

The image of women in Romanian advertising: The 1890s-1920s. A discourse analysis approach

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This paper attempts at depicting the image of women as portrayed in Romanian advertising in the last part of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century. The theoretical framework of analysis combines instruments of discourse analysis and pragmatics with gender studies concepts and it is part of larger research dedicated to the study of the image of the woman as portrayed by adverts throughout time, in Romania. As our research will prove, the way in which the image of women has been captured by the discourse of advertising has undergone changes, as a reflection of the mentalities and implications generated by the historical and social background.

Keywords: discourse analysis, woman portrait, gender studies, advertisements, diachronic and synchronic approach

1. Introduction and methodology

Starting from Cook's (1992) definition of discourse, the present study uses a discourse analysis approach to examine the early beginnings of advertising in fin-de-siècle Romania. Thus, clearly identifying the features that create discourse, Cook described the canvas of discourse as being made not only of text, but also, in more refined terms, of different other elements, which can address the targeted interlocutor in a much more powerful manner than as if it were a text built only with words. His opinion was that:

Although the main focus of discourse analysis is on language, it is not concerned with language alone. It also examines the context of communication: who is communicating with whom and why; in what kind of society and situation; through what medium; how different types and

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acts of communication evolved, and their relationship to each other. When music and pictures combine with language to alter or add to its meaning, then discourse analysis must consider these modes of communication too. (Cook 1992, 1)

In this way, Cook asserted that discourse is text and context together and defined context as an ensemble made of substance, music, pictures, paralanguage, situation, co-text, intertext, participants and function (1992, 2).

Belonging to a larger diachronic study dedicated to capturing, portraying and rendering the image of women throughout time, in Romania, from a discourse analysis point of view, the present paper represents the first step towards analysing the changing image of women against the background of the Romanian society, as depicted and reflected by the vivid form of the advertising discourse, from a synchronic perspective, with focus on the 1890s-1920s. Mention should be made, from the very beginning, that the interest of the authors in the current research topic already manifested itself on the occasion of a previous academic event, when another time division was under scrutiny, in the same line of thought, and with the same instruments of interpretation. Thus, the period of time belonging to the 1930s has already been covered, that research paper (Nechifor, Dimulescu 2018) representing, actually, the incipit of the laboratory which was afterwards generated with the aim of covering a wider time span in order for a feminine Romanian prototype and/or a stereotype to be identified. Thus, drawing a possible profile of a feminine figure in certain periods of time is considered the main target of our endeavour, as well as establishing a connection between such a 'type' and the social context it belonged to. As a side goal of our project, reference should be made to our intention to 'measure' this internal image against external feminine visual representations, as depicted by foreign researchers into the matter, within the same period of time as their Romanian counterparts, for the sake of contrast and for identifying a possible original differentiating trait which could singularize (if the case!) the contextually represented Romanian woman among her socially determined representations abroad.

The current study is based on a corpus of 62 adverts which were attentively selected from the wider data base made up of 279 advertisements compiled by the authors from @ReclameVechiRomanesti [OldRomanianAds] (www.reclamevechi.ro), an account consisting of hundreds of randomly scanned fragments of magazines and newspapers from different epochs. The account belongs to Florian Ciobanu who is a passionate collector of printed press with commercial content from 1840 until 1995 and an ex-ad-man himself. He started the collection of old printed magazines and newspapers containing advertisements from scratch, 20 years ago,

out of pure pleasure, as a hobby and he deposited it in a warehouse, as seen in Figure 1, below. According to Florentina Iana, who interviewed him, among the most valuable ones he mentions *Moftul român* [*Romanian Caprice*], from the end of the 19th century, a magazine managed by I. L. Caragiale himself (Iana 2017).



Figure 1. @ReclameVechiRomanesti [OldRomanianAds] – the warehouse

What we selected from the uploads available to the public, are, on the one hand, image focused ads, from which text is not excluded, and, on the other hand, solely written text ads, in which there is no image present. In this way, we analysed, discursively speaking, both images and texts, in different combinations, in order for the substance of the interpretation to be more varied and complex.

2. Belle Époque. The background of the epoch. The beginning of the advertising industry

Defined, in retrospect, as a period featuring cultural flourishing, optimism, economic growth, technological advancement and scientific innovations, and placed in time against the background of what will become the great historical silence between the Franco-Prussian War, which ended in 1871, and the start of the world's two most horrifying conflagrations, Belle Époque represented the ideal cradle that swung, both in Paris, and all over Europe, many famous productions in the world of the arts, but not only.

