

## CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 7.1 INTRODUCTION

Advertising is an important communication tool for organisations. It facilitates brand recognition, and as such, it assists in brand differentiation. It allows the organisation to set itself apart from its competitors and assists the consumer in identifying the brand. Advertising allows the consumer to associate with the brand and link to its benefits. The visual elements of advertisements and commercials serve various functions, among others to create an image of the typical consumer of the brand.

The visuals include the character that features in the advertisement or commercial. This character should facilitate the link between the brand and the target consumer. Female portrayals in advertising assist the female audience in relating to the advertisement or commercial, and thereby increase the likelihood that the consumer will associate positively with the advertised brand. Women in advertisements and commercials serve as representatives of the brand. As such, it is important that they portray the desired image.

In South Africa, the female market consists of a variety of women of various ethnic origins, including Africans, coloureds, Indians and whites. The ethnic diversity of this market requires marketers to ascertain the unique needs that exist in the diverse market. The correct message then needs to be developed - based on the target audience's needs.

The present study has aimed to investigate the manner in which women are portrayed in South African magazine advertisements and television commercials. The primary objective was to determine the role portrayals of women. Apart from the primary objective, several other objectives were also formulated. The secondary objectives included examining the overall representation of women in all advertisements and commercials, the nature of the visuals, the ethnic representation, advertising appeals, celebrity/non-celebrity status, multiple-role portrayals in one advertisement or commercial, product/service categories featuring women, the product/service categories advertised for the different roles, as well

as identifying new roles. All these objectives were achieved and the findings were reported in Chapter 6.

To reach the study objectives, a content analysis was conducted on samples of magazine advertisements and television commercials. The content analysis research method was suitable to the objectives of the study, as it allows for the analysis of the visuals in advertisements and commercials based on the guidelines and prescriptions outlined in the codebook. This method has also been used extensively in analysing gender roles in advertising in previous research studies.

The thesis commenced with an overview of the study in Chapter 1; this was followed in Chapter 2 by an outline of the promotional elements of marketing, as they pertain to the study. Chapter 3 presented a discussion on the development of creative strategies, including the process involved in creating advertising messages. The literature on female portrayals in magazine and television advertising was summarised in Chapter 4, providing a background to the role categories used in the study.

The research method followed was described in the next chapter (Chapter 5), including the process applied in a content analysis, as well as the sampling procedures applicable to the study.

Chapter 6 presented the research findings of the study, including a summary of the pilot study that was conducted before the final study. The results of the final study were described, and a discussion was provided on the findings. Each research objective was discussed, based on the findings of the analysis. The reliability statistics achieved in the study were then described.

Chapter 7 concludes the study and presents a summary of the main research findings on all the variables. This includes conclusions on the main results, as well as the implications of the findings. Thereafter, the limitations of the study are outlined and some suggestions for further research are discussed. The chapter concludes with a summary.

## 7.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The study examined different variables (as mentioned previously) in order to reach the set objectives. Conclusions were drawn, based on the respective research findings. The implications thereof will be presented in this section. The discussion to follow is structured according to the research objectives.

### 7.2.1 Role portrayals

A summary of the roles portrayed by women in advertisements and commercials is presented in Table 7.1.

**Table 7.1 Roles portrayed by women in advertisements and commercials**

Role	Magazine advertisements		Television commercials	
	n	%	N	%
Career woman	9	4.3%	45	11.7%
Homemaker	2	1.0%	21	5.5%
Mannequin	35	16.6%	5	1.3%
Mother	5	2.4%	27	7.0%
Physically decorative	57	<b>27.0%</b>	24	6.2%
Product user	21	10.0%	95	<b>24.7%</b>
Romantic	11	5.2%	9	2.3%
Sex object	9	4.3%	3	0.8%
Social	8	3.8%	74	19.2%
Other	30	14.2%	50	13.0%
Background element	24	11.4%	32	8.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>385</b>	<b>100%</b>

#### 7.2.1.1 *Role portrayals in magazine advertisements*

Table 7.1 shows that the woman portrayed as physically decorative was the role most frequently found in magazine advertisements, preceding the mannequin role by a substantial margin (27% versus 16.6%). A typical example of the woman as a physically decorative portrayal is the advertisement for *Dark 'n Lovely* hair products, where the character in the advertisement is depicted with perfectly sleek hair – a desirable result for the consumer. An example of a mannequin is featured in apparel designer *Guess's* advertisements.

The findings indicate that women are likely to be stereotyped in magazine advertising on the grounds of their physical appearance. The results suggest that the woman as a decorative creature remains an important part of South African magazine advertising. Women's physical beauty appears to be an integral part of their portrayed value. Decorative portrayals may also reinforce the social demand on women to be physically "perfect", which holds implications in terms of consumer socialisation (learning of gender roles) as many young women strive toward the physical ideal portrayed in advertising (Napoli & Murgolo-Poore, 2003:60). The question arises on how the prevalence of women "judged" on their physical attractiveness impacts on female consumers.

The *Female Nation Survey, Women24* (not dated), reports that 41 per cent of South African urban women would consider having plastic surgery. Plastic surgery is generally associated with dissatisfaction with some physical characteristic; it is possible that the constant portrayals of physically "perfect" females in advertising have had an impact on body dissatisfaction. Baird and Grieve (2006:116) assert that women who are exposed to physical ideals in media negatively compare themselves to the ideal and that leads to dissatisfaction with their own looks.

The findings of the current study are similar to previous international research studies on the decorative nature of women in magazines. It seems that women in advertisements are more likely to be portrayed as physically decorative figures than as skilful individuals or achievers. The career woman, for example, was portrayed in only 4.3 per cent of advertisements in the present study.

The mannequin portrayal was the second most prevalent portrayal in magazines. The mannequin is typically associated with fashion apparel, and as such, features in advertisements for apparel retailers, such as *Edgars* and *Truworts*. The mannequin was frequently found in a previous South African study (Rudansky, 1991:169). Its prevalence is to be expected, as many of the magazines in the sample were women's magazines; these typically contain advertisements for fashion clothes and accessories.

The mannequin character needs to portray a suitable image for the advertised brand, and advertisers of fashion brands should select mannequin characters that express the desired

image. For example, *Guess* features a young, vivacious woman when advertising their jeans, thereby associating the brand successfully with vivacity.

The woman portrayed as a product user was found in 10 per cent of the advertisements. An example of a woman depicted as a product user is an advertisement for *Aquartz* bottled water, where the woman is depicted as drinking the water. Depicting product use allows the audience to identify usage situations and link product use to their own circumstances. The advertisement for *Garnier Pure* skin products depicts a series of photographs indicating a step-by-step process in applying the brand.

The final result is a clean, clear complexion. This advertisement enables the potential buyer of *Garnier Pure* to identify with the character's consumption problem (problem skin), and her eventual problem solution (clear skin). This may create a sense of ownership of the brand, possibly increasing purchase intent, as the consumer can imagine her own use of the brand.

The romantic role, along with the sex object, career woman, social being, homemaker and mother were not frequently depicted. An example of the woman in a romantic role is featured in the advertisement for *Unforgivable Woman* fragrance, where the woman is being embraced by a man. The woman as a social being is depicted effectively in the *Old Mutual* advertisement featuring two laughing women jumping into a swimming pool, clearly enjoying themselves. Advertising that features the woman in a romantic or social role (thereby interacting with other people) generally focuses on the social needs of the consumer.

