



# Gender-roles in magazine advertisements

A comparison between Egypt and Sweden

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## **Abstract**

Middle Eastern countries are highlighted by media today and people all over the world are getting more interested in the Middle Eastern cultures. Egypt is one of the more liberal and west influenced countries in the Middle East but despite that only one survey has been done of Egyptian media contexts trying to examine the construction of men and women and its effects and reflection of the society. The purpose of this paper is to examine how men and women are constructed in Egyptian magazine ads compared to Swedish magazine ads and to compare it to previous western researches on the subject. I will study how ads may reflect or contribute to reinforce or alter gender roles and its meanings within a cultural context. The methodology used is a semiotic analysis combined with literature studies and with interviews with Egyptian media experts. The conclusions of this study is that both men and women in the Egyptian ads are constructed according to the western consumer culture, where women are portrayed as innocent or sexy, dressed in western fashion and where men are portrayed as determined or sexy, associated with work or relaxation. The Egyptian woman's expanding role in the labour market is not depicted. Furthermore this study concludes that the ads are only reflecting the top of the society, thus the higher classes and their habits and ways of dressing. The vast majority of the society is not targeted by the magazines, which is also shown in the society in that the most common dress worn by women is still the loosely fitting eastern dress and the veil.

## **Acknowledgements**

Since the year 2001 I have been traveling back and forth to Egypt. I have been there nine times altogether. The longest period of time I stayed there was six months and the shortest time of period was three weeks. During my visits to Egypt I have experienced the Egyptian culture by working there as a model and by studying the Arabic language. I have studied both the standard Arabic and the Egyptian colloquial and thereby I have learned to read and write in Arabic. I have also got to know a lot of people, who have become my friends.

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## Introduction

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11th 2001 to the present war between Israel and Lebanon a lot of attention has been paid to the Middle East. Debates about the gap between Islam and the West are high lightened, and questions about the seclusion of the Muslim woman and wonderings about what motivate suicide bombers are concerning issues. In general people all over the world are more interested in the countries in the Middle East and its different cultures, religion and mentality. Egypt is one of the first Middle Eastern countries that opened up to the West and that is cooperating with the West and is influenced by the West through international companies and media. I have lived and studied in Egypt for some time and therefore I found it interesting to do some research about the Egyptian media, the influences from west and its reflection on the society.

Egypt is the largest Arab country; the population consists of 68 million people. Egypt is also the largest media exporter to other Arab states. Its film and movie industry is without doubt the most developed in the Arab world, and because of this Egypt has a strong influence on other Arab countries. Egypt is considered the Mecca of the advertising world (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000). Advertisements have in the last three decades exploded in the Middle Eastern countries. Egypt's advertising expenses all together year 2005 were 190, 4 million dollars (Egypt, 2006) compared to Sweden's expenses that in 2005 reached approximately 6875 million dollars ([www.irm.se](http://www.irm.se)). This indicates that Egypt is on its way to become a market economy and the expansion of mass media is a condition for the advertisements expansion.

Mass communication is seen as a precondition for socioeconomic change. Theorists have seen mass media as a development instrument for the Third world. Popular culture features in the lives of most Egyptians, but still the academic interest in mass-mediated popular culture in the region is absent. A remaining question is if it is the same postmodernism as the one in the Western communities that is expanding in Egypt. The academic examinations within this field are so far very few. A barrier for foreigners to study the Egyptian popular culture is that it is oriented towards an Arabic-speaking market. Sometimes the commercial culture in Egypt is depicted as erasing the non-Western cultures. In Egypt the Western influence is a common element in both artistic performance and the critical opinion of the layman. But if it is a blind imitation or adoption of Western culture has always been an ambiguous matter. "... *every society appears to bring to these [popular] forms its own quirks and idiosyncrasies*" (Armbust, 1996, s 8). Another problem in writing about Egyptian popular culture is that the

audience does not discuss it as an academic issue. It is discussed by the mentions of names of entertainers and performances associated with them. (Armbust, 1996)

Advertising is an interpretive visualization of the world, a metonym of a certain lifestyle. By manipulation of symbols and the propagation of cultural agendas, advertising challenge reality. Advertisements offer a vision of a sweater life. It is an illusion of escape from the present. As an advertiser you must find a way to attract the audience in and sell products to the general public of a certain culture. It is therefore assumable to say that the advertiser first wants to investigate the society, peoples and their habits, dreams and ambitions. To attract the audience the advertiser must combine the product with existing cultural symbols. It is the culture and the historical symbols that are advertised (Zirinski, 2005). Media is counted as an important socialization agent and it act as intermediary of knowledge about the world and about norms and values that pervades the society. A lot of the media content is today advertisements that are constructed to draw attention and lead to changed attitudes towards something or to changed behavior. Advertisement has a purpose, either to make people buy a product or to change the attitude towards it, i.e. affect people. Advertisements do not only affect people when watching the advertisements, but also indirect when talking about it. (Jarlbro, 2000)

### ***1.1 Previous Research***

Past research of portrayals of men and women in magazine ads indicates that men and women in most parts of the world are portrayed in a stereotypical way. Men and women appear in different settings and for different products. For example women are more likely to be portrayed in domestic environment and as sex objects, while men are more likely to be portrayed being occupied. But several differences have also been recognized across countries. For example in Sweden advertisers show men and women in greater variety of nonworking roles than in the U.S.A and Germany and women in Asian countries are less likely to be shown as sex objects. (Das, 2000)

A lot of researches, all over the world, have tried to increase our understanding of cross-cultural differences in advertising content; especially in Asian countries. For example Tsu Wee Tan, Boon Ling and Phua Cheay Theng (2002) studied the gender-role portrayal in Malaysian and Singaporean television commercials. A cross-cultural study of men and women in magazine ads in the US and Sweden concluded that Swedish magazines more often

portray men and women in recreational roles and women in working roles, while the US advertisers more often portray them in decorative roles (Wiles & Tjernlund, 1991). Little attention has been paid on the exposure of advertisement in the Arab societies and even less to their perception of it (Al-Makaty, Tubergen, Whitlow & Boyd, 1996). Except from investigations in Saudi Arabian ads, there is only one study that has examined the cross-cultural differences in advertising content in other countries in the Middle East and only one study of the portrayal of Egyptian women in television commercials. In the former study the researchers have performed a content analysis of magazine ads in the U.S and in twelve Middle Eastern countries, among them Egypt. The study focuses on and tries to explain differences in the ads by using cultural and economic reasons. The conclusions of this study is that people are depicted less frequently in Arabic magazines ads and that when women are depicted they are wearing long dresses and tend to be pictured related to the advertised product. Another conclusion is that US ads have more information content, provide more price information and use more comparative advertising than Arabic ads (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000). The latter study is also a content analysis which concludes that Egyptian advertising does not reflect the expanding role of women in Egypt or the growing influences of Islamic fundamentalism (Ahmad, 2002). There are no studies of men in Arabic magazine ads and only a few studies about women in Arabic media content focusing on the veil (Shirazi, 2001). The lacking of investigations of portrayal of men and women in magazine ads in the Middle East is one reason for this study and hopefully this study will fill that gap. This investigation can enhance our understanding of the Egyptian culture both for advertisers and for other interested groups. It is important to understand how people with a different culture reason, to be able to communicate and understand each other. Egypt is a nation that is more liberal and influenced by western media, which means that the culture differ from other more Arabic cultures, for example in Saudi Arabia. Not all Arabic countries are based on strictly fundamental laws.

Not many studies tries to explain ads based on religious beliefs. Researchers have either concentrated on or compared dissimilar cultures, such as the U.S and Japan or they have focused on similarities or differences on similar cultures, such as Great Britain and Australia (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000). Many researches explain ads by using Hofstede's cultural dimensions or Hall's high and low typology and other country specific variables. Religious beliefs are important because it helps to form the culture. Culture dominates communications, such as language, traditions, beliefs and music (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000). In this study I

will focus on cultural reasons, which are based on values and norms formed on Islamic religious beliefs.

In western communities, as I mentioned above, previous researches have shown that women are very often portrayed in very stereotypical ways, such as in family roles, in lower physical and social position than men or as humble and obedient and that women in magazine ads are depicted as passive sex objects. Continuously western advertisements promote that a woman's ultimate goal is to attract men. Men, on the other hand, are often constructed as active and in an occupation. The portrayal of women's and men's sexuality is of great importance to investigate because it has been suggested that sexuality is the root cause of gender inequality (Baker, 2005). Advertising contains images of idealized others and researches have shown that the viewers of these images use them for social comparison purposes, that is the images are used to help viewers to know what behaviours are appropriate and inappropriate. Media images contribute to sex role socialization and sex role stereotyping, thus contribute to the construction of what is to be a man or a woman (Carilli & Campbell, 2005). But important to know is that advertisement depicts how we *think* about men and woman, not necessarily how we *act* and *behave* (Baker, 2005). Thus the media play a large part in the socialization process, perhaps especially socialization into gender roles. The traditional gender roles are both reflected and reinforced by the media and often advertisements represent an ideal of the way things should be. In Sweden many researches about the portrayal of men and women have been carried through, e.g. Hirdman (2004) investigated how sex-roles in magazine advertisements are depicted. The communities in the Middle East, among them Egypt, are influenced by western societies through international mass media channels and international companies expanding there. A remaining question is how that is reflected in Egyptian media content. Not one research has tried to explain how men and women's exposure in magazine ads reinforce or alter gender roles by the presence of western cultural influences. Thus this study is also significant to the debate of westernization and modernization in the Arab world. (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000)

## **1.2 Purpose and questions at issue**

The purpose of this study is to examine how men and women are exposed in Egyptian magazine advertisements. The ads will be analyzed in a broader cultural and religious context. I will study how advertisement may reflect or contribute to reinforce or alter gender roles and their meanings within the cultural and religious context. The main aim is to examine how the



cultural and religious context influences the gender portrayal in Egypt. I will do this by comparing Egyptian ads with Swedish ads in magazines and search for similarities and differences, that is to say a comparison between eastern and western advertisement. My questions are as follows:

1. How are men and women depicted in Egyptian magazines compared to the portrayal of the gender-role in Swedish magazine ads?
2. How is the portrayal of men and women reflected in the current Egyptian culture and how do the ads contribute to reinforce or alter current gender roles?

This study is significant for the reason that only one study has been done in this field. Another reason for doing this study is to increase our understanding of the Arabic societies, and in this case Egypt. Egypt is specifically interesting because it is one of the more liberal societies in the Middle East and because of its great influence on other Middle Eastern countries through the domination of the film and media industry.

## **2. Background**

In the following chapter I will describe the current Egyptian culture and the Egyptian judicial system that is based on the Islamic law, shari'a, and then I will discuss the Egyptian media sphere and its restrictions.

