

THE ROLE OF THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE CREATION OF THE SOCIAL RESPONSIBLE ADVERTISING ENTERPRISE: THE GENDER EQUALITY IN THE CREATIVE DEPARTMENT

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Abstract

In Spain, with the recent adoption of the law of effective equality between women and men, one of the social responsibility policies recommended is to achieve their equal promotion in the different professional groups and categories. This policy would be important, specially, in the commercial communication industry and, in particular, in the creative departments. The standard of an equal distribution by gender in the creative workgroups would compensate the absence of a legal or corporate norm which protects the participation of women, in equal opportunities to men, in the creation of the message. In this way, with the creative mixed workgroups, we would be able to promote the gender equality not only in the enterprises but also in the social environment for stimulating the role of women as “creative force” of the advertising message. Until now, for achieving a fair image of women in the mass media, the efforts have been focused on promoting the participation of women in the control of the message once created, (“censor force”), but not in their participation in its creation. So, the gender inequality in the core of the advertising industry (the creative department), would be able to perpetuate the sexist advertising in the mass media. In a prospective manner, this research pretends to know which department the future advertising workforce plan to go into, to assess, according to the results obtained, the need of adopting this measure of corporate social responsibility (a balanced distribution of women and men in the different professional groups). For this objective we have administered a questionnaire on work and family expectations to a sample of 350 advertising and public relations undergraduate students coming from three different universities. The results indicate that, like it happens in the “real” advertising industry, the creative department will be, predominantly, male. This suggests that the educational system could reproduce and legitimate the inequity between men and women in the advertising departments. In this way, if the enterprises adopt this measure of corporate social responsibility, the university education must adequate the teaching of advertising’s systems and process to the new parameters imposed by the advertising social responsible enterprise.

Keywords: gender equality, creative department, university advertising education, work expectations, advertising undergraduate students.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper will focus on issues pertaining to the role of advertising education in achieving gender equality in the creative departments. With the European Space for

Higher Education we have the opportunity to rethink methodologies and curricula and, therefore, it is time to consider how the commercial communication education could aide to remove the sexual segregation in the advertising sector.

First of all, we will review the legal and ethical efforts made in our country to achieve gender equality. This analysis will comprise an overview of the Spanish legislation on women's issues and, in particular, the law of effective equality between women and men. Besides, we will analyse the advertising legislation and the ethical dispositions of *Autocontrol* (the Spanish advertising self-regulation organisation-SRO) that protects the image of women in the mass media.

Secondly, we will examine the importance of ethics in the advertising curricula and we will study the advertising approach proposed to include a new paradigm in the ethics of women's advertising.

1.1. The gender equality in Spain: theory vs. practice

In our country, the 1978 Constitution establishes the principle of equality as a superior value of the legal order and no sexual discrimination as a fundamental right. From this starting point, and according to the review made by Bustelo, Lombardo & Platero (2003), in Spain the equality legislation has adopted several laws in the civil regulation (e.g. Law 11/1981, 13 May on legal equality between husband and wife), the penal regulation (e.g. Law 35/1995, 11 December on resources and assisting the victims of violence and crimes against sexual freedom), and the labour and social regulation (e.g. Law 39/1999, 5 November on promoting the reconciliation of family and work life of working people).

In particular, our interest is focused on the adoption of the Law 3/2007, 22 March on effective equality between women and men. In this law, one of the social policies recommend is to achieve the equal promotion of men and women in the different professional groups and categories. Despite the increased participation of women in the labour force in recent times (International Labour Office, 2006), this measure is still needed to achieve an increase of the socioeconomic empower of women, the basic condition to reach an effective gender equality (International Labour Office, 2003). Several studies confirm that there is a gender gap in the labour market. The Corporate Women Directors International 2007 report manifest that only 11.2% of all board seats in the Fortune Global 200 companies are held by women (CWDI, 2007). In this sense, in our country, Mateos, Escot & Gimeno (2006) also identified the glass ceiling (vertical segregation) with only 6.61% of women in the board of directors of the 1085 bigger Spanish enterprises.