The social needs of consumers are satisfied through interaction, albeit in a romantic or a social manner. The low levels of portrayal of women in the romantic and social roles indicates that magazine advertisers may perceive the social needs of the female consumer to be secondary to their other needs, or that these needs are better addressed by other portrayals, such as the physically decorative role (which addresses the need to "belong" in terms of an appearance that is socially acceptable).

Marketers need to conduct research in order to determine the most prominent needs of their target consumers. If marketers know these needs, they can offer products aimed at

satisfying the identified needs of the target audience. Furthermore, they can portray the need-satisfying properties of the products in their advertisements.

Women as sex objects were seldom (4%) portrayed. An example of such a portrayal is featured in an advertisement for *Onde* perfume, in which the apparently naked woman is staring seductively at the camera. The low incidence of women as sex objects indicates that advertisers are refraining from featuring over-sexualised images of women. In a study on consumer perceptions of sex appeals in advertising, Sawang (2010:181) reports that women found sexual content in advertising to be less effective and less acceptable than men did.

It may be suggested that advertisers have come to the realisation that female consumers may not view sexualised images in a positive manner, and may therefore respond negatively to advertising that contains such images. It may also be argued that the South African culture is more conservative in nature, and that the modest depictions of women in advertising reflect the culture of the nation. Religious values may also play a role in the images that are deemed acceptable. It is important that advertisers consider the suitability of featuring sexualised images in advertisements, as the target audience may take offence and that may lead to negative brand associations. If an advertiser is considering featuring a sex object in an advertisement, pre-testing before launching is advisable - in order to determine whether the advertisement will convey the desired message.

The career woman was not frequently depicted (only 4%), which is inconsistent with social reality, as women make up half of the work force in South Africa (Van Klaveren, Tijdens, Hughie-Williams & Martin, 2009:5). When the low frequency of the career woman portrayal in the current study is considered in relation to South African employment statistics, the question arises why female characters are not depicted as career women more often.

It appears that magazine advertisers follow international trends in focusing on a woman's physically decorative image rather than on her professional image. This result signifies a rather limited view of the modern working woman; a view that is not truly representative of reality. Sim and Suying (2001:488) studied the perceptions of women toward female portrayals in advertisements, and they report that female respondents believe advertisements do not convey "the true lifestyles" of females.

Marketers need to take into account the reality of today's modern woman. As a career person, much of her time is taken up by work. As such, her career is probably a large part of her world, and if advertisers want to connect with the career woman's circumstances, they will need to portray this important facet. An example of an advertiser linking the busy career woman to their brand is found in the *Eno* antacid advertisement (a product that aims at providing fast relief from indigestion). This advertisement features a woman dressed in a business suit.

The roles that were the least represented in the study were homemakers and mothers. These domestic roles are generally associated with traditional female roles, and were found in advertisements such as *Wellington's* sauces (a woman is depicted as cooking – a homemaker) and *Dark 'n Lovely Kids* hair relaxer. In the latter advertisement the woman is depicted with a child whose hair she appears to be styling - a motherly role.

The low results for the roles of homemaker and mother suggest that advertisers are moving away from depicting women in traditional female roles in magazines. The present findings are in line with those of the *Female Nation Survey* (Women24, not dated), which reported that only three per cent of women surveyed classify themselves as homemakers. It appears that marketers should focus on other portrayals of women that are more representative of current social realities.

In a study previously completed on magazine advertising in South Africa, Rudansky (1991:162) found depictions of mothers to be the second most prevalent role portrayal (after the mannequin). Mothers were depicted in few cases in the present study (2.4%). The results of the present study indicate that modern advertising reflects the contemporary way of life, where women are not limited to household and nurturing roles. Nevertheless, 52 per cent of South African mothers are single parents, which mean that they have the sole responsibility for their family's wellbeing, and as such probably make most household decisions (De Wet, 2010). The role of the mother may therefore still be a relevant part of the modern woman's life. Perhaps marketers should consider this, particularly in marketing products for household consumption.

Women in “other” roles - and as background elements - were relatively prevalent in magazine advertisements. “Other” roles were portrayals that were not commonly found in previous research. Some of these may represent new roles, which are discussed in Section 7.2.9.1. The new roles, in particular, represent a contribution to the field of female portrayals in advertising.

Women as background elements (non-functional roles) were frequently featured when considering the many roles in which women can be portrayed. This implies that advertisers often place a woman or women in an advertisement or commercial without the intention of portraying a clearly definable role. This may cause the advertisement or commercial to lose its effectiveness, as people identify better with images to which they can relate, increasing thereby the differentiation of brands and enabling the consumer to form a more clearly defined picture of the brand. This view is supported by Heckler and Childers (1992:479) who assert that relevant information is better recognised and recalled. Therefore a relevant (identifiable) image will be better remembered, leading to increased advertising effectiveness.

Clear associations between brands and specific roles are advisable, as this allows consumers to connect with the brand. Consequently, the use of non-functional portrayals (background elements) indicates a lack of clear differentiation, as the depictions are not definite and do not allow a distinct association between the brands and female roles.

The findings on role portrayals suggest that the stereotyping of women as objects of external beauty is prevalent in the South African magazine sample, as women were likely to be portrayed in roles that symbolise physical attractiveness. Magazines tend to have gender-related target audiences, and this possibly plays a role in the depictions featured. Many of the most popular magazines (which were included in the study) are aimed at female audiences.

Stereotyping of women based on their physical beauty may arguably strengthen consumer learning of limited gender-based stereotypes, particularly as these depictions occur in media aimed at women. Moreover, such stereotypes may negatively impact on women’s self-images (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009:1429).

### 7.2.1.2 Role portrayals in television commercials

In television commercials the most frequent portrayal was that of a product user, followed by the social being. The results suggest that women are not frequently portrayed in traditional stereotypes in South African television advertising, as these roles are not widely considered to be traditional for women. As stated in Section 7.2.1.1, depicting actual product use enables the target audience to imagine their own application of the product. This may facilitate identification with the advertised brand.

The medium of television allows for clear demonstrations of product use, further enhancing the suggestion that the product will be effective when used by the audience. An example of a woman depicted as a product user is the commercial for *Dove* beauty soap. In the commercial, the woman uses the *Dove* soap to wash one side of her face; another brand being used to wash the other side of her face. The result is that the *Dove* brand visibly achieves better results.

The prominent portrayal of women in social roles indicates the importance of women's social motives, or "belonging" needs. The nature of television as an advertising medium allows richer imaging than printed advertisements, and women enjoying social activities can be vividly portrayed in commercials. This allows advertisers to depict shared enjoyment of the advertised brand, linking thereby to female consumers' social motives. The prevalence of the social being in South African commercials indicates that advertisers perceive a higher importance to depicting social activities and women as socialisers in this medium.

