more common than mothers, but we find the opposite in the Bulgarian ads.

women" talks about a new myth that oppresses women in a new way, and the ads in women's magazines have a large role in its creation. Western economies, she claims, are totally dependent on the continued devaluation of women. "As soon as a woman's primary social value could no longer be defined as the attainment of virtuous domesticity, the beauty myth redefined it as the attainment of virtuous beauty" (1991:18). Fashion and cosmetics industries face an uncertain future, as a result of which new marketing and advertising strategies are developed to digest the success of the women's movement and use it for commercial purposes. In such a context, the idea of beauty is directly connected to that of youth. Many of the analysed female figures are less than 30 years old. Such discriminatory practices against older women are facilitated by the so-called "double standard of aging" – an expression used by Susan Sontag (1971) to refer to the different value that age has for men and women. According to her, women more likely than men are subject to fear of aging: age is associated with a more attractive body and facial beauty, and insofar as a woman are equated with her body shape, her youth is a sign of attractiveness. Different imposed cultural standards determine her attractiveness as a norm continuing from youth. Thus, according to Sontag, age becomes a social judgment more than a biological characteristic: the sexual "validity" of a woman depends on how she manages to hide the traces of old age in her body.

✓ Role behaviors – the differences between men and women in both advertising samples and in the Bulgarian and Italian ads are significant. Although in all of them men and women advertise mainly domestic products, this is especially true for women. Men outnumber women significantly in advertising products used outside the home, such as cars and banking services, as well as products used both at home and outside of it. In almost all cases men give facts about the product, and women give opinions, except in the Italian ads where the opinion is equally divided between men and women, and the ads on Canale 5 in which men more often than women give opinions. There is a sex divide in the "credibility" category, where women are more likely to be users and men authorities. The significance of the male figures is confirmed by their role in making end comments in ads – as voice-overs in both advertising samples, in the Bulgarian and the Italian ads, or visually in both Italian and Bulgarian ads. We do not notice significant differences in the "mode of presentation" category: the sample of ads on bTV shows no difference between men and women, but there is one in the Bulgarian ads, where women speak more than men; however, in the ads on Canale 5 and in the Italian ads we find the opposite. As for communication, in all ads, including the Bulgarian and Italian ones, men more often

than women communicate with women and children, with men and women, or only with women, while women more often than men communicate with children, with men and children, or only with men.<sup>124</sup>

✓ As observations additional to the guidelines given by Eisend, we should mention that in the ads on both channels women give the reward of self enhancement more often than men, whose prerogatives are the reward of pleasure and the practical reward (except in the ads of Bulgarian origin, where the rewards are equally distributed between genders). Everyday clothing is typical of all advertising figures, but sexually suggestive clothes are assigned mostly to women and work clothing to men. We find stereotyping in weight, where thinness is typical for women, and normal weight or overweight to men, which underlines the importance of appearance for the construction of femininity at both a national and an international level.

Similarly to visual figures, female voice-overs in both advertising samples are used for advertising of domestic products more often than male voice-overs, which are heard in ads for products used outside the home and in ads for products used at home and outside of it. Moreover, in all ads the female voice-overs make fewer end comments than male voice-overs. In almost all ads (except in the Bulgarian ones), opinion is given by female voice-overs more often than by male, which give mostly facts. In the "reward" category the results are similar to what was found with the visual figures: female voice-overs give the reward of self-enhancement more often than male voice-overs, and the latter more than the former give the reward of social approval or pleasure (except in the Italian ads, where the reward of pleasure is given mainly by female voice-overs).

It becomes apparent that the international and national ads broadcast on the two national commercial channels follow similar ways of representing women, both visually and as voice-overs or taken as a whole, and for the most part they are based on stereotypes, as was claimed by Eisend (2010). Only a few cases of overturning stereotypes are evidence of the persistence of gender stereotypes, which shows a common tendency in both toward a high degree of stereotyping. As to differences, these are at the level of statistical significance and concern only a few categories of analysis of visual figures and of voice-overs.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Exceptions are the Italian ads where there is a slight predominance of men communicating with men.

