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Symbolic violence and gender inequity in radio advertising in Mexico

Violencia simbólica e inequidad de género en la publicidad radiofónica en México

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Abstract

Despite the advances in gender equality made in Mexico in recent years, on the radio there remains a significant lag in acting against symbolic violence exercised against women; this is reflected, in particular, in the advertising presented on the radio stations of the Metropolitan Area of the Valley of Mexico. This study performs an in-depth analysis of the narratives of radio advertising in Mexico from 1991 to 2018 to assess the role of female voices and the structures that perpetuate gender violence. In addition, it seeks to understand how these structures are created and the consequences of their repetition. The analysis was developed in two stages by means of two different matrices: both general sound and with a gender perspective items. Through a sample of 313 spots, it was evident that symbolic violence pertains in force. Although the incursion of women in the processes of radio or advertising within their spaces in Mexico is analysed, no investigation of its impact on the advancement of equity is performed, hence the reason behind the present investigation.

Keywords

Symbolic violence; gender; Mexican radio; gender violence; radio advertising.

Resumen

Pese a los adelantos en materia de equidad de género realizados en México, dentro de la radio existe aún un rezago importante que impide contrarrestar la violencia simbólica ejercida en contra de las mujeres, la cual se refleja, sobre todo, en la publicidad que se presenta en las estaciones radiofónicas del Zona Metropolitana del Valle de México. En este artículo se realiza un extenso análisis de las narrativas de la publicidad radiofónica en México desde 1991 hasta 2018 para conocer cuál es el papel de las voces femeninas y las estructuras que perpetúan la violencia de género. Pero también para entender cómo se crean esas estructuras y cuáles son las consecuencias de su reiteración. El análisis se realizó en dos tiempos, por medio de dos matrices distintas: elementos sonoros generales y con perspectiva de género. Con un universo de 313 spots, se encontró que la violencia simbólica sigue vigente. Asimismo, si bien en México se analiza la incursión de la mujer en los procesos de la radio o la publicidad dentro de sus espacios, no se realiza un análisis del impacto de ésta en el avance de la equidad, motivo por el cual la presente investigación resulta necesaria.

Palabras clave

Violencia simbólica; género; radio mexicana; violencia de género; publicidad radiofónica.

1. Introduction

Since 1921, after the first radio transmission in Mexico, radio broadcasting became part of the daily life of thousands of people (Medina & Vargas, 2015). Throughout 100 years, radio broadcasting has developed a dynamic interaction with audiences because by being an auditory medium, it does not require the consumer's visual capacity, as revealed by the *Estudio de Radio Online 2018* (2018 Online Radio Study) (IAB, 2018).

Radio broadcasting has a privileged space for the transmission of messages, not only in terms of content, but also regarding the broadcasting and dissemination of advertising. The transmission of advertising messages is an intrinsic part of the listeners' radio experience, limited in most cases by their activities. In 1930, Mr. Emilio Azcárraga Vidaurreta, Mexico's telecommunications magnate, expressed with respect to one of his radio stations, a reality that has become increasingly tangible with the evolution of the medium:

W station is the first radio station to develop advertising strategies to influence the habits and daily consumption patterns of the population, and the first to understand that, in order to be financially successful, radiobroadcasting has to become a daily reference for people, that is, the audience should be looking for our information, our entertainment and our company (Mejía, 2007: 6).

Advertising, understood by Luis Bassat as "the art of convincing consumers" (Bassat, 2018: 20), and as a fundamental part of the radio experience, has been in charge of creating sound narratives that communicate with the listener to convince him/her to approach to either a good, service or product. These narratives, still of an authoritarian nature from the perspective of Daniel Prieto Castillo (1991), contain messages that reveal the positions regarding masculine and feminine roles in a social environment, since as the author has explained:

An authoritarian process implies that creation, diffusion and reading are at the service of the interests of those who have the power or share the crumbs, and not of other sections of the population, the most dispossessed. The creation is left in the hands of specialists, whose only function is to design messages with maximum impact on the public (Prieto, 1991:11).

Despite the evolution of gender issues in the media in recent years, and the legal reform through the *Ley General para la igualdad entre mujeres y hombres* (General Law for Equality between Women and Men), whose purpose is "to regulate and guarantee equal opportunities and treatment between women and men, [...] promoting the empowerment of women and the fight against any discrimination based on sex" (Federal Gazette of the Federation, 2006), the role of women continues being bracketed by harmful gender stereotypes subjected to said authoritarianism described by Prieto.

It should be noted that Teresa De Lauretis (1989), based on the theories of Michel Foucault, explains gender technologies as the way in which an individual creates his or her identity through the conception of a gender. Following her postulates, gender is a social representation of the grouping of our relationships and their collective standards. Exposure to advertising messages with old conceptions rooted in the idea of "feminine" and "masculine" prevents a radical change in the perception of radio listeners.

In spite of the ongoing studies that analyse advertising and the role of women in the Mexican radio media, there is no current research with a gender perspective that reflects on the role of female voices in the formation of sound narratives, perpetuating a symbolic violence against women. Taking into account this analytical gap, this article aims to analyse the representation of women and the female voice in the main sound narratives used in advertising to approach audiences over the last 30 years. During this time period, the social-political and cultural context has been radically transformed; however, the role of women continues to be reduced to the classic gender roles. The hypothesis that rules this work is that in the Mexican radio advertising narratives there is a bias between theory and practice in terms of gender equity. As a result, female voices do not have the media reach to position themselves as opinion leaders in spheres other than cooking or cosmetics.

In this field, there is research in Spain, such as *Las mujeres en la prensa diaria vasca* (Women in the daily press in the Basque Country) (Abril, 1994), in which progress in gender issues is reported year after year. However, in Mexico there is no in-depth search in this regard. Proof of this is the awarding of advertising spots since 1991. In this award ceremony, the media reality of gender advertising – in which symbolic violence and domination against women continue to be present – was exposed. There are statistical samples, of course, that speak of the role of women in the mass media, specifically in radio, but these are still limited to the labour and programmatic sphere, leaving aside the advertising arena.

1.1. State of the art

Radio broadcasting in Mexico is comprised of 221 radio stations in amplitude modulation (AM), and 1620 in frequency modulation (FM) (IFT, 2018: 38), according to the *Estudio de Diagnóstico del Servicio de Radiodifusión Sonora en México* (Diagnostic Study of the Sound Broadcasting Service in Mexico) of the Federal Telecommunications Institute (IFT by its acronym in Spanish). Within this spectrum, all the stations incorporated in the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México or ARVM (Radio Association of the Valley of Mexico) are included. This radio group "integrates and represents 16 radio groups that operate 47 stations under concession for commercial use (ARVM, 2020).