Women portrayed as mothers or homemakers were not dominant in television commercials. This once again indicates a movement away from depicting women in traditional (home-related) female stereotypes. The findings suggest that advertisers take cognisance of the social changes in South Africa, as female roles have changed from the traditional to a more modern outlook. This includes, for example, women in the workplace, which is reflected in the higher prevalence of women depicted in working roles rather than at home performing household tasks. It is also possible that the home-related function of women is perceived as being inherent in the modern woman's portfolio of daily tasks, causing the portrayal of such roles to become less obvious.

Career women were depicted more often in television commercials than in magazine advertisements (12% versus 4%). This was found, for example, in the commercial for *Mediclinic* medical services. This contains images of different career women, such as nurses and a doctor. Even so, the frequency of the career woman portrayal is low when considering that half of the South African work force consists of women. One may argue that the woman as a working person has become so commonplace that depicting the career woman is considered superfluous by advertisers.

It is recommended, however, that South African advertisers should consider featuring women in career portrayals more often, as the working element is an important part of many women's lives and this should be reflected in advertising imagery. The present incidence of females in work-related portrayals is not representative of the current employment situation. Moreover, career women will identify more easily with portrayals that reflect their real-life circumstances. This enables the audience to relate better to the product, enhancing identification with the brand and the brand equity.

The physically decorative role was found far less frequently in television commercials than in magazines (6% versus 27%). A typical example of a commercial that featured this role is the *Lux* soap commercial. It features a woman depicted as possessing silky, soft skin, which represents an ideal that may be achieved by using the advertised brand. Depicting the ideal (the physically decorative woman) allows the consumer to visualise what the product can do for her. This may enhance the probability of purchasing the brand, since most consumers probably want to achieve the physical ideal.

The nature of the television channels on which the television sample is based requires wider audiences than is found in magazines. This means a broader gender focus in advertising on television, dictating thereby more balanced product type advertising. The physically decorative role is almost exclusively associated with personal care items, such as cosmetics that have a largely female target market. The magazines sample included many women's magazines. The lower incidence of this role portrayal in television commercials is therefore to be expected. The incidence between product categories and roles is presented in more detail in Section 7.2.8.

Roles that were relatively infrequent in commercials include the romantic role, the mannequin and the sex object. It is worth noting that the mannequin role was prominent in magazines, but not in television commercials. The difference can probably be explained when it is taken into account that the magazine sample inherently contained many fashion magazines, as these are among the most popular magazines, allowing for many apparel advertisements – hence the mannequin. The mannequin, as “wearer” of the advertised product, is also mostly depicted in a static state - to allow effective presentation of the product. Therefore, the depiction may be more suitable to the magazine medium.

The woman in a romantic role is associated with the social needs of the consumer, which are also related to depictions of women as social beings. In the study, women were far more often portrayed in social roles than in romantic roles (19.2% versus 2.3%). The results appear to indicate that television advertisers place a stronger emphasis on the social need of female consumers in terms of their basic social needs, rather than any romantic interaction. This may possibly be due to the nature of the target audience: social depictions are more widely applicable (therefore, they have a larger audience) than romantic portrayals.

The commercial for *Love Heart* candy (which features a woman in a romantic role) is a relevant example; it depicts a loving couple throughout their lives together - from where they meet as children, to where they are now as an elderly couple. The commercial positions the candy as being suitable for eating when sharing romantic moments with a loved one.

Similar to the findings on magazine advertisements, the woman as a sex object was seldom portrayed in television commercials. An example was found in the *Nestlé Nestea* commercial, which features a buxom woman dressed in a skimpy bikini, walking down the beach. Television channels have broad target audiences that include children. Advertisers that use television as a medium need to consider the negative perceptions that may be associated with featuring the woman as a sex object in commercials; not only for the purpose of brand associations, but also because the audience is likely to include children.

The very low incidence of women as sex objects in the study may indicate that advertisers are aware of the dangers of exposing children to potentially offensive images. Depicting

women as sex objects has been widely condemned; and the learning of negative gender roles (such as sex object) through advertising has been hotly contested - and generally denounced (Coltrane & Adams, 1997:342; Napoli & Murgolo-Poore, 2003:62; Stankiewicz & Rosselli, 2008:587).

It is also possible that the results of the study reflect a movement away from sexually objectifying women, as the South African society generally has a very strong emphasis on women's rights and protecting women against abuse. This emphasis on the protection of women is represented by organisations such as *POWA* (People Opposing Women Abuse) and initiatives such as the annual "*Sisters with Blisters*" walk that encourages women to walk in high heels to stand up for abused women (*Sisters with Blisters*, 2010).

The "other" role was the third most frequently depicted portrayal. A detailed discussion on the "other" category, as well as new roles, is presented in Section 7.2.9. Background elements featured in around eight per cent of the commercials, and as such were favoured above six specific role depictions (mother, physically decorative, homemaker, romantic role, mannequin and sex object). Considering that there are several roles available that can be portrayed in advertising, the use of non-functional background elements is not the best alternative.

As stated previously, advertisers need to create a suitable fit between the imagery in commercials and the brand. Featuring women in clearly identifiable roles in a commercial will enable the consumer to associate with the commercial and with the brand.

The results on role portrayals imply that advertisers use broader, less traditionally stereotypical depictions of women in television commercials, which has a broader target market. The focus in television commercials appear to be on depicting women as product users and social beings, rather than as decorative creatures, as was the case in magazines. In terms of consumer socialisation, the manner in which women are portrayed in commercials will facilitate the learning of less-traditional roles (such as social beings) than is the case in magazines.

The representation of females in terms of the overall numbers of advertisements or commercials will be discussed next.

### **7.2.2 Number of female models in relation to overall advertisements or commercials**

The findings of the study indicate that female models featured in more than half of the magazine advertisements examined; and in television commercials 39.5 per cent of advertising depictions contained women. The high incidence of women in advertising portrayals is consistent with social reality, where women represent a very large target market and advertisers are tapping into the market by using images to which women can relate. According to Voight (2009), women are the foremost economic influence in the world; and the women's market is a market that is growing.

There has been an increase in the incidence of women appearing in South African magazine advertisements. Rudansky (1991:157) found that women featured in 39 per cent of advertisements, whereas the results of the present study indicate 55 per cent. The increase in the frequency of female portrayals could be an indication of the changing role of the woman in South African society. The buying power of women has grown and it is to be expected that this will be reflected in advertising. According to Morgan (2010), South African women make 87.7 per cent of all buying decisions and constitute the main decision-makers for their families.

The prevalence of female images in magazine advertising is also consistent with the target audience demographics, as the magazines in the sample contained primarily female-oriented publications, as these were among the most popular magazines. The findings imply that advertisers are becoming aware of the growing female market and are responding to consumer demand. According to the *Female Nation Survey (Women24, not dated)*, 49 per cent of women in South Africa are the breadwinners in their families, and as such are primary decision-makers across a variety of products and services. This holds strategic implications, as marketers need to consider the important role of women in household decision-making, and to address this in new product development and marketing communication.

The nature of the visuals featured most frequently in advertising will be discussed next.

### **7.2.3 Nature of the visuals**

The findings of the study indicate that the vast majority of visuals consist of real-life depictions of women, as photographs (in the case of magazines) and filmed images (in commercials) were consistently preferred over illustrations or animation. Therefore, South African advertisers favour the authenticity of real-life depictions. The findings indicate that South African advertisers hold to the assertions of Burtenshaw *et al.* (2006:120) and Wells *et al.* (2006:390) that photographs (or films) provide realism and enhance the authenticity of the brands they advertise.

