

## Status of Arab Women in Advertising: A Survey of Arab Women Specially College Going Students

Sanjay Singh Baghel

Professor, Delhi University, Delhi, India

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### ABSTRACT

The role of women in advertising in the Arab world has gradually expanded in the past 40 years. Before the 1960s, few opportunities existed for women outside of domestic and family life. However, with the discovery of oil and the subsequent expanding economic sectors, women have fought to increase their access to education, resulting in increased involvement in outdoor jobs. However, their society and culture still do not allow them to work in all sectors. Advertising and media are among the sectors where women's representation is still not considerable compared to other countries.

In recent years, the media played a significant role in women's awareness about their rights across the Arab world. Last year during the Arab world spring and revolution, women's participation was quite eye-opening for the monarchies who have ruled the Arab world for quite a long time. This participation was possible due to social media and its uses. The majority of the users were women. It's depicted that in the media and advertising sectors, women's participation is rapidly increasing. Yet, there is a lot to be done in the advertising sector where women are direct users of the products but they are not directly representing their country-made products.

The Arab world consists of approximately 350 million populations, with total imports of over \$250 billion. Second, due to global competition, their economies have undergone remarkable transformation within the last decade. Most Arab countries have pursued privatization and liberalization, which has led to more competition, entailing intensive advertising. Third, by divergent magazines and television channels ad content in the Arab world, this study will facilitate a better understanding as to how Western-oriented advertising practices need to be modified to accommodate the religious beliefs, traditions and lifestyles of the Arab world.

This paper extends the research in cross-cultural advertising by analyzing the content of magazines, television advertisements, hoarding, banners and posters from the Arab world, which is composed of twelve Middle Eastern countries (Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria, U.A.E. and Yemen). Researchers have tried to discuss women's limitations and extensions of advertising in the Arab World.

Keywords: Women, Advertising , Arab World, Media

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the world revolution and the beginning of the feminist movement in the 20th century, the style of thinking towards women has changed. Women are playing an important role in different fields and media. The developments of Arab advertisements in the media are enhancing the role of Arabic women in Arabic television. Also, it presents their abilities and skills. In this study, we aim to present one of the most important media issues in our Arab communities such as the image of Arabic women in the advertisements. We will address the definition of advertisements, the beginning of appearance the of Arabic women in advertisements, the advantages and disadvantages of women in advertisements, equality between men and women in the advertisements field and the opinion of Arabic Street towards the appearance of Arabic women in advertisements.

Advertising is a tool that is used to promote material, goods or anything else. There is a specific destinations, companies and organizations that function to market and promote the idea of substance, consumer, subject and purpose by using attractive ways to attract viewers and they may watch or own that material advertised.

The advertisements have been known since old age in the Arabic world. For example, the Pharaohs in Egyptian civilization used it to announcement for their losing things, and to advertise for their rulers by putting it on the walls and stones. In addition, the primitive tribes in the civilization of Iraq used advertisements in agriculture

scope to clarify how to produce a better product in the early nineties, due to globalization and other changes in the world, Arab media began using women in commercial advertisements for several reasons. Firstly, this was influenced by the emergence of universal laws promoting women's rights and their long-standing struggle for freedom, democracy, justice, and equality. Secondly, Arabic channels have used women as a commercial commodity to increase profits, boost sales for manufacturing institutions, and achieve various political, economic, and ideological objectives within the community. Arabic women are used as a tool to attract the attention of the viewer especially beautiful ones because the audiences like the beautiful, good-looking, attractive and white ladies. However, Arab women resort to working in the field of advertising to increase the income of their families and help their husbands with their children's expenses to live the good life. Also, some women specialize in this area to gain fame and high renown. Statistics carried out by "private family magazine" show that the rate of emergence of Arabic women in advertising in some Arab channels of up to 82% if we exclude the ads for children and advertising, conferences and seminars, the exploitation of women up to 95% of advertisements private for men tools and their clothes.

According to the study performed by Eman (2008) "The employment of women in advertising is a sign of change and development in the culture of the community and that the principle of equality between men and women has achieved. The Arabic women in the light of globalization have become similar image with the image of foreign women in advertisements".

On the other hand, according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Nehad, 2008) "the distinction between men and women in the employment section of advertising is an insult to human dignity and the dignity of women in particular. Also, it is a must to abolish all the laws and different bad customs which are practised against the Arabic women".

However, the Arab world began to treat both men and women equally specifically, in the employment department in the ads field. We note at this time most of the Arab channels attract women to its screens for commercials. For example, in shampoo advertising, soap, make-up and sometimes ladies are standing with men in one advertisement. Above all else, with the increase in social awareness most Arab women, began working in the advertising department. Nowadays, we find most women are getting bachelor, diplomas and have experience in this area, like Arab men.

Although the work of Arab women in the field of advertising is considered one right for them there are many advantages and disadvantages they are facing during their work in this scope.

First of all, one of the disadvantages is that any Arab lady who works in advertising becomes very busy and does not have enough time for her family, her husband and her children. Therefore, she does not have extra time in most cases which makes her spend much of her time at work. Moreover, most Arab men see ladies who work in the field of advertising as bad women because they regard it as just a commercial commodity used for economic and political. In addition, the public sees her as a temptation only to attract attention from men. For example, some of the ladies wear naked clothes to present their charming bodies.

