Women Stereotypes Portrayed in Print Ads by Luxury Fashion Brands.
A Content Analysis from 2002 to 2005.

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Abstract
Using the content analysis as a tool to determine the most frequent images of women portrayed in the Fashion Luxury Brands advertisement, this study shows five different stereotypes and several values that "define" how women should act of behave in our society. There are few academic studies on this subject because of the lower status that fashion advertising as a cultural manifestation found in mass media has in academia. Even though this, luxury brands, more than any other sector, provide a powerful symbolic value added to their goods. However, more than a mere market function, advertising has social and educational impacts. Due to this, this research offers a very valuable analysis of print advertisement that women might see, and in long terms, may influence their own self perception and scale of values. A content analysis was performed of 290 print ads which relate to 97 luxury brands. The survey reveals five different women's stereotypes found in advertising images and the most frequent values offered though this women images or representations. Implications of these findings are interesting for future research[1].

1. Introduction

 Advertising has more consequences than just the sale itself. As children we learn that advertising is all pervasive in our daily lives and will be present over our lifetime. Even though we may not pay attention or not listen to advertisements, they still have an influence on us.

As the academic literature demonstrates, especially on the *Third Person Theory* (Gunter, 1991; Davison, 1983; Duck & Mullin, 1995; Rojas, 2007), most people, when asked about the influence of advertising on defining their ideals, desires and behavior, tend to deny any kind of effects that could influence them, even their commercial behavior. Ironically, they recognize consequences on others, especially on vulnerable targets, such as children and adolescents. Regardless of beliefs, research has demonstrated the long term consequences of advertising in our lives (David and Johnson. 1998). Advertising in site of their first commercial goal, creates different stereotypes which form references for "what" a woman or man should do in order to be successful in their job and/or social or affective lives.

Is well known and accepted that a society can be defined by looking at the cultural manifestations of its art and social life: architecture, photography, dance, visual performances and so on. Each society has its own self values and principles which mold art and cultural performances. Some researchers found that mass

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media's content can also be considered as a snapshot of a society. For this reason advertising can also show a "portrait" of a society. But, as a consequence of globalization, most of the brands tend to be international, and because of that, they express "common values" more than a concrete cultural. Additionally, we also noticed that advertising and promotions do not aim to educate a society or to transmit good values –except for those advertisements which have education as their precise goal.

However for many researchers, professionals and consumers every message from an identified author who paid for the advertisement can say whatever he or she wants because of the economic transaction. TV commercials and print ads are not bound by ethics (Barthes, 1990; Baudrillard, 1974 and 1999).

Regardless of the source's intention, advertising is transmitting a "role model" by its mere existence as a notion about "how we must be", behave, purchase, and so on, to be successful according to the social scale. Because of the use of symbols and stereotypes understood by most of the audience, advertising immediately communicates a simple way of thinking, with an easy meaning.

At the same time, there are no definitive conclusions about the association between media consumption and bad consequences on people's self image and behavior, but more and more authors are asserting this connection. Some interesting surveys study the perception that consumers have about advertising models (David, Morrison, Johnson and Ross, 2002; Dittmar and Howard, 2004) and they accept from the very beginning that these kinds of real influences exist (Kang, 1997).

We point to the fact that fashion's consumers are highly identified with their own purchases in comparison to all consumers. In our society, clothes and accessories are, without a doubt, a part of our own identity (Bourdieu, 1991; Entwistle, 2000; Entwistle & Wilson, 2001). The first description we offer to others about ourselves is the result of an elaborate process of dressing and grooming our body: the *appearance management* (Kaiser, 1996). This self image something about our personality because it is the key language for communicating with others. Elizabeth Entswistle said in the introduction to *The Fashioned Body*, 2001, that the human body is a dressed body. In its most external appearance social life is composed of dressed bodies and our first impression when meeting someone is always their external appearance, especially the face, neck and hands. Several authors reinforce the thesis that the clothes we dress in show our personality (Horn & Gurel, 1981). This psychological process is taken into account and exploited by luxury brands marketers in order to sell more items. They know that consumers need to express themselves and tell stories about their personality, aspirations and way of life. As a result, something which was initially an element that differentiates the personal identity, become an element of equalization or even alienation.

