

## CHANGING FACE OF WOMEN IN INDIAN

### ADVERTISING

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#### ABSTRACT

*India has witnessed many changes in last few decades. The changes can be attributed to many factors, like economic, regulatory, political and cultural. Due to changes in social system our lifestyle and mindset is changing. One of the major changes is the changing social status of women. the increasing female literacy rate has resulted in increased participation of women in workforce. The paradigm shift in status of women is visible in various spheres of life, including advertising. The paper explores the changes witnessed in the depiction of women in advertisement with special focus on television commercials.*

**Key Words: Women, Advertising, India, Television Commercials, Product Category**

#### I. INTRODUCTION

The role of women has been changing over the years in various fields around the world like advertising, academics, politics, etc. Today 30% of employees in the software industry are women. They are also distinguishing themselves as professionals in different walks of life. But has the representation of women advertising changed over a period of time in advertisements? Or does it confirm to some of the traditional notions about women and their role in society? That is the question we wish to deal with in this paper. Portrayal of woman in advertising has been an area of interest for both academicians and practitioners. There has been a socio-cultural change in society over the decades which are evident from the increasing number of women pursuing careers, changing family role structure, and un favourable female attitudes toward traditional sex-role stereotypes. The earliest study of women’s role portrayals was done by Courtney (1971). They studied 112 ads in magazines and concluded that the ads reflected stereotypical roles like “women’s place is in the home, women don’t make important decisions or do important things, and women are dependent and need men’s protection, men regard women as sex objects and are not interested in women as people”. Like Courtney (1971), many other studies still believe that sex-role stereotyping occurs in television commercials and the same is been a trend for years. There is a strong similarity in sex role advertising around the world but there have been a few studies which have focused on the effect of culture on advertising Role portrayals in advertising are different in Asia, as compared to the rest of the world. Italso identifies that the cultural values of Asian nations are significantly different from those of countries like the United States, Canada, and Britain. Therefore we can say that the role of woman will also be different in Asia when compared to theUnited States or U.K. There have been very limited studies on woman role portrayal in India. All these studies have focused their study on the

print advertising. They studied the segmentation of men and the advertisements preferred by various segments. These two studies are limited in their scope. It conducted a study on the role of both men and woman in Indian magazines over three years 1987, 1990 and 1994 and also compared these to the ads from other countries. A review of extensive literature has helped to identify that there has been no study in the Indian context on the role of woman in Television advertising. This study aims to fulfill this gap by analyzing the role of woman in Indian Television across three product categories.

## II. ADVERTISING

Advertising is the process of persuading potential customers to buy products or promote its services. It is the branch of marketing that deals with communicating to customers about products, brands and services. Advertising is a form of communication used to persuade an audience (viewers, readers or listeners) to take some action with respect to products, ideas or services. Most commonly, the desired result is to drive consumer behaviour with respect to a commercial offering, although political and ideological advertising is also common. Advertising messages are usually paid-for by sponsors and viewed via various traditional media, including mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television commercials, radio advertisements, outdoor advertising or direct mail or new media, such as websites and text messages. The foregoing implies that advertising is the process of creating awareness about goods, ideas, products and services. Thus, every organisation that Audience perception of the Portrayal of Women in TV Advertising in February, 2013 wants its products to be known has to create awareness through advertising. This perhaps explains why says that advertising involves research-consumer research, product research, marketing analysis, getting the appropriation and developing creative strategy and plans, tactical decisions in regards to budgeting expenditures, media and scheme insertions and broadcasts. The purpose of advertising is nothing, but to sell something - a product, a service or an idea. Thus, the real objective of advertising is effective communication between producers and consumers.

Advertisers often emphasize sexuality and the importance of physical attractiveness is an attempt to sell products (Fox, 1996). Women have been stereotyped in the media more than any other group. She has been depicted as perfect. This is not true in all the real world but because it is portrayed so much in the media people feel it is necessary to have high expectations for women (Ryan, 2002).

