

Motherhood, family, and consumption: Representations of women as mothers in advertising in *O Cruzeiro* (1955–1959)

Maternidade, família e consumo: representações da mulher-mãe na publicidade de *O Cruzeiro* (1955–1959)

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ABSTRACT: *The article examines representations of motherhood in advertisements in O Cruzeiro magazine between 1955 and 1959, treating print advertisements as cultural devices for the production and circulation of meanings about femininity. Based on the premise that the media participates in shaping social imaginaries and naturalizing gender roles, the study investigates how advertising articulated motherhood, care, and consumption in the construction of the figure of the woman-mother, associating women with the organization of domestic space, the education of children, and the maintenance of family well-being. Methodologically, the study uses content analysis, with the selection of categories related to domestic consumption, family life, and female appearance. The discussion highlights how advertising contributed to consolidating normative representations of motherhood and families in the mid-20th century.*

Keywords: *O Cruzeiro; motherhood; families; advertising and consumption; representations.*

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Editors: Gisela G. S. Castro , Maria Collier de Mendonça  and Milena C. B. F. de Oliveira-Cruz 

RESUMO: *O artigo examina as representações da maternidade na publicidade da revista O Cruzeiro entre os anos de 1955 e 1959, tomando os anúncios impressos como dispositivos culturais de produção e circulação de sentidos sobre o feminino. A partir da premissa de que a mídia participa da conformação de imaginários e da naturalização de papéis de gênero, investiga-se como tais narrativas articularam maternidade, cuidado e consumo na construção da figura das mulheres-mães, associando-as à organização do espaço doméstico, à educação dos filhos e à manutenção do bem-estar familiar. Metodologicamente, o estudo utiliza a análise de conteúdo, com a seleção de categorias relativas ao consumo doméstico, à vida familiar e à aparência feminina. A discussão evidencia como a publicidade contribuiu para consolidar representações normativas da maternidade e das famílias em meados do século XX.*

Palavras-chave: *O Cruzeiro; maternidade; famílias; publicidade e consumo; representações.*

Introduction

During the 20th century, advertising contributed to the construction of normative models of femininity and gender roles, associating women with the domestic universe, childcare, and the maintenance of family harmony. Motherhood appears in this media context as a central element in defining feminine identities, frequently presented as women's natural vocation and as a pillar in the organization of families. Thus, advertising narratives not only portray motherhood but have also consolidated it as a structuring axis of female social life (MENDONÇA, 2021).

This paper is situated within that horizon and aimed to analyze representations of motherhood in advertisements published in *O Cruzeiro* magazine between 1955 and 1959. The analysis starts from the premise that advertisements can be understood as cultural archives that reveal value systems and social expectations within a given historical context. By examining these representations, the study sought to understand how advertising participated in the symbolic construction of the woman-mother figure in Brazil in the mid-twentieth century, articulating families, domesticity, and consumption.

The chosen period corresponds to a particularly significant moment in Brazilian social history. The 1950s are frequently associated with the intensification of urban growth, industrialization, and cultural modernization in the country. The growth of cities, industrial production, and new media contributed to the consolidation of an emerging consumer culture, especially among urban middle-class sectors. In this scenario, the media assumed a decisive role in the circulation of lifestyles and the definition of socially desirable patterns of behavior.

Illustrated magazines became important cultural mediators during the period, gathering reports, photographs, and advertisements that presented models of life associated with cosmopolitan modernity (ROCHA; PEREIRA; AUCAR, 2013). *O Cruzeiro* magazine was one of the most influential of these periodicals and had the highest circulation among them in that period. Published from 1928 to 1975, the magazine reached

a wide national circulation and became a reference in Brazilian illustrated journalism, directly engaging with the imaginaries of the emerging urban middle class. According to Corbo (2018), print media played a relevant role in creating normative patterns for these emerging strata, disseminating behavioral and consumption models associated with the projection of an ideal of civility. In this context, advertising functioned as a form of consumption pedagogy, guiding everyday practices and presenting material goods as instruments capable of producing comfort, leisure, and social distinction (CARRASCOZA; HOFF, 2015).

