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GENDER-ORIENTED ADVERTISING AND PECULIARITIES OF ITS TRANSLATION IN LATVIA

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Advertising both serves as a mirror of existing values in the society and makes an impact on them. By using stereotypes adverts can perpetuate them. This research explores the use of gender stereotypes in Latvian advertising from 2010 to 2023, with a particular focus on content in the men's magazine *Klubs* and the women's magazine *Ieva*. Through a qualitative and multimodal discourse analysis, the study examines how advertising reflects and perpetuates societal values through the use of gender stereotypes. To provide a broader view of the discussed issues the authors also consider adverts in other media and give a wider context of the gender stereotype discussion in Latvia. A brief insight into advertising in Latvia in 1920s and 1930s shows the existence of gender stereotypes, some of which are still present today. Modern stereotypes about women and men as depicted in adverts are analysed, along with non-stereotypical adverts that are becoming more numerous. The research finds that while a shift toward fewer gender stereotypes is visible in Latvian advertising, this change is not significant or widespread. In contrast, regions (for example, Rēzekne and Ogre still) exhibit more traditional and objectifying portrayals of gender roles. Results suggest that the translation of advertisements plays a crucial role in either reinforcing or breaking stereotypes, with recent examples showing both tendencies. Despite a gradual shift towards non-stereotypical portrayals, gender stereotypes in advertising remain deeply rooted in Latvian society, particularly in certain regions. The novelty of this research lies in its comparison of gender stereotypes across different time periods and media, particularly highlighting the evolving portrayal of women and men in advertising. Furthermore, the study pays specific attention to translated advertisements, revealing both the persistence of stereotypes and cases where they are being gradually challenged.

Keywords: advertising, gender stereotypes, translation, gender representation, advertising history, Latvian media,

Uz dzimumu orientēta reklāma un tās tulkošanas īpatnības Latvijā

Reklāma ir gan sabiedrībā pastāvošo vērtību spogulis, gan arī ietekmē tās. Izmantojot stereotipus, reklāmas var tos nostiprināt. Šajā pētījumā analizēta dzimumu stereotipu izmantošana Latvijas reklāmā no 2010. gada līdz 2023. gadam, īpašu uzmanību pievēršot vīriešu žurnāla "Klubs" un sievietes žurnāla "Ieva" saturam. Veicot kvalitatīvu un multimodālu diskursa analīzi, pētījumā tiek noskaidrots, kā reklāma atspoguļo un saglabā sabiedrības vērtības, izmantojot dzimumu stereotipus. Lai sniegtu plašāku skatījumu uz apspriestajiem jautājumiem, autore aplūko arī reklāmas citos medijos un sniedz plašāku kontekstu dzimumu stereotipu diskusijai Latvijā. Īss ieskats reklāmā Latvijā 1920. gados un 1930. gados liecina par dzimumu stereotipu pastāvēšanu, daži no kuriem saglabājušies arī mūsdienās. Tiek analizēti reklāmās attēlotie mūsdienu stereotipi par sievietēm un vīriešiem, kā arī nestereotipiskas reklāmas, kuru skaits kļūst arvien lielāks. Pētījumā konstatēts, ka, lai gan Latvijas reklāmā ir vērojama pāreja uz dzimumu stereotipu samazināšanos, šīs izmaiņas nav būtiskas vai plaši izplatītas. Turpretim reģionos (piemēram, Rēzeknē un Ogrē) joprojām ir tradicionālāks un objektivizētāks dzimumu lomu attēlojums. Pētījuma rezultāti liecina, ka reklāmu tulkošanai ir izšķiroša nozīme stereotipu nostiprināšanā vai laušanā, un nesenie piemēri parāda abas tendences. Neskatoties uz pakāpenisku pāreju uz nestereotipiskiem attēlojumiem, dzimumu stereotipi reklāmā joprojām ir dziļi iesakņojušies Latvijas sabiedrībā, īpaši atsevišķos reģionos. Šī pētījuma novitāte ir dzimumu stereotipu salīdzināšanā dažādos laika periodos un dažādos medijos, īpaši izceļot mainījušos sievietes un vīriešu attēlojumu reklāmā. Turklāt pētījumā īpaša uzmanība pievērsta tulkotajām reklāmām, atklājot gan stereotipu saglabāšanos, gan gadījumus, kad tie pakāpeniski tiek atspēkoti.

Atslēgvārdi: reklāma, dzimumu stereotipi, tulkošana, dzimumu reprezentācija, reklāmas vēsture, Latvijas mediji,

Introduction

Advertising sells not only products, but also values, it is both influenced by the values of the society, serves as a projection of them (Liu 2022), and makes an impact on them (Zitmane 2021). The great potential of advertising in influencing the society is underscored by advertising psychologist Lebedev-Lubimov: "Advertising as a social mass phenomenon contains enormous cultural potential,

which in certain circumstances can have a positive impact on both the individual and society as a whole. It plays an important role not only in the development of the so-called mass culture, but also in the development of traditional, classical culture” (Lebedev-Lubimov 2002, p. 14). Relations between adverts and cultural concepts are viewed in opposite ways by those who adhere to the ‘mirror’ argument stating that advertising only reflects existing values (e.g., Eisend 2010) and those who believe in “mold” argument and posit that advertising exercises cultural impact on values (e.g., Pollay 1987). The authors of the present article, similarly to Liu (2022), consider both arguments valid. However, besides exercising a positive impact indicated by Lebedev-Lubimov advertising can have a negative one as well: if adverts contain stereotypes, they can influence the society and be perpetuated. This assumption corresponds to the findings that stereotypes are self-perpetuating in the minds of the people growing stronger with use (Barnard 2022).