### 2.1 Projection of women in Indian Advertising

Women have been depicted in numerous contexts and in innumerable ways in Indian advertising – as a girl child, a prospective mother, a home-marker, a career woman and also as one who just enhances the appeal of the advertisement. However, majority of modern Indian advertisements present a more realistic and balanced picture of woman. There has been a general shift whereby advertisements have moved from showcasing women merely as tradition-bound homemakers to those playing modern roles. The modern day Indian working woman, who plays multifaceted roles and emerges as one who is, not only in full control of herself, but also has the power to influence others around her. The plethora of changes in India on the cultural, social and educational fronts has brought about a transformation in society, which, in turn, is also finding its influence on the advertisements of the day. Women presently constitute a major factor in the work force, as a result a result the role portrayals is expected to become much wider. Career oriented roles are beginning to become more

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common, but majority of the advertisements still shown woman in a secondary position or as a dutiful housewife taking care of the house, her husband and children. Women playing non-conventional roles in advertisements are definitely on the increase. They are also finding increasing presence as brand ambassadors and endorsers for products which are not necessarily women-oriented. A sportswoman like SaniaMirza&SaniaNehwaletc is often seen and accepted as yielding referent power in advertisements for a variety of products, in the same manner as any other male sports personality. This is a reflection regarding the acceptance of woman playing many roles and the changing cultural mindset. However, women are portrayed in substantive way in the advertisements for cement, steel or scooter etc which continues to be male dominated. Women are an epitome of both beauty and intelligence, and this has been amply demonstrated in the case of innumerable advertisement models who have won several beauty pageants over the years.

## 2.2 Previous Research Of Women In Advertising

Author & year	Stydy findings
Hofstede (1980)	He found that the U.S. culture to be more masculine than the Indian culture. Based on his findings, he ascertain that the women in the U.S.would be portrayed in more diverse roles than women in India.
Bellur and Bellur (1992)	They conducted a study in order to analyse the impact of socio-economic changes on marketing in India. They concluded that westernisation had brought about substantial changes in the social environment. A breakdown of traditions barriers, higher literacy rate and development of a new marketing environment provides a manifesto of change where women not only in traditional roles, but also in modern roles.
Sexton and Haberman (1974)	They found in their study based on how women depicted in magazine advertisements found that women in cigarette advertisements are frequently employed in a decorative capacity, while in home appliance advertisements women were depicted in a traditionally way.
Wagner and Banos (1973)	It was found that more advertisements showed women in working roles and portrayed women in more responsible working capacities.
Courtney and Lockeretz (1971)	They found that the ineffectiveness of advertisement To reflect the true range of women's roles within society. Many ads tended to portray women as homemakers neither making important decision nor doing important things

Wortzel and Frisbie (1974)	They empirically tested the role portrayal preferences of women in advertisements based on 100 reactions of five female roles with seven product advertisement situations, and concluded that the effectiveness of role portrayal depended on the product being advertised in media. For instance-for personal, grooming products, the working woman role was preferred, whereas for household appliances it was a family role that was preferred.
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They reported the following findings women were rarely shown in out-of-home working roles.

1. Not many women were shown as a professional or high level business person.
2. Women rarely ventured far from home by themselves or with other women.
3. Women were shown as dependent on men’s protection.
4. Females were most often shown in ads for cleaning products, food products, beauty products, drugs, clothing and home appliances.

### III. PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN BEAUTY PRODUCTS

Produced by cosmetics company Hindustan Unilever, “Fair and Lovely” is a skin-lightening cream that dominates the Indian market. This ad is part of a campaign that portrays women with dark complexions who suddenly find romance and glamorous careers after using the “Fair and Lovely” whitening cream. Due to controversy, Hindustan Unilever had to pull these ads from Indian media in 2007.

If we read through the earlier theories, they are mainly focused on negative aspects of women portrayal in advertisements. When we talk about women in ads generally negative concepts occupy our mind. Many authors also have spoken only about negative representation of women in television ads. They speak about women exploitation in ads, women shown as show piece, women used as sex objects etc. Viewing the earlier theories one can always zero in on the optimistic study of the women projection. This part of the article highlights on the positive portrayal of women in ads by advertisers to promote and persuade audience towards their products.