### ***2.1 The Egyptian Culture and Society***

In the Western countries modernity is the ground for more rational forms of society. Egyptian also emphasizes rationality, but puts greater importance on maintaining continuity with the past. Mass media has been an important instrument to distribute modern ideology. In all societies the radical changes of modernity are to some extent balanced with the conservative and the nationalistic. Nationalism and modernity are closely related and makes the “conservative radical” a feature of all contemporary societies. But modernity differs in different societies, thus all societies have unique features. In Egypt the relation between modernity and nationalism mostly appears in the language. Popular culture has been linguistically important for the establishment of a national identity, rather than an official discourse (Armbrust, 1996). A social transformation took place when the Muslim countries were exposed to Western science and technology. It had a great impact on behavior and lifestyle. Firstly on the ruling class and then further down in the hierarchy. The contact with Western countries has led to changing roles among women, now caught between traditional demands and expectations of modernity. Mass education and employment divided the society into a modern and traditional sector, each with its own costumes and lifestyles. Traditional and modern is defined as how much freedom is granted the women to participate in the public life. The traditionalists perspective on women is that women's role is foremost a maternal and domestic one. The modern perspective is characterized by laws on equality. (Stromquist, 1998)

Egyptians have started to be aware of their poor social condition and that if they want to enjoy life as Western people they have to, first of all, educate the women. Women are the ones bringing up the children and if they do not take part in the activities of men the society will not develop. Two changes are in focus. (1) The upbringing and education of women must be considered and (2) the legal system must be revised to adjust to the current environment. In Egypt one can see changes within four fields; a new perception is developed regarding the importance to educate their daughters. The seclusion of women is decreasing and will gradually disappear. The young men are persistent *not* to marry according to traditional

patterns, they want to become better acquainted with the woman they will marry. And the government is involved in reforming the shari'a courts, which will affect the Egyptian families. The protest is mainly against polygamy and the rules for divorce. (Amin, 2005)

Unlike many other Arab countries the Egyptian government has resisted to attempts of Islamic militants to gain power and as a result the Egyptians, I refer to the to the upper classes, are fairly modern and liberal in their lifestyle, which includes popular movies, music, nightclubs, restaurants and western style dress. Egypt consists of different social classes which vary greatly by means of income and social participation. Egypt was one of the first countries to open up to the west. (Ahmad, 2002)

Advertisers must consider the complex severe social rules, sensitivities, and taboos affecting the media use in the Arab world. Western advertisements, especially for consumer products, cannot simply be translated into Arabic. Advertisers must understand the Islamic religion and its basic laws. In some Arabic countries for example women should not be depicted in western dress, ads that appear in the holy month of Ramadan should not illustrate eating or drinking, nor should ads with music and dancing be depicted during the Haj period. (Marriott, 1986)

### **2.1.1 The Islamic religion and basic Laws**

More than one billion Muslims live throughout the world and Islam is playing an increasingly important role for the possibilities provided and the limits obligatory upon men and woman. The Muslim world consists of an extreme variation in political economics, racial, ethnic and linguistic variation, but one thing they have in common is their belief in the Qur'an (Stromquist, 1998). Islam is the religion of the state and cultural force in Egypt. Over ninety percent of the population is Muslim, while about ten percent is primarily Christian (Ahmad, 2002)

The social structure, language and the economic philosophy is grounded in the Islamic law, shari'a, and prescribes all that one should do. The legal science in the Arab societies has four major sources. (1) The Qur'an, which is the words of God, revealed by the prophet Muhammad and the rulings which are central to religious beliefs and behavior. The Qur'an has for long determined every aspect of lives, among other things gender status (Stromquist,

1998). (2) The sunna, which is the divinely inspired conduct of the prophets, (3) the qiyas i.e. the reasoning by analogy and (3) the ijma i.e. the consensus of opinion and the agreement of qualified legal scholars in a given generation. Neither the Qur'an nor the Sunna explicitly addresses advertising, which means that Qiyas and Ijma are applied on issues specifically concerning advertising. (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000)

The shari'a remains and has a lasting influence on the public and private lives of the people in the Muslim world and is governing the duties, behavior and morals of all Muslims. It describes what values Muslims should hold, including individual freedom, truth, justice, honesty, social obligations, collective responsibility and the roles of men and women (Al-Olayan, & Karande, 2000). The man is, according to Islamic law, the provider of the family. It is his duty to provide his wife with accommodation, food and cloths. The women are *not* required to do housework or contribute financially and are allowed to be socially or politically active (Stromquist, 1998). Women under the Islamic law only inherit half of what men inherit and men are allowed to have up to four wives on the condition that he can treat them equally as stated in the Qur'an. (Stromquist, 1998)

The women's status is debated among traditional Islamists, reformist Islamists and feminists, secular or Islamic. *The traditional Islamists* are clear about the male-female differences and insist on the distinct sex roles. They view women as emotional, sentimental and weak humans whose duty is in the household. The traditional Islamists take every verse in the Qur'an as a source of protection of women and see women as minors that need to be protected by superior men. In return the woman will nurture the family and try to please her father, brother or son, or whoever may be the head of the household. The woman has a responsibility to maintain the honor, reputation and status of the family. Traditionally, a man's honor depends on the extent on the virginity of his sisters, wife and daughters, and widows divorcees' sexual continent. *The Islamic reformists* believe that the inferiority is only in relation to the woman's physical strength and weaker autonomy, thus she is capable of participating in all spheres or public and social life. Modern and liberal reformists are trying to accommodate the Islamic rules with the realities of modern times. *The feminist* view is a secular movement whose aim is to achieve equality for women. The roots of this movement consider the woman as totally subordinated to the man and that the veil is a symbol of this. (Stromquist, 1998)

## ***2.2 The media sphere in the Middle East***

For decades, ruling elites in Arab countries have monopolized the media to disseminate complimentary publicity about them. The government controlled the press and broadcasting so that only the governments' own agenda was expressed in public (Sakar, 2004). In 1979 the press in Egypt was characterized by the almost total subordination of the media system to the political system and was controlled by the government. In the era of the former president Sadat and the present president Mubarak the private press has been diversified in Egypt. Nowadays even state owned press criticize the government. But the journalists doing this are often mistreated and the publications are often banned. The political system determines the degree of press freedom. The system has gradually changed with the successive regimes. From the former president Nasser to president Mubarak the political liberalism has increased. (Hazef, 2001)

Since the beginning of the 1990s the mass media in the Arab world and the Middle East has undergone profound changes. The spread of new technologies, such as satellite television and the internet have extended the media space and the access to alternative media sources and influences from other cultures. This has enabled the consumers, with access to the new technologies, to bypass the limits of authoritarian information control. The internationalization of the media compels television stations to adapt to the new trend, globalization, which has lead to that the structures of media ownership are being altered. Main factors that have motivated Egypt to let go of the monopolies of media systems are the following. Firstly, that the global competition has made it necessary for the Middle Eastern states to fill the gap between state-owned and foreign programs, thus private capital has been allowed in advertising activities and film production etc. Secondly, the external competition has pressured the ambition to make new programs attractive to larger audience, which has lead to a regional competition. To achieve media freedom, privatization of media ownership is necessary, because most governments resist the democratization of society (Hazef, 2001). A remaining question is if the new access to external media is enough to generate social changes and provide for new types of gender roles in the Arab World. Western satellite television and international magazines are no substitute for domestic produced television or magazines. Still the vast majority of the population in Egypt is illiterate when it comes to the English language. These cultural and language barriers limits the exposure to the elite, thus the members of the educated well-of upper and upper middle classes. The consumption of western mass media can be seen as a mass phenomenon but there is doubt about weather western media can have

any real impact on the development in the Middle East. Western media are although always welcomed as an alternative source. (Hazef, 2001)

From 1920 Egyptian cinema dominated the Arab market, and eventually became the nation's second most important income source. The Egyptian media is still today a rich source of audiovisual production, which gives it a central role in the Arab region. Advertisements have expanded greatly in Egypt the past decades and with this the ethnical demands. In Egypt, images, movies or commercials that allude to sex is prohibited. Scenes in western movies which show, for example kisses or other sexual insinuations, are censored (Sinding Jensen, Kanafani and Möller Kristensen, 1987). Thus to advertise in Arab countries the creator must consider attitudes of Islam toward women. Some 20 years ago, a Pakistani fundamentalist suggested that women should be banned from all media contexts. In Saudi Arabia photographs of women were not allowed to be used, only drawings of women, where the women must be 'properly' dressed and in Egypt, one of the more liberal Muslim communities all advertising must be reviewed by a government committee. As an advertiser in Egypt one must know these boundaries, thus what is accepted. The westernization and modernization of Egypt is increasing and the advertisements are the most visible result of these trends. (Kline, 1982)

### **2.2.1 Media and the Arabic language**

Language cannot be separated from culture; it is a complex system of codes that is called culture. Through language we learn who "we" are and who "they" are. Language is expressed both through an audio code, to listen and to repeat sounds, and through a visual code for literate people, reading and writing. Nonverbal behavior, facial expressions and photography are visual codes. The official language in all Arab countries is Arabic. In Egypt there are two national vernaculars; the classical vernaculars, al- lugha al- fuseha, and the colloquial vernaculars, al-lugha al-kallam. The dialects, al-lugha al-kallam, vary from country to country but the grammatical and written Arabic is the same across all Arab countries, and is referred to as the classical Arabic. The classical is very hard to learn and is ambiguous (Armbrust, 1996). Classical Arabic is used in formal situations, among others in news reports, in political speeches, presentations, lectures and in written text (Sinding Jensen, Kanafani och Möller Kristensen, 1987). The colloquial vernacular is easily understood and learned, but lack in prestige. Arab writers therefore insist to keep the classical as literacy ideal. (Armbrust, 1996)

### **3. Theory**

In the following chapter I will discuss theories about cultures and gender studies. Cultural studies involve the attempt to examine the symbolic environment created by mass media and study the role that mass media play in culture and society. Cultural studies researchers often concentrate on how a particular phenomenon relates to matters of ideology, race, social class, and gender. Cultural studies concern issues about the meaning and practices of everyday life (Severin & Tankard, 2001). I will specifically focus on theories about consumer culture, western imperialism and popular culture.

The discipline of gender studies investigates the nature of sex and gender in a social context. Researches in gender studies are often associated with work in feminist theory, which is focusing on stereotyping, objectification, and especially sexual objectification, oppression, and patriarchy and other theoretical aspects of cultural studies. I will specifically focus on theories about gender-roles, stereotypes and mediated identity. (Hall, 2002)

#### ***3.1 Consumer Culture, Culture Imperialism and Popular Culture***

Consumer culture is the culture of mass consumption, not only the consumption of products but also the consumption of visual images and its meanings and symbols, thus the consumer culture is a visual culture. Theorists believe that the western modernity and consumer culture are synonyms, that the consumer culture is the culture of the modern west. The consumer culture can be interpreted as the promise of a beautiful and fulfilling life, by the transformation of the self and lifestyle. The modern hedonist is characterized by fulfilling daydreams and fantasies, that comes from advertising and marketing about things he or she wants to buy, through consumption. Consumption is a way to become ‘another self’, to become someone else. Some theorists focus on how the mass consumption and marketing change values and mentalities. For example advertising techniques have played an important role of the creation of the consumer culture. The consumer is exposed to advertisements that aim to alter the attitudes towards a brand, product or service by associating the product with a certain lifestyle. Hedonism is spread in order to create a mass consumer market. For example, in the creation of the consumer culture the US advertisers used beautiful movie stars with close-up images to increase the intimacy and to create a new beauty ideal. Hedonism, luxury and beautiful people changed the way people perceived themselves. Mass produced clothes and popular media, such as popular magazines which described how to improve one's appearance, were produced for a wider range of people to participate in the new culture. The

result of the consumer culture and popular culture comes from the overload of images (Johansson, 1998). Modernity is often described as a time where identity is not recognized in tradition or religion, but is something that people choose, and it is discussed that individuals try to find oneself by identifying with images, such as images in ads. The consumer culture has been described as narcissistic and self centered and occupied by trying to transform personalities, styles and appearances. “...*the beautiful body is put at the center of symbolic production, and the way we look becomes an image through which we see and understand ourselves*” (Johansson, 1998, s12).

A big issue discussed is if the western culture is embodying its values globally. Media and advertising are accused of erasing local identities all over the world. Cultural imperialism, Media Imperialism, Westernization or Americanization is the perception that the globalization of communication has been driven by the big transnational companies from the United States of America to satisfy commercial interest often in corporation with western political and military interests. This process, the westernization process, is argued by some theorists to destroy the traditional cultures. Theorists as Schiller claim that the high expenses of western production in the Third World countries have led to a greater importation of foreign programs, which results in an invasion that is threatening local traditions (Thompson, 2001). Schiller believes that communication driven by multinational companies systematically bring about negative consequences on a global scale. This thought has spread. For example in 1996 the European Parliament voted to limit the non-European films aired in television and in 1998 the Islamic Taliban government of Afghanistan banned all television sets, VCRs, videos and satellite dishes (Lull, 2000). But analysis has shown that the practices of consumption of the western cultures in one case lead to the construction of an identity based on others but at the same time it leads to reproduce the local traditions. (Johansson, 1998)

The circulation of media images helps to spread the dominant ideology and reinforce a consumerist atmosphere. Images in the commercial mass media help to create communities of consumption. The mass media both reflect social reality and create it. But the audiences appeal must be taken into consideration. The vast majority of programs and movies for example fail to turn into profit. The popular culture is often apprehended as the mainstream, dominant and widespread commercially successful culture, but popular culture means the culture developed from ordinary people, thus styles of human expression that circulates among people according to their interests and preferences. Everybody helps to create popular



culture by using and interpreting symbolic forms, thus popular culture is the style in everyday environment that is interpreted and used by ordinary people, which *sometimes* being circulated by mass media. Producers try to provoke emotions within their audiences, people never just ‘watch’ or ‘read’ images, they feel images. Advertisers believe that consumers develop relations with the product or service; they try to make the consumer addicted to their brand. Some theorists say that the emotional perspective works best on middle-class people in developing countries and on relatively poor people in developed countries, because the emotional images stimulate a better life (Lull, 2000).