Vinacke speaks about stereotypes as views about a social category (Vinacke 1957), and Ashmore and Del Boca add that they are especially such views that separate genders (Ashmore, Del Boca 1981). A similar view is expressed by Zitmane who states that “stereotypes are specific qualities, characteristics or roles that are assigned to a woman or a man, based on his or her belonging to the social group of women or men” (Zitmane 2021). A summary of these views can be found in the definition of gender stereotypes by the Council of Europe that holds that “gender stereotypes are preconceived social and cultural patterns or ideas whereby women and men are assigned characteristics and roles determined and limited by their sex” (Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023, Strategic objective 1) (Council of Europe 2018). From a practical side, Zitmane describes stereotype as a short story, a concentrated message used due to the short time given to attract attention. Stereotype is a mechanism of compression of information and a short-cut to a larger information (Zitmane 2021). A similar view about the ability of stereotypes to deliver a message in a very short time due to their clarity and conciseness (Pollay 1986) is expressed by Patterson, O’Malley and Story (2009) who refer to stereotypes as simplistic and reductive. Adhering to stereotypes can result in sexism defined by the Council of Europe as “any act, gesture, visual representation, spoken or written words, practice or behaviour based upon the idea that a person or a group of persons is inferior because of their sex, which occurs in the public or private sphere, whether online or offline” (Committee of Ministers, Council of Europe 2019). Among purposes of such negative acts the Council of Europe includes maintaining and reinforcing gender stereotypes.

A survey of 3,352 residents aged 18 to 65 conducted in 2022 in the Baltic countries by the research agency Forta Research, Norstat and Novatore found that stereotypes about men’s and women’s roles are quite strong in the Baltics: 20% believe men are better suited for leadership roles, especially in big companies, 40% of Latvian respondents consider that women’s primary role is home and family, and 38% believe men should be paid more (Novatore 2023). However, psychologist Zakriževska argues that a business woman is among new stereotypes that are created in Latvia (Zakriževska 2011).

The present article aims at establishing what stereotype about woman’s role in society is developed by Latvian men’s magazine *Klubs* (2010–2023), what stereotypes about men are developed by women’s magazine *Ieva* (2010–2023) and identifying who and what kind of advertisements translates in the Latvian market and thus deals with stereotypical content of advertising. To provide a broader view of the analysed issues the adverts in other mass media and outdoor posters are analysed as well. The topicality of the research is underscored by the recent developments in the society of Latvia when after a revealing broadcast of the Latvian Television (LTV) show *Kultūršoks* (LTV 18.03.2024) the discussion about topics of sexual harassment similar to the ones dealt with by the #MeToo movement across the world (metoomvmt.org) started in the Latvian mass media (Sprudzāne, Rožukalne 2024) thus bringing to the fore the issue of objectification of women. Qualitative analysis of advertisements and multimodal discourse analysis are used as methods for the research. In order to set the background

for the current research, the evolution of stereotypes as depicted in advertisements in Latvia is considered.

Stereotypes in the interwar period Latvia

Stereotypes have a long history. A stereotype of a woman in the interwar period Latvia (1918–1939) was that of a beautiful housewife and a care-giving mother who also remembered to take care of her beauty. Although according to Balandina advertising of the 1930s also presented a modern woman who spent her time idly (Balandina 2010).

Men were depicted as elegant, smoking cigarettes, also shown as sportsmen engaged in outdoor activities, and, occasionally, as a bachelor looking for a wife who, for instance, would make an advertised coffee for breakfast: “*Man jāprecas bet tikai tādu sievu, kura rītos vāra reform-kafeju VEGA (bez kofeina)*”¹ [I have to marry, but only such a wife who makes the reform-coffee VEGA (without caffeine) in the mornings].

There are also non-stereotypical ads such as an advert for asenization services addressed to homeowners. The ad pictures both a woman and a man as addressed homeowners, as a woman was taking care of the order in the house (Figure 1).

Figure 1

An advert for asenization services addressed to homeowners



Source: *Atpūta*, 1924. No. 5, 05.12.: 2.

However, ads featuring men and women in stereotypical roles were more numerous reflecting the values of the society and thus providing the basis for the ‘mirror’ argument. Yet the ‘mold’ argument can also be applied, as Balandina states, “advertising during this period in time began to dictate the social order, representing the ideal social role and ideological values of the 1920s and 1930s” (Balandina 2010, p. 154). Some stereotypes of the time continue to exist today. Moreover, there is a discussion of the emergence of retro-sexism as a global problem (Bordo 1995; Williamson 2003).

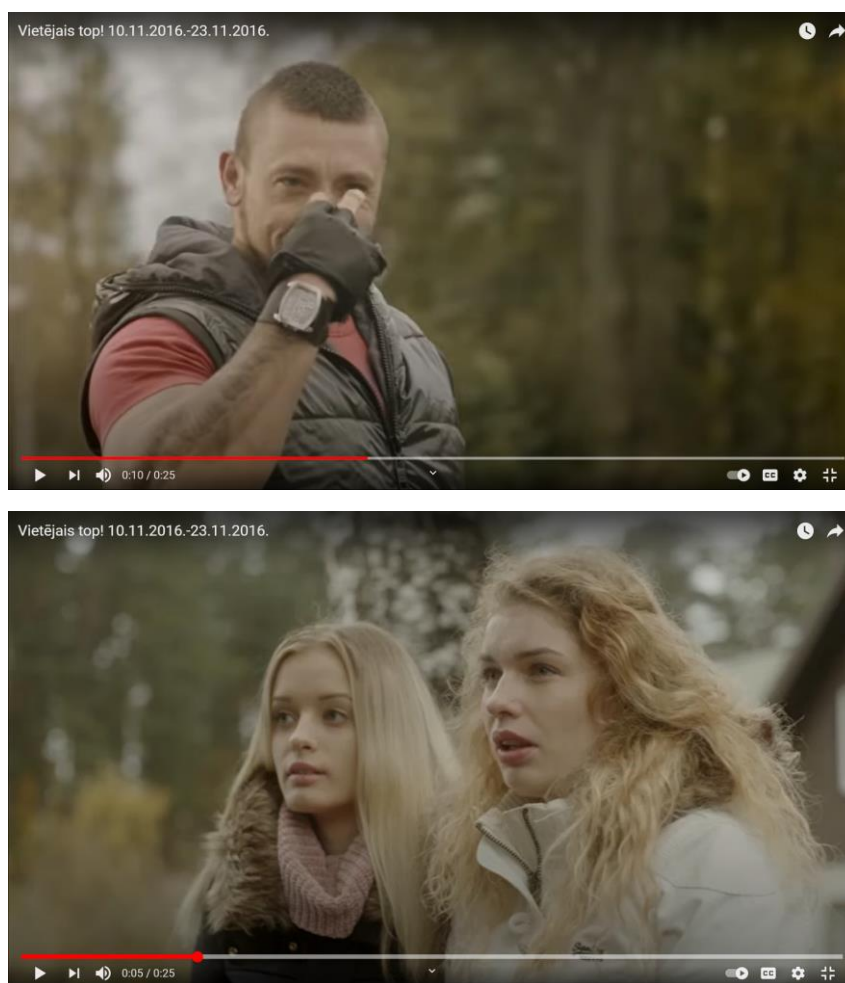
¹ *Atpūta*, 1924. No. 4, 28.11.: 22.

