

**FEMALE IMAGE IN GLOSSY MAGAZINES FOR MEN IN RUSSIA AND ABROAD:
EDUCATION AND CLASS**

**IMAGEM FEMININA EM REVISTAS PARA HOMENS NA RÚSSIA E NO EXTERIOR:
EDUCAÇÃO E CLASSE**

**IMAGEN FEMENINA EN REVISTAS BRILLANTES PARA HOMBRES EN RUSIA Y
EN EL EXTRANJERO: EDUCACIÓN Y CLASE**

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ABSTRACT: The article deals with a comparative and educational analysis of the specifics of the presentation and functioning of a female image in advertising for men's glossy magazines MAXIM and Esquire in the USA, Russia and Sweden. As a result of typological analysis, it was revealed that MAXIM is a narrowly targeted publication of an erotic nature, Esquire is a publication of general interest. At the same time, magazines of the same brand in different countries are similar in audience orientation, purpose, main headings, frequency, only the circulation volume differs significantly. The results of the content analysis and the comparative method indicated that the American and Russian MAXIM often sexually objectifies a woman, presents her image in advertising through the prism of gender stereotypes. Esquire magazine in the USA, Russia and Sweden exploits female images much less often, trying to build an image of collegial relationships between the sexes.

KEYWORDS: Glossy magazines. Education. Men's magazines. Female image in advertising. Gender stereotypes.

RESUMO: O artigo trata de uma análise comparativa e educacional das especificidades da apresentação e do funcionamento da imagem feminina na publicidade para as revistas masculinas MAXIM e Esquire nos Estados Unidos, Rússia e Suécia. Como resultado da análise tipológica, foi revelado que MAXIM é uma publicação direcionada de natureza erótica, Esquire é uma publicação de interesse geral. Ao mesmo tempo, revistas da mesma marca em países diferentes são semelhantes em orientação ao público, objetivo, títulos principais, frequência, apenas o volume de circulação difere significativamente. Os resultados da análise de conteúdo e do método comparativo indicaram que a MAXIM americana e russa frequentemente objetificam sexualmente a mulher, apresentam sua imagem na publicidade através do prisma dos estereótipos de gênero. A revista Esquire nos EUA, Rússia e Suécia

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explora as imagens femininas com muito menos frequência, tentando construir uma imagem das relações colegiais entre os sexos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Revistas glossy. Educação. Revistas masculinas. Imagem feminina na publicidade. Estereótipos de gênero.*

RESUMEN: *El artículo trata de un análisis comparativo y educativo de las particularidades de la presentación y el funcionamiento de una imagen femenina en la publicidad de las revistas masculinas MAXIM y Esquire en EE.UU., Rusia y Suecia. Como resultado del análisis tipológico, se reveló que MAXIM es una publicación de naturaleza erótica con un objetivo limitado, Esquire es una publicación de interés general. Al mismo tiempo, las revistas de la misma marca en diferentes países son similares en la orientación de la audiencia, el propósito, los títulos principales, la frecuencia, solo el volumen de circulación difiere significativamente. Los resultados del análisis de contenido y el método comparativo indicaron que el MAXIM estadounidense y ruso muchas veces objetiva sexualmente a una mujer, presenta su imagen en la publicidad a través del prisma de los estereotipos de género. La revista Esquire en los Estados Unidos, Rusia y Suecia explota las imágenes femininas con mucha menos frecuencia, tratando de construir una imagen de relaciones colegiais entre los sexos.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Revistas brillantes. Educación. Revistas para hombres. Imagen femenina en publicidad. Estereotipos de género.*

Introduction

Today, glossy magazine comes into high demand as the format that receives into itself all the qualitative changes in modern media discourse both in the field of media consumption of the audience and in blurring of lines between journalistic, commercial and entertainment information (POLONSKIY 2019, p. 34). Advertising in slick magazines in various countries is becoming a reflection of “cultural codes”, historical buttress, mentality and stereotypes that are consolidated and repeatedly concentrated in the mass media content. Men’s glossy adopts a high profile in magazine production, advertising there often uses images that are understandable and familiar to the audience, often based on gender stereotypes. This is one of the most common and striking prejudice that an individual holds, because gender is easy to distinguish and identify. Sex differences are often featured in advertising, female and male images are in market and sell, so advertising makers often focus on sexualizing people and stressing gender roles.

This topic in different ways has become the subject of exploring by various authors. For example, the specifics of advertising in men’s publications were studied by D. O. Bel'skiy (2014), I. V. Tolstikhina (2017), T. A. Mel'nichuk (2018) and others, typological features of glossy magazines, including men’s ones, - by L.V. Lytkina (2018), Y. A. Golovin (2012), A. B. Polonskiy (2019), S. S. Raspopova (2013) and others, the issues of gender stereotypes in

advertising were considered by J. Butler (1994), T. Calvin (1999), G. Lerner (1994), O. R. Mukhambayetliyeva (2019), G. A. Chedzhemov (2019), M. K. Khodkevich (2019), T. V. Bridko (2016), Ye. V. Kazakova (2016) and others. Despite an intense interest in this issue among researchers, we have not found comprehensive works on representing woman's figure in men's glossy of Russia, the USA and Sweden.

In view of this, **the topicality** of this study is due to the need to reflect on theoretical and practical aspects of the functioning of woman's figure in advertising of men's glossy magazine, as well as to compare their representations in Russia, the USA and Sweden, which has become **the purpose** of the paper.

The object of inquiry is advertising in men's glossy magazines. **The subject** being analyzed is the specificity of the representation of the image of a woman in the advertisement of the American, Russian and Swedish magazines *MAXIM* and *Esquire*.

Materials and Methods

The study material was the advertising aids of the magazines *MAXIM* and *Esquire*, selected by the method of continuous sampling. In total, the empirical base has encompassed more than 1000 advertising messages published in 72 issues (from July 2019 to June 2020). In terms of geography of distribution, the number of magazines to have been analyzed can be represented as follows:

- *MAXIM* in Russia – 12 editions, in the USA – 12 editions, in Sweden – 12 editions;
- *Esquire* in Russia – 12 editions, in the USA – 12 editions, in Sweden – 12 editions

The methodological framework is general scientific methods (the methods of analysis, synthesis, deduction, analogy), the methods of scientific observation and description. When characterizing glossy magazines, the method of typological analysis was used. When analyzing the specifics of advertising in magazines, the method of content analysis was applied. Description and substantiation of the similarities and differences in the representation of woman's image in magazine advertisements were made on the basis of the method of comparison.

Results and Discussion

The glossy magazine, the fundamental principle of which is positivity, is a phenomenon that is opposed to the flood of negative information contained in other publications. This is a

kind of bright “picture from an exhibition” that, via its visual-semantic code, builds up a system of symbolic values: aesthetic, moral, social-status, social-role and others. Glossy magazines are practically not intended for reading; they capture a person not with their informative content, but with a vivid image that symbolizes success, pleasure, prestige. It follows that glamor is a disguise that is needed in order to increase man’s social status in the eyes of others.

Thus, the glossy magazine is a magazine that is designed for a specific readership and the main goal of which is to form a certain lifestyle and help to achieve success by highlighting various aspects of a beautiful life, focusing on elitism, prestige, beauty and relations between the sexes (BELOEDOVA, 2017).

Of methodological importance for the research is the understanding of the essence of glossy magazines and their cultural role in modern society, which are most often justly criticized as a phenomenon of consumerism and social egoism. Nevertheless, the glossy magazine is, according to A. V. Polonsky,

an ambiguous cultural project ... this is not just a magazine of life style with the key concept “glamor” that gives a woman or a man actual samples of elitism and taste but a mass media ideological resource of modern society which pretends today to a leading role in the formation of public consciousness ... a mechanism of rigid construction socio-cultural reality, all its practices, meaningful and cultural-symbolic forms, cultural, ideological and gender identity of the individual, culture of everyday life (POLONSKIY, 2012, p. 84).

Men’s magazines are publications the content of which is addressed to the information and entertainment needs of men. This is a relatively young segment of the media market that has emerged from a pattern of glossy magazines for women (OVSEPYAN 1999). One of the most important typological features of the magazine edition is the *audience* feature. The target audience of such publications is predominantly men. In different publications, it differs in such audience *demographics* as occupation, social status, level of income and education.

MAXIM magazine in the USA and its European counterpart is a cultural product representing a particular lifestyle, predominantly for men. Men’s magazines often contain sexual content not only in advertisements, but also in journalistic materials. The study of the editorial rhetoric of the *MAXIM* magazine gives the idea that materials and photographs accentuate the topic of sex and sexual practices, enhance the objectification of women and give preference to heteronormativity.

MAXIM is an international men’s magazine, devised and launched in the UK in 1995, but headquartered in New York since 1997, and prominent for its erotic photographs of actresses, female singers and models. This is an edition with monthly circulation of about 9

million readers. *Maxim Digital* reaches more than 4 million unique viewers each month. The magazine publishes 16 editions, sold in 75 countries worldwide, including Russia and Sweden.

The key typological characteristics of *MAXIM* in the USA, Russia and Sweden are the following: 1) men's lifestyle magazine; 2) a targeting sex publication; 3) according to the intended purpose – entertaining; 4) according to the quality of content – general press; 5) frequency - once a month. The technical data of magazines in the studied countries differ. In the USA, the founder is Biglari Holdings Inc, the size of the magazine is 200-250 pages, the editor-in-chief is Joe Levy, the circulation is 2.01 million copies, it has been published since 1997. In Sweden, the founder is Dennis Publishing Inc., the size is 200-250 pages, the editor-in-chief is Kate Lanphear, the circulation is 60,000 copies. In Russia, the founder is the Hearst Shkulev Media publishing house, the size is up to 250 pages, the editor-in-chief is Alexander Malenkov, the circulation in Russia is 150,000 copies, published in our country since April 2002.

The basis of the publication is made up of facile topics and columns covering sex, sports, fashion and hobbies. The design is variegated and glamorous, using vibrant colors. The cover of the issue is always provocative and catchy; it usually contains photographs of scantily-dressed female media culture stars. *MAXIM* almost always approaches the materials with humor, most of the content is sexually suggestive, entertainment is mainly about relationships from the eyes of men and for men. The major headings are “Dress Code”, “Men's Rules”, “Sex and Relations”, “Food and Alcohol”, etc. Each year the editorship publishes a list of the top 100 sexy women in the world.

Esquire is an American men's magazine. It has been published in the United States by the Hearst Corporation since 1986 and has over 20 international analogues. The periods of efflorescence in its publication was during the Great Depression in the 1930s of the 20th century when it was led by Arnold Gingrich, David Smart and Henry Jackson, and in the 1960s. *Esquire* pioneered the New Journalism movement, aimed at high-profile revelations and investigations. In the 1990s, the magazine almost fell into decline and regained popularity under the supervision of David Granger as a lifestyle magazine, addressed men as a target audience.

The leading typological characteristics of *Esquire* in the USA, Russia and Sweden are: 1) men's lifestyle magazine; 2) publication of general interest; 3) according to its intended purpose – entertaining (with a bias for enlightenment); 4) in terms of the quality of content, it falls in between high-quality and mass press, tends to be of high quality; 5) frequency – once a month. Publishing characteristics differ in the United States, Russia and Sweden. In the USA, the founder is Hearst Magazine Media, Inc, the size – 200-220 pages, the editor-in-chief is

Michael Sebastian, the circulation is 709,000 copies, published since 1986. In Russia, the founder is Fashion Press LLC, the size is 200-220 pages, the editor-in-chief is Sergey Minaev, the circulation in Russia – 70,000 copies, published since April 2005. In Sweden, the founder is House of Hearst, the size – 200-220 pages, the editor-in-chief is Alex Bilmes, the circulation is 59 970 copies.

Esquire positions itself as an intelligent magazine for a successful gentleman who can form his personal opinion of the most significant world events. *Esquire*'s target audience is primarily well-educated men above 25 years of age. Today *Esquire* is an edition that publishes texts of fairly high quality, exclusive interviews with stars and photographs at a high professional level. One can judge from the content of the publication that it makes an inquiry into a more diverse subject matter than *MAXIM* – politics, sports, lifestyle, fashion, cars, etc.

One of the key features of the discourse of glossy magazines is an individual conceptualization of the reality which is manifested in the prevalence of presentative and symbolic interpretation of the experience of cognizing of an object. The dominant cognitive unit of the discourse of glossy magazines is the image as a subjective picture of the world projected in the mind, reflecting the promoted ideology. The image allows the readership to bear something new of experience as their own.

Women advertised primarily alcohol and entertainment in magazines, then their images were used in advertising other goods. Slick magazines today are focused not only on entertaining the reading public but also on developing certain tastes and values among the audience. The content and structure of glossy magazines largely depend on the intended readers. Advertising in publications uses women bodies to draw attention to products that are not pertinent to women. This technique is very common in a number of glossy magazines, not only in Russia but also abroad.

In 2004, the Center for Gender Issues (a feminist organization on the Lakehead University campus in Thunder Bay, Ontario) came out against *Thunder Bay Boob Idol* event sponsored by *MAXIM* magazine. The Center designated the magazine's content as "sexist bravado and racist imagery". In 2006, Alok Jha from *The Guardian* criticized the magazine for encouraging over consumption of alcohol and sexual objectification of women (THE GUARDIAN 2006). In June 2007, it had transpired that the magazine released photography sessions of almost naked Israeli women who were in the army. The campaign provoked an angry reaction from lawmaker Colette Avital, a former diplomat who served as Israel's consul general in New York in the 1990s. In December 2019, Presto Media Productions criticized the *Maxim Cover Girl 2019* contest in an independent documentary made by model, actress and

producer Valentina Lucia Faltoni (PRESTO MEDIA PRODUCTIONS, 2019). *Esquire* has not been found in high-profile gender discrimination scandals.

The very idea that advertising conveys gender information is not new. In American society, sexism has been a household word for many years and continues to be one of the most iconic social phenomena. *Sexism* is “a set of preconceptions and biased attitude to people or discrimination against people on the basis of sex or gender; prejudice, negative attitude or antipathy towards people of a certain gender” (ANDERSEN, 2007). Sexism in relation to women is a frequent phenomenon existing in America for a long time, which they try to comprehend. Advertising symbolically reflects the socio-cultural constructions of gender through the demonstration of posing, facial expressions and social roles. The sexist content in many advertisements only becomes evident through their deconstruction; at first glance, the public may not even consider an advertising as such.

In Sweden, feminism is a significant social and political phenomenon

a movement for the restoration of rights to women, equality and the elimination of discrimination. It is aimed at eliminating the infringement of the rights of women in politics, economy, civil sphere and other fields. At the same time, the movement is aimed at real support of women’s rights in practice (BUTLER, 1994).

The Swedish government evaluates all policies in accordance with the principles of gender mainstreaming. Feminism dates there back to the 17th century. In 1862, unmarried Swedish women became the first in the world to be granted the conditional right to vote in municipal elections. Universal women’s suffrage followed in 1921. Since then, Sweden has been considered the forerunner of gender equality.

In Russia, both the ideas of combating sexism and feminism have not yet received sufficient understanding, both in media discourse and in society on the whole. This thesis is confirmed by the results of this study.

Most often, the magazines under study advertise cars, perfumes, watches and other accessories. These categories are featured in *MAXIM* and *Esquire* magazines for all countries under consideration. Electronic vaporizers and cigars are specific advertising objects in American editions, mobile operators in Russian, and men’s cosmetics in Swedish.

The most frequent category of advertised items is Audi, Lexus, BMW, Mercedes **automobiles**.

In Russian editions, the most common advertising of auto models of SUVs and sedans, the latter are presented via the methods of humanization – they are described as women, as an

object of sex fantasies or just an element of temptation. In *MAXIM*, woman's image as an element of attracting attention is exploited much more often than in *Esquire*, in addition, if in the first case there is an emphasis on the sex expression of woman's image, then in the second it is rather a family type, the convenience of using a car in everyday life. For example, the advertising of Mercedes-Benz in *MAXIM* is built around the image of singer Vera Brezhneva, posing against the background of the very car, while *Esquire* advertises a car of the same marque differently – a presentation of the car standing on the racing line with the inscription “Class Superiority”. *MAXIM* expressly draws attention to advertising in the image of a famous singer, while *Esquire* focuses on the characteristics of the car, its status.

In the American magazines *MAXIM* and *Esquire* automobiles also occupy the greatest part of advertising content, but in none of them we have not found an active use of the image of a woman. As a rule, car advertisement is an image of cars against the background of some kind of landscape.

In Swedish magazines, car advertisements, as well as in the United States, do not reflect a significant objectification of women. As a rule, on the pages of magazines there is a photo of the very automobile or a man with whom readers would like to relate themselves. For example, *MAXIM* has published a Volvo advertisement with the Swedish footballer, Zlatan Ibrahimovic, in a number of issues.

The second frequency promoted product group is **perfumes, watches** and other **accessories**.

In Russia, advertising of perfumery products and cosmetics for men exploits the image of a woman as a “decoration” for an advertising message or as a “signal” of fascination. Often in these ads, the woman is nude and the man is well-clothed. For example, *MAXIM* presents *Versace* perfume in advertising as a sculpture of a naked woman body where her lower part is hidden behind a bottle of perfume. The advertisement for the same fragrance in *Esquire* is completely different – a monophonic red leaf on which an uncluttered perfume bottle is featured – in moderation and aesthetically pleasing.

The trends we have mentioned in domestic editions can be seen in advertising for this group of products in the United States. For example, *MAXIM* advertises *Paco Rabanne* perfume in a sensually explicit way – a nude woman enveloped with gold puts her arms around a man. *Esquire* does not indulge in such visual representations. Here, the readers can see only a man frozen alone, as if in a dance. Of course, *MAXIM* is guided by the fact that images of women as sexual objects create a more favorable attitude towards advertising, make it supposedly fascinating.

Both Swedish editions do not contain sexually suggestive context. Perfume advertising evinces, more often than not, “ideal” images of men that potential consumers should theoretically want to become. For example, in *Esquire* we see an advertisement for *Prada*, which depicts a male model with masculine features that express toughness and restraint. This presentation of advertising can be traced within this category of products in both magazines.

And we will present the specifics of the representation of woman’s image in the advertising of goods that were found only in the magazines of a certain country.

In Russia, such a category has become advertising of **mobile operators**. Even here, the process of exploitation and sexualization of the female image can be noted. For example, in an advertisement of the tariff “Zabugorishche” of the *MTS* telecom operator in *MAXIM*, we see a gorgeous actress, Maria Gorban, in a swimsuit, lying on the beach and chatting coquettishly with someone on the phone. *Esquire* diverts the reader, although the female image is still present. Here we see a girl dressed in the national costume of the Indians, she does not coquette, flirt and does make an appeal to the reader. This image is rather aimed at reflecting another culture.

In the American magazines *MAXIM* and *Esquire*, **vapor pens and cigars** have become a unique product category. The image of a woman is abundantly used in *MAXIM*, for example, in the advertising of the *Blu* brand – a dark-skinned girl, completely naked, appears before us, who relaxedly holds an electronic cigarette in her hand, standing at the picture window. But the reverse is true for *Esquire* – the same brand advertises its cigarettes differently. Here, a dark-skinned man, fully clothed, smokes *Blu* at the poker table, no sexually suggestive context or the elements of the erotic. Such a significant difference between the images in advertising, its presentation once again proves how different magazines of the same typological group can be.

In Sweden, **man cosmetics** is advertised quite often and in different ways in *MAXIM* and *Esquire*. *MAXIM* presents beauty products as something that will help a man to attract the opposite sex, which will make him attractive and desirable, therefore, female images are frequently used, as, for example, in advertising of *Van der hagen* beard shampoo. A woman’s figure becomes an element that draws attention to the image with a focusing eye, although the lady is not nude. Meanwhile, advertisements of such products in *Esquire* are presented quite austere and minimalist, for example, *Barbasol* razor is featured against a white background with a short inscription, concisely describing the product.

Summary

Thus, *MAXIM* and *Esquire* offer their advertising content differently, and the differences are also observed at the level of the countries in which they are published. Female images in advertising are exploited more often in Russian publications, they are often sexually objectified, a woman's figure appears there either as a "decoration" of a man or a product, or in a position of subordination. In the US, there is an idea that advertising content that uses the objectification of women can have consequences, even if it is not qualified by society as misogynistic, because a person has automatic, unconscious thinking mechanisms through which the media can have an implicit effect on the general public. However, the American *MAXIM* magazine continues to objectify women, although much less intensively than the Russian glossy, while *Esquire* exploits female images in advertising much less often. The Swedish advertising industry is already in a self-regulatory regime and the Advertising Ombudsman's guidelines state that advertising should not present women or men as "mere sexual objects" or in other ways that are "degrading". And it is this trend that can be traced in the results of this study, both editions in Sweden try not to objectify woman's image at all.

Conclusion

Advertising often uses visual images because they can have a greater impact than words. It is an important means of socialization and the formation of a person's identity. Advertising often uses images and ideals so that consumers can identify themselves with them. Stereotyped images are one of the most popular persuasion methods. Using gender stereotypes, advertising in men's glossy magazines, particularly in such ones as *MAXIM*, exaggeratedly and idealistically reproduces traditional gender roles and thereby supports gender stereotypes entrenched in society.

Based on the peculiarities of the magazines *MAXIM* and *Esquire* in different countries, it can be noted that the representation of woman's image also has a substantial difference. This is clearly manifested in the advertising content of American and Russian editions. While *MAXIM* magazine mainly represents women as a sex object, *Esquire* holds a position of collegial relationship, but not entirely equal so far. *MAXIM* introduces a sexually suggestive context into woman's image in almost any advertising material. *Esquire*, on the other hand, tries to avoid intimate overtones in female images, viewing them as independent personalities. For example, the *Rules of Life* column publishes stories of outstanding women as well as of men.

Advertising in the American editions *MAXIM* and *Esquire* is slightly different from their Russian counterparts. The female image is already less pronounced here, although the elements of objectification and unequal treatment of women are still observed in *MAXIM*. In addition, both publications in the United States use dark-skinned models in the advertisements, which we have not found in Russian and Swedish *MAXIM* and *Esquire*. The female image in the American *Esquire* is even less objectified than in the Russian version. We see collegial relations between men and women, respect and equality.

Sweden is one of the most feminist countries not only in Europe but also in the world. The men's magazine there is rather a publication that seeks to show a man how to become better, a room for improvement; in advertising, they also try not to draw attention to products via women bodies. *MAXIM* magazine is a borderline medium, between prevailing gender stereotypes and Swedish socialism. Even in the very advertising, there are echoes of the typical American elements of sexualizing both men and women. *Esquire* adheres to absolute minimalism in advertising of almost any goods and services, it is unostentatious and ascetic here.

All this makes it possible to conclude that advertising in various magazines of the same typological group can vary even within one country, and other mentality provides an even more diverse "picture" which develops into a hierarchical system.

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