<sup>125</sup> E.g., in the ads on bTV "mode of presentation" does not have statistical significance, contrary to what was found for the ads on Canale 5; there is no statistical significance in the categories "argument" and "end comment" for the ads on Canale 5, contrary to what was found for the ads on bTV. E.g. statistical significance in voice-overs is missing in the "argument" and "sex" in all ads on Canale 5, but is present in the ads on bTV etc.

Is the lack of differences in the advertising representation of women in the two countries due to the fact that we analysed ads broadcast for a week only, and/or is it due to the limitations of the method of content analysis? We are aware of the time limit and consider it necessary to track the evolution of female representation over time in a future analysis. In this case, we could think of gender as one of the most important aspects of advertising, and the use of similar gender stereotypes in similar cultures is predictable. In view of the great similarity in our results for the ads in/from both countries, we could assume that the Italian and Bulgarian cultures are similar in regard to gender stereotypes and the image of women in advertising. This should not be a surprise given the fact that the same version of international ads is often broadcast in several European countries. It does not explain, however, the lack of significant differences in the ways women are portrayed in the Bulgarian and the Italian ads. Is this simply a numerical result, and/or an indication that advertisers do not comply with national conditions, or it is due to the entry into Bulgaria of Western models of behavior, as described by Hristov (2004) and Georgieva (2006)? We have already pointed out the limited period of analysis, which could have an effect on the numerical results. Regarding the phenomenon of convergence and divergence typical of the Bulgarian advertisements today, Petrova claims that "during the transition period (which, according to some researchers, has not yet been completed) the Bulgarian woman was torn between the desire to emulate models coming from the West (luxury goods and lifestyle), the remnants of the traditional notions of Bulgarian femininity (entailing sacrifice and self-dedication to home and family) and scarce economic opportunities" (2008: 95, my translation). We could find both models in the analysed cases: on one hand 'westernized' modern mothers, or women with careers, on the other hand traditional Bulgarian women (e.g. the caring mother and wife).

We can look at the image of women in the ads on Canale 5 and bTV from two perspectives. In the context of the similarities in the results of the analyses of the ads on both channels, we can conclude that the Italian and Bulgarian cultures are similar in terms of the role of women in society and its impact in advertising. However, complete similarity between these two cultures is difficult to determine. Along with that, there are some differences, which we pointed out in par.1.4. One of them is the degree of masculinity and femininity as defined by Geert Hofstede. Based on Hofstede's observations on Italy as a masculine culture and Bulgaria as moderately feminine, we accept / reject the following hypotheses:

H1 is rejected because the women in the ads on Canale 5, including the Italian ads, are shown in dependent roles less often than the women in the ads on bTV and the Bulgarian ads.

H2 is confirmed because the women in the ads on bTV and the Bulgarian ads are shown more often than those in the ads on Canale 5 and in the Italian ads communicating with others.

H3 is partially accepted because the women in the ads on Canale 5 are portrayed young more often than those in the ads on bTV. It is partially rejected because the women in the Bulgarian ads more often than the women in the Italian ads are displayed young, but also because the women in the Italian ads and in those on Canale 5 are portrayed thin and in suggestive clothing to a lesser extent than the women in the Bulgarian ads and in those on bTV.

H4 is partially rejected, because the women in the ads on bTV and in the Bulgarian ads more often than those in the Italian ads and the ads on Canale 5 are shown advertising domestic products and at home but the latter is not true for the women in the ads on Canale 5 which are shown less often at home.

We do not find conclusive evidence for a relationship between gender stereotyping and the masculinity/femininity of a country. We could assume that the index of Hofstede is not sufficient to detect any differences in the gender portrayal, which is likely to be affected by other factors such as regulation and self-regulation. It is also likely that the depiction of women in Europe is characterized by more and more convergence, which is also evident in the smaller differences in gender stereotyping among different countries. As claimed Albers-Miller and Gelb (1996), “The finding that masculinity scores seem not directly related to the level of gender stereotyping in advertising has important consequences for advertisers. If variation in advertising content would be linked to a culture’s masculinity index, an advertiser’s task crossing national borders would be simplified and more predictable as to its outcomes” (cit.in De Wulf et al., 2003). The problem is that this dimension is indicative, and although it gives us an idea of the content of the national culture (according to which we can orient advertising appeals), it is not the only thing that affects the advertising. It would be interesting to see what cultural factors (such as legal requirements, economic situation of the country, labour market etc.) influence the representation of men and women. However, the index of masculinity and femininity gives us an idea about the portrayal of gender roles, especially when it comes to relationships.