Modern stereotypes

According to Williamson sexism in advertising can broadly be divided into social and sexual, however, these categories overlap (Williamson 2003). Both social and sexual in the form of glorification of masculinity by depicting a man as a macho and reducing a woman's role to serving as a beautiful decoration are found in contemporary Latvian adverts. An advert for the grocery store *Top* (Figure 2) drew attention of and earned criticism in the broadcast *Aizliegtais paņēmiens* (Forbidden Method) (LTV1 24.02.2020) for depiction of a man as a macho and a woman as beautiful, but not clever. In the advert, a man did donuts with his car while a woman, a shop-assistant of the grocery store *Top*, asked her colleague what the man was doing. The colleague answered using a zeugma: the man, as she said, was either looking for trouble or a wife (LTV1 10.06.2020). Notably, the advert received 2020 ADwards MMXX golden award in the category TV and Radio (Priedīte 2020) thus, in a way, reflecting the attitudes of the society towards genders. The same role division was used in another advertisement for the same grocery store *Top* even in a more pronounced way. In the advert, a muscular man drove to the store in his tractor, parked it and while going to the shop pointed two V-sign fingers first at his own eyes, then at the girls sitting nearby. The girl looked at him with admiration.

Figure 2

An advert for the grocery store *Top*



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6S6wUKCu17A>.

It seems that Latvian advertisers were still guided by the idea that ‘ideal masculinity’ sells. However, the research by Otnes and Zayer in the USA shows that men react typically negatively to depicting them as ‘macho men’ in advertising (Otnes, Zayer 2012).

In the analysed men’s magazine *Klubs*, there are advertisements that show a woman as a commodity and are instances of the sexual form of sexism. For example, in the advertisement for a lawnmower, stereotype is created by the picture and the text: a woman plays a decorative role in the picture that is accompanied by the text “Values that others only dream of!” (Figure 3). This corresponds to the findings by Uray and Burnaz about women playing a decorative role in advertisements (Uray, Burnaz 2003). Objectification – seeing a woman as an object occurs (Aizliegtais paņēmiens 2020).

Figure 3

The advertisement for a lawnmower



Source: *Klubs*, 2013, No. 4: 107.

Such attitude if frequently expressed by ads may become a norm in the process of normalization of values and attitudes in society (Zitmane 2021).

Discussions in the society

The society shows difference of opinion about stereotypical ads as reflected in various discussions or the absence of them that provide some insights for the current research.

In 2015, the associate professor of the University of Latvia Zitmane filed a complaint about the telephone company Tele2 new tariff plan advert “*Trīsreiz vairāk labu lietu*” [Three times more of good things] where good things were symbolized by three women craving attention of one man (Figure 4), but the Ethics Council of the Latvian Advertising Association did not consider that the advert violated ethical norms. The advertisers explained that the advertising message was about the new tariffs that included tripled amount of data. In order to convey the message the multiplication of characters was used. The main characters wife was multiplied to reflect the human desire for the increased presence of the loved ones, and it was intended in a figurative sense (Latvijas Reklāmas asociācijas Ētikas padome 2015), however the advert did not convey the message convincingly. The case was brought to the audience’s attention in the Latvian TV broadcast *Aizliegtais paņēmiens* (LTV1 24.02.2020).

Figure 4

The telephone company Tele2 new tariff plan advert



Thus, there was no significant change in the public opinion since 2012, as another advertisement, by the internet and television service provider ‘Baltcom’, that made use of a similar multimodal reference and objectified women in the picture by posing a question “*Vai ar vienu tiešām pietiek?*” [Is one really enough?] (Figure 5) while offering the internet and TV bundle, did not initiate public discussions in 2012–2013.

Figure 5

Use of a similar multimodal reference and objectified women while offering the internet and TV bundle



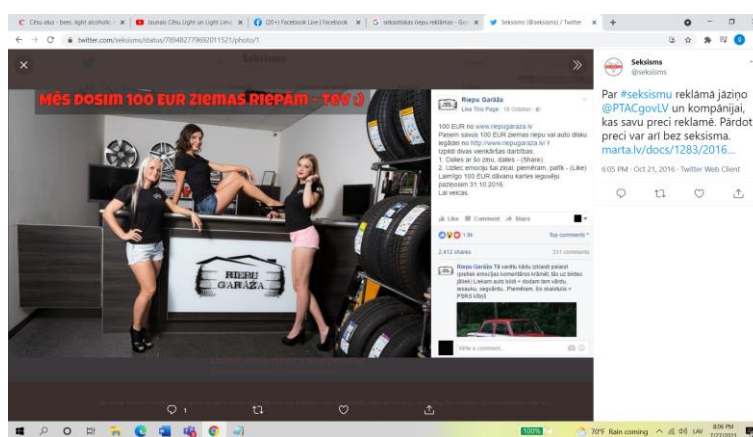
Source: Advert for the internet and TV bundle by the company “Baltcom” in 2012–2013.