### **3.2 Gender studies**

The gender-roles in media contexts are often very stereotypical. The dominate image of men and women that circulate is maintaining and establishing believes about what roles men and women have or should have in a society. Men and women can not simply be categorized into masculine and feminine or male and female, because these concepts are not homogenous. Other social identities like age, social class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and so on must be taken in consideration when categorizing someone (Hall, 2002). The mass media is a part of everyday life and culture is always taken in consideration. From culture to culture the meaning of home, family and leisure differ. Mass media both changes and reinforces cultural traditions and has without doubt deep implications for gender relations and family life. Two American researchers have shown that mediated content, for example the content in television, movies or advertising *does* matter in that people cannot distance themselves as much as you may think from what *is* reality and what is *not* (Johansson, 1998). Therefore, researchers believe, it is significant to depict men and women equally in media to achieve a more equal society.

The consumer culture’s visual codes present a world of wellbeing and convenience. Identity is not only made up by traditional values and activities from the local environments but also by symbolic power expressed by mass media. The symbols of the popular culture allow people to personalize identities. Language, hairstyle and clothes and all other cultural features construct identities and styles. Through media, in popular press in particular, women understand that beauty is something that they must strive for. (Lull, 2002) The female body is to be reconstructed to fit in to the society’s apprehension of beauty. Wrinkles and cellulites are their worst enemies. *“The myth of beauty is said to be about intimacy and sexuality and life itself, the homage of women. But instead it consists of emotional distance, politics, money, and*

*sexual oppression*” (Jacobson, 2004, s 35). The media create beauty ideals that tell women that a thin and fragile body is sexy and at the same time fatness has become a big health problem. The thin women should also have big breasts, which is hard when you are under normal weight. The solution is breast enlargement with silicon. The values focused on are to live in the present and it focuses on the individual and her body. In this culture the body is a product; an object. The view on relations and sex are changing in the western world; anonymity, speed and volatility are valued. The media people have a perception of the world that most people agree on and if you do not agree you will be considered abnormal. For example a common perception is that men should not wear lipstick, but women should. (Lull, 2000)

### **3.2.1 Gender-roles**

In media contexts the man has always been described as strong, competent, and outgoing. He is depicted in professional roles, such as managers, politicians, experts, as well as heroes or criminals. The man is depicted as a busy, concentrated and serious businessman in suit and tie. Also researchers have found that men occur in all ages, both as young and as older men, and that men dominate news media and scientific knowledge programs. Masculinity is described by words such as; skill to conquer, strength and *not* being a woman and is associated with activity, which is accentuated in media contexts. (Ekenstam, Frykman, Johansson, Kuosmanen, Ljunggren & Nilsson, 1998, Hirdman, 2004)

For a long time producers have tried to make men be more aware of his appearance. In the 1980-1990s the gym culture was growing and homosexuality and the ‘gay culture’ was expanding. During this period homosexuality was debated as masculinity, which the traditional masculinity started to be threatened by. New masculine identities started to occur which also was reflected in the western media. The hegemonic masculinity, thus the dominating masculinity, is spread by mass media and popular culture. The masculinities that does not include the hegemonic masculinity, like homosexuals or men that are doing some female activity, are inferior the hegemonic man. ((Ekenstam, Frykman, Johansson, Kuosmanen, Ljunggren & Nilsson, 1998)

According to Anja Hirdman’s investigation (2004) of gender-roles in magazines, the man is illustrated in different ways depending on if he is portrayed in a men’s magazine or if he is portrayed in a women’s magazine. She continues to discuss that men portrayed in men’s

magazines do not face the observer often because men are occupied with other things. Thus he does not pay attention to the observer and he does not establish any relation with them. Hirdman (2004) argues that the non-facing gaze is there to stop all homosexual insinuations and that the heterosexual identity is built on the non-facing gaze. Also men are illustrated with none or few emotional expressions and he is illustrated at distance and in control.

In women's magazines, though, the gaze of men is almost always directed to the audience. The gaze tries to build a relation with the observer. In these contexts the man also often discusses his point of view on love and what characteristics and looks his 'dream girl' has. Men occur either alone or with women in contexts about relations. The men that are portrayed alone are usually described as heroes or celebrities and are depicted with smiling facial expressions and are available to its audience. In women's magazines the man is not portrayed as a sexual object, but instead as a celebrity lure. The longing for the celebrity is not about his body, but about his official life and profession which gives him status. His appearance in combination with his official life makes him interesting. The women's desires are associated with competence and successful achievements. The man is portrayed as the traditional man, as the watcher, that looks at the women to confirm that she is desirable, while she is looking at the reader. His gaze is focused and engorged by her beauty. He does not pose to invite sexual allurements, but instead his muscles promise action and control (Hirdman, 2004).

Women on the other hand have always been depicted as thin, beautiful and shy or as a mother or wife or as a sex object or victim. Women are associated with sex and passivity and men are associated with power and activity. For example women are always depicted in washing soap commercials and she is always depicted with long hair in shampoo advertisements and the man is always depicted in situations where he becomes the hero. Stereotypes convey a feeling of safety and we consume the things we are used to. That is why we are never surprised when we watch images of men and women, because it is what we expect. Women's actions and thoughts are diminished while men's actions and thoughts are enlarged. The real women do not have as much time for beauty custody as the media insinuate. Woman has through past times symbolized body and emotions, while the man symbolizes intellect and brain. (Hirdman, 2004)

Women have through past times always been depicted as Love goddesses or housekeepers, even when they are interviewed in their work. Women are portrayed as long as they fulfil the

beauty ideal of the society and if they are under 30 years old. They are depicted in nurturing situations and when talking about her love life and in discussions about appearance. These stereotypes are adjusted and modernised for the time epoch. Now in the twenty-first century the love goddess is depicted as a bitch or as a sex object, which women are to 'be proud of'. The women are characterized by her smile, 1965 with a modest smile 1970 with a big smile and 1995 with an inviting smile. In the images of women for beauty care the women are active by shaving her legs, applying makeup or working out. A trend is that the woman portrayed is posing as if she is looking at herself in the mirror, thus a narcissistic focus exists. The poses and gestures are illustrating to the reading women what is classified as femininity and thereby how a woman should look to catch other people's attention. When women are looking at portrayed women in media they are evaluating and examining the portrayed woman's beauty. The message in the images is that the observing woman must learn how to become as beautiful and coveted as the woman in the image. Women are also portrayed in the spirit of fetishism, i.e. with close-ups at lips, legs, eyes or other body parts. The purpose to fetish these parts of a woman's body is not to increase her sexual function, but to tell the reader that these parts are important to be defined as a woman. Women are always told to approve her appearance and her appearance is always in focus. The feminine body is described with metaphors and experiences like 'hair of gold' (Hirdman, 2004).

When men look at men, this disturbs the heterosexual masculinity. But paradoxical, when women look at other women this is reinforcing their femininity. And only the male observer's gaze is to be filled with sexual attraction, while the women are sexually passive. In mediated contexts women are the ones that should arouse eagerness and not be the one aroused.

These gender-roles found in men's and women's magazines Hirdman (2004) argues illustrate the diverse apprehension of what is expected from a man's and a woman's sexuality. The representation of women implies the idea that women *are* sex and their bodies *mean* sex. Both men and women are expected to direct their lust at the same body, the woman's body, but with different implications. For women it means to continuously try to improve ones appearance and for men it represents promises to satisfy the audience.

By studying the ideals of beauty and the way men and women are portrayed in media we can know something about how that culture expects men and women to behave and look. Advertising is an important medium in this process.

## **4. Methodology**

The research objectives of this study are to examine the portrayal of male and female characters in Egyptian media context and specifically in magazine advertisements. I will investigate how sex-roles in the Egyptian society are reflected in these ads and I will try to discover gender stereotypes, emerging roles influenced by western countries, and their meanings within the cultural and religious context of the society. The main aim is to examine how the cultural and religious context influences the gender portrayal in Egypt or visa versa. I will do this by comparing Egyptian magazines ads with Swedish magazine ads in eight lifestyle magazines in Egypt and Sweden. To be able to interpret the Egyptian ads it is significant for me to increase my own understanding about the Egyptian culture and therefore I will perform interviews with, among others, Egyptian Editors, Art Directors and models. The methodological tools include literary theories, semiotic analysis and interviews.

### ***4.1 The magazines and countries***

In order to assess the differences between the portrayal of men and women, I performed a semiotic analysis of images of men and women in advertisements in eight different popular magazines published in the spring and summer months, May, June and July, in 2006. The magazines are Charisma, Enigma, Higab Fashion, Cosmopolitan, Plaza Kvinna, He, Café and King. The magazines are comparable in content, so that the target audience of each magazine is similar, thus all of the eight magazines are popular lifestyle magazines that focus on issues related to fashion and style information, entertainment information and celebrity profiles and were selected based on reader age and reader gender. Five of the eight magazines that I selected are specifically directed toward women, three published in Egypt, Charisma, Enigma, and Higab Fashion and two published in Sweden, Cosmopolitan and Plaza Kvinna.

Charisma, Higab Fashion and Enigma are like I said Egyptian published magazines, the two former ones are written in Arabic and the latter are written in English. Charisma is the only Egyptian lifestyle magazine targeting women in Arabic, while there are several in English, among them Enigma. Higab Fashion is the only magazine targeting veiled women specifically. Both Cosmopolitan and Plaza Kvinna are written in Swedish. The other three magazines that I selected are directed towards men, one published in Egypt, 'He' and two published in Sweden, Café and King. The only lifestyle magazine targeting men in Egypt is 'He' and is written in English. All the other lifestyle magazines targeting men are published abroad. The Swedish magazines targeting men are written in Swedish.

I selected two issues from each of the magazines Charisma, Enigma and three issues from He for the reason that the magazines did not contain enough ads compared to the Swedish magazines, thus I analyzed issue June and July from Charisma, May and July from Enigma and the autumn, spring and summer issues from 'He'. The Swedish magazines are from June and July. All of the magazines are published monthly except for 'He' and 'King', which are released four and ten times a year.

## **4.2 Ad selection**

The elements in the advertisements that the study comprises are full page ads, images and headlines that consist of men and/or women. Totally, 450 advertisements were analyzed. The four issues of Charisma and Enigma together consisted of 95 ads of women, Higab Fashion consisted of 68 ads, Cosmopolitan and Plaza Kvinna consisted of 104 ads of women. The three issues of He consisted of 46 ads of men and Café and King consisted of 51 ads. The amount of ads studied in respective magazine and country can be viewed in table 4:1.

*Table 4:1 The amount of ads studied of men and women in the eight different magazines.*

<b>Magazine</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>	<b>Women and Men</b>	<b>Total</b>
Charisma & Enigma	95	9	12	116
Higab Fashion	68	0	0	68
Cosmopolitan & Plaza Kvinna	104	3	5	112
He	18	46	15	79
Café & King	11	51	13	75
All	291	109	40	450

Only ads showing men and/or women are taken into consideration. Ads showing only hands or feet or ads with children, illustrations or sketches or only the products are eliminated for the reason that the purpose of the paper is to investigate gender-roles.

## **4.3 The interviews**

To increase my understanding about the Egyptian cultural and social life and to be able to interpret the Egyptian ads, I went to Egypt and contacted several people working in the media field. I performed nine interviews in English with two Editors in Chief in two different magazines, two Art Directors, a TV and Media Producer, a Senior Copywriter in an international advertising agency, a TV Commercial Director and two former Models.

