

Paradigm shift in female role portrayals in Advertising: A theoretical framework

Manpreet Kaur

Principal, Khalsa College for Women, Amritsar, Punjab, India

***Corresponding Author: Manpreet Kaur**

Email: 111kaur.manpreet@gmail.com

Abstract

Women have been portrayed with erotic images and are being used as sexual elements by the advertisers at present, consequently having bad effects on the youth. As far as women empowerment in advertisements is concerned, they are portrayed as obverse to the same, completely degrading their image. On the contrary much of the advertisements highlight men with multiple powers and depict a very rosy picture of them. Explicit media is much to blame instead fastening a firm's belief of women's perception of themselves in eyes of men as also for themselves. Advertisement- being a mirror of society goes on to overemphasized on negative aspects of beauty and sexuality as being profit yielding basis. People in general adopt whatever is being shown and hence leaves a marked impression of disrespect to women hood. In this growing age of media communication, it is very painful thing to see women being portrayed as an epitome of sacrifice and exhibiting stereotype role in their lives. Despite the growth in professional roles by women, their picture is depicted as being a subordinate and submissive in much of the advertisements. In the present study, theoretical framework is being worked on and contents of few advertisements have been critically analysed to see the better picture of advertisements in today's world.

Keywords: Advertising management.

Introduction

Advertisements are the most influential and powerful medium of marketing in society. Jean Kilbourne in her article portrays advertising as the foundation and economic life blood of the mass media. The foremost purpose of the mass media is to deliver an audience to advertisers, just as the primary purpose of television program is to deliver an audience for commercials.

The wave of feminism began in the mid-19th century and continued till early 20th century mainly in UK and USA. The improved rights in case of marriage and property supported feministic community a lot. In 1960's and 1970's it extended to the right of education, work and the home.

In 1963, Betty Friedan, a writer published the feminine Mystique, considered to be the important work of the inherent feminism's second wave. Friedan argued that women were unhappy because of feminine Mystique. She blamed the media for showing women inside four walls of her home and living for family: people used to be taken as man's wife, mother, and love object etc, undoubtedly totally dependent on men for basic and important decisions.

Germaine Greer (1970) in her book, the "Female Eunuch" argued that women were treated as exclusive eunuchs by society. More extensively, she attacked the nuclear family, romantic role of women limited to the women's sexuality, the role not natural but artificially learnt.

Laura Muvey and her theory of the 'Male Gaze' is an important feminist work. Society's patriarchal approach recognises the male gender and the sexuality of men as the dominant norm.

The third wave of feminism began in 1990's. It addressed the different disadvantages that women experience because of race, ethnicity and class.

Post feminisms after 1990's suggests that feminisms may not be relevant anymore because women have won

equal rights and equal opportunities. The young ladies don't even know about feminism or any such movement as they are in the era where women share, experience and enjoy equal rights.

Literacy Review

Women in advertising have been considered vital for the promotion of products and services both for verbal and visual depictions. Through it has been criticized many a time because of the content and misrepresentation message as not the true representation of their position in the society. The advertisers are considered to be responsible for the increased violence against women. Various researchers justify the way women have been portrayed in the advertisements is the way she has been treated in the society and such illicit portrayal of women in the advertisements has become a considerable issue. To examine the role portrayal of women in the advertisements and to what extent these advertisements affect the place of women in the society, studies have been conducted. Some of the analytical studies show that women portrayal is positive. Though the gender was biased in earlier times, but now the scenario has changed and gradually the women have been portrayed in the advertisements as equal to men. But some of the studies contradict the results of the researchers and they conclude that though a little change has been witnessed in the way women have been presented in the advertisements, this change is negligible when compared to the contributions made by women.

The study of Nagi (2014) revealed that, "Sexual appeals in visual images may arouse the subconscious desires that manifest themselves in the purchase of that product. However sex appeals are perceived differently from person to person, time to time, society to society and culture to culture. The advertiser must be sure that the product, advertisement, audience and use of sexual elements all