The advert for a tire shop (Figure 6) caused discussions in the mass media in 2016: head of the MARTA Resource Centre for Women saw a discrimination against women there and filed a complaint with the Consumer Right Protection Centre, which did not find a serious breach of ethics in the advert. No elements of sexism were found in the ad by the chair person of the Latvian Advertising Association. And the manager of the tire shop argued that this advert was targeted to both men and women, who liked it as well, as women and cars were a sexy combination (Dzērve 2016). The advert is retro-sexist as it ties in with “the traditional trope of sexy-woman-and-a car” (Williamson 2003) employed globally by the car-makers of the 1960 / 1970, however the arguments reveal how deeply embedded this stereotype is in the Latvian society. In 1960 / 1970, Latvia was part of the Soviet Union where cars

were a rare commodity, thus some adverts that were made were targeted for the export markets. Latvia was producing mopeds, and the advert made for the foreign, Eastern Block, market for moped Riga-12 produced in the late 1970s / beginning of 1980s featured this cliché combination (Figure 7). The psychologists' explanation of the longevity of the stereotype's use in the car adverts is sex appeal that is effective in making impact on men's purchasing decisions (Lapiņa 2024). Thus, not only women are objectified in such adverts, but men are manipulated by them as well.

Figure 6

The advert for a tire shop



Source: <https://twitter.com/seksisms/status/789482779692011521/photo/1>

Figure 7

Moped Riga



Source: Glūdiņš 1983.

Using of female sexuality in advertisements by automotive industry to capture the attention of a male audience continues in the contemporary Baltic market. An example is adverts for the car audio equipment sellers Alphard Group Baltics (Figure 8). The company uses a less provocative picture of a female model on its home page (Figure 9), perhaps to deflect accusations of sexism in the virtual landscape. However, its website banner still plays with the dreams of the male audience triggered by the picture, the technique in advertising that is increasingly used for luxury products today (Amatulli et al. 2018).

Figure 8

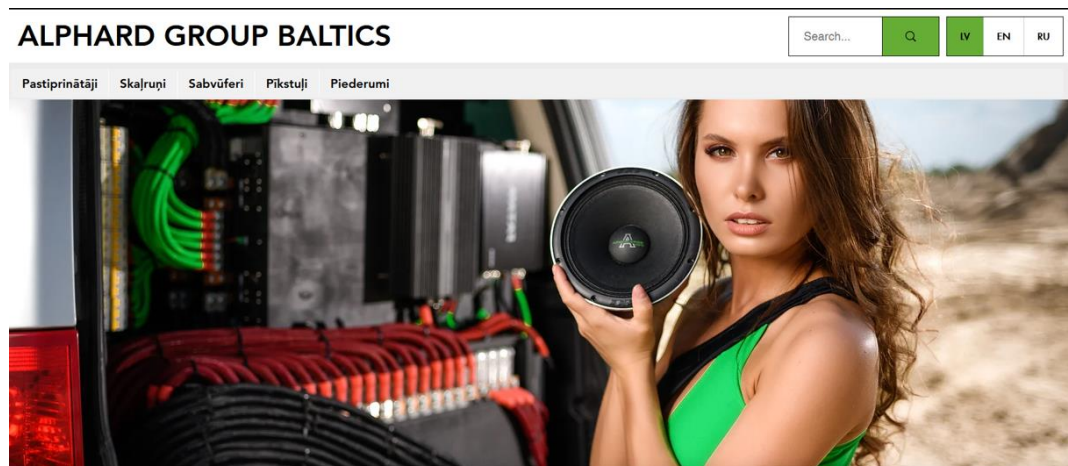
Adverts for the car audio equipment sellers Alphard Group Baltics



Source: Alphard Group Baltics advert 2024.

Figure 9

A female model on the home page of Alphard Group Baltics



Source: <https://www.alphard.lv/>.

However, there are adverts that were condemned for sexism after the complaints by the society and withdrawn. Among them is an ad for the energy drink XL with a title “*Līderis Rīgas naktsdzīvē*” [A leader of Riga night life] from 2015 that featured on the city buses a woman dressed in a corset kneeling in an erotic pose. The advert was considered by the Ombudsman office (Pakārkle 2021) and the Latvian Advertising Association (Aizliegtais paņēmieni 2020). The Ombudsman office found a non-compliance with the Article 5 (a) of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the section 3, paragraph (2) of the Advertising Law that states that “Only such announcements or visual representations as do not breach generally accepted ethical, humanitarian, morality, decency and propriety norms, shall be permitted to be included in advertising” (Saeima 2000; Pakārkle 2021). The advert was taken out.

The advertisement for Cēsu Light Lime beer “*Jaunais Cēsu Light un Light Lime. Ir varianti!*” [The new Cēsu Light and Light Lime. You got a choice!] and the advertisement for Cēsu Light beer featured sexist caps of the bottles. The featured caps had two types of images: of woman’s belly and of woman’s buttocks on them. In 2017, the MARTA Resource Centre for Women filed a complaint with the Ethics Council of the Latvian Advertising Association (Latvijas Reklāmas asociācijas Ētikas padome 2017), and after a while, the brewery *Cēsu alus* changed the sexist caps.

Another case caused a wide resonance in the society in summer 2019: the MARTA Centre and its Forum *Celies* found a promotion of violence and sexist behaviour in the Ghetto Games (sports events as street basketball, street gymnastics a.o. for young people) adverts with English slogans containing rude language “Some bitches are always ready for opportunities” and “A real woman never let her man go to Ghetto Games hungry or horny”. The slogans were translated into Latvian with omissions, they did not have the rude references: “*Dažas ir vienmēr gatavas jaunām iespējām*” [Some are always ready for new opportunities] and “*Īstas sievietes nekad nepalaidīs savus vīriešus izsalkušus uz Ghetto Games*” [Real women will never let their men go hungry to Ghetto Games]. The posters also contained rather violent scenes (Jauns.lv/LETA 2019). The Ombudsman of Latvia considered the case and found that the adverts did not comply with the section 3, paragraph (2) of the Advertising Law (Saeima 2000). They were also considered not in line with the section 50, paragraph 1 of the Law on the Protection of the Children’s Rights as well as the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (Pakārkle 2021). The organizers of Ghetto Games withdrew the offensive adverts. Thus, the discussions in the society may have a positive impact on advertising trends.

Non-stereotypical adverts

The analysed advertisements show the change of the attitude towards women. A non-stereotypical ad of the LMT home internet with a leading female scientist physicist Duncie was aired in 2020.² Such non-stereotypical ads help to reconsider the stereotypical view on labour division. Construction of the images of successful women in non-stereotypical roles in adverts is based on a 'femvertising/ appeal, a global trend demonstrated by brands marketing empowerment to women (Kapoor, Munjal 2019; Tschla 2020).