Moreover, fashion reality, far from being a set of clothes, is now a *total social phenomenon* as a result of the merging of different characteristics in our societies. First of all, we seek a universal language that

everybody will understand and overcome some of the terrible lack of communication among modern societies (González, 2007). Secondly, the capitalist system needs a mechanism, like the ephemeral and fleeting fashion process, which demands a constant updating for their sustainability (Horn & Gurel, 1981). Finally, the well-known *progress myth* promotes the constant development and perfection of the human being through technological and scientific progress. Fashion does not get away from the influence of these social features even with its cyclical nature, and constant flashbacks and feedbacks. We can also assert with Jean Baudrillard, that there is no constant progress in this field: fashion is arbitrary, temporary and cyclical and does not attach anything to the intrinsic features of the individual (Baudrillard, 1999).

The most interesting research related to ours was *"Images of women in general and fashion magazine advertisements from 1995 to 2002"* conducted by Katarina Lindner in 2004. Its most important conclusion was that women's portraits shown in fashion advertisements tend to reinforce the stereotypes that we had previously found in society.

2. Objectives and research questions

The objective of this study is a deeper understanding of the women's images shown in luxury fashion advertisements. We analyze the advertisements included in women's magazines, trying offer a classification of the most frequent representations of women. Nor only studding their external features (such as race, body type, eye color or hair color) but also analyzing their position and attitude.

The three hypotheses of this research are:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Luxury fashion brands propose different imaginary women's profiles.
>
> *Hypothesis 2:* These women images can be classified in different groups.
>
> *Hypothesis 3:* These different images or stereotypes are defined by values that make them different from each other.

3. Methodology

This research was performed from July to November 2005. During these months we collected, scanned and analyzed advertisements from mostly women's magazines and some general content magazines. Related to the publication dates, 25.3% of the units' total amount were published in 2005; 26.5% in 2004, 24% in 2002 and 14.2% during 2003. Most of the advertisements analyzed appeared in *Elle* magazine (40.7%) and *Telva* (25.5%). In addition to these two magazines *Vogue* (12.4%), *Marie Claire* (7.6%) and *Cosmopolitan* (5.1%) contributed some advertisements to the final sample. The other ones were from general content

Spanish magazines. This fact allowed us to expand our research conclusions to the European and even the North American and other developed countries markets.

We identified 97 luxury brands in 290 advertisements from 2002 to 2005.

We created eight categories:

- Clothing,
- Cosmetics,
- Beauty treatment,
- Perfume,
- Accessories (bags, shoes, belts and sunglasses),
- Lingerie,
- Jewelry (watches) and
- Others (sports clothing, furriers…).

Because we wanted to find the stereotypes and women's values that defined these stereotypes, we decided to use the advertisements' characters as the analysis unit: so we analyze the characters included in the fashion brand advertisements. We extracted 324 units from the 290 advertisements. Finally, we decided to use only the feminine, not the masculine characters, because of the scarcity of males and because the male characters were irrelevant for our research.

4. Results' analysis

4.1. General profile

In reference to product most of the advertisements were about perfume (42.5%) followed by accessories such as bags and shoes (26.9%). We also found clothing advertisements (10.9%), lingerie (10.2%), and (4%) about cosmetics and beauty treatments (5.5%). When analyzing these advertisements in terms of their market position we create a classification of brands based on our own experience and brand knowledge (*classical*, *transgressive* or *other* kind of brands); we founded that 53.1% of them were classical brands as opposed to 41.8% presented as transgressive brands.

Continuing with the analysis of the characters, we detected that 81.1% of them were not celebrities and identified 18.9% as famous people (singers, actress and fashion models). In social demographics features, we found that 90.2% were Caucasian women, only 1.8% were Afro-American women, 2.2% Asians and 4% Hispanics. Most of them belonged to the young age group: 72.7% were between 15 and 30 years old. 18.5% were mature women between 31 and 75 years old. A small group of female characters (3.6%) were less than 14 years old. Briefly 10.5% of the sample showed on purpose underage appearance, even though

they weren't underage; a bigger average than the real presence of this age in the total sample (we found just a few cases of children in the sample).

We also determined that most of the characters (52.4%) had a wealthy or upper middle class appearance (13.8%) and only 0.7% of the characters appeared to be from the lower class. A large group could not be classified because of insufficient facts.

When we looked at the external appearance of the characters we detected the predominance of blond hair (29.5%) and dark hair (25.8%) with brown haired women next in number (20.4%). In reference to the body type, we found that thin women were the most frequent group (62.9%); in contrast, the normal weight women made up 12% of the sample and the thin were a relatively large 10.9%. On the other hand a quarter of the women sampled had an athletic body type.