It is precisely in this symbolic space that motherhood acquires centrality in advertising narratives. In many 1950s ads, women appear as mediators between consumption and family well-being, responsible for managing homes, feeding families, and caring for children. The choice of specific products, such as food, clothing, household utensils, hygiene items, or medications, is frequently presented as an expression of maternal love and women's responsibility for the balance of family life. Hence, consumption becomes an integral part of the social performance of motherhood, both in the private realm and in its public expression.

In terms of methodology, the research draws on content analysis, as proposed by Laurence Bardin (2021). This method allows for the systematic investigation of discursive and visual materials, to identify representational patterns and recurrent themes in the selected sample. Content analysis combines quantitative and qualitative procedures, allowing data to be organized into analytical categories to support the organization and interpretation of meanings present in the advertisements. Based on a sample divided into thematic categories, ads that represented women in association with domestic consumption, motherhood, and family experiences were identified to compose the research corpus.

By exploring these advertising narratives, this article seeks to highlight the articulations between media, consumption, and gender, highlighting the role of advertising in the production of social imaginaries that shape cultural practices, sensibilities, and ways of life across different periods. As Joana Pedro (2005) observes, the debate around the category

of “gender” acquires greater theoretical density only in a period subsequent to the one under analysis here. Until then, the notion of “woman” prevailed in an oppositional relationship to “man” who was taken as the universal reference for social patterns and as the organizer of language itself. The understanding of gender as a cultural construction dissociated from biological sex gained greater visibility in the 1960s, especially with the rise of the second-wave of feminism, driven by struggles over rights to the body, sexuality, pleasure, and resistance to patriarchy. In that context, the publication of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in France in 1949 and Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in the United States in 1963 were fundamental works for problematizing social representations of femininity and domesticity.

In this sense, analyzing representations in documents from the past allows for an understanding of continuities and transformations in discourses about types of motherhood, families, and female identities that often continue to circulate in contemporary media culture, more than seventy years later. As Mendonça (2021) observes, advertising’s reinforcement of motherhood ideals reveals cultural contradictions and creates tensions in the everyday experiences of many women in contemporary society.

Women as mediators in domestic consumption

Female figures occupy a central position in the constitution of consumer society and in the projection of gender roles, consolidating themselves, especially within bourgeois families, as mediators between the domestic universe and the market of goods. The symbolic organization of consumption attributes to women the responsibility for choices that structure everyday family life, linking motherhood, care, and homemaking.

Since the mid-eighteenth century, with the increasing separation between productive and domestic spaces, bourgeois families have taken on a new symbolic configuration. While men begin to occupy the public spaces of work and politics, women are cast into the roles of household

custodians responsible for reproducing family order (DAMATTA, 2004). Hence, domestic life becomes the main space for the realization and construction of identities in consumer society, which recognizes women, above all, middle- and upper-class women, as the managers of everyday consumption practices.

McCracken (2003) highlights the emergence of department stores in the 19th century as a significant inflection point in that process. These establishments profoundly transformed the experience of consumption, offering new spaces for sociability and the circulation of goods. Department stores emerged at the convergence of industrialization, urban expansion, the rise of advertising, and transformations in women's social roles. One of the first such shopping temples was *Le Bon Marché*, which opened in 1852 in Paris, followed by the *Louvre* (1855) and *Printemps* (1865). In London, *Harrods* became an important shopping establishment after 1883. These new shopping environments, designed to make shopping an extravagant and immersive experience, created an aura of dreams and wish fulfillment through consumption. Within their spaces, department stores positioned women from elite sectors as protagonists, making them feel “as if they were in their own homes, always well-tended by the employees, free to roam around the sections, check the products on offer, spend most of their day at the bistro, the library, and the lounge room, and participate in the shop's entertainment activities” (ROCHA; FRID; CORBO, 2016, our translation).