In the Spanish advertising industry, these gender inequalities are also clear. A research in Spanish advertising agencies on women's categories and specializations shows a vertical and a horizontal segregation. On the one hand there are an extremely low percentage of women in managerial positions (1%) and, in the other hand, some departments (creative services, art and copy) are "exclusive" for men (Martín-Llaguno, Beléndez & Hernández, 2007).

In the commercial communication industry, not only due to gender inequalities, but also for the social influence of the advertising discourse in the transmission of roles, attitudes and values, the application of this measure would be strongly recommended in the creative departments to remove the sexist advertising. In this sense, the Spanish National Women's Agency (*Instituto de la Mujer*) has created an Observatory of Women's Image to detect sexist campaigns that include stereotyped images of women. This Observatory has registered, in 2006, 549 complaints relating to 207 advertising campaigns, which represents an increase of 12.2% compared to 2005 (Instituto de la Mujer, 2007).

Since the IV World Conference on Women in Beijing, in 1995, the promotion of a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in media is a means to achieve

gender equality. In this sense, in our country, the Law 3/2007, 22 March on effective equality between women and men states that:

“Public media will look after to transmit an egalitarian, plural and non-stereotyped image of women and men in society and will promote the knowledge and the diffusion of the equality principle between women and men”.

In the advertising sector, the Law 34/1988, 11 November on general law advertising considers illegal the advertising which promotes the stereotypes of women.

In this sense, in the General Code of Advertising Practice (1996, last update in 2002) of the Spanish SRO (*Autocontrol*) there is a compromise to respect the values, rights and principles from the 1978 Constitution, which implicitly assumes the protection of gender equality.

In this line, the women and the media platform for action of the Fourth World Conference on Women stated that it would be needed:

“Develop, consistent with freedom of expression, professional guidelines and codes of conduct and other forms of self-regulation to promote the presentation of non-stereotyped images of women”.

So, we can conclude that for achieving a fair and not stereotyped image of women in the mass media, the efforts have been concentrated on promoting the participation of women in the control of the message once created, (“censor force”), but not on their participation in its creation.

In this research we consider that the gender inequality in the core of the advertising industry (the creative department) would be able to perpetuate the sexist advertising in the mass media.

1.2. The importance of ethics in advertising education: the new paradigm in the women’s advertising.

Due to the creation of the European Space for Higher Education, and following the principles articulated in the Sorbonne Declaration (1998) and the Bologna Declaration (1999), the Communication Spanish Faculties have published a Green Paper on Communication Studies.

One of the previous steps to restructure these studies was to define the job opportunities, the knowledge and the professional skills needed by these undergraduates. In particular, in the Advertising and Public Relations studies, the most important subject observed was “the knowledge of the ethics and professional deontology of the advertising and public relations, as well as their legal aspects”.

According to these data, it is clear that the ethics issues are an integral part of the education of advertising professionals’ new generations.

In this context, and in relation to the increasing public and political gender equality awareness, it is needed to spread a new paradigm in the women’s advertising. In this sense, Cohan (2001: 323) propose “to adopt a new paradigm that emphasizes values which women hold to be important, and to discard certain practices, such as stereotyping women as weak, in need of help, or sex objects”. One of the recommendations proposed to be taken is “to encourage creative teams to transform negative images to ones which empower women” (Cohan, 2001: 331).

In this paper we believe that for adopting this paradigm shift we have to act in a prospective manner and, particularly, from education. In other words, we have to consider the influence that the process of labour socialization in the University, taken as the “learning process through which acquire the attitudes, skills and behaviors useful for the performance of work” (Prieto, Peiró, Bravo & Caballer, 1996: 67), has for achieving a gender-balanced society.

2. OBJETIVES

The purpose of this paper is to know the department the future advertising workforce plan to go into, to assess, according to the results obtained, the need of adopting a measure of corporate social responsibility: a balanced distribution of women and men in the different professional groups.