Our Arab societies consider males society more than females. The existence of a woman with beauty and a gorgeous image in advertisement field is considered the demolition of morality and not from our customs, and traditions and not from our Islamic religion. On top of that, Arab cultural principles are to maintain women and not to offer them as commodities for sale by showing their beauty and fascinating bodies (Kilbourne, 2000). Furthermore, Arab girls who are working in the field of advertising have fewer opportunities for them to marry because Eastern men do not accept a woman who shows her beauty in front of men through the channels. Also, the men thought that the woman who was present in the advertising was reckless and flirted with Islamic traditions and customs that are prevailing in the Arab community.

On the other hand, there are advantages to having Arab women working in the advertising field. It is important for women to work in advertising to sustain their livelihoods and effectively showcase their role in Arab media. This helps highlight their talents and their contribution to creating a positive image for women. Also, advertising agencies need Arab women in order to achieve material gains and high profits. For instance, Arab women are used to promoting the company's goods, advertising its various programs and in order to gain a high reputation and fame. Advertising agencies transfer and highlight the potential of women as effective ladies and have powerful activities and creativity. Moreover, women gained high Center and high fame and became popular with the public audience in society

Arab Street has its own opinion towards Arabic women who are working in the advertising field. Most Arab societies reject the work of women in advertising because of the social customs that exist in our Arab countries. Also, there are a lot of misinterpretations about their appearance in Arab television channels. Through a survey, we did with some of the Arab citizens residing in the Sultanate. Ghassan- an Iraqi citizen -43 years says" that the work of women is something is very important and necessary and can not affect on her function as a

housewife, especially if she is divorced or widow and if she is the sole provider for her family. Also, there should be available factors for the success of the woman in her work in advertising and in her home. In contrast, there are other Arabic groups which are disagreeing with the work of women in this field. They see this job as an abuse of the Arabic customs and beliefs in their countries. They also prefer women who work in the sectors of education, health and management. For example, we tacked the opinion of an Omani citizen -Khalid Al-shikili- 33 years old, who said "I don't prefer women who work in the advertising field because it is not appropriate for our habits and religion".

In conclusion, Eastern women play a large role in the area of advertisements and she equal with Recent studies have shown that advertising in the Arab world is becoming more female-centric, with many women specializing in this field in universities and colleges across all Arab countries.

### Significance of this Research

The importance of this research lies in highlighting various risks faced by Arabic women, including persecution and restrictions on their lives. They must adapt and coexist with a society that does not grant them the freedom they desire. In addition, the advertisements are destroying the image of Arabic women which is displayed through the advertising means and use women as a tool for excitement. Sometimes the main objective of women is considered as a commercial commodity which is just to promote the products. The significance of our research is to find effective solutions and ways to improve the status of Arab women and how to deal with them logically.

While media in the Arab world are not as developed as in the other world, they are in the process of developing into a more progressive state. Conventionally, print media have had the dominant share of advertising dollars (Martin, 1998). Newspapers have been the backbone of the Arabic media, but magazines are becoming more popular as advertising vehicles because of improved quality (Martin, 1998). Titles such as *Hia* compete with Western glossies, and publications of all sorts are improving the quality of editorial work, photography and paper (Martin, 1998). Arab publications can be classified broadly as "local" (for one country), "regional" (for one country with some spillover), or "pan-Arab" (for the whole of the Middle East and North Africa)(Martin, 1998). In this study, we analyze ads from pan-Arab as well as local general interest, family, and women's magazines from Egypt, Lebanon and the United Arab Emirates. These countries are chosen because they are from the larger North African, Middle Eastern and Gulf regions. Therefore, the results can be generalized to an Arab population of approximately 350 million.

The main consequences of using women in advertisements are the tool of temptation and the exploitation of her body for the promotion of goods that are manufactured by the company. Moreover, the distortions of the image of Arabic women strip her from its Islamic values, customs and traditions.

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Arabic culture is a complex matrix in which the social structure, language and economic philosophy are fully grounded in the Islamic region. The Islamic law, *Shari'a*, prescribes all that one should do (Coulson 1964). There are four major sources or roots of jurisprudence—the word of God himself in the *Qur'an*, the divinely inspired conduct of the Prophet (*sunna*), reasoning by analogy (*qiyas*), and consensus (*ijma*) (Coulson, 1964, p. 55-59). According to the *Shari'a*, where a problem is not specifically regulated by the *Qur'an* or *sunna*, the method of analogical reasoning must be used to extend the principles inherent in the *Qur'an* and the *Sunna* to cover new cases (Coulson, 1964, p. 76). *Ijma* is the agreement of qualified legal scholars in a given generation and is used when analogical reasoning cannot be applied. *Ijma* and *qiyas* become important for our study because neither the *Qur'an* nor the *Sunna* addresses advertising directly.