The prevalence of real-life visuals in South African advertising is understandable, as the target audience is more likely to relate to photographed depictions that represent real women. The authenticity of the advertised brands is enhanced by real-life depictions. Particularly for products such as personal care items that rely on visuals to portray the effectiveness of the product, the use of real depictions is appropriate.

The findings imply that authentic representations are preferred by the target audience and that advertisers are reacting to this preference by featuring real-life portrayals rather than illustrations or animations. This is an appropriate action that enhances advertising effectiveness.

The ethnic representation of women in advertisements and commercials will be discussed in the next section.

### **7.2.4 Ethnic representation**

White women represented the majority ethnic group in advertisements as well as in commercials, followed by African women. Advertising is expected to reflect the ethnic representation of the target audience. According to Statistics South Africa (2009:4), African women constitute the majority of South African females (79.5%), followed by white and coloured women (9% each). The findings on ethnic representation in the study are in

contrast with the population statistics; and ethnic portrayals in advertisements and commercials should ideally reflect the ethnicity of the market.

However, if the South African population's access to media is considered, white South Africans have greater access to magazines and television (71.5% and 96.4%, respectively), as opposed to African South Africans (at 32.3 per cent and 79.7 per cent respectively (Koenderman, 2009:15). This may provide an explanation as to why the larger part of the population (African women) is not depicted more often in advertisements and commercials. African people have substantially lower access to the media than do white people.

A closer inspection of the results for two magazines that are aimed at different ethnic groups (*Bona* and *You* magazines), revealed that the ethnic representation of women in advertisements in the respective magazines reflects its readership in terms of ethnicity. *Bona* magazine, which aims primarily at an African audience, mainly features African women in its advertisements; whereas *You* magazine features primarily white women. Ninety-one per cent of advertisements in *Bona* magazine feature African women, as opposed to only 4.5 per cent white women.

In *You* magazine, 57 per cent of the female portrayals consist of white women, and 29 per cent feature African women. This implies that South African advertisers are taking heed of the differing demographics of the target audiences of magazines, establishing a suitable fit between the target audience and the ethnic imagery in the advertisements.

The representation of African women in television commercials is low when considered in relation to their access to television. It is suggested that South African advertisers may be overlooking a major segment of the market in ethnic advertising depictions on television. Women of a particular ethnic origin will relate better to similar ethnic depictions in advertising, which means that the impact of visuals on the target audience may be diminished by not using characters with similar ethnicity to that of the target audience. For example, a coloured woman may relate better to a depiction of a coloured female in an advertisement, and as a result respond more favourably towards the advertised brand. Advertisers should consider the ethnic profile of their markets, in order to match better the product benefits with the unique needs of the market.

Advertisers may be neglecting to differentiate the African target audience in television advertising. Care should be taken when choosing advertising characters in terms of ethnicity, as the assumption cannot be made that all ethnic groups will respond in the same manner to an advertising message. Different ethnic groups have specific needs that have to be considered when advertising.

Women of varying ethnic origins in one advertisement or commercial were not frequently depicted in the study. Considering the target audiences of the various media that were included in the study, the low incidence of multiple ethnic portrayals in one advertisement or commercial is to be expected, as many of the magazines differentiate between ethnic groups in segmenting their markets. For example, the *Sarie* magazine primarily targets white people, and as such mostly features white women in its advertising. Advertisers are expected to consider the target audience of the selected media when placing advertisements or commercials.

The advertising appeals that were most frequently featured in the research are discussed next.

### **7.2.5 Advertising appeals**

The findings indicate that the majority of magazine and television advertisements use rational advertising appeals to reach their target audience. This result may indicate that South African advertisers associate women with rational, practical purchase motives. The findings suggest that the common perception of women being impacted more by emotional appeals does not necessarily hold true. South African advertisers in both magazines and on television appeal to the rational, functional motivations of women, rather than to the emotional approach.

It is possible that rational appeals are favoured because women have become more involved in non-traditional consumer decision-making than before, leading to a change in the manner in which females make purchase decisions (Cant *et al.*, 2006:97). Modern women make use of rational, practical thinking to make consumption decisions; and

advertisers seem to be considering this when developing advertisements. The findings suggest that South African advertisers take cognisance of the evolving purchasing habits of women.

Rational appeals were considerably more dominant than emotional, or a combination of appeals in magazines. Rational appeals were also comparatively more prevalent in magazine advertisements than they were in television commercials (56% versus 40%). The difference may be ascribed to the nature of the media. Magazines are high-involved media, thereby involving the more rational sphere of the brain (left brain); whereas television is a low-involved medium that engages the right brain – the emotional sphere. This possibly impacts on television commercials featuring a more balanced spread of the different appeals.

The presence of celebrities in advertising was also examined and this will be presented next.

#### **7.2.6 Celebrities**

Celebrities do not feature very often in South African advertising. This is possibly because using celebrities in advertising generally entails extra costs, as the numbers of celebrity endorsement contracts can attest. According to Grau *et al.* (2007:55), Nike's endorsement of Serena Williams (tennis player) is reputed to be worth around \$40 million, and South African-born actress Charlize Theron's endorsement deal with Raymond Weil watches was reportedly worth \$20 million (Stone, 2007). Additionally, marketing budgets were limited (decreased by 71%) due to the global recession during the time of the study (Gullan, 2010).

It is suggested that consumers generally relate better to "ordinary" people rather than to celebrities, as non-celebrities represent attainable goals, whereas celebrity lifestyles can be perceived as being out of the reach of the general population, causing disassociation. Furthermore, ordinary or typical consumers are regarded as superior information sources in comparison to celebrity sources (Seitz *et al.*, 2007:395). Advertisements that feature

non-celebrity spokespeople thus represent a closer fit with the target audience, gaining better acceptance of the message they convey.

Women were portrayed in more than one role in one advertisement or commercial; the findings on this are summarised below.

### **7.2.7 Multiple roles**

Women were not often depicted in multiple roles in magazines. However, in television commercials, women were frequently depicted in multiple roles. An example is the commercial for *Richelieu* brandy. The commercial features women depicted as product users, as well as in romantic and social roles. The reason why the findings on magazine and television advertising differ may be ascribed to the nature of the two media. Television allows for the inclusion of more information, and as it contains movement and audio, allows for more creativity. The broader scope of creativity in commercial development (refer to Chapter 3), lends itself to a wider variety of portrayals - and therefore has more scope for multiple role depictions.

Characters in commercials can consequently be portrayed in various roles or functions. It may be argued that advertisers are acknowledging the multiple facets of the modern South African woman by portraying multiple roles in one commercial. The modern woman can thus relate to the imagery in the advertising, allowing a better match between the brand and the target consumer. Portraying women in more than one role may also be linked to representations of the various lifestyle factors that impact on female consumers. Segmentation should not be limited to one aspect of the target audience; and similarly, the various features of women should be addressed in advertising. This may be accomplished by portraying women in multiple roles in advertising more frequently.

The product/service categories that most frequently featured women in their advertisements or commercials are summarised next.



## 7.2.8 Product/service category

Table 7.2 summarises the findings on product/service categories for both media. The most prevalent product/service categories are indicated in **bold** in the table.