As regards the most frequently shown body part, we found that the body as a whole was illustrated 37.8% of the time, the breast 30.2%, and the face 15.6%. Then, we found that the legs were shown in 4.7% of the cases; reveal the body 15.6% but not the model's face and 2.9% showed only the hands.

A detailed analysis discovered that 22.9% of the ads showed the face of the model and 80.4% of the full body and the faces included in the advertisements were perfect (without freckles, moles, imperfections or wrinkles; the flesh was plain and smooth). Moreover, 20.4% of the cases studied showed a naked or half nude woman as an accessory of the product. In 67.7% of these examples, bodies were only an esthetical complement to the advertisement.

When we analyzed women's attitudes shown in the advertisements, data reflected that a large group of them (42.2%) were presented in seductive attitudes, as compared to 26.9% in an attitude of self-contemplation. Women in passive attitudes such as lying down, resting on beds, in cars or other objects, represented 20.4% of the total.

The context and the settings of the advertisements were interesting: a large proportion of them were real ones (61.1%) and the environment had a luxurious atmosphere. When photographing the characters, most of the ads used a frontal focus (84%), and overviews (11.3%).

It is also interesting that a large percentage (62.5%) illustrated a direct relationship between product consumption and the external beauty of the models.

4.2. Women images with presence in the advertisements

When we calculated the presence of different images is in the sample we analyzed 29 items that determine women's features found in luxury brands. In a dichotomy option (0=no; 1=yes), we analyzed if the character showed, for instance, pleasure, pain, competitiveness, maternity or triumph. We call these

images *stereotypes* because they are not just a collection of external features, more than a representation of a concrete type of woman that could be recognized in real life.
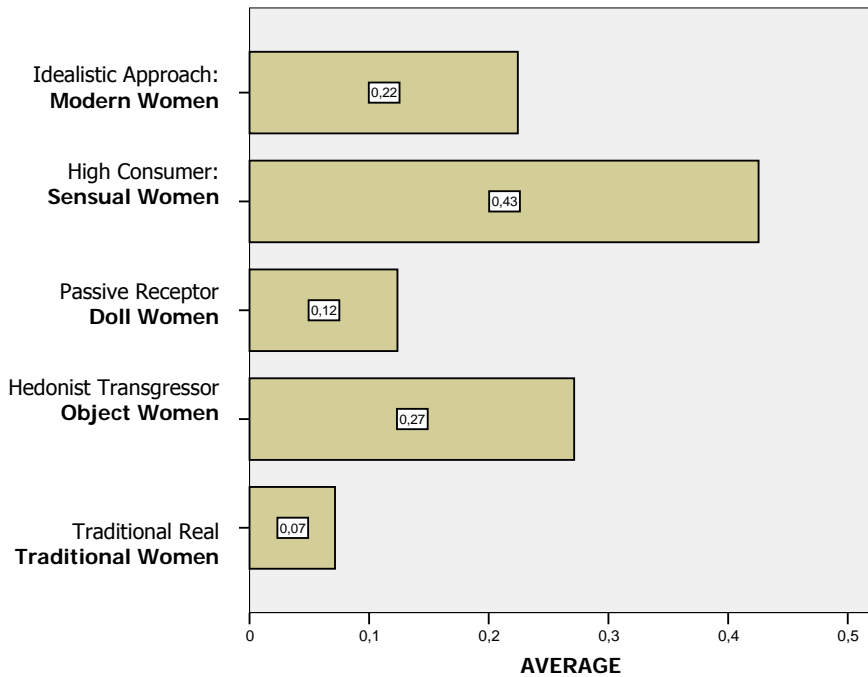
With the total amount of items classified, we did the first factor analysis, using a orthogonal varimax rotation, in order to determine if these items tended to organize themselves around a pattern based on different factors. We checked the quality of the factor analysis using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure. It gave us a .72 value and Bartlett's test of sphericity was sufficiently representative (p≤.001). The analysis showed a group of 10 items that explained 64.33% of the variance. With this data we first eliminated factors composed only of one item, doing a consistency analysis of the other 10 elements in order to eliminate those which did not have the necessary reliability (Cronbach's alpha) to be acceptable in an exploratory study such as ours.