However, the mercantile aspect of life also put forth buds in a society open to embrace the new, thus not only finding its way through the spirit of the epoch but also the instruments by means of which it can reach both the minds of the customers, and, more targeted, their pockets. According to Ioana Pârvulescu,

Appeared in Europe around 1830, developed and refined through the spread of chromolithography, advertisements take full advantage of the boom of the new type of communication at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century: then when everything is invented. Although the target is the pocket, or in the terms of the epoch, the pouch of the good citizen, clients are helped to spend their money having the feeling that they are doing a great deal, or that, at least, they are spending their money on something absolutely necessary. (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation)

Thus, already pragmatic spirits, enjoying the benefits of the era they were contemporary with, the members of the society of those days not only discovered new means of entertainment, but also how to derive profit from them. In one of *Dilema Veche's* issues, Pârvulescu analysed the world of business of those days which seems to have understood that it could rely on the discourse of advertisements as a means of better communicating with the clients in order to determine them to make up their minds in point of choices when selecting a certain product:

With an open mind and a raking spirit, sensitive to the new more than ever before, the Belle Époque individual is already aware of the science and the consciousness of advertisements. Publicity enters their life by means of newspapers [...]. Consequently, a typical symbiotic relationship is born: adverts are paid, newspapers live on them, and, on the other hand, magazines ensure the winning dynamism of advertisements. The more ads are included in a newspaper, the more its circulation can be increased, and the bigger the circulation, the more numerous the houses where the ad ends up being read. (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation)

The conclusion deriving from here, regarding the emergence, spread and development of the phenomenon called advertising is nothing but clear: "Belle Époque is the period of time which innovates the most in what advertisements are concerned, thus becoming a landmark in its evolution" (Pârvulescu 2012). Therefore, its mere evolution is subject to be discovered in its mechanism, display, ways of implementation, as well as discourse because it obviously represented the embodiment of one of the characteristics of the society which generated it and supported it to grow. In a very short period time, its discourse was included in the body of the press, thus generating a mutually beneficial circle which involved the use of marketing schemes in nuce:

In the Romanian printed press, for example, the daily magazine which benefited the most from advertisements, increasing its circulation year after year, was 'Universul' [The Universe] which reached, around 1900, almost 100.000 copies, an enormous number if we compare it to the population of Romania of approximately 7 million people. (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation).



Figure 2. Where publicity started from and how it reached the amazing power of today

Romanian advertising started with the “shouters” who called attention to the products they sold and the first written ad was published in 1830 in the newspaper *Mercur* [Mercury], in Brăila. In 1880, David Adania laid the basis of the first Romanian advertising company that functioned successfully for 25 years and became the representative of the *Parisian Annual Didot-Bottin* for Romania and several other Eastern countries. George Albert Tacid, who launched the famous saying ‘the ad is the soul of commerce’, introduced the Romanian Advertising Office in 1886, and in 1884, together with Constantin Brăiloiu, he started the weekly *La Publicité Roumaine* [The Romanian Advertising]. Other newspapers that publish ads were *Românul* [The Romanian], belonging to C.A. Rosetti, and *Universul* [The Universe], founded by Luigi Cazzavillan. At the beginning of the 19th century, the first newspapers and magazines focused on advertising appear: *Anunțatorul* [The Announcer], in 1886, *Monitorul reclamă* [The Advertising Monitor], in 1907, *Reclama* [The Advertising], in 1909, *Reclama modernă* [The Modern Advertising], in Brăila, in 1923, *Reclama* [The Advertising], in Pitești, in 1910, *Reclama magazin* [The Advertising Magazine], in Brașov, in 1933, and *Reclama Sibiului* [Sibiu’s Advertising], in Sibiu, in 1934. Around 1914, following this mediatic development, the first advertising agencies appeared: I. Brănișteanu, F. Lazar, Adania (Petre, Nicola 2009, 34-35).

Although the Romanian advertising industry developed along the lines of American and European landmarks, it was not tributary to the progress abroad, but it was imaginative and ingenious, developing around a series of indigenous brands

such as *Azuga*, *Adesgo*, *Carmol*, *Capşa*, *Gambrinus*, *Nevralgin Jurist*, *Stela*, *Vulcan*, and *Carul cu bere*. International brands such as *Omega*, *Longines*, *Chrysler*, *Fiat*, *Bayer*, *Nivea*, *L'Oréal*, *Vichy*, *Philips*, and *Kodak* were advertised together with the local ones through both local and multinational advertising agencies. By the interwar period, there were 23 advertising agencies, out of which, the multinational *J.W. Thompson*, *Rudolf Mosse* and *Siegfried Wagner*.

