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Gender Portrayal in Advertising: A Review of Current Research

Shivangi Gupta
Dr. Manish Arora
[1] *Department of Applied Arts, Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University*
[2] *Department of Applied Arts, Faculty of Visual Arts, Banaras Hindu University*

ABSTRACT: *Through a review of the literature on gender stereotypes, this paper explores the historical context of the representation of women in advertising. Representation of men and women in promotion of product has received a lot of consideration recently and is still a crucial topic.In television commercials, both international and Indian advertisers have shown men and women in conventional roles.Men and women now play quite different roles in their personal and professional life, which has had a big influence on how these roles are portrayed in advertising. Over time, more people are becoming aware of the necessity of challenging gender stereotypes & promote equal opportunities and diverse portrayals in advertising. This evolving perspective aims to inspire a more inclusive and equitable society. When compared to global advertisements and Indian advertisements, there is a cultural disparity.*
KEYWORDS: *Gender advertisement, Stereotypes, Role Portrayals, Television Ads*

I. INTRODUCTION

For many years, academics, activists, and consumers have closely scrutinised advertisements that employ stereotypical portrayals of women. Although there have been some recent improvements, certain ads still perpetuate negative gender stereotypes, reinforcing traditional roles and expectations for women. The persistence of such portrayals highlights the ongoing need for continued awareness and efforts to challenge and reshape gender representations in advertising. Creating more empowering and diverse depictions of women in ads can contribute to a more inclusive and progressive societal outlook.(Gupta and Jain 1998).

The term "gender advertisement" pertains to marketing visuals that depict stereotypical gender roles and behaviors. Through these portrayals, the relationship between genders is often established, reinforcing traditional norms. Some scholars argue that advertisers have a strong focus on gender, perpetuating these fixed roles and expectations. Despite this, there is a growing awareness of the impact of such advertising, prompting discussions about the need for more progressive and inclusive representations that challenge gender stereotypes and promote equality in marketing. Efforts to redefine gender portrayals in advertising can contribute to a more diverse and accepting cultural narrative.

Advertisers emphasise gender dynamics because individuals identify with one gender or the other. We are mindful of press and the relationship between how we view ourselves nowadays, and the pictures of bodies that are presented in commercials have a big impact on how we view our own bodies.

However, it's important to recognize that various other factors, including upbringing, education, and personal relationships, also contribute to how we feel about our bodies.

Studies have examined how advertising impact how individuals feel about their bodies from the realms of psychology and marketing. Additionally, it is said that advertising teaches kids about gender roles. Femininity and masculinity, which include gender roles, are learnt behaviours affected by society standards.

Studies conducted by researchers in various disciplines, including psychology and marketing, have investigated the impact of advertisements on individuals' body image perceptions. Moreover, it has been argued that advertising plays a role in shaping children's understanding of gender relations. Gender roles, which involve the concepts of femininity and masculinity, are acquired behaviors influenced by societal conventions and expectations.

Advertisements often reinforce these preconceived notions, portraying men and women according to traditional gender stereotypes. Women are expected to embody femininity, while men are often portrayed as being strong and macho.

Some advertisers are attempting to dispel gender stereotypes and depict women in a more genuine and varied way as a result of growing awareness of these issues.

Better representation, diversity, and inclusion in advertising have also been demanded by organisations and individuals in order to reflect the varied reality and experiences of women.

In addition, regulatory organizations and advocacy groups in various countries have addressed harmful gender stereotypes in advertising. For example, Britain's Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) introduced rules in 2019 that banned ads that reinforce negative gender stereotypes.

Overall, changes are being made, but There will be more work to be done prior negative stereotypes relating to men and women are completely eliminated in advertising.