Historically confined to domestic spaces and religious institutions, bourgeois women began to occupy urban spaces more visibly through consumption practices organized by department stores. Therefore, the new business model not only expanded women's presence in the public sphere, transforming shopping into activities frequently associated with leisure and sociability, but also expanded the possibilities for women in lower-income classes to participate as saleswomen (RAPPAPORT, 2001).

However, the growing female presence in the public sphere did not translate into a rupture with roles historically attached to women in the traditional model of bourgeois families. On the contrary, consumption

narratives, especially those found in department stores' catalogs produced using modern printing techniques, reinforced the centrality of upper-strata women within the household. By taking on the responsibilities of homemaking and shopping, they became mediators between the market and the family, in charge of selecting products that would ensure the comfort, health, and well-being of the members of their family unit.

This social attribution is profoundly related to the historical construction of motherhood as a central axis of the feminine gender ideal (PEDRO, 2005). In that period, medical, religious, and political discourses reiterated what Badinter (1985, our translation) calls the “myth of maternal love”, reinforcing the idea of motherhood as a woman's natural vocation. From that perspective, caring for children was socially interpreted as a spontaneous and instinctive expression of feminine nature, giving women the affective and moral responsibility for raising future generations. Motherhood went beyond the biological dimension of reproduction and became associated with a broader set of social responsibilities. Mothers became accountable not only for their children's physical survival but also for their moral, emotional, and cultural education. As Pantoja (2023) indicates, the dominant discourse in the early 20th century strengthened the idea that women should have children for the homeland and shape the character of future citizens.

Normative discourses forged a motherhood ideal that ascribed to women a fundamentally domestic and maternal role, establishing a motherly image centered on the feminine, in which the desire to perform motherhood and care for children became ideologically intrinsic to the feminine condition (PANTOJA, 2023, p. 4, our translation).

In this arrangement, women assume a triple identity as mothers, wives, and homemakers, responsible for preserving the harmony and managing their households and for educating their children. This myth has been passed from one generation to another and sustained by official discourses built to enhance productivity and meet the demands of the capitalist economy. Bourgeois families became fundamental institutions

for sustaining social order, working as allies of the State as the responsibility for the care and subsistence of individuals was transferred from the public to the private sphere (D'INCAO, 2022).

In Brazil, the consolidation of consumption practices associated with this representational family model is directly related to social transformations that occurred from the 1930s and 1940s onward. In that period, the country experienced rapid industrialization and urbanization, processes that were intensified during President Getúlio Vargas' government and deepened in the post-Second World War period. The expansion of cities, the development of the industrial sector, and the diversification of economic activities contributed to the emergence of new urban social strata, including the middle classes. In particular, the 1950s are described as a moment of acceleration of the Brazilian developmentalist project. President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956–1961) promoted policies aimed at economic modernization and technological development, synthesized in the motto “fifty years in five” (ORTIZ, 2012, our translation).

Emerging middle classes began to play a central role in the expansion of the consumer goods industry and the dissemination of new standards and lifestyles. In this environment of economic growth, the media played a decisive part in disseminating lifestyles associated with material progress. Illustrated magazines, radio shows, advertisements, and later telenovelas were important cultural mediators in producing narratives about domestic life, comfort, and family happiness, particularly centered on the Rio de Janeiro–São Paulo axis. As Ortiz (2012) argues, Brazilian cultural modernization was profoundly connected to the expansion of the media and the circulation of symbolic goods that served as common references for behavior and consumption in the country.