Thirty years ago, ARVM established the Radio Advertising Creativity Award, with the aim of recognizing the work of creatives in charge of connecting audiences with different goods and services (ARVM, 2020).

The award became a benchmark for the creation and creativity of advertising content exposed through radio tools. While the award laid the creative basis for the spots, it was also responsible for forging a part of the radio experience, in which advertising plays a crucial role; however, the award also prevented a change in the symbolic violence against women in the Valley of Mexico.

Symbolic violence, conceptualized by Pierre Bourdieu as "said violence that entails submission that is not even perceived as such, based on 'collective expectations'" (Bourdieu, 1999: 173), defines the relationship in the representation of men and women in radio advertising. The settled and rewarded structures establish negative gender roles in relation to women, while giving male roles a broad spectrum of roles associated with patriarchal tendencies. This situation fosters inequalities by transmitting messages from a privileged position, since, as Bourdieu has pointed out, cultural institutions and producers play a fundamental role in both the production and reproduction of inequality (Bourdieu, 1989: 555). In the case of radio broadcasting, they even disseminate and promote such differences through representations based on harmful stereotypes, such as said general conceptions rooted in a social group labelled with physical, psychological and sociological characteristics (Charles, 1998; Plaza, 2005; Cook and Cusack, 2010).

From the perspective of De Andrés del Campo (2007), only by becoming aware of these conditioning messages transmitted in the media we are able to acquire a critical stance and confront them, since they mark out our gender identity. The author points out that advertising particularly resorts to spaces of inequality by promoting conceptions of masculine and feminine and associating them, in general, with beauty, youth or body worship. Following Erving Goffman (1987), "if gender is defined as the culturally established correlations of sex (whether as a consequence of biology or learning), gender visualization refers to the conventional representations of these correlations" (p. 1). In radio advertising, these correlations are established by means of short spots using sound and discursive resources. In this sense, brands use the radio broadcasting spectrum to communicate with potential audiences, in what García-Uceda (2008) calls "an impersonal and controlled process used in the mass media with the intention of introducing a product, service, idea or institution, in order to inform or influence the purchase or acceptance thereof" (p. 29). Likewise, brands convey in those advertising messages the complete identity of a company (Davis, 2016), since according to Javier Velilla (2010):

Today, a brand means an idea in the minds of its audiences that is intentionally generated from a strategy. [...] It establishes associations and connections in the brain, highlighting certain meanings and actionable elements that conjugate rational, emotional and meaning factors (p.29).

However, in the construction of this personality, stereotypes are used to perpetuate gender rituals, as Goffman (1987) mentions, since they create reproductions considered correct by a certain dominant section of the population, in addition to reinforcing stereotypical visions through sound images that contravene reality (Blanco, 2005). In the words of Carrillo (2020), studies on the representation of women in the media not only corroborate Goffman's assertions but also show "the lack of equality that the female figure bears in comparison to the representation of men" (p. 233). These notions are radio broadcasted in a sonorous form. According to audio narratology, sound language has a structural capacity to perform different narrative functions, attending to the configuration and elements used to shape a message (Huwiler, 2016). Emma Rodero (2011) proposes the existence of two fundamental elements in such constructions:

- Sound forms: speech, human, verbal and vocal sounds; music, musical, acoustic and synthetic sounds; sound effects or noises, sounds of reality, natural or artificial sounds.
- Non-sonorous forms: silence, absence of sounds.

Silence and the absence of sound are responsible for giving rhythm and pauses to the audio narration of a radio spot. On the other hand, the music and sound elements create the physical and psychological

environments for the voice that will travel directly or indirectly to the listener. It is worth mentioning here the contributions of Mikhail Batjín (1994), who emphasizes the social importance of vocalized utterances, since according to his postulates: "Speech is social" (p. 95), it is mobile, changing and arises within a context that is not foreign to us, we recognize it and interact with it, and both silence and vocalized utterances acquire preponderance depending on how they are used.

In *Narrativa radiofónica: ritmos, duraciones y arquitecturas sonoras* (Broadcasting narrative: Rhythm, Duration and Sound Architecture) (2011), Rodríguez Bravo highlights the importance of the voice as a "sound construction resulting from actively using language, it is the central tool of the sound narrative, the backbone that supports and coordinates the rest of the organs of the narrative body" (p. 248). Likewise, the voice becomes a fundamental entity because it is the backbone of the discourse constructed in the sound narrative – it is in charge of materializing the image in the spectator's head. As Camacho (1999) points out, although the sound image is formed by music, noises or sound effects, silence and words, creating a suggestive phenomenon, the speech has an essential communicative function since it brings dialogue and exchange closer, creating different dimensions of reality. Although the speech does not have a preponderance over the other sonorous elements, it is through it that the linguistic message is transmitted. It is transcendental at this point to recover Judith Butler's (2004) idea about the formation of identity through language, since the constant repetition of specific words to name a person becomes part of the "possibility of social existence" (p. 17). Butler (2004) also refers to Bourdieu to explain how these linguistic constructions, given through words, generate symbolic violence once again. It is in this interaction that the link between how a person is named and represented, and how he or she is conceived by himself or herself.

Along the same lines, the speech, enunciated by means of the voice, in addition to evoking a sound image, also presents the psychological environment of the advertising spot, making use of tone or frequency and timbre. Camacho (1999) adds that low voices are considered "indicated to denote presence and to connote the communicative action with a closer psychological contact" (p. 17). On the other hand, the high tones, while denoting clarity, have less presence. Added to this is also the testimony of researchers such as Kloststad, Anderson and Nowicki's (2015) *Influence of Candidate Age on Vote Choice or Influence of Perceived Strength, Competence, and Age on Preference for Candidates with Lower Voices* who state that trustworthiness is more often given to lower pitched voices as these generate the perception of wisdom, competence and integrity.

Then arises the intentionality that those voices try to emulate and that, following Jakobson in *Essays on General Linguistics* (1986), seeks to establish a different relationship according to their use in a given context. At this point it should be noted that Jakobson refers to six linguistic functions: emotive (or expressive, starting from the sender of the message and appealing to the emotions of the sender as a means of transmission); poetic (or aesthetic, its starting point is the message and its stylistic construction); appellative (or conative, it focuses on the receiver and seeks to generate a behaviour); referential (it focuses on the message, in this case on the specific description of benefits or characteristics of the product or service); phatic (which interrupts or prolongs the communication, in addition to focusing on the channel); and metalinguistic (centred on the code). Located in this spectrum, radio advertising makes use of these functions in conjunction with voices and sound elements to organize its messages.