Important to be aware of is that all the interviewed, except for one, have lived abroad in countries like Tunisia, Syria, Saudi Arabia, The US, Italy, Hungary, Lebanon and so forth and they are all from the upper classes. Thus the interviewed are influenced by different cultures, which might give another view of the society than the ones that have never been exposed to different cultures other than by media. The interviewed are guaranteed anonymity, thus their identity will not be revealed in the research. I used a semi structured interview guide, which can be found in Appendix 1.

As I said, the argument to carry through these interviews was to increase my own understanding. My intention from the beginning was not to use the interviews in the analysis or to be a part of my methodology, but since the interviews gave me significant information for my analysis, I decided to use them. I did not perform any interviews with Swedish media people, because of two reasons. (1) I am brought up in Sweden and have profound understanding of the Swedish culture. But as my focus is on the Egyptian culture and society and because the Egyptian culture differs a great deal from the Swedish culture I felt that it was momentous for my analysis to perform the interviews with the Egyptian media people. (2) My aim is *not* to interpret the opinions of the sending perspective, but the semiotics of the images and for that reason I did not find it necessary to perform interviews with Swedish media people.

#### **4.4 Complications**

A qualitative method has the distinguishing characteristics that the researcher can get wider and deeper information about the subject examined. The disadvantage of a qualitative method is that, with fewer images and texts analyzed compared to a quantitative method, the researcher can not generalize the results (Kvale, 1997). Thus this analysis can not be generalised to *all* men's and woman's magazines, but only for the selected magazines and similar magazines.

The relation between objectivity and subjectivity is often discussed in relation to a qualitative method. Therefore I need to point out that I am aware of the fact that the analysis is pervaded of my own subjective thought and interpretation. With other words the analysis is not objective and I am not trying to be objective either because I do not believe that anyone can be fully objective. But this is not an attempt to provide only my own interpretation of

contemporary advertising images. I will try to achieve more than that by describing how a contemporary Egyptian reader might interpret these images.

#### **4.5 Performing a semiotic analysis**

A semiotic analysis can be applied to all kinds of texts, such as comic books, as well as music and paintings. Generally texts or images, both in my case, contains of a number of sign systems on which it is possible to comment in detail using this type of semiotic analysis. The requirement of a qualitative semiotic analysis is not to investigate the frequency of images and texts, but to seek for differential features in the material studied. In this type of analysis the researcher interprets and maps out the general impression of the image and put it in a relation to the society (Jarlbro, 2000). In other words the researcher describes the content and then interprets it, which in my case is the headline and image that the advertisements consist of. Emotions are easier expressed through images than through text and this is why images are important when, for example advertisers, want to intermediate ideal and expectations of a product or service (Jarlbro, 2000) Images are most often designed implicitly, which means that there are several ways to interpret the image. Thus I need to call the attention to that the reader of the analysis might not interpret the images the same way as I do, because of different cultural beliefs.

Semiotics focuses on the meaning of the message. In this kind of analysis the interpretation is dependent on time and space. A semiotic analysis is appropriate when studying advertising as a social text and is the study of signs. It attempts to decode the signs hidden in the text. Semiotics consists of three main fields to study: (1) *the study of signs*, thus the examination of different kinds of signs and the ways in which they convey messages (2) *the study of codes and systems*, thus the ways in which the signs are organized and combined, and (3) *the study of culture*, thus the examination of a specific culture in which the signs, codes and systems operate. (Zirinski, 2005) In my analysis I will focus on the third level. It is important to keep in mind that our understanding of reality is cultural and that reality is a social construction. Society and culture convey common sense, not only ideas and opinions. (Zirinski, 2005) For this reason it was significant for me to increase my own understanding about the Egyptian culture by performing the interviews.

When analyzing the texts and/or images the researcher has to consider two distinct parts which the signs are made up of. (1) *The surface meaning*, which consists of the overall



impression and the object the ad contains of. This part is the physical or material thing that is perceived through the senses, for example hairstyle or clothes. This physical part is referred to as the signifier. In this first step in my analysis I will examine (a) the models postures and facial expressions, which are signs within the larger system of non-verbal behaviour or the *codes of non-verbal communication*. (b) The models clothes, which are signs within the larger system relating to dress, *the codes of dress*. (c) The sales message, thus the meaning that the advertiser intends to convey to the reader, *the advertisers intended meaning*. (d) *The props and settings* and what it symbolizes or signify. Thus how it support certain values in the society.

(2) *The cultural or ideological meaning*, means that the reader makes sense of the ad by relating it to the culture and shared systems in the community, thus in this part I will analyze the meaning that these different sign systems, such as dress, posture and facial expressions have for us, for example 'freedom'. The signs say something about the text or image, thus it has a 'meaning', and because of this, they can be regarded as signs within a semiotic system. This conceptual part is referred to as the signified. To interpret the signs, in my case the advertisements, I need to isolate the signifiers that communicate the advertisements messages, gestures, facial expressions etc and comment upon what we take to be their meaning or signified. (Selby & Cowdery, 1995) This level includes more diffused ideological values, like stereotypes that are based on cultural believe. Stereotyping appears to be "common sense" until it is criticised by a large group of people.

The semiotic tools that I described above used in the analysis are primarily used to structure the information, as a complement to the analysis I have also, as I mentioned, used the information from the interviews and the literature about culture, gender and social structure existing in Egypt and Sweden that I have presented in the theory chapter. I have also considered accepted clichés and norms.

## **5. Analysis: Men and Women in Magazine ads**

In this chapter I will discuss images of men and women from the eight magazines selected on the basis of a cultural perspective. I will look specifically at ethnicity and gender and the representation of men and women and examine the contemporary ideal of Egyptian identity compared to Swedish identity, as reflected in ads. I will also interpret this in the broader social context of the Egyptian society.

### **5.1 The Women's Magazines and its Content**

A great amount of the content and articles in the Arabic magazines, Charisma and Enigma consists of Egyptian celebrities and high class people and the events they have been to. Interviews with celebrities, for example with artists, actresses and upcoming singers and their lives are common. Mostly the cover of the magazines is of celebrities. Other articles in these magazines describe to its audience how to use beauty products to approve ones appearance. One ad is specifically describing how women can use makeup to make the nose look more petite, like the typical western small up-pointing nose. This specific article also tells its audience how to wear her hair depending on the size of her nose. There are also articles about common people, such as documentary about common people's lives and what mistakes one should try to avoid, advises about how to be honest and straight with people. Articles that tell parents, or mothers, how to raise ones children in the 'right' way and what to do if something goes wrong when one is pregnant. Articles about restaurants, cars, arts and about etiquette at the dinner table, about furniture and the greatest beaches and resorts, such as Hawaii, Bali and Dubai are common topics in the magazines. There are no articles about sex and relationships in the Egyptian magazines, which in Swedish magazines are central issues. For example in the Swedish magazines there are guidelines, advises and tests that will declare something about couple's relation with one and another, predictions about how the relation will work out in the long run and tests about summer flirts. In Plaza Kvinna a headline says: "*Will you keep the summer flirt? We have the answer on page 157*" (Plaza Kvinna, no 07 July). In the Swedish magazines one also can read about career, the newest dating trends, and fashion etc. Thus there are differences from the point of view of content in the Egyptian magazines compared to the Swedish magazines. In the Egyptian society the marriage and the commitment between a man and a woman is a great issue. So how come there are no articles about relations? One explanation may be that in the Egyptian society men and women are not allowed, according to shari'a, to enter a relationship if it will not lead the couple to marriage. If a man and a woman

wants to be together officially they must be engaged, otherwise the society will not accept their relation. Girls in particular do not tell her family if she has a boyfriend. Open-minded families might be an exception. In open-minded families the parents accept that their daughters have a relation, but mostly, in these cases, at least one of the parents are from abroad or the children has lived or studied abroad (interview, 2006). The prohibition of relationships between men and women is reflected in the Egyptian magazines in that the articles about sex and relations are absent. Only articles that indicate a relation between married couples exist, e.g. how to handle a divorce.

## **5.2 Women in Magazine Ads; A comparison (2006)**

The first thing notable to say, about the models in the Arabic magazine ads, is that almost the same amount of ads contains models with western appearance, as models with the typical Arabic appearance. The ads of western models are often directly taken from abroad and when Arabic models used they are often Arabic celebrities. In Egypt there are not many Egyptian models. The Arabic models that do appear in the ads are often from other Arabic countries, for example from Lebanon. There are only a few Egyptian models that have the 'right' appearance and characteristics to represent a product or service (interview, 2006).

Totally in the four issues of Charisma and Enigma there are 95 full page ads consisting of women. 57 of them consist of models with an Arabic appearance, including the fashion section. 37 ads consist of women with western appearance that is women with blond hair or blue eyes or with typical western features, like the petite nose. The ideal hair color in the Egyptians ads is brown; straight, wavy or curly. Two ads portray black women. In the two Swedish magazines, Cosmopolitan and Plaza Kvinna, there are totally 104 ads of women. The ads consist of women with all kind of hair colors, but the most common hair color is medium blonde or brown. Two black models were found in the two magazines. The Swedish magazines, as a whole, contain a significant higher frequency of images, when it comes to both ads and articles, than the Egyptian magazines.

### **5.2.1 Women's gestures and facial expressions: Sexy or Innocent**

The models in the Egyptian ads, both Arabic and western models, are depicted as decorative beauty icons, often portrayed as sexy, 59 % of the ads, or innocent, 41 % of the ads. With sexy I mean when the model is gazing at or away from the observer with a turbid glance or when her lips are parted. Some of the images are also expressed by sexy gestures. With innocent I mean when the model is smiling or when she is gazing with big or smiling eyes.

The postures and facial expressions provoke different emotions within the recipient that the advertiser carefully has thought through. For example in the ads examined the women are almost consistently portrayed with slightly parted lips or smiling and she either glance at the observer with a dreamy or sexy look or she avoids the observer's investigating eyes by turning her eyes in another direction. When gazing at the observer, while smiling, the portrayed women become more available for the observer. It tells the observer that he or she is invited to look. (Hirdman, 2004) Ads that focus on the women's faces, close-ups, are taken for the observer to feel intimacy with the individual portrayed (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). Many of the images of the women are close-ups, except the images for fashion collections, where the models more often are portrayed in full picture.

Just as the Egyptian ads women in the Swedish ads are portrayed either smiling, 25 % of the sample, or with sexy facial expressions 75 % of the sample. In some ads it is impossible to decide weather the ads are from the Swedish or Arabic magazines, if one did not know from which magazine the ad was. The Swedish ads also depict older women more often then in Arabic magazines, but the ads where the older woman appear are in ads for anti-wrinkle creams and rejuvenating pills. In the Swedish ads women are depicted with western or European appearance and all sorts of hair color; blond, red, brown, black etc, thus there is no ideal hair color reflected in the ads.

Many ads in the Egyptian magazines advertise beauty articles, fashion and jewelry, beauty salons, makeup artists, makeup styling, skin care and makeup lessons. Implicitly this indicates the importance of women's beauty. Some ads also indirectly describe to the reader that it is important to be beautiful to get married and to be beautiful for ones husband, which is illustrated in fashion shots that picture women in wedding dresses and ads for hotels depict married couples (se fig 1, 2). Also ads for beauty salons indicate this.

**Fig 3** In one ad for makeup styling a woman with dark brown hair and brown eyes is depicted. In her hair she has a white hair-ribbon with white flowers attached to it. The woman in the image is looking with a longing gaze straight into the camera. Her eyes are applied with dark eye shadow, which gives her, a somewhat, more determined gaze. She is dressed in a white dress with white laces, which resembles a wedding dress.