This development proves that the Romanian advertising industry progressed at incredible speed and by the interwar period it flourished to a degree comparable to the American and Western European industry.

But in order for the functions of the advertisements to reach their intended target, some strategies were activated, strictly related to discourse management and technical details, such as: layout, graphics, design, paper quality, and printed page formatting. In Florian Ciobanu's stories, for example, when interviewed by *Iana*, there was even a famous fabrics store, opened at fin-de-siècle, near *Cocor*, in Bucharest, which took a particular interest in marketing its brand when it came to advertising itself:

'Vulturul de mare cu peştele în ghiare' [The Sea Eagle Pinching the Fish] was a store opened towards the end of the 19th century, near *Cocor*, on its left. The building still stands today, functioning as a bank, as far as I know. It was a famous textile, fabrics, linen, as they called them, and suits store. And their advertisements were very nice. They used to issue a yearly catalogue of the store. It looked like a brochure, a little smaller in format than an A4, full of advertisements drawn by hand, very beautiful graphically, with no pictures or slogans", according to Florian Ciobanu. (*Iana* 2017, our translation)



Figure 3. Ad samples in 'Vulturul de mare cu peştele în ghiare' [The Sea Eagle Pinching the Fish]

Other patterns of discourse used to boost the trust of the clientele in the quality of the products subjected to being advertised included, for example, mention of the fact that the merchandisers selling their goods happened to also be the official suppliers of the royal court, a detail overtly stated in the body-text of the ad, as identified by Pârvulescu (2012): “Around the 1900s a lot of Jewish from Romania do business, and are, thus, interested in advertising. Very many are suppliers for the Royal Court, a detail which is mentioned in the ad, as a guarantee of the quality”.

Another feature of the advertising discourse of the time was pinpointing, which referred to making sure that the place where certain products, goods or services were to be found could be easily spotted by the customers. Thus, clear physical indications of where the store, beauty parlour, shop, etc. was situated was marked usually between round brackets at the bottom of the page on which the ad was printed in order to mention next to what other famous and easily traceable location this particular place could be found: opposite Queen Mary Theatre House, or in the houses of Mr. Benedici Martin, near Calea Victoriei, opposite Lupoaița, as it can be seen in the selection included in Figure 4 below:



Figure 4. Selection of ads which include directions for customers to locate the stores easier

But nevertheless, the most fruitful technique of all on the market of the time addressed the more content related aspect of the world of business which was only afterwards captured and rendered through the useful instrument of advertising. And this referred to the vicious circle of supply and demand which generated the ever self-catered for loop governed by the norms of the new emerging social stratum, that of the bourgeoisie.

The Ancient used to sacrifice their animals on the shrines of the unseen gods which spun the world, the modern man sacrifices his money on the shrine of the most visible gods of advertisements, which deal with the supply and demand. **The demand was according to the clientele: to get**

rich, to get healthy, and to be more beautiful and up-to-date with the world, to find a job, a tenant, a trading or a life partner.” (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation, our emphasis)

Consequently, the highest number of adverts featured beauty products and services, lingerie, clothes, shoes, pharmaceutical products and targeted mainly the female population of the time in perfect consonance with the social profile of the Belle Époque women, as depicted in the selection in Figure 5:



Figure 5. Ads displaying the wide range of beauty products and services addressed to women

An even more detailed list of the items included on the supply list was identified by Pârvulescu, who isolated sub-areas which catered for the direct needs included on the demand list, thus picturing, on the one hand, the mechanism of the advertising machine and, on the other hand, the profile of the clients, both targets and generators of the whole cycle:

The supply: **food and clothes, the comfort of the whole family**, (everything related to the domestic space and the technological advancement), **health** (general physicians, pharmacists, dentists), **pleasure for leisure time** (theatre, opera, concerts, circus, sportive competitions, among which an important place was occupied by the bicycle, balls and restaurants). (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation, our emphasis)



Figure 6. Representation of one of the domains targeted by ads

3. The image of the woman

3.1. General considerations

Words accompanied by gestures, posture or facial expression embody cultural values and create cultural identities. The ad, a collection of words spoken or written accompanied by relevant body language in an appropriate setting of objects and colours, represents the creation of cultural identity through the eyes of the advertiser. Goffman said that the advertisement is a depiction not of how men and women behave, but of what we think they behave, of what we are directed to think they are or desire to be or should be towards themselves and towards each other (Goffman 1988). The image we are presented with in ads is contrived to function socially in the desired way and accomplish the function ascribed to it. To demonstrate the undeniable force of the ad image, Goffman concentrated on facial expression, body posture, gaze, positioning and gestures of ad characters.