In addition, the voices aimed to the listener in these advertising spots generally resort to stereotypes anchored in a specific context, since their credibility and recognition are essential to establish a quick and effective relationship with the listener. In doing so, they reinforce stereotypes that continue to be perpetuated in the collective imagination. The problem arises when in a geographic area with a 52% female population, 10.20% of which consumes radio on a regular basis, radio spots are largely constructed with male voices in the role of guide or opinion leader. In addition, female voices are relegated to stereotypical outdated gender roles, which perpetuate the dominant role of the male figure. The postulates of Pierre Bourdieu are presented once again:

The power of words is only the delegated power of the spokesman, and his words – that is to say, inseparably the matter of his discourse and his way of speaking – can only be at most a testimony, and a testimony among others, of the guarantee of delegation that this spokesman is invested with (Bourdieu, 2001: 67).

Thus, women do not have the quality of legitimate spokespersons in aspects other than those granted to them by their role determined by patriarchy. In reference to this phenomenon, since 1994 the Basque Institute for Women pointed out, for example, that "advertising is the world of stereotypes par excellence, and women, since they represent a high percentage of advertising content [...], are the group most affected by the use of stereotypes" (p.69). Despite the passing of time, this reality continues to prevail in the arena of Mexican radio advertising, where gender roles persist. With this approach, Marcela Lagarde (1997) explains that:

The gender category is suitable for analysing and understanding the female condition and the situation of women, and it is also suitable for analysing the male condition and the life situation of men. That is to say, gender allows us to understand any social subject whose construction is based on the social significance of his/her sexed body with the burden of duties and prohibitions assigned to live, and on the vital specialization through sexuality. Women and men do not form social classes or castes; because of their characteristics they belong to the social category of gender, they are gendered subjects (p. 29).

It should be noted that Mexico City is currently the geographic area with the highest population density in the country: 5967 inhabitants per square kilometre. This is very similar to the rest of the Metropolitan Zone of the Valley of Mexico, which includes Mexico City, 60 municipalities in the State of Mexico and one in Hidalgo. According to the 2020 census: the 16 entities that make up Mexico City and 8 of the State of Mexico have a total of 15,274,143 (INEGI, 2020a), of which 51.6% are women (INEGI, 2020b).

Following the *October-December 2019 Quarterly Report on Radio and Television Audiences with a Gender Perspective* (IFT, 2020), the last quarter of that year radio consumption from Monday to Friday in Mexico City was 10.72% in men and 10.20% in women. On weekends, 8.56% of consumption was reached by men and 9.15% by women, the population group with the highest participation is registered between 25 and 44 years of age, with 6.59 percentage points more than men (IFT, 2020).

The analysis of symbolic violence associated with the female gender should be a primary subject within the powerful media, inserted in everyday social interactions, as is the case of radio broadcasting, since "they uncover interesting differences in the ways men and women create knowledge, produce language, generate social structures, and construct their identities" (Corres, 2012: 111). Not to mention the importance of the female voice in the formation and psychosocial and motor development from early childhood. Studies such as *Effects of Experience on Fetal Voice Recognition* (2003) led by Barbara S. Kisilevsky, emphasize the importance of voice from the gestational stage, where the foetus recognizes the mother's voice above others which "supports an epigenetic model of speech perception, assuming an interaction between neurodevelopmental gene expression and species-specific experience" (p.1). For this reason, it is necessary to pay attention to and analyse the hegemonic representation that is built around women in radio advertising, especially when it comes to advertising that is considered a standard and example of production and creativity at the national level.

2. Method

This research is based on the question: What is the hegemonic representation of women in Mexican radio advertising spots nowadays? It arises from the need to put into perspective the role of the female voice in radio broadcasting, as well as the role that advertising spots play in the perpetuation of negative stereotypes around females and the violence that derives from it. The general objective guiding this research is to analyse the representation of women and the female voice in the main sound narratives used in advertising to approach audiences over 30 years old. From said general objective derive the following specific objectives: to know and analyse the social repercussions in the construction of the representation of women in the most representative advertising spots on Mexican radio broadcasting; to explain the resources used to create the representation of women in radio advertising spots; and to analyse the stereotypes arising from such representations.

The universe chosen for this study is 313 advertising spots that were awarded with the *Radio Advertising Creativity Award*, granted by ARVM from 1991 to 2018. In order to assure a thorough analysis, a database with 17 general analytical categories was created taking into account the characteristics of the sound narratives as per the perspective of Emma Roderó (2011), and also the functions arising from said characteristics, since they comprise not only the parameters associated with radio tools, but also the forms, contents and discursive components. Once this first qualitative-quantitative exploratory approach to the advertising spots was carried out, a second analysis matrix was made with six specific gender-perspective categories.

2.1. Analysed Sample and Procedure

The analysed population is comprised of 313 winning commercial spots of the Radio Creativity Advertising Award between 1991 and 2018. *Table 1. Sample*, presents the exact number of advertising spots analysed per year.