Advertising, motherhood, and consumption in *O Cruzeiro* magazine

The analysis of representations of motherhood in Brazilian ads reveals a convergence of advertising narratives around a shared symbolic axis: the construction of women-mother figures as mediators of consumption,

care, and the organization of family life. In the examined ads, consumption extends beyond the economic dimension and functions as a social language that articulates affection, domestic responsibilities, and gender roles, naturalizing social expectations about motherhood and presenting domestic consumption as an extension of women's duties (MENDONÇA, 2021). This dynamic must be understood in the context of the expansion of mass media throughout the 20th century, especially the illustrated press, which played a central role in disseminating models of feminine behavior and in the symbolic organization of everyday life. By connecting products, lifestyles, and family relationships, these periodicals provided a kind of grammar of social customs through which consumption became one of the main mechanisms for organizing everyday practices and social roles (ROCHA; PEREIRA; AUCAR, 2013). In that context, *O Cruzeiro* magazine was one of the most influential vehicles in the Brazilian media.

Launched on November 10, 1928, by Assis Chateaubriand, as part of a project to expand the *Diários Associados* conglomerate, *O Cruzeiro* was the first weekly magazine of wide national circulation in Brazil. Over the following decades, the magazine established itself as an important vehicle for information, entertainment, and cultural development, combining reports, chronicles, photographs, and ads in an editorial project that sought to portray and promote the country's ideal of modernization. The magazine innovated by investing in photojournalism and advanced printing techniques for the time, such as rotogravure, becoming a reference in Brazilian illustrated journalism (SERPA, 2017).

Though not exclusively a women's magazine, *O Cruzeiro* dedicated significant space to themes related to domestic life, fashion, behavior, and consumption, targeting especially women from urban middle- and upper-class strata. In this sense, its pages functioned as an important space for the circulation of normative discourses about the role of women in society. As Bassanezi (2022) observes, magazine sections aimed at women at the time contributed to promoting a White, nuclear, and hierarchical family model, in which gender roles were clearly defined.

The empirical analysis of this study is situated within that context. The research corpus consisted of ads published in *O Cruzeiro* between 1955 and 1959. According to Silva and Melo (2014), the periodicals used as a method of historical investigation worked as “sources of manipulation of interests and intervention in social life, since these communication vehicles are not impartial disseminators of events; that is, they carry an ideological position within the political and social reality they are in” (SILVA; MELO, 2014, p. 84, our translation).

As a sampling strategy, one issue per month was selected within the period under analysis. This methodological decision sought to avoid excessive repetition given the magazine’s weekly publication schedule and the monthly advertising contracts that were usual in the publishing industry. Double-page, full-page, and half-page ads were considered, discarding the smaller, quarter-page ads due to the lower visual relevance of their images within the magazine’s editorial content. We accessed the material through the Hemeroteca Digital da Biblioteca Nacional (Digital Newspaper Archive of the Brazilian National Library), from which the images were extracted for subsequent cataloging and analysis.

Overall, we selected 119 ads based on criteria that prioritized narratives featuring women, either through their visual representation or textual references to women. To examine the material, we adopted the content analysis methodology proposed by Laurence Bardin (2021), which allows for the systematic investigation of discursive and visual content through analytical categories. The procedure involved the following stages: organizing the documentary material, coding, categorizing, processing, and interpreting the inferences. From an exploratory reading of the corpus, we defined six thematic categories that reflect the main axes of representation of women-mothers present in the analyzed ads. These categories are:

- “My home, my life,” grouping ads related to the construction, remodeling, and decoration of homes;
- “Brazilian women’s elegance,” grouping ads that emphasize female vanity through clothing;

- “Culinary art,” focused on products that associate women with food preparation;
- “Sweet, clean, and tidy homes,” featuring consumer goods related to general household care, including household appliances and sewing machines;
- “Well-nourished families, happy families,” grouping ads focused on family nutrition;
- “Health, hygiene, and well-being for all families,” presenting care from a broader perspective within the traditional family model.