The *Shari'a* is a comprehensive code governing the duties, morals and behaviour of all Muslims, individually, and collectively in all areas of life, including commerce (Luqmani et al., 1987). It completely describes the values that Muslims should hold, such as individual freedom, truth, justice, honesty, social obligations, collective responsibility, the roles of men and women and the role of buying and selling. As the *Qur'an* is followed by most Arabs, it influences Arab values about issues such as business conduct (e.g., the appropriateness of business practices) as well as personal conduct (e.g., relationships with others and the role of women).

In a study carried out by one of Egypt's Universities in Cairo (Department of Media and Advertising), "Women are presenting in the Egyptian TV channels about 95% in advertising programs. She is used for several purposes such as the promotion of goods and highlighting her beauty and her body and that is not linked to their nature as female (Cairo University,2011).

According to Laila Al-Bahri (Professor of Advertising, Qatar University "my point of view, there are no relationships in some advertising which the Arab women are showing in it such as stone batteries, shavers

advertising and agricultures machines and cars adv. Women became dancers and singers in impolite manner. In this situation, she does not serve advertising in itself as far as insulting her femininity”.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

The research problem revolves around two points:

- The use of women in commercials is disrespectful and reduces their dignity. They are often included in ads for the sole purpose of promoting products by attracting attention, rather than for any relevance to the product being advertised.
- There are numerous detrimental effects resulting from the portrayal of Arabic women in advertising. We will analyze these consequences and their underlying causes, and endeavor to find solutions to improve the representation of Arabic women in ads.

### **The Assumptions**

- Advertising is working through commercials to distort the image of Arab women.
- Use of the physical side of women in advertising helps in the promotion of goods and products.
- Women are employed in some commercials that are not relevant to them.
- Some commercials are destroying women from their Islamic values and customs.
- Ads are using women in a bad way which contributes to destroying the moral Standards instead of being a constructor.
- Use of the excitement to attract audiences and encourage them to buy promotions.
- The advertisement uses the beauty of women more than the quality of the product or item.

### **3. OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

- The definition of advertising and the beginning of the appearance the Arabic women in the advertisements.
- To what extent are men and women shown in advertisements? Specifically, to what extent are women shown in advertisements and how are they depicted?
- To what extent are comparative ads used?
- To what extent do ads provide information?
- To what extent are price appeals used?
- Knowing the influences of advertising on women and if men and women are equal in the advertising field.
- Clarified the advantages and disadvantages of using women in commercial advertisements.
- Determine the cause of the use of women in the commercials.
- The opinion of Arabic Street towards the appearance of the Arabic women in the advertisements.
- Find the appropriate solutions for this problem.

### **4. RESEARCH DESIGN**

As advertising students, we have learned that it is important to gather public opinions through surveys and questionnaires when conducting research. This helps us to achieve our goals and find the best results and solutions for the issue at hand. Hence, we surveyed to know the opinion of Arab Street about the state of Arab women in advertising. We included in our sample survey which contains 30 copies that we distributed in our college. The respondent's age groups are different and were selected through the Random sampling method was used to gather the data required for the study.

The main method of data collection in this study was based on questionnaire. The survey instrument included both open-ended and close-ended questions, intended to reach to the real opinion about the image of Arab women in the advertisements.

### **5. RESULTS**

Table 1 and 2 provides general demographic information about the people surveyed. A majority of the participants in the study had attained Bachelor's, Master's, or Doctoral degrees. According to the data in the table, 60 per cent of the respondents held Bachelor's degrees, 25 per cent held Master's degrees, and 15 per cent held Doctoral degrees. Females represent almost 100% of the respondents, while no males participated.

**Table 1:** Study level

Class	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor	14	60%
Master	10	25%
Doctor	6	15%
Total	30	100 %

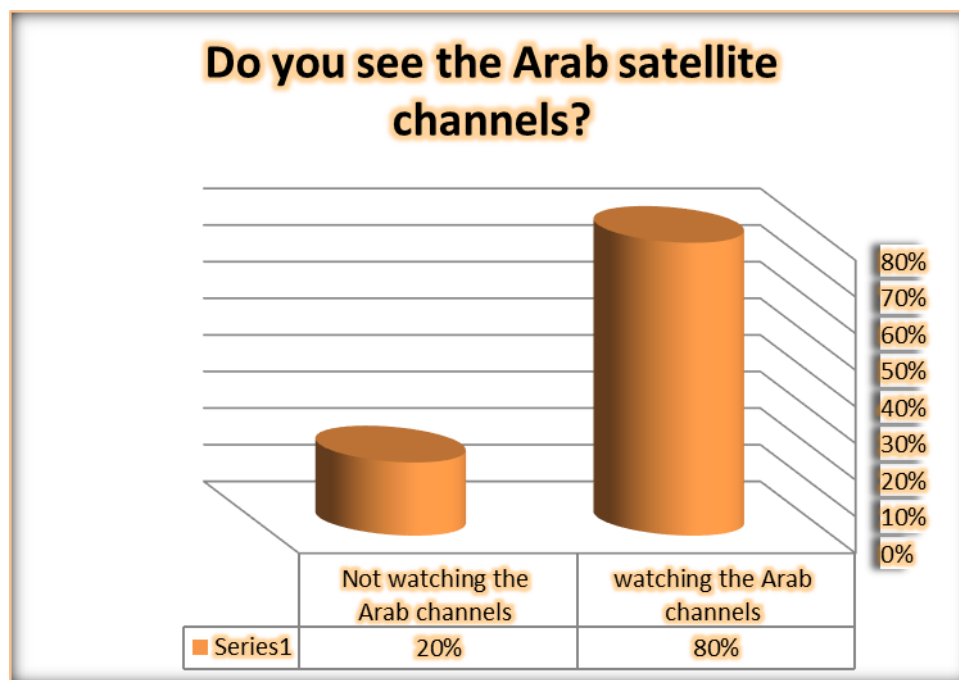
**Table 2:** Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	0	0%
Female	30	100%
Total	30	100 %