match up to make the call effective.” Men and Women spontaneously prefer images, which warm up the senses irrespective of the model, the respondent’s gender or any other such element. Earlier Women likely associated on cheap and luring products are shown whereas men with expensive and elite ones. It does represent women negatively for viewers see women as sex objects, for attraction and lurement. Women have been shown in meaningless and glamorous roles in order to sell more. Radzinur and Mahfuza (2017) revealed, “The choice of words used by the advertisers in beauty advertisements to depict women does not show the true picture of women.” Conley and Ramsey (2011) found in their study that portrayals of women in passive positions was seen more frequently than male models. Women with flawless skin were significantly more prominent than men in the advertisements. Women were shown dismembered, that is particularly one part of their body was focused upon. (Soley and Reid, 1981) conducted a study that suggested that “The presence of women as decorative models improves recognition for the entire advertisement.” Tehseem and Iraq (2015) concluded, “In order to attract the opposite gender, you need to look prettier. Women have been shown in glamorous but meaningless roles to attract viewers.”

Contrary to this, some researchers revealed that position of women in the advertisements has been changed. She has not been seen in stereotypical roles only. Moorthi, Roy and Pansari (2014) states, “There is a difference in product categories advertised by women. Advertisers are willing to portray women in male dominant society.” Sukumar, (2014) strongly finds out that the role of women in advertisements is no longer confined to four walls of a house. “Though a change has been seen in the portrayal of women, yet its position does not depict the true picture in the society. She is still found in passive roles and dependent on men” (Bekaoui and Belkaoui, 1976). Japanese magazines content also showed such portrayal of women where no stereotypes have been seen. These magazines portray both men and women in positive way. They show men participating in household chores: depicting men and women in both Eastern and Western cultures.

A large number of researchers found women as misrepresented or low represented in advertisements. It was seen that Women were shown with household chores only and represented as mothers and housewives. Pillay (2008), in her study revealed that the misrepresentation of women has resulted in rather narrow limited views of women as portrayed by female characters in advertisements. “Stereotypes exist today and the “happy housewife” stereotype is predominant in TV commercials. TV cultivates a view of the world”, (Srikhande 2003). Men are shown in white collar jobs as compared to women. Wood, in her research concluded that men were shown as strong, confident and authoritative and on the other hand, women were considered to be dependent, caring and passive. Himashree (2014), concludes that Advertisers portray women in the roles; they feel would be beneficial for them.

It hardly matters whether the role is meaningless or meaningful.

Content Analysis of selected Advertisements

Advertisements depicting changing role of women in them with some taglines can be classified as such:

Beauty over Brains

The advertisers create such advertisements which are responsible for the brain wash of audience. The “taglines” added with the advertisements such as “CHEHRA AISA JO BADAL DE AAPKI DUNIYA” made people believe the knowledge stands nowhere, all you need is a beautiful face in order to get success or to make your dreams come true. An advertisement showed that a young girl with the dancing talent is nothing but after using a fairness cream, her life gets a new opportunity and she wins a dancing competition. This shows that it isn’t her dancing talent but the complexion of her skin, that makes her win the competition.

Advertising, Then and Now... The Changing Scenario

If women are scaling new heights and have a voice in all fields, then women in advertisements can’t be confined just to washing clothes, cooking or makeup or pleasing husbands and family.

The beaming wife with a spatula, the obedient daughter and daughter-in-law, the loving mother, the seductress – these are some social conventions on women that advertising has continuously reinforced since time immemorial. Women have done it all: washing, cleaning, cooking and, most importantly, pleasing the men in their lives. While men have conquered mountains, closed business deals and succeeded in every walk of life, women in advertising get relegated to the confines of her house.

It is said that advertising is a reflection of the life around. Showing women as homemakers obsessed with getting the ‘ziddi’ stain out of clothes must have made sense a few decades ago but today’s women have come a long way. In recent times many advertisements have gone beyond the white picket fence when it comes to portrayal of women.

Ariel’s Dads #ShareTheLoad campaign went viral when people around the world supported the ad for bringing to fore the problems of stereotypes. When Sheryl Sandberg, Chief Operating Officer, Facebook, shared the video and called it one of the most powerful she had ever seen, the ad racked up massive viewership on the internet. When Dads #ShareTheLoad won five Lions at Cannes this year, we knew change had arrived and arrived in style, roaring to get noticed.

Moving with Societal Change

So what has changed since the days of the Hemas, Rekhas, Jayas and Sushmas of the advertising world?

According to Divya Radhakrishnan, MD, Helios Media, “Advertisements are based on two counts. One, reflection of society and, two, aspirational ambience. Therefore, it can’t

stray far from its surrounding, if it has to stay relevant to the audience.”