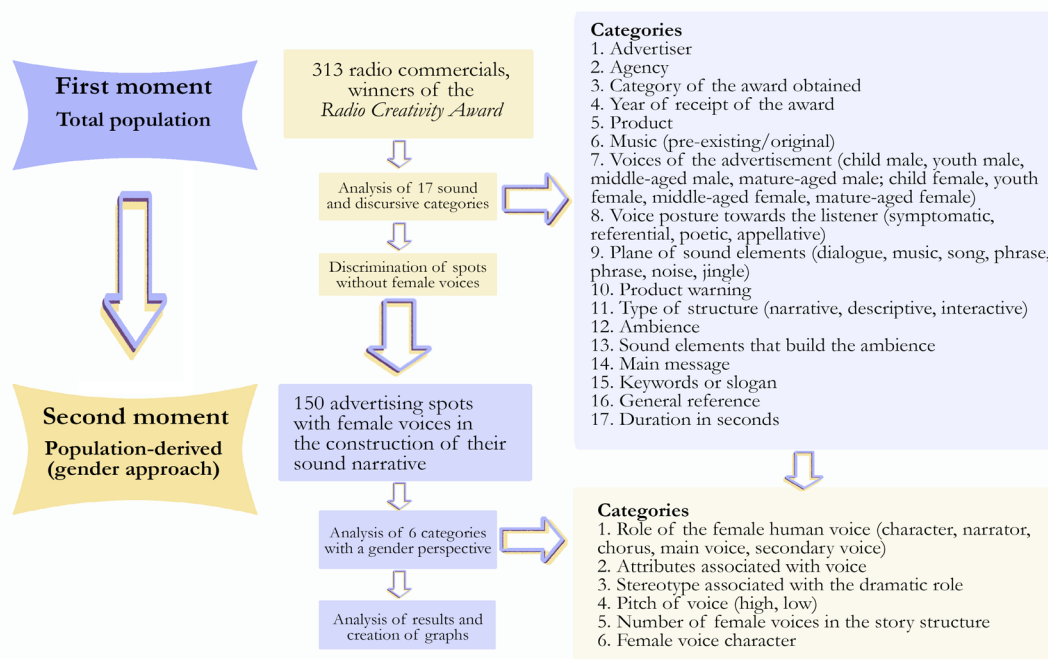
Table 1. Sample

| | Awards recorded as delivered | Analyzed audios | Cause of mismatch |
|-------|------------------------------|-----------------|---|
| 1991 | 12 | 12 | |
| 1992 | 12 | 12 | |
| 1993 | 12 | 12 | |
| 1994 | 12 | 12 | |
| 1995 | 12 | 12 | |
| 1996 | 11 | 11 | |
| 1997 | 14 | 14 | |
| 1998 | 11 | 11 | |
| 1999 | 9 | 9 | |
| 2000 | 9 | 9 | |
| 2001 | 19 | 18 | A single product received more than one award |
| 2002 | 11 | 8 | Missing data |
| 2003 | 12 | 12 | |
| 2004 | 11 | 11 | |
| 2005 | 10 | 10 | |
| 2006 | 11 | 11 | |
| 2007 | 12 | 9 | Missing data |
| 2008 | 11 | 11 | |
| 2009 | 8 | 9 | |
| 2010 | 9 | 11 | |
| 2011 | 11 | 8 | |
| 2012 | 15 | 16 | |
| 2013 | 12 | 12 | |
| 2014 | 14 | 14 | |
| 2015 | 11 | 11 | |
| 2016 | 7 | 7 | |
| 2017 | 14 | 14 | |
| 2018 | 7 | 7 | |
| Total | 319 | 313 | |

Source: Own preparation by collecting data on advertising spots awarded by the *Radio Advertising Creativity Award*.

In the interim, *Figure 1. Flowchart of the systematization of advertising spots* schematizes the process of sample selection and discrimination of elements according to the analyses carried out.

Figure 1.
Flow chart of two-step content analysis



Source: Own preparation by collecting data on advertising spots awarded by the *Radio Advertising Creativity Award*.

Due to the absence of existing tools to analyse both the sound elements and the discursive construction of the spots, two tools were developed to cover these two aspects. The first tool is applicable from a general perspective to the field of sound advertising. The second tool included analytical categories with a gender perspective, not forgetting the sound components of the analysed products. Both tools followed the creation of a longitudinal study (Babbie, 2000) by construct (Sullivan, 2009, Babbie, 2000). The first approach to the spots aimed to determine the number of spots using female voices as part of their structure, their general characteristics, linguistic function type used or sound elements that create the atmosphere of the spot. The second approach was aimed to find the specific elements that configure the female voices within the analysed universe.

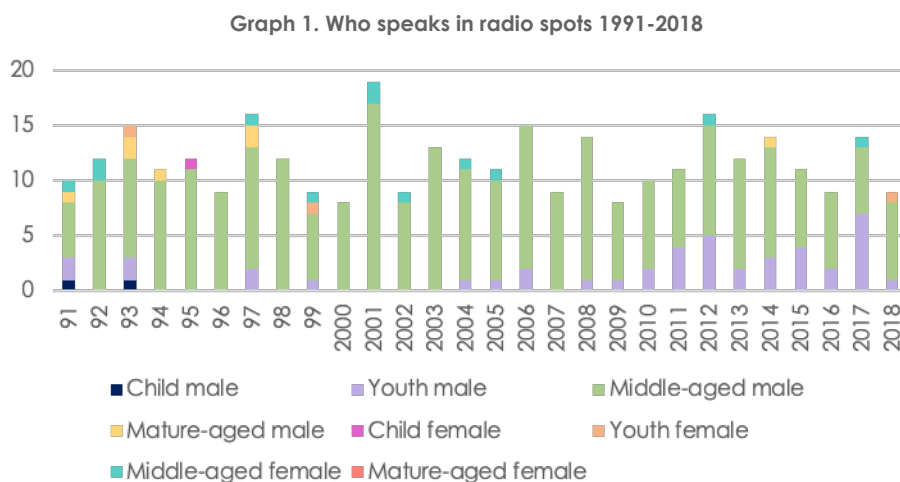
Building on the database of *Radio Advertising Creativity Award Winners 1991-2018*, a tool was structured during the first analytical approach using the following categories: 1. Advertiser, 2. Agency, 3. Category of the award obtained, 4. Year of receipt of the award, 5. Advertised product, 6. Music (original / pre-existing), 7. Voices of the advertisement (female, male and age of these: childish, juvenile, middle-aged, mature), 8. Position of the voice in front of the listener (role played by the voice, appellative, symptomatic, referential, poetic), 9. Plane of the sound elements (music, dialogue, song, phrase, noise and jingle), 10. Product warning (when it includes any reference to nutritional content and age of consumption), 11. Type of structure (narrative: uses dramatization and use of characters; descriptive: it is limited to describing the qualities of the product; interactive: addresses the public directly and even asks for their participation), 12. Environment (general psychological idea generated by sound effects), 13. Sound elements that build the environment, 14. Main message (approach of the brand to the listener), 15. Keywords or slogan, 16. General referent (main theme or topic used to create the main argument), 17. Duration in seconds.

Once the general characteristics of the spots were organized, a second instrument was created to define the distinctive features of the spots containing female voices. This instrument had the following analytical categories: 1. Role of the female voice (narrator/character); 2. Attributes associated with the voice (following Lidia Camacho's descriptions in *La imagen radiofónica* (The radio image), 1999 and Emma Rodero's proposals); 3. Stereotype associated with the dramatic role (role with which the woman is associated according to the sonorous elements that construct her role); 4. Tone of the voice (sharp/

deep); 5. Number of female voices in the structure of the story, 6. Character of the female voice (explicit role with which the woman is named). Based on the data collected, a series of graphs were prepared to visualize the results of the research for discussion.