The company Dove continues to showcase a more inclusive look upon beauty (see Ločmele 2021 about Dove's campaign in 2020). Its 2022 Body Wash advert (TV3, 23.06.2022, 20:57) shows women of different ages and colour, also ones with a scarred skin, underscoring that every skin is beautiful and gracefully reflects the woman's life experience. A positive influence of the Dove advertisements is also noted by psychologist Zakriževska: "Dove adverts break stereotypes entrenched in society by showing that women need not necessarily have a perfect body, but men – be superheroes" (Zakriževska 2011, p. 78).

The fashion company's Lindex underwear advertising campaign "Your invisible support" (TV3, 16.05.2022, 21:46) features women of different ages, sizes and race. It shows respect to women at different stages and moments of their life.

A fight against stereotypes and an example of another modern brand responsibility (Champlin et al. 2019) trend, 'dadvertising' (Tschla 2020), is demonstrated by diaper producer Pampers. An advertising text in the Latvian portal Delfi reads: "Now it will be much easier for the dads to change diapers for their children, as it is very easy, besides, they know that they will not interfere with a child's play. ... Diapers will suit any dad's skills. ... No way to make a mistake. And nothing will disturb the important moments that parents spend with their child" (Delfi Life 2016). Such advertisements correspond to the view expressed by Otnes that men in adverts need to be shown in the roles of a husband, a dad and a handyman, as these are responsibilities they have in real life (Otnes, Zayer 2012).

Thus, advertising plays an important part not only in the reproduction, but also in the change of stereotypes. Gender role stereotypes can be changed by a non-stereotypical gender role advertising (Chu et al. 2016). It refers to car manufacturers as well. They try to introduce a different take on women in their adverts, as the analysed material shows. Kia uses female athlete, 2022 Latvian Tennis Champion Semeņistaja's endorsement "*Lai gūtu panākumus, jābūt kustībā*" [To be successful, you have to be on the move] as the headline for Kia advert adaptation for the Latvian market (Santa, 2023, No. 7: 5) which echoes Kia's slogan: "Movement that inspires". Thus, femvertising evolves diffusing criticism that it fails to highlight women's athletic or career success (Tschla 2020).

The fact that male models endorse traditionally female-oriented products also indicates to gradual social changes in gender role stereotypes. A woman and a man promote the washing detergent Persil Expert Duo-Caps in the analysed women's magazine *Ieva* (Ieva 2012, No. 36: 41). Beko home appliances are advertised by and for men and the whole family both on the Internet and TV³. Washing powder Vanish⁴ and Colour Catcher sheets⁵ are endorsed by male experts.

The change of gender roles is mainly observed in the translated advertisements, however, some local advertisements also show this trend: the advertisements produced in Latvia for the supermarket Rimi advertise Cleaning Day products by both a man and a woman cleaning a house (Figure 10).

² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8gF4fL_2CHE

³ <https://beko.lv/lv/company/who-we-are>; TV3, 03.08.2021, 12:35

⁴ TV3, 23.07.2021, 8:52; TV3, 28.03.2021, 21:07; TV3, 15.05.2021, 21:18; TV3, 18.02.2021, 21:27

⁵ TV3, 23.07.2021, 9:16

Dadvertisements by local producers (e.g., pharmaceutical company Grindex) featuring men in a father's role appear in the magazine for women Ieva as well (Ieva 2019, No. 46: 33)

Men appear in non-stereotypical ads in a humorous way as in the advert for Somat 4in1 dishwasher detergent (Figure 11). In more stereotypical ads, men are shown as less competent in home chores, with a woman providing advice like in a Beko dishwasher commercial where a woman shows that a dishwasher uses water more economically compared to hand washing dishes that is done by a man (Figure 12). These social images (Williamson 2003) of the male gender are still slightly unconvincing, and the Beko advert depicts some tension of change by the woman taking an expert role and the man looking mildly offended.

Figure 10

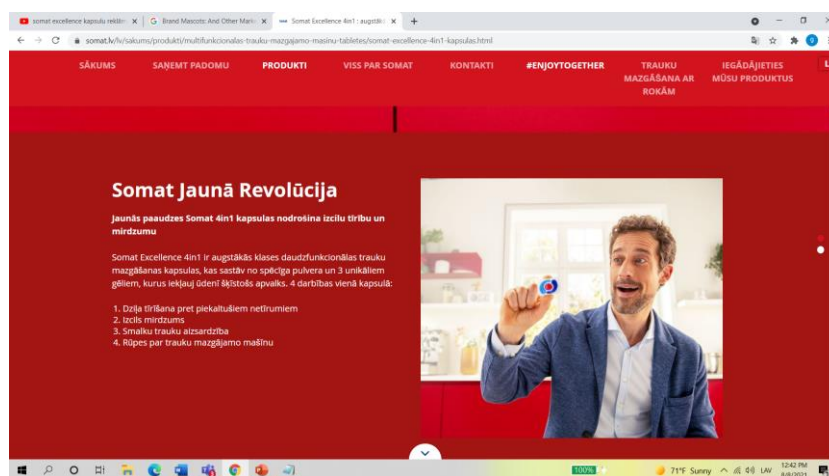
The supermarket Rimi advertises Cleaning Day products



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tPA1cm9ES7Q>

Figure 11

the advert for Somat 4in1 dishwasher detergent



Source: <https://www.sodat.lv/lv/sakums/produkti/multifunkcionalas-trauku-mazgajamo-masinu-tabletes/somat-excellence-4in1-kapsulas.html>

Figure 12

Beko dishwasher advertisement



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2pU5cjxbrns>

The analysed men's magazine *Klubs* also shows a change in the attitude towards women in advertisements. A woman is shown as a businesswoman, for example, a manager of a growing company in the advertisement under the headline "*Pienācis laiks paplašināt jūsu uzņēmuma darbību?*" [Is it time to increase your business?].⁶ Several months earlier magazine *Klubs* published a similar advertisement with a picture of a man.⁷ The fact that the two adverts have appeared in the same men's magazine shows increasing social status of a woman, men and women are more equal in these adverts. The image of a business woman is gaining ground. Intertextuality with the above adverts demonstrates the advert under the headline "*Drīzumā biznesam atkal kļūs par šauru*" [It will soon be too little space for your business again] in 2020 (*Klubs* 2020, No.7: 5) with a picture of a woman in a bright colour business suit in an uncomfortable pose due to too little space in the room. Thus, in line with the view by Zakriževska, the stereotype of a business woman was forming (Zakriževska 2011).

