

MEDIA AND GENDER: A STEREOTYPICAL AFFAIR

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Abstract

Media play important roles in society. They report on current events, provide frameworks for interpretation, mobilise citizens with regard to various issues, reproduce predominant culture and society, and entertain (Llanos and Nina, 2011). As such, the media can be an important factor in the promotion of gender equality, both within the working environment (in terms of employment and promotion of female staff at all levels) and in the representation of women and men (in terms of fair gender portrayal and the use of neutral and non-gender specific language).

Media is an important area of study since it has the power to represent what is socially acceptable (Carter & Steiner 2004). If you watch television, walk on the street, wait for the bus or do other things, you are always confronted by images of men and women. In movies, television series and advertisements you see these images and they may influence you consciously or subconsciously. Since media is such a big part of people's everyday lives, and in some ways may influence how people perceive themselves and the world, it is interesting to see how representations in movies portray gender. These images, whether it is known or not, may have an important impact upon people's lives and how people create their identities. It is highly improbable to think that the media does not affect people, their way of thinking, and the way they perceive the world and themselves (Gauntlett 2008, p. 1-3).

Therefore, the main idea of this paper is attempting to see how gender is represented in media by loosely using different types of data analysis. Based on previous research in the field of gender studies in media, it has been argued that men and women are viewed differently, and this view lives on in how they continue to be represented/characterized/framed etc within different forms of media. Studies on gender roles in media show that women are underrepresented in movies, and that they are represented in a different way than men. Gender studies in media are a wide topic of research that includes many different types of media: prime-time television, radio and more recently, the internet. It is a constantly growing field of study and is important for many reasons.

Gender studies in media mostly concern the feminine perspective, and how women are portrayed. Mostly it focuses on the negative aspects of women's portrayal, rarely the positive. It rarely pays attention to how men are portrayed. If at all it is mentioned but not discussed to the same length. Furthermore, media and gender are a big area that constantly produces new data that can be gathered and analysed in various ways. The gender roles that we are presented with on a regular basis are still lagging behind in terms of showing better representations of gender equality. Studies have found that although the number of

women working in the media has been increasing globally, the top positions (producers, executives, chief editors and publishers) are still very male dominated (White, 2009). This disparity is particularly evident in Africa, where cultural impediments to women fulfilling the role of journalist remain (e.g. travelling away from home, evening work and covering issues such as politics and sports which are considered to fall within the masculine domain) (Myers, 2009). The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) reports that throughout the world, female journalists are more likely to be assigned 'soft' subjects such as family, lifestyle, fashion and arts. The 'hard' news, politics and the economy, is much less likely to be written or covered by women.

The level of participation and influence of women in the media also has implications for media content: female media professionals are more likely to reflect other women's needs and perspectives than their male colleagues. It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all women working in the media will be gender aware and prone to cover women's needs and perspectives; and it is not impossible for men to effectively cover gender issues. Recent research from 18 disparate countries shows that male and female journalists' attitudes do not differ significantly (Hanitzsch & Hanusch, 2012). Nonetheless, the presence of women on the radio, television and in print is more likely to provide positive role models for women and girls, to gain the confidence of women as sources and interviewees, and to attract a female audience.

Keywords: media, gender, equality, advertisements, gender roles, representation, disparity, participation, perspective, underrepresentation, women, acknowledgement.

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality is a prerequisite for human rights, democracy and social justice. Its benefits society as a whole. Media and editorial freedom, media pluralism and gender equality can advance one another. The European Convention on Human Rights bans all types of discrimination, including on grounds of gender. Not only women, but also men can suffer from the standards imposed by gender stereotypes and sexist advertising in the media. For these reasons, there is a need to create equal access to media work and management posts for both sexes and the presentation of men and women in the media must not undermine gender equality. Media is a big part of people's everyday lives. It influences both how we see ourselves and the world to some extent. There are many different types of media, for example: television shows, movies, the radio, newspapers, advertisements which are placed in random places and the internet. In these different forms of media, there are images of men and women, which are represented in different ways and with different characteristics.

- Assuming social constructivism, we believe that the images of gender representation in movies affect our perception of what a man or a woman is. Unfortunately, a lot of the topics and content included in media as a whole are, in fact, sexist. The most common theme that appears everywhere is gender roles.
- From advertisements to films, men and women are constantly stereotyped and labelled into 'archetypes'. An example of this is that women are mainly shown to be

- weak, working at home, and often do not take action. As they are constantly portrayed as the 'weaker' gender.
- Women don't tend to be the protagonists, unless it's for cleaning products. A man stands for humanity, but ads only show women if it's something specifically to do with their gender, like beauty.
 - Those have been the archetypes, but there are some notable exceptions that broken through.
 - Out of 80 ads, 47.5% of advertisements reinforced gender stereotypes.
 - The number of women using cars doubled in the past 5 years, but the ads didn't reflect that.