As the earlier studies, where authors have focused the negative portrayal of women in ads, one may tend to have the same perception even now as one might say to oneself that women are projected just as objects. We can certainly agree with the point but things have improved over the years, take the examples of Health drinks, Detergent cakes and powders, soaps, medicine, cosmetics, mobile advertisements on television they have represented women in a very vigorous way, very energetic, dynamic, strong and enthusiastic wherein it will definitely have a positive impact on society. Human tendency is they connect themselves to something positive. These ads show women neatly dressed, family bound, persuading women to have aspirations, and achieve them etc. Women will connect themselves to these ads depending on which category they belong to. Women representation in ads have changed from stereotypical to go getting attitude, take the example of Santoor deodorant ad wherein the lady runs, jumps and reaches office before her male colleague to give a presentation. Take the example of fair and lovely ads wherein a dark skinned woman uses the product to lighten her skin tone and first rates to become an airhostess and a commercial featuring film star GeneliaD'souza wherein she desires

to become a commentator. All these ads are showing woman as having aspirations and nothing can stop them in achieving it. Almost all ads except few deodorant ads have shown women in a positive light.

Off late but media has realized that woman is the most respectable personality in India than in any other country and the way they are projected in recent TV ads is different and has changed over the years. People still want to see women as homemakers neatly dressed in saris and salwars. This virtual thought of audience has been caught by advertisers and project women as expected by audience, the mere base remaining the same that is to persuade audience to buy their products. If we see the latest ads of this generation whether it's related to electronic items, home appliances, cosmetics or health drinks women are projected in a very encouraging beam.

Depiction of women in advertisements has changed and it is becoming healthier over the time. In most of the advertisements of recent times, a woman is projected as confident, extrovert, dominant and having go getting attitude rather than just portraying them stereotypically as being a homemaker washing clothes, utensils, cooking, taking care of family members etc.

#### **IV. PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS**

From the very early ages, women have either been doing the only housework, or dealing their profession along with housework. Today many women who are associated with full or part time employment agree that an increasing number of husbands are helping in household chore. If these are real facts then why advertisers still portray women predominately in household product commercials? According to Julia, ad do not want to represent a modern woman because she knows that life is not a bed of rose. Therefore, she will not buy any magical product which can solve any problem relating professional or personal. For this reason, the advertisers most of the time uses the features of traditional woman. Moreover, this can also be true that men dominate the workplace in most cases while a very few women are in the position of decision making.

Women are still being represented as dependent on men. In the advertisement, “Harpic Toilet Cleaner” for example, a housewife attempts at cleaning the toilet but fails. Then a male person comes to help her in cleaning the toilet. He tells her about Harpic, an active liquid cleaning agent that washes away all the grime from the toilet in order to make it safe for every member of the family. His tough male voice encourages the audience in believing that the product is really very active. It also indicates that a woman always needs a man’s help to invent powerful products to do the work well. Here, the man is the adviser and the woman shows her gratefulness by following his steps. It mainly focuses the messages that women need men. Another example of household product advertisements is the ads of detergent such as “wheel Power White” where women is always portrayed as a person whose main duty is to wash the clothes. Her husband feels the smell of the clothes and falls in love with her. It shows that the beautiful smells of the clothes brings the husband near to his wife.

In the advertisements of “Dettol Soap” they are shown as a doctor but their main patient is only their children. So, it focuses even being a doctor her main responsibility is to find out which soap is good for her child. The gender discrimination is very acute in ads. On the other hand, men are portrayed as more career concerned and success person. They are always busy with their work or job and also about the security of the family. However, the picture of the real world is changing. Now women are more careers focused, independent and have their own personal world. They are able to manage their both personal and professional life through their own talents not by the magic of the advertised products.

