

## ELEMENTS OF INFORMATION PRODUCTION AND DISSEMINATION BY IBERO-AMERICAN NON-SEXIST ADVERTISING OBSERVATORIES

ELEMENTOS DA PRODUÇÃO E DIVULGAÇÃO DE INFORMAÇÃO DE OBSERVATÓRIOS IBERO-AMERICANOS DE PUBLICIDADE NÃO SEXISTA

ELEMENTOS DE LA PRODUCCIÓN Y DIFUSIÓN DE INFORMACIÓN DE LOS OBSERVATORIOS IBEROAMERICANOS DE PUBLICIDAD NO SEXISTA

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### ABSTRACT:

The information disseminated by observatories can play a decisive role in shifting perceptions and increasing awareness among the public regarding specific issues. Therefore, the central question this research addresses is: what are the types of information and dissemination means used by Ibero-American observatories focused on non-sexist advertising? This qualitative and exploratory investigation collected data from 12 Ibero-American observatory websites, which are directly or indirectly dedicated to monitor and analyze advertising communication. The investigation identified various types of information presented on these websites and the formats used for their dissemination.

**KEYWORDS:** Observatory; Sexist advertising; Types of information.

## Introduction

An observatory focuses on monitoring a phenomenon or issue by collecting and analyzing information. The core actions of a social observatory involve information production, availability and dissemination, which requires interaction and integration with society. Moreover, the outputs generated by an observatory should reflect the interests and criticism regarding the treatment that certain themes receive in a given context. According to Braga (2015, pp. 8-9), the actions of observatories complement those of social movements and political demands as they reinforce social policies and

are a mediatized communicational action, constituting part of a critical system that contrasts with the traditional systems of information production and dissemination. They support political actions and the defense of important issues for citizens, requiring the involvement of other participants from civil society, the government and the productive sector. This participation of different interests and perceptions enhances the performance of social observatories and also influences the quality of observations and generated information outputs (Braga, 2015, p. 16).

According to Herschamann, Santos and Alborno (2008), observatories contribute to the development of a more balanced and democratic society and are capable of providing relevant information which can influence policy-making.

This ability of influencing public policy-making is vital for the performance of a non-sexist advertising observatory, as it can intensify and accelerate the production of specific legislation on the subject within the Brazilian context, in which there are isolated cases of laws approved in some states of the Brazilian federation.

A non-sexist advertising observatory is dedicated to monitoring the information disseminated in advertising, alerting the population about inappropriate content, and when supported by laws or decrees, the observatory has its role enhanced, and can recommend adjustments to those responsible for the advertisement.

According to Machado (2015, p. 33), observatories contribute to the distribution of power and contribute to democracy, as the actions of producing and disseminating information decentralize the power that, in general, is attributed to the State.

Herschamann, Santos, and Alborno (2008) identify three primary challenges in implementing observatories: 1) the scarcity on theoretical reflection; 2) the diversity of observatories, which vary in objectives, themes, structures, methodologies, and participants; and 3) the occurrence of inaccuracies in the data provided by observatories. Additionally, the effectiveness of an observatory is hindered by the absence or insufficient legislation relating to marketing and advertising.

In this sense, in order to establish an observatory with the aforementioned characteristic, understanding the operation of similar observatories within the Ibero-American context, especially in relation to information production and dissemination, was deemed necessary.

Thus, if the actions of an observatory are anchored in fostering information production, engaging civil society, and monitoring and reporting activities, the following problematic arises: what channels can be utilized to encourage interaction with diverse audiences? In what formats can this information be shared? Pursuing this line of inquiry, the core question of this research becomes: what types of information and

dissemination means are used by Ibero-American non-sexist advertising observatories? Addressing these questions is central to the development of an advertising observatory, and the answers could guide its construction, setting boundaries and focus on the type of information that needs to be produced and shared.

Observatories are associated with the production of data regarding a certain issue or situation and are fundamental for diagnosing them. Without this data, the opportunity to deepen knowledge about a phenomenon and relate it to other variables is overlooked.

In this sense, observatories have a social, political and economic utility, as they enable constructing map scenarios, instructing and encouraging the public's participation based on the information produced. Due to their capacity to produce information and interaction, observatories have drawn attention from society, governments and organizations, which depend on the production of this information to make public policies, solutions and interventions, as is the case of the use of the analyzed Ibero-Americans non-sexist advertising observatories. Furthermore, their inclusion on websites and social networks reveals the interest in improving the access to information, seeking the inclusion of different audiences. In this case, observatories produce, but are also responsible for disseminating information, in addition, they foster public participation, not only through access, but also through information sharing directed at the observatory itself. Advertising, media, urban or other observatories dedicated to social issues are considered social observatories.