Advertising always represents what is happening in society. A few decades back the trend was that a woman has to take care of the house, the kids and the daily chores. Many detergents, including Nirma, showed women enjoying washing clothes. They probably did enjoy it because of how they were raised and what they were taught growing up. But in the last three decades, the role of the same Hema, Rekha, Jaya and Sushma, of Nirma, has changed. They are still running the houses but they have a different hold in our society.”

This change was evident when Taproot Dentsu used the same four characters Hema, Rekha, Jaya and Sushma for the ambulance ad. This time around, instead of trying to get the perfectly white shirt whiter, the women were seen trying to help a stuck ambulance. Breaking out of the confines of the house, the ad rather focused on women getting the job done, no matter how dirty.

Role of Advertising as Social Agent

The important question is if advertising really brings about a positive change?

“Ariel’s Dads #ShareTheLoad was a response to an Indian condition. But it had universal resonance. It went viral globally at the speed of feeling. We received lakhs of comments, stories and confessions from people who wept after seeing our work. It seems to have embraced the world with pure empathy and hope. Everybody connected with it. I was fortunate to be on the Glass Lion Jury at Cannes with so many brilliant people from different countries and various parts of the world. When the #ShareTheLoad film played, many of them broke down and had tears streaming down their face. We were bonded by empathy. Advertising is more powerful than we think. It can change the world,” Paul said.

Conclusion

To conclude, Women have been portrayed with erotic images and are being used as sexual elements by the advertisers at present, consequently having bad effects on the youth. As far as women empowerment in advertisements is concerned, they are portrayed as obverse to the same, completely degrading their image. On the contrary much of the advertisements highlight men with multiple powers and depict a very rosy picture of them. Explicit media is much to blame instead fastening a firm’s belief of women’s perception of themselves in eyes of men as also for themselves. Advertisement- being a mirror of society goes on to overemphasized on negative aspects of beauty and sexuality as being profit yielding basis. People in general adopt whatever is being shown and hence leaves a marked impression of disrespect to women hood. In this growing age of media communication, it is very painful thing to see women being portrayed as an epitome of sacrifice and exhibiting stereotype role in their lives. Despite the growth in professional roles by women, their picture is depicted as being a subordinate and submissive in much of the

advertisements. Focus these days relies more on model presentation and its outer beauty rather than the original product and its quality. Women have been shown as a figure responsible for managing household chores only. Their ability to manage work life balance is least focused in today’s advertisements.

References

1. Aaker, David A., John G., Myers, and Rajeev Batra. *Advertising Management*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1992.
2. Amor, Nour El Houda Ben, Mohamed Skander Ghachem, Karim Garrouch, and Mohamed Nabil Mzoughi. "Female Bareness in Print Advertisements: Do Religiosity and Gender Matter?." *International Journal of Marketing Studies*. 20146(3):97.
3. Amyx, Douglas, and Kimberly Amyx. "Sex and puffery in advertising: An absolutely sensational and sexually provocative experiment." *International Business and Management*. 2011;2(1):1-10.
4. Aydinoglu, Nilufer, and Luca Cian. "Show me the product, show me the model: Effect of picture type on attitudes toward advertising." (2014).
5. Baker, Christina N. "Images of women’s sexuality in advertisements: A content analysis of Black-and White-oriented women’s and men’s magazines." *Sex roles* 2005;52(1):13-27.
6. Belkaoui, Ahmed, and Janice M. Belkaoui. "A comparative analysis of the roles portrayed by women in print advertisements: 1958, 1970, 1972." *Journal of Marketing Research*. (1976):168-172.
7. Browne, Beverly A. "Gender stereotypes in advertising on children’s television in the 1990s: A cross-national analysis." *Journal of advertising* 1998;27(1):83-96.
8. Budgeon, Shelley. "I’ll tell you what I really, really want”: Girl power and self-identity in Britain." *Millennium girls: Today’s girls around the world*. 1998:115-144.
9. Callen, Karen S., and Shiretta F. Ownbey. "Associations between demographics and perceptions of unethical consumer behaviour." *International Journal of Consumer Studies*. 2003;27(2):99-110.
10. Conley, Terri D., and Laura R. Ramsey. "Killing us softly? Investigating portrayals of women and men in contemporary magazine advertisements." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 2011;35(3):469-478.
11. Courtney, Alice E., and Thomas W. Whipple. *Sex Stereotyping in advertising*. Free Press, 1983.
12. Covert, Juanita J., and Travis L. Dixon. "A changing view: Representation and effects of the portrayal of women of color in mainstream women’s magazines." *Communication Research*. 2008;35(2):232-256.
13. Debevec, Kathleen, and Easwar Iyer. "The influence of spokespersons in altering a product’s gender image: Implications for advertising effectiveness." *Journal of Advertising*. 1986;15(4):12-20.
14. Duker, Jacob M., and Lewis R. Tucker Jr. "Women’s Lib-ers” versus Independent Women: A Study of Preferences for Women’s Roles in Advertisements." *Journal of Marketing Research*. 1977:469-475.
15. Elliott, Richard, Susan Eccles, and Michelle Hodgson. "Re-coding gender representations: Women, cleaning products, and advertising’s “New Man”." *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 1993;10(3):311-324.
16. Ferguson, Jill Hicks, Peggy J. Kreshel, and Spencer F. Tinkham. "In the pages of Ms.: Sex role portrayals of women in advertising." *Journal of Advertising*. 1990;19(1):40-51.