3. Results

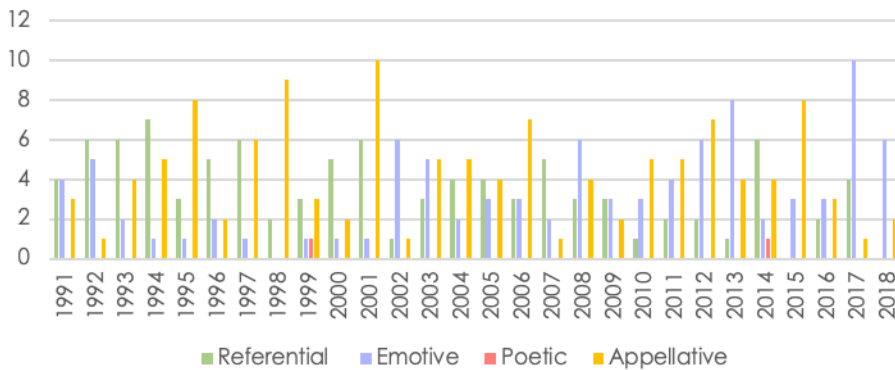
As previously mentioned, the analysed spots are taken as the main references in the construction of sound narratives in Mexican radio broadcasting due to their recognition by one of the most important broadcasting institutions in Mexico, ARVM. Therefore, this study will allow us to know how the daily messages received by thousands of Mexicans for the last three decades have been constructed. The analysis of the 313 awarded spots shows that between 1991 and 2018, 79% of the main voices that hosted a radio advertising spot correspond to middle-aged male voices, followed in frequency by juvenile male voices, 13%; middle-aged female voices, 4%; mature-aged male voices, 2%; juvenile female and child male voices, 1%; while child female voices does not reach 1% and mature-aged female voices are absent in the voices used to narrate or host radio advertising spots. The overall result, however, does not allow us to visualize the seriousness of the problem until it is particularly broken down and shows the distribution of voices on an annual basis, as presented below in *Graph 1. Who speaks in radio spots*, in which we can visualize that, until 2018, male voices were dominant.



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

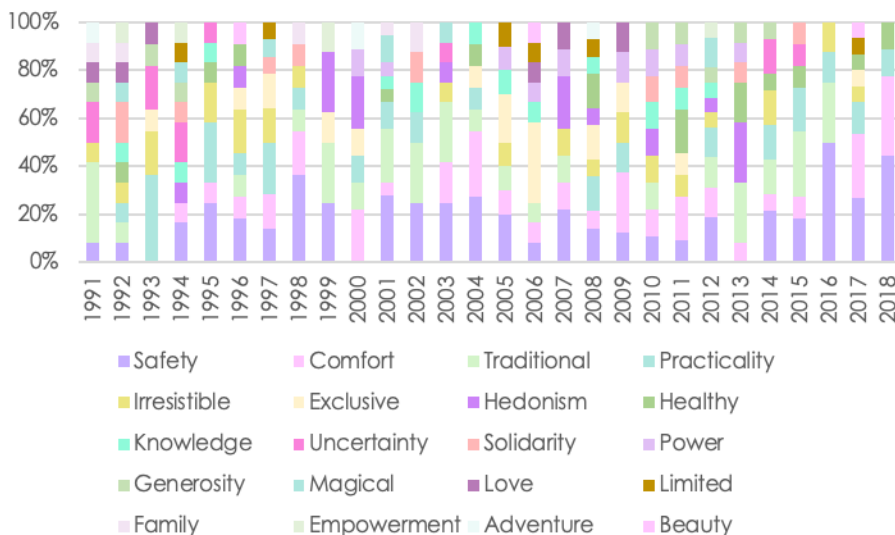
The general analysis also shows, as shown in *Graph 2. Voice functions by year* and *Graph 3. Referents for the creation of the message*, that the use of the functions of language proposed by Jakobson (1986) is limited to four of them: referential, in the case of advertising spots it has direct descriptions of the characteristics of the product or service offered; emotive or expressive, it addresses the listener directly to generate empathy; poetic or aesthetic, when talking about radio spots it makes use of sound resources that embellish the advertisement and highlight the expressive capacity of the voice; and appellative or conative, it is presented in radio commercials as a direct call to the listener to perform an action. The most frequently used referent to create the message was "safety". Most of the sound narratives appealed to themes about social and financial security, through the symptomatic and appellative functions of language. Likewise, it was confirmed that the persuasive voices used to create a sense of security or to issue a call to the listener are always those of low pitch and, generally, masculine; while feminine voices remain in secondary roles.

Graph 2. The narrator's expression according to year



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

Graph 3. Most used referent to create advertising messages



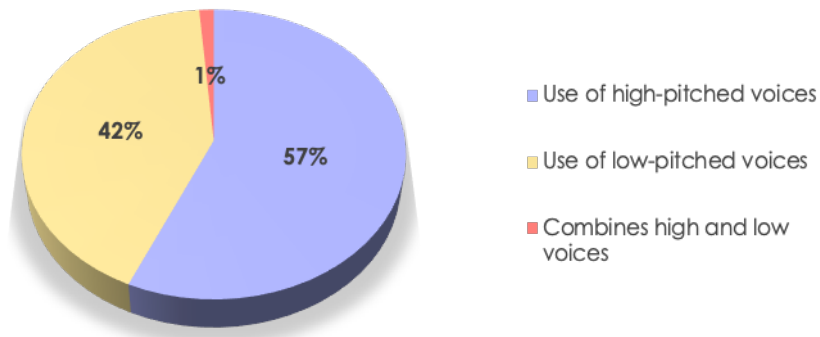
Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

Not only is there a relationship between the scarce use of women's voices and the perpetuation of gender roles that prevent women from becoming an "authorized spokesperson" (Bourdieu, 2001: 81) within radio advertising, but also in the use of sound forms (Rodero, 2011), especially regarding speech, human, verbal and vowel sounds.

Within the second part of the analysis, it was found that, in the 313 ads studied, not only male voices lead the ad, but there is even a type of discrimination in the use of female voices, since they are generally used as secondary roles in the dramatized spots, in addition to frequently resorting to the emotive function as an expressive resource.

In this case, out of the 313 spots analysed, 150 use female voices as part of the sound forms included in their structure, of which 128 (85.3%) use the symptomatic or emotive function. Likewise, as can be seen in Graph 4. *Timbre of female voices*, the spots that use high-pitched female voices as part of the configuration of their environment exceed to those that use low-pitched voices by 15 percentage points; while those that combine both forms are reduced to 1.33%.

Graph 4. Inflection of female voices



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

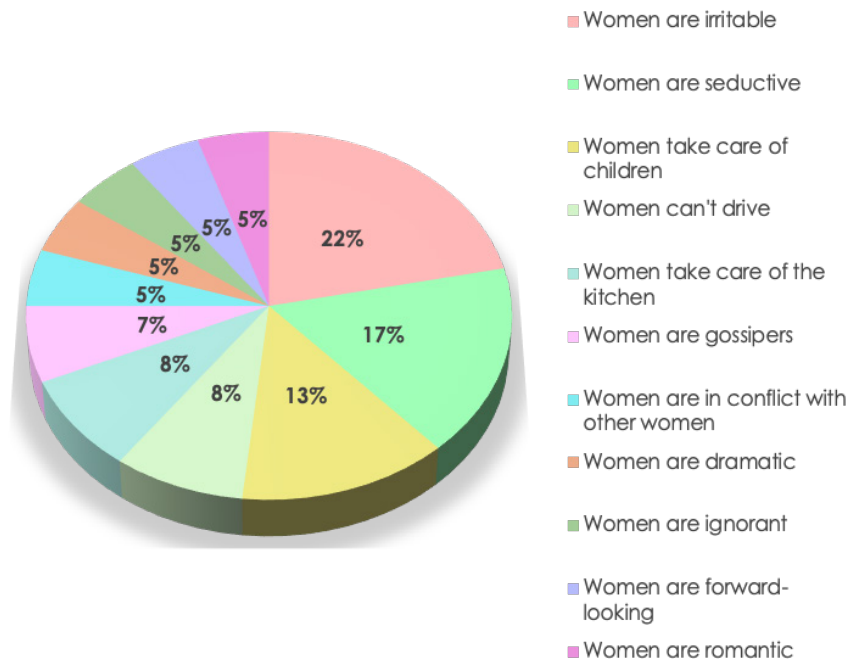
Following Huwiler (2016) and Camacho (1999), the use of high-pitched voices, which mostly make use of the symptomatic function of language, convey the idea of instability, drama and insecurity associated with the female figure within the narrative of the analysed spots. While the used male voices mostly in general resort to low or medium pitches; according to Emma Roderó (2001) said pitches are preferred due to three main reasons:

Firstly, from a physiological point of view, because a low-pitched voice with good articulation does not need amplification of the intensity (a low-pitch voice is usually more intense). Therefore, the voice is less strained and it is possible to speak for a longer period of time without overexertion. On the other hand, a high-pitched voice is less perceptible, maintains less presence, and is therefore forced to increase its intensity resulting in greater effort. Secondly, from an acoustic point of view, since high notes are reinforced in the distance, a high-pitched voice conveys distance and coldness, as opposed to the warmth and presence of a low-pitched voice. Therefore, using low-pitched tones establishes a closer communication link with the listener, an aspect that is highly valued by the radio audience. Finally, from a psychological perspective, deeper voices are perceived as more confident and credible than sharper voices (p. 3).

Along with this structural problem, there are again the sound forms used in association with female roles. All said sound forms are based on gender roles that configure women based on structuring attributes diverging from the gender equity initiatives; sound such as: chicken clucking sounds, soap opera backgrounds as voice accompaniment, tears or tearful accents, long phone calls, screams or sensual music. In this way, the predominant idea of a woman as established by means of sound resources, timbre, tone of voice and interactions with female voices, gives the women the attribute of "irritable" in 22.59% of the spots. Likewise, 14.84% of the spots show women as "enthusiastic"; 9.37% associate them with being "apprehensive"; 8.59% exhibit them as "sensual;" and in lower percentages with profiles such as "tender," "insecure," "ignorant" or "intelligent" (only in 7.81% of the recorded voices).

These attributes configure, in the complete discourse of the sound narrative, negative stereotypical ideas associated with female gender roles, as shown in Graph 5. *Stereotypical ideas derived from attributes associated with women 1991-2018.*

Graph 5. Frequency of repetition of stereotypical ideas



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

For three decades many advertising spots were repeatedly listened to and maintained the symbolic violence around the female figure, transforming women in the minds of the listeners into an irritable, sensual or unreliable being. Not only that, they were awarded for being the most creative ads and those that most effectively reached the listener.

A woman yells at her neighbour because he won't let her sleep (1994). A shocked mother rants about her son having condoms in his room (1998). A girl complains and brings up a "headache" to avoid physical contact with her boyfriend until he offers her a chocolate (2000). A gambler woman is screaming drama because the horse she trained loses the race (2001). Another woman is booing children who confuse her with a witch (2003). Another woman yells at her husband on the phone who run away without telling her he was going out to have a few beers (2004). And another woman spies on her husband's cell phone (2017). While he is talking to her with a fresh and melodious voice, in a low-pitched and deep tone: "Darling, by any chance, haven't you seen my phone?". She answers back almost stifling a scream, with a high-pitched voice: "Yes, look here, I have it here, here," and the commercial ends with: "Find more than eight thousand pharmacies selling bump ointments" while the funeral march plays in the background.

Another stereotypical form attributed to women as an inherent attribution to the feminine role is seduction. In none of the spots are the men shown as capable of enrapturing another character, but rather as victims of this ability. The male character, on the other hand, is shown as the provider of resources, the father of the family (always married), the entrepreneur and the one subdued by the ambition, tenderness or seduction of the female figure.

Another unjustified negative stereotype promoted over the years is: "Women can't drive." This idea is used in the promotion of car insurances as well as in car commercials, including even beer commercials, even resorting to implausible situations and aggressive phrases such as: "There are many women driving out there, for God's sake, get insured."

It should be noted that stereotypes – understood as mental constructs that synthesize elements of the world for its understanding – play an important role in the way we interact and react to everyday phenomena, and additionally, they can generate discriminatory prejudices or reinforce preconceived ideas that are detrimental to gender equity. José Luis Atienza accurately points out that on many occasions the stereotype "is reinforced based on incomplete or misleading information" (Atienza, et al. 2005: 347), and this leads to a series of adverse social actions that prevent forceful social change.

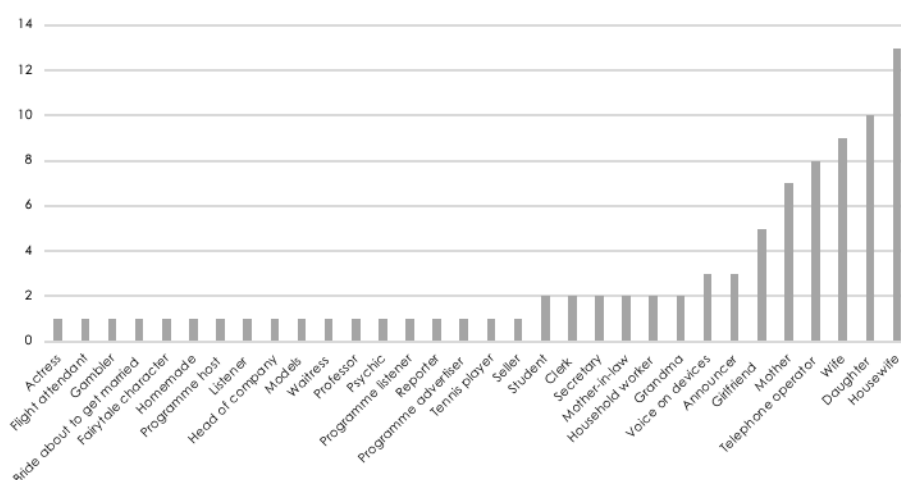
It should be noted that even in spots where female voices are absent in the narrative, stereotypes are still used ("women can't drive," "they are seductive," or "they turn things into drama"). Even when not present, a female role is relegated to a submissive, uncoordinated or seductive posture. Chats among men about a woman's promiscuity as something intolerable (2004); male voices that correct the driving style of their female partners (2009); or narratives where driving mistakes are described by a sports commentator (2016) are some examples of how the representation of women is configured not only through their own voice, but by the discourse of men, who endow them with positive or negative characteristics according to the role they play. That is to say that the symbolic violence exercised against women through the hegemonic representation in which they are encapsulated, not only turns them into unauthorized spokespersons (Bourdieu, 2001), but also prevents them from qualifying or configuring themselves, since their representation is constructed by male discourse, where they are relegated to the passive role of receiving and accepting said attributes.