The Brazilian population, similarly to those in other countries, has increasingly become aware of social issues, as evidenced by the demands directed at political, economic and social institutions and systems (Machado, 2015). This growing awareness is largely attributed to dissatisfaction and the public's enhanced access to information, which is also reflecting in behaviors demanding accountability from public authorities.

The type of information observatories disseminate can be decisive in shifting perceptions and raising the public's awareness about a particular issue. They have a pedagogical function and encourage a shift in perspective on a given social issue, considering that access to quality information is one of the primary functions that needs to be ensured by observatories. When the observation is directed towards sexist advertising, the context includes the society that consumes the ideas disseminated in advertisements and their producers, responsible for content that may be appropriate, but can also reproduce sexism and be violent towards women.

## **2 Observatories, advertising and information**

The production and dissemination of sexist, violent and stereotypical information is still frequent in the media and in promotional tools used by companies, in advertisements that continue to convey a sexist vision based on stereotypes, as stated by Madureira (2022).

A sexist view based on stereotypes means that the information available in advertising, whether in text, image or sound, conveys negative ideas about women, and seeks to build and perpetuate the power of men. Alemany (2009, p. 271, our translation) argues that

Violence committed against women because of their sex takes multiple forms. They encompass all acts that, through threat, coercion or force, inflict on them, in private or public life, physical, sexual or psychological suffering with the purpose of intimidating, punishing, humiliating, harming them in their physical integrity and in their subjectivity.

Given this scenario, instruments of control, inspection and education are necessary to stimulate the production of quality and non-violent information conveyed through promotional tools, with emphasis on advertising observatories.

Therefore, observatories should focus on producing reliable information that highlights the violent ideas in use, in such a way that these are ideas can be identified and criticized. Based on this approach, observatories can be understood as information centers, many of which are considered areas supervised by scholars and researchers, as noted by Robert C. Wood (1972 apud Frausto Martínez and Ihl, 2008, p.4). However, observatories go beyond concentrating and providing access to information, they need to be able to monitor, help control and mobilize, as highlighted by Machado (2015, p. 23).

To this end, the function of an observatory should be to ensure and provide access to information and knowledge, aiming at intentional change, a common characteristic of media observatories in Latin America (Angulo Marcial, 2009). This author focuses his understanding on media observatories, but provides important clues about the relationship social observatories have with the change they can bring about in society. In this sense, the observatory “is a catalyst for collective intelligence that opens up participation to a greater number of agents” (Angulo Martial, 2009, our

translation), becoming fundamental to foster the participation and support from different stakeholders.

Actions originating within observatories promote the sharing of power with citizens, making them co-responsible for what happens locally or nationally, and for what happens in public administration, in the political sphere and in democracy (Machado, 2015). Braga (2015, p. 8) argues that observatories have the overarching goal of promoting democracy and the exercise of citizenship. In this sense, participation leads to stimulating demand and production of more appropriate information capable of questioning official information provided by the government.

There are different types of observatories, some of which are dedicated to social issues. Frausto Martínez and Ihl (2008, p. 13) suggest that observatories, as a social practice, are necessary in locations where they already operate, but also in places where rates of gender inequality and social violence are high. Furthermore, these authors argue that “Local urban observatories are an instrument that can develop and strengthen agendas of gender and social violence through the development of community indicators, systematizing information, georeferencing and focusing on the indices” (Frausto Martínez and Ihl, 2008, p. 13, our translation), that is, they constitute guidelines built on important social agendas and drive the production of information centered on a specific theme.

Through an observatory, Schommer argues in an interview conducted by Machado (2015, p. 24), the sharing of power and its control mechanisms are also promoted, but above all, participants become producers of the world in which they live in, assigning them new roles, which begin to produce information to dialogue, oppose and question information, including official information produced and provided by institutional bodies that represent public power. In this case, control shifts and decentralizes.

The presence of observatories on the internet has been growing and demonstrated that many internet users mobilize themselves in networks and in political actions (Braga, 2015, p. 8), criticizing and acting in an elaborate communicational network to carry out what Braga (2015) calls social listening.