Within the limits of this article, the selected ads covered all these categories, although some were more heavily represented than others, depending on their respective characteristics, as Chart 1 shows:

Chart 1 – Ads selected per analytical category

Categories	Total number of ads	Percentage (%)
My home, my life	2	1.6
Brazilian women’s elegance	5	4.2
Culinary art	9	7.5
Sweet, clean, and tidy homes	32	26.8
Well-nourished families, happy families	32	26.8
Health, hygiene, and well-being for all families	39	32.7
Total	119	

Source: Elaborated by the authors

In the category “My home, my life” (Figure 1), we can see women in their roles as mothers. Ads for products such as *Sherwin-Williams* washable paint or *Goyana*’s plastic bathroom items depict everyday situations involving motherhood to legitimize the value of the advertised goods. In the first case, the representation of a child drawing on the walls highlights a familiar setting marked by the challenges of domestic life with

Figure 1 – “My home, my life” ads



Source: *O Cruzeiro* magazine, October 19, 1957, and March 7, 1959, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/docreader.aspx?bib=003581&pasta=ano%20195&pesq=&pagfis=108136>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=123240>. Accessed on: Sep. 10, 2026.

children. The ad presents washability, the paint's distinctive feature, as a solution to a problem mothers frequently face, transforming the product into an ally for women in managing their homes. The scene promotes the product's efficiency while reiterating the social expectation that mothers should maintain the home's cleanliness and order despite the contingencies of family life.

In the ad for Goyana products, the centrality of motherhood becomes even more explicit. The image of a woman holding a toddler during bath time emphasizes the affective and physical bond between mother and child, converting a moment of care into an advertising appeal. The product is presented as an instrument that guarantees the child's safety, comfort, and protection, while the mother appears as the person primarily responsible for that care experience. Hence, advertising symbolically connects motherhood and consumption, suggesting that the correct choice of domestic objects is essential to the expression of maternal love. In both cases, the ads reiterate the association between femininity, motherhood, and the domestic space.

In the “Brazilian women's elegance” category (Figure 2), clothing ads expand that logic by articulating consumption, appearance, and the

Figure 2 – “Brazilian women’s elegance” ads



Source: O Cruzeiro magazine, March 5 and May 7, 1955, December 8, 1956, and May 4, 1957, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=96820>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=97772>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=102078>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=111546>. Accessed on: Sep. 10, 2026.

transmission of family values. Though at first glance these ads emphasize fashion and aesthetics, they frequently position the mother as a mediator of consumption choices related to children’s appearance. In the case of the Far West pants, the advertising discourse implicitly addresses mothers by highlighting qualities such as durability, economy, and resistance, attributes that suggest the rational management of children’s clothing. Even when the product is intended for children, advertising recognizes mothers as the primary decision-makers in the purchasing process.

Nailotex ads, in turn, highlight another symbolic dimension of motherhood: the intergenerational transmission of aesthetic and behavioral patterns. The joint presence of mother and daughter suggests a process of social learning in which the mother acts as a model of femininity and elegance. In this context, clothing becomes a cultural sign that expresses social belonging and conformity to certain standards of respectability. As Baudrillard (2020) suggests, consumer goods participate in symbolic systems that organize social meanings. Thus, by connecting clothing, motherhood, and social distinction, advertising contributes to disseminating models of taste and behavior considered legitimate in middle-class culture.

The “culinary art” category (Figure 3) deepens that association between motherhood and domestic duties by situating the kitchen as one

Figure 3 – “Culinary art” ads



Source: O Cruzeiro magazine September 3, 1955, June 30, 1956, and August 18, 1956, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=105909>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=40120060000025&pagfis=106893>;

of the main spaces of female activity. The analyzed ads portray kitchen utensils and food products as tools that enable women to fulfill their domestic functions adequately. Images of women handling utensils and organizing the kitchen reiterate the idea that food preparation is a fundamental dimension of maternal care. In this sense, cooking appears less as an occasional activity and more as an everyday practice that structures family life.

Moreover, many of these ads use a rhetoric of efficiency and productivity, bringing domestic work closer to the logic of professional work. Terms and expressions such as “handy,” “save time,” or “higher efficiency” suggest that good performance in domestic chores depends on technical competence and rational organization. Thus, advertising contributes to naturalizing domestic work as a female responsibility while incorporating it into the logic of modernization and rationalization of everyday life.