OBJECTIVES

1. To study the role of media in stereotyping women.
2. To attempt to see how gender is represented through advertisements by loosely using different types of discourse analysis.
3. To find out the general perception of respondents regarding different role portrayal of women in advertisements.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore different types and trends of portrayal of women in television advertisements and to find out the perception of the audience regarding the portrayal of women in advertisements. The study understands the role of women in media through qualitative analysis techniques such as review of literature and analysis of advertisements.

1. Review of secondary sources
2. Data collection by interview.
3. The study is mainly based on secondary data but accordingly some primary data has also been collected.
4. Primary data for the study is collected through the structured questionnaire. The use of a questionnaire is an inexpensive and convenient method of data collection, as people hesitate to answer sensitive questions.

Data Analysis

1. The analysis is based on the simple percentage method.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The above-mentioned theoretical background in mind, the present study tries to answer an overarching research question, that is: to what extent the can media portray a stereotypical image of a women?

This question could be divided into the following research questions:

Q.1 How do you feel when you see objectified portraits of women on advertisements?

Q.2 Do advertisements showing objectified pictures of women affect society?

Q.3 Do you think such objectified pictures are necessary to increase the sale of a product?

Q.4 Does the objectified picture of women on the advertisement make the product more appealing?

Q.5 Do you think such advertisements need to be curbed?

Q.6 Was this issue bothering you also but you felt helpless as to what can be done to curb it?

POPULATION AND SAMPLE

To meet the objectives of study primary data is collected from a survey by using a structured questionnaire to explore the perception of the audience regarding the portrayal of women in advertisements especially to find out whether there is any difference in the perception among the audience on the basis of their gender, age and education.

1. Convenience sampling is done.
2. A total of 20 student-teachers were selected out of a total of 100 student-teachers.
3. Answering the above-mentioned questions required a sample of 20 student-teachers of both the gender. A questionnaire was designed so that the underrepresentation of women in media is clearly represented through the results.

CATEGORICAL ANALYSIS

In the present study the portrayal of women in advertisements is measured from different angles or viewpoints. The study first tries to explore different types of portrayal of women that are prevalent in advertisements and their association with other collarets of the advertisements through data analysis of the advertisements and then to substantiate the result, it aims at finding out the perception of the respondents regarding these portrayals through a survey by the help of the structured questionnaire. By following these two methods the study will assume to have a complete picture about the portrayal of women in advertisements. Data analysis has been done using to find out the frequency of the occurrence of the different role portrayals of women in TV advertisements and to find out the perception of the respondents. For the first part of the study, content analysis is used as the research technique to analyze the advertisements that are selected for the purpose. Most of the studies have used content analysis as their research technique to find out the different types and trends of the role portrayal of women in advertisements.

Appliances

- Out of the 17 ads analyzed in this category, 15 showed a case of gender bias.
- Kitchen items were represented by female as well as male models. The male models, however, were posing with them while women were typically shown using them.
- One ad showcased a family where the mother was wearing a chef uniform and the father was in athletics gear. All that the ad needed to show was that they could keep the clothes white — the mother could very well have been wearing just a white saree.

Auto:

Out of the 11 ads in this category, only two were positive.

* All car ads were marketed towards a male audience. In the past five years, the percentage of women car buyers has nearly doubled, to 10-12 per cent from about 6 percent.

Banking and financial services:

- Credit and debit cards necessarily had women selling them.
- Investment ads necessarily had men taking care of financial planning.
- Loans for entrepreneurs had both women and men, home loans typically had only men.
- Ads about financial support schemes by government stuck to traditional gender roles.

E-commerce:

- Overall, the ads were definitely more progressive than the average appliance ads.
- Ironically, an ad that showed a woman to be a problem-solver had a man admitting to having a male ego and justifying it humorously.

Fashion:

- Out of the 11 analyzed ads, only three actively made an attempt to smash patriarchy.
- 'Let's celebrate a change', a campaign by Sabhyata, particularly stood out in the crowded space of fashion where women are still the key customer and models are predominantly female.

