



## The Pragmatic Analysis of How Gender Roles Are Portrayed on Billboard Advertisements in Cameroon

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### **Abstract**

This paper aims to navigate the rich academic literature on multimodal analysis and gender portrayal in billboard advertising and provide an overview of key findings and trends observed throughout the years. For several years, women in advertising were likely to be depicted in traditional and domestic roles and were excluded from empowering roles and professional settings. Male depictions have also changed, moving from mere tradition and masculine portrayals to a greater variety of roles. Since humans create the concept of gender socially, gender is referred to as a social construction. This is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups, and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex. Nevertheless, these ascriptions differ across societies and cultures. The gender Schema Theory by Bern (1981) and Williamson's (1978) representation theory has been used to analyse this work.

**Keywords:** Advertising, gender roles, gender stereotyping

### **INTRODUCTION**

The power of advertising to change, public opinion has had a significant impact on the lives of men and women ([www.womenissues.about.comcs/body\\_image](http://www.womenissues.about.comcs/body_image)). Thus, advertising has been accused of contributing to women's regulation in the background, assigning them to a place in the kitchen, ascribing them to a posture to be seen and not to be heard and generally making women tools for just the advancement of men. This study explores the issue of femininity and masculinity as the escalation in billboards represents the final pattern. That is, advertisements display a realistic portrayal of daily life. In this study we look at what men and women stand for in advertisements, their placement and the message they convey to the audience. It also ascertains the reasons behind dominant forms of representations of gender and the way advertising contributes to upholding definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Gender roles are based on the different expectations that individuals, groups and society have of individuals based on their sex and each society's values and beliefs about gender. Gender roles are the products of the interactions between individuals and their environment, and they give individuals cues about what sort of behaviour is believed to be appropriate for what sex. Appropriate gender roles are defined according to a society's beliefs about differences between the sexes. Understanding the term 'gender roles', we can say 'gender' is a social term often confused with 'sex'. Sex and gender are different concepts. Sex is a biological concept determined based on an individual's primary sex characteristics that people ascribe to different sexes. Oakley (1972) was one of the first social scientists to distinguish the concept of sex. According to Oakley, gender parallels the biological division of sex into male and female but involves the division and social valuation of masculinity and femininity. In other words, gender is a concept that humans create socially through interacting with one another and their environment, yet it relies heavily upon biological differences between males and females. Since humans create the concept of gender socially, gender is referred to as a social construction. The social construction of gender is demonstrated by the fact that individuals, groups, and societies ascribe particular traits, statuses, or values to individuals purely because of their sex. Nevertheless, these ascriptions differ across societies and cultures over time within the same society.

The concept of gender roles is closely related to another equally important concept, "Gender Stereotyping." The traditional and general definition of stereotypes can be defined as beliefs about the behaviours, characteristics and attributes of members of certain social groups (Hilton and Hippel, 1996). More specifically, gender stereotypes inform us about what women and men are and also lay ground rules for how men and women should be (Kite et al., 2008). Hence, as Hamburger et al. (1996) ascertain, gender stereotyping divides men and women into two groups by determining what is masculine and what is 'feminine'. Thus, gender stereotypes communicate gender-specific characteristics and behaviours that are believed to belong to 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Gender roles can also be linked to expectations of males and females in realms outside of the family (Williams, 1995). In the workplace, men and women are often expected to perform different tasks and occupy different roles based on sex (Kanter, 1977). Even in the early twenty-first century, many corporations operate from a perspective that favours traditional beliefs about gender roles, for example, offering parental leave benefits only to mothers and denying such benefits to fathers.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In order to be able to perform well-informed research on how gender roles are portrayed on billboards, this section presents the review of other works that relate to this and sets up a theoretical framework that would expatiate the issues on the topic. The concept of pragmatics, as viewed by Mey (1993), is that it is not a science of language in its own right or the science of language as seen and studied by linguists but as the science of language seen in relationship with its users, as real-life people use it for their purposes and within their limitations. He further buttresses this viewpoint by aptly alluding to the nature of advertisements, which attempt to sell goods or services by inviting the spectator without

actually saying the words and appealing to the human instincts of want and need. Leach and Short (1988) cited by Amadou (2011) opine that the pragmatic analyses of language can be understood to be the investigation into that aspect of meaning which is derived not from the formal properties of words or constructions, but from how utterances are used and how they relate to the context in which they are uttered. The above opinion of Amadou (2011) is related to this paper as it is out to derive the meaning of how gender roles are being portrayed on billboard advertisements.

With regards to gender roles in advertising, several previous studies from the 20th century, show the prevalence of traditional gender roles in advertising. An example is research by Lindner (2004) on the gender representations of women in advertisements. When it comes to more recent research, a meta-analysis by Grau and Zotos (2016) of an academic article on gender stereotypes in advertising that was published in marketing communication journals (2010) also shows that gender stereotyping still exists in advertising around the world. It is important to note, however, that the result of past research also depends on the scope of the research, which can be limited. Gentry and Harrison (2010) state that many studies on gender portrayals in advertising focus on the prevalence of female stereotypes. The reason for this scope is that the stereotypical portrayal of women is often seen to be more problematic, as the feminist perspective used to be focused on giving equality to women, Gentry and Harrison (2010). Their research states that in television commercials from (2007) and (2008), women were portrayed less in stereotypical gender roles than men. Therefore, the authors argue that a mere gender-neutral representation of men in advertising may be a pivotal step to facilitate a shift in gender roles (Gentry and Harrison, 2010).

The studies of Iman (2001) and Wilson (2004) reveal that the media present dominating and negative images of women, portray ideological themes encouraging women's subordination in advertisements and provide powerful models of behaviour to emulate or react against a masculine image in advertisements which typically reflect power, strength, virility, athleticism and competitiveness while feminine images portray beauty, submissiveness, nurturance and corporate. Thus, billboard advertisements, like other media adverts such as television, newspapers and or magazines, reflect or portray women in an awful societal marginalisation, discrimination and overall relegation of women to the background.

Research also shows that about two-thirds of women feel that advertisers go too far in using sex to sell products and that explicit billboard advertisements are more offensive. Recent French reports also highlight the promotion of sexual values in advertisements that increasingly show degrading portrayals of women with overtones of violence, sexual discrimination and bestiality, (Media and Gender Monitor (2002) cited by Onyejekwe, 2005). A classic example is the Barbette brand cooking cream advert in France that shows a headless torso of a woman with the caption "I do what I want with her". Likewise, Courtney and Whipple (1974), cited by Asemah et al. (2013), studied the portrayal of women in television commercials and found significant differences between men and women. Women were overrepresented in advertisements for cosmetics and were less likely to appear in advertisements for cars, trucks and related products. They found out

that 75% of all advertisements using women were for products in the kitchen or bathrooms, reinforcing the stereotype that a woman's place is in the home. Compared to men, women were primarily portrayed in house settings rather than business settings. In most adverts, women are portrayed as subordinate to men or as decorative items. Ferrant et al. (1988), cited in Asemah et al. (2013), stated that the portrayal of women in television advertisements is criticised by men who believe that women's depicted roles in commercials have not kept pace with women's changing roles in the society, Ferrante et al. (1988) cited in Asemah et al. (2013) found that women traditionally have been over-represented in the home and underrepresented outdoors in business settings. Also, Whipple and Courtney (1988) found that there is evidence that advertising presents a traditional portrayal of women and that demography and attitudes have changed drastically over the past decade. This idea by Shipple and Courtney (1988) is related to this work. Meanwhile, Lesniak (2012) avers that there are ethical considerations for sex and gender representation in advertising stereotypes for men and women, which are heavily used to clarify messages. For instance, a woman in the kitchen cooking a meal while the husband gets home from work is a stereotype that is often used to sell dinner items.

Several researchers have examined gender roles, identification and representation. Each researcher has concerned himself with how men and women have been represented in particular ways. Some of the most provocative research dealing with gender has been on advertisements. Advertisements allow for an in-depth examination of the representation of our culture and the display of realistic images of daily life.

## THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING

Judith Williamson's Representation Theory and Bern's Gender Schema Theory reviewed By Eileen and Christine (2016) are used. The representation theory by Judith Williamson 1978 posits that our unconscious linking of products, images, and emotions produces the meaning of advertisements. The currency of science does not exist without our actions and desiring minds that complete transactions and transfer meanings and value within signs. The advertisements draw on existing referent systems, shared cultural codes, signed systems and conceptual maps to construct their meaning, and we, in turn, draw on this reference system to interpret and create the meanings of advertisements. Gender Schema theory is a social-cognitive theory about how people in society become gendered at an early age and the impact of its gendering on their cognitive and categorical processing throughout their lifetime. Children develop ideas and theories about what it means to be masculine and feminine, called gender schema, from an early age and use these theories to categorise information, make decisions and regulate behaviour. According to Bern (1981), gender schematic people are more likely to divide their world and regulate their behaviour based on gender. In contrast, for gender schematic people, gender is a less critical category, and thus, they are less likely to organise information or regulate their behaviour based on gender. Bern developed the gender schematic theory to investigate and focus more on how society creates and enforces the categories of gender

Specifically, gender schema theory argues that American culture is so gender polarising in its discourse and its social institution that children come to be gender schematic without even realising that gender schematic, in turn, helps lead children to become conventionally sex-typed. In imposing a gender-based classification in reality, children evaluate different ways of behaving in terms of their cultural definitions of gender appropriateness and reject any behaviour that does not match their sex. In contrast to Kohberg's cognitive developmental account of why children become sex-typed, this alternative account situates the source of the child's motivation for a match between sex and behaviour not in the child's mind but in the gender polarisation of culture (Bern, 1993). This theory relates to this study because it answers how gender roles are portrayed in billboard advertisements.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

There has been a purposeful selection as the sampling technique. Fifteen billboards were selected from Yaounde, Douala, Limbe, Buea and Bamenda and were analysed pragmatically. The sources of the pictures are from billboards in these cities in Cameroon. The advertisements captured were of goods and services used nationwide. The findings can be generalised to all geographical areas of Cameroon. As important as the text is, succinctly putting across the advertiser's message, the billboards are analysed using two steps. The linguistic analyses using Williamson's (1978) representation theory and the gender roles portrayed, which is the focus of this work, cannot be ignored. The visuals are used to elucidate how gender roles are portrayed by advertisers and communicate, most times, a myriad of meanings that the customers relate with in their subconscious to stimulate the representation into real-life situations without reducing the efficacy of the message using the gender schema theory by Bern.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The data for this work is presented, analysed and interpreted here as patterns of instances of multimodal analysis and how gender roles are portrayed on billboard advertisements of some companies in Cameroon. Using the review of the gender schema theory by Bern (1981) and the representation theory of Williamson 1978. Coloured graphic representations of billboard advertisements are presented and analysed pragmatically. This is to foreground how much meaning visuals and text contribute to the overall message of multimodality and gender roles.

### Multimodal analyses of Vitale Mineral Water



**Figure 1.** Vitale Mineral Water

According to Societe des Eaux Cameroon, Vitale mineral water has existed in Cameroon since 2017. It is a brand from the source Tangui, situated in Mombo-Mbanga. It is rich in

minerals and gives excellent hydration. <https://www.boissonducameroun.com>. The advertisement shows a picture of a couple who seem to be on their toes to protect their child, who appear to be running towards danger. The child is excited to get a water bottle, yet the parents fear she might fall. This relates to the representation theory because consumers always try to link an image to their emotions to make meaning. The caption "**She is our happiness**" is written in black and white against a coloured background to capture attention. The gender roles here direct our attention to the man who asserts his position to protect his family. His arms are wide open to protect the child while his wife, though looking in their direction, sits confidently as she is sure that no danger can befall the child with the man with the man. Again, the traditional gender role of women being linked to child nurturing is different here, as the advert shows that child upbringing is a joint effort for both parents. Looking at the schema theory, the man in the photo still carries the role of protector of the family as he looks like a shield for both the wife and child judging from his position in the photo- to lord over his family and to protect them. In contrast, his wife is comfortably positioned in the background.

### Multimodal Analysis of Mayor Oil



**Figure 2.** Mayor Oil

A beautiful lady and a girl are holding a bottle of mayor. This suggests that cooking is a woman's thing; it is best for women to be brand ambassadors. At the top of the billboard is a caption in white that reads "**A BEAUTIFUL STORY OF COMPLICITY**" written in capitals to pull maximum eyeballs to the board. The message looks like a pun because of the words beautiful story and complicity. The endorsers are dressed in a blend of yellow and red, all attractive colours to enhance brand identity, pull attention, and stimulate appetite. This is related to the representation theory. According to the gender schema theory, children grow up and already develop schemas to distinguish sex stereotypes. The women are all smiles, as though they are delighted with their assigned roles. The text on the billboard reads A beautiful story of complicity. This suggests that mayor oil is a great partner in cooking, as we see in the image of mouth-watering chicken pieces on the litres of oil.

### Multimodal Analysis of Martinal



**Figure 3.** Martinal

Figure 3 is an advertisement for both Martinal and Tartina. Tartina is a unique recipe made from finely selected cocoa beans that accompany various sandwiches, pancakes, waffles, cookies, etc. This beautiful family comprises a mother and two kids: a boy and a girl. This outfit insinuates they are school kids about to have breakfast and are set for school. There is a cheerful and radiant little girl giving her mother a "goodbye" kiss while her brother is all smiles, gazing at the audience, while the mother, putting on a white apron, looks very happy and fulfilled. The verbal message written "**smart and full of energy throughout the school year**" complements the image on the board relating to the representation theory; it also insinuates that Martinal is energy givers and suitable for school kids, according to Schema Theory, which posits that from birth, children grow to be sex-typed.

The beautiful family presented and the tins of Martinal and Tartina images are stimuli the advertiser provides to attract attention. When the advertiser activates and considers the images relevant enough, the advertiser compliments it with a message to provide the best stimuli so that the potential buyer begins the inferential process to recover the implicit and explicit information and the conclusions expected by the advertiser. The portrayal of gender roles, on the part of this advertisement, reflects the social reality of its time - that women were in charge of every house chore as they are related to the traditional idea of being in charge of nurturing. Housewife and mother, on the other hand, though the boy child in the picture has a beaming smile, his sexuality is still asserted as he ends with the smile without being part of the drama of kissing performed by his sister, asserting the fact that children are sex-typed from birth. Therefore, the man remains the man and is not ready for any emotional drama.

### Multimodal Analysis of SANET and CLEAN soap



**Figure 4.** SANET and CLEAN soap

Figure 4 advertises the household name of a detergent, Savon Clean, manufactured by Speed Clean Company at Diedo, Douala Cameroun. At the same time, Sanet soap is also a washing soap that is sold in cubes of 400g. There is a message on the board: "**Me and**

**You, SANET and CLEAN, we are together.**" SANET and CLEAN may be ascribed different names, but they perform the same function of washing thoroughly. There is an image of a lady gazing at the audience with a smile and two cubes of soap in front of her; probably Savon CLEAN and SANET. The portrayal of the gender role of a woman in an advertisement by inference shows that women are always shown in certain advertisements with products such as cleaning and housekeeping and also that focusing on the role that women are happy as a homemaker and their only duties are limited to the home. Thus, the happy mood of the woman in the picture. She looks happy asserting her responsibility as a woman and agreeing to the traditional role of domestication with no regrets. There is nothing linked to the male world in the picture that relates them to having a need or use for the soap. It is a woman's thing, and the man has nothing to do with it. Thus, it affirms the tenets of the gender schema theory that right from birth, children evaluate different ways of behaviour regarding their cultural appropriateness and reject any behaviour that does not match their sex.

### Multimodal Analysis of MANYAN Beer



**Figure 5.** MANYAN beer

Figure 5 is the advertisement for a larger beer brand, Manyan, produced by Les Brassieres du Cameroun based in Douala. The picture was taken at Mile 2 Nkwen Bamenda. The message on the billboard at the top is "**MY BRO, THIS IS OUR MATTER!**", and this text message compliments the image of the men discussing over bottles of beer. The message in capslocks for emphasis and to pull maximum attention. Alluding representation theory suggests that men don't mingle with women during essential discussions. The men look so happy after having their discussion.

Men are often presented as always in charge, self-contained and often love to be left to themselves. They love having fun together and in Cameroon, especially when beer surrounds them. They do not see women as partners but as objects that are supposed to be trampled upon and relegated to the background. From the message on the billboard above, there is no way a woman should be part of the discussion with men. It is not easy to see men with families in adverts or with kids. The patriarchal role is often projected. According to gender schema theory, children grow to become sex-typed without even knowing. Thus, the advert above projects that matters involving men are conventionally right to be discussed only by men without women being part of it. These views about men also suggest that advertisements portray how they negatively affect men by narrowing the definition of what it means to be a man. Therefore, alternatively, social roles for men

unwilling or unable to restrict themselves to the role of the firm, a silent loner on horseback.

### Multimodal Analysis of Champion Wheat Flour



**Figure 6.** Champion Wheat Flour

It is an advertisement for wheat flour. The picture was captured from a phone camera at Commercial Avenue Bamenda. The name "**Champion**" is written in bold over a yellow background to assert the brand's uniqueness. Yellow is a food colour that pulls attention. Different kinds of pastries produced out of flour are being displayed. The picture of a young man dressed like a baker is projected. He seems as if he is mixing dough for a pastry. He has a broad smile on his face while gazing at the audience as if to say that "what a man can do, a woman can do it better" is now a thing of the past. The portrayal of gender roles, in this case, does not align with the traditional idea of assigning domestic roles to women. The image of the man here insinuates that men can do what women do and can do it happily. Billboards have the advantage of being vast and eye-catching, targeting different classes, and thus having a guaranteed audience, Silveira and Ibancs (2004). Thus, what will first come to the eyes of the consumer is the picture of the smart and attractive young man in the attire of a "chef", prompting the consumer to want to get to the root of the matter. Comparatively, in Figure five, the woman is depicted with the natural role of being linked to house chores and the kitchen. The narrative has changed in Figure 6 because it is now the man who has been used to advertise wheat flour, out of the ordinary. This shows that the trends in advertisements are changing. Thus, images of empowering, active, confident, sexually powerful women are trending in advertisements, thus the idea of Femvertising – advertising that challenges traditional female advertising stereotypes that eliminate gender-based disparities as projected in figure 6. This contradicts the idea of gender schematic propagated by Bern in his Gender Schema theory.

### Multimodal Analysis of BOOSTER GIN



**Figure 7.** BOOSTER GIN

It is an advertisement for Booster gin produced by Les Brasseries du Cameroun based at Bonamousadi in Douala. The picture was taken at Bonaberi Doula. One can see a young man in a pose that projects him as a heavy-weight lifter. The image of a dark, muscled, strong and frightful young man on a black-coloured dominated background. The message "**So Hot**" written in white and "**So Gin**" written in lemon green complements the picture of the bottle of Gin placed to the right, which is also a visual stimulant. The young man is linked to the fire glowing beneath the gin bottle. The other message written in capslock, "**BOAST YOUR FEELING**", triggers many eyeballs and suggests the following according to the representation theory.

Black men are powerful.

A traditional man must have muscles to assert his masculinity.

Men must depict qualities of power to assess their patriarchal roles quickly.

Boaster gin makes you "high" and may make you look like the guy in the picture.

Men are supposed to look serious in their appearance, as depicted in the picture.

A dark body, broad chest, heavy-looking hands, and body are trending among youths. Thus, the drink would be widely loved by youths.

All the above insinuations are the traditional ideas of the male gender portrayed in most parts of our society, and these are stereotypical images that are gradually dwindling. Advertisers are trying to communicate new meanings of gender to embrace and effectively appear more socially responsible and satisfy the audience, especially the ethically conscious millennial customers. Therefore, Fig 7 could be another way of uploading trending pictures to pull maximum eyeballs towards the product.

### Multimodal Analysis of Mutzig Beer



**Figure 8.** Mutzig Beer

Figure 8 is the advertisement for Mutzig lager beer manufactured by the brewery company known as Les Brasseries du Cameroun. The picture was taken at Mile 17 Buea. To the left of the board is written "cheers to the whole world", and visibly below it in a blend of white and yellow, "Uncap and Win." It sounds like an order and relates to Williamson's Representation theory, which suggests that our unconscious linking of products to images gives meanings to advertisements. Also, several prizes are to be won, like drinks, laptops, and even cash prices flaunted on the board. Glaringly seen is an image of a man and woman, probably a couple. The man sits comfortably on a chair while the

lady is leaning on his shoulders with her hand and thumb up, suggesting that she is happy and satisfied with her environment.

Judging from the image on the board, one can infer from the gender schema that the idea of children growing to be sex-typed and the concept of gender polarisation of culture suggest that.

A woman remains subordinate to a man, taking from the depiction. The man is comfortably seated while the lady is standing and leaning on him.

A woman depends on the man, as the lady leaning on him suggests. She is only a compliment to the man. The woman is a 'toy' or a sex object to the man, so she has to accept being under him.

Men must be older than their wives. The image of the man presents him as an older man, old enough to be the father of the girl beside him. The girl's outfit depicts that she is of this generation as she is all dressed in trending attire while the man is dressed in traditional old-fashioned attire. The lady is the one taking a selfie depicting her age. Young girls like getting attached to old rich men. The lady is portrayed as a gold digger who does everything to keep the man's pocket.

The above insinuations judged from the gender roles portrayed in the advertisement are linked to the traditional stereotypical ideas of 'masculinity and femininity' held by society. The images and the prizes to be won are sufficient stimuli to attract public attention. This type of advertisement may incite the suppression of women and promote a chauvinist culture. It could also encourage women's denigration and reinforce the construction of an identity based on men's superiority.

### Multimodal Analysis of Kadji Beer



**Figure 9.** Kadji Beer

The advertisement of Kadji beer produced by Kadji group of companies and Les Brasseries du Cameroun; brewed and bottled in Douala – Cameroon, and sold in 65 bottles. The picture was taken from a phone camera at Tiko Round About. The colour scheme and aesthetic design are consistent with the drink identification. The image of two young men, each carrying a bottle in their hands, being sandwiched between them by a beautiful lady complements the verbal text message "**IT'S OUR BEER, ENJOY QUALITY**". The message is in cap locks as if the advertiser wants to point out glaringly that men and women can now share a beer equally. Alluding to the schema theory, gender roles are portrayed significantly in the above advertisement. The men are portrayed as

being in charge and thus are supposed to be protective, so the woman is seen standing between the two men. They (men) also assert their sexuality since they represent the fact that men drink beer, which is why it is two against one female.

On the other hand, it portrays the woman as strong and independent; she, too, has her beer in her hand, asserting that not only men drink beer; women, too, can drink beer. Figure (9) contradicts Figure 7, which depicts that men are strong and should be feared and respected. Figure 7 and 8, which project male chauvinist tendencies, is contrasted with Figure 9, whose depictions suggest that women can be part of what men do and can be projected with their heads high. The reason why the verbal message insinuates that the beer is for everyone.

### Multimodal Analysis of Reaktor Energy Drink



**Figure 10.** Reaktor Energy Drink

Reactor is an energy drink made by Monarch Beverage Company, bottled and distributed in Cameroon by Source du Pays S.A. The picture of the billboard was taken at Mile 2 Limbe. It is an effective energy drink and ensures well-being. The text message on the board is "**Energy to GO**", complementing the idea of it being an energy drink. Another message on the billboard is "**Conquering Day and Night**," insinuating that, according to representative theory, you would have energy that can sustain one to drive for 24 hours. The portrayal of gender role in this advert shows that man is strong and even get stronger after taking the reactor. The man behind the wheel, about to go on a journey, looks robust, muscular and confident, which are all depictions of how society sees men in their traditional ideas of what a man should be and what a woman should be. The man is driving a truck, technically projecting that a woman cannot dare to drive a truck and, worst still, drive it at night. The man is seen as powerful and courageous. He has authority – all these attributes do not ally with the concepts of what society feels a woman should be according to the gender schema theory.

### Multimodal Analysis of Orange Cameroun Data Bundle



**Figure 11.** Orange Cameroun Data Bundle

An advertisement for one of the orange bundles. The picture was taken at Commercial Avenue Bamenda. Once a customer subscribes to any bundle, the advantage is double. This can only be feasible if one renews the bundle before it expires, another subtle indication that one's bundle should not expire before it is renewed. The advertiser is persuasive, though he may sound different. The joy the man in the photo expresses while enjoying his "koki" and chatting indicates bonuses. The sizes of the bundles of koki indicate that the bundle is beautiful. Every transaction you make gives you a double advantage. Gender portrayal in this advert suggests that the man is seen only at eating time but not during food preparation. Food has been prepared by a woman since they are associated with domestic chores. The man does not only appear during eating but carries two heavy bundles of koki to eat alone. The broad smile on this face is assertive. It projects the idea of a satisfied man with authority over his home.

### Multimodal Analysis of Ozil Ultra Power Detergent



**Figure 12.** Ozil Ultra Power Detergent

The company OZIL ULTRA POWER is based in Douala, Cameroon. This advert was at Bonduma, Buea. The detergent with ultra micro bubbles penetrates deep into clothes to neutralise dirt and bacteria. It can be obtained from [glotelho.com](http://glotelho.com). The image of a strong-looking man dressed in yellow and black, which are the brand's colours, asserts brand identity. His dark eyeglasses and the folding of his arms suggest that he is just so satisfied with the detergent and is asking potential consumers to try it. The visual act performed by this advert is expressive by illustrating the endorser's state of mind, evident from his facial expression, pose and body language and also directive because the consumer's attention is attracted towards the product and psychologically pushing the audience to try the product. "**FINALLY STAINS HAVE MET THEIR MATCH**" written in cap locks is a pointer to potential customers and agrees with the tenets of Williamson's representation theory. The projection of a strong man who stands out as if to oversee that the stain remover is effective. The portrayal of the gender role of a strong and serious-looking man corroborates with the societal idea of men having the power and authority to be in charge or to lord over our society. In this case, the stain remover can only be compared to the strength of a man and corroborates with gender schema theory.

## Multimodal Analysis of Anna's Super Hair Weave



**Figure 13.** Anna's Super Hair Weave

Anna Super is a brand of synthetic hair or weaves wick style produced by super women dressed in Cameroonian hairstyles using "**Anna super weave wick**". The picture of the billboard was taken at Mile 4 Limbe. This high imagery attracts attention because of its colourfulness, of which the sky blue colour background is dominant and pulls out the beautiful faces and hairstyles of the ladies. The pose of the ladies is lovely and asserts their gender roles. The women are of different shapes yet look superb in their Anna Super hairstyles; using Anna Super suggest youthfulness and a fun-filled life. The visuals are more prominent as the facial expressions of the ladies express the pleasurable state of mind in addition to the colours. The only verbal message is the company's Anna Super name for brand identification. This shows that when it comes to beauty, products-only the women can fit the shoe. Women are endowed with beauty; thus, beauty products mostly have a large market related to women. Also, the female gender is depicted as being associated with trivial issues like hair. Men are suggested to be clung to more productive issues rather than being related to hairdo. Thus, children are being linked to gender schemas of their sex from birth according to the gender schema theory.

## Multimodal Analysis of Orange Money



**Figure 14.** Orange Money

It is an advertisement for Orange Money. At the top left is the message "**We are family!**" written in orange to assert brand identity. This billboard was captured at Upstation Bamenda. At the end of the message is an exclamation mark, which indicates the strong feeling attached to the message. Below the message are two arrows in white indicating the sending of money using orange money. The orange brand colour indicates receiving money. Next is "**10 years.**"; This could suggest that Orange Money has existed for years or is linked to the graduate in corporate blue attire whom the family has sponsored to achieve her dreams for ten years using Orange Money transactions. We see the joy, the laughter and the excitement on the faces of the family, in a mood of celebration after

pushing one of theirs to accomplish her dreams. This is complemented by the message to the board's top left: **"Pushing our limits to help you catch your dream,"** this is related to representation theory. Gender roles are presented here by asserting the authority of the men by indicating that sponsoring family members is always a man's thing, as we see more men in celebration in the picture than women. Women are portrayed as barely observers when it comes to taking care of the family. Thus, this alludes to the tenets of the gender schema theory by Bern S.

### Multimodal Analysis of Baron de Madrid



**Figure 15.** Baron de Madrid

Baron de Madrid is a quality brick red wine with a brilliant ruby red colour and purple tints. Its nose is fresh and clean with notes of red fruit and wood (<http://aurimat.com.shop>); it is brewed in Douala, Cameroon, at LA CAVE DU SECTEUR at cite des palmiers. It is sold in cartons and bottles of 7.5l. The picture of this billboard was taken at mile four of Limbe Park. The message on the right side of the board is **"Enjoy the sweetness"**. It is conspicuously written in bold for maximum eyeballs as the advertiser encourages the consumers to enjoy the drink's sweetness. Gender role is portrayed in the advert as if the drink is meant explicitly for women. Enjoying the sweetness suggests that women are attracted to sweetness. No signs on the advert suggest that men too can drink it. The lady in the advert looks assertive and very satisfied with the drink. Society believes that sweet drinks are meant for women since they are believed to be weak and cannot stand alcoholic drinks. This relates to the gender schema theory.

**Table 1.** Summary

GENDER PORTRAYED	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
No male portrayal	44	44%
No female portrayed	17	17%
Neutral	39	39%
Total	100	100%

From the above table, one can deduce that men are portrayed more than women in adverts. Most of the advertisements collected were for alcoholic drinks. This can justify why male roles were portrayed more than women's. Alcoholic drinks are mostly linked to men; thus, men's roles are expected to be more projected in this work.

Women's roles were projected just seventeen times because a few adverts associated with domestic chores were collected. According to the Gender Schema theory (1981)

Berns, children grow from birth developing gender schemas that make them develop their minds to what makes them male or female and thus behave as assigned by these traditional gender roles. Because adverts related to food were just 7, while those associating with women nurturing children and doing domestic chores were seven, and the ones related to beauty products were just three, this gave an advantage for the men's role to be projected more. The role of women being relegated to the background, projected as domestic aids linked to housekeeping and nurturing, is still noticed. However, some adverts dare to change the narrative where we see men trying to assist women in doing domestic chores and giving a helping hand to roles traditionally linked to women.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

As for the visual analysis of the selected billboard images concerning schema theory, the findings have revealed that the pictorial depiction of men and women on billboard adverts of companies in Cameroon considering gender stereotypes was persuasive, family in ritualistic subordination, domestic aids, and dependent on men. The women were somehow dehumanised, as seen in Figure 8 and objectified.

In the case of Fig (1,2,3,4), women are represented actively mainly in meaningless and domestic products, which are not representative of women's diversity, unlike men who appear in autonomous and prestigious roles like in Figs 7,8 and 10.

## CONCLUSION

The analyses presented fifteen advertisements concerning how gender roles are portrayed on billboards by some Cameroon companies. Concerns about women's inferiority and domestic life (housework and motherhood, men's patriarchal tendencies, men's power and authority, etc.). It should also be noted that recent advertisements have changed the narratives as the world is changing. Some advertisements do not comply with the traditional stereotypical man or woman, as seen in Fig 6 and Fig 9. The benefits of introducing a pragmatic perspective in the work reside in that it enables the recovery of all the levels of information comprised in the advertisements, and, in turn, analysis of what they convey about gender roles is more accurate. This work has been limited to analysing advertisements found in the English-speaking part of Cameroon.

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