## Conclusion

The comparative analysis of television advertising representation of women on bTV and Canale 5 highlights both the similarities in stereotypical images of advertising women and the connection of these stereotypes with the situation of women in both countries. Our analysis, which is based on documents and initiatives of national and international institutions and organizations, statements and actions of NGOs (EWL), and analyses of the image of women in media and advertising, gives an idea of what is happening in Bulgaria and Italy regarding the situation of women in society and their media manifestations in recent years. Although Italy is a founding member of the EU, which implies longer experience with its principles – including the policies against gender stereotypes – it does not seem to have coped with these problems; on the contrary, gender stereotypes are enshrined in the structure of Italian society. The majority of women in Italy still faces problems, such as low political participation, difficulties in reconciling a career and a family, horizontal and vertical segregation in the labor market despite their educational attainments, a high unemployment rate, violence and many others. Although in the more developed northern part of the country women are in a better situation (e.g. there is a greater number of working women) than in the South, contemporary Italy is a patriarchal society in which gender equality is still far from being implemented. An expression of this is the media and advertising representation of women which is partial and stereotyped – a subject of debate and criticism among NGOs, media, public and political figures. Italy's membership in the EU is in contrast with the reality of women in the country, evidence of which is Italy's 71st place in the Global Gender Gap Index 2013. By contrast, the position of Bulgaria is far better – 43rd place – but the problems of women in the country are not less important, and they are related not only to the problems of the country but also to the common views about gender stereotypes. As one of the main problems, we could mention the low level of civic participation and the lack of interest in the problem of representation of women in the media and advertising compared to Italy.

From the quantitative analysis of the data it becomes clear that advertising follows certain patterns of gender representation, already noted in the analyses of other Western European and American authors. There are a number of stereotypes about women – the focus on their appearance, the dependent roles of a mother, a housewife, a partner, a model, the fact women mainly advertise domestic and body

products, etc. This pattern is typical for both foreign and national ads, broadcast on both channels, which speaks of the mutual influence between two. Although we found some timid attempts to overcome gender stereotypes, and several quantitative differences, Italy and Bulgaria both appear as southern countries with a patriarchal culture characterized by traditional gender stereotypes.

Although our study is not exhaustive, it gives an insight to a time period which comprises a set of ads whose analysis indicates distinct stereotypes in the representation of women. Our quantitative study confirmed several hypotheses: women in advertising on bTV and Canale 5, to a lesser extent than men, are displayed in autonomous roles, in settings outside the home, and make end comments, and to a greater extent than men are shown young, thin and in sexy clothing, as product users, in voice-overs and giving opinions, mostly advertising domestic and body products, often presented at home, communicating with children, and giving rewards such as social approval and self-enhancement.

The problem of gender stereotypes is of a particular importance for the EU, and in support of this we can cite the opinion of the Advisory Committee on Equal Opportunities for women and men to the European Commission on "Breaking gender stereotypes in the media" (2010: 6): "In the present context, it is important to address the fact that gender stereotypes not only contribute to the status quo in terms of women's and men's roles, but also promote an asymmetrical vision of women and men in society. Furthermore, they are one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life, influencing their choices in education, professional and private life". Despite Italy's and Bulgaria's membership in the EU, which implies compliance with the rights and obligations arising from this, advertising and media operators still continue to offer to the audience mostly one-dimensional and stereotypical images of women, images not characterized by the variety of roles and equal opportunities much desired by the EU and EWL. In the EU context, a major problem results from the unbalanced, distorted and stereotypical representation of women in advertisements analysed here, with only a rare presence of independent, successful, active women, or overturning of gender stereotypes.

