

Mapping the Portrayal of Females in Contemporary Indian Advertisements

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The role of advertising as an effective vehicle of communication has long been acknowledged. It has become the important 'part of the cultural and economic fabric of a society and continues to be a primary tool for marketing communication' (Lane et. al., 2005). The current study examines the portrayal of women in contemporary Indian magazine and television advertisements in various product and service categories. The present study is an effort to fill the gap of limited research on gender representation in Indian context. Using content analysis, a total of 275 advertisements comprising print and television ads were examined. The result reveals the dominance of female stereotyping in Indian advertising where females were mostly depicted as a housewife, predominantly endorsing household products and mostly young female models were preferred for brand promotion by advertisers.

Keywords: Portrayal, content analysis, stereotyping, advertisements, India

In recent years, the Indian advertising industry has gained economic importance and looked upon as a tool to encash lucrative business opportunities. In last two decades, the Indian advertising industry reported sustained growth. As per the report of FICCI-KPMG (2012, 2014), there has been an increase in advertisement spends by marketers. In the year 2011, the total advertising spends across all media in India, accounted for 300 billion rupees which contributes to 41 per cent of the overall media and entertainment industry's revenues (FICCI-KPMG 2012). In addition, the advertising revenue recorded a growth of 10.9 per cent in the year 2012-13 and has been projected at 13.9 per cent for the year 2018. The increasing ad expenditures shows a positive acceptance of advertising as an important tool for marketing strategy and an effective social communication tool through infusing the desire for a better lifestyle among the target audience. Thus, advertising industry not only act as a 'medium' to bring in these desires in consumers but also the 'recipient' of beneficiary of these desires.

In order to achieve the same, gender stereotyping is the most common strategy and practice employed by several advertisers to establish a strong connect with the brand since 'a lack of identification with the roles portrayed may reduce the attention, credibility, retention and subsequent recall of any advertisement' (Pollay & Lysonski, 1993). There has been a plethora of research articles conducted on gender portrayal in advertising in western countries (specifically the United States, UK and European Union) and have documented the prevalence of gender stereotyping in advertisements. Compared to the developed nations, very few studies have been undertaken in the developing countries of Asia-Pacific region especially the case of India. Brokaw & Lakshman (1995) observed absence of research on 'gender portrayal' and 'communication impact' particularly on

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gender-role portrayals in Indian media. Further, the research studies which were conducted in India are inadequate and limited in scope. In last four decades, the research studies were either concentrated in examining the gender representation in print or electronic media advertisements or else analysed the public attitude towards gender portrayals in advertising. Most of the studies came to conclusion that advertising do not reflect the changes in the society and mainly portray women in the stereotyped role (for example, housewife, sex-object, and dependent).

With the changing social climate as well as evolution of women's role in India, not only in the home front but also in their work environment, raises the question of aptness of women portrayal in today's advertising practice. The present study examines the female portrayals in Indian advertising (television and magazine advertisements) and significant since in Indian context very few published empirical research on the gender portrayal studies can be traced that too were only limited to gender representation in media.

Gender Portrayal Research in India

As mentioned earlier, there have been very few researches conducted in the emerging economies of Asia-Pacific region especially in case of India. Matthew (1990) examined male stereotypes that metropolitan Indian men exercise to understand themselves and other men. The study revealed that males see themselves primarily in three stereotypes: (i) career driven, (ii) self-seeker, and (iii) home-lover and they identified with those images which are closer to their own self-images.

Munshi (1998) analyzed the advertising discourses in India are accountable for the emergence of 'new Indian women in multiple avatars as homemakers'. In addition to this, the study also analyzed whether such representations in advertising further defies or build western theorizing through media texts which were used in print and television advertisements during 1990's. Findings revealed that the representation of woman has been played around with, but not changed in a structural or substantial way.

Das (2000) examined the portrayal of women and men in Indian magazine ads from magazines in 1987, 1990, and 1994. Results indicated that there is a slight decrease in the traditional role portrayals of men and women in Indian magazine ads over the period but majority of advertisements still portray gender in stereotypical or traditional role.

Dwivedy et. al. (2009) examined the role portrayals of men and women that appeared in India's most popular general interest magazines of the year 2006-07. Content analyses of 1,400 advertisements were carried out to identify the role portrayal patterns of male and female images appearing in contemporary Indian magazine advertisements. It was revealed that male and female are portrayed in traditional roles.

Das (2011) examined portrayals of men and women in Indian television commercials, selected in three different languages (English, Hindi, and Tamil) from four national, international and regional channels in 2004 for the period of two weeks. Results indicated that, as against women, men were preferred by advertisers to portray central figures and their voice-over is dominated in most of the commercials, whereas women were mainly depicted in relationship roles to others. It may be noted that so far only few studies have been conducted to understand the gender portrayals in Indian print and television advertising that are again limited in terms of their scope. Only one study is conducted in case of gender representation in television advertising in India.