What is striking and obvious from the very beginning when considering, from a general perspective, the multitude and the diversity of the ads is the fact that their protagonists, directly represented or indirectly simply addressed to, are, by far, the women of the society. Still, without being completely neglected or untouched by the trends of those days and by everything in fashion, the male figures are also present in ads. However, they are portrayed in fewer numbers, only sometimes alone, usually accompanying women, or even enjoying fame, under the form of a profile portrait describing, for example, the success of a certain person as a stage director, in an interesting reversed manner than the representations of women on stage (see Figure 6 above), who appear almost naked and grotesque, performing to please the public:



Figure 7. Male focused ads

According to Marian Petcu, associate professor at the Chair of Cultural Anthropology and Communication of the Bucharest University – Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, in *O istorie ilustrată a publicității românești* (An Illustrated History of Romanian Advertising), the first women’s magazine in Romania, entitled *Femeia. Jurnalul nepoliticu* (The Woman. The Non-Political Journal), appeared on 25th December 1868, at Ioan Gheorghiu’s initiative, and this happened not in one of the big cities, but in Roman (Petcu 2007). Quoting from the first issue of the magazine, Petcu presented the reality of the time concerning the relation between demand and supply, considering that fashion was placed at the centre of the discourse and that it was also defined in terms of philosophy, art, but ultimately approached pragmatically, from a mercantile point of view:

At the beginning, I decided that the individual cannot live without tyrants; in case they are not present as such, the individual will create them. (...) Fashion is one of the most powerful tyrants of humanity. This monstrous illusion is born of that part of the individual that is full of nothingness. It is always born out of necessity, but it does not fill any need. (...) Fashion, taken philosophically, could be qualified as follows: the art of covering nudity. In this understanding only, it is of interest to the individual who must cover their nakedness. (in Petcu 2007, our translation)

3.2. The stereotypical image of the woman

3.2.1. The embodiment of fashion

According to Ioana Vighi, when analysing women and feminism in the inter-war period, there has always been a powerful attachment of women to fashion,

make-up, or to other feminine petty things (Vighi 2018). Consequently, the portrait of the woman is associated to trying to look good, to smell nice, to stay young and beautiful, generating an obsession over fashion. Retrospectively, this can also be said about the Belle Époque woman who started to become aware of her own self, in terms of social identity.

Gabriela Dita, in her article dedicated to the analysis of the first Romanian advertisements and magazines for women at the end of the 19th century, identified, as we also did when we analysed our data base, different types of ads, from the point of view of the discourse used. And if, from this perspective, she focused on two: descriptive only, at the very beginning, and then text accompanied by pictures, we managed to subdivide them into four sub-categories, as it will be indicated further on. Dita (2011, our translation) said that: “At the beginning there were the descriptive announcements, praising the qualities of a product and informing the potential buyers where they could acquire it from”, and we were able to find a representation of this, incorporated in Figure 8:



Rosée du Harem
 (The morning dew of the harem)
 Makes them all disappear: wrinkles and freckles; incredible for
 blackhead removal. It gives your skin an unparalleled freshness.
 Ask for the explanatory brochure to
 Mrs. Widow Vachon
 Paris, - 277, Rue St. Honoré, Paris
 Or to Mr.
 Bruno Scherer, Representative
 10, Paris st. (former Doamnei), Bucharest

Figure 8. Illustration of a text only ad focused on a beauty product

Afterwards, she continued with the observation that “to these there were added drawings of the wrappings of the products” (Dita 2011, our translation), and continued by mentioning that already “Around the 1900s, the advertisements dedicated to women become more daring. The texts shorten, are imperative and already address a modern woman” (Dita 2011, our translation), only to conclude that “This is how the erotic dimension of the Romanian advertising starts”. (Dita 2011, our translation)

