

## How Media Constructs the Image of Marketing, Advertising and PR Professions: A Case Study of The Boys TV Series

Árpád Papp-Váry<sup>1,2</sup>, Márk Oltai<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Budapest University of Economics and Business, Faculty of Marketing and Business Communication, Budapest, Hungary

<sup>2</sup> University of Sopron, Faculty of Economics, Lámfalussy Research Centre, Sopron, Hungary

\*Corresponding Author: [papp-vary.arpad@uni-bge.hu](mailto:papp-vary.arpad@uni-bge.hu)

**Citation:** Papp-Váry, A. and Oltai, M. (2025). How Media Constructs the Image of Marketing, Advertising and PR Professions: A Case Study of The Boys TV Series, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(3), 3369-3382. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i3.4707>

**Published:** December 13, 2025

### ABSTRACT

Stereotypes continue to shape how marketing, advertising, and public relations (PR) professionals are perceived by society. These simplified and often distorted images influence not only public opinion but also career paths, gender roles, and internal professional identity. This article explores how such representations emerge and persist, with a particular focus on their portrayal in popular media. Drawing on insights from sociology, psychology, media studies, and business ethics, the paper uses The Boys television series as a case study. The show offers a satirical yet insightful depiction of corporate communication, enabling analysis of how professional roles are framed in entertainment. The study incorporates qualitative data from a focus group, in which participants reacted to selected scenes and reflected on their own perceptions and experiences. Findings reveal recurring patterns: PR is associated with manipulation, marketing with persuasion, and advertising with superficiality. Gendered expectations also emerged, with participants identifying structural barriers that limit women's access to leadership. By linking fictional media content with real-world attitudes, the article highlights the broader cultural impact of entertainment narratives. It emphasizes the importance of fostering more inclusive and accurate portrayals and encourages reflection on how media representations influence both the legitimacy and self-understanding of communication professionals.

**Keywords:** Marketing, Advertising, Public Relations, Stereotypes, Media Representation, The Boys, Gender.

### INTRODUCTION

Stereotypes are powerful cultural tools that shape our perceptions of individuals, groups, and entire professions. In many cases, these perceptions are not based on personal experience but are formed through mediated narratives. Television, as one of the most pervasive forms of popular culture, plays a central role in producing, reinforcing, or occasionally challenging such narratives. Among the professions frequently subject to stereotyping are those in marketing, advertising, and public relations. These fields are often portrayed as manipulative, image-driven, and ethically ambiguous, despite their central role in shaping public discourse and influencing consumer behavior.

This contradiction between perceived superficiality and actual strategic influence makes these professions particularly interesting from a sociocultural perspective. While marketing and PR professionals design and manage public narratives, they are also targets of public skepticism. Their portrayals in movies and television series often reduce their work to persuasion at all costs, spinning the truth, and serving corporate interests without regard for ethical boundaries. Such portrayals risk overshadowing the nuanced reality of these fields, where communication is not merely a tactic but a central mechanism of social organization, branding, and reputation management.

The purpose of this study is twofold. First, it aims to analyze how television, as a narrative medium, contributes to the construction of professional images in the fields of marketing, advertising, and PR. Second, it investigates how audiences interpret these portrayals and what meanings they attach to them. The case study selected for this purpose is *The Boys*, an Amazon Prime television series that offers a complex, satirical vision of image management in a world where superheroes are treated as commercial assets. The show foregrounds the intersection of branding, power, and media manipulation through characters who function simultaneously as symbols, products, and public relations challenges.

*The Boys* provides a rich context for exploring professional stereotypes. Superheroes in the series are managed by a fictional conglomerate that relies on branding strategies, media scripting, and PR spin to preserve and monetize their reputations. In this world, public image is everything, and communicative labor becomes a tool of control. These representations offer a fictional but socially resonant account of how marketing and PR operate under the pressures of performance, profitability, and public scrutiny.

To investigate these dynamics, the article draws on both textual and audience-based data. Focus group discussions with students and early-career professionals were used to capture how viewers interpret character behavior, ethical dilemmas, and the relationship between corporate logic and personal identity. These discussions were complemented by thematic analysis of key scenes, with particular attention to recurring motifs such as gendered expectations, emotional labor, and credibility.

The article begins with a review of literature on occupational stereotypes, media representation, and the cultural functions of marketing and PR. This is followed by a description of the methodological framework, including the focus group design and criteria for scene selection. The findings section synthesizes participant insights and media analysis, while the discussion connects these observations to broader debates about ethics, inclusion, and the legitimacy of communicative professions.

By integrating narrative analysis with audience perspectives, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how fictional media participate in shaping public attitudes toward marketing, advertising, and PR. It highlights the cultural responsibility of media producers and invites reflection on how professionals within these fields might challenge or reframe the stories told about them.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Stereotypes emerge through cognitive and social mechanisms that help individuals make sense of a complex world. Allport (1954) argued that categorization is an essential but potentially dangerous mental process, leading to overgeneralization. Social categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) explains that people instinctively classify others into groups based on perceived similarities and differences, which can lead to generalized attributions. Illusory correlation (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976) reinforces these patterns by creating the illusion of association between traits and group membership, even when such links are unfounded. These cognitive simplifications are strengthened through observation and media exposure, as demonstrated by Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura et al., 1961). Repeated exposure to stereotyped portrayals leads individuals to adopt these characterizations as mental shortcuts. Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) further shows how individuals internalize the values and images of their social or professional group, while simultaneously reinforcing the perceived characteristics of out-groups.

When applied to the professions of marketing, advertising, and public relations (PR), these psychological theories intersect with strong cultural narratives. These fields are frequently portrayed as manipulative, superficial, and ethically questionable. Marketers are seen as creators of artificial desires, advertisers as purveyors of unattainable ideals, and PR professionals as spin doctors rather than facilitators of transparent communication.

Characters like Nick Naylor in *Thank You for Smoking* (2005) and Olivia Pope in *Scandal* (2012) reflect this tension between persuasion and morality. Miranda Priestly in *The Devil Wears Prada* (2006) epitomizes the image-obsessed executive whose professional power is coupled with emotional detachment. These portrayals contribute to reductive public images of communication professionals, obscuring the strategic, creative, and ethical dimensions of their work.

The television series *Mad Men* (2007–2015), created by Matthew Weiner, offers a stylized reflection of the advertising industry in the 1960s. Its main protagonist, Don Draper, is charismatic, brilliant, and emotionally unstable. These qualities reinforce the trope of the tortured creative genius. Peggy Olson represents the uphill struggle of women seeking recognition in a patriarchal industry, while Roger Sterling embodies the hedonistic side of networking culture. As noted by Papp-Váry and Cserényi (2021), these characters embody archetypes that shape our collective image of the advertising world: ambitious, glamorous, and morally ambiguous. Their study highlights how professional roles become intertwined with identity, performance, and deception, creating a stylized but persistent mythology of advertising work.