The information intended to be circulated and produced by observatories depends on the type and quality of the sources of information accessed, but also on the processes used to produce the information. Braga (2015) explains that production circuits need to be productive and articulated with civil society, with the presence of channels designed to facilitate the information flow and reach the audiences. Damas and Chrisfoletti (2006, p. 5) reinforce this argument and suggest that consumer action

in observatories is necessary. Thus, observatories carry out diverse actions, interact with various stakeholders and seek to influence public policies and mobilize the population for change.

Observing the promotional or communication dynamics of organizations is not an easy task. The formats adopted in communication are diverse, considered here as any format intended to communicate something to a specific audience.

There is no consensus on the terms marketing and advertising, causing the literature that addresses communication and advertisements to adopt the terms without justifying the terminological choice.

Kotler and Keller (2018, p. 644) prefer the term advertising (propaganda in Brazilian Portuguese) and consider it “a profitable way of disseminating messages”. For Las Casas (2019, p. 645, our translation), advertising is a “paid, non-personal form, in which there is an identified sponsor. It can be used to inform or persuade a particular audience.” The author also explains that, in Brazil, advertising and publicity (propaganda and publicidade in Brazilian Portuguese) have the same meaning, that is, both terms are used interchangeably.

On the other hand, Santos and Cândido (2017, p. 4) discuss and clarify the meaning of advertising and publicity, and prefer to define the first one as

the dissemination of an idea that, through some means of communication, seeks to influence someone to buy a product or service, creating in that person the feeling of desire for what is advertised. It can be defined as the promotion of ideas, products and/or services, announced by an identified person, with a defined target audience, and aiming for profit.

Therefore, the term advertising is adopted in this study. Advertising is adaptable to different organizational objectives, audiences and means necessary to disseminate information and persuade. Advertisements are considered sources of information and one of the promotional communication tools, used by organizations towards their target audiences; they are endowed with intentionality and they carry information. This information load suggests that it is a source of information, as it informs about a product, a service, about changes, innovations, or provides clarifications and attempts to remake the image of an organization, making comparisons, when necessary, just to mention part of its possibilities.

An information source is considered any place or thing that provides access to information, which may be in different formats and supports, physical or electronic, with momentary or long-term availability, and may or may not be directly mediated by a



professional or person in charge. Lima and Rita (2022, p. 13) clarify that sources of information can be diverse things. Two of them stand out, and are illustrated in Chart 1:

**Chart 1 - Information Sources**

| Information source            | Author  | Perspective  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Media                         | Cerigatto & Casarin, 2017; Gumpo, et al., 2020; Pedriza, 2018; Li, et al., 2020 | The media, such as newspapers, magazines, television programs and electronic social networks, are sources of information as they permeate and mediate diverse information for society. They are present in the daily life of the information society, where it is possible to have access to information relating to politics, economics, culture, etc. Examples of electronic social networks are Instagram (Gumpo, et al., 2020); Facebook (Pedriza, 2018) and YouTube (Li, et al., 2020), each having specific characteristics and audiences. |
| Electronic information source | Rodrigues & Crespo, 2006  | Electronic information sources are environments used to facilitate information access and use. They also gather services and resources in one place. An electronic information source for university libraries and education centers facilitates access and organization of scientific productions and journals.   |

Source: Lima and Rita (2022, p. 34).

According to Miquel Peres and Royo Vela (1999, p. 16, our translation), advertisements are also information sources, therefore “the type of advertising often labeled as persuasive, is not only informative and creates utility or value, considering that the perception of the product is influenced by the psychological field of the consumer [...]”.

Advertising is responsible for informing, enticing and promoting the purchase of a good or service, or the appropriation of ideas, such as those representing veganism, sustainability, among others. These aspects have been incorporated and propagated by organizations and people alike.

The marketing discourse is increasingly present in our daily lives. It appears not only in well-known and well-marked advertising formats, such as television commercials, radio advertising spaces, advertisements in periodicals and magazines, posters, internet and billboard advertisements, electronic mail advertising, etc., but also in more subtle, such as native advertising, advergames, advertainment, product placement and branded content (Burrowes, 2017, p. 17, our translation).

In this case, marketing discourse invades homes, work and any space or context in which individuals are exposed to advertising communication. The possibilities for disseminating information to different audiences were further enhanced in formats created for new contexts, such as the virtual environment. The boldness of these promotional or communicational actions goes beyond invading, they propose to reconfigure, restructure models and standards on which individuals base their perception and choices.

What expanded advertising promises is precisely the overwhelming experience, such that it takes part in the production of models and patterns that capture the imagination and direct choices and behaviors, and drive their distribution. There are models of happiness, success, beauty and identity, models of life and love, and they are always satisfied through some form of consumption (Burrowes, 2017, p. 17, our translation).