An effort to overcome more rigid stereotypes is also made by Baltic Pride 2021 advertisements: "*Vienam Martēni, otram Labutēni, un miers virs zemes*" [Dr. Martens for one, Louboutin's for another, and peace on earth] is a reference to very different boots and shoes and their different wearers as well as a biblical allusion. The language that is used is also very important, as here the two trade marks are made to rhyme. The Latvian version, *Martēni*, is less known, as usually these boots are called *docs*, and also *Mārtini* or *Doki Mārtini* among their wearers. The slogan of the Pride "*Nāc, kā esi!*" is a translation of the English "Come as You Are!" (<https://balticpride.org>) that is an allusion to Nirvana's song with the same title encouraging people to be themselves (Huber 2021). As Western society becomes more inclusive on gender identity (Liu 2022) Latvia demonstrates the same trend, however not always consistently. And even if the change is present in the society it has not fully found its way into the mainstream advertising yet. Positive shifts are mainly observed in reducing what Williamson calls social sexism in advertising (in work and home environment) (Williamson 2003).

⁶ *Klubs* 2018, No.11: 21

⁷ *Klubs* 2018, No.6: 39

Depiction of men in adverts

Idealization and erotization of men's bodies exist as well, but the intensity is different and the control and perception of oneself as an individuality in men's portrayal is more present than in the sexualised images of women (Zitmane 2021). However, according to MARTA Centre public relations specialist Tentere, men are represented 4 times less than women in sexist adverts (Tentere 2021).

The analysed women's magazine *Ieva* includes very few examples of objectification of men in the adverts. One of them is an advert for the magazine *Ieva* saying that you can probably manage without a man on Wednesdays, but not without the advertised magazine (Figure 13). The advert pictures a naked male body and can serve as an illustration of reverse sexism and can feed the argument of sex wars in advertising posited by Williamson (Williamson 2003).

Figure 13

An advert for the magazine *Ieva*



Source: *Ieva* 2015, Nr. 10: 64.

Adverts in men's magazine *Klubs* show men as very masculine more frequently, relating masculinity to dangerous activities that produce adrenaline, thus the advert for the telephone company LMT (Figure 14) is made to break stereotypes of male clerks as men in business suits rather picturing

a clerk as pursuing his dream, being passionate. The ad encourages to trust your business to passionate people like Gvido, a business client manager at the LMT.

Figure 14

The advert for the telephone company LMT



Source: Klubs 2021, No.8: 21.

However, there are adverts in the men's magazine *Klubs* depicting men engaged in activities traditionally considered as female, for example, knitting (Klubs 2019, No.11: 9).

The depiction of men is changing due to the changes in gender stereotypes: they are decreasing in Western society (Liu 2022), Latvia is starting to show a similar trend.

Stereotypes in the regions of Latvia

The change of stereotypes is rather slow in the regions where one can find examples of cultivation of stereotypes. For example, billboards from Rēzekne in the Eastern part of Latvia, one for a beauty

parlor (Figure 15), the other two for a lingerie store at the entrance of a shopping mall with a note on the door “*Laipni lūdzam!*” [Welcome] (Figure 16) demonstrate still existing objectification of women. A rather low standard of the first billboard is also demonstrated by a grammar error in its text, “*Individuāla pieeja pie katra klienta*”, translated literally [Individual approach at every client] (Figure 15).