17. First, Anat. "Nothing new under the sun? A comparison of images of women in Israeli advertisements in 1979 and 1994." *Sex roles*. 1998;38(11):1065-1077.
18. Ford, John B., Patricia Kramer Voli, Earl D. Honeycutt Jr, and Susan L. Casey. "Gender role portrayals in Japanese advertising: A magazine content analysis." *Journal of Advertising*. 1998;27(1):113-124.
19. Friedan, Betty. "The Feminine Mystique. 1963." *Reprint. New York: DeU* (1983).
20. Gebreselassie, Kenaw. "The portrayal of women in Ethiopian Television advertisements." PhD diss., MA thesis, Addis Ababa University, 2006.
21. Gilly, Mary C. "Sex roles in advertising: A comparison of television advertisements in Australia, Mexico, and the United States." *The Journal of marketing*. 1988:75-85.
22. Greer, Germaine. "The Female Eunuch. 1970." *London: MacGibbon and Kee* (1971).
23. Hair J F, Ralph E A, Ronald L T and William C B (2011), *Multivariate Data Analysis*, 4th Edition, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.
24. Hundal, B.S (2001), "Consumer Behavior in Rural Market: A Study of Durables", An Unpublished PhD Dissertation Submitted to Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar.
25. Kotler, Philip and Keller, Kevin (2011). "Marketing Management, Twelfth Edition, Prentice Hall of India Private Limited, New Delhi.
26. Kumari, Shyama, and ShradhaShivani. "A Content Analysis of Female Portrayals in Indian Magazine Advertisements." (2013).
27. Lavine, Howard, Donna Sweeney, and Stephen H. Wagner. "Depicting women as sex objects in television advertising: Effects on body dissatisfaction." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 1999;25(8):1049-1058.
28. Lin, Carolyn A. "Beefcake versus cheesecake in the 1990s: Sexist portrayals of both genders in television commercials." *Howard Journal of Communications*. 1997;8(3):237-249.
29. Low, Jason, and Peter Sherrard. "Portrayal of women in sexuality and marriage and family textbooks: A content analysis of photographs from the 1970s to the 1990s." *Sex Roles*. 1999;40(3):309-318.
30. Lundstrom, William J., and Donald Sciglimpaglia. "Sex role portrayals in advertising." *The Journal of Marketing*. 1977:72-79.
31. MacKay, Natalie J., and Katherine Covell. "The impact of women in advertisements on attitudes toward women." *Sex Roles*. 1997;36(9):573-583.
32. Malhotra N. K (2011), *Marketing Research: An Applied Orientation*, Pearson Edu. (India Branch), New Delhi.
33. Mickson, Mazuruse, and Mrs Musasa Tendero. "A Critical Evaluation of the Portrayal of Zimbabwean Women in Advertisements and its Impact on Shona Culture." (2015).
34. Milner, Laura M., and James M. Collins. "Sex-role portrayals and the gender of nations." *Journal of Advertising*. 2000;29(1):67-79.
35. Moorthi, Y. L. R., Subhadip Roy, and Anita Pansari. "The Changing Roles Portrayed by Women in Indian Advertisements: A Longitudinal Content Analysis." (2014).
36. Nagi, Parul. "Projection of Women in Advertisement: A Gender Perception Study." *International Journal of Managerial Studies and Research* 2014;2(9):75-88.
37. Nargundkar R (2011), *Marketing Research: Text and Cases*, Tata McGraw-Hill Publishing Company, New Delhi.
38. Orth, Ulrich R., and Denisa Holancova. "Men's and women's responses to sex role portrayals in advertisements." *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. 2004;21(1):77-88.
39. Patowary, Himashree. "Portrayal of Women in Indian Mass Media: An Investigation." *Journal of Education & Social Policy*. 2014;1(1):84-92.