Table 3 to Table 8 presents the outcome of the survey questions. Table 3 shows that about 80 % are watching the Arab channels and 20% are not watching. These percentages show that many Arabic viewers are watching Arab channels, indicating the significant impact of TV on audiences. (Figure 1)

**Table 3:** Watching the Arab satellite channels

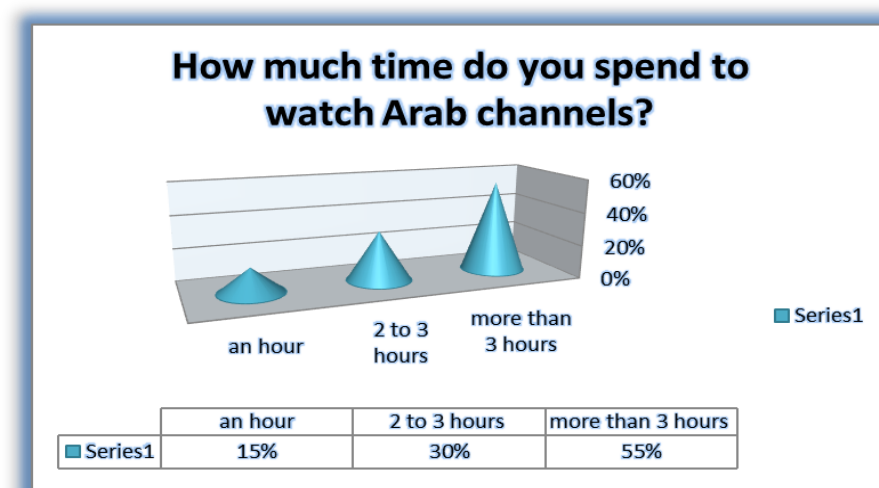
watching the Arab satellite channels	Frequency	Per cent
Sometimes	7	20%
Always	23	80%
Total	30	100 %

**Figure 1:** Do you see the Arab Satellite Channels?

In Table 4, the responses to the question "How much do you spend to watch Arab channels?" are presented. The results of our survey show that 55% of Arab viewers spend more than 3 hours watching Arab channels, while 30% spend from 2 to 3 hours, and 15% spend less than an hour. These high percentages reflect the good quality of our Arab programs, which provide comprehensive coverage to the public.

**Table 4:** Time Spend Online Daily

	Hours spent	Frequency	Percent
1	Less than an hour	7	15%
2	Two to three hours	9	30%
3	More than 3 hours	14	55%
	Total	30	100 %



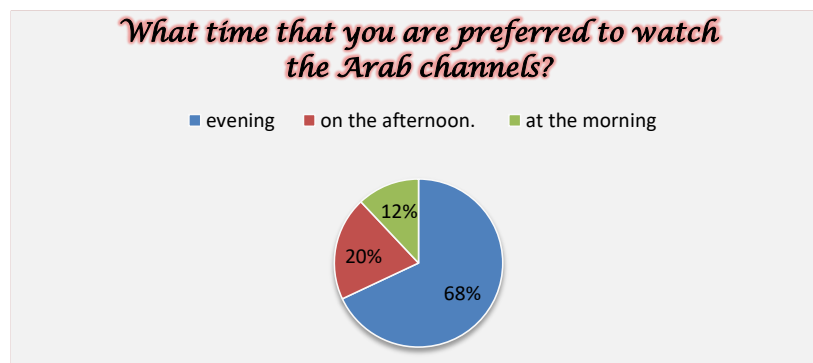
**Figure 2:** How much time do you spend to watch Arab Channels

Table 5 shows that the highest viewership is in the evening, with about 68% of Arab audiences preferring to watch TV channels at that time. Additionally, 20% prefer to watch in the afternoon, and 12% watch in the morning.

**Table 5:** What is the time that you are preferred to watch the Arab channels.

	Time preferred	Frequency	Percent
1	At the morning	6	12%
2	At night	8	20%
3	Afternoon	16	65%
	<b>Total</b>	30	100 %

These results indicate that the majority of Arab viewers prefer to watch Arab programs in the evening, which is predictable because families in our Arab communities tend to gather more at night than in the morning or afternoon, as most people are at work during those times.