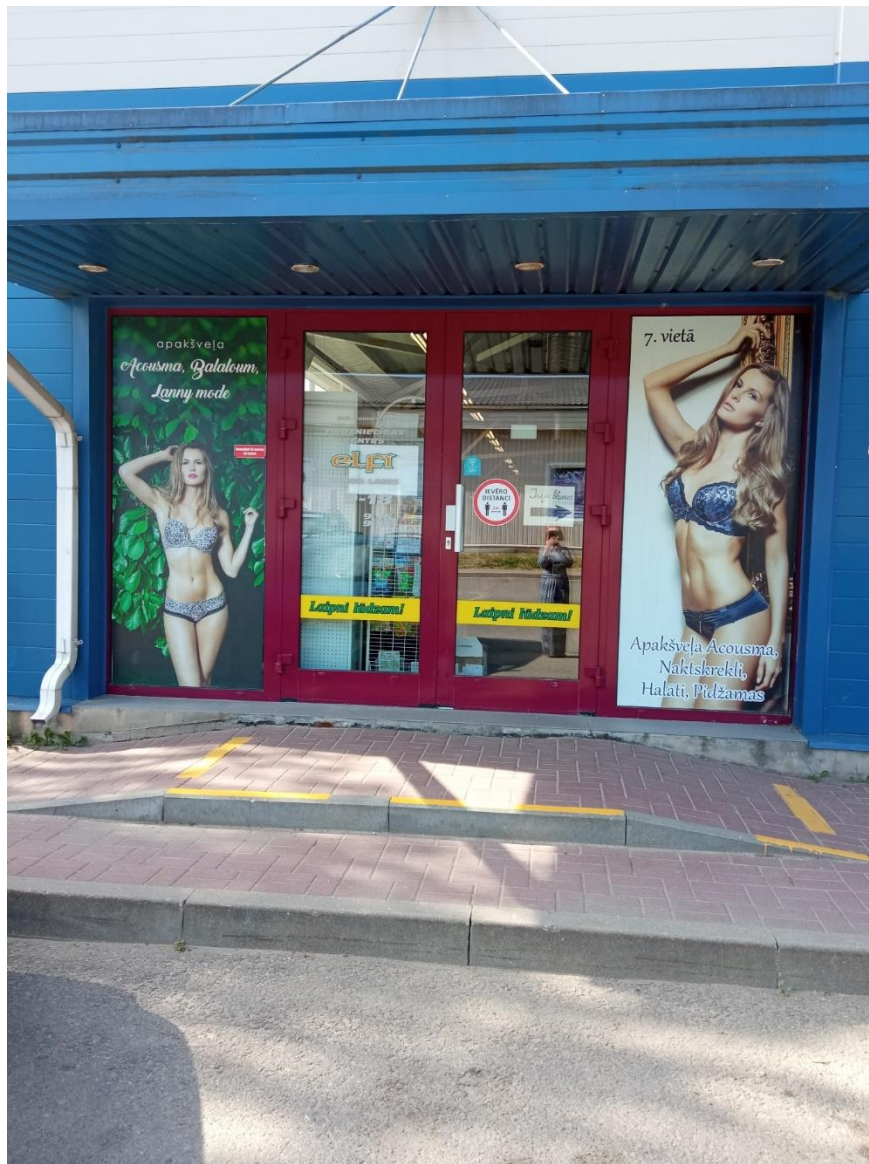
Figure 15

Billboard for a beauty parlor from Rēzekne in the Eastern part of Latvia

Source: Rēzekne 2021.

Figure 16

Billboard for a lingerie store from Rēzekne in the Eastern part of Latvia



Source: Rēzekne 2021.

Another example of the objectification of women found in the regions is a billboard advertising a timber shop in Ogre (Figure 17).

Figure 17

Billboard advertising a timber shop in Ogre



Source: Ogre 2022.

The more stereotypical picturing of women in the regions was noted also in the discussion about gender stereotypes and sexism in advertisements organised by the Ombudsman office in the summer of 2021 (Facebook 2021). The situation slowly improves, for example, the billboard for the timber shop (Figure 15) was removed in 2023.

On the existence of good stereotypes

The question arises if there are good stereotypes. The UK ban on Harmful Gender Stereotypes allows ads that satirize gender stereotypes, ads with innocent depictions, for example, of men repairing home or women engaged in shopping if there are no value judgements (Perrigo 2019). The chairperson of the Latvian Advertising Association Liepiņa refers to the UK experience in the attitude that some stereotypes do not bring harm: if the men are traditionally depicted as the ones doing some specific crafts, not forbidding the women to do the same, and women sewing, decorating home, gardening (Facebook 2021). On the contrary, the MARTA Centre considers that there are no good stereotypes, they do harm and can provoke violence (Tentere 2021). One may say that stereotypes in advertising are unavoidable, but should be used with caution. As Burkeman reports, stereotypes are “bad even when – perhaps especially when – they're "good"” (Burkeman 2012). Research by Kay et al. (2013) demonstrates that “positive stereotypes – though often treated as harmless, flattering and innocuous – may represent an especially insidious means of promoting antiquated beliefs about social groups” (Kay et al. 2013).

edia literacy and stereotypes

In general, there are issues with media literacy in Latvia – the ability of people to recognize stereotypical content and its potential negative impact. In October 2020, the Ministry of Culture carried out a media literacy research. It contained a question how often a person has recognized stereotypes in the advertisements: age, nationality, and also gender stereotypes. From 1001 respondents in the age group from 15 to 74 only 17% answered that they had never noticed any gender related stereotypes, and 15% answered that they notice gender stereotypes very often in media content (not only in advertisements). There was no difference between male and female respondents in the answers about noticing the content (Latvijas Fakti 2020). This reveals the facts about how much society notices it, not the fact how much stereotypes are present in the media. There is a vicious circle – the presence of stereotypical ads strengthens such stereotypes, and the tolerance of the society towards stereotypical ads fosters their production. The relative majority of the society, according to Feldmane (2021), tolerates such advertisements.

There is a question of how much such advertisements are really present. The Consumer Rights Protection Centre considers that there is no avalanche of such advertisements (Facebook 2021), but the MARTA Centre – that there are many of them (Tentere 2021). In our material we found that 7% out of 462 analysed adverts in the women's magazine *Ieva* use stereotypes and 6% out of 379 analysed adverts use stereotypes in the men's magazine *Klubs*.

Translated adverts

In the majority of the analysed cases when the source advert contained a stereotype it was retained in translation.

To gain the insight into how translations are made we carried out several surveys of translators working with marketing texts in 2020–2022. The surveys revealed that there are instances when the client requires the usage of gender-neutral language. In one case, the requirement to address both genders in translation was explained: advertisements for dolls, cars, robots should be translated as produced for children, not for girls or boys, avoiding the view that girls play only with dolls or boys – with cars or robots. And the addressees for Barbie doll adverts need to be addressed either as children or all admirers of Barbie as the dolls are collected by adults as well. As Latvian has two grammatical genders, masculine and feminine, such instructions by the client are welcome though provided rarely. Lack of instructions, as revealed the surveys, can be a source of confusion for a translator: should a cosmetic product be addressed to women only or to men as well, because men also use such products, as, for example, a tonal cream. Translators also noted gradual improvement in advertising as regards gender stereotypes answering that “Earlier there were advertisements with slogans addressed to one gender only, but today there are fewer of such” and “It seems that situation is better today, a specific gender is not highlighted in marketing texts”.

In the actual translations of the advertisements with stereotypes in the analysed magazines the strategies as equivalence, modulation, word-for-word translation, adaptation, transcreation and non-translation were used.

For example, in the advert for the Riga Black Balsam Cherry in the women's magazine *Ieva* a play on words “Ar odziņu” is used (Figure 18). It means, literally, “with a berry”, and is used as an idiomatic expression in Latvian that embodies taking something that exists and making it greater. Equivalence is used in the English translation of the advertisement because it makes use of the idiom *With a cherry on top* (Figure 19) with a similar meaning thus retaining the play on words as the balsam has cherry flavour. The language helps to create the stereotype as the woman can be identified with the promised cherry on top.

Figure 18

The advert for the Riga Black Balsam Cherry in the women's magazine *Ieva*



ALKOHOLA LIETOŠANAI IR NEGATĪVA IETEKME, TĀ PĀRDOŠANA,
IEGĀDĀŠANĀS UN NODOŠANA NEPIĻNGADĪGĀM PERSONĀM IR AIZLIEGTA

Source: Ieva 2018, No. 14: 15.