A complexity of these portrayals is explored in depth in the study *Black Mirror: The Portrayal of Advertising Professionals in Hollywood Movies* (Papp-Váry et al., 2015). Based on a content analysis of 27 films, the authors identify recurring traits assigned to advertising professionals: they are often workaholics, consumed by their careers, and usually male. Many are shown in suits, involved in chaotic love lives, or struggling with addictions such as excessive alcohol use, cigarette smoking, or drug use. However, the authors' in-depth interviews with real advertising professionals revealed that only some of these portrayals align with reality, such as the stress and emotional toll of campaign work, while others, like constant dishonesty or theatrical showmanship, are largely fictional. This contrast highlights the need for a more grounded and accurate understanding of advertising as a profession.

These media portrayals are especially influential given the limited direct contact most individuals have with marketing or PR professionals. According to OECD (2021), these professions employ a relatively small segment of the workforce, making media representation a primary source of public understanding. A 2020 Statista-Horowitz survey found that 58 percent of American viewers believe television perpetuates harmful stereotypes, while 68 percent think media should promote more accurate and diverse portrayals. This underscores the importance of examining how fictional representations inform public attitudes, professional identity, and career aspirations.

Beyond general portrayals, researchers have explored specific stereotype categories. Fennis et al. (2004) show that marketers are often perceived as disingenuous or deceptive. Duncan and Moriarty (1998) emphasized that marketing communication relies on emotional framing, which may be misread as manipulation. Kliatchko (2008) and Mulhern (2011) discuss how integrated marketing communication (IMC) further amplifies this perception through the blending of persuasive media messages across platforms. Eagly and Chaiken (2007) note that marketing is frequently associated with packaging and aesthetics rather than long-term value creation. The assumption persists that marketing emphasizes image over authenticity.

Public relations suffer from a similar stereotyping process. According to Grunig et al. (2005), women in PR often face marginalization despite their numerical dominance in the profession. Serini et al. (1997) highlight gender-based job satisfaction gaps, with women reporting greater emotional labor and less recognition. Daymon and Demetrious (2013) argue that PR is framed as emotional and appearance-driven work, especially for women. Men and Yue (2019) emphasize the importance of internal communication for creating a more supportive and emotionally balanced work culture, a point often omitted from media portrayals.

Appearance and behavior stereotypes further entrench professional expectations. Dion et al. (1972) found that physically attractive individuals are often assumed to be more competent and trustworthy. Johnson et al. (2014) show that dress and body presentation in marketing contexts influence perceptions of credibility. Cavico et al. (2012) discuss the consequences of appearance discrimination in workplace environments, a phenomenon often normalized in portrayals of PR and advertising professionals.

Gender stereotypes are especially persistent. Åkestam et al. (2021) found that advertising often portrays gendered roles in ways that have negative cross-gender effects. Šramová (2014) observed that media content aimed at youth reinforces limiting and outdated gender roles. Lott (1989) and Kilbourne (1999) argue that advertising not only reflects but perpetuates sexist assumptions about gender roles, limiting how both men and women see themselves and others. Bem (1993) adds that these lenses of gender filter nearly all public discourse, including representations in marketing and media.

Finally, television series like *The Boys* bring a satirical and dystopian lens to these professional stereotypes. In this narrative, superheroes are managed like corporate brands, and characters such as Ashley Barrett and Madelyn Stillwell function as extreme fictional portrayals of PR managers and brand strategists. Their work revolves around controlling narratives, staging appearances, and neutralizing scandals. The series amplifies common stereotypes such as manipulation, obsession with image, and moral detachment, but also highlights their dangers. As branding becomes a tool of power, PR and marketing shift from communication to control. While these portrayals are hyperbolic, they resonate because they reflect deeper anxieties about the ethics of persuasion and the commodification of truth.

Taken together, these studies and media portrayals demonstrate how occupational stereotypes in marketing, advertising, and PR are constructed and sustained. They also show how fictional representations shape not just public opinion but professional self-understanding. In light of growing calls for ethical communication and diversity in representation, it is critical to reflect on the messages media sends about what it means to be a communicator and who gets to be seen as credible, creative, or powerful in that role.

## **CASE STUDY: THE BOYS AS A CULTURAL MIRROR OF COMMUNICATION PROFESSIONS**

*The Boys* (Amazon Prime Video, 2019–) is a satirical superhero series created by Eric Kripke that offers a sharp and often cynical portrayal of branding, PR, and marketing in a hyper-commercialized society. At the center

of its fictional universe stands Vought International, a powerful media and pharmaceutical conglomerate that owns and manages the superhero group known as The Seven. Far from being independent moral agents, these superheroes are treated as corporate assets, branded, monetized, and strategically deployed for public approval and political gain. This setting makes *The Boys* an apt and richly layered case for examining how media fictionalizes and critiques communication-related professions.

**Image control:** From the very first episode (S01E01), Vought introduces The Seven through a polished promotional campaign that constructs them as flawless defenders of justice. This image, however, is quickly undercut by behind-the-scenes revelations of recklessness, crime, and exploitation. When A-Train, a speedster hero, kills a civilian in a moment of negligence, the event is not addressed with accountability but instead covered up through PR tactics. The same episode introduces Madelyn Stillwell, Vought's Senior VP of Hero Management, whose primary role is to manage public narratives. She treats heroes not as people but as "brands with legs", illustrating the reduction of identity to communicative capital.

**Manufactured empathy:** In S01E02, A-Train visits terminally ill children in a hospital. The event, intended as positive PR, turns awkward due to his emotional detachment. Watching live footage, Stillwell and her subordinate Ashley Barrett immediately conclude that future appearances must be scripted. This moment dramatizes the tension between authenticity and control, showing how even the most emotional encounters are curated through marketing logic.

**Crisis management:** In S01E04, two junior executives brainstorm responses to the disappearance of Translucent, a member of The Seven. Dressed in casual hipster attire and exchanging fist bumps, they illustrate the perceived frivolity of PR work. Their superficial tone, treating the death of a colleague as a branding challenge, exposes the stereotype of communication professionals as emotionally disengaged spin doctors.

**Strategic deception:** In S01E06, Homelander, the team's ultra-nationalist leader, stages a media appearance in a replica of his fabricated childhood home. He delivers a speech about growing up in rural America, painting himself as a self-made patriot. In reality, Homelander was raised in a lab by Vought scientists. The false narrative is not a glitch in the system but the system itself: an illusion designed to make him relatable and marketable, regardless of the truth.