FMCG, home décor, retail and food:

- Male ambassadors posed with the food products while female models were necessarily shown cooking using the products.
- FMCG products had progressive issues being discussed but stuck to the societally defined gender roles.

- Home décor ads went so far as to show women in pillow fights, an overdone stereotype that's lasted for generations.

Luxury — jewelry and gold:

- This assumption that only men buy high value goods is dangerous because in 2006, 60% women were consulted during purchasing decisions while in 2016 it was 73%.
- There has also been a 20% growth in the number of positions held by women at leadership level.

Real Estate:

*Real estate ads were as biased as the auto and gold sector.

¢ They mainly catered to men as buyers and women as the nester of the house or the influencer.

¢ Supporting the analysis, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media research team conducted additional research, identifying age, location, objectification, and other personal characteristics associated with prominent characters.

¢ Age: Women in ads are mostly in their 20s while men are in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. This means male characters are far more diverse than female when it comes to age.

¢ Objectification: One-in-ten female characters are shown in sexually revealing clothing — six times the number of male characters. Men are 62% more likely to be shown as smart.

¢ Location: Women are 48% more likely to be shown in the kitchen while men are 50% more likely to be shown at a sporting event.

¢ Work: One in three men are shown with an occupation compared to one in four women.

The study finds the dominance of the Decorative role portrayal of women, followed by Family role, as Free wheeler and in Working role in Indian TV advertisements. Advertisers use the sexual appeal of women only to grab the attention of the viewers. The portrayal of women as concern for look and beauty constituted around nearly 60% of the decorative role, implies the craze of Indian girls and women for fair skin and beauty. Family role found to be the second dominant role portrayal of women in Indian TV advertisements, which implies that though over the years the depiction of women in Family role is decreasing, there is a huge increase in the decorative portrayal of women in advertisements. It has also been observed that even if the portrayal of women with independent thinking and opinion contributing positively towards the society, sometimes with better position than men, are noticed in Indian TV advertisements their numbers were very small. Even the portrayal of women as professionals and as career minded is rare to see in advertisements that are under study. All these indicate that not much progress has

taken place in the portrayal of women in Indian TV advertisements. They are still portrayed either as decorative object or in relationship role.

The study has found that in most of the advertisements under study women are portrayed as independent decision makers for the use of the advertised products. Whereas the neutral status of women was found to be least portrayed in advertisements. The study reveals a statistically significant association between the role portrayal of women and their status in advertisements. It is noticed that when depicted in Family role, women in Indian TV advertisements are mostly related with the dependent status, whereas the Decorative role, working role and women as Free wheeler are found be associated with the independent status of women in advertisements. The study further explores that in comparison to other role portrayals, women as Free wheeler are more related with the Neutral status.

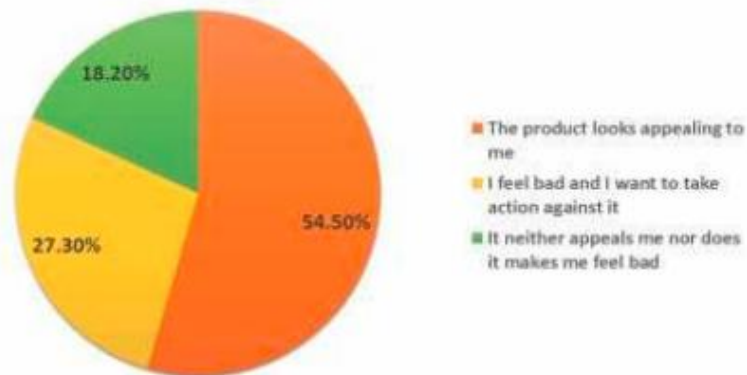
Setting: The study explores the dominance of Home setting in nearly 50% of the advertisements under study, whereas occupational setting is found to be the least as setting. A significant association has found between the Role portrayal of women and the setting of the advertisements. The study finds that the settings of the advertisements vary according to the different Role portrayal of women in Indian TV advertisements. When portrayed in Family role and Decorative role women in advertisements are found mostly in-Home setting, whereas while depicting the Working role as the name suggested the association is more on the Occupational setting and as a Free wheeler woman in Indian TV advertisements are mostly shown in outdoor settings. Voice over: Though the study doesn't find any statistically significant association between the Role portrayed by women and voice-over of advertisements, it is observed that male more than female was used as voice over for the advertisements under study. Product Category: Cosmetics, Jewelry and Apparel were found to be the dominant product category that are advertised which are considered in the study. The study found the product categories vary according to the role portrayal of women in advertisements. While the portrayal of women in Family role mostly associated with the products related to Health and Hygiene, and Food and Beverages; women in Working role mostly related to the Health and Hygiene product; and the Decorative role portrayal of women as the name suggested mostly connected with the products related to Cosmetics, Jewelry and Apparel. But women as Free wheeler are found to be equally portrayed for the product categories that are under study except for the products related to the Cosmetics, Jewelry and Apparel.