The wedding dress is a metonym for the wedding and the life as married and all 'happiness' that comes with that. The white wedding dress is also a symbol of virginity. The ad might tell the reader that 'if you go to this salon you will become beautiful and you will get married'. In the Egyptian society the marriage is a major issue to men and women, boys and girls and their families. If a girl has the choice to work or get married, the majority of the girls will choose to get married, independent of social class. Only a small minority will choose to work. If a married woman wants to work she can do so only with her husband's approval. Most common if the woman has the choice to both work and marry she will choose not to work, because the Egyptian woman's opinion also states that her task is to stay at home and take care of the children and the domestic issues. Only if the family is poor and her workforce is needed to provide the family she will work. Thus the most important thing in a woman's or girl's life in Egypt is to find a husband to marry. Egyptian men are not as willing to marry as women are, but they are pressured from family and relatives. The main reasons for a man to get married is because he cannot, according to the Islamic law, have sexual intercourse with a woman as long as they are not married, which also means that he cannot have any children as long as he is not married. (Interview, 2006)

### **5.2.2 Women's dress: Revealing or Covered up?**

Clothes intermediate a first impression of what kind of individual the reader has to deal with, which is also conceptualized as *the codes of dress*. The prejudice people have about different types of clothes is well exploited by advertisers, when to set a new trend or when to create a certain feeling. People associate certain kinds of clothes with certain kind of values and it symbolizes different kinds of personalities (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). In the Egyptian society the majority of the population wear the looser and less revealing Egyptian dress, only a minority of the population, the elite, wear western clothes (Interview, 2006). And even so the women in the Egyptian magazine ads are portrayed in fashionable western clothes, either in evening dresses, causal tops or swimwear, just as in Western countries. Women are portrayed showing both arms and legs.

**Fig 4** In an ad for Smoothie Lotion an image of a woman sitting on the floor wearing just a white top, jeans shorts and a straw hat is exposed. The woman's stomach is showing and also her legs and arms are bare. The woman in this ad does not face the observer, and her gesture is very innocent.

This ad is very innocent for the western observer and maybe also for an upper-class observer in Egypt, but for a lower class inhabitant the woman would be apprehended as almost naked (Interview, 2006). Other Egyptian ads are more revealing and exposing more sexual expressions and sexy gestures.

**Fig 5** The picture is portraying a woman lying down on her shoulders lifting her body balancing on one foot, with the other foot on her leg. She is wearing a red and pink patterned bikini and she is wearing pink high heels. The model has brown curly hair and she looks at the observer with a turbid gaze.

The guidelines of the Qur'an are not strictly followed in the contemporary Arab world, but the Qur'an has influence on the public expectation about modesty in dressing. A Muslim woman should, in general, not be wearing perfume or cosmetics and be veiled in public. (Stromquist, 1998) This means that the way the Egyptian women are depicted in the ads is directly conflicting with what the Qur'an says about women's dress. Women should not provoke and tempt the man and the man must control himself and his attraction to women. Women must accept and obey the restrictions of the society. The ads are exposing women in a very tempting way, implying sexual attraction. Thus it is contradictory with the view and restrictions that is still deeply rooted in most Muslims. The veil, for example, works as a measure of discipline and is a symbol of virginity and the approval of the given structure. A woman's hair has a strong sexual attraction and in all the ads women are depicted without the veil and in Egypt many women choose not to wear the veil, but still the veil is the clothing used in public of the vast majority (Gerholm, 2000).

The Art Director of the magazine, in which the image above was published, explained that this ad would not pass if it was a full page picture, but because it was a smaller image it was approved. The same magazine had to edit another ad of the same photo shots of this fashion collection to pass the governmental control. The prohibited ad represented a model whose hand covered her underwear so it appeared as if she did not wear any underwear (see fig 6). To pass the governmental control and publish the image the art director had to edit the image by drawing fake underwear on the model (Interview, 2006). This same ad would without problem be published in a Swedish magazine. In the Swedish sample, I found a woman even more undressed than the prohibited Egyptian ad.

**Fig 7** The model is sitting on the floor wearing only underwear, fully aware of her nudity and that she is observed. She is trying to hide and cover her naked breasts with her arms and hands. The woman is gazing at the camera with an innocent smile and light makeup. She appears to be pure and clean.

The woman portrayed would at a first glimpse appear naked to the readers. The Swedish women are often portrayed as passive, innocent half dressed beauty icons, sitting or laying (see fig 8, 9), but very rarely, she is portrayed like the described image above. In Sweden the freedom of press and speech gives the publisher the right to publish almost whatever he or she wishes. The business world's ethical council, that works for the prohibition of gender-discriminated ads, ERK, reviews and tries to convict inappropriate ads after publication (Gustafsson, 1994). Thus it is not as restricted as in Egypt, where the government control all media print before publication.

The fashion advertised in the Egyptian magazines, like the fashion in Swedish magazines, consists of both international and local brands. The same ads of some western celebrities and models can be found in both the Egyptian and Swedish magazines, but the ads are exposed in different ways to adjust to its market. For example one ad for Christian Dior uses the same photo shot, but in the Swedish ad the model is revealing her breasts in a very low-cut dress and in the Egyptian ad the photo shot is edited, remaining only a close-up at the models face (see fig 10, 11). Thus images of women in Egyptian ads are depicted in a similar way as the women in Swedish magazines except for the fact that women in Egypt, mostly, do not wear revealing clothes that allude to sex. This shows that Swedish women are far more exposed and exploited than the Egyptian women. In Sweden it is common to use sex appeal, while it is forbidden in Egypt. For example in Egyptian ads a man and a woman are not allowed to be exposed in the same bed in commercials and it is forbidden to use erotic sound effects, like groaning. (Interview, 2006)

The first hypothesis I had about the Egyptian ads was that the western women in the Egyptian ads would be portrayed more revealing than the Arabic women. This hypothesis proved to be wrong. Both Arabic and western models are portrayed in the same way, which also were confirmed by the interviewed. The only thing that differs is that western women take a higher salary (interview, 2006). Arabic models, nowadays, accept to be portrayed in both bikini and underwear and in very sexy postures, as we have seen in fig 5 and 6. This is found in

magazine ads even though the images are reviewed by the government. For example in television commercials this type of portrayal is not broadcasted on governmental TV channels, only on private TV channels. Some ten years ago it would be very difficult to find Egyptian models, because it is not accepted by the majority of the society for a woman to expose herself. Modeling, as a profession, is considered as a low class job, both for men and women. A model might be perceived as a prostitute by some people. The rumors that will circulate will be difficult for a girl to handle. She will not be respected and might not get married and it will be hard for a woman to stay single, because people will think there is something wrong with her if she is not married. According to the interviewed Editors, Art Directors, Copywriters and Media Producers it is easier now to find models, but most often it is the same models working.

*“... like 80% are the same models, some brands have these stars, so most often it is the same models in every ad they shoot. Some other [companies] that does not have these celebrities we take other selective models and it is easy to find them, but very few are representative enough to be in an ad. Like 6-7 models... You end up having the same model do a photo shot for Mobinil and the next morning one for Vodaphone”*  
(Interview, 2006).

Recently the awareness of models in Egypt have increased and with that the importance of them. Most of the actors in Egypt today, in the leading roles of Egyptian cinema, were once models, such as Yasmine Abd el Aziz, Ahmad Ezz, Ghada Adel, Amir Karara. Models most often come from the lower classes, but that is about to change. Nowadays there are more models from higher classes, than before. (Interview, 2006)

### **5.2.3 Beyond the headlines: Luxury contra Mystery**

In the Egyptian ads luxury is a constantly recurring issue, which can be exemplified by an ad for the soap LUX.

**Fig 12** In this ad a woman dressed in a tight elegant purple evening dress with glittering diamond earrings appear. The model is standing straight up, facing away from the camera. Her hand is elegantly placed on her hip. The background is graphic, consisting of something that resembles sparkling stars. In the left corner there is an image of the soap advertised.



Ads provoking a feeling of luxury are frequent in Egypt. For example women dressed in exclusive, elegant evening wear, for events or weddings connote luxury. But not only the dressing code, but also the headlines express it. The headline in the ad described above says: ‘Mabnasba alaam Lux lilanaqah’, which means ‘Lux is the elegance’s world’. Other ads that connote the same thing says: ‘Kuni zagma maa makayaag intareeg Ilizabeth Arden’, thus ‘Be a star with makeup from Elisabeth Arden’, ‘Iktashfa gambek el-ra’ee’, thus ‘Discover your delicate side’ and one ad in English ‘Start your life with Elegance’. All the ads indicate the longing for luxury, elegance and star life in Egypt.

In the Swedish ads I found two major values focused; the first focuses on mysterious and exotic values.

**Fig 13** The ad denotes a brunette woman surrounded with exotic flowers and crystal blue water streaming by. In her hands she holds, close to her lips, a white and yellow flower. She is looking at the observer with a mysterious gaze and a soft smile. Her makeup is light. (see also fig 14)

Plenty of headlines also confirm the exotic and mysterious trend illustrated in the Swedish ads; ‘Förtrollande Kosmetik för den Modemedvetna’, thus ‘Enchanted Cosmetics for the Fashion Conscious’, ‘Hemligheten bakom Vackert Hår’, thus ‘The Secret behind Beautiful Hair’, ‘Låt dina Ögon och Läppar Blomstra Passionerat’, thus ‘Let your Eyes and Lips Blossom with Passion’, and some ads in English ‘Tonight Unbottle your Wildest Fantasies’, ‘Essence of Paradise’, ‘A New Surprising Fragrance’.

The other major value focused on in Swedish ads is ‘how to improve one’s appearance’, this can be illustrated by headlines like; ‘Från Skimmer till Glans’, thus ‘From Brightness to Splendour’, ‘Skaffa en Ny och Levande Hårfärg till Sommaren’, thus ‘Get a New and Living Hair Color for the Summer’, ‘Få den Hy du Alltid Drömt om’, thus ‘Get the Skin you have Always Dreamed of’, ‘Håret Du alltid Drömt om’, thus ‘The Hair you have Always dreamed of’, ‘Hetast på Stranden’, thus ‘Hottest on the Beach’, ‘Visa dina Vackra Armhålor’, thus ‘Show your Beautiful Arm pits’ and some in English ‘Blondes have more Fun’, ‘A Wake Up Call for Your Skin’, ‘You are Beautiful’, ‘Restore hair to its natural beauty’. All the ads portray beautiful innocent women with light makeup, smiling or posing with sexy facial expressions.

Values like luxury and wellbeing is accentuated in the Egyptian ads. In Egypt status and the belonging to a certain social class is very important. It is very hard for anyone, man or woman, to marry someone in a higher class than himself. The only way for someone from the lower classes to become rich is to become famous, for example by modeling or working as an actor or actress. (Interview, 2006) In Sweden values like the mysterious the unknown is accentuated. The headlines implicitly say that ‘The mysterious and exotic woman is more exiting’ and ‘if you use my product, you will achieve your wildest dreams and fantasies’. And the Swedish readers are also showered with messages that tell them that they are natural and beautiful, as long as they make some small changes in their appearance. The Swedish woman is fed with the message that she is not approved by the society, or media, if she does not look in a certain way, while the Egyptian woman is fed with the message that she is approved only if she is rich and surrounded with luxury goods.

#### **5.2.4 Settings: Office, domestic or neither of them? Graphics takes over!**

The settings in the Egyptian ads are most often unclear graphic ones, just as the Swedish ads are. The ads contain diffuse surroundings, where the models are pictured against colored and empty walls. A lot of the ads are close-ups and that is one of the reasons the settings are diffuse.

Naturally, the models are also depicted in clear settings. Important to notice is that in neither the Egyptian nor the Swedish ads are models depicted in indoor domestic environments in the sample. In the Egyptian sample, though, some indications or props of the domestic life can be found, such as ads when a woman carries a baby or when the prop is a washing machine (see fig 15, 16). Not even one woman in the sample is depicted in an office or other professional surroundings, neither in the Swedish nor in the Egyptian sample. Thus all the images of women are depicted in nonworking and non professional situations and does not reflect women’s expanding professional role in the society. In Egypt for example some Egyptian feminists have since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century drawn the attention to women’s position and rights in the society through women’s journals (Baron, 1994). Today the Egyptian women have high positions in the labour market, for example as managers, positions in the military and she is getting stronger in governmental positions.