II. STEREOTYPES

Stereotypes are beliefs or perceptions that differentiate one social category from another. In modern times, we have become increasingly conscious of the relationship between the media and body image. The body images projected by advertising play a significant role in shaping how we view and feel about our own bodies. However, it is essential to recognize that various other factors, such as cultural influences, personal experiences, and societal expectations, also contribute to our body perceptions. Acknowledging these complex influences can lead to a more comprehensive understanding of body image and its connection to media representations. (Ashmore and Del Boca, 1981). Stereotypes pose a challenge.

When stereotypes come into play, they can lead to unequal opportunities and preferences for specific social categories over others. Over the years, numerous content assessments have examined various elements, such as physical attributes (e.g., body size and height), vocational status, leadership responsibilities, and roles related to self-assertion. Studies have shown that men are often depicted as more self-reliant, authoritative, and competent, regardless of age or physical appearance.Contrarily, women often be portrayed in more ornamental roles, valued for their beauty or physical appearance, and are often depicted in family-oriented roles with fewer responsibilities at work, and are more frequently played in meek or subdued parts.

It is essential to recognize the impact of these stereotypes as they can perpetuate gender inequalities and shape societal expectations about the roles and capabilities of individuals based on their gender. By identifying and challenging representations, advertisers need to promote more progressive and modernwhich can break free from traditional gender norms and foster a more diverse and empowered cultural narrative.

Stereotypes are opinions or presumptions about a certain group of individuals that are frequently formed based on scant knowledge and are susceptible to cultural, social, and historical influences. These ideas can be neutral, good, or negative, but they frequently overgeneralize and overstate a group's traits, resulting in partial impressions and conclusions.

For resolving social inequities, encouraging inclusivity, and building a society with greater equity, it is crucial to comprehend preconceptions and their effects. Society can try to challenge and lessen the harmful effects of stereotypes on individuals and groups through study and advocacy.

III. ROLE PORTRAYALOF MEN AND WOMEN IN TV COMMERCIALS.

According to various researchers, including Gunter (1995),TV Commercials tends to portray envisioned as opposed to realistic depiction of suitable duties and actions for men and women. As a result, it is essential in determining how society perceives and anticipates what constitutes acceptable behaviour. and roles for each gender.These idealized depictions in television ads can influence how individuals perceive their own gender identity and the roles they are expected to fulfill within society. The powerful influence of advertising on shaping cultural norms and reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes underscores the importance of promoting more inclusive and diverse representations in media to foster a more equitable and progressive societal outlook.

The analysis of gender stereotyping in advertising has garnered considerable attention due to the influential role advertising plays in shaping and perpetuating gender preconceptions. Notably, in countries like India, where television advertising was introduced relatively later, its impact is expected to be even more significant. Television was first introduced in India during the early 1970s (De Souza 2006), making it a relatively newer medium compared to nations where television had been present for a longer time. As a result, the influence of television advertising on shaping gender perceptions and norms in India is of particular interest to researchers and advocates of gender equality. Understanding and challenging gender stereotypes in advertising within this unique cultural context can contribute to fostering more inclusive and visualisations of roles for women that are more liberal in media.

Over the last decade, a notable transformation in the Indian television industry has been the increased incorporation of both domestic and foreign content. This addition of diverse programming has resulted in heightened viewer engagement with television shows (Bowman 2004).

According to past investigations on gender typecasting in advertisements, gender inequality is especially prevalent in television advertising.
Advertising from various countries, including Asian nations like Japan, has been found to perpetuate such stereotypes, reinforcing traditional gender roles and expectations for men and women (e.g., Arima 2003).

Surprisingly, there has been a finite number of investigation on actions played by men & women television advertisements from India and other South Asian nations, despite the significance of the Indian subcontinent as an appealing market for multinational corporations. India's socioeconomic development has reached a pivotal juncture, drawing the attention of international stockholders (Reddy et al. 2007).

The third-largest television viewing market is in India. around the globe and with a substantial middle class population exceeding 300 million people, India ranks as the fourth-largest economy globally. (Forrester 2007). These elements make it crucial for both domestic and foreign businesses to comprehend how gender roles are portrayed in this nation.