Mental patterns, beliefs and values are the basis of culture; therefore, they influence behavior. Mental and behavioral patterns aimed at consumption are influenced by the stimuli that target audiences receive. A situation that portrays this tendency in advertisements is what happens with breastfeeding, discussed by Fredericq (2009, p. 159, our translation), who states that “Currently, the entire advertising scheme of powdered milk companies is built around this psychological inhibition of the natural lactation reflex”. It is noted that advertising is used as an information source that changes consumer perception and is reflected in behavior, as it encourages the exchange of breast milk for formulas, whose intentionality and direction for sales are evident.

Advertisements follow specific regulations, designed within the scope of laws and recommendations from global organizations and countries regarding ethics and human dignity. However, this does not enable the protection and ensures that the information disseminated in advertisements deliver a positive image of individuals and groups. Oppression and violence are always available, such as in “Many TV commercials reaffirm that dedication to a career will not prevent a woman from embodying the stereotypical role of sexual object that has been attributed to her in the male supremacist society” (Hooks, 2019, p. 125, our translation).

As Hooks (2019, p. 70, our translation) points out, “Challenging sexist oppression is a crucial step in the struggle to eliminate all forms of oppression”, and it is necessary to “know by what means” women must unlearn sexism (Hooks, 2019, p. 86), and must question the “naturalness” given to it.



According to Krefta in an interview with Machado (2015, p. 47, our translation)

we have enormous challenges in women's struggles. Their liberation with autonomy over their lives, be it economic, social, political and cultural, takes place in a struggle against the capitalist and patriarchal system of production, which grounds and sustains all forms of oppression and submission to women.

From this perspective, observatories become essential. In a context where advertising significantly influences individual behaviors, it is necessary to encourage the development of critical thinking skills to enable individuals to discern underlying messages and embedded intentions. This skill is described as literacy, consisting of “the skill to perceive and evaluate the connection or distance between what brands promise, what they deliver and the company's actual practices in the environmental, social and psychological fields” (Burrowes, 2017, p. 37, our translation). Stimulating the development of this critical skill, non-acceptance and intolerance of advertising that projects violence towards women is an expected result of a non-sexist advertising observatory.

Inequality regarding gender relations remain present in everyday life and continue to generate situations such as differences in financial compensation, access to job opportunities and greater tendency to unemployment, access to a management or hierarchically superior position, access to healthcare, just to name a few. Inequalities are present in everyday life and reflect the society in which women are inserted. Among the issues with inequality, the treatment given to women in advertisements stands out, in which, over the years, have systematically been portrayed with a gender stereotype, or even as objects that accompany the product sold by a company.

Based on the theoretical framework presented, Figure 1 is proposed. It summarizes the type of information, participants, sources and actions linked to the observatories. Although the literature mentions the relevance of quality information, little was observed in the theoretical framework incorporated into this research, a detail on the type of information that an observatory should produce.

**Figure 1** - Production and dissemination of information by observatories: types, actors, actions, channels mentioned in the literature

|  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| Universities ----- sources of information                                      |                               |
| Stakeholders   |                               |
| Companies  |                               |
| Government   |                               |
|  |                               |
| Networks or online circuits ----- channels/means of dissemination              |                               |
| Physical   |                               |
| Citizens in general/consumers ----- Participants                               |                               |
| Organizations  |                               |
| Members of social movements  |                               |
| Universities   |                               |
| Government   |                               |
|  |                               |
| Elements of information production and dissemination utilized by observatories |                               |
|  |                               |
| Types of information -----   | Legal                         |
|  | Social                        |
|  | Statistics and from synthesis |
|  |                               |
| Actions -----  | Search                        |
|  | Analyze                       |
|  | Criticize/question            |
|  | Share                         |
|  | Dialogue/listen               |
|  | Observe                       |
|  | Synthesize                    |
|  | Engage                        |
|  | Invite                        |
|  | Surveil/monitor               |
|  | Control                       |
|  | Interact                      |

Source: By the authors (2022).