The “sweet, clean, and tidy homes” (Figure 4), “well-nourished families, happy families,” and “health, hygiene, and well-being for all families” categories account for most of the ads in the sample and form the structural nucleus of representations of women-mothers. In ads for

Figure 4 – “Sweet, clean, and tidy homes” ads



Source: O Cruzeiro magazine, June 4, 1955, November 10, 1956, April 12, 1958, and December 27, 1958, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=98242>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=101464>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=117524>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=115822>. Accessed on: Sep. 10, 2026.

household appliances, cleaning products, and domestic utensils, motherhood appears to be deeply linked to efficient homemaking. The presence of children, such as in the ad for the Elgin sewing machine, reinforces the idea that activities like sewing or tidying the home are not only domestic chores but also practices of maternal protection and care.

Likewise, ads in the “well-nourished families, happy families” category (Figure 5) assign the responsibility for children’s nourishment and physical development to mothers. Ads present products like milk powder,

Figure 5 – “Well-nourished families, happy families” ads



Source: O Cruzeiro magazine May 7, 1955, July 6, 1956, October 18, 1958, and March 7, 1959, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=97762>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=112785>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=114627>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=123185>. Accessed on: Sep. 10, 2026.

cereals, and lactea flour as essential to ensuring children's healthy growth. These advertisements also draw on a discourse strongly grounded in science and nutritional technology. Many ads highlight qualities such as nutritional value, vitamins, energy, or strengthening of the body, suggesting that consuming these products contributes to children's healthy development. In this context, mothers emerge as mediators between nutritional science and family life, responsible for selecting food considered modern and appropriate to their families' needs.

Finally, the "health, hygiene, and well-being for all families" category (Figure 6) summarizes in a particularly expressive way the imaginary of motherhood present in the advertising of the time. Advertisements for body powder, soaps, toothpaste, medicines, and baby hygiene products emphasize mothers' constant vigilance over their children's health and bodies. By positioning women as guardians of family hygiene and health, these ads reinforce a model of motherhood based on constant dedication.

Figure 6 – "Health, hygiene, and well-being for all families" ads



Source: *O Cruzeiro* magazine, February 5, 1955, October 20, 1956, December 3, 1958, and October 17 and 19, 1959, respectively. Available at: <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=96311>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=100997>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=120183>; <https://memoria.bn.gov.br/DocReader/DocReader.aspx?bib=003581&id=4012006000025&pagfis=120882>. Accessed on: Sep. 10, 2026.

Although organized in different thematic categories, the analyzed ads converge on the same symbolic logic: the construction of women-mothers as central figures in family life and privileged mediators of consumption practices. By associating products with domestic care, nurturing, hygiene, and children's well-being, advertising in *O Cruzeiro* magazine helped to consolidate the profound interconnection among motherhood, consumption, and family responsibilities in the social imaginary.

Final considerations

The analysis of ads published in *O Cruzeiro* magazine between 1955 and 1959 highlights the active role of advertising in the symbolic construction of motherhood in mid-twentieth-century Brazil. Through content analysis of the selected corpus, recurring representations were identified that position women-mothers as privileged mediators between consumption, affection, and the organization of family life. In this context, ads not only promote products but also produce and reinforce cultural models of femininity, contributing to the naturalization of social expectations that link feminine identity to motherhood and the management of everyday household life.

Whether in representations of household chores, food, hygiene, or personal appearance, motherhood is a structuring axis of advertising narratives. Ads portray domestic consumption as a concrete expression of maternal care, transforming daily practices, such as cooking, cleaning, dressing, or caring for the family's health, into symbolic manifestations of a mother's love and devotion.