The study revealed that women in advertisements are not always depicted as independent decision makers and as both the user and authority of the advertised products. They mainly represent the products related to Cosmetics Apparel and Jewelry, Health and Hygiene, and Food and Beverages; they are mostly depicted inside the home and hardly make direct Eye contact with the viewers. The study

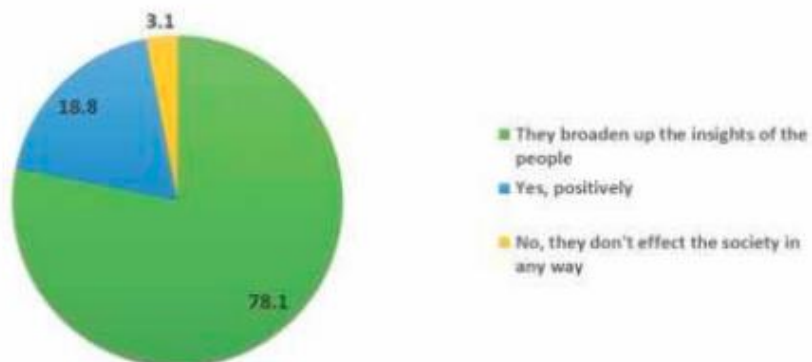
also found a significant association of different roles portrayed by women in advertisements with their (women's) Status, Credibility (whether user or authority of the product in ads) and eye contact (whether the women in ads are making direct eye contact with the viewers or not) in the advertisements; and setting, voice over and product category of the advertisements. This indicates that Status, Eye contact, Credibility of women and the Setting, and Product category of the advertisements varies according to different roles portrayed by women in advertisements.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

How do you feel when you see objectified portraits of women on the advertisements?



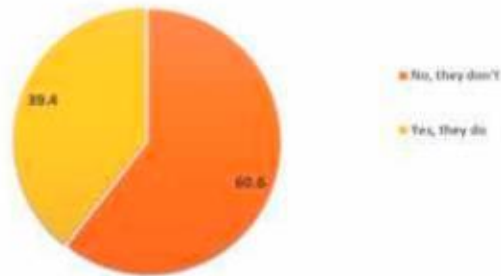
Do advertisements showing objectified pictures of a women affect the society?



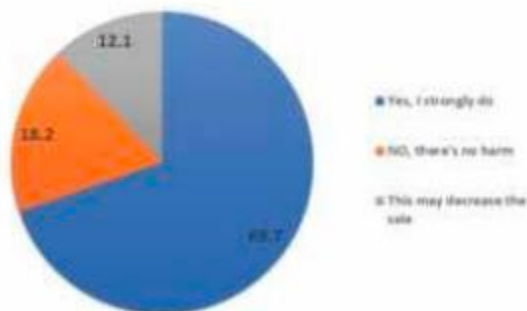
Do you think such objectified pictures are necessary to increase the sale of the product?



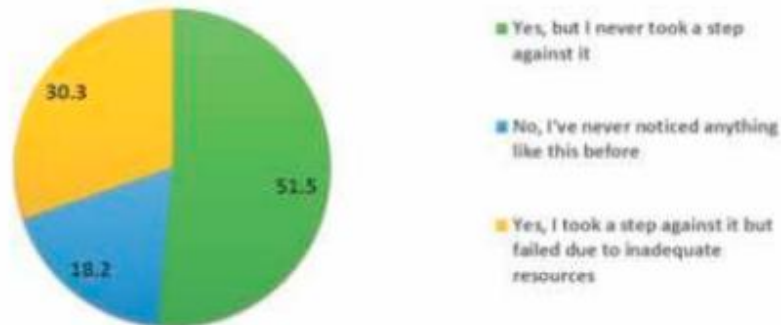
Does this objectified pictures of women on the advertisement make the product more appealing?



Do you think such advertisements need to be curbed?



Was this issue bothering you before also but you felt helpless as to what can be done to curb it?