**Figure 3:** What time that you prefer to watch the Arab channels?

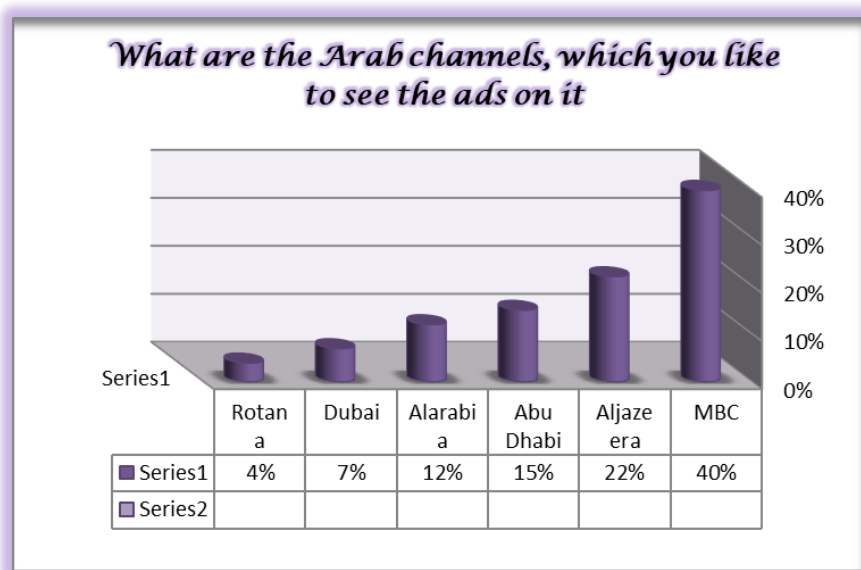
Table 6 presents the popularity of channels and provides the answer to the question “Which Arab channels do you prefer to see advertisements on?”

**Table 6:** The most popular Arab channels.

Channels	Frequency	Percentage
MBC	10	40%
Aljazeera	8	22%
Abu Dhabi	5	15%
Alarabia	4	12%
Dubai	2	7%
Rotana	1	4%
Total	30	100%

This situation presents the most popular Arab channels which Arab audiences are interested in watching. For instance, we found that most channels are watching is MBC channel because of the good and beautiful programs

that present on its screen and the second channel is Aljazeera because it shows political issues and world events. Then it came in watching Abu Dhabi, Alarabia, Dubai and Rotana channels.



**Figure 4:** What are the Arab channels which you like to see the ads on it

Table 7 shows that all respondents (100%) believe both "strong attractive tools" and "promoting the goods" are crucial in advertising. None selected these reasons individually, indicating that attractiveness alone or promotion alone is insufficient. The unanimous preference for combining both elements highlights the need for a balanced approach to successful advertising campaigns.

**Table 7:** The main reason behind the emergence of Arab women in the advertisement field

	Main Reason	Frequency	Per cent
1	Strong attractive tools	0	0%
2	Promoting the goods	0	0%
3	Both	30	100%
	Total	30	100 %

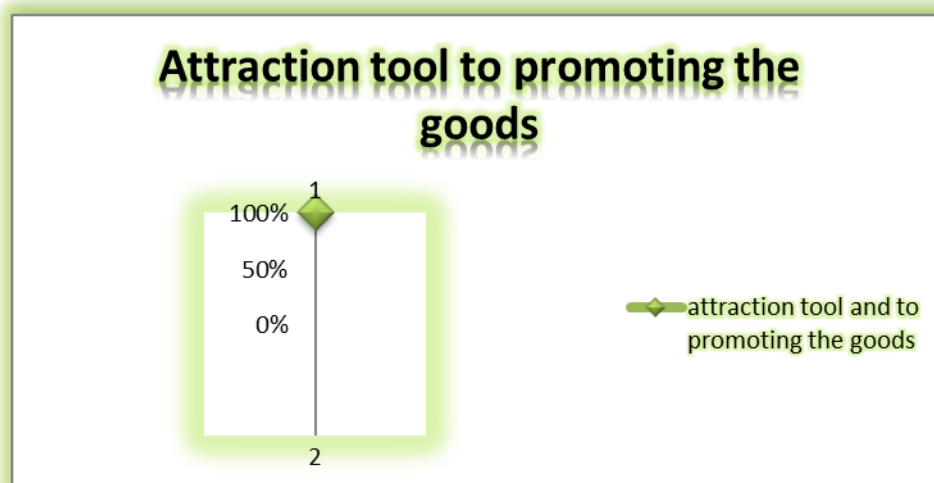


Table 8 presents the results of the second questionnaire providing a comprehensive overview of societal perceptions regarding women in the advertising industry. These perceptions highlight the complex interplay between gender roles and professional responsibilities in a traditionally male-dominated field.

### Acceptance of Women in Advertising

The data reveals that a significant portion of respondents (65%) believe it is not okay for women to work in advertising, indicating a strong societal bias against female participation in this industry. Similarly, 80% of respondents think it is not okay for advertiser women to become promoters. These figures suggest deep-seated gender biases and a reluctance to accept women in active, visible roles within the advertising sector.

#### Perception of Success and Professional Distinction

Interestingly, despite the overall negative perception of women in advertising, a substantial majority (87%) consider Arabic women successful in the advertising scope. This paradox may reflect a recognition of individual achievements despite broader societal resistance. Additionally, 72% of respondents perceive advertiser women as different from other women due to the nature of their work. This perception underscores the unique challenges and distinctions that women in advertising face, setting them apart from women in other professions.