These representations must be understood in the historical context of the 1950s, a period marked by economic modernization, urban expansion, and the consolidation of consumer culture among the Brazilian middle classes. In that setting, advertising presented goods as instruments capable of producing comfort, efficiency, and family happiness, and women-mothers as figures responsible

for incorporating these technological innovations into everyday domestic life. Advertising functioned as a pedagogical instance that articulated material modernity and the organization of family life (CARRASCOZA; HOFF, 2015).

However, this process occurred amid profound social transformations that challenged the traditional roles assigned to women. Throughout the 20th century, especially from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, the strengthening of feminist movements, the expansion of female participation in the labor market, and access to new reproductive technologies, such as the contraceptive pill (1962), contributed to broadening the debates on autonomy, sexuality, and women's rights. As Badinter (2023) observes, these processes were associated with significant changes in women's experiences, including reduced fertility rates, sexual freedom, increased female participation in paid work, and the diversification of women's life projects.

These transformations also relate to the theoretical critique developed in gender studies, which began to question the idea that female and male behaviors were biologically determined. Authors such as Margaret Mead (2015) paved the way for understanding gender differences as cultural constructions, a perspective later deepened by feminist reflections associated with the so-called "second-wave feminism." Mead (2015) argued that every social group used sexual difference as an argument in the constitution of social roles. Yet, these uses varied from one society to another.

Second-wave feminism, which emerged after the Second World War, prioritized struggles over bodily rights, sexuality, and pleasure, as well as opposition to patriarchy. It was also in that context that "gender" became an analytical tool to highlight the historical and social character of differences between men and women. Later, so-called "third-wave feminism" emerged in the 1990s, broadening these discussions by questioning universal notions of female identity and emphasizing the discursive and performative dimensions of gender. Thinkers such as Judith Butler (2021) have questioned the idea that gender constitutes a natural expression of

biological sex, arguing that gender identities are socially produced, performed, and reiterated. For Butler (2021), gender does not correspond to a fixed or natural essence but results from continuously repeated actions, gestures, and social norms.

Despite this environment of social transformations and growing debate about the female condition, the analysis of ads in *O Cruzeiro* magazine reveals the persistence of representations that associate femininity predominantly with motherhood and domestic life. Even in a historical moment marked by the expansion of modernity and the emergence of new horizons of autonomy for women, the country's main illustrated magazine reproduced narratives that reinforced the model of women-mothers as the centers of families and as primarily responsible for caring for their households and children.

Thus, the analyzed ads directly engage with Badinter's (1985) reflection on how the idea of the naturalness and universality of maternal love results from historical constructions that assigned women almost exclusive responsibility for raising children. Throughout history, the reiteration of narratives that associate women specifically with patriarchal motherhood, care, and dependence on domestic spaces reinforces symbolic hierarchies that limit female autonomy and legitimize inequalities between the sexes (MENDONÇA; OLIVEIRA-CRUZ, 2020/2021). Such representations also contribute to perpetuating cultures marked by gender violence and female subordination, in which femicide, rape, and other forms of symbolic and physical violence against women remain recurring.

In this sense, the analysis of these historical materials allows for reflection on the persistence of certain representations in contemporary media culture. Although social transformations have broadened the possibilities for women's participation in the public sphere and diversified their lifestyles, many media narratives still reproduce the associations among femininity, care, and domestic responsibility. Revisiting past advertising discourses contributes not only to understanding how these imaginaries took shape but also to

questioning their continuities and tensions in current representations of motherhood, family, and female identity.

Conflict of interest: nothing to declare.

Funding: FAPERJ - Fundação Carlos Chagas Filho de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Process SEI-260003/000533/2023.

Data availability statement: All datasets were generated or analyzed in the present study.

Authors' contributions: Aucar, B.: conceptualization, methodology, formal analysis, writing – original draft. Patrocínio, V.: investigation, formal analysis, writing – original draft. Rocha, E.: writing – original draft, writing – review and editing, supervision.

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Received: 03/10/2026
Accepted: 05/26/2026