What needs to be done to overcome obstacles to achieve a non-stereotypical representation? First, we need the active participation of all advertising and media operators, as well as NGOs and the governmental sector. After all, advertisers offer us what they think we expect. If a society is accustomed to receive such messages about gender roles, and this addiction is so strong that stereotypes are not even noticed, it means that it is necessary to change the attitudes and expectations of the recipient. If discrimination against women is a daily practice, we should not expect that women's

images in advertising will lack gender stereotypes because that would lead to some risk of misunderstanding the advertising message. Although codes of conduct and regulation of the advertising sector by the State are positive inducements, they are not sufficient to overcome the stereotypical representations. The field of advertising representation is slippery, it is difficult to determine what exactly the stereotypical advertising representation is, and although there are attempts, the same advertising content could be interpreted differently by the different recipients, its producers, and persons/organizations on the outside.

However, we hope that the dynamic situation in Italy concerning the issue of women's representation can serve as a catalyst for positive developments and an example of "attacking" the problem of gender stereotypes there. As for Bulgaria, we hope that its EU membership could lead to a real absorption of the EU's principles, but this is a long process and involves a vibrant civil society, media and institutions. Particularly important is the change of traditional expectations and attitudes of the public about gender roles. To that end, it is necessary to conduct training and other activities aimed at advertising / media specialists, in order to raise their awareness of the gender stereotypes present in media/advertising texts and the consequences of their use, and to stimulate their creativity in search of innovative solutions and actions to raise awareness of the audience, including young people and students – similarly to what done by the authors of the of the Italian documentary "Women's body"<sup>126</sup> and their initiative "New eyes for television" (Nuovi occhi per la Tv) to cultivate a more critical look at advertising contents.

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<sup>126</sup> "Il corpo delle donne" (2009) consists of extracts from entertainment programs broadcast by the public RAI and by Berlusconi's Mediaset channels, and presents in 25 min. the usual ways of representation of women on the Italian TV - the only possible model is that of strip club aesthetics, plasticization of the bodies, cancellation of individuals and individuality through plastic surgery, and demeaning, subordinate roles for women. Cfr. <http://www.ilcorpodelledonne.net/english-version/> and <http://www.ilcorpodelledonne.net/formazione/> (accessed Jan 2014).



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<sup>127</sup> All websites were accessed on Jan 29, 2014.

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Appendix  
TABLE I Total coding

Categories	ALL ADS IN THE SAMPLE				BULGARIAN ADS		ITALIAN ADS					
	bTV		Canale 5		bTV		Canale 5					
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female				
	132	49.1	137	50.9	142	43.3	186	57.7	80	35.2	93	53.8
	$\chi^2=0.093$ df=1 NS											
<b>Product type</b>	$\chi^2=24.204$ df=2 p>0.001											
domestic	87	65.9	124	90.5	82	57.7	147	79.0	44.0	83.8	51.2	72.0
non-domestic	24	18.2	6	4.4	19	13.4	8	4.3	38.0	13.5	5.0	1.0
both	21	15.9	7	5.1	31	21.8	27	14.5	18.0	2.7	36.3	23.7
other	0	0	0	0	10	7.0	4	2.2	0	0	7.5	3.2
<b>Mode of presentation</b>	$\chi^2=15.965$ df=2 p>0.001											
visually speaking	38	28.8	60	43.8	38	26.8	59	31.7	38.0	58.3	31.2	41.9
visually silent	26	19.7	41	30.0	33	23.2	71	38.2	16.0	22.2	16.3	33.3
voice-over	68	51.5	36	26.2	71	50.0	56	31.0	46.0	19.4	52.5	24.7
<b>Argument</b>	$\chi^2=16.45$ df=2 p>0.001											
factual	52	39.4	28	20.4	47	33.1	33	17.7	32.0	21.6	36.3	17.2
opinion	33	25.0	62	45.3	47	33.1	64	34.4	40.0	43.2	37.5	28.0
none	47	35.6	47	34.3	48	33.8	89	47.8	28.0	35.1	26.2	44.1
<b>Reward</b>	$\chi^2=28.774$ df=6 p>0.001											
self-enhancement	32	24.2	69	50.4	43	30.3	100	53.8	12.0	54.1	21.3	48.4
social approval	13	9.8	12	8.8	9	6.3	7	3.8	12.0	10.8	6.3	4.3
self-enhancement & social approval	5	3.8	12	8.8	2	1.4	14	7.5	0.0	0.0	2.5	3.2
self-enhancement & practical	16	12.1	9	6.6	6	4.2	2	1.1	18.0	0	5.0	3.2
practical	27	20.5	11	8.0	32	22.5	18	9.7	26.0	8.1	25.0	8.6
pleasure	26	19.7	17	12.4	27	19.0	22	11.8	20.0	18.9	23.8	17.2
other/none	13	9.8	7	5.1	23	16.2	23	12.4	12.0	8.1	16.3	15.1
<b>End comment</b>	$\chi^2=8.84$ df=1 p>0.005<0.002											
present	70	53.0	48	35.0	78	54.9	58	31.2	52.0	29.8	58.8	29.0
absent	62	47.0	89	65.0	64	45.1	128	68.8				