What we identified, based on the type of discourse displayed, are the following sub-categories:

First, there were the text-only approaches, which theoretized upon fashion, giving advice to women on how they should dress, what dresses to wear for a party, what fabrics to choose, how to put on weight (even though the image focused ads display slender silhouettes of young ladies), how to do their hair and

how to look after their hair, how to put make up on, etc., as displayed in Figure 9:



Figure 9. Representations of text-only ads giving advice to women

Second, still at the beginning of the advertisement industry, but a bit different in display, there were the visit card types of ads, looking exactly like a business card, simply rendering the name of the person delivering the service and indicating where this could be found, as it can be seen in Figure 10:



Figure 10. Business card type of ads

Third, there came, according to an observation previously made, which is related to the functional aspect of advertising in those times, the text and image discourse, displaying and describing not only the fashion products available in specialized stores, but also precisely indicating the addresses where these shops could be found, as a characteristic feature of the ad discourse of the time, physical orientation in space being an extremely important detail in order for the stores to be easily located.



Figure 11. Text and picture ads

And fourth, image only focused ads, simply featuring hourglass-like ladies wearing a certain piece of clothing, or semi-naked dancers, as well as actresses on stage:



Figure 12. Image only ads

The mini-conclusion regarding this allotropy in the profile of the woman in advertisements of the time belongs to Dita who said that:

Surprisingly or not, the message of the 1927 advertisements is very similar to that of today. (...) Irrespective of the flight of time, women's desire to be beautiful and fashionable has stayed the same, reason for which the message in the media discourse dedicated to the representatives of the weaker sex has broadly remained the same. The commercial formula promoting miraculous products has always worked because preserving beauty has been associated for a long time to the magic of stopping the time, and the feminine ideal is eternal. (Dita 2011).

An opinion not only shared by Erving Goffman, but one he also extensively detailed upon when analysing the gender stereotypes that the modern age inflicts upon society in terms of clichés distributed via the discourse of advertising when associating a certain type of an image to women and a different one to men (Goffman 1988).

3.2.2. *The woman as an “easy woman”*

In what the second type of perception about women in the epoch is concerned, according to our categorisation there comes the profile of the easy woman, befallen from the rights she should traditionally have in the society and associated to a type of Madame Bovary syndrome type of discourse which generates prejudices and judgements.

The image of women on stage, associated to performances (opera, theatre, cabaret, balls) can, at first sight, be wrongly interpreted as laying the foundation of the emancipation roar that will dominate the next epoch, the interwar period, given the freedom of women to display nakedness in public, for example. However, this image is, in fact, tributary to the old stereotype of the fallen woman, which generates sometimes grotesque images and which, from a discourse point of view, has two approaches: text only and image only.

In the first category, that of text only, we came across a narrative told by Margareta Nicolau, on the 10th of August 1929, in an article entitled ‘The Night Dancer’ from *Realitatea Ilustrată* [The Illustrated Reality], which practically recounted the story of a woman, divorcee-to-be, who “left her home” because “inside her shouted the desire of the woman who, even if bowing down to love, wants her own hours of solitude with liberties of action forbidden in a marriage” (www.reclamevechi.ro, our translation). Even though the buds of emancipation are to be traced in her story, the nuance of stigmatization is not absent at all, as the comments of the interlocutor involved in the dialogue transpire the regret towards the one who “ruins himself uselessly to fulfil the arbitrary game of a doll”. Thus, the ex-husband-to-be of the Hungarian countess happens to be an ex-honourable representative of the Peasants’ Party and is referred to as having left his duties in Transylvania and as spending all his money attending his wife’s on stage shows every evening, unable to resist her charms, even though on the verge of bankruptcy and abandonment.



Figure 13. The story of a fallen woman and her perception by the male society of the time

Regarding the second category of ads, meaning the photographic one consisting of images only, the portraying of women strikes a significant comparison to that of men who happen to belong to the same world of stage performances. Thus, the opposition regarding the gender distribution of the roles within the same world strikes as clear when it comes to portraying men, in the business of drama, theatrical performances or directing: while women appear half-naked and even grotesquely dressed and made up, men are in a superior powerful position, owning the stage, which they direct and are also awarded recognition and appreciation for doing that. Figure 14 illustrates the basic representation of women related to the business of entertainment, while Figure 15 brings forth the story of a male figure internationally appraised for his success in the directing business.