### 3 Methodological procedures

This qualitative, exploratory research used data collection as the procedure within the Ibero-American context in the following observatories dedicated to directly or indirectly monitor and analyze advertising communication: *Observatório de violência de gênero em meios de comunicação*; *Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la Mujer – CIEM / Universidad de Costa Rica*; *Observatorio de la Imagen de las Mujeres en la Publicidad*; *GEMA – Observatório de Gênero y Medios*; *Observatório Andaluz de la publicidad no sexista*; *Institut de les Dones*; *Ministério de las Mujeres, Género y Diversidad*; *Observatório de la Discriminación em rádio y televisión*; *Observatório de Gênero*; *Observatorio de la publicidad e información no sexista del principado de Asturias*; *EMAKUNDE – Emakumearen Euskal Erakunde Instituto Vasco de La Mujer*; *Observatorio de la Imagen de las mujeres*. A total of 12 websites, considering direct or indirect involvement with advertising communication as the criterion was adopted to select them.

Data were collected from the observation of 11 (eleven) categories, which were constructed empirically based on the analysis of information available on the websites of the 12 (twelve) observatories: 1) name of the observatory; 2) country of origin; 3) booklets and manuals against sexism in advertising; 4) observatory URL; 5) laws that support the observatory; 6) objectives of the guides or manuals; 7) beginning of activities or how long the observatory has been in operation; 8) types of information (what it contains); 9) means of dissemination; 10) information access format; 11) objectives/functions of the observatory.

The observatories were located employing google.com, and using website indications on the observatories themselves. The choice for website exploration was due to the fact that they constitute a growing option for sources of information and are also a communication channel with different audiences, as they facilitate dissemination and interaction with audiences that have access to technological tools and the internet.

In this case, a table was created - with content that extended over 8 pages, with these categories, filled with data collected from the websites. The analysis was carried out describing what was found, following the inferences and comparison with the researched theoretical framework.

## 4 Results and analysis

Data was collected between January 2022 and May 2022 on the websites of 11 observatories whose main or secondary function is to identify, classify and disseminate sexist and violent advertising against women. These are based on laws and decrees that became manuals and decalogues used to carry out this classification.

It is noteworthy that the operation of these observatories depends on the intense participation of the public, responsible for reports via channels available for exchange and interaction, a characteristic mentioned in the literature, such as reported by Angulo Marcial (2009) and Braga (2015). It is also highlighted that in the category 'teams', participants appear in different numbers. Some of the observatories inform who the collaborators are, while others do not mention them.

**Chart 2 -** Characterization of observatory participants

| <b>Observatory</b>   | <b>Civil Society</b>   | <b>University / Scholars</b>   | <b>Ministries, secretariats, councils and commissions linked to the government or global organizations</b> |
|--|--|--|--|
| Observatório de violência de gênero em meios de comunicação /<br>Observatory of gender violence in the media   | Civil society representatives<br><br>Organization Mujeres en Frecuencia AC in Mexico City. | Scholars   | <u>Consejo Ciudadano de Seguridad y Justicia del Estado de Puebla (CCSJP).</u>                             |
| Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la Mujer – CIEM / Universidad de Costa Rica<br>Observatorio de la Imagen de las Mujeres en la Publicidad /<br>Research Center in Women's Studies – CIEM / University of Costa Rica<br>Observatory of Women's Image in Advertising |  | Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la Mujer (CIEM) de la Universidad de Costa Rica (UCR)<br><br>Research Center in Women's Studies – CIEM / University of Costa Rica (UCR) | <u>Comisión Costarricense de Cooperación con la UNESCO (Comisión UNESCO).</u>                              |
| GEMA –   | Social and political   | University faculty   | Public Institutions  |

|  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Observatório de<br>Gênero y Medios<br>/<br>GEMA – Gender and<br>Media Observatory                                      | activists, students<br>and retirees;<br>consultants,<br>communication<br>professionals.<br><br>Social Organizations<br><br>Private institutions |  |  |
| Observatório<br>Andaluz de la<br>publicidad no sexista<br>/<br>Andalusian<br>Observatory of non-<br>sexist advertising |   |  | Instituto Andaluz de<br>la Mujer –<br>Consejería de<br>Igualdad, Políticas<br>Sociales y<br>Conciliación;<br>Centros Provinciales<br>del Instituto Andaluz<br>de la Mujer; Centros<br>Municipales de<br>Información a la<br>Mujer.<br><br>Andalusian Institute<br>of Women–<br>Department of<br>Equality, Social<br>Policies and<br>Conciliation;<br>Provincial Centers of<br>the Andalusian<br>Women's Institute;<br>Municipal<br>Information Centers<br>for Women. |
| Institut de les Dones/<br>Instituto de las<br>mujeres<br>/<br>Women's Institute  |   |  | Generalitat<br>Valenciana;<br>Vicepresidencia y<br>Conselleria de<br>Igualdad y Políticas<br>Inclusivas; Institut de<br>les Dones.<br><br>Valencian<br>generalitat; Vice<br>Presidency and<br>Department of<br>Equality and<br>Inclusive Policies;<br>Institute of Women.  |
| Ministério de las<br>Mujeres, Género y<br>Diversidad<br>/<br>Ministry of Women,<br>Gender and Diversity                |   |  | Ministerio de la<br>mujer, género y<br>diversidad.<br><br>Ministry of Women,<br>Gender and Diversity   |
| Observatório de la<br>Discriminación em<br>rádio y televisión  |   |  | Actúa<br>articuladamente con<br>el Instituto Nacional  |