40. Peterson, Robert A., and Roger A. Kerin. "The female role in advertisements: Some experimental evidence." *The Journal of Marketing*. 1977:59-63.
41. Pillay, Nerisa. "The portrayal of women in television advertisements on SABC3: a reflection on stereotypical representation." PhD diss., 2010.
42. Plakoyiannaki, Emmanuella, and Yorgos Zotos. "Female role stereotypes in print advertising: Identifying associations with magazine and product categories." *European Journal of Marketing*. 2009;43(11/12):1411-1434.
43. Plakoyiannaki, Emmanuella, Kalliopi Mathioudaki, Pavlos Dimitratos, and Yorgos Zotos. "Images of women in online advertisements of global products: does sexism exist?." *Journal of Business Ethics*. 2008;83(1):101.
44. Plous, Scott, and Dominique Neptune. "Racial and gender biases in magazine advertising: A content-analytic study." *Psychology of women quarterly*. 1997;21(4):627-644.
45. Radzi, Nur Syuhada Mohd, and Mahfuza Musa. "Beauty Ideals, Myths and Sexisms: A Feminist Stylistic Analysis of Female Representations in Cosmetic Names." *GEMA Online® Journal of Language Studies*. 17, no. 1 (2017).
46. Ramaswamy, V.S. and Namakumari, S. (2002), *Marketing Management*, Third Edition, Macmillan Publishers, New Delhi.
47. Reid, Leonard N., and Lawrence C. Soley. "Another look at the "decorative" female model: The recognition of visual and verbal ad components." *Current issues and research in advertising*. 1981;4(1):123-133.
48. Schneider, Kenneth C., and Sharon Barich Schneider. "Trends in sex roles in television commercials." *The Journal of Marketing*. 1979:79-84.
49. Shrikhande, Vaishali. "Stereotyping of Women in Television Advertisement." (2003).
50. Snigda, Sukumar. "People Perception towards the Portrayal of Women in Advertisements: A Study with Special Reference to the Bangalore City." *Indian Journal of Research*. 2014;3(2):183-185.
51. Trehan, R and Singh, H. "A Comparative Study on Urban and Rural Consumer Behavior", *Indian Journal of Marketing*. 2002;33:7-11.
52. Vantomme, Delphine, Maggie Geuens, and Siegfried Dewitte. "How to portray men and women in advertisements? Explicit and implicit evaluations of ads depicting different gender roles." (2005).
53. Whipple, Thomas W., and Alice E. Courtney. "Female role portrayals in advertising and communication effectiveness: A review." *Journal of advertising*. 1985;14(3):4-17.
54. Wilson, ClarkL. "Marketplace Behavior—A Psycho-metric Approach." In *American Marketing Association Proceedings*. 1966.
55. Wood, Julia T. "Gendered media: The influence of media on views of gender." *Gendered lives: Communication, gender and culture*. 1994:231-244.
56. Wortzel, Lawrence H., and John M. Frisbie. "Women's role portrayal preferences in advertisements: An empirical study." *The Journal of Marketing*. 1974:41-46.
57. Zantides, Evripides, and Anna Zapiti. "Children's representation in advertising: A content analytic look." *Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 2011;20(1):48-54.
58. Zimmerman, Amanda, and John Dahlberg. "The sexual objectification of women in advertising: A contemporary cultural perspective." *Journal of Advertising Research*. 2008;48(1):71-79.

59. Zotos, Yorgos, and Eirini Tsihla. "Female portrayals in advertising past research, new directions." *International Journal on Strategic Innovative Marketing* 1 (2014).

How to cite this article: Kaur M. Paradigm shift in female role portrayals in Advertising: A theoretical framework. *J Manag Res Anal.* 2018;5(4):431-435.