**TABLE II Separate coding**

Visual figures Categories	All ads in the sample						Bulgarian ads		Italian ads					
	bTV		Canale 5		bTV		Canale 5							
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F				
	$\chi^2=8.297$ df=1 p>0.005<0.001	64	38.8	101	61.2	$\chi^2=17.318$ df=1 p>0.001	71	35.3	130	64.7	58.7	63.0	35.2	64.8
<b>Product type</b>	$\chi^2=18.304$ df=2 p>0.001					$\chi^2=13.13$ df=3p>0.005<0.002								
domestic	38	59.4	89	88.1	39	54.9	100	76.9	37.0	79.3	44.7	70.0	44.7	70.0
non-domestic	14	21.9	6	5.9	10	14.1	6	4.6	40.7	17.2	5.3	1.4	5.3	1.4
both	12	18.8	6	5.9	15	21.1	21	16.2	22.2	3.4	39.5	25.7	39.5	25.7
other	0	0	0	5.9	7	9.9	3	2.3	0	0	10.5	2.9	10.5	2.9
<b>Mode of presentation</b>	$\chi^2=0.05$ df=1 NS				$\chi^2=1.218$ df=1 NS									
silent	26	40.6	41	40.6	33	46.5	71	54.6	22.2	27.6	34.2	44.3	34.2	44.3
speaking	38	59.4	60	59.4	38	53.5	59	45.4	77.8	72.4	65.8	55.7	65.8	55.7
<b>Credibility</b>	$\chi^2=3.235$ df=2 p<0.05 NS				$\chi^2=18.192$ df=2 p>0.001									
user	40	62.5	76	75.2	44	62.0	114	87.7	55.6	65.5	58.0	84.3	58.0	84.3
authority	12	18.8	14	13.9	12	16.9	8	6.2	22.2	17.2	21.1	7.1	21.1	7.1
neither	12	18.8	11	10.9	15	21.1	8	6.2	22.2	17.2	21.1	8.6	21.1	8.6
<b>Argument</b>	$\chi^2=8.026$ df=2 p>0.02<0.01				$\chi^2=4.554$ df=2 NS									
factual	9	14.1	6	5.9	8	11.3	5	3.8	18.5	13.8	10.5	5.7	10.5	5.7
opinion	18	28.1	49	48.5	23	32.4	40	30.8	37.0	44.8	44.7	37.1	44.7	37.1
none	37	57.8	46	45.5	40	56.3	85	65.4	44.4	41.4	44.8	57.1	44.8	57.1
<b>Reward</b>	$\chi^2=17.012$ df=3 p>0.001				$\chi^2=23.382$ df=6 p>0.001									
self-enhancement	11	17.2	46	45.6	16	22.5	64	49.2	11.	48.3	7.9	45.7	7.9	45.7
social approval	9	14.1	12	11.9	6	8.5	6	4.6	11.1	13.8	5.3	5.7	5.3	5.7
self-enhancement & social approval	3	4.7	11	10.9	2	2.8	11	8.5	0	0	5.3	4.3	5.3	4.3
pleasure	15	23.4	13	12.9	17	23.9	16	12.3	22.2	20.7	28.9	0.0	28.9	0.0
practical	9	14.1	10	9.9	12	16.9	14	10.8	11.1	10.3	26.3	10.0	26.3	10.0
self-enhancement & practical	7	10.9	3	3.0	3	4.2	0	0	25.9	0	2.6	17.1	2.6	17.1
none/other	10	15.6	6	5.9	15	21.1	19	14.6	18.5	6.9	23.7	17.1	23.7	17.1
<b>Role</b>	$\chi^2=15.611$ df=2 p>0.001				$\chi^2=15.923$ df=2 p>0.001									