**Table 7.2 Proportion of product/service categories in magazine advertisements and television commercials featuring women**

Product/service category	Magazines		Television	
	n	%	n	%
Personal care	86	<b>42.4%</b>	64	<b>26.1%</b>
Apparel	34	<b>16.8%</b>	6	2.5%
Alcoholic beverages	3	1.5%	23	9.4%
Electronics	5	2.5%	6	2.5%
Entertainment	5	2.5%	5	2.0%
Food	3	1.5%	35	<b>14.3%</b>
Health and medication	25	<b>12.3%</b>	10	4.1%
Household	8	3.9%	31	<b>12.7%</b>
Non-alcoholic beverages	3	1.5%	12	4.9%
Other	9	4.4%	15	6.1%
Services	20	9.9%	24	9.8%
Sport	0	0%	4	1.6%
Transport	2	1.0%	10	4.1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>100%</b>

Both magazine and television advertising that contained women primarily advertised personal care products, such as cosmetics and personal hygiene items. This result was expected, as the personal care category includes cosmetics in which the primary target market is women. The findings indicate a perception that physical care and beauty are very important to women; thus, physical grooming is assumed to play a large role in the lives of the female target market. This perception of the primary importance of beauty may exaggerate the prevailing notion that women are mainly objects of beauty, and that their consumption behaviour focuses on the physical rather than on any other aspects of the individual. The findings seem to imply that women are still considered primarily as objects of beauty, and their abilities and skills are only of secondary importance, as these are not often portrayed.

The research findings suggest that South African advertisers (included in the sample) seem to apply basic marketing principles in magazine advertising in terms of matching the product with the applicable target market, such as cosmetics with a female target audience. This results in advertising that is well suited to the audience demographics. The South African market is similar to the international arena in terms of advertising, as personal care product advertising featuring women is also common across a variety of countries (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.4.8).

The prominent incidence between the physically decorative role and one product category (personal care) raises the question of whether individual advertisers of personal care products are succeeding in breaking through advertising clutter (competing messages) by featuring similar characters in advertising. Consumers apply selective perception to facilitate information processing, and it is possible that the similarity of portrayals across brands negates individual brand equity. If this is the case, brand differentiation will be low; which signifies that the advertising may not be as effective as it could be.

Table 7.2 indicates that the prevalence of personal care advertising was lower in television commercials than in magazine advertisements (26% versus 42%). This may be ascribed to the fact that the sample for popular magazines included many magazines aimed at women. This is consistent with the advertising of products such as cosmetics. The television sample is less differentiated when considered along gender lines.

#### **7.2.8.1 Product/service categories in magazine advertisements**

Apart from personal care products that were the most dominant product category, magazine advertising often featured women in apparel, as well as health and medication categories. As the magazine sample included many women and fashion magazines (due to their high readership levels), the frequency of apparel advertisements is to be expected. Health and medication products often feature women in their advertising, as women are generally perceived to be concerned about health issues. Additionally, women are often the primary decision-makers for these types of products for the family; therefore, featuring women in these advertisements is appropriate.

Advertising for sport products did not feature women at all in magazines in the present study. This result is not surprising, as sport is an area that is generally associated more with males than with females (Grau *et al.*, 2007:55). Additionally, the magazine sample excluded specialist publications, such as sport magazines, which probably feature women in advertisements. According to *SouthAfrica.info* (2010), the female market for sport (specifically rugby) shows significant growth, as female viewership of the 2010 *Super 14* final grew by 140 per cent from the previous year. This offers an opportunity for marketers to link female characters to sports' consumption.

Women were also seldom portrayed in magazine advertising for products, such as electronics or cars (included in the transport category). These products are generally aimed at the masculine market, and are thus not traditionally associated with women. Modern women, however, make purchase decisions for such products and have a large influence on the purchase thereof for family consumption.

For example, in South Africa 60 per cent of new cars are purchased by females, and they make 66 per cent of personal computer purchases (Morgan, 2010). The low use of females in advertising such products may perpetuate the perception that women are purchasers only of traditionally female products and not of "non-feminine" products. The impact that women have on the choice and/or purchasing of traditionally non-feminine products should be portrayed in advertising.

#### **7.2.8.2 Product/service categories in television commercials**

The results for the most dominant product/service categories (after personal care) indicated that women were frequently portrayed in commercials for products that are considered conventionally female (food and household products). According to Morgan (2010), women make the vast majority (94%) of household-related purchasing decisions in South Africa. Therefore, the market for these products is predominantly female, and this represents an opportunity for local marketers.

The findings suggest that although women are not often portrayed in traditional stereotypical *roles* (such as homemakers) they are associated with *product categories* generally seen as the woman's domain. Similarly, the low result for women depicted in

sport product advertising (such as sporting gear) relate to gender domains, as sport is not popularly associated with the female market. There has been some growth in women's interest in sport, as indicated by their increased viewership (Cummins, 2009:381).

The increased viewership of sport by women may indicate an emerging market for sport-related products. South African marketers need to consider this aspect. Particularly with the hosting of major sporting events, such as the Soccer World Cup, South African advertisers need to take into account that women consumers may also be impacted by the hype. This may lead to increased purchases of products (such as team-branded apparel) related to such events.

The most dominant incidences between roles and product/service categories are summarised next.

#### **7.2.8.3 Incidence between role portrayals and product or service category**

The most prevalent role category in magazine advertising, the physically decorative role, was used most often in the advertising of personal care items. As the primary benefit of personal care products is to create or enhance physical attractiveness, the featuring of decorative females is appropriate in the context of this specific product category. Associating physically decorative females with personal care products is also advisable from a marketing strategy viewpoint, as the portrayal should suit the advertised product, and personal care products are focused on enhancing physical beauty. They should be advertised, consequently, by someone who is physically attractive.

The prevalence of the mannequin in advertising apparel is similarly appropriate, as the mannequin is primarily defined by her function as the "wearer" of the product. Apparel advertisers should pay attention to selecting a suitable mannequin character for their brand, as the image she portrays should be consistent with the brand image. A relevant example of a suitable mannequin portrayal was found in the advertisement for *Milady's* apparel retailer. The advertisement features a mannequin character that symbolises the company's stylish and classic image.

The background element was mostly used in advertising for health and medication products. An example is the advertisement for the *ReliSlim* weight-loss product, which features a woman pictured from the shoulders up; no attempt is made to link her with the benefit of the product (weight-loss). She serves no clearly definable function, other than filling the top part of the advertisement space.

The health and medication product category may be better advertised by a woman in a specific, identifiable role. Advertisers seem to be placing female models in medication advertisements purely to fill space - and not to convey any specific message or meaning. South African advertisers may need to consider linking health and medication products with specific roles, instead of using non-functional portrayals.

Featuring a specific, identifiable role in the advertising of health and medication products may assist the target audience in identifying with the brand, as they can readily associate with a particular role. This will enhance brand differentiation, as the consumer will be able to link an identifiable role with the brand.