*“... we have very good education and women work in big fields. The Egyptian women have a big place in our society, managers and everything. The women take big*

*positions. It doesn't matter if it is a man or woman; it differs in education” (Interview, 2006).*

The settings that the women do occur in are in cafés, on the beach and in outdoor environment. The outdoor surroundings are the most common setting in the Egyptian ads, for example in forests or in urban environments.

**Fig 17** In an ad for a telecom operator, Mobinil, a brunette woman is walking talking in her cell phone, on her way to somewhere. She has a big smile on her lips and she is looking away from the camera. Her clothing consists of a top and a skirt. In the surroundings there are cars passing by in high speeds. In the background a big skyscraper can be glimpsed, which is a metonym for the big city life. The ad says; “*Mash iy had star*”, thus “Not everyone is a star”. On the windows there is a reflection from the sun, which reminds us that the sun is shining.

The reflection in the window can be interpreted as a bright star, which enhances the star feeling. Thus not only the dress code and headline, but the settings also construct a feeling of urban star life. Thus instead of reflecting the women as professionals, values like luxury, marriage and beauty are accentuated in the ads. This, though, can arise from the fact that the majority of the Egyptian women are still house wives. The middle and upper-classes have maids to help them with the household, thus they have more time for beauty care, than Swedish women have. The status and social class, as I have said, is a big concern for the Egyptian people. A rich man or woman is worth more than the lower classes and according to me that is why luxury and the lives of rich people are accentuated and illustrated in the ads. This is the lifestyle most people long for.

In the Swedish ads women are only pictured either in diffuse settings or on the beach. In only one Swedish fashion shot a minor indication of a business environment can be found, but it could also be interpreted as a room in a modern home. Two images will be described.

**Fig 18** A woman is sitting on a bench against a dark brown wall. On the floor there is a small suitcase or portfolio. The woman is wearing black shorts and a black top. While sitting down her legs are spread and her position is up-right. Her lips are closed and she is gazing at the observer.

**Fig 19** In this image the woman is semi lying in a sofa, in the same room, with the same dark brown walls. She is wearing beige shorts, a vest and a tie. She is playing softly with her hair, while gazing at the observer.

These images are ambiguous. The environment and some props, like the portfolio, the tie and the vest can be associated with business, but the postures of the woman indicate something else. If it was to be professional the woman would not pose with spread legs and inviting facial expression. Thus in the one ad where the woman might be interpreted as a professional the codes of behavior tell the reader that she is not. She will be interpreted as a sex object and any thoughts about her as an intellectual business woman will not enter ones mind.

### **5.2.5 Veiled or unveiled? The Egyptian Woman**

Only one woman in the sample of the Egyptian ads in the magazines Charisma and Enigma, is depicted wearing a veil, or higab in the Egyptian vernacular, and a long dress, galabeya that covers her body. This ad is advertising Motorola's MotoRAZR in PNK.

**Fig 20** The ritta', which is the dress that covers the body and hair, is black with a pink strap. The woman is looking straight at the camera with a satisfied smile. The surroundings are black and the woman wears black makeup. She might symbolize a black, dangerous panther.

This ad is an exception from other ads in the magazines and I believe the only reason the woman is veiled in this ad is because the advertiser wants the woman to resemble a panther. Veiled women are not common in ads for beauty products and fashion or other ads for that sake. Ahmad's (2002) investigation of gender-roles in Egyptian television commercials found that not even one woman was veiled in the 306 television commercials examined. This indicates that the Egyptian media is sending a message that women are not obliged to wear the veil. As I have stated before the government supervises all Egyptian media, newspapers, radio, as well as television commercials and advertisements. Thus the government decides whether the women are to be veiled in media or not. In 2006, the government closed down an advertising agency because the agency only published ads with veiled women, separated from men. Thus men and women were never exposed together. The government found out that this agency belonged to a fundamentalist party, with deeply religious belief (Interview, 2006). This incident indicates an attempt from the government of more liberal believes that men and women are *not* to be constructed with strict separation of the sexes and that an incorrect

message might be sent to the inhabitants if the women are portrayed in veil only. Thus this governmental action confirms that it is acceptable for a woman *not* to wear the veil; that she is not obliged to wear it. But do the Egyptian media and governmental actions reflect the society's opinion and mentality? The majority of the population does not. A man in a committing relationship will step by step try to make his woman wear the veil, by telling her not to wear tight clothes or anything that shows her body. One reason for this might be that he wants the right to have the woman for himself and not share her with someone else by other people looking at her (Interview, 2006). This is deeply rooted in the religious believes. According to the Qur'an men should not look at women if they feel passionate about them and women should not tempt the man. The Qur'an says:

*“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and be modest. That is purer for them, Lo! Allah is aware of what they do. And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and be modest, and to display of their adornment only that which is apparent, and to draw their veils over their bosoms, and not reveal their adornment save to their husbands or fathers or husband's fathers, or their sons or their husbands' sons, or their brothers or theirs brothers' sons or sisters' sons, or their women, or their slaves, or male attendants who lack vigour, or children who know naught of women's nakedness. And let them not stamp their feet so as to reveal what they hide of their adornment”* (Amin, 2005, s 136).

If a man looks at a woman and feels passionate about her he is forbidden to look at any woman, even if she is ugly. A young woman is forbidden to expose her face for the fear of temptation. This applies to women that are ugly as well (Amin, 2005). This also is shown in the society. There are people that do not want to see women exposing themselves.

*“When Nancy Agrab [an Arabic celebrity] was exposing her breasts in a low-cut dress in an outdoor advertisement for coca cola, you later found all the ads sprayed with black paint to cover her up [...] just because they [some people in Egypt] do not want to see this stuff, because it is an Islamic country”* (Interview, 2006).

Egypt is a patriarchal society where the man is in control. The man is brought up with the right and freedom to go out to parties, have a girlfriend and the right to control the woman. One *hadith* says: “Al-rigel qawamoon ala elnisaa”, which means that the power is given to the man and he is much stronger than the woman. On the other hand, if the woman wants to be

considered a 'good' girl, she should have a curfew at eleven pm, she should not go to parties and she should not wear tight clothes. (Interview, 2006)

*"A little percentage goes out together [to parties] and get married that is the open minded people that are living on the top of this society"* (Interview, 2006).

Thus even if the magazines are portraying women in western fashion this is not the reality of most Muslims life's, but only the higher classes.

In Egypt there is one magazine that targets the veiled women in particular, 'Higab Fashion', thus 'The Fashion of the veiled'. This magazine is a fashion magazine consisting of ads with veiled women only. The veiling has the roots in that female sexuality is a source of temptation and seduction to men. Therefore women should be covered so as to protect them from any threat to their honor. The veil is not a custom only to Muslims, but was also used in the Greek and the Spanish societies. In the pre-Islamic Arabia the veil symbolized social class. Low classes and hard working Bedouins were not allowed to wear the veil. The veil was a symbol of honor and rank. Today the veiling is interpreted as a total coverage on the female body, except the face, hands and feet. (Stromquist, 1998)

The veiled women are *not* constructed in sexy gestures as in the other Egyptian and Swedish magazines. Instead she is constructed with innocent, soft and shy facial expressions. She is posing as if she is not used to the camera. The veiled women are wearing plenty of makeup, which is conflicting with what the Qur'an's advise. The woman should not apply cosmetics or perfumes (Stromquist, 1998). All images are with models with typical Arabic appearance. The clothes that the models wear are the looser less revealing Eastern dress; for example tunic, jeans and dresses all with different fashionable veils worn in dissimilar ways. There is fashion for daily occasions, such as military pants and dresses for events and weddings. (see fig 21, 22, 23)

The veiled women as well as the non-veiled Egyptian and Swedish women are depicted in nonworking situations. The setting in the magazine ads that the veiled women appear in are in parks, beside pools and in chairs etc. The images are full picture, and not facial ones. Facial images for example are often used in both the Egyptian and Swedish lifestyle magazines and

indicate intimacy. Thus the veiled woman is not as objectified as the women in the other magazines; she is more reserved and is distanced from the observer.

To enhance and reinforce the desired feeling in the image the creator can place out props that he or she knows is associated with certain values.

**Fig 24** In one ad a woman, dressed in a pair of jeans, a long blue, orange and white checked dress and an orange and black patterned veil, is holding a male mountain bike, with a bicycle basket added. She is standing on a fine cut lawn. In the background the observer can get a glimpse of palm trees and a white stone wall. The woman does not face the observer's eyes and she is wearing full makeup.

The mountain bike connotes that the veiled woman is modern; and so is the fashion that she is representing. Settings that indicate luxury is present in the ads also for the veiled women, but focused on domestic setting and not the star life. In other ads the veiled woman is portrayed with old antique furniture. (see fig 25) The furniture indicate class and elegancy, such as pillows and marble pillars or statues in the Rococo and Baroque style, also called The Louis-Farouk style by Egyptians. The style has it origin in Europe in the eighteenth-century (Zirinski, 2005). These props occur as symbols of wealth and luxury (Zirinski, 2005). Other settings consist of perfectly cut grass with palm trees, which indicates calmness and peacefulness. The veiled models are depicted standing or sitting in different settings of luxury looking in different directions, well aware of the camera. The images of the veiled women also indicate the importance of marriage, as Enigma and Charisma does, in that all the women are portrayed in wedding rings and wedding dresses. (see fig 26, 27)

Only in the holy month of Ramadan are women in the magazines Charisma and Enigma, portrayed in loose Arabic dresses, with long sleeves and clothes that can be worn by women that is not hageba, thus by non-veiled women. In these months western models are not used, only models with Arabic appearance.

*"I can't put a western model in Ramadan because she is blond, with blue eyes. But I can put her in the winter and with something with glamour. If she is going to were abeya or galabeya or hagab people will not accept it. ...why is she wearing something*

*like this? Lots of people go out in galabeya in Ramadan, not because they like it but because of the theme like Halloween” (Interview, 2006).*

### **5.3 The Men’s Magazines and its Content**

In Egypt there is not any magazine in the Arabic language, targeting men, that write about fashion, women, adventures etc. Only one magazine, published in Egypt, concerning men’s lifestyle is available, but it is in English. Other magazines for the male gender are either for teenagers or it discusses problems in the society or sports. That means that the men targeted is only the higher classes that are educated in the English language. This magazine is called ‘He’. The magazine discusses world economic issues, the best of spring fashion, celebrities and rising stars and other issues. All the articles in the magazine are about men and their careers, as bankers, singers and other professions. Some of the articles discuss religion and the Prophet Muhammad’s guidelines for life. There is one article concerning dieting; ‘Dieting 4 summer’ with an image of a tape measure around a woman’s waist. Another headline says: ‘Can a marriage be saved?’ which discusses how to solve marital problems. The ads advertise fashion, hair and body products, food, services and electrical attributes, such as cell phones and operators.

In Sweden there are a great variety of magazines targeting men, all from sports and different hobbies and issues in the world to fashion. The Swedish magazines Café and King are life style magazines that discuss issues like fashion for men, sport, reportage and interviews with interesting people and the latest trends. These magazines also give guidelines and advise about women and relationships. In the Swedish ads there are also a great variety of products advertised. The types of product advertised can be categorized into four themes: products for beauty, such as products for hair and body, electrical attributes, such as cell phones, watches and cars, sports, such as sportswear and fitness centers, services, such as recruitment and broadband companies, and others. Ads included in others are ads that cannot be found in Egyptian ads, for example ads for safe sex, such as condoms.

### **5.4 Men in Magazine Ads; A comparison (2006)**

In the Egyptian magazine the Arabic man is portrayed more often than the western man. Totally the three issues of ‘He magazine’ consisted of 46 ads of men. 65% consisted of men with Arabic appearance, while 35 % consisted of men with western appearance. The two



Swedish magazines, Café and King, consisted of totally 51 ads of men, pictured with western appearance. The Swedish magazines consist, as the woman's magazines, of a higher frequency of images than the Arabic magazine.

#### **5.4.1 Men's gestures and facial expressions: Determined or Smiling**

The Egyptian man is either exposed determined; 63 % of the sample, or smiling; 37 % of the sample. He is never exposed with sexy facial expressions. But the Egyptian man is also constructed as passive and decorative, especially in the ads for fashion and clothes. When constructing the Egyptian man he is either standing straight looking into the camera or he is turning his head away pretending he does not know that he is observed. Hirdman (2004) states that men more often are depicted facing away from the observer and he is also more often depicted in full picture, which indirectly indicates that he is preoccupied with something more important and are not aware of that he is observed.