**Gender and power:** Gender dynamics are also central to the show's portrayal of professional life. Starlight, the team's newest female member, initially embodies idealism and integrity. In S01E03, she is pressured to wear a revealing costume designed by Vought's marketing team, justified under the guise of empowerment. Her protest is dismissed, and she is told to "think of the brand". This scene critiques the sexualization of women in professional and public life, especially in roles where appearance is conflated with value. Ashley Barrett, as Vought's PR lead, is portrayed as career-driven but morally flexible. Her primary concern is message discipline, even when it conflicts with ethics or empathy. Stillwell, on the other hand, combines maternal warmth with ruthless strategic calculation, representing the archetype of the polished executive who manages perception with surgical precision.

**Satirical advertising:** The series also features mock commercials that parody real-world advertising conventions. In S01E05, A-Train stars in a fictional Turbo Rush energy drink ad, complete with fast cuts, exaggerated masculinity, and a shallow appropriation of social justice imagery. Similarly, The Deep endorses Liquid Death bottled water in a metal-inspired campaign that trivializes environmentalism. These ads expose how marketing often appropriates serious causes for entertainment and profit, reinforcing the notion that branding trumps sincerity.

Through these episodes and characters, *The Boys* constructs a world in which communication professionals are not facilitators of truth or transparency but engineers of illusion. Their actions are driven not by shared values but by the imperative to maintain control over public perception. The series does not simply critique these roles; it magnifies their most cynical traits, exaggerating them to the point of grotesque satire. Yet, this exaggeration does not render the critique irrelevant. Rather, it holds up a mirror to real-world concerns about how modern marketing and PR operate within corporate structures. By staging a universe where branding is everything and truth is malleable, *The Boys* dramatizes the ethical tension at the heart of contemporary communication work.

## METHODOLOGY

This study applies a qualitative research design to explore how the television series *The Boys* shapes and reflects public perceptions of the marketing, advertising, and public relations professions. The research aims to understand how viewers interpret media portrayals of these occupations and how such portrayals influence stereotypes, gender perceptions, and professional identity. To access in-depth perspectives, focus group discussion served as the primary method of data collection.

The focus group consisted of eight participants between the ages of 20 and 26. Most were concurrently studying and working, and seven out of eight had academic or professional exposure to marketing, advertising, or PR. Participants were affiliated with Hungarian higher education institutions such as Budapest University of

Economics and Business (BUEB) and Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE), studying Commerce and Marketing, Business Administration, Business Economics, or Philosophy. This group composition allowed for a rich blend of insider perspectives and critical distance, making it especially suitable for reflecting on how media constructs occupational images.

Participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure diversity in background and viewpoint. The session was conducted in an informal but focused environment to encourage open, honest reflection. The discussion began with a short introduction to the study's purpose and ethical guidelines, followed by a warm-up task in which participants shared a single word or phrase they associated with marketing, advertising, or PR. This initial activity helped uncover existing associations and prepared the group for deeper engagement.

The conversation was structured around three thematic blocks:

1. General stereotypes about marketing, advertising, and public relations professionals
2. Gender representation and professional identity
3. The influence of media narratives: reactions to scenes and ads from *The Boys*

Connected to the third thematic focus of the discussion, selected scenes and fictional advertisements from *The Boys* were screened to prompt critical reflection. These clips were chosen for their relevance to professional portrayal, narrative framing, and ethical dilemmas. Participants were provided with brief narrative context before each clip, and open-ended prompts guided the post-viewing discussion. This approach allowed participants to explore how media representations influence their perceptions of marketing, advertising, and PR, especially when satire blurs the line between critique and reinforcement of stereotypes.

The session was audio-recorded with informed consent and transcribed verbatim. Field notes were taken to capture non-verbal cues and contextual details. Thematic analysis was conducted through inductive coding, focusing on recurring patterns, contradictions, and emergent ideas related to media influence, professional stereotypes, and identity. Both convergence and divergence in participant perspectives were examined.

Ethical standards were rigorously upheld. All participation was voluntary, based on informed consent, with participants free to withdraw at any time. Anonymity was maintained throughout transcription and reporting.

While qualitative research offers depth, certain limitations apply. These include self-selection bias, the influence of group dynamics, and the non-generalizability of results. Nevertheless, the methodology enabled a nuanced exploration of how *The Boys* engages with and potentially shapes societal views of marketing, advertising, and PR. By combining audiovisual material with guided group discussion, the study provides meaningful insight into the cultural narratives that inform both public opinion and professional identity.

## FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents the key insights emerging from the focus group discussion, analyzing how *The Boys* portrays the professions of marketing, advertising, and public relations (PR) through stereotypes, character dynamics, and narrative framing. Thematic analysis of participant responses revealed how viewers interpret these depictions and how such portrayals intersect with broader social beliefs and professional self-understanding.

### General Stereotypes about Marketing, Advertising, and PR Professionals

The session opened with a word-association task, where participants were asked to express what came to mind when thinking about marketing, advertising, or PR, especially as seen in *The Boys*. The responses revealed both professional awareness and cultural skepticism. One participant immediately connected PR to social media: "I always think of social media first." Another participant, with a background in philosophy, took a more critical stance: "Marketing is about creating false desires in people." A third participant, who had several years of experience in marketing, simply said: "Propaganda."

Others added terms such as "creativity", "finding target groups", "manipulation", "persuading people", and "customer value creation." These responses reflected a blend of technical understanding and value judgments, indicating that even industry insiders grapple with the ethical ambiguity often attributed to these professions.

From the outset, participants identified a range of stereotypes embedded in the show's depiction of marketing-related characters. A recurring theme was the emphasis on appearance: professionals were expected to be well-groomed, stylish, and confident. Several individuals noted that this aesthetic pressure contributes to workplace stress and shapes implicit norms around who is seen as "professional."

The profession's association with manipulation also surfaced repeatedly. Marketing, advertising, and PR were seen as domains where truth is negotiable and image is paramount. As one participant remarked: "It was very interesting how the two marketers approached it all. Basically, they didn't understand reality at all, only what kind of story can be drawn from it."

As another contributor observed: “They’re selling something that people wouldn’t buy without the image creation. Because he is morally corrupt and often infantile. One does not want such leaders or people to look up to.” This skepticism was echoed across the group. While some acknowledged the exaggeration inherent in *The Boys*, most agreed that these portrayals mirrored real-life suspicions about the communication industry’s ethics.