With the resulting 22 items we again applied a factor analysis using orthogonal rotation in order to obtain the relationship among these variables. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure statistic offered a .72 as a result and the test of sphericity was representative sufficiently (p≤.001). So, we determined the reliability of the analysis. From these results (Table 1), we could determine the existence of five factors comparable with other female stereotypes present in the advertisements analyzed. We named these stereotypes to facilitate our work method: *Traditional Real (Fulfilled Women)* (α=.76) made up of the items where the women appear with values such as "love", "maternity", and "family". The *Hedonist Transgressor (Object Women)* (α=.65) composed of items linked to "triumph", "freedom", "conquest", "loyalty" and "transgression". We even identified the weak and fragile woman and called her *Passive Receptor (Doll Women)* (α=.67) with features such as "sadness", "weakness", "listlessness" and "submission". The other women were the *High Consumer (Sensual Women)* (α=.61) identified by her "sexual attractiveness", "seduction" and pleasure. Finally, we detected the *Idealistic Approach (Modern Women)* (α=.63) related to images of "modernity", "joy" and "comfort".

Table 1: Main components' Factor analysis (orthogonal varimax rotation)

Items	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
The character shows family values	,871				
The character shows maternity values	,802				
The character shows love	,751				
The character shows sadness		,827			
The character shows weakness		,726			
The character shows listless		,666			
The character shows submission		,513		,418	
The character shows triumph			,756		
The character shows freedom			,686		
The character shows conquest attitude			,639	,395	
The character shows loyalty			,598		
The character shows transgress attitude		,373	,401	,388	-,351
The character shows sexual attraction				,776	
The character shows pleasure				,697	
The character shows seductive attitude	-,424			,497	
The character shows comfort attitude					,772
The character shows modernity					,743
The character shows affective success	,454			,412	,480
Eigenvalue	2.52	2.22	2.15	2.14	1.79
Percentage of the variance explained	13.99%	12.33%	11.94%	11.90%	9.96%

Graphic 1: Averages of each stereotype present in the advertisements

Each stereotype has a theoretical span with a variation from 0 (no presence) to 1 (very present).

With all this information, we described five new variables representing the five stereotypes found in our analysis. Based on COMPUTE command in SPSS 13.0 software we proceeded to add up all the factors found in each stereotype and divided the total amount by the total number of items in order to obtain a similar average for each stereotype. Then, with the new variables we had created on the basis of this process, we verified that the most frequent stereotype shows a sensual woman (M=0.43) followed by a transgressor woman (M=0.27) and a modern woman (M=0.22). Also present though to a lesser extent, are the stereotypes that reflected women as fragile or submissive (M=0.12) and traditional creatures (M=0.07). (See data in Graph 1).

4.3. Differences between women, depends on the stereotypes used
When we performed the bivariate analysis, we detected differences in the representative statistical presence of each stereotype based on the features of each advertisement. In this sense, we observed differences at the multivariate level among the stereotypes, depending on the advertised product [Lambda

de Wilks=0.69, $F_{multivaried}$(25.000, 985.933)=4.175, p≤.001]. At the univariate level, we detected differences in each stereotype analyzed (see Table 2). We also observed that the traditional woman stereotype mostly promotes (M=0.14) perfume (F(5, 269)=4.654, p≤.001). On the other hand, we found that the transgressor and aggressive women are shown in perfume (M=0.26) and accessorize advertisements (M=0.36) (M=0.36) (F(5, 269)=5.391, p≤.001). In these same advertisements, we also frequently found the *sensual* women, not only showing accessorizes (M=0.46) but also perfumes (M=0.51) (F(5, 269)=5.534, p≤.001).   Meanwhile, the modern woman was only prevalent in the beauty treatment advertisements (M=0.33) (F(5, 269)=2.740, p≤.05). The fragile and passive women were found especially in clothing advertisements (M=0.15) and accessories (M=0.19) (F(5, 269)=3.596, p≤.01).

Table 2: Differences founded between stereotype averages and their presence in each kind of product.

| Women Stereotype | Total average | 1.1 Product category of the advertising | | | | | | 1.2 F 1.3 (5, 269) | p |
		Clothing	Cosmetics	Beauty Treatment	Perfume	Accessory	Underwear		
• Traditional	0.07	0.02	0.00	0.00	**0.14**	0.03	0.02	4.654	.000
• Hedonistic-transgressor	0.27	**0.23**	0.05	0.16	**0.29**	**0.36**	0.13	5.391	.000
• Passive – Receptor	0.12	**0.15**	0.02	0.00	0.12	**0.19**	0.03	3.596	.004
• Sensual	0.43	0.29	0.33	0.13	**0.51**	**0.46**	0.33	5.534	.000
• Modern	0.22	0.14	0.15	**0.33**	0.28	0.22	0.08	2.740	.020
N	275	30	11	15	117	74	28		

Each stereotype has a theoretical span with variation from 0 (no presence) to 1 (very present).