**Impact on Family Roles:** A considerable majority (68%) believe that women who work in advertising neglect their husbands and children. This view reflects traditional expectations of women's roles within the family and suggests that professional commitments are perceived as conflicting with familial responsibilities. Such beliefs could contribute to the resistance against women working in advertising, as societal norms continue to prioritize domestic roles for women.

**Societal Contribution and Perception:** Despite the negative perceptions, 66% of respondents acknowledge that advertiser women play an important role in society. This acknowledgment points to an underlying recognition of the contributions that women in advertising make, even if it is not widely accepted. Conversely, 77% of respondents believe that society views advertiser women negatively, highlighting the ongoing stigma and challenges that women in this field face.

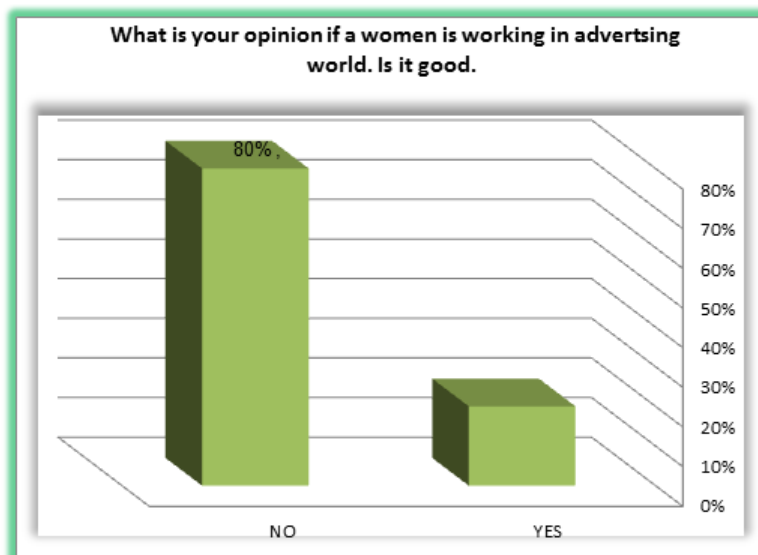
**Gender Equality:** The survey shows a striking disparity in perceptions of gender equality, with 89% of respondents asserting that an advertiser woman's status is not equal to that of an advertiser man in society. This significant majority indicates a persistent gender gap in professional status and recognition within the advertising industry.

**Influence on Society:** Finally, only 27% of respondents believe that advertiser women influence society, suggesting a perception that women's impact in this field is limited or undervalued. This perception further reinforces the need for greater recognition and empowerment of women in advertising roles.

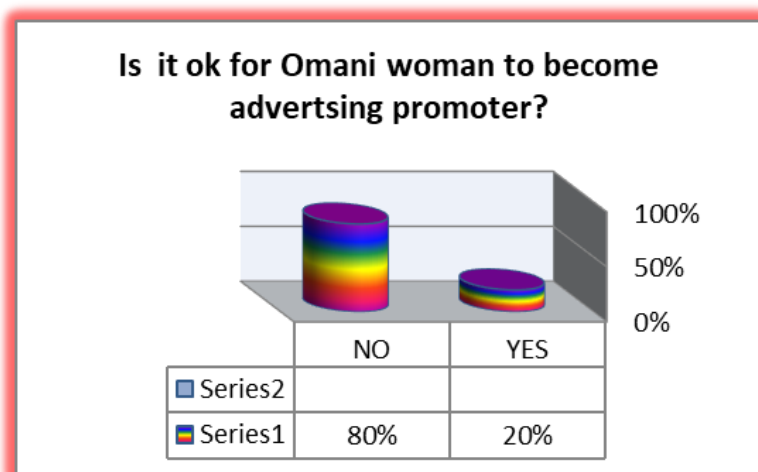
Table 8: Questionnaire

Questions	Yes		No		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
In your opinion, it is ok to women to work in advertising?	11	35%	19	65%	30	100
It is ok for advertiser women to become promoters?	7	20%	23	80%	30	100
Is an Arabic woman considered a successful woman in advertising scope?	25	87%	5	13%	30	100
Is an advertiser woman considered different from other women because of the nature of her work?	21	72%	9	28%	30	100
5) Does the woman who works in the adv neglect her husband and look after children?	18	68%	12	32%	30	100
6) Does advertiser woman play an important role in society?	17	66%	13	34%	30	100
7) Does the society negatively see advertiser woman?	19	77%	11	23%	30	100
8) Is the advertiser woman's status equal to the advertiser man's status in society?	5	11%	25	89%	30	100
9) Does advertiser women influence society?	9	27%	21	73%	30	100