Participants did not just describe how others might perceive these professions. They also reflected on how these stereotypes influenced their own thinking. The tension between how professionals are seen and how they see themselves emerged as a key insight. Some worried that the industry’s reputation for manipulation could lead to decreased trust and increased cynicism both within and outside the profession. As one participant observed: “This is actually the same thing again... the stereotype is oversimplifying, but it cannot be created without a reason. There is essentially a core of absolute truth.”

This idea — that stereotypes are grounded in partial truths but distorted for narrative effect — underpinned much of the discussion. Participants acknowledged that while not every depiction was fair, the recurrence of certain tropes (the cold strategist, the image-obsessed PR woman, the spin-doctor CEO) was not entirely unfounded.

In sum, the focus group revealed a complex picture. Participants recognized *The Boys* as satirical fiction but also as a credible reflection of public attitudes toward marketing and PR. The discussion underscored how media representations can simultaneously entertain, exaggerate, and reinforce social beliefs about professional identity. These portrayals not only shape public opinion but also influence how individuals within these professions view their own roles.

To further explore associations, participants were asked what immediately came to mind when thinking about professionals in marketing, advertising, or public relations. Several responses were strong and unfiltered. One individual bluntly stated: “For me, snakes in a suit. There’s this specific image usually associated with psychopathic leaders of large capitalist corporations.”

This comment sparked reflection on one of the most enduring stereotypes: the well-dressed but morally questionable communicator. Most participants associated these professions with formal office attire, typically suits, which they linked to status, authority, and surface-level credibility. As one put it: “Well, people working in these professions live in my head like an average person working in an office from 9 to 5.”

It was acknowledged that the “suit stereotype” is rooted in both real-world corporate norms and cinematic portrayals. While the symbolism of tailored clothing as a signal of competence persists, several participants noted that in reality, dress codes are becoming more relaxed — especially in creative or agency environments. The visual shorthand, however, remains: suits equal professionalism.

The conversation then turned to status signaling and privilege. Several contributors discussed whether marketing and PR tends to attract individuals from more affluent backgrounds. As one participant expressed: “I think status is incredibly important in this profession. There’s a need to represent one’s background, or even over represent it.”

Another noted that the public often conflates marketing with sales, despite important differences: “The stereotype we described about marketers could actually apply even more to sales. I think the average person doesn’t really distinguish between the two.”

This prompted a more detailed comparison. Sales was viewed as more reliant on personal charisma and client-facing performance, where clothing, charm, and first impressions matter. In contrast, marketing and PR were seen as involving more strategic or behind-the-scenes tasks. One participant explained: “Sales is more about face-to-face interaction, where appearance and first impressions matter most. In other roles, things happen more behind the scenes.”

When asked about personality traits, responses reflected a mix of idealized and skeptical views. One participant responded simply: “Charismatic. Open.” Another, with intern experience in the field, gave a more ambivalent description: “I think they’re youthful because they have to follow trends. But also cold and calculating, if you’re trained to understand how to influence emotions, you might bring that home, too, and avoid unnecessary interactions. Maybe you only say what you think is strategically necessary.” In response, one participant challenged this assumption by grounding it in everyday realities: “This is just like the suit stereotype. Marketers are not mind-reading psycho geniuses. Sure, in big companies there are deep campaigns, but most people just work with Excel sheets and upload data into software. It’s more ordinary than people think.” This exchange highlighted a central tension between public myths and professional self-awareness. While participants recognized that stereotypes simplify and dramatize, they also acknowledged that such images persist — partly because they build on familiar elements, even when exaggerated.

When prompted to discuss habitual behaviors associated with marketing and PR professionals, participants frequently referenced media tropes. One participant noted that in films and series, these characters often smoke, drink coffee with colleagues, and socialize through golf or squash. This image, shaped by shows like *Mad Men*, recurred throughout the conversation as a visual shorthand for status and authority in the advertising world. As one participant explained, *Mad Men* represents everything that had been mentioned, just elevated. The character

of Don Draper, a creative director in the 1960s, always wore a suit, both at work and outside it. Another reflected that even today, senior executives often wear suits, and people continue to imagine men in those roles. Appearance matters. A tailored suit and styled hair contribute to how status is inferred. At the level of stereotype, insensitivity was often associated with men.

One participant offered a broader reflection on how these visual cues intersect with gendered expectations. Although both women and men can be marketers, there is still a prevailing belief that it is more of a man's job. This may stem from the idea that men are perceived as better at separating work from personal life. However, in marketing, persuasion is not always direct. Often it is more about understanding people.

These insights led directly into a more focused conversation on gender roles within the marketing, advertising, and PR professions.

### **Gender Representation and Professional Identity**

Gender emerged as one of the most significant themes during the discussion, particularly concerning who is imagined as occupying senior roles. A question from the moderator, asking why such roles are usually portrayed by men in media, sparked critical reflection on how ambition, power, and emotional detachment are culturally coded as masculine traits.

One participant expressed the view that a male figure is often seen as more suitable for leadership. The desire to dominate and move forward is framed as a male principle. Whether people like it or not, this is perceived as reality. In most companies, men occupy leading positions. It was suggested that ambition and insensitivity may be linked, and that reaching a high position requires making difficult decisions and upsetting others, something commonly associated with masculine behavior.

At the same time, others challenged this notion. One participant emphasized that to be a good marketer or PR professional, one needs strong observational skills and emotional attentiveness. Women are often seen as more empathetic and responsive to others' needs, which makes them well-suited for such roles.

This tension between leadership norms and the interpersonal demands of marketing revealed a deeper contradiction. While women may be stereotypically viewed as more communicative, they are underrepresented in high-status or strategic positions.

Another participant pointed to one possible explanation rooted in workplace culture. The stereotype that women will eventually have children and take maternity leave contributes to uncertainty in hiring or promotion. Women are still asked about marital status or family plans in job interviews, despite the fact that these do not necessarily affect work performance.

One participant shared a workplace example. In a previous job, one team handled technical tasks while the other managed communication and regulation. The latter team consisted entirely of women. This was interpreted as a reflection of a broader tendency: women are more likely to pursue human-centered work, value team interaction, and serve as social connectors in the workplace. Men, by contrast, may prefer independent work and take on more detached roles. As a result, women often end up in middle-management positions with fewer opportunities for advancement.

This anecdote aligned with broader findings in gender studies and organizational sociology. Women are frequently overrepresented in support roles and underrepresented in decision-making ones. Even with equivalent qualifications, they are often evaluated through the lens of gendered expectations.

The discussion emphasized that real change requires more than surface-level policy reform. Cultural attitudes about gender, leadership, and emotional labor must evolve. As participants concluded, communication-related professions are especially well-positioned to challenge these biases, both because of their influence on media narratives and their ability to model more inclusive workplace cultures.