We also identified significant differences at the multivariable level [Lambda de Wilks=0.66, $F_{multivaried}$(20.000, 1076.000)=5.927, p≤.001] when we focused on the use of the different stereotypes in each different woman's age group. At the univariable analysis we found representative differences but only for three of the five stereotypes (see data in Table 3). At this point, we can say that thin women (M=0.32) and those with a normal complexion (M=0.25) are usually presented as fighter or transgressor (F(3, 271)=6.039, p≤.001). On the other hand, the *fragile and passive* women were the tiniest (M=0.33) (F(3, 271)=9.842, p≤.001). Similarly, we found that the *sensual* woman stereotype has a high presence among characters with a skinny appearance (M=0.53) (F(3, 271)=2.847, p≤.05).

Table 3: Relationship between stereotype and Characters body complexion

| Women Stereotype | Total Share | 1.4 Character Complexion | | | | 1.5 F 1.6 (3, 271) | p |
		Tiny Complexity	Thin Complexity	Normal Complexity	Could not be classified		
• Traditional	.07	.03	.07	.13	.08	1.287	.279
• Hedonistic-transgressor	.27	.22	**.32**	**.25**	.12	6.039	.001
• Passive – Receptor	.12	**.33**	.11	.06	.07	9.842	.000
• Sensual	.43	**.53**	.44	.36	.32	2.847	.038
• Modern	.22	.11	.24	.25	.21	1.577	.195
N	275	30	173	33	39		

Each stereotype has a theoretical span with variation from 0 (no presence) to 1 (very present).

In order to detect the relationship between the different stereotypes found in the analyzed advertisements as well as the features shown in the advertisements or the characters themselves we proceeded to make the correlation (Pearson test) among the five stereotypes and all of the aspects (see Tables 4 and 5). Then, we were able to determine that the advertisement reflected reality when the characters shown in the ads were playing the traditional woman stereotype (r=.29, p≤.001) and modern woman stereotype (r=.41, p≤.001), but this realism decreases in the case of the *fragile* woman (r=-.13, p≤.05) and the *sensual* woman stereotypes (r=-.13, p≤.05). We also reviewed all of the advertisements to understand the relationships between external beauty and product consumption in the *object* woman (r=.44, p≤.001) *doll* (r=.26, p≤.001), *sensual* (r=.31, p≤.001) and *modern* (r=.27, p≤.001). Related to the connection between the happiness and external appearance of the characters, we found that the stereotypes with the greatest presence of this feature was the *traditional* (r=.28, p≤.001) and *modern* (r=.37, p≤.001) (see data in Table 4).

Table 4: Correlations between stereotypes and descriptive variables of the advertisements.

Rest of variables	Women stereotypes				
	Traditional	Hedonistic-transgressor	Passive – Receptor	Sensual	Modern
The advertisement is realistic	.29(***)	-.05	-.13(*)	-.13(*)	.41(***)
Relationship between product purchase and beauty	-.05	.44(***)	.26(***)	.31(***)	.27(***)
Relationship between happiness and external appearance	.28(***)	.01	-.11	-.03	.37(***)

*** p≤.001; ** p≤.01; * p≤.05

As for the concrete relation between the five stereotypes and other features of the characters we detected that each of them had a singular relation with some important aspects present in the advertisements (see data in Table 5). For example, we noticed that the woman present in the traditional stereotype was frequently found in happy characters (r=.32, p≤.001), those who were illustrating friendship (r=.34, p≤.001), doing homework (r=.25, p≤.001), in leisure environments (r=.44, p≤.001) and also those women who were underage in appearance (r=.17, p≤.01). At the same time, we did not find this stereotype in the characters with seductive attitudes (r=-.20, p≤.001) or those in self-contemplative poses (r=-.17, p≤.01). The *hedonistic transgressor* woman was closely related to women with aggressive (r=.25, p≤.001), competitive (r=.18, p≤.01), and personal effort attitudes (r=.25, p≤.001) as well as athletic (r=.50, p≤.001), seductive (r=.46, p≤.001), self-contemplative attitudes (r=.42, p≤.001), with a perfect face and body (r=.33, p≤.001) and performing leisure activities (r=.13, p≤.05). This stereotype was significantly and negatively associated with the childlike image of the woman (r=-.15, p≤.05).

Table 5: Correlations between stereotypes and descriptive variables of the characters.