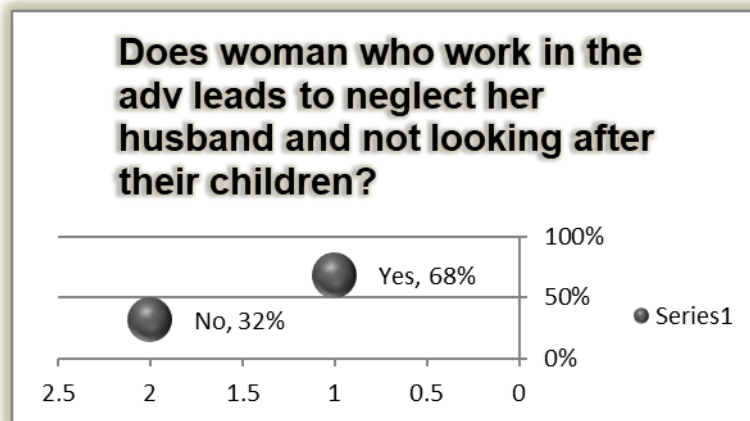
**Figure 8:** What is your opinion if a woman is working in the advertising world. Is it good



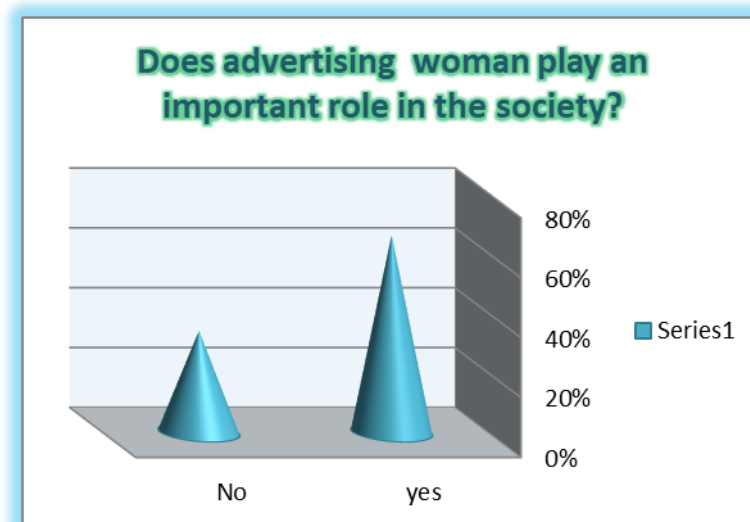
**Figure 10:** Is it ok for Omani women to become advertising promoter.



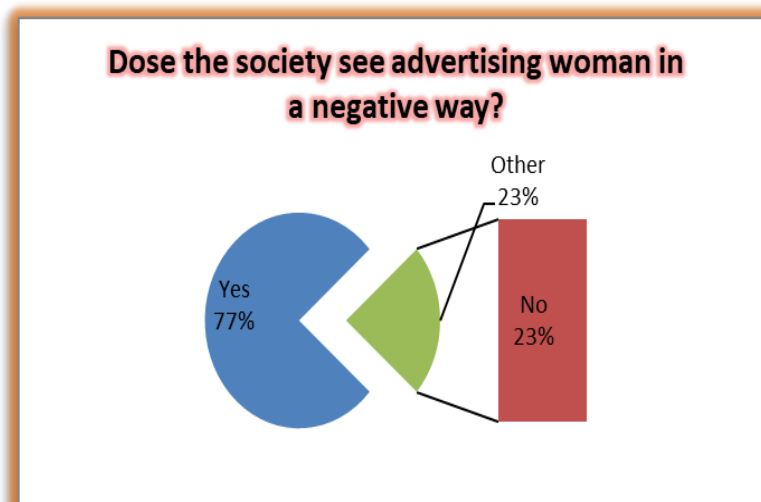
**Figure 10:** Is Arabic women considered successful women in advertising.