As the discussion progressed, participants turned their attention to the structural consequences of gendered stereotypes in marketing, advertising, and PR. In response to the moderator's question on how these stereotypes influence perceptions of gender diversity and inclusion, several key themes emerged.

One participant offered a critical perspective rooted in systemic logic. According to this view, professional opportunities are not necessarily shaped by individual prejudice but by broader economic rationality. Capitalist systems prioritize efficiency and profitability, so the person perceived as more productive, often a man, may be favored for a role. While not overtly discriminatory, this framework still reproduces inequality by rewarding traits traditionally coded as masculine.

Another participant added that differences in behavioral tendencies and occupational preferences also play a role. The conversation revisited earlier points about competitiveness and productivity. If men are more drawn to high-pressure performance roles or are socialized to excel in them, the labor market may reflect this preference. However, this does not mean women are incapable; rather, it shows how both societal expectations and internalized norms shape career choices and outcomes.

A third voice in the discussion highlighted hiring practices and day-to-day biases. Despite improvements in gender equality, assumptions about family planning still influence how women are evaluated. Even when not explicitly stated, concerns about maternity leave or work-life balance can reduce women's chances of being hired or promoted. These stereotypes persist despite evidence that personal circumstances do not predict professional commitment or competence.

Participants also reflected on the broader consequences of these biases. One argued that companies often prioritize speed and output while overlooking qualities associated with relational intelligence. Including more of what are traditionally seen as feminine strengths such as empathy, patience, and adaptability could benefit organizations, especially in communication-focused fields. The problem lies in the fact that many companies do not recognize or value these traits as leadership assets.

Together, these reflections revealed how gendered assumptions continue to shape professional experiences in subtle but impactful ways. The group emphasized that improving gender diversity requires more than policy changes. It demands a cultural shift in how leadership potential is defined and which traits are valued in the workplace. In communication professions especially, where human insight and ethical awareness are central, expanding the notion of professional competence could lead to both fairer and more effective organizational practices.

Participants also considered how historical legacies and evolutionary narratives continue to influence the dominance of male leadership imagery in marketing, advertising, and PR. One participant drew from evolutionary psychology, suggesting that men have historically been placed in decision-making roles, often under pressure, and that over time this contributed to the association of leadership with masculinity. While acknowledging that women are equally capable today, this perspective argued that the legacy of male-dominated systems and the historical exclusion of women from legal and social power still affects how leadership is imagined. The idea that decisiveness and authority are masculine traits was seen as deeply embedded in cultural memory.

This reflection aligns with research showing that assertiveness, confidence, and dominance are still widely perceived as masculine leadership qualities. These associations are frequently reinforced in media portrayals and professional contexts. Even when women display these traits, they are often judged more harshly, reflecting persistent double standards in leadership evaluation.

Another participant challenged the evolutionary explanation, referencing anthropological examples where women assumed leadership roles when circumstances required it. In these contexts, women began to exhibit traits typically labeled as masculine, not because of biology but due to their roles in the community. This perspective emphasized that gender roles are socially constructed and shaped by cultural and institutional frameworks rather than fixed biological patterns.

This view is consistent with social role theory, which posits that many gendered behaviors arise from expectations linked to societal roles rather than innate differences. Historically, women were assigned caregiving tasks and thus associated with empathy and cooperation, while men occupied leadership roles and became linked to ambition and control.

The exchange between these perspectives highlighted the ongoing tension between biological essentialism and social constructivism. While historical patterns clearly inform present-day expectations, most participants agreed that these should not define modern leadership. They stressed that organizations need to move beyond outdated assumptions and critically assess the cultural scripts that still influence who is seen as a leader.

The group reached a consensus that redefining leadership is essential. It should include a wider range of qualities such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and collaborative skills, alongside strategic thinking and decisiveness. Participants argued that broadening this definition would benefit not only women but also enhance the inclusivity and effectiveness of leadership in marketing, advertising, and PR professions.

### **The Influence of Media Narratives: Reactions to Scenes and Ads from *The Boys***

A recurring theme in the focus group discussion was the perceived influence of media, especially television series, on public perceptions of marketing, advertising, and public relations professions. Participants explored how these portrayals shape occupational identities, affect audience trust, and contribute to career-related expectations and stereotypes. When asked how television shows affect public opinion of these professions, one participant remarked that while they could not name a specific example, media representations are pervasive. Marketing-related characters appear in advertisements, films, and series, even when marketing is not the central theme. This reflects how communication professionals are symbolically embedded across fictional narratives, shaping expectations even in the background.

Another participant offered a more critical view of the narrative logic behind these portrayals. In television, where screen time is limited and each moment must convey meaning, professions are often reduced to clear

stereotypes. The office worker in a suit with middle-class habits becomes a shorthand for identifying roles quickly. This strategy may be efficient for storytelling, but it creates distorted images of professional life.

Such observations align with Entman's theory of media framing, which suggests that repeated and selective representations shape audience understanding. In the context of marketing-related fields, portrayals often reinforce enduring images such as the cynical advertiser, the manipulative PR expert, or the charismatic yet ethically ambiguous communicator. Even when intended as satire, these character types risk being misinterpreted as accurate reflections of reality.

One participant noted that for those who do not personally know anyone working in marketing or PR, these fictional portrayals may serve as their only frame of reference. This highlights the importance of media literacy and the need to interpret such portrayals as stylized constructions rather than factual depictions.

The Boys was identified as a particularly relevant example. Characters like Ashley Barrett represent the cold and calculating PR executive who constructs narratives not based on truth, but on what will satisfy the public. While the show is overtly satirical, the intensity of these depictions may leave a lasting impression, especially for viewers unfamiliar with the professional realities of communication work.

Participants also discussed what drives producers to depict certain professions in particular ways. Aesthetic appeal was frequently cited. Viewers are more likely to engage with content that features attractive characters, which often results in sexualized portrayals. This choice is intended to enhance visual pleasure and viewer retention.

Another participant pointed to the emotional strategy behind character development. In popular culture, producers aim to make content as consumable and emotionally engaging as possible. This can lead to negative portrayals of certain professions. Sometimes these characters evoke moral superiority in the audience, offering a sense of relief. In other cases, they are portrayed as enviably successful. Both emotional responses function as effective narrative hooks.

The discussion also touched on broader television trends. Participants noted that shows often gravitate toward extremes. Characters are either high-level managers in suits or awkward office workers, as seen in comedies like *The Office*. Even when marketing characters are absent, the general portrayal of office culture reinforces stereotypes about daily routines and professional identity.