From 2004 onwards, a significant change has taken place in the socio-economic status of women in India. Moreover, in view of the fact that India being one of the largest economies of the world; it is very intricate to make inferences with the help of previous researches. In this context, more research is needed for better understanding and in-depth knowledge of gender portrayal. Therefore, the study is deemed to be appropriate as it will provide more contemporary evaluation

of the portrayal of women in advertising with their changing socio-economic status in the society.

A decade-wise assessment of gender portrayal research globally, reveals a similar pattern of gender stereotyping. The gender portrayal research started in early 1970's and during this period it was found that men and women were depicted in highly stereotypical roles. 'The overall conclusion of the studies of sex role portrayals in advertisements conducted in the 1970s is that women were portrayed differently from men' (Gilly, 1988). It was also forecasted that advertisements of 1980's would depict men and women in more contemporary and non-traditional roles. But the studies conducted during 1980's, contradicted the forecast made by researches in the last decade. Both male and female continued to be represented in stereotypical role. In fact findings of researches undertaken during 1990's and 2000 were again consistent with the findings of previous researches with few exceptions (less stereotypical stance) in gender stereotyping particularly in case of women. In one of the studies it was revealed that though female stereotyping is prevalent in Korean print advertising, they were less shown as sex objects (Cutler et. al., 1995).

The general consensus of the research on gender role stereotypes in advertising over the past four decades is that: women in ads are portrayed as (i) dependent on men (ii) needs protection of men, (iii) not making important decisions, (iv) homemakers, (v) mainly represented in home-settings and (vi) sex objects (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Sullivan & O'Connor, 1988). Similar results were found in studies of ads from countries such as Italy (Furnham & Voli, 1989), Australia (Mazella, Durkin, Cerini, & Buralli, 1992), Japan (Ford et. al., 1998), Korea (Cutler et. al., 1995), Hong Kong, (Sengupta, 1992), and Portugal (Neto & Pinto, 1998).

Hypothesis

The study examines the female portrayal in Indian print (magazine) advertisements and television commercials across various product and service categories. Based on the objective, following hypotheses have been framed:

H1: Majority of the advertisement depicts women in stereotyped role.

H2: Women are having high preference by the advertisers to endorse products which are considered to be female oriented.

H3: In majority of the advertisements, young female models are employed/used most often to promote the brand.

H4: Majority of the advertisement depicts women in home setting.

H5: Majority of the advertisement depicts women as product representative than as expert.

H6: Females will be shown more often without any indication of employment status.

H7: Television commercials dominate male voiceover in comparison to female voiceover.

Methodology

In order to address the proposition of this study, a proper and adequate research method was required to enumerate types of female portrayals featuring in the content of print and television advertisements. An exhaustive literature review indicated that content analysis is the most used research method to examine the role portrayals of females/males in print (magazine) and television advertisements (Lundstrom & Sciglimpaglia, 1979; Lysonski, 1985; Gilly, 1988; Furnham & Voli, 1989; Mitchell & Taylor, 1990; Ford & LaTour, 1993; Ford et. al., 1998; Milner & Collins, 2000; Das, 2000; Khairullah & Khairullah, 2009; Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009; Das 2011; Ali & Shahwar, 2011). Content in the context of analysis refers to words, statements (theme/assertion), character, imagery of character, location, voice-over, theme, product category, role that are used as unit of analysis.

I. Sample Design

As the study aims to assess the portrayal of females in Indian advertising, print and television medium is selected as it is the medium through which people are exposed to the maximum. Thus, in print medium, advertisements were selected from the magazines and General Entertainment Channels (GEC) in case of television.

Sampling plan for Magazine advertisements

The study first identified the most read magazine in three different genre viz. general interest magazine, male oriented and female oriented magazine in urban area (Delhi city). According to the Indian Readership Survey (IRS) data of the first Quarter of 2011, following magazines had the highest readership (see Table1):

- In General Interest Magazine, India Today (English) had the highest readership;
- In case of magazines targeted to female audience, Femina (English) had the highest readership and;
- In case of magazines targeted to males, Autocar (English) had the highest readership.

Table 1. Readership of different publications in Delhi, India

Publication	All	State: Delhi	Male	Female
The Times Of India	960	960	632	329
Hindustan Times	842	842	548	295
Navbharat Times	813	813	523	290
Hindustan	505	505	329	176
Punjab Kesari	365	365	273	92
Dainik Jagran	336	336	250	86
Infomedia Yellow Pages	209	209	150	59
India Today (English)	137	137	97	40
Pratiyogita Darpan	117	117	79	38
Grih shobha (Hindi)	106	106	37	69
Mail Today	102	102	74	29
Grehlakshmi	97	97	28	69
The Hindu	69	69	57	11
Mint	67	67	46	20
The Economic Times	65	65	50	15
Meri Saheli	59	59	8	50
Vanitha (Hindi)	57	57	2	55
General Knowledge Today	54	54	35	19
Champak (Hindi)	52	52	33	19
Femina	51	51	9	42
Readers Digest	51	51	26	25
Sandhya Times	48	48	41	7
Competition Success Review	47	47	27	20
Arogya Sanjivani	47	47	15	32
Auto Car	45	45	38	8
Nandan	45	45	24	21
Outlook	41	41	28	13
Nai Dunia	38	38	30	8
Cricket Samrat	37	37	32	5

Source: Indian Readership Survey (1st Quarter 2011) (* Highlighted publication has the highest readership in their respective genre)

The magazines selected for the study was weekly (India Today), fortnightly (Femina) and monthly (Autocar) publications. Issues published during April 2011 to July 2011 were selected. Advertisements which were quarter page or more in size with at least a female character in it were selected for the study as the study only examined female role portrayals in ads.