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
| / Radio and Television Discrimination Observatory  |  |  | <p>contra la Discriminación, la Xenofobia y el Racismo (INADI) y también con el Ministerio de las Mujeres, Géneros y Diversidad.</p> <p>It acts jointly with the National Institute against Discrimination, Xenophobia and Racism (INADI) and also with the Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity</p>  |
| Observatório de Género / Gender Observatory  | <p>Coordinadora de la mujer – organização sem fins lucrativos</p> <p>Coordinator of women– non-profit organization</p>   |  |  |
| <p>Observatorio de la publicidad e información no sexista del principado de Asturias</p> / Observatory of non-sexist advertising and information of the principality of Asturias | <p>asociaciones de mujeres de nuestra comunidad autónoma</p> <p>women's associations of our autonomous community</p>   |  | <p>Instituto Asturiano de la Mujer;</p> <p>Asturian Women's Institute</p>  |
| <p>EMAKUNDE – Emakumearen Euskal Erakunde Instituto Vasco de La Mujer</p> / EMAKUNDE – Emakumearen Euskal Erakunde Basque Women's Institute                                      | <p>La Comisión Consultiva de Emakunde con las asociaciones de mujeres de la CAE. Las Asociaciones y federaciones de Consumidoras y Consumidores de la CAE.</p> <p>The Emakunde Consultative Commission with the women's associations of the CAE.</p> <p>The Consumers' Associations and Federations of the CAE</p> | <p>La Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y de la Comunicación de la Universidad del País Vasco / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea tanto del ámbito docente de publicidad como de comunicación.</p> <p>Faculty of Social Sciences and Communication of the University of the Basque Country / Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea faculties of both advertising and communication</p> | <p>BEGIRA está compuesta esencialmente por la Presidencia, que la ostenta la Secretaría General de Emakunde, una Secretaría Técnica y por once Vocalías en representación de:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• El órgano consultivo y de asesoramiento del Gobierno Vasco en materia de Publicidad.</li> <li>• Los Departamentos del Gobierno Vasco competentes en materia de Cultura, Comercio y</li> </ul> |



|  |  |  |   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  |  |  | <p>Educación.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• La Radio Televisión Vasca/Euskal Irrati Telebista.</li> </ul> <p>BEGIRA is essentially composed of the Presidency, which is held by the General Secretariat of Emakunde, a Technical Secretariat and eleven Members representing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The consultative and advisory body of the Basque Government in matters of Advertising.</li> <li>• The Basque Government Departments responsible for Culture, Commerce and Education.</li> <li>• Basque Radio Television/Euskal Irrati Telebista.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An expert in gender equality and advertising.</li> <li>• An expert in gender equality and communication</li> </ul> |
| <p>Observatorio de la Imagen de las mujeres<br/>/</p> <p>Women's Image Observatory</p> |  |  | <p>Ministerio de la Igualdad; Insituto de la Mujer.</p> <p>Ministry of Equality; Women's Institute.</p>   |

Source: By the authors, based on data collected from the observatory websites (2022).

Regarding the information on when non-sexist advertising observatories emerged, the dates indicate that the first one began operating in 1994, in Spain and the most recent in 2020, in Argentina and also in Spain. However, most of them have begun their activities less than two decades ago. The need for observatories seems to emerge more recently. Conversely, this could mean greater demand for information production, but also for inspection; or these demands may suggest not only a change in behavior, following a more critical stance, as Machado (2015) points out, but mainly

a need for demands from different sectors of society to establish adequate treatment, without violence in the use of information and images of women. Additionally, this demand may have intensified due to the fact that produced legislation have taken years to transform into plans and materialize into actions. This may mean that future approvals of laws will take time to achieve inspection, to be monitored and even to create those responsible for imposing sanctions on possible infringing advertisements.