Overall, participants concluded that media portrayals of marketing, advertising, and PR professionals are shaped by narrative economy, visual appeal, and emotional engagement. While effective for storytelling, these portrayals risk solidifying reductive stereotypes that shape public understanding. *The Boys* exemplifies this dual role. It critiques image-making practices while simultaneously relying on exaggerated characters that reflect existing public doubts about the communication industry.

Connected to the third main theme of the focus group, participants were shown selected scenes and fictional advertisements from *The Boys* featuring characters involved in marketing, public relations, and advertising. As they were not informed in advance that specific scenes from the series would be analyzed, their responses reflected a mix of spontaneous impressions and previously held beliefs about the professions.

The chosen clips focused on characters such as Ashley Barrett, Madelyn Stillwell, and Stan Edgar, each responsible for branding, media management, and crisis communication within the show's fictional corporation.

Participants quickly identified visual and behavioral cues such as formal clothing, sleek office environments, and calculated speech and posture, all of which reinforced familiar occupational stereotypes. These included the ruthless executive, the emotionally distant PR expert, and the image-driven marketing strategist.

In addition to the narrative scenes, participants also viewed fictional in-universe commercials that parody real-world advertising. These ads presented superheroes as branded commodities, marketed with slogans, packaging, and emotionally charged visuals. Several participants noted that although exaggerated, the strategies shown closely resembled contemporary branding practices. The satire was seen as effective precisely because of its resemblance to actual industry behavior.

Throughout the discussion, participants reflected on how such portrayals shape public and professional understandings of communication work. Some emphasized that these caricatures mirror broader societal concerns about manipulation and superficiality. Others noted that while the show distorts reality for dramatic effect, it captures key truths about media logic, image control, and the commodification of identity.

Overall, the scenes served as a catalyst for critical reflection. Participants agreed that *The Boys* effectively illustrates how media narratives influence perceptions of marketing, advertising, and PR. This is achieved not only through entertainment but also by subtly reinforcing occupational stereotypes. The following section summarizes each scene and advertisement, along with the participants' reactions.

A-Train's hospital visit (S01E02): In this scene, A-Train visits a terminally ill child. The interaction is awkward and performative, while Ashley and Madelyn watch from a control room, carefully managing the scene for public consumption. One participant noted that the characters are not concerned with people but with selling a product. Others agreed that the scene critiques inauthentic PR moments and corporate compassion that is staged for

branding purposes. Ashley was described as anxious and detail-oriented, while Madelyn was seen as cold and focused on control. Both were identified as exaggerated portrayals of image-obsessed communication professionals. Participants noted that although the satire is extreme, it resonates with reality and reflects familiar corporate behavior.

Starlight confrontation scene (S01E02): In another scene, Starlight is reprimanded by Ashley for stopping a sexual assault, which is presented as a violation of company protocol. Rather than being praised for her bravery, she is scolded for acting off script. One participant commented that the characters in the show are clearly not interested in moral issues but only in appearances. Ashley was described as following rules above all else, with concern driven not by ethics but by the disruption of branding plans. Participants interpreted this scene as a critique of a corporate environment where branding trumps ethics. The visual presentation of Ashley, including her polished outfit and behavior, was again highlighted as a reinforcement of the visual stereotype of the communications professional.

Managing crisis and corporate image (S01E04): In this scene, two Vought employees consult with Madelyn about how to handle the disappearance of Translucent. Rather than transparency, the focus is on controlling the narrative and organizing a high-profile funeral. Participants noted that the professionals in the scene wore casual hipster-style outfits, which contrasted with the seriousness of the subject matter. One participant observed that the informal tone, including gestures like a fist bump, infantilized the situation. The scene was seen as a satire of crisis communication culture, where even serious scandals are managed through polished messaging, emotional distance, and a focus on image maintenance.

Homelander and the fabrication of identity (S01E06): In this scene, Homelander visits a staged childhood home and delivers a sentimental monologue about growing up in a loving family. In reality, he was raised in a laboratory. Participants noted that the scene illustrates how branding creates false but compelling narratives. Homelander was described as the perfect product, built to embody an ideal story. The fake childhood setting was interpreted as a parody of American Dream imagery. Participants discussed how branding often relies not on truth, but on emotionally satisfying scripts. They agreed that although most communication professionals do not fabricate stories on this level, the scene reflects a real tendency to prioritize narrative coherence over factual accuracy.

Starlight's costume redesign: In a pivotal scene, Starlight is presented with a new costume by Vought's marketing team. The hypersexualized outfit is designed for visual impact rather than functionality. Although she resists at first, she ultimately complies, signaling the pressure to conform to branding demands. Participants saw this as a turning point in the character's arc, representing the moment she realizes her role is not to be a hero but a marketable image. The scene sparked discussion about how marketing often reduces women to decorative functions, overriding individuality and ethical concerns in favor of profit. This was linked to broader academic critiques of the objectification of women in media and branding.

Fictional advertisements: Three in-universe ads were also discussed. The Turbo Rush commercial, featuring A-Train, mimics energy drink ads with exaggerated visuals and references to social justice causes. Participants found it to be a satire of how brands exploit activism for commercial gain. The Liquid Death parody, starring The Deep, presents bottled water with aggressive branding. Participants described it as a humorous take on how even basic necessities are marketed with extreme aesthetics. The skincare commercial featuring Starlight uses typical beauty ad tropes such as soft lighting, slow motion, and exaggerated promises. It was interpreted as a critique of how advertising creates unattainable ideals while disguising manipulation under polished visuals.

Taken together, these scenes and ads allowed participants to reflect critically on how satire can mirror reality. They emphasized that although *The Boys* exaggerates for effect, it draws on real cultural anxieties and familiar communication practices. Participants concluded that while such portrayals can entertain, they also influence public perceptions of marketing, advertising, and PR in lasting ways.

As the discussion drew to a close, participants reflected more broadly on the cumulative insights of the session. Overall, they agreed that *The Boys* offers a striking, if exaggerated, portrayal of marketing, advertising, and PR professionals. While many acknowledged that certain stereotypes contain a core of truth, they emphasized that these are often stretched or misapplied in media contexts.

One participant suggested that many traits associated with marketing are in fact more characteristic of sales, and that lay audiences tend to group the three professions together without distinction. Another admitted that marketing can influence people deeply and may even be seen as manipulative, but felt that this is only one part of a much more complex reality.

Several participants pointed to gendered dynamics as contributing to the persistence of certain stereotypes. It was observed that men are still more likely to hold leadership roles, particularly in traditional corporate environments. Others noted that while formal dress codes such as suits may persist in large firms, they are much less common in smaller or more creative workplaces. These cultural markers can reinforce assumptions about professionalism and status, but do not capture the diversity of real-life settings.