Figure 14. Representations of women on stage

started with what we think to have been an equal distribution of gender roles in society in what jobs, careers and marriage proposals were concerned. Thus, both men and women, in possession of almost the same skills, qualities and talents, desired to find employment within wealthy households, either as governesses, or as administrators, errand-runners or caretakers.



A Romanian lady coming from beyond the Carpathian range is asking for a position as a governess with an honorable family. She is able to give lessons of German, Italian and Hungarian languages. Information about this lady at the headquarters of the newspaper Buciumul.



A young man of 35 years of age, not married, Christian, with good credentials and acquaintances in this neighborhood, being able to speak and write in Romanian, German and Slavic, wants to find employment within a strong household as an administrator, caretaker or errand-runner. Inquire at the newspaper headquarters.

Figure 17. Job announcements by men and women

Also, marriage is seen as a trade by both parties involved in the exchange, both men and women transacting what they have for what they can obtain from the other as a result of their possible social reunion. Subsequently,

An educated young lady who is also thrifty and good at keeping the household, with a dowry of 3-4000 crowns would like to meet a Romanian Greek-Orthodox churchman who would desire to find happiness settling down within a parish with a clear income of 1200 crowns, firewood to fit the needs and much more. She is looking for acquaintance via this channel. The ones interested in making acquaintance will hand in their address to the headquarters of this newspaper that will pass it on to the announcer. (www.reclamevechi.ro, our translation)

And, at the same time,

A widower aged 44, without children, of a prosperous village in Banat, with a capital of over 8 acres of land, house, garden and everything necessary in a household. He is looking for a wife who is a well-behaved widow aged between 30 and 35; she should be well acquainted with household chores, land administration, writing and reading. If there is any dowry, this is well received, in case there is none, this is no obstacle. Letters will be addressed to the *Libertatea* headquarters that will send them to me. (www.reclamevechi.ro, our translation)



Figure 18. Marriage announcements by men and women

Nonetheless, Pârvulescu found, in the same type of text-only announcements, as a nuance to the above observations, that women could also represent the instrument by means of which men could access higher classes in society, their position thus proving to be, in certain cases, not only that of blue-collars, but that of white-collars, in modern terms, i.e. of well-positioned players in the society who could enable a better situation for men, via marriage, in exchange for a marital status and marriage privileges.

If the ones with a call for the justice system ‘can apply themselves to their task’ in different lawyer’s offices, a young and noble vice-notary combines the necessary with the pleasant honestly displaying his intentions to make his way into the world with the help of the woman: **‘Young vice-notary, holding a degree and perfect practice, from a noble Romanian family, wishes to marry a young lady or a widow without children, of 18-30 years old and from a good Romanian family, by whose means, intervention or protection he would become notary in some well-off village.’** The pretensions are not big, as it can be seen, addressed to Poste-restante, (Pârvulescu 2012, our translation, our emphasis)

But it all evolved into what Vighi called, in terms of inter-war female representation, women's "Limitation to the confined space of the house" (Vighi 2018). The emerging profile of the lady of the house can be traced to the ads of the 1920's. The image developed in this epoch will later become a lingering stereotype, despite the background of women's emancipation, which will characterize the very next period of time. Women thus, start to be associated to house products, placed in different rooms of the house, in the bathroom, near the bathtub, next to the refrigerator in the kitchen, or even sitting on the toilet, comfortably advertising for constipation products, as depicted by the relevant ads in Figure 19, below:



Figure 19. Women and their households

4. Conclusions

The Romanian advertising of the 1890s-1920s represents a persuasive type of discourse which, with the help of the imaginative means of the then emerging advertiser, creates new necessities in a society that is still innocent in the advertising world but willing to both create and receive the glamour of an illusion.

On the background of Belle Époque, a period of prosperity, peace around Europe, scientific, cultural and artistic innovation, as well as evolution at economic and social levels, everything flourishes and creates a context favourable to the buying and selling of not only commodities but also of images and illusions.

Consequently, the image of the late 19th century – early 20th century woman emerges of the advertising world at the crossroads of several trends: the stereotype of the fragile and coquette woman, as she seems to need fashionable clothes and beauty products to smooth her face, create a slenderer figure, preserve a youthful image; the domestic stereotype of the woman doing the household chores, appendix to man and confined to the space of the private boudoir and its intimacies; and the timid beginnings of a stronger woman, a breadwinner for her family, taking on masculine roles on the background of the First World War that forces her into emancipation.

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