dependent	28	43.8	75	74.3	26	36.6	82	63.1	40.7	65.5	31.6	59.4
independent	26	40.6	18	17.8	31	43.7	25	19.2	48.1	27.6	55.3	29.0
other	10	15.6	8	7.9	14	19.7	23	17.7	7.4	6.9	13.2	11.6
<b>Setting</b>	$\chi^2=16.207$ df=5 p>0.01<0.005											
private	19	26.7	52	51.2	25	35.2	57	43.8	29.6	44.8	36.8	47.1
work	14	21.9	5	5.0	8	11.3	5	3.8	25.9	3.4	13.2	4.3
open	17	26.6	21	20.8	15	21.1	20	15.4	25.9	27.6	15.8	15.7
closed	7	10.9	11	10.9	15	21.1	18	13.8	11.1	10.3	26.3	14.3
mixed	5	7.8	5	5.0	3	4.2	11	8.5	7.4	10.3	0	7.1
imaginary	2	3.1	7	6.9	5	7.0	19	14.6	0	3.4	7.9	11.4
<b>Communication with</b>	$\chi^2=28.708$ df=6 p>0.001											
children	2	3.1	9	8.9	1	1.4	7	5.4	3.7	6.9	2.6	8.6
M & children	0	0.0	11	10.9	0	0.0	11	8.5	0	20.7	0	11.4
F & children	4	6.9	0	0.0	2	2.8	0	0.0	11.1	0	5.3	0
M	13	20.3	27	26.7	10	14.1	35	26.9	22.2	27.6	0	0
M, F & children	2	3.1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3.7	3.4	21.1	20.0
F	22	34.4	13	12.9	27	38.0	17	13.1	22.2	13.8	34.2	22.9
M & F	12	18.8	7	6.9	5	7.0	6	4.6	25.9	3.4	13.2	5.7
missing	9	14.1	34	33.7	26	36.6	54	41.5	11.1	24.1	23.7	31.4
<b>Age</b>	$\chi^2=13.312$ df=3 p>0.005<0.001											
teen	4	6.3	4	4.0	1	1.4	1	0.7	7.4	6.9	0	1.4
young	15	23.4	62	61.4	24	33.8	78	60.0	7.4	42.3	18.4	47.1
young to middle-aged	31	48.4	31	30.7	28	39.4	35	26.9	61.9	37.9	39.5	35.7
middle-aged to old	11	17.2	3	3.0	13	18.3	14	10.8	25.9	3.4	34.2	14.3
old	3	4.7	1	1.0	5	7.0	2	1.5	7.4	3.4	7.9	1.4
<b>Weight</b>	$\chi^2=95.757$ df=2 p>0.001											
slim	10	15.6	92	91.1	13	18.3	109	83.8	11.1	82.8	5.3	84.3
over-weight	7	10.9	3	3.0	10	14.1	2	1.5	18.5	3.4	21.1	1.4
neither	47	73.4	6	5.9	49	69.0	20	15.4	70.4	13.8	73.7	14.3
<b>Clothing</b>	$\chi^2=30.734$ df=4 p>0.001											
casual	40	62.5	58	57.4	49	69.0	77	59.2	63.0	69.0	76.3	67.1
suggestive	0	0.0	30	29.7	0	0.0	20	15.4	25.9	6.9	13.2	1.4
working	11	17.2	4	4.0	10	14.1	4	3.1	0	17.2	0	10.0
semi-naked	6	9.4	5	5.0	4	5.6	15	11.5	0	0	5.3	7.4
other	7	10.9	4	4.0	8	11.3	14	10.8	11.1	6.9	5.3	67.1
<b>End comment</b>	$\chi^2=4.18$ df=1 p>0.05<0.025											
present	6	9.9	16	15.8	12	16.9	14	10.8	11.1	17.2	18.4	12.9
absent	58	90.6	85	84.2	59	83.1	116	89.2				