On the basis of criteria, a total of 263 advertisements were selected but only 120 advertisements were finally selected for coding and were further content analyzed. All repeat advertisements, institutional/corporate advertisements, advertisements containing solely children/kid, animated characters, and all those advertisements with no adult female character were excluded from the study.

Sampling plan for television advertisements

As per Television Audience Measurement Media Research (TAM) data 2011, the General Entertainment Channel (GEC) has maximum viewership (see Table 2) as compared to other genres, thus, ensuring a representative sample of ads watched by Indian television viewers. Ads were selected from the top four GEC channels in India viz. Star Plus, Colors, Zee TV and Sony Entertainment (see Table 3).

Programmes with the maximum TVR's were selected during August and September 2011 from the top four GEC channels (see Table 3.). Each channel was video-taped for four hours counter-balance basis. Ads run between 7 pm to 11 pm on selected GEC's were recorded.

Ads which appeared for 20 seconds or more were considered for analysis. From the literature review, it has also been identified that most of the studies on gender role portrayals in television advertisements have focused on primetime or on programs shown on major networks or in popular channels (Gilly, 1988; Mazzella et. al., 1992; Milner & Collins, 2000; Das 2011).

Table 2. Genre-wise share of television channels in India

Genre	Channel Share
GEC	2.193
Regional GEC	0.908
Hindi Movies	0.443
Others	0.404
Sports	0.329
Regional News	0.328
Regional Movies	0.133
Hindi News	0.113
Kids	0.103
Music	0.093
English Movies	0.055
Infotainment	0.054
Regional Music	0.049
Lifestyle	0.049
English GEC	0.043

Source: TAM Media Research

The final sample comprised of 155 television advertisements for content analysis since repeat advertisements, institutional/corporate advertisements, movie promotions, channel self-promotions, advertisements containing solely children/kid, animated characters, and all those advertisements with no adult female character were excluded from the study.

Table 3. General entertainment channel share

GEC Channel	Channel Share
Star Plus	8.72
Sony Entertainment TV	7.8
Colors	6.16
Zee TV	4.65
SAB	2.83
Imagine TV	1.84
Sahara One	0.78
Star One	0.78
Star Utsav	0.65
DD1	0.5
Bindass	0.2
Zee Smile	0.15
9X	0.02
Zee Salaam	0.01

Source: TAM Media Research

Table 4. Television rating points of different programmes in top 4 channels

Star Plus	TVR	Sony Entertainment	TVR
Saathiya Saath Nibhana	4.00	Kaun Banega Crorepati	3.40
Is Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon	2.90	Bade Achhe Lagte Hain	3.20
Just Dance	2.70	Crime Patrol	2.90
Yeh Rishta Kya Kehlata Hai	2.60	C.I.D.	2.80
Colors	TVR	Zee TV	TVR
Balika Vadhu	2.60	Pavitra Rishta	2.40
Uttaran	2.40	Hero Saregamapa Lil Champ	1.90
Na Aana Is Des Laado	1.90	Yahan Mein Ghar Ghar Kheli	1.70
Sasural Simar Ka	1.80	Hff Double Dhamaal	1.62

Source: TAM Media Research

II. Coding Procedure

The researcher adopted the coding procedure used in the previous researches on gender role portrayal (particularly Das 2000; Milner & Higgs 2004; Das 2011) with slight modifications to make it suitable for the current study.

Coding

Central figure: In this research, female adults playing a central role in a commercial/ advertisement were classified as central figure. If more than two females were depicted, those featuring most prominently were selected for further coding.

Role portrayal category: The study used the same role portrayals categories used in previous researches. Following categories were identified: (i) Dependency^a (ii) Housewife/parent/spouse/

girl friend, (iii) Sex-object/decorative, (iv) Career-oriented, (v) Authority figure/decision maker, (vi) Non-traditional, (vii) Celebrity, (viii) Neutral, and (ix) Others.

Age: Central figures were categorized as being (i) Young (35 Years or less) (ii) Middle Age (35-55 Years); (iii) Old (55 Years and above) or (iv) unclear.

Employment status: Central figures were categorized as being (i) Employed, (ii) Celebrity, (iii) Unemployed, and (iv) Unclear.

Credibility: Central figures were categorized as being either (i) Product user or (ii) Authority; when they were depicted as sources of information or expert (iii) Non-user or (iv) unclear.

Voice-over (in case of television ads): Voice-over is coded as (i) Male, (ii) Female, (iii) Chorus, and (iv) No voice-over.

Product category: The product categories were based upon the literature review and the scope of this study. The product categories were classified into following: (i) Personal care (cosmetics/toiletries); (ii) