



## **Gender Parity in the Media**

Tarek Abdelraouf

17/08/2021

In the year 2015, in an attempt to bring the world's greatest challenges to center stage, the United Nations formally adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The 17 SDGs were released, each with a set of targets and indicators to assist in the implementation and progress tracking for each goal. In Egypt, where the SDG's have been embraced and integrated by the government through statewide initiatives such as the "Egypt's Vision 2030", demands for gender equality can be heard throughout the streets and within the stories told by each Egyptian woman. Although progress has been made towards achieving gender equality in Egypt, there are still fundamental changes that need to be made before we can translate that progress into success. This paper will highlight the striking effects and influence of the media on society, and how gender roles are imposed in advertisements. The paper will also provide policy recommendations intended to reduce the gender gap through the desolation of gender advertising in the Egyptian media.

SDG 5 Gender equality clearly states that "*Gender bias is undermining our social fabric and devalues all of us*" (UN SDG, 2015). Although Egypt has taken steps in order to reduce its gender gap, there is still much work to be done in order to consider the effort a success. One of the main focal points of gender inequality in Egypt is in the media. Around 98% of all Egyptians have access to a working television at home, 84% of which use their television on a daily basis for news (GALLUP, 2014); thus, television plays a big role in Egyptian culture and the receipt of information. Coupled with how influential television is on both young people and adults in terms of purchasing decisions and culture (CPS, 2003), it is viable to see how advertisements are able to derail gender equality efforts and instead reinforce the status quo. There are many examples of how gender roles are portrayed in Egyptian media, one study from 2017 analyzed over 386 different Egyptian advertisements that were aired in 2016, and the results showed how misrepresented and objectified women are in the media (El-Sherbini, et al. 2017). The study looked at how women are portrayed in different advertisements and broke down how the representation of women in these advertisements has only reaffirmed the current stigma of gender roles to the millions of Egyptian viewers. One example of this misrepresentation in the media is Gold Gyms 2016 "This is no shape for a girl" advertisement, which used body shaming tactics to convince women viewers to join their gym (Egyptian Streets, 2018). Another example is the highly controversial 2018 Toyota campaign "made for men" which featured their, at the time, latest model for their Fortuner model (Egyptian Streets, 2018).

These advertisements and many others have been perpetuating gender roles in Egypt for many years, and they will most likely continue to do so due to a lack of accountability and consequences. Currently there is no specific agency or foundation in Egypt that focuses on gender advertising, but there is potential to delegate and distribute the responsibility amongst ministries and government agencies that

have the capacity and knowledge to take on the challenge. As of now, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (MCIT) provides no clear framework or guidelines for advertisements, yet they have the tools, resources and capacity needed to positively restructure the advertising industry. The Consumer Protection Agency (CPA) is a government agency dedicated to the support and protection of the Egyptian consumer. The agency had previously sued 5 satellite television channels and removed ads they had aired from television, but those lawsuits were for false advertisements of products (Shorouk News, 2016). Although the CPA has not been directly involved in the fight for gender equality, their role as the protectors of the Egyptian consumer places them in a prime position to be a leading agency in Egypt's fight against gender inequality. The National Council for Women has been the main spearhead for the fight against gender inequality in Egypt, as a government agency, they have some of the support and backing needed in order to be an effective change agent in Egyptian society.

SDG Goal 5 Gender Equality targets 5.1 “End discrimination against women”, 5.B “Promote empowerment of women through technology”, and 5.C “Adopt and strengthen policies and enforceable legislation for gender equality” can all be targeted and focused on through legislation and holding advertisers accountable for the content they create. The following policies are proposed in order to support Egypt's mission towards Gender Equality:

- 1) The MCIT should create and uphold marketing and advertising frameworks and guidelines that must be upheld before any content is allowed to be aired.
- 2) Creation of a task force consisting of the MCIT, CPA, and NCW. The purpose of this task force is to oversee and report against any and all advertisements or content that may harm women and undo the strides already taken towards gender equality.
- 3) The NCW should partner with local non governmental and nonprofit organizations to teach and raise awareness on the consequences of gender advertising. The partnership should also focus on educating the public on women's rights and the essentialness of achieving gender equality.
- 4) The MCIT along with the NCW should partner together to create a program that provides access to technology to women, while also providing them with the means to learn how to use said technology.

The Sustainable Development Goals can only be achieved through communication and cooperation. The government and its agencies must work alongside their partners and civil society in order to raise awareness and educate the people on the importance of gender equality. The role of the MCIT, CPA, and NCW cannot be understated. Combined, they have the ability to transform, not only the advertising industry, but also the trajectory of gender inequality in Egypt.

## References

- El-Sherbini, N., Darwish, S., Bastawisi, I., & El-Tarabishi, M. (2017). Women as Reflected in Egyptian TV Commercials. Cairo; American University in Cairo.
- Elaraby, M. (2016). الأكثر قراءة. "حماية المستهلك" يحيل 5 قنوات فضائية للنيابة بتهمة الإعلان المضلل - بوابة الشروق. <https://www.shorouknews.com/news/view.aspx?cdate=02012016&id=504c4a90-1c04-44e6-a818-c272ab58bbc9>.
- Eltigani, N. (2018, October 18). *Unapologetically sexist ads: "anyone can drive a man's car" but not women*. Egyptian Streets. <https://egyptianstreets.com/2018/10/18/unapologetically-sexist-ads-anyone-can-drive-a-mans-car-but-not-women/>.
- Goal 5: Gender equality*. The Global Goals. (n.d.). <https://www.globalgoals.org/5-gender-equality#:~:text=End%20All%20Violence%20Against%20and,and%20other%20types%20of%20exploitation>.
- n.d. (2003). Impact of media use on children and youth. Canada; Canadian Paediatric Society.
- n.d. (2014). Contemporary Media Use in Egypt . Washington D.C.; GALLUP.