Figure 19

The English translation of the previous advertisement



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-eLiGqYQUhc>

In another example, the advertisement for Innex washing machine, a promise is given in Latvian: *revolūcija veļas mazgāšanā* [a revolution in laundry] (Figure 20).

Figure 20

The advertisement for Innex washing machine



Source: Ieva 2014, No. 14: 2.

The same headline in German contains a different statement: *Innex, die Revolution 'ehemanntauglich'!* [A revolution in what a husband can do] (Figure 21).

Figure 21

The same headline in German



Source: [Indesit XWA 71483X W EU Autonome Charge avant 7kg 1400tr/min](https://www.indesit.co.uk/Landings/Do-it-together-3)

The German headline breaks away from stereotypes and chimes in with what the producer's Indesit UK homepage stated: “Despite great strides in gender equality, most of the housework is still being done by women. Both men and women tend to stick to the jobs they know – often for fear of getting things wrong. But what if housework was so simple that anyone could take on a task and be confident of great results? That’s what Indesit is ensuring with its brilliantly reliable appliances!”.⁸ All of the UK webpage content was based on the man taking more active part in housework. In the Latvian advertisement this connection is lost with the man’s arm in the picture remaining the only link with the washing done by men. The text in Latvian, German and English reads “2 seconds, 1 press, 0 problems” and is translated word-for-word.

An untranslated Ray-Ban advertisement from Never Hide campaign is targeted at a younger Latvian generation. It plays on the thought that the most fashionable thing is you. The sunglasses make one stand out from the crowd and be at the centre of attention, be attractive. Applying a multimodal discourse analysis, we can see that for those who do not know English, the words play a decorative role accompanying the picture in which a woman leans towards a man with admiration (Figure 22) and embodies a stereotypical role of a beautiful decoration.

⁸ <https://www.indesit.co.uk/Landings/Do-it-together-3> Accessed 10.01.2020

Figure 22

An untranslated Ray-Ban advertisement from Never Hide campaign



Source: Ieva 2015, No. 51-52: 49.

However, breaking away from stereotypes in translated adverts was observed in more recent cases. A feminized translation of the narrator's voice is used in the advert for Volkswagen ID.5 in 2022. A male voice is used as a presenter in the original advert.⁹ The shortened adaptation in Latvian uses a female voice as a presenter.¹⁰ The choice of the male voice in the source text is probably motivated by the opinion that male voices are more authoritative and both men and women looking for cars tend to trust a male voice more than a female voice (ESB Advertising 2018). Speaking about gender stereotypes, it is considered that they play a role in the decisions about using a male or a female voice as a presenter as people have a nearly instinctual response to masculine or feminine voices (ibid.). The

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uTNxbjazqkI>

¹⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T6eGWABCKx4>

choice of the female presenter in the Latvian translation is more logical because a woman is driving the advertised car in the commercial and the viewer can relate to the driving experience as presented by a female voice more naturally.

The translators working with marketing material rely on their professional skills, specialised knowledge and wit and usually translate texts irrespective of the gender of the target audience. However, some respondents also mentioned that it was still easier to understand one's own gender and it would be more difficult for a woman to understand some specific products for men, for example, hygiene products, specific men's work footwear and clothing. Similar views were expressed about translation of adverts for specific women's beauty and hygiene products. In all mentioned cases the concern was the specific language that would express exact feelings, emotions, mood of the target audience. However, the prevailing view was that the translators who are masters of their trade can deal with these issues irrespective of the products' target consumers.

Conclusions

A change towards a decreasing use of gender stereotypes is observed in advertising in Latvia, however the decrease is not sharp. On the one hand, this might be explained by the observations that advertising is rather slow to adjust its communication practices and tends to use some stereotypes that seem to be overcome by the society thus lagging the societal norms (Plakoyiannaki, Zotos 2009). On the other hand, examples of a woman playing a decorative role both in the men's magazine *Klubs* and in the women's magazine *Ieva*, indicate to still relatively strong roots of this stereotype. And, with some noteworthy exceptions, stereotypical ads glorifying a beautiful body still feed a beauty industry, particularly in the regions. The study has revealed some differences in the portrayal of genders in the men's magazine *Klubs* and the women's magazine *Ieva* with both magazines showing some pronounced examples of objectification of the opposite gender, and the men's magazine picturing men as athletes pursuing traditionally masculine sports. However, the women's magazine contained adverts portraying women stereotypically as beautiful decorations as well thus indicating to acquiescence of stereotypical roles at least by part of the target audience.

However, the way how advertisements are created has changed in the business environment of today's Latvia. The advertising industry has also developed and the sexism in the ads is not tolerated by the members of the Latvian Advertising Association according to its chairperson Liepiņa (Facebook 2021). But there is a need for more pressure and non-tolerance of the society (Zitmane 2021), as Lebedev-Lubimov has stated, "Everything depends on the society's position towards advertising" (Lebedev-Lubimov 2002, p. 14).

The impact of the advertising relates to the 'mold' argument: creating the values in the society. The society needs to be educated about the issues. The education of the young people would be the way how to overcome the problem of stereotypes (Facebook 2021), social media play a role, there are groups that share their views about stereotypical ads, but the role of such groups need to increase even more so that they convincingly push advertisers into withdrawing the problematic ads. Gender stereotypes impact negatively both genders, because they result not only in negative outcomes for women but they provide unrealistic expectations for men as well (Moss-Racusin, Good 2015).

Advertising language plays a role in creating stereotypes along with the images used. There is a trend to use a more inclusive language as demonstrated by the answers to the questionnaire by translators working in the field of advertising, however instances of gender biased language have been revealed. The issue of gender biases in advertising language – written or spoken – deserves further investigation.

Living in stereotypes also refers to the clients ordering translation of advertisements, and even to translators themselves. The society has produced stereotypes and the society has the ability to change

them (Pakārkle 2021). The war in Ukraine has partly taken the focus away from stereotypes in advertising in Latvia. But the topical question for today remains, as the Baltic Pride advertisement put it in 2021: “Choose, what we are – **discrimination** or love nation?”

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