In the Swedish magazines you find a variety of different kinds of masculinities compared to the Egyptian ads. In the sample 43 % portrayed the man determined, 13 % of the ads were depicting the man laughing, 35% pictured him sensual and the rest of the 9 % the man is depicted in other positions and situations. The men depicted in the Swedish ads have typical western appearance, some with long hair some with short, some that are shaved and some with stubble. The men in the Swedish sample do not have moustache or bear, like some men in the Arabic ads. In the Swedish ads some male models are moving; jumping, bending down and running around. He is active, but not in a professional way, but in a playful way. This depiction of the man would, by Egyptians, be interpreted as homosexual for the reason that he is not standing still or because he has long hair. The more traditional man in Swedish magazines is depicted in a straight up position. The different kinds of masculinities in the Swedish ads for clothes, shoes and fashion are among others; the tough man. The setting connotes a tough lifestyle, the lifestyle of a prisoner.

**Fig 28** In this ad a man is portrayed sitting in a simple bed in a room with walls filled with graffiti. His arms are tattooed and he is looking directly at the observer with a determined gaze.

To contrast this with another type of masculinity we have the boyish. The model is postured in a shy position and is reaching out to the reserved man.

**Fig 29** A young blond boy with a thin body is standing on a big stone in the archipelago looking down on his feet. He is wearing suspenders and white pants with a blue striped shirt and blue shoes.

And the upper-class snobbish man is also found.

**Fig 30** The upper-class men have a typical original Swedish appearance, blond hair and blue eyes portrayed in up-right gesture wearing striped suits.

The Egyptian man is in 63 % of the sample portrayed with a determined facial expression, with up-right firm gestures their lips are closed and their eyes express power.

**Fig 31** The ad is denoting three men standing up-straight. They are all gazing at the camera with determined looks. Two of them are wearing suits and the third is more casual. One of the men is holding a Pepsi cola, the seconded man a golden football and the third is holding a silver suitcase.

This traditional man is occurring in many ads. (see also fig 32, 33) As I said above, Egyptian male models are *not* portrayed with sexy facial expressions or gestures, but the sexy man is present. This can be exemplified by an Egyptian ad.

**Fig 34** The ad denotes a man with a typical Arabic appearance, standing in front of the sea in a red shirt with only one button buttoned, the one closest to his neck, thus showing his hairy stomach. He is holding his hands on his hips looking straight to the camera with a big smile.

Thus he is not portrayed with sexy facial expressions, but indirectly he conveys a message by the open shirt that he is to be observed as sexy. The smile is inviting the observer to look at him. The hairy body, though, confirms his masculine side. In Egypt the man should be constructed determined, mentally strong and sexy. He should not be constructed, so that he could be mistaken for a gay person.

*“He has to have a masculine look, not a gay look. He must look like a man, a nice man ... the why he looks and the way he wears the clothes, the shirt, I like when I look at a man in a photo I like to see that he is a man, a sexy man with the shirt open [...]*

*look straight to the camera with a mysterious look ... A masculine man is standing still  
[...] the man will appear as gay if he never stands straight and if he is moving a lot”*  
(Interview, 2006).

This can be contrasted with the sensual man portrayed in Swedish magazines. In 35 % of the ads the man is sensual. The man is either looking at the observer with a sexy or dreamy gaze or away with an innocent facial expression. Some of the models have feminine features, like frail bodies and long hair. The Swedish men are depicted more playful and sexy and they appear more often with bare bodies, wearing only shorts. Swedish men are more often depicted in positions that earlier was considered as feminine postures and gestures. This can be exemplified by two Swedish ads.

**Fig 35** The ad is portraying a man on the beach lying in the sand. The picture is taken from above and the model is looking at the camera with a sexy gaze. His head is resting on one of his arms and the other arm is on his stomach. He is wearing a shawl around his neck and his lips are parted.

Before only women were portrayed lying down in passive positions, while men were always portrayed standing up (Gustafsson, 1994).

**Fig 36** In the other ad two men are standing on the beach one of them holding a brown umbrella like the elegant women used to in old movies from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The man holding the umbrella has a pale body and his hair is ending just over his shoulders. He is wearing a cardigan and his breast is naked. The other man is standing looking at the man with the umbrella. He is taller than the man with the umbrella. This model is wearing a hat and over his shoulders he has a jacket. This picture is taken on the beach in the twilight.

The typical gender stereotype is that the woman is shorter than the man and that the woman is the one holding the umbrella as the rich women used to when they tried to cover their faces from the sun. This image is an example of how to blur the traditional gender-stereotypes in Sweden. The ad is ambiguous, because one can interpret it with both homosexual and heterosexual eyes and also the ads illustrate a variety of different masculinities that are being normalized by the Swedish media. Homosexuality is becoming more and more accepted by the Swedish society, for example this is shown by the acceptance of the Swedish Pride

Festival, a gay carnival, where politicians are present. This is also reflected or constructed in the magazine ads. For example in ads for condoms, found in the Swedish sample, the advertiser both target heterosexuals and homosexuals.

**Fig 37** The ad for the heterosexual men denotes a man's back embraced by a woman's arms. Her nails are painted with red nail polish and she has scratched his back.

**Fig 38** In the ad for homosexual men two, supposed to be, 'naked' men, only with their naked arms exposed, are portrayed in a bed. One of the men is standing hugging the other man from behind.

This ad might inform the reader that homosexuality is becoming or is normalized in Sweden. This can be contrasted by the taboo of homosexual men in Egyptian ads. The homosexual man is absent in Egyptian media context; homosexuality is not depicted at all in Egyptian ads. In Arabic countries the inhabitants are deeply intolerant of homosexuality. It is discussed as an illness and is not accepted as masculinity. (Ghoussoub & Sinclair-Webb, 2000)

*"It is not right, it is against human nature. It has nothing to do with the society, culture or religion. If someone is homosexual that means he or she has a problem, because God created us the way we are. It's against God's creations. It's a problem within the person"* (Interview, 2006).

In Egypt there are not many male models. Even in my sample you will find the same model in different ads (see fig 33, 34, 44) and one of the reasons is that when a guy is too concerned about his appearance he might be mistaken for a gay and get insulted and disrespected by the society, which is, as I said, considered as an illness. In the Egyptian society men's appearance is not important. A man in the Egyptian society should not be concerned by his appearance, at least not openly. Women does not look for a cute man, she is looking for an educated man with a good job, who can provide her with all her needs. In Egypt the man is still the provider of the family. He is responsible for assuring that the family has shelter, food and for fulfilling other needs. A man that cares about his appearance will not be considered as a real man by the women in general (Interview, 2006). There are small homosexual communities that are trying to expand and prove themselves in Egypt, but they are not, yet, accepted in the society.

(Interview, 2006) Another explanation why homosexuality is absent is that magazines are not allowed to write about these things;

*“I can talk about things, but not homosexuals. Even if someone is homosexual he can’t show it. Because it is not legal in our country [...] in my magazine, I can’t talk briefly about sex, religion or anything about the country [...] this is our policy in our magazine. To take the licence we said this. [...] We are talking about lifestyle and we can’t say and permit that we have homosexuals here”* (Interview, 2006).

An interesting point to add to this discussion that needs to be considered is that men, in 37 %, in the Egyptian ads for fashion, are presented with one or many women by their side. In the Egyptian magazines the fashion collection shots consist of women’s fashion also. In the Swedish magazines there are special pages where women are posing in sexy gestures. In the ads for women’s fashion men are not present, neither in the Egyptian magazines nor in the Swedish ones. One can discuss why men are illustrated this way. One explanation might be that ads for fashion, which until recently have been dominated by women, threaten men’s manhood, unless something confirms their heterosexuality. Like I said, in the Egyptian society a man that cares too much about his appearance will be insulted by others in the society. A man that goes shopping and openly talks about it will be considered as gay by both men and women. Modelling is not a respectable profession for men. If a man is modelling it means he wants to show off and to be famous, just as women (Interview, 2006). Another explanation can be that the lifestyle that these models represent, and thereby the clothes advertised, is more attractive to other men if women are involved. In a patriarchal society the images of men and women are presented in a heterosexual man’s perspective and in this perspective sexual attractiveness is associated with physical beauty. When a man has a physically attractive woman by his side this is a sign of status. (Baker, 2005)

#### **5.4.2 Men’s dress: Arabic, suit or causal?**

All the Egyptian models are depicted in western clothes and they are often portrayed in suits; 43, 9 % of the sample. Thus tokens of the active man are presented in the Egyptian models clothes. The suit is the male working dress and indicates professional work. Also attributes like the business portfolio appears, which is associated with and is a metonym of the business man. 46, 3 % of the sample is depicting the man in causal clothing. In the rest of the ads the man is portrayed either stripped to the waist, 7, 3 % or in other professions, 2, 4%. In only one ad, in the sample, the man is depicted in the typical Arabic dress, the galabaya.

**Fig 39** In this ad two men are hugging one another, or one man and a woman, the face of the person being hugged is not exposed. The man is wearing black sunglasses and a white galabeya and he has a perfect well cut beard, that many Arabs wear.

In the Egyptian society a great amount of the male population wear the Arabic dress, the galabeya, which is illustrated in the ad above. The galabeya, though, is worn mostly by the lower classes and by people that comes from the countryside and villages or by poor peasants. Men from urban societies and higher classes usually wear western clothes. The dress code for work is mostly formal, like a suit, while the dress code after work is casual, like jeans and a t-shirt. (Interview, 2006) Thus men find the western fashion more appealing than Egyptian fashion, referring to the upper classes. Men being aware of his appearance are mostly from the upper classes, men, who have traveled or lived abroad. If these upper class men want to read about fashion they will *not* choose an Arabic magazine, but one published abroad.

*“[A lifestyle magazine for men]...in Arabic won’t work, the people that only reads Arabic I don’t think they are interested [in reading about fashion], they don’t have the character. The fashionable man who studied abroad and studied English like the upper classes will read about fashion. I’ll get Maxim; it is fashion, sport and business, from abroad. But I don’t think I’ll get something like this in Egypt. But also I think fashion is expensive, and having it in Arabic can turn off most of the people who can afford to follow that fashion. (Interview, 2006).*

In the sample most of the ads in men’s magazine are for fashion. Thus it seems that men’s awareness of fashion is on the rise and focused on, maybe to try to make men care about their appearance. If you read other lifestyle magazines you will find articles about the metro sexual man. The articles are discussing metro sexuality in a very positive spirit. For example discussions about male designers of clothes and fancy and expensive hair products that are increasing in the market. *“Men are finally taking the time, money and effort to look good”* (Crush magazine, July, 2006). And as I have discussed before a man does not show that he is concerned about fashion, even if he likes it.

*“Most guys spend as much time in front of a mirror as a woman. Also comes the point of the macho guy who cannot be perceived as interested in fashion even if he is”* (Interview, 2006).

Despite all the prejudices about men's appearance in Egypt and despair of being judged to be a homosexual, the Egyptian man, at least in the upper classes, are starting to be more aware of his appearance.

In the Swedish ads 68 % of the men occur in casual wear, 14 % of the men are depicted stripped to the waist or a facial where the clothes are not exposed. Only in 16 % the man is portrayed in a suit. The casual dress is as we can see dominating the Swedish ads. This can be explained by the fact that Swedish people are more informally dressed at work, than people from other countries. A chief executive, CEO, is likely to wear casual at work, which is less likely to be found in the Egyptian society.

### **5.4.3 Beyond the Headlines: Information and Functionality**

The headlines in the Egyptian magazines do not say anything about beauty or how men should look, or how they can improve their appearance. The ads are instead informing about a new ring tune, 'Now with the video tune service, your phone will receive voice and video clips', about new chips flavors, 'Lays Lights, the New Lays Lights', how to win a golden football and how sprite will "Treat your thirst". The lack of headlines targeting men is present in the sample. The headlines that do exist are information about a service or lower prices. A headline for McDonald's says; 'Yes, any of these for 5LE only!'