The study finds a significant difference of perception between the male and female audience regarding the portrayal of women in Indian TV advertisements. Female more than male were found to be concerned about the portrayal of women in advertisements. More than male, female perceive that women in advertisements are portrayed mostly either in Traditional Family role or as the Decorative object and rarely shown as professionals and Free Wheelers. More than male they were feeling uncomfortable with the sexual portrayal of women and prefer to see normal looking women in advertisements.

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

Fair gender portrayal in the media should be a professional and ethical aspiration, similar to respect for accuracy, fairness and honesty (White, 2009). Yet, unbalanced gender portrayal is widespread. The Global Media Monitoring Project finds that women are more likely than men to be featured as victims in news stories and to be identified according to family status. Women are also far less likely than men to be featured in the world's news headlines, and to be relied upon as 'spokespeople' or as 'experts'. Certain categories of women, such as the poor, older women, or those belonging to ethnic minorities, are even less visible. Stereotypes are also prevalent in every day media. Women are often portrayed solely as homemakers and carers of the family, dependent on men, or as objects of male attention. Stories by female reporters are more likely to challenge stereotypes than those filed by male reporters (Gallagher et al., 2010). As such, there is a link between the participation of women in the media and improvements in the representation of women.

Men are also subjected to stereotyping in the media. They are typically characterised as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to demean men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose violence. Such portrayals can influence perceptions in terms of what society may expect from men and women, but also what they may expect from

themselves. They promote an unbalanced vision of the roles of women and men in society.

Attention needs to be paid to identifying and addressing these various gender imbalances and gaps in the media. The European Commission (2010) recommends, for example, that there should be a set expectation of gender parity on expert panels on television or radio and the creation of a thematic database of women to be interviewed and used as experts by media professionals. In addition, conscious efforts should be made to portray women and men in non-stereotypical situations.

1. 1. There have been set code of conduct in media ethics to be followed by advertising agencies. In order to regulate the system, "The Advertising Standard Council of India" was set up.
2. 2. There have been other legislations that have been passed for the same as 'Drug and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisement) Act, 1954' and "Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969".
3. 1. Curb the "ideal-woman" image which can only be done by flashing the reality in the advertisements.
4. 2. It is recommended to the media owners that only the advertisement which will give women prestige, code of conduct, moral values should be permitted to be aired.
5. 3. Pay attention on the complaints coming from consumers about the product ads.
6. 4. Companies should employ other means such as promotional offers, genderneutral advertisements, giving free samples etc. to sell their products.

CONCLUSION

The evidence of the earlier studies (Manushi, 2001; Das, 2000; Das, 2010; and Dwivedy et al. 2009) and the findings of the present study points out the fact that nominal changes have taken place in the portrayal of women in advertisements over the years. The progress in positive direction in this aspect is very slow. Women still in advertisements are portrayed mostly in stereotypical role either as decorative object or as happy housewives; rarely portrayed in decision making executive position

contributing positively towards the society. The findings of the study have proved that though there are policies against the indecent representation of the women in advertisements, but these policies have failed to make anticipated impact. Audience, still is not feeling comfortable to watch advertisements with their family members. Thus, the theoretical argument for this justification suggests the need for the review of the existing policy which would strictly banned the commercials that are going against the integrity of the women and will help to establish equity for women with men in the world of advertisements. The study will help the advertisers to know the liking and preference of the

audience of different gender, age group and level of education so that they can plan their advertising message according to the preference of the targeted audience.

Women are represented as striving towards being as beautiful as possible, and as young looking as possible. The two genders are still for the most part represented as different from each other, in both a traditional and modern way, but do sometimes try to question the 'patriarchal privilege'.

Participatory approaches are considered to be an effective tool in encouraging alternate discourses, norms and practices, and in empowering women. The use of sketches and photography in participatory workshops, for example, has encouraged women who have traditionally been reluctant to engage in public forums to express themselves. In order for the empowerment of women to have a genuine impact, opportunity structures also need to be addressed, such as conservative and male opinion. Afghan Women's Hour has a large male audience (research by BBC Media Action found that 39% of listeners were men), which provides a way to challenge male views on gender norms. Group educational activities, a common programme for men and boys, also have the potential to contribute to changes in attitudes on health issues and gender relations and, in some cases, changes in behaviour.

It is also important for communication initiatives to build on tradition and culture, not only because this can resonate better with communities, but because it can help to mute opposition from conservative segments of society. The involvement in projects of key community leaders such as teachers, cultural custodians and government officials is also important for greater impact and sustainable change.

The way gender is represented in the media does have an influence on how we perceive gender roles. Certain gender specific features can strengthen the image of what a man and a woman are, and how they should behave in relation to each other.

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