Likewise, the use of the female voice when the spots make use of songs reinforces the idea of Sánchez, Vinuesa and Abejón (2013): "Women, on the other hand, are suitable to convey messages that have to do with 'women stuff' because women symbolically represent only the 'women's group' and not the universal group" (p.14). Unlike male singers who advertise everything from sweet beverages to heartburn medicines, female singers are limited to singing jingles for restaurants, shopping malls or singing catchy tunes for weight loss beauty salons, because "if you want to lose weight, just call 2-602099. With personal advisors and prepared food, you're going to smile!", claimed in a spot a voice mixed up with a synthesizer to the rhythm of pop music.

In addition, as already mentioned, the configuration of the women role in the spots resorts to additional sound elements. Female voices and roles in the spots are associated with cackling to refer to conversation among young women; whistling, moaning and deeper voices for the attribute of seduction; screaming, crying or sighing in relation to drama, and apprehension. These are sound elements that reinforce the symbolic violence against women. Such violence may appear to be exposed in a laconic manner, disguised under a mask of comicality, however, it is no less harmful to its victims, who are boxed in unfavourable roles they should accept to get to play the character of a member of the society, but surely not that of an "authorized spokesperson."

Likewise, in the radio spots under study women, as well as men, have specific roles. While they generally hold the role of patriarchs, protectors, suppliers, heads of companies, sportsmen, workers; women in advertisements are, as seen in Graph 6. *Roles of female voices in the advertising narrative 1991-2018*: housewife, daughter, wife, telephone operator, mother, girlfriend, announcer (at supermarket or airport), or voice in devices (relaxation recordings, telephone answering machine, road navigator), and generally their individuality is non-existent, since the role they represent acquires validity within the sound narrative only in relation to the male voice to which they accompany. Under this scheme the roles exclusive for woman are notorious. While the role of "mother of a family," for example, has a "father of a family" counterpart, professions such as flight attendant, secretary or telephone operator are never associated with the male figure.

Graph 6. Roles of female voices in advertising narrative 1991-2018



Source: Own elaboration based on the analysis of information from the data platform of the Asociación de Radio del Valle de México (ARVM).

In addition to this problem there is also explicit symbolic violence in advertising messages that tacitly project discursive aggressions. Among adds that appeal most to the use of aggressive phrases are the spots advertising beer, followed by those for cars, clothing and deodorants. Among the most aggressive phrases transmitted in radio advertising messages are:

- "Because a woman will never understand a man's passion" (2003): with sound effects of a hand rubbing metal and an explosion alluding to the appearance of a genie, a girl with a high-pitched youthful voice asks for "the most handsome man on earth", but who doesn't like soccer. A new explosion indicates the appearance of a man: "You look gorgeous," she says between sighs. As soon as he speaks, an inflection associated with mannerism is used: "Thank you, sweetie, my name is Rodolfo, but call me Gabriela."
- "You're with that bitch again" (2003): telephone conversation in which a couple discusses the location of the man who is trying to hide his whereabouts.
- "If you wear the trousers": a middle-aged man calls home to ask permission to attend a game of dominoes with his co-workers. Hearing his wife's annoyed voice, he simply said: "I was just checking in. It's cool you get along super well and organize Thursday dominoes. I'll see you at home, I'm on my way as we speak". Then the announcer's voice comes in: "If you need trousers, shirts or men gear...".
- "Being a man is easy" (2013): a middle-aged man calls home, and upon hearing his wife's irritated voice answering the call asking if he is the one calling, he pretends being a pizza service. "I'd better stay for a little while," he tells his friend. The narrator's voice announces: "A man knows when things need a second-thought. Being a man is easy..."

Finally, the award given to the best spot of each year, among the best in each category, ends up revealing the cognitive dissonance between theory and action in terms of gender equity.

Since the 90s, the award has given rise to multiple campaigns against the abuse and inequality experienced by women; however, at the same time, prizes have been awarded to campaigns such as "Combina mujeres" (Combine women) (2007), or "¿Por qué tu esposa quiere otro vestido de noche?" (Why your wife wants another evening gown) (2013), in which the representation of women is reduced to an item. Another example of such dissonance is the awards of 2016, one was granted to a spot broadcasting the voice of Laura, embodied in a male voice, justifying the blows to her body, the ad closes with the slogan: "Do not let others speak for you. Stop violence against women. Make a complaint!" while the award for snacks, which also won the best commercial of the year, was awarded to a promo in which several men talk about having a relationship with Jenny, and the spot ends with: "Where there's room for one rancher, there's room for more."

4. Discussion

The idea of "symbolic violence" enunciated by Pierre Bourdieu (2001) may perhaps be perceived in the media as an outdated or exaggerated concept in the second decade of the 21st century, especially when countries such as Spain have been reflecting on the subject since the 90s. But by reviewing the analysis of 313 advertising spots between 1991 and 2018, considered as the mecca of advertising creativity and referents for communication with consumers of radio broadcasting and other products, we can confirm that currently the symbolic violence is still present in Mexican radio broadcasting via advertising spots that are listened by a big audience.

As stated at the beginning of this article, advertising is an intrinsic fragment of the radio experience. While listeners do not tune in a particular station to listen to spots for supermarkets, deodorants, restaurants or automobiles, the dynamics of city life impedes zapping as a chance to avoid spots.

In addition, these commercial spots sometimes provide an identity to a station and/or a program, since advertising messages are designed to reach a target audience at a specific time schedule. Spots also allow audiences a pause between segments of their favourite programming.

Our analysis reflects the way in which these commercial breaks are saturated with mental images and representations that appeal to unfavourable roles for women. Spots are endowed with exaggerated or negative characteristics that are repeated daily and reinforce said position of subordination, inferiority and defencelessness that is trying to be eradicated from social life. These images conveyed by sound narratives contribute to the normalization of symbolic violence in the mass media.

In spite of the fact that the main function of the analysed messages was not addressed to maintain the patriarchal status quo as an ideological banner, their configuration, narrative, sound and discursive elements keep up the violence against women because said messages express two poles, both equally worrisome. On the one side, it may be that the spot creators urgently need to be updated and sensitized with respect to gender issues, in order to avoid the dissemination of messages that bias the role of women in society and at the same time inhibit the various expressions of masculinity by

placing men in the box of "Mexican macho provider". On the other side, it may be that these images of discrimination present in sound narratives are still the reflection of a society that has standardized the symbolic violence against women and materializes it as gender violence in everyday life.