Combining the objectives proposed by the different non-sexist advertising observatories, the following list of objectives is created, from data collected on the observatory websites: to raise awareness on the causes of femicide to build a culture of equality and free from discrimination and violence; to become a tool to promote a culture of respectful advertising; to facilitate access to tools that enhance the exercise of citizenship, seeking to develop a more sensitive and critical attitude, taking into account the exercise of women's rights; to add to the construction of journalistic ethics and the publicity of universal Human Rights values, aiming at reducing gender-based violence; to build a new advertising discourse that responds to social changes; to compile information relating to women, carrying out analysis, studies and diagnoses of gender violence problems; to facilitate the exchange of information with authorities, researchers and organizations; to take action against sexist language; to suggest public policies and projects; to encourage the production of appropriate and non-violent content that represents good practices; to raise awareness, train and advise on the topic of non-sexist advertising; to receive reports from citizens and direct them to the competent bodies; to propose sanctions for advertising and brands that use violent and sexist information and images against women.

The proposed objectives require different areas to understand the advertising issue. Learning what advertising is and what its limits are in relation to what the law determines and what can be tolerated in ethical terms, constitutes one of the approaches. However, other areas are being transposed where, in addition to ethical discussions, it is necessary to think about sanctions for those who violate the legislation; also, about the reasons that lead society to tolerate or encourage sexist advertising, or even about what to do to educate the public about the harm of propagating sexist ideas. These objectives require the presence of public authorities, not only punishing, but creating mechanisms together with the observatory and other stakeholders, aiming to bring about a change in society, as discussed by Machado (2015).

Observatories use information in the following formats: texts, written and published in PDF extension, but also in DOC extension; dissemination in video format;

audio to promote radio campaigns; and images in documents. This variety of formats facilitates access to information, but also meets the preferences of certain groups and individuals. In this sense, the identified documents included: interviews, campaigns, laws, decrees, booklets, decalogues, reports, bulletins, news, publications on the number of reports and people affected, and gender indicators. Materials produced by the observatories themselves or shared by them indicate that constituting a source of information is one of their central purposes. However, it was observed that, out of the twelve observatories, ten used PDF files, with images and texts. This option leads us to consider that the observatories assume that whoever accesses the information can read such documents and understand them; in addition, that they constitute the preferred option for audiences seeking information from an observatory, as they are literate audiences. However, if the intention is to ensure that the observatory under construction has reach and can be accessed by different audiences, by adopting text files accompanied or not by images which require the ability to read, they disregard audiences who cannot read or prefer other formats, implying an immediate reduction in access, interest and interaction by some potential audiences.

Regarding the type of information they share, the following are included: How to work with speeches and words to become inclusive; Non-sexist journalism; International agreements; Political participation; Cultural transformation; Economic autonomy; Criteria used to assess sexist advertising; data and figures of violence; influence of gender violence, of the patriarchal religious system, of freedom of maternity and of choice; Other sites of interest and observatories; Best practices (videos that exemplify best practices in advertising); What an observatory is (its objectives, contact channels, how to report, contact information); Information on mental health monitoring and problematic media consumption; Gender indicators for media; Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action; Violence in the media and advertising.

It is observed that the types of information cover more than assessing whether an advertisement is violent and sexist. It is clear that to identify the presence and classify advertisements as violent, one must understand the concept of violence, sexism, and the forms they manifest. However, this is not enough for an observatory, as other duties that go beyond observing are delegated to it. The obligation to provide information on how to act, produce and provoke social change is revealed. The pedagogical nature should be present, along with actions that support information production, dissemination and reception, and interaction with the audiences.

The study was not able to identify information on the number of accesses to materials shared by the observatories. Generating information about the number of

accesses can facilitate understanding about the interaction with some audiences, just as the levels of reports on sexist advertisements can also become an indicator. However, the fact that there are reports at the observatories is already an important indicator of the participation of audiences who interact, above all, via the reporting channel.

## **5 Final considerations**

A non-sexist advertising observatory has a clear purpose, but with a difficult task. Not because it proposes to monitor and criticize the information disseminated in advertisements and to question the adopted sexist standard, but because it proposes to change this context, raising awareness in society about ideas taken as normal and natural, but which are in fact an expression of sexist oppression.

Hooks (2019, p. 62, our translation) expresses that “The real engagement of those who adhere to women's movement to end sexist oppression is made up of revolutionary struggles. And a struggle is rarely safe and pleasurable.” According to the discussion developed throughout the text, establishing a non-sexist advertising observatory, producing and disseminating quality information, is a challenge when it comes to creating and disseminating this information.