There was consensus that while stereotypes may reflect fragments of experience, they fail to account for the range of roles, personalities, and values within these professions. The media's tendency to simplify for dramatic effect was seen as a major contributor to public misunderstanding, especially among those with little direct contact with marketing or PR professionals.

Participants also noted that company culture, organizational structure, and national context strongly influence how these roles are performed. In flexible or progressive environments, stereotypical traits are often challenged or redefined, whereas in rigid, hierarchical systems, they may be maintained or even intensified.

In summary, the session highlighted how occupational stereotypes are simultaneously grounded in partial realities and distorted by media narratives. The group's reflections underscored the need for more diverse and accurate representations of communication professionals, both to inform public perception and to support more inclusive self-understanding within the industry itself.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the enduring influence of stereotypes in shaping perceptions of marketing, advertising, and PR professions, both from within the industry and from external audiences. Drawing on established psychological and media theories, the analysis illustrates how fictional representations such as those in *The Boys* do more than entertain. They reinforce cognitive patterns and cultural narratives that shape professional identity and social expectations.

The participants' responses aligned closely with the theoretical frameworks of social categorization (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and illusory correlation (Hamilton & Gifford, 1976). These theories help explain how occupational groups become cognitively associated with emotionally charged stereotypes such as the manipulative marketer or the glamorous but superficial PR agent, regardless of individual variation. These associations are further amplified through repeated portrayals in popular culture, which favor dramatic tropes over nuanced realism.

Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura et al., 1961) helps illuminate how such portrayals are internalized. Many participants reflected that their understanding of marketing and PR had been formed well before professional contact, shaped largely through television, films, and advertisements. Characters like Ashley Barrett and Madelyn Stillwell in *The Boys* serve as hyperbolic but familiar archetypes, emotionally detached, image-obsessed, and ethically ambiguous. These depictions encode messages not just about the profession but also about gendered authority and moral flexibility.

Social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004) offers further insight into the internalization of these images. Several participants with industry experience acknowledged a tension between their self-perception and the stereotype they feel others project onto them. This internal dissonance reflects the subtle but powerful role of media in shaping both how professions are viewed externally and how professionals view themselves.

This aligns with OECD (2021) data showing that marketing and PR represent a small segment of the labor force. For many people, media representations are their primary exposure to these professions. Participants acknowledged this. Those without direct contact often rely on media portrayals, which makes the influence of shows like *The Boys* especially significant.

Gender stereotypes emerged as a recurring and salient theme. Lott (1989) and Kilbourne (1999) argue that advertising and media often reflect and reinforce sexist assumptions. The participants noted how women in *The Boys*, such as Ashley Barrett or Starlight, are held to appearance-based standards and moral double binds. This mirrors the findings of Eagly and Karau (2002), who demonstrate how women are disadvantaged in leadership roles due to perceived incongruity between femininity and authority.

Beyond gender, appearance and behavioral expectations were also noted. Participants emphasized that professionals in these fields are frequently judged by their looks, confidence, and charisma. This confirms earlier findings by Dion et al. (1972) on the "what is beautiful is good" stereotype. Johnson et al (2014) similarly emphasize the role of dress and body in constructing professional identity, especially in communication-related fields where image is closely tied to credibility.

The satirical lens of *The Boys* amplifies these tropes to disturbing effect. The character of Homelander, managed like a commercial brand, and the orchestrated "hero narratives" reflect what Mulhern (2011) describes as the shift toward fully integrated branding systems where emotion and identity become commodified. Kliatchko (2008) and Duncan and Moriarty (1998) note that integrated marketing communication often prioritizes cohesive messaging across platforms. In *The Boys*, this coordination serves more sinister ends. Truth becomes pliable, and branding replaces substance.

The participants critically engaged with this dissonance. While they rejected the more extreme portrayals as exaggerated, they acknowledged that some real-world practices, especially in large corporations, do echo the emphasis on optics, metrics, and narrative control. This reinforces Eagly and Chaiken's (2007) observation that persuasive communication often blurs the line between authenticity and performance.

Finally, participants recognized how professional dissatisfaction and emotional burnout are frequently caricatured in popular culture. As Hammer et al. (2009) show, advertising clutter and performance pressure can lead to diminished effectiveness and personal tolls. Yet, as Šramová (2014) and Åkestam et al. (2021) suggest, these portrayals are not harmless. They can influence not only how others see communication professionals but also how professionals behave, what they wear, and whether they feel they belong.

In sum, this study confirms that media representations, especially those in stylized or satirical formats, play a central role in shaping how communication professions are understood. These portrayals inform hiring biases, workplace norms, and professional self-conceptions. As Allport (1954) noted, prejudice thrives on mental shortcuts. In the context of media-saturated societies, those shortcuts are often created and reinforced through the stories we consume. Thus, the challenge for scholars and practitioners is not merely to reject stereotypes but to create alternative narratives that reflect the ethical, strategic, and deeply human dimensions of marketing, advertising, and PR.

## LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting the findings. First, the analysis focused exclusively on a single television series, *The Boys*, which, while rich in satirical content, offers a highly stylized and exaggerated portrayal of marketing, advertising, and PR professions. Broader insights could be gained by comparing multiple series or genres.

Second, data were collected through a single focus group discussion. Although this format allowed for dynamic interaction and in-depth reflection, it limits the generalizability of the results. A larger number of groups or individual interviews could provide a more diverse range of perspectives.

Third, the focus group participants were primarily young adults between the ages of 20 and 26, most of whom were concurrently studying and working. While their dual perspective as both consumers and emerging professionals offered valuable insights, the findings may not reflect the views of older or more experienced professionals.

Finally, the majority of participants had academic or practical experience in marketing-related fields, which may have influenced their interpretations. Future research could benefit from including lay audiences or professionals from unrelated sectors to better understand how media stereotypes affect general public perception.

Further studies might also explore how different media platforms, including streaming content, influencer culture, and interactive advertising, shape occupational stereotypes. Longitudinal research could examine whether such portrayals influence career aspirations, professional identity formation, or trust in communication industries over time.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study investigated how stereotypes related to marketing, advertising, and public relations are constructed, reinforced, and challenged through popular media, with a focus on the television series *The Boys*. Drawing on psychological and sociological theories as well as qualitative data from a focus group, the research revealed that these stereotypes are neither incidental nor harmless. They function as cultural narratives that shape not only how these professions are viewed by outsiders but also how professionals view themselves and their roles.