Both situations are worrying in a country where femicides have doubled from 2015 to date (Sánchez, 2021), for example: "411 femicides were reported in 2015, but one month before the end of 2019 there are already 890 reported". (Gudiño, 2019)

Emma Rodero (2011) explains that the sensory process of image creation in radio is characterized by a sequence of three sub-processes: encoding, storage, and retrieval of said experience in the memory. Based on this assumption, once the listener receives a sound message, he/she decodes it according to his/her cultural capital and context, and then stores it:

Storage is the process of creating a long-lasting mental representation of previously encoded information. When a person encodes new information, he/she creates links or associations between it and the information he/she has previously stored (p. 2).

With this idea in mind as a starting point, it is understandable why symbolic violence against women, as embodied in Mexican radio advertising spots via stereotypes and negative attributes, ends up creating an opposition force against changing the mindset. A change that is urgently needed. Said violence creates a clash between the actions and advance of women in the search for gender equity, and the hegemonic representation daily constructed, disseminated and reaffirmed by radio advertising campaigns and spots. The impact of campaigns and speeches that promote women's rights and the stop of violence are faced with the repeated messages constantly showing an adverse discourse. At the same time, men are prevented from enunciating different behaviours allowing them to express a healthy masculinity that does not undermine the role of women. This is demonstrated by ads wherein a man is forced to even put his health at risk: a man goes to the doctor and when the doctor tells him that he must perform on him a prostate exam, the man starts his car and drives off at full speed. The masculine figure is associated with protection, whether from a bug buzzing around the house or a stranger entering the living room. A man is conceived by radio advertising as the mainstay of the household by financing everything from vacations to sweet sixteen celebrations. And as such, men are not allowed to get involved in household chores, much less showing interest in things other than powerful engines, sports or women, again represented as objects of consumption. This is shown in spots with phrases such as: "Advertisement sponsored by husbands who, when they ask for vacations, are forced to work at home. Fix the leak, the squeaky door or the lame table leg. This airline joins the cause so that more husbands can have real vacations" (2015). Or a spot where a boss asks his employees in an energetic voice: "Aren't there any men in this company?" Then his secretary speaks over the intercom: "Mr. Sorian, your ballet teacher, is calling" the nervous man replies: "Ballet? Wrong number. Hang out, I don't know him," the narrator finishes with, "No matter how hard you try, there are things you can't cover up."

As already mentioned, as early as the 90s, Natividad Abril (1994) explained the need to modify the behaviour of the mass media as one of the approaches of the feminist struggle to fight against social inequalities associated with gender. However, the problem does not lie in the examples mentioned as part of radio advertising with messages broadcasted countless times without any censorship. The problem is that said messages are a reflection of the social environment in which they were produced.

The broadcasted and awarded spots up to 2018 show deficiencies in the application of the provisions that regulate broadcasted contents, which are the General Law for Equality between Women and Men, and the General Law for the Access of Women to a Life Free of Violence (Federal Gazette of Federation, DOF, 2007), as amended in April 2020.

This law states that the Comprehensive Program to Prevent, Address, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in addition to educating, training or promoting awareness of human rights has the following purposes, among others: "To ensure that the mass media do not promote violence against women and do favour the eradication of all types of violence in order to strengthen respect for human rights and the dignity of women" (p. 17). Likewise, it is the Federation's task: "To ensure that the mass media do not promote stereotyped images of women and men, and do eliminate patterns of behaviour that generate violence" (p. 19).

However, in reality radio advertising shows that theory and practice are still far apart, as explored in this article. There is an additional factor that helps to explain this phenomenon: the use of comedy to mitigate explicit violence. More than 70% of the spots analysed in this research resorted to humour as a way to verbalize said aggressive messages, such as the idea that attractive men are necessarily homosexual, referring to this fact mainly as a defect.

Certainly, the use of comedy and even aggression in advertising creates an impact on the public and raises the level of recall of a product; but this does not diminish the negative impact the spots have in the fight for gender equity.

Upon analysing the transformations around female and male identities, you can see there is great reluctance to change. It would seem that both women and men are entrenched in these stagnant social formations, making it difficult to set a denounce and preventing a true re-evolution (Corres, 2012: 114).

5. Conclusions

Radio broadcasting in Mexico continues to be one of the most widely consumed media by the majority of the population. In the course of one hundred years radio broadcasting has managed to approach different types of audiences; listeners look for contents either by analogue or digital means. This mass media has transformed schemes and formats to adapt to the needs of its consumers and to the new contexts of use and reception. However, there is still a long way to go to achieve a transformation into an inclusive media that ensures equity, not only in terms of the inclusion of women as radio presenters and voices, and the opening of programs with a gender perspective, but even in the advertising spots that are part of the radio experience of thousands of listeners throughout the country.

When examining the daily radio programming on Mexican stations that allow the use of advertising breaks a lag becomes evident in terms of equity in the country and as a society. Said lag is explicit in radio advertising; despite the fact that almost three decades have passed since the first of the spots under study was produced, gender roles, stereotypes and voice selection criteria have not changed.

Once the problem is made visible, it is possible to confront it and find measures that promote a better compliance with the legal elements already in place in order to achieve the structural changes needed for the equality of women (their voices and their roles) in the society. In addition to have national agencies such as the IFT to enforce laws such as the General Law for Equality between Women and Men or the General Law for Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence, it is imperative to bring creators closer to awareness courses for creating inclusive sound narratives. It should be mandatory to guide audiences to acknowledge their rights and take action by demanding the cessation of spots that violate and encapsulate women in limited roles that are impossible to eradicate because the mass media itself promotes them.

Radio has undergone a process of technological transformation. However, practices in the production of advertising messages, especially in the context described here, have not yet responded to the reality of a society that increasingly pursues gender equality.

Radio is a transcendental vehicle of messages in mass communication, a promotor of imagination and a creator of images that reside in the memory of thousands of listeners. Just as radio has advanced along with technology, its contents must also evolve to open avenues that facilitate the recognition of gender equity via the sound images they transmit.

Women's voices are present in everyday life in the most diverse professions. However, the position they have in radio advertising is still lagging behind.

6. Punctual contribution per author

| Contributions | Contributor |
|---|--|
| Concept and design of the work | Virginia Medina Ávila and Rosa Azucena Mecalco López |
| Documentary search | Virginia Medina Ávila and Rosa Azucena Mecalco López |
| Collection of data | Virginia Medina Ávila and Rosa Azucena Mecalco López |
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| Version review and approval | Virginia Medina Ávila and Rosa Azucena Mecalco López |

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