In the Swedish magazines the ads discusses success, functionality and quality. For example headlines like, 'X-trail tar dig dit-Resten är upp till dig' thus 'X-Trail takes you there-the rest is up to you', 'Hårda Sparkar och Cool Attityd räcker inte-Men vi har resten' thus Hard Kicks and a Cool Attitude is not enough-But we've got the rest' and in some in English 'A High Class Lifestyle, 'The original classic', 'Designed to move you', Quality grooming products for men', 'With passion for Quality'.

Some of the Swedish ads point out to the man that he should also care about his appearance; 'Upptäck Aqua-Power, en vårdande fuktgel för män' thus 'Discover Aqua-Power, a tendering moisturizing gel for men', 'Förnya din hud', thus 'Renew you Skin' and 'Avancerad ansiktsvård för män' thus 'Advanced facial care for men'.

The Egyptian man is not encouraged by any ads to improve his appearance. He is only told what food to eat and what products or services to get. Thus a man's appearance is not important and the ads indirectly say that the man has another focus in his life than beauty. But at the same time ads for men's fashion are increasing. Unfortunately, in these ads and as I have stated before, there is a lack of headlines and the men often appear with women. The Swedish men, though, are encouraged to buy things for his appearance, but in a functional way. Quality and not beauty as women are showered with, is accentuated.

#### **5.4.4 Settings: Professional or Relaxed**

Just as women, men are also depicted in diffuse graphic settings, both in the Egyptian and Swedish magazines. The clear Egyptian settings denote environments like the beach, in sport contexts or in relaxing positions, such as in deck chairs, in gardens or by the sea (see fig 40, 41). The Swedish man is pictured on the beach, in domestic settings, like the living room, in setting connoting adventure and sports contexts (Fig 42, 43). Thus, unlike women, men do appear in sports surroundings or with attributes that indicate an active and professional man. In an Egyptian photo shot a model is depicted on a tennis court.

**Fig 44** The male model is holding the net looking away from the camera. He is wearing a pink shirt and a pair of blue city jeans. He is standing straight with his legs crossed. His lips are parted, his eyes squint and his eyebrows are frowned.

The surrounding in this ad is depicting the man in an active environment, a sports environment, but the man himself is not active. He is not depicted with any attribute, like a tennis racket, that would indicate that he knows how to play.

In both the Egyptian and Swedish magazines I found ads portraying the man as a professional chef. (see fig 45, 46) This is interesting, because when men are depicted as something traditionally feminine, like in a kitchen cooking, the man is depicted as a professional and not as a family man. Another example is an Egyptian television commercial where a black man is advertising a washing powder.

*“The man was wearing this dress that they use when they are working with machinery, they got dirt and oil, all over his dress. Then the man was washed with this soap and when he came out he was all white. The ad didn't talk to the man at all but when the women see this they will think that it is the best soap, you got a tough man and tough*



*stains like petrol stains, so you can use men in ads for these kinds of ads*”(Interview, 2006).

This commercial as well does not depict the man in a domestic environment, where he is using a washing machine, even if he is advertising those products. Instead he is a tough and strong guy or a professional, when he appears in ads doing traditional women’s work. This might be because the man is still the main provider of the family he is more often associated with work, sports and activity. Even the interviewed agreed on that “*men have better things to do than reading magazines about beauty*” (Interview, 2006) If a man wants to read anything he will read a book, not about fashion and beauty products. Thus men are depicted in settings that are connected with work and activity in both the Swedish and the Egyptian ads, but important to notice is that most of the ads depict the man in diffuse settings and in outdoor relaxing environments, with no connection to work, except for the suit.

## **6. Discussion and Conclusion**

In this chapter I will discuss and conclude the questions asked in this paper, thus how men and women are depicted in Egyptian magazines compared to other western countries. I will also discuss how the portrayal of men and women in the magazines are reflected in the current Egyptian culture.

### ***6.1 Gender-roles: Differences and Similarities***

When it comes to gender-roles the conceptions about men that exist in the Egyptian ads are that men are strong and determined. This type of masculinity found is referred to as the traditional masculinity. The traditional man is a strong and up-straight man and he is to some extent representing work and the relaxing life. The traditional man does not show weakness. The Egyptian man is also depicted as an accommodating and smiling man, but he is still pictured in firm positions, thus he is not moving around or lying passively on the floor as we have seen women do. He is not associated with domestic tasks, unless he is portrayed as a tough man and he is not depicted as a sex object. In the Swedish ads you find three types of masculinities; the traditional, the playful and the feminine man. In western societies difference between men and what masculinity can be is most often brought out in campaigns in more cosmopolitan metropolitan centers, which open up the discussion of sexuality and gay masculinities. In the Middle East there is a deep intolerance and denial of homosexuality and is not accepted or categorized as masculinity. The one thing the Egyptian and Swedish ads have in common is the fact that the men are not depicted in settings that indicate any specific occupation, but symbols of the working and active man are visual in the ads by dress codes, like the suit, and props, like the portfolio, which signifies, to some extent, that the portrayed person is professional.

The conceptions about women that exist in the ads are that women are to be beautiful and innocent, or sexy and adorable for both men and women. This is illustrated in both Egyptian and Swedish ads. In the Egyptian magazine ads women are invariably depicted in western clothes and unveiled. She is portrayed as a nice, smiling, innocent woman or with very sexy facial expressions and sexy postures as with big longing eyes and with slightly parted lips applied with red lipstick, even if the majority of the society does not accept that women dress in an inappropriate way, as in tight and revealing clothes. Apart from that, the Egyptian women, as the Swedish women, are also constantly depicted in ads that advertise beauty

products and in outdoor and diffuse settings. Thus she is depicted in non-professional settings and not in settings that reflect her expanding professional role in the society.

Traditionally the man is associated with intellect and brains and women with body and soul. The media follows this in Egypt, while Swedish advertisers are moving away from the traditional stereotype of men. The gender-roles portrayed in the Egyptian magazine ads are stereotypical and do not reflect the changes taking place in the society, for example the growing role of women in the labour market. It does not either reflect the typical dress worn in the society and the veil. The gender hierarchy is reinforced by constantly showing the woman in the media as a beauty icon and men with attributes that is associated with work. But important is that the women in the sample are neither associated with domestic tasks nor covered up as the Qur'an suggests which gives the Egyptian women more freedom.

In western communities advertisers have gone so far in exposing, exploiting and objectifying the woman and her body that it is difficult for a western woman to guard herself from sensuous desire and shameful feeling. And in some Islamic societies they have gone so far in secluding the woman and prohibit her to be unveiled in front of other men that the Muslim women turn into objects that men own, as it is in Saudi Arabia for example. The Egyptian ads resemble the western exposition of women. Both in the Egyptian and the Swedish society organisations *are* trying to stop this exploitation of the female body in media context, in Egypt by the governmental committee, while different ethical councils try to stop discriminating and stereotyping of men and women in Swedish media. But as a paradox and diversified from the western exposing of women, women in contemporary Egyptian media are prohibited to allude to sexual appeal. Thus compared to the western women, the Egyptian woman is exposed with limits, so that she is not to be exploited. But even if the governmental committee is prohibiting ads that allude to sex, plenty of very revealing ads pass and according to me Egypt is moving towards the western exploitation of women. Even if it is not tolerated by the people today I believe it will be by time, because they are already exposed to it by satellite television and private channels.

## **6.2 Advertising: The mirror or the distorted mirror of society?**

The Egyptian ads have a striking resemblance with the ideals of the consumer culture. The depiction of men and women in magazine ads is influenced by hedonism and what is apprehended as the modern western society, but with some limitations and mixed with its own

traditions. The message that the consumer culture conveys to its audience, both in the western world and in Egypt, is that 'only beautiful and rich people are good enough'. In former times in western countries women wore corsets to set off her body. The middle and upper-classes operated the bottommost rib to look thinner. Today we do breast enlargements and fat removal surgeries. We wear high heels, that are hard to walk in, we build long nails and words like dieting and fitness circulate in media. Depilation, anti-wrinkle cream, methods for the elimination of stretch-marks and hair extensions are all common methods and soap operas like 'Top Model' and 'The Swan' are reinforcing these values about female beauty and women's bodies in western television. The Egyptian popular culture is also a consumer culture where beautiful people expose themselves in images, which is influenced by the western consumer culture. Luxury and status are important values in the Egyptian society because the social classes in Egypt are so different from each other. Only the higher classes are targeted and exposed to the hedonistic message in the Egyptian magazines, which is also reflected in the Egyptian society in that it is only the higher classes that wear western fashionable clothing. Thus these classes are trendy and modern according to western ideals, especially the younger generation, which some people call 'the MTV generation'. But even if the ads of men and women in the Egyptian magazines reflect a more western type of lifestyle, with western fashion and products and even if the dress of the higher classes is reflecting this consumer culture, this is *not* a reflection of the society. It does not mean that the ads are reflecting the mentality of the Egyptian minds and that the Egyptian local traditions will vanish. Only a minority of the population is taking part of the so called westernization in Egypt, or what some people call cultural imperialism. Egypt has its own values and traditions that come from the socialization with the fundamentals of the Islamic law and the Qur'an. A major argument that opposes the approach of cultural imperialism in Egypt is that the national and regional media production in Egypt has not been destroyed through western competition. Egypt is still the most important center for films and books in the Arab world. Thus the media seem to have limited effects on people's minds and thinking. The consumption of foreign media does not necessarily destroy indigenous media, but can bring about new intercultural media space and cultural mixes and lifestyles. Egyptians often argue that the western media is exposing women to the extreme. *"The culture and the media of the west are deemed to be pornographic, violent and unsocial and engaged in an "imperialist" crusade against the Islamic world"* (Hazef, 2001, 14). Thus it can also have an opposite effect, it can help to revitalize traditional cultures, which might be spread to the western world. A trend coming up in Egypt is to focus on local and traditional values.

*“... I believe, or more I hope, that we get modernized yet keep what is left from our identity. I think vintage and local culture is becoming hip. And an example to reflect that can be the rise of certain artists such as West el Balad who play Egyptian songs from the heritage while adding some funk to it and they are doing well...” (Interview, 2006).*

Thus even if the media is reflecting a more western inspired content, this is far from the real life and the current culture in Egypt.

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# **Appendix 1: Interview Guide**

## **Questions about the interviewed**

1. How old are you?
2. What is your profession?
3. For how long have you been working in this field?
4. Did you ever live abroad?

## **Questions about the magazine:**

5. When was this magazine founded?
6. Do you have any figures of the circulation of the magazine?
7. Which group is targeted? Gender, age? Class?

## **Questions about the culture:**

8. How would you describe the Egyptian woman in general?
9. How would you describe the Egyptian man in general?
10. What kind of features do you believe makes a woman/man attractive?
11. What is your opinion of homosexuality?

## **Questions about ads/commercials**

12. Could you consider constructing a man in a more feminine way?
13. Can you explain why so many ads are in English and not in Arabic?
14. How do you reason when you/ the AD develop ads for fashion? From where do you get inspiration?
15. Are there any restrictions in the construction of men/women that you must think of?
16. Would you do something different if you were living abroad?
17. Explain the taboo about sex in ads/commercials.
18. Why do you think there aren't any magazines targeting men's fashion in Arabic?
19. Would you buy it if one would get released?

## **Questions about models:**

20. What opinion do you think Egyptians have about Arabic models? Women? Men?
21. What is your own opinion about them?
22. Is it hard or easy to find Arabic models for your photo shots? Why?

## **Questions about Western influences**

23. How would you say Egyptian people think of western influences in ads/commercials?
24. Do you prefer Arabic or western models?

25. How do you think Egyptians look upon Western models working in Egypt? Women/  
Men?
26. Why do you think there are a lot of western models in magazine ads?
27. When using western models, do you construct them in a different way than the Arabic  
models?
28. In which situations do you prefer to use a western model?

**Closing up**

29. Do you think that Egypt will be westernized or modernized?

**Appendix 2: Illustrated Advertisements**