The findings show that media representations significantly influence the public understanding of these communication-related fields. Participants recognized that characters such as Ashley Barrett or Madelyn Stillwell embody exaggerated tropes of manipulation, vanity, and strategic detachment, yet they also admitted that these portrayals reflect some aspects of real-world professional behavior. The show's satirical lens blurs the boundary between critique and confirmation, raising important questions about authenticity, ethics, and the performance of professionalism.

Moreover, the focus group revealed how stereotypes intersect with gender norms, organizational culture, and workplace dynamics. Participants discussed how appearance expectations, leadership biases, and assumptions about emotional labor continue to shape opportunities in the industry. They also noted the internalization of these images and how they affect professional identity and career aspirations, particularly among younger practitioners.

The research confirmed key insights from the literature: that stereotypes operate through cognitive simplifications and are maintained through repeated media exposure. Fictional narratives like those in *The Boys* do not merely entertain; they participate in shaping public beliefs and workplace realities. As long as these depictions go unchallenged, they risk narrowing the perception of what these professions entail and who is seen as competent or credible within them.

Given these findings, several recommendations can be made. Media creators should be encouraged to portray communication professionals in more diverse and nuanced ways, highlighting the strategic, ethical, and

collaborative dimensions of the work. Professional associations and industry stakeholders should invest in public education and campaigns that challenge outdated or harmful images. Educational institutions should prepare students not only for professional practice but also for critical engagement with how their field is represented culturally.

Finally, researchers should continue to explore how occupational stereotypes evolve and how they are received by different audiences. Broader samples, comparative media analysis, and longitudinal designs would further enrich our understanding of these dynamics.

In conclusion, stereotypes are not fixed truths but social constructions. They can be reproduced or resisted, depending on the narratives we choose to endorse. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue between media studies, organizational research, and professional education, it becomes possible to shift how communication professions are imagined—and ultimately, how they are practiced.

## REFERENCES

- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The Nature of Prejudice*. Perseus Books, Cambridge, MA.
- Åkestam, N., Rosengren, S., Dahlén, M., Liljedal, K. T., & Berg, H. (2021). Gender stereotypes in advertising have negative cross-gender effects. *European Journal of Marketing*, 55(13), 63–93. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-02-2019-0125>
- Bandura, A., Ross, D., & Ross, S. A. (1961). Transmission of aggression through imitation of aggressive models. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 63(3), 575–582.
- Bem, S. L. (1993). *The lenses of gender: Transforming the debate on sexual inequality*. Yale University Press.
- Cavico, F. J., Muffler, S. C., & Mujtaba, B. G. (2012). Appearance discrimination, 'lookism' and 'lookphobia' in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Business Research*, 28(5), 791–802. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v28i5.7223>
- Daymon, C., & Demetrious, K. (Eds.). (2013). *Gender and public relations: Critical perspectives on voice, image and identity*. Routledge.
- Dion, K., Berscheid, E., & Walster, E. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 24(3), 285–290. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0033731>
- Duncan, T., & Moriarty, S. E. (1998). A communication-based marketing model for managing relationships. *Journal of Marketing*, 62(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1252157>
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (2007). The advantages of an inclusive definition of attitude. *Social Cognition*, 25(5), 582–602. <https://doi.org/10.1521/soco.2007.25.5.582>
- Eagly, A. H., & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. *Psychological Review*, 109(3), 573–598. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.109.3.573>
- Fennis, B. M., Das, E. H. H. J., & Pruyn, A. Th. H. (2004). If you can't dazzle them with brilliance, baffle them with nonsense: Extending the impact of the disrupt-then-reframe technique of social influence. *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 14(3), 280–290. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1403\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327663jcp1403_9)
- Grunig, L. A., Hon, L. C., & Toth, E. L. (2005). *Women in public relations: How gender influences practice*. Routledge.
- Hamilton, D. L., & Gifford, R. K. (1976). Illusory correlation in interpersonal perception: A cognitive basis of stereotypic judgments. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 12(4), 392–407. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031\(76\)80006-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-1031(76)80006-6)
- Hammer, P., Riebe, E., & Kennedy, R. (2009). How clutter affects advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 49(2), 159–163. <https://doi.org/10.2501/S0021849909090217>
- Johnson, K. K. P., Lennon, S. J., & Rudd, N. (2014). Dress, body and self: Research in the social psychology of dress. *Fashion and Textiles*, 1, 20. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40691-014-0020-7>
- Kilbourne, J. (1999). *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. Touchstone.
- Kliatchko, J. G. (2008). Revisiting the IMC construct: A revised definition and four pillars. *International Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), 133–160. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2008.11073043>
- Kripke, E. (Creator). (2019–present). *The Boys* [Television series]. Amazon Prime Video.
- Lott, B. (1989). Sexist discrimination as distancing behavior: II. Primetime television. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 13(3), 341–355. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-6402.1989.tb01006.x>
- Men, L. R., & Yue, C. A. (2019). Creating a positive emotional culture: Effect of internal communication and impact on employee supportive behaviors. *Public Relations Review*, 45(3), 101764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2019.03.001>
- Mulhern, F. (2011). Integrated marketing communications: From media channels to digital connectivity. In *The Evolution of Integrated Marketing Communications* (1st ed.). Routledge.
- OECD. (2021). Annual labour force survey, summary tables. OECD. Accessed: 29.10.2024.

- Papp-Váry, Á., & Cserényi, V. (2021). Old brands come to life: Historic product placement in the light of *Mad Men*. In Lefait, S., & Villers, S. (Eds.), *The faces and stakes of brand insertion* (Chapter 10). Vernon Press, Wilmington, DE, United States.
- Papp-Váry, Á., Takács, Zs., & Ugrin, D. (2015). Black mirror – The portrayal of advertising professionals in Hollywood movies. In Vuletic, A., Vlahov, R. D., & Pihir, I. (Eds.), *Economic and Social Development: 11th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – Building Resilient Society: Book of Proceedings* (pp. 220–233). Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency, Zagreb, Croatia.
- Serini, S. A., Toth, E. L., Wright, D. K., & Emig, A. G. (1997). Watch for falling glass... Women, men, and job satisfaction in public relations: A preliminary analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 9(2), 99–118. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr0902\\_02](https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr0902_02)
- Šramová, B. (2014). Aggressive marketing, consumer kids and stereotyping of media contents. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 140, 255–259. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.417>
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–37). Brooks/Cole.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (2004). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In J. T. Jost & J. Sidanius (Eds.), *Political psychology: Key readings* (pp. 276–293). Psychology Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203505984-16>
- Weiner, M. (Creator). (2007–2015). *Mad Men* [Television series]. Lionsgate Television.