<b>Aurial sample</b>	$\chi^2 = 9.846$ df=1 p>0.002<0.001	M 68 65.4 F 36 34.6	$\chi^2 = 1.772$ df=1 NS	M 71 55.9 F 56 44.1	74.2 25.8	64.6 35.4
<b>Product type</b>	$\chi^2 = 9.817$ df=2 p>0.02<0.01	49 72.1 35 97.2 10 14.7 0 0.0 9 13.2 1 2.8 0 0 0 0	$\chi^2 = 8.525$ df=3 p>0.05<0.025	43 60.6 47 83.9 9 12.7 2 3.6 16 22.5 6 10.7 3 4.2 1 8	52.2 100 34.8 0.0 13.0 0.0 0 0	57.1 78.3 4.8 0.0 33.3 17.4 4.8 4.3
<b>Argument</b>	$\chi^2 = 5.511$ df=2 NS	43 63.2 22 61.1 15 22.1 13 36.1 10 14.7 1 2.8	$\chi^2 = 1.387$ df=2 NS	39 54.9 28 50.0 24 33.8 24 42.9 8 11.3 4 1.4	47.8 50.0 43.5 37.5 8.7 12.5	59.5 52.2 31.0 43.5 9.5 4.3
<b>Reward</b>	$\chi^2 = 16.188$ df=6 p>0.02<0.01	21 30.9 23 63.9 4 5.9 0 0 2 2.9 1 2.8 11 16.2 4 11.1 18 26.5 1 2.8 9 13.2 6 16.7 3 4.4 1 2.8	$\chi^2 = 16.951$ df=6 p>0.01<0.005	27 38.0 36 64.3 3 4.2 1 1.8 0 0 3 5.4 10 14.1 6 10.7 20 28.2 4 7.4 3 4.2 2 3.6 8 11.3 4 1.4	13.0 75.0 13.0 0 0 0 17.4 12.5 43.5 0 8.7 0	33.3 60.9 9.5 0 0 0 19.0 17.4 23.8 4.3 9.5 13.0 9.5 8.7
<b>End comment</b>	$\chi^2 = 0.906$ df=1 NS	64 94.1 32 88.9 4 5.9 4 11.1	$\chi^2 = 5.589$ df=1 p>0.02<0.01	66 93.0 44 78.6 5 7.0 12 21.4	100 85.7	95.2 82.6

## Abstract

Recognizing stereotypes as an obstacle to gender equality, the European Union has set itself the challenge of eliminating them in media and advertising. Television ads are an important manifestation of gender stereotypes, and content analysis of such ads has a long tradition in the US and Western Europe. This study extends that tradition by comparatively analyzing the representation of women in TV ads in one representative founding EU member state, Italy, and one representative new member, Bulgaria.

Following the examples of other Western European and American authors, ads broadcast during a standard television week (21 to 27 March 2011) on two national commercial channels with the largest audiences in the two countries, Italy's Canale 5 and Bulgaria's bTV, are subjected to a detailed content analysis. The results are examined in light of statistically derived cultural differences between Italy and Bulgaria, and of Geert Hofstede's theory of "cultural dimensions". According to that theory, Italy's is a more "masculine" culture and Bulgaria's more "feminine". Nonetheless, TV advertising follows certain similar patterns of gender representation, and these patterns are typical of both foreign and nationally produced ads.

Although several differences and some tentative attempts to overcome stereotypes are noted, Italy and Bulgaria both appear as "southern" countries with a common patriarchal culture characterized by traditional gender stereotypes – more similar than cultural-dimensions theory would predict. The study concludes by considering to what extent images in ads match reality, and by discussing the relevance of its analysis both for the EU and at the national level. There have been intensive debates in Italy in recent years over women in media, but insufficient study of such images in Bulgaria. Correctly perceiving that advertising both reflects and shapes culture, the EU has called for overcoming stereotypes by changing perceptions, advocating awareness-raising campaigns aimed both at the general public and at leaders of media, advertising and other institutions. This study's results reinforce those initiatives by highlighting the extent to which they have not yet succeeded, leaving gender stereotypes in advertising as an ongoing problem.

*Key words:* television advertising, gender stereotypes, EU, Italy, Bulgaria

*Parole chiavi:* pubblicità televisiva, stereotipi di genere, UE, Italia, Bulgaria