In this context, the observatory, which should be a means of social listening, but must also be capable of mobilizing and influencing public policies, requires working on different fronts, including thinking about the types of materials or formats for displaying information; being based on national laws, which, when non-existent, must be demanded from legislators, or resort to recommendations from global organizations; specifying the focus on some types of information; determining the means of dissemination that will be adopted; identifying participants and the best ways to interact with them; and, outlining the observatory's objectives or functions.

The proposed research problem was ‘what are the information and means of dissemination used by Ibero-American non-sexist advertising observatories?’. The first part of the answer includes the identification of different types and themes for the information displayed in the future on the observatory website, which are: media, laws, international declarations, gender indicators, policies, partners or similar organizations, international agreements, issues in the field of health, economy, culture and motherhood. Therefore, in addition to the information involving advertisements, observatories dedicated exclusively or in an associated way to observing

advertisements, end up including a vast informational framework, requiring specification based on the objectives outlined for the action.

The second part of the answer to the problem is dedicated to the means of dissemination, revealing the following preferences: textual format, image, videos and audio, used in the format of interviews, campaigns, laws, decrees, booklets, decalogues, reports, bulletins, news and gender indicators.

In the context of the proposed discussion, advertising is considered a cultural mediator and capable of transforming habits, a topic that should be deepened in future research, with commercial potential to stimulate the sale of products, brand awareness and which affects behavior and consumption. Advertising ends up propagating textual, sound and image information that mediates between those who sell and those who buy or consume, but it is not only about that, as they also appropriate and reverberate, reproduce and perpetuate the central values contained in a given advertising. Valuing or encouraging the desire for violence and disrespect towards women should be banned and prohibited from any means or instruments used for communication. In turn, advertising, which does not intend to announce sales, has as its motto the dissemination of ideas and is close to advertising as it also disseminates a thought (Santos and Cândido, 2017). In this sense, Santos and Cândido (2017), argue that “Both Advertising and Publicity transmit ideologies, one in a more open way and the other in a more simplified and/or disguised way in its objective to sell”. These authors also suggest that advertising disseminates what is salable, which leads to questioning, at least, why violence and abuse towards women sells and is desired. In this sense, marketing and advertising are connected to a market logic, which use the ideas or ways of thinking most appropriate for sale in a given social context.

Further research is necessary to understand the context, operations and problems of an advertising observatory. Among the themes, we intend to carry out research involving: a) Systematic literature review on advertising analysis techniques, predicting advertisements in different formats; b) Discussion on ethical issues involved in the activities of the non-sexist advertising observatory; c) Analysis of the discourse of inclusion in advertising: focus on guidelines provided in Ibero-American non-sexist advertising observatories; d) Media literacy on advertising: developing critical thinking in the population; e) Quality of information in advertising observatories.

## **Funding**

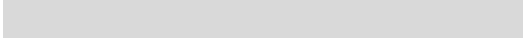
Sponsored by CNPq/MCTI/FNDCT N. 18/2021 - Track A - Emerging Groups,  
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**RESUMO:**

O tipo de informação que os observatórios difundem pode ser determinante para a mudança de percepção e para sensibilizar a população quanto a um determinado problema. Assim, o problema central desta pesquisa é: quais são as informações e meios de divulgação usados pelos observatórios da publicidade não sexista ibero-americanos? Trata-se de uma pesquisa qualitativa e exploratória que utilizou uma coleta de dados em sites de 12 observatórios ibero-americanos dedicados direta ou indiretamente a monitorar e analisar a comunicação publicitária. Identificaram-se diferentes tipos de informações expostas nos sites, bem como seus formatos de divulgação.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:**

Observatório;  
Publicidade sexista; Tipos de informação.

**RESUMEN:**

El tipo de información que difunden los observatorios puede ser determinante para el cambio de percepción y para sensibilizar a la población sobre un determinado problema. Así, el problema central de esta investigación es: ¿cuáles son las informaciones y los medios de difusión utilizados por los observatorios de la publicidad no sexista iberoamericanos? Se trata de una investigación cualitativa y exploratoria que utilizó una recolección de datos en sitios web de 12 observatorios iberoamericanos dedicados directa o indirectamente a monitorear y analizar la comunicación publicitaria. Se identificaron diferentes tipos de información expuesta en los sitios web, así como sus formatos de difusión.

**PALABRAS****CLAVE:**

Observatorio;  
Publicidad sexista; Tipos de información.