Rest of variables	Women Stereotype				
	Traditional	Hedonistic Transgressor	Passive – Receptor	Sensual	Modern
Character shows aggressiveness	-.11	.25(***)	.12	.25(***)	-.19(**)
Character shows happiness	.32(***)	.09	-.28(***)	-.24(***)	.23(***)
Character shows personal effort	-.06	.12(*)	.13(*)	-.01	.04
Character shows friendship	.34(***)	.07	-.13(*)	-.06	.30(***)
Character shows joy	-.08	.11	.03	.07	.20(***)
Character shows professional success	-.07	.25(***)	-.06	.14(*)	-.10
Character shows competitiveness	-.09	.18(**)	-.08	.04	-.10
Character shows care of the home tasks	.25(***)	-.07	-.03	.06	.20(***)
Underage appearance	.17(**)	-.15(*)	.22(***)	.02	-.04
Character is athletic	-.05	.50(***)	.16(**)	.34(***)	-.06
Character is in a seductive attitude	-.20(***)	.46(***)	.28(***)	.48(***)	.09
Self-contemplative attitude	-.17(**)	.42(***)	.14(*)	.31(***)	.02
Character has a passive attitude	-.01	.02	.35(***)	.26(***)	.19(***)
Character has a perfect face or body	-.02	.33(***)	.16(**)	.34(***)	.13(*)
Character is naked or half naked	-.03	.01	.02	.32(***)	-.03
Character shows body as a esthetic value	-.06	.47(***)	.20 (***)	.31(***)	.17(**)
Character is in a leisure environment	.44(***)	.13(*)	-.08	-.08	.35(***)

*** p≤.001; ** p≤.01; * p≤.05

In reference to the representation of the women as fragile and submissive in the *passive-receptor* stereotype, these images were significant and positively associated with an underage appearance (r=.22, p≤.001), seductive attitudes (r=.28, p≤.001), passivity (r=.35, p≤.001) and self-contemplation (r=.14, p≤.05) as well as personal effort (r=.13, p≤.05). This stereotype showed an athletic woman (r=.16, p≤.01), with a perfect body and face (r=.16, p≤.01) as well as a body exposed as an esthetical value (r=.20, p≤.001). On the other hand, this woman was also characterized by a lack of happiness (r=-.28, p≤.001) and friendship (r=-.13, p≤.05).

The *sensual* woman was aggressive (r=.25, p≤.001), athletic (r=.34, p≤.001), seductive (r=.48, p≤.001), self-contemplative (r=.31, p≤.001), passive (r=.26, p≤.001), with a perfect body and face (r=.34, p≤.001), showing professional success (r=.14, p≤.05), and a naked or half naked body (r=.35, p≤.001), which, at the same time, was shown as an esthetic value for the advertisement (r=.31, p≤.001). We found a negative relationship in this stereotype only in the case of the happiness of the character (r=-.25, p≤.001).

The last character, the modern woman was shown as friendly (r=.30, p≤.001), happy (r=.23, p≤.001), joyful (r=.20, p≤.001), a good housewife (r=.20, p≤.001) and performing leisure activities (r=.19, p≤.001). This stereotype also had a perfect body and face (r=.13, p≤.05) and, usually, the body was used as a mere esthetic value (r=.17, p≤.01) rarely associated with aggressive women (r=-.19, p≤.01).

5. Conclusions and Discussion

One of the most surprising results of the research is that these five stereotypes we found in our analysis of Spanish magazines could be expanded to any other country. Most of the brands were international, and this means that a regular consumer could find the brand in airports or in her/his own country.

Another interesting conclusion is the average of each stereotype in the sample. The absolute presence of the *sensual* and *object* woman above other woman representations could be overwhelming. At the same times there is an evident absence of certain values and types or representations of real woman.

This study provides evidence of a double tendency. On the one hand brands show women as aggressive, active, taking the initiative in the affective and sexual relationships and having negative attitudes related to aspects like invasion, imposition, evidence or arrogance. On the other hand, we also found a delicate, fragile and unhealthy woman who is excessively thin and has a passive attitude. Both are extreme examples and do not reflect women's real lives.

We would like to point out the hedonist and transgressor women who reinforce the social stereotype of this type of woman who is always appreciated for her external beauty. This stereotype is transmitted by women's magazines in open contradiction to their usual defense of women's rights. This construction of a woman's image as very feminine and delicate and, at the same time, with some aggressive attitudes (conquest, seduction, sexual aggressiveness and so on) perpetuates the social stereotype of a triumphant women who bases hers domination on her physical aspects, not on her intelligence, or her personality.

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