3. METHOD

Participants

The sample for the study comprised 350 advertising students coming from three different Spanish universities, 238 from the University of Alicante, 69 from the University of Murcia and 43 from the University of Navarra. Of the 350 students, 86 (24.6%) were men and 264 (75.4%) were women. They ranged in age from 17 to 30 (*Mean*= 20.45, *SD*=2.58). One hundred eighty-two (52%) were “full-time” students, 131 (34.4%) had part-time jobs and 37 had temporary jobs. Among the respondents, 162 (46.3%) were involved in a relationship and 188 (53.7%) were not either married or involved in a relationship.

Procedure

The data were collected as a part of a larger study on family and work expectations of advertising undergraduate students. They were asked to complete a self-administered survey. Questionnaires were administered in 2006-2007 academic year in class, prior to lesson commencement. Participation in the survey was voluntary and confidentiality of responses was assured to the participants. The survey took approximately 30-40 minutes to complete.

Measures

- a) Gender: this variable was coded as 1= man and 2= woman.
- b) Advertising Department: participants reported which specialization they plan to go into (production, account services, research, creative, copy, art, public relations, administration, other).

4. RESULTS

Advertising Department

Table 1 examines the extent to which male and female participants plan to enter different specializations as their first choice.

A chi-square test indicates that there are significant male-female differences in the choice of advertising specialization when the eight specializations and other specializations are compared, $\chi^2 (9, N = 350) = 20.81, p = .01$. Results show that a higher percentage of women (5.7%) plan to enter Research than men (1.2%). A higher percentage of men (40.7%) intend to enter Creativity than women (20.1%).

Table 1. Descriptives for Advertising Specialization by gender

	Gender		Total
	Men	Women	

Department	Production	2.3%	6.4%	5.4%
	Account Service	2.3%	1.5%	1.7%
	Research/planning	1.2%	5.7%	4.6%
	Creativity	40.7%	20.1%	25.1%
	Copy writing	0%	1.9%	1.4%
	Art	10.5%	12.1%	11.7%
	Public Relations	25.6%	27.7%	27.1%
	Administration	1.2%	0.4%	0.6%
	Other	2.3%	2.3%	2.3%
	I do not know	14.0%	22.0%	20.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

5. DISCUSSION

The focus of this study was on examining some of the work expectations of the advertising undergraduate students. In particular, an analysis of the gender differences in the specialization chosen to work in would permit us to assess the need of adopting a measure of corporate social responsibility (a balanced distribution of women and men in the different professional groups) in the advertising enterprises.

Results indicate that there are significant gender differences in the advertising department intended to work in. Thus, in the core of the advertising sector (the creative department), the male viewpoint will still dominate the advertising campaigns.

We can argue two possible explanations for these gender inequalities. On the one hand, the advertising education could reproduce the gender stereotypes. If traditionally, men are placed in the creative area, while women are assigned to the research positions, the professionals could be able to internalize this sexual segregation from the University. Perhaps, the labour socialization process in the advertising education could transmit the sex-role socialization of the advertising industry and, therefore, perpetuate the occupational segregation. In this way, the University would be only a sort of business and would “produce” the “goods” demanded by the “public” (the enterprises). On the other hand, the gender differences in the advertising department could be attributed to the different skills of women and men. So, it is possible that participants choose different tasks according to their skills.

These gender differences are particularly relevant when studying the complaints of sexist advertising campaigns because most of them are created by men. As noted earlier, if we put the emphasis on the participation of women in the control of the message once created, and not on its conception, it will be difficult to remove the sexist advertising campaigns. The results of this study beg the question of whether the parity in the creative teams could aide to develop a more gender-balanced advertising. If so, the advertising education must adopt a new social approach towards this sector with the purpose of creating a more egalitarian and fair society. A key aspect is the convenience of including the concept of gender mainstreaming in the advertising curricula. If the advertising messages have the potential to impact in the values of the society, the gender approach has to be present throughout all the teaching of the advertising’s systems and process.

In sum, with this paper we propose to transform the role of women as “censor force” into “creative force”. Furthermore, the University can contribute to the social change

with the adoption of the gender issues in the curricula beyond the gender mainstreaming to achieve deconstructing the gender stereotypes.

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