Furthermore, as noted by Munshi (1998) and Kumar (1994), Gender and power discourses in South Asia are distinct and unique to the region. that have been significantly influenced by the region's post-colonial socio-economic transformations as well as the region's colonial history.

As explained by Munshi in 1998In India, there is an emerging trend of depicting women as both traditional and liberated individuals, responsible for caring for others. This combination forms a localized sense of modernism and the concept of the "New Indian Women". Moreover, according to Wolf (2009), women liberation and ideas of sexualegalitarianism, in India emerged in a different manner compared to Asian and European countries. Non-discrimination is viewed in a family-centered manner rather than individual-focused, where women continue to hold honoured duties in the household and prioritize family above all. These cultural nuances could impact the advertisers portrayingpeople in their commercials.

IV. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Gender Role portrayal in Global Ads

Research	Key Findings
Bardwick and Schumann (1967)	women (relative to males) appeared more frequently as housewives and those who were confined to their homes.
Gilly (1988)	The most noteworthy of these studies that examined gender stereotyping in television advertisements
Furnham and Voli (1989)	Based on the data, men are generally more prevalent than women in advertisements, particularly in those promoting monetary, technological, automobile.
Allan and Coltrane (1996)	Advertisements for household products have been found to feature women more frequently than those for personal care items
Furnham and Bitar (1993)	Advertisements employ voice-overs to authoritatively convey key information about a product. Male voiceovers are more commonly utilized than female voiceovers in numerous countries, including the US, UK, France, Spain, and others.
Furnham et al. (2000)	More women are credible in the advertisements because they are actual users of the product being promoted rather than specialists or authorities. The evidence suggests that female characters featured in advertisements tend to be younger compared to their male counterparts.
Wiles and Tjernlund (1991)	Swedish and US magazine advertisers differ in portraying women and men in non-working activities advertisements. Swedish advertisers display women in professional roles, while advertisers of US showcase men and women in ornamental functions.
McArthur and Resko (1975)	Even in scenarios where they would not be the principal users of a good or service, more men were employed in television advertising, according to.
Courtney and Whipple (1983)	Women are not portrayed as independent, human people in sex portrayal papers from the 1970s, according to the writers but they are portrayed in domestic settings in the 1980s
Sullivan and Connor's (1988)	study on role depictions in magazine advertising found that since the 1970s, there has been less distinction between men and women in roles. Only 6.67% of women are depicted in family settings, while 77% are in non-working roles and 52% are employed.
Belknap & Leonard, (1991)	Following industrialization and the raising the percentage of women employed, representations of gender roles in adverts underwent a transformation to reflect the evolving Gender positions in civilisation. The conventional portrayal of the perfectly desirable females shifted, with advertisements now

Research	Key Findings
	depicting women as prominent figures, engaged in unconventional and forward-thinking profession outside the home.

Gender Role Portrayals in Indian Ads

Research	Key Findings
Munshi (1998)	In 1990s Indian tv advertisements, women were typically depicted as homemakers or housewives.
Gupta and Jain (1998)	Indian tv commercials reinforced conventional as well as preconceived beliefs of females being inferior to males. Moreover, these advertisements frequently emphasized stereotypical images of women in subservient roles compared to men.
Jha Dang and Vohra (2005)	Compared to men, women were portrayed more prominently in advertisements for personal or beauty products. Women were also less likely to be portrayed as working in these advertisements. Additionally, similar patterns were seen in magazine advertisements.
Das (2000)	While women appeared more frequently in commercials for household and cosmetic products than men, men appeared frequently in commercials for technology, financial, and motor vehicle related products.
Sukumar &Venkatesh, (2011)	Indian women's roles in advertisements have evolved, transforming from house wives to economically independent, financially controlled individuals. This shift in portrayal highlights the importance of women's multiple identities and their ability to balance personal and professional lives. In patriarchal societies, women are often seen as perfect homemakers or mothers, sisters, and wives.
Mankekar (2004)	Mass culture, economic deregulation, and global capital led to frenzied commodity consumption, sexualization of Indian television, and increased disposable income and living standards. Sex marketing targeted products not previously associated with sexual attractiveness, such as mineral water, shoes, soft drinks, and coffee.
Khan (2011)	While Indian respondents continue to perceive the advertising sector as sexist, depicting women as objects of sex is still prevalent. On the other hand, international respondents no longer commonly consider their commercials to be sexist. The depiction of women in Indian commercials reflects how women are recognized in Indian culture.
Chatterji, (2006)	Marketers have effectively employed sexual appeal to promote denims, colognes, alcoholic beverages, wristwatches, hygiene items, motor vehicles.
Ryan & Kanjorski, (1998)	Advertising that is sexist could harm Indian society in numerous ways. The perception of women in society may be harmed by pervasive sexist themes (Ryan & Kanjorski, 1998)
Fam & Waller, (2003)	Stereotypical depiction of men and women across cultures, minor differences in gender roles, and global trends influence Indian advertisements. The depiction of women in ornamental functions and their professionalism in non-Western ads diverges from that in Western advertisements.
Kotwal and Sahni (2008)	In order to fascinate the Indian women target market, it may be required to portray women as powerful and influential through the use of female voiceovers, employment, and/or expertise.

V. CONCLUSION

Gender biases in advertisements are not limited to specific regions and can be found in various degrees across the world. However, increasing awareness and evolving societal norms are driving positive changes in the portrayal of genders in advertisements in both India and other countries. Women are given more screen time and are featured more in television commercials than men are, and there is not much variation in the actors' ages. Women are also shown more frequently in professional roles and in work environments. The primary distinction between advertisements from all other nations and those from India is the extent to which women in India are depicted as decorative elements or as aesthetically pleasing objects.

These distinctions highlight the significance of cultural influences on gender portrayals in advertising and demonstrate how advertisements in India may challenge some conventional gender stereotypes more effectively compared to western counterparts.

Similar differences between Indian and Western advertisements in a study focused on magazine advertisements in India. For instance, women being shown as sexual objects was less prevalent in Indian commercials compared to western ones (Das 2000). These disparities in gender depictions could be attributed to India's distinct and evolving sense of modernity (Munshi 1998), a stronger the importance of familial principles

within the culture (Wolf 2009), or the influence of distant devout beliefs, primarily Hinduism, that shape societal norms and perceptions in India.

These factors collectively contribute to the distinctiveness of Indian advertisements and underscore the importance of considering cultural nuances when analyzing gender representations in advertising.

For example, the higher emphasis on family values in certain cultures could be a contributing factor to the lower representation of female characters in purely ornamental functions in advertisements from those countries. On the other hand, the unique and homegrown sense of modernity within Indian culture might explain why employed women in Indian commercials are visualised in roles with equal status to employed men.

These cultural influences shed light on the different ways gender roles are portrayed in advertising across various societies and highlight the importance of understanding cultural contexts to interpret gender representations accurately. By recognizing these underlying factors, advertisers can create more inclusive and culturally sensitive campaigns that challenge stereotypes and promote gender equality in their messages.

Few scholars have, however, looked at how men and women are showcased in Indian TVads. Only a few journal publications on the subject were found after a thorough study of the literature. Three of the four journal studies on the depicting roles in Indian tvcommercials date from the 1990s. Even though gender is displayed in stereotyped manner in television commercials in India, the representation were different from those seen in others countries, according to the only article released in the last five years (Jha Dang and Vohra 2005).

As a consequence, it's possible that the conclusions drawn from research on how women and men are portrayed in television advertisements conducted in other countries may not be entirely relevant to the Indian context. The absence of a comprehensive study on gender role characterizations in television advertisements in India, given the size and growth of the Indian market for television advertising, emphasises the necessity of conducting such studies in order to gain a thorough understanding of gender representation in this particular cultural context.

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