On surveying the ads of jewellery of 1990's , a common factor emerged in practically aa the ads and that was jewellery being given to girls on their marriage. This depiction of daughters in ads reinforced the Indian psyche that daughters were burdens for whom investment needs to be done right from their birth. However the Tanishq ad launched on Mother's Day in 2015 featuring popular Bollywood actress is a contrast against this portrayal of women in ads of jewellery. In this ad a working woman, a successful Bollywood actress is shown gifting her mother and acknowledging her contributions in her life. Clearly, the ad is an acknowledgement of the growing purchasing power of working women in India. More importantly, it highlights the many ways in which Indian women are taking care of their families, something new in a tradition where parents are not supposed to “take” anything from their daughters. In yet another ad of Tanishq a middle aged woman, who is a mother of a small girl, is shown getting remarried. This ad break another stereotype of Indian society where remarriage of women is considered a taboo. Another brand of jewellery PC jewellers have tried to positioned themselves on the lines of changing face of women in Indian advertising. In the new ad of PC jewellers it is shown that at a party, as two couples greeting each other, one of the women notices the earrings of the other, appreciating it and shows the same to her husband. On seeing the earrings the man suggests that since the lady's husband is an investment banker, it is no big thing for them to be able to afford diamonds. The other man is soon to correct him. It turns out that he's been staying at home for six months working on a book while his wife runs the house on her income. The film ends with a showcase of the diamond earrings and a sign off saying 'Nayezamaanekeheere'. Thus it can be said that there is marked change in the way women is projected in the ads of jewellery.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The rise of progressive advertisements is a positive sign for feminist causes in India, but there are a few grains of salt to be taken with the obvious benefits. India's rapidly growing middle class has no doubt helped spur the development of higher levels of gender equality, with many of these progressive ads being targeted at that audience. Obviously even middle and upper class women still face numerous challenges, but the climate has shifted as far as what they can and cannot do, and these advertisements reflect that. Home-maker is still an option, but so is student, pilot, soldier, sports star, politician, academic, and so on. And yet ultimately this is a relatively small audience in a country where around three quarters of the population is still rural. The vast majority of Indian women are not included in the audience for these progressive ads. The ages targeted tend to be teenage to thirties and the audience is never the lower classes. For most women traditional roles still take precedence. Furthermore, not a single one of the progressive ads displayed showed a woman with a family or long term relationship, subtly implying a sort of mutual exclusivity between independence/empowerment and family life. This message is quietly subversive to the otherwise empowering tone, and also ignores the reality of both outside work and domestic life as being the dual responsibilities of countless women. Essentially, these ads imply that a woman can only be empowered/independent etc if: she is young, single, middle to upper class, does not have family/home obligations or children, etc. If, however, economic stabilization increases and more women acquire a higher level of purchase power, progressive ads may well reach a wider audience with their message of empowerment.

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Advertising is one of the "promotional tools" used in marketing endeavors, as one means of communication between the seller (advertiser) and the buyer (consumer or organization). The general roles that women play in advertising are Decorative Role, Recreational Role, Independent Career Role, Self-involved Role, Carefree Role and Family Role. In the ads there are three main types of portrayal of women. The first type of ads includes the female body displayed as a sexual object. The second type exhibits the housewife who is nurturing, caring, older, and unsexual. These ads feature women as competent only in cleaning, cooking, and taking care of children. The final type is the empowered female, in control, young, and attractive. It is only the third type of ad, which has occurred much less frequently that empowered and recognized women as equal to men. The portrayal of women in advertising has been particularly stereotypical with confinement of women to household chores. Women were rarely shown as equal partners; for example, as a person who is employed and has her own will. These portrayals largely stem from the gender role norms accepted and prevalent in the Indian society. The role portrayal is largely done within the male dominant ideology. The men are largely posited as strong, independent and macho men, while women are generally confined to household chores, or mother/ caretaker roles whose world centers around the house. Owing to influences from the west, the familial norms are shifting from being patriarchal to more egalitarian (where both spouses are partners in making decisions and contribute equally to all household decisions). With the rise in the number of women in the workforce, their role in the family and the society has changed, albeit slowly. This has automatically created greater financial independence for women, who were earlier subservient, meek and submissive to male dominance. This has implications for marketers and advertisers who have framed ad messages keeping into mind the Indian cultural settings.

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