**Figure 11:** Does women who work in the adv leads to neglect her husband and not looking after their children.

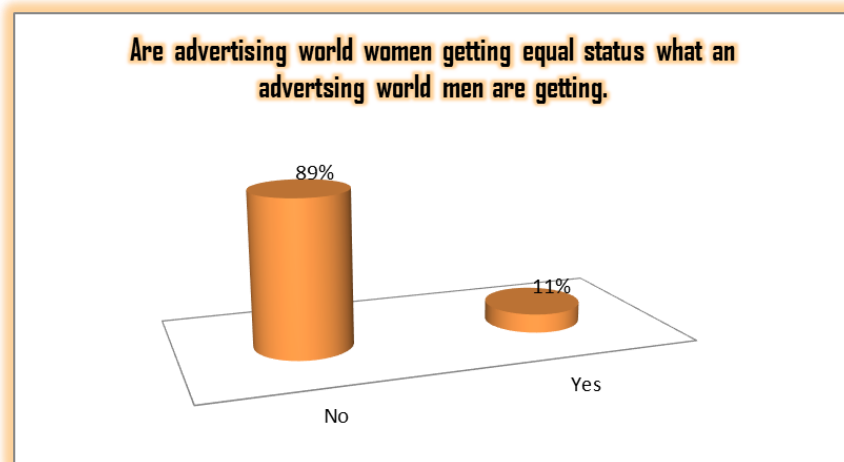


**Figure 12:** Does advertising women play an important role in the society.

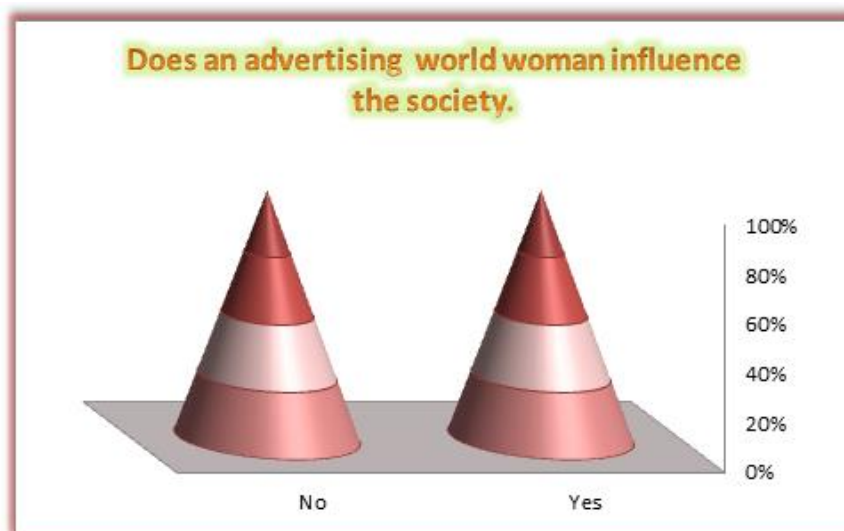


**Figure 13:** Does the society see advertising women in a negative way.

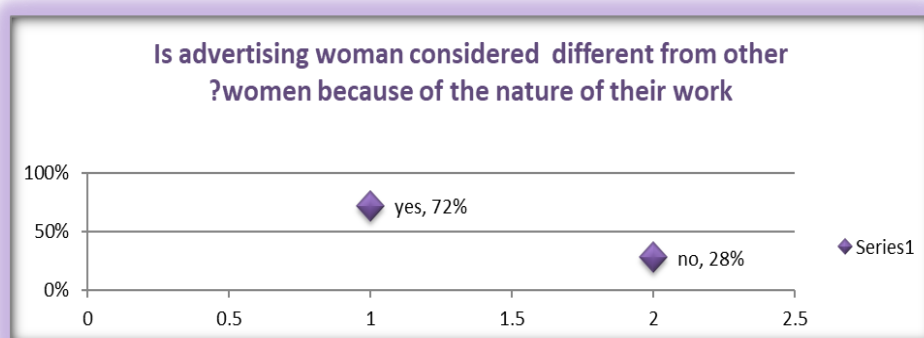
The results of our survey clarified that most of the respondents are disagreeing with the work of Arab women in the advertisements. And the image of her in the Arabic channels is considering insult for her dignity as female.



**Figure 14:** If women are working in an advertising world. Are you thinking an advertising world women getting equal status what an advertising world men are getting



**Figure 15:** Does an advertising world women influence the society



**Figure 16:** Is advertising women considered different from other women because of the nature of their work.

Advertising is working through commercials to distort the image of Arab women and use of physical side of women in advertising helps in the promotion of goods and products by showing her body and insult her dignity, use of the excitement to attract audiences and encourage them to buy promotion, using the beauty of women more than the quality of the product or item. We ensure this hypotheses by the highly percentage when we found 77% of public was agree with this hypotheses. Women are employ in some commercials that is not relevant to her. This fined in cars ads, men perfumes and other materials which related to the men. This

hypotheses is agree with our results because when we ask (Is advertiser woman considering different from other women because of the nature of her work?) we found that about 72% are agree. Some commercials are destroying the women from her Islamic values and customs and using women in bad way which contribute to destroying the moral Standards instead of being a constructor by making her practice something are not related to their nature. Also, this hypotheses is agree with our results because when we ask (it is ok to women to work in the advertising?) we found that about 65% are agree.

On the other hand, the objectives of this research are achieved because many of reasons such as we completed our research by explaining the goals clearly. Second, we tacked some views and opinion from the Arab street. Third, we tacked several samples by asking various students from colleges such as Islamic Dubai College and private of Al-Buraimi College. In addition, we searched from a lot of resources, books and website in order to find accurate information.

In a study carried out by one of Egypt's Universities in Cairo (Department of Media and Advertising) "Women are presenting in the Egyptian TV channels about 95% in advertising programs. And she is using for several purposes such as promotion of goods and highlights her beauty and her body and that is not linked to their nature as female.

According to Laila Al-Bahri (Professor of advertisements, Qatar University "my point of view, There are no relationship in some advertising which the Arab women are showing in it such as stone batteries, shavers advertising and agricultures machines and cars adv. Women became dancer and singer in impolite manner. In this situation, she does not serve advertising in itself as far as insult her femininity". Our results for this research are compatible with results in both these researches.

### **CHALLENGES**

- Difficult in publishing and distribution of the questionnaires and surveys.
- Consume a lot of time for us to writing, researching for information, search for sources and doing the questionnaires and surveys.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Countries should to put some rules and laws in order to prevent the commercials from insult the dignity of Arab women in advertising.
- Advertising agencies should to use Arab women's as a goods commodity their only goal is to attract the attention of the public's.
- Employment of women in ads relates to them and appropriate for the nature of female.
- Should to present the advertising without release our Islamic customs and traditions.
- Clarify the important role of women in society and their equality with men and not just a commercial commodity.
- Should not to imitate Western women in advertising.

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