In television commercials, personal care products were most often advertised by depicting a product user in television commercials. Television as a medium lends itself well to depicting product use. In the case of personal care products, the actual application of the product (such as cosmetics) is often portrayed. It is suggested that product use may be portrayed frequently in personal care advertising, as it facilitates the audience in imagining their own application of the product. Additionally, portraying product use aids in creating an idea of “before and after”; showing the character as glamorous and more attractive after applying the product. The physical ideal is thus achieved by using the advertised product.

A relevant example of such a commercial is for *Head & Shoulders* anti-dandruff shampoo. A woman is depicted as struggling to control dandruff, and then she is shown using the advertised brand, after which her hair is dandruff-free – the ideal. This portrayal of product effectiveness enables the target consumer to link the brand promise to its benefits, as the consumer can see the results of product use. This may facilitate brand differentiation for the organisation and ease product selection for the consumer.

The social role that was prominent in television commercials was featured often in advertising personal care products and also alcoholic beverages. Both these product categories are associated with the social needs of consumers. Personal care and grooming is important in attaining social acceptance; and social activities (such as parties) are often associated with the consumption of alcoholic beverages.

Featuring a social image in these commercials is therefore appropriate, as was the case for the commercial for *JC le Roux* sparkling wine. This commercial features women depicted as attending a social gathering (social role), while consuming the brand. Such portrayals can strengthen the image of the brand as being suitable for consumption at social gatherings. It also enables the consumer to know the appropriate application or usage situations for the brand, for example as a celebratory drink.

The background element (a non-functional portrayal that serves as a “space-filler”) was used most often in advertising services in television commercials. It is suggested that advertisers do not necessarily identify clear roles in advertising services, indicating a lack of brand differentiation. This may negate brand differentiation, as the image in the commercial can serve as a vehicle for brand identification. As was mentioned previously, the relevancy of the portrayal impacts on the effectiveness of the commercial.

If women cannot identify with the portrayal in the commercial, they may connect less with the brand. Services are used by a variety of women who fulfil many roles in reality; associating a definite female role with the advertised service will enhance the differentiation of the brand and enable the consumer to relate to the brand.

The study identified several “other” portrayals; among these some new roles were identified.

### **7.2.9 New roles**

The study identified several “other” portrayals that could not be categorised under the specified category roles (namely career woman, homemaker, mother, mannequin, physically decorative, product user, romantic role, sex object, social being or background

element). All cases of “other” portrayals were identified by descriptive terms such as “client” or “runner” (refer to Chapter 6, Tables 6.24 and 6.26).

The process that was followed to determine probable new roles commenced with provision of descriptive terms for “other” portrayals, and then the descriptive terms were examined in order to combine those that were similar into categories. Next, the descriptive categories were tested at the hand of the role criteria, and the incidence of the category was considered in order to evaluate its suitability as a role. Finally, based on the role criteria and incidence, new roles were identified.

#### **7.2.9.1 “Other” categories in magazine advertisements**

The frequencies of “other” categories that were used as a basis for determining new roles are summarised in Table 7.3.

**Table 7.3 Frequencies of “other” categories in magazine advertisements featuring women**

“Other” categories: magazine advertisements	N	%
Customer	2	7%
Driver	2	7%
Inferred user	2	7%
<b>Leisure woman</b>	7	23%
Potential user	4	13%
Spoilt woman	2	7%
<b>Sportswoman</b>	5	17%
Testimonial	3	10%
Various “other”	3	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 7.3 shows that the most prevalent portrayals (printed in **bold**) were of women in leisure or relaxed poses (leisure women), followed by women engaging in some form of exercise or sporting activity (sportswomen). The incidence of the categories of customer, driver, inferred user, potential user, spoilt woman, testimonial and various “other” were not frequent.

It is suggested that women depicted in a leisure state symbolise a sense of “stress-free consumption”; the brand aims to communicate that dissatisfaction in the product is

unlikely. The image suggests an association between a worry-free state and the brand. An example is the advertisement for *Game Décorland*, which features a woman sitting in a relaxed pose looking out the window of her sitting room.

Females portrayed as sportswomen reflect the modern perception that exercise is beneficial and rewarding to the individual. The advertised brand is associated with being able to be active and live healthily; for example, an advertisement for health supplements that features a portrayal of a woman performing yoga exercises.

The results suggest that South Africa women live active and healthy lifestyles and that health is an important concern. The results are supported by the rapid growth of health magazine readership, particularly for the relatively new *Women's Health* magazine (*Women's Health*, 2010). The magazine has reported a substantial growth in subscription rates (around 7000 subscribers) since its launch in October 2009. The portrayal of women as active, healthy individuals in advertising may be indicative of a growing trend that should be explored for future product development.

The woman as a customer portrays the action of purchasing something, or she is being served as a client. This may or may not be related to the advertised product. The woman may be depicted as carrying branded shopping bags while exiting the advertised retailer; or she may be depicted as a client who is unrelated to the advertised product – a client in a salon - while the advertisement may actually be for an event.

An example of the former is the advertisement for the *Total Bonjour* convenience store, where a pregnant woman is depicted with a shopping bag from the store. Women are known to enjoy shopping, and as such, it is assumed that most women will be able to identify with the customer role. Additionally, if the customer is depicted as shopping in the advertised retail environment, the benefits of the shopping action become patent and facilitate better brand differentiation.

It is worth noting that in the advertisements featuring women as drivers, the advertised product or service was related to transport, such as an advertisement for a car service company. Although the incidence of such portrayals was very low, it indicates that advertisers for car-related products identify women as decision-makers and purchasers of

such products. When one considers that South African women are buyers of 60 per cent of new cars and influence 80 per cent of all car purchases (Morgan, 2010), advertisers should possibly consider portraying women more frequently as car users (drivers).

Depictions of an inferred user represent women that are not shown as actively using the product; their attitude and manner however suggest that the advertised product has been used, and that they are satisfied with the results. These depictions were mainly featured in personal hygiene advertisements (such as *Shield* deodorant advertisements), and it is suggested that these portrayals are aimed at stimulating identification - with the resulting benefits of the product (such as being free from unpleasant body odour).

An example where a woman is depicted as a potential user is the advertisement for *Unique Irri-Col*, a product that is advertised as providing relief for irritable bowel syndrome. In the advertisement, the woman is depicted in obvious physical discomfort (holding her stomach); the advertised product is intended to solve the depicted problem. The woman should use the product if she requires relief; and she is clearly a potential user. The advertiser hence links the brand to the portrayal as a solution to the problem, enabling the target audience to recognise the benefit, such as relief.

The spoilt woman is portrayed as someone whose every need is catered for: she is depicted in a comfortable pose in luxury surroundings. The spoilt woman is being waited on hand and foot. The presence of this portrayal points to an almost fantasy-like "ideal" situation; the message to the target audience may be that consuming the advertised product will create a sense of utter comfort and indulgence.

This type of portrayal may be very desirable to the target audience; the female consumer may long for such a luxurious life or even for moments of indulgence. As such, advertisers may consider featuring the spoilt woman portrayal in advertising, as women may identify with its fantasy-like image.

The woman in a testimonial situation in magazines is primarily featured as a satisfied product supporter who testifies to the efficacy of the advertised brand. This portrayal is probably aimed at enhancing the credibility of the advertiser's claims of product superiority, and as such, it communicates the value and effectiveness of the product to the target

audience. The testimonial provider converses from a position of authority, and as such indicates that women's opinions on the subject matter under discussion are important.

On further analysis, using the role criteria and incidence, two of the categories were identified as new roles, namely leisure woman and sportswoman. These will be described in more detail in Section 7.2.9.3.

### **7.2.9.2 “Other” categories in television commercials**

The frequencies of “other” categories that were used as a basis to determine new roles are summarised in Table 7.4.

**Table 7.4 Frequencies of “other” categories in television commercials featuring women**

“Other” categories: television commercials	N	%
<b>Customer</b>	15	30%
Inferred user	2	4%
Leisure woman	3	6%
<b>Spokesperson</b>	22	44%
Sportswoman	3	6%
Various "other"	5	10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>100%</b>

As can be seen in the above table, women in the “other” category were portrayed most frequently as spokespersons and customers in television commercials (indicated in **bold** in Table 7.4). The categories of inferred user, leisure woman, sportswoman, and various “other” were not prevalent.

As a spokesperson, the woman serves as an expert or the facilitator of an expert in the commercial, a product ambassador who commends the product to consumers with similar needs. When she acts as an expert, she relates the product's benefits, and in many cases demonstrates the product. In interviewing, the spokesperson converses with a person that is perceived to be an expert on the advertised product, and the conversation revolves around the advantages of the product.

The spokesperson as presenter is often used in advertising household cleaning products, of which the effectiveness is demonstrated by the spokesperson. Demonstrating the actual

working and effectiveness of the product enables the audience to form a clear association between the product's attributes (for example a particular cleaning agent) and the product's actual benefits (for example brighter washing results). This assists in differentiating the product from the competing products.

It is worth noting that celebrities in advertising are often inherently spokespeople. They act as endorsers of brands. The findings imply that female consumers are also impacted by the opinions of ordinary people who are portrayed as knowledgeable on the brand and its effectiveness. An example of such a spokesperson is the (non-celebrity) woman featured in the *Bio Oil* skin-care product commercial. In this advertisement, she relates how the product has enabled her to gain self-confidence by diminishing the appearance of a scar. Women who face similar circumstances may identify with the woman in the commercial and consequently link the advertised brand with favourable results, as testified to by the spokesperson.

The woman as customer is depicted as a client or as engaging in a shopping activity. In television commercials that feature movement, the woman can easily be portrayed in a variety of shopping scenarios or situations where she is served, such as in a beauty salon. An example is of the woman in the *Telkom Direct* commercials, where a woman carrying shopping bags from other stores is depicted entering the *Telkom Direct* shop.

As an inferred user, the woman in the commercial is depicted as enjoying the benefits of having used the product, although she is not depicted as actually using the product. Product use is therefore inferred from her manner and attitude. For example, the inferred user of a *Dove* deodorant product is portrayed as being free to enjoy her day, knowing that her deodorant will protect her from body odour (hence preventing a problem from developing).

Portraying an inferred user showcases the product's benefits without depicting actual product use. Advertisers may feature the inferred user as a more subtle alternative to depicting actual product use, especially with products where the use is not complex or high-tech, such as deodorants.

Women portrayed in leisure poses may be indicative of women's need for relaxation. It is suggested that portraying leisure women presents the "worry-free" aspects of the advertised product, or possibly an ideal state of relaxation that may be achieved by consuming the product. The female audience may perceive the portrayed pose to be desirable, possibly stimulating thereby a positive response to the advertised brand.

As was the case for magazine advertisements, the presence of sportswomen indicates that the target audience is placing a high value on physical activity and health. This is in line with the findings of the *Female National Survey* (Women24, not dated), which indicated that 44 per cent of surveyed South African women enjoy participating in sport. This represents a substantial market that merits the attention of advertisers, as well as manufacturers of sports gear and/or organisers of women's sport.

On further analysis based on the role criteria and incidence of the categories, two new roles were identified, namely those of customer and spokesperson. It should be noted that some studies (for example those of Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007:692) examined women as spokespersons, but this role was not defined as a distinct role. The new roles will now be described in more detail in Section 7.2.9.3.

#### **7.2.9.3 Summary of new roles identified in the study**

In summary, the new roles that were identified in magazine advertisements were those of leisure woman and sportswoman; and in television commercials, the customer and the spokesperson.

The woman featured in a **leisure** role reflects the consumer's need for recreation. Marketers of leisure-oriented products may depict women in leisure roles in order to portray the recreational, fun aspects of the brand. Such products are aimed at providing entertainment or relaxation; and portraying a woman in a leisure pose enables the consumer to identify with the situation and link the brand to the benefits of recreation.

The presence of female characters in leisure roles indicates that modern women need to unwind, and there are various ways in which this can be achieved. Results of the *Female National Survey* (Women24, not dated) indicate that women enjoy a range of leisure activities, such as reading, watching television and meditating.

The incidence of the **sportswoman** role suggests that a healthy and active lifestyle is portrayed as a desirable outcome of consuming the advertised product. As mentioned previously, health concerns are important to modern women and South African women enjoy participating in sport. This trend should be monitored by marketers, and even advertisers of products not related to sport may consider featuring the sportswoman in advertising, as women will relate to the role. Modern women live multifaceted lives and the sporting interests of the target audience may be depicted in advertising images. Featuring the sportswoman in an advertisement for a product not directly related to sport may differentiate the brand from competitors, as the image may be distinct in the eyes of the target market.

The **customer** implies the portrayal of a woman as a decision-maker, often depicted in buying environments. This role portrayal may be useful in expanding the purchasing role of the woman by depicting her in a wide variety of purchasing situations - not only in purchases of traditionally female products. For example, the woman may be portrayed in a shopping centre where she visits a variety of stores, including those that sell products not traditionally associated with women (such as electronic stores). Such a portrayal will reflect the differentiated and important roles a woman plays in household decision-making situations across a range of product categories.

A surprising result was that women have not been identified as portraying customers in any previous research studies. Although this portrayal was often related (in the study) to a retail environment, there were instances of women as clients or customers in other environments, such as in a beauty salon. The customer in a retail environment aids the advertising of retailers, as this enables the advertiser to depict the variety of products available in the shop. Additionally, depictions of shopping scenarios enable the consumer to visualise the environment within which the product may be purchased.

The **spokesperson** represents women as authoritative voices in advertising. As the spokesperson, she shares her knowledge, since she is depicted as an expert and a facilitator of product information. She often acts as a narrator for a consumption activity that is being depicted, such as a family enjoying breakfast in the *Bokomo* (breakfast

cereal) commercial. The spokesperson then communicates brand information relating to the depicted scenario.

The spokesperson is inherently an opinion leader who links the mass audience to comprehensive information on the product. This assists other consumers in decision-making, as well as in the differentiation between competing brands.

Opinion leaders play a crucial role in initiating WOM communication; and such portrayals in advertising may stimulate positive conversation about the brand. WOM is aimed at assisting other consumers in decision-making and providing advice. *Marketingweb* (2010) reports that the concept of “*ubuntu*” facilitates WOM communication in South Africa. *Ubuntu* refers to the definition of the self through one’s relationship with others, or with society. Depicting spokespersons as trusted opinion leaders links to stimulating WOM thereby spreading product knowledge and assisting consumers by distributing information.

The new roles identified in the study emphasise four aspects of the modern South African woman: her need for a stress-free or recreational environment (leisure), the importance of an active lifestyle (sportswoman), her voice of authority (spokesperson) and her important function as actual purchaser of a variety of products (customer).

The limitations of the study will be outlined next.

### 7.3 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study operated under certain limitations that should be noted. It is not an international study, since it is limited to the South African context, and the results are therefore not representative of international advertising practices. The sampling method utilised in the present study is non-probability sampling, which implies that the results may not be generalised. Therefore the roles identified in the present study are not generalisable to a larger context, not even in South Africa.

The present study was not longitudinal in nature and direct comparisons of changes over time cannot be made. The data for the present study were only gathered over a limited

time period (one month for television commercials, and two months for magazines); data gathered over longer periods of time could have yielded different results and possibly have uncovered other roles. The present study analysed only the media of magazines and television – additional role portrayals may be found if other media (such as the Internet) are included.

The magazine sample consisted of only the most popular magazines and excluded specialist publications. As such, the sample contained many magazines aimed at women, thereby limiting the scope in terms of the audience, and thus possibly other portrayals. Moreover, the inclusion of specialist magazines and magazines with low circulation may have provided additional role portrayals or new insights into evolving roles.

The television sample consisted only of free-to-air channels that are supported by a large, possibly less-affluent audience. The exclusion of the subscriber channels may possibly omit advertising that contains portrayals that provide a differing viewpoint. It is also possible that role portrayals may exist in commercials featured on pay channels that do not occur on the free-to-air channels. Additionally, only commercials aired in prime time were analysed; variations in portrayals may occur in other time slots.

A larger sample size may provide superior results as a larger selection of advertisements and commercials may increase the likelihood of uncovering new roles. The specific relation between magazine and television advertising was not examined, nor were the associations between magazine type and different female portrayals. Examining the relation between the different media may provide additional understanding of advertising practice for academia, particularly in terms of integration of marketing communications. The perceptions of females toward the specific portrayals in the study were not examined. Studying consumer perceptions toward the role portrayals in advertising could provide valuable insight to advertising practitioners in terms of relevancy of current role portrayals.

A larger sample of media types may increase the likelihood of identifying new roles that do not occur in magazine advertisements and television commercials. Additionally, examining more media types may indicate that some portrayals are more prevalent than those found in the current study. For example, the sex object (which did not occur often in the present study) may be more prevalent in other media such as outdoor media.

Reliability in content analysis is a contentious and widely argued issue and several challenges were faced in finding a suitable reliability measure. No clear guidelines for measuring reliability across multiple responses (for multiple coders) were found in literature. Consequently, alternative methods had to be used to determine the reliability for variables with multiple responses (refer to Chapter 6, Section 6.3.3).

Recommendations for future research are presented next.

#### **7.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The limitations of the present study can be addressed in future research by including all South African television broadcasters, as well as a sample of magazines that focus on wider audiences. Moreover, female role portrayals in other types of magazines, such as specialist magazines may provide valuable insights and additional roles may be uncovered.

A survey can be conducted to determine the perceptions of the target audience regarding the portrayal of women in advertisements and commercials. This will enable practitioners to evaluate the effectiveness of the portrayals they feature in their advertising. The impact of female portrayals on attitudes and purchase intent of consumers could also be examined by using a survey. Such research could add value to the field of consumer behaviour, particularly in explaining the consumer decision-making patterns of female consumers.

The impact of the role portrayals (particularly the physically decorative portrayal) and the significance that the target audience attach to them could be examined. The possibility exists that women's self-images may be negatively impacted by portrayals of near-perfect ideals; therefore the social and cultural implications of female role portrayals, in particular the physically decorative role, should be investigated.

Qualitative research featuring depth interviews or focus groups could be conducted to reveal how women are impacted by advertising portrayals, and also how role imagery

impacts on the perception of the brand. This may enable organisations to refine their branding and to determine if their brand advertising is conveying the intended brand image.

Interviews could be conducted with advertising agencies to determine the reasoning behind the selection of specific portrayals in advertising. This will enhance the knowledge base of academia in applying advertising theory to practice. Practitioners could utilise copy research to test the effectiveness of the female characters in communicating the desired brand image. Such research could also assist in determining whether the roles portrayals featured in the organisation's advertisements are effective in connecting with the target female.

A comparative study could be conducted between different countries in order to broaden the context of the research and to allow comparisons of advertising portrayals across different cultures. Such research can provide insights into advertising portrayals in cultures that are similar (such as African countries) and those that are different (for example South Africa and Germany). Comparative studies between male and female portrayals can also be conducted to examine gender role evolution, which will supplement the current body of research in this area. Also, a comparison can be made between the genders in terms of stereotyping and product categories associated with males and females.

The portrayal of women in media, other than magazines and television, could be investigated: for example, women in outdoor advertising and on the Internet -specifically on social networks. Social networking is a growing trend and advertising featured on this medium could add valuable insight into contemporary advertising practice. The integration of the various communication tools in terms of female portrayals should also be investigated, as consistency in advertising creativity is key to advertising effectiveness.

Future researchers could also consider using the remote conveyor model to determine advertisement effectiveness. The remote conveyor model integrates two important elements, namely a key benefit claim and a creative idea to create effective and relevant advertisements (Rossiter, 2008:140). The visuals in an advertisement serve to attract attention; as such the character featured forms part of the creative idea and effective use of a character can therefore enhance the effectiveness of the advertisement.

## 7.5 SUMMARY

The research study aimed to determine the roles portrayed by women in South African advertisements and commercials. As the primary and secondary objectives of the study were achieved, the research has contributed to the body of knowledge of the marketing discipline, particularly in the field of role portrayals in advertising.

The contributions of the study to the field of marketing are apparent in many ways. Firstly, there is the identification of current female roles in South African magazine and television advertising. Various roles were identified and the frequency with which women are portrayed in more than one role in an advertisement or commercial was reported. Furthermore, a number of new role portrayals were also identified and described.

The ethnic representation of the women featured in advertisements and commercials was also examined and the findings indicate that African women are under-represented, since they have ample access to media that feature advertising.

The research findings revealed that in terms of advertising appeals, the preferred appeal was rational, and non-celebrities were favoured over depictions of female celebrities. The results showed that there exist distinct linkages between particular role portrayals and product and/or service categories.

Lastly, the study provided a basis for future research into female role portrayals and the manner in which women are depicted in advertisements and commercials. Specific recommendations for future research in the field have been made.

The study indicated that the fit between a suitable character and the advertised product or service is important. The target consumer is better able to identify with a portrayal that reflects her own circumstances or a situation that is desirable to her. South African advertisers need to consider carefully the suitability of the female portrayal featured in their advertising - in order to be sure they convey the desired message. The visuals used in an

advertisement or commercial communicate particular meanings and need to adequately reflect the image of the advertised brand.

When a product or service is advertised by featuring a suitable and distinct female portrayal, the organisation will then be better able to differentiate itself from competing brands. Portraying definite, identifiable roles facilitates the communication of the product benefits to the target consumer. The advantage to the consumer lies therein that consumer decision-making is simplified due to clear brand differentiation. Distinct role portrayals enable the female consumer to relate the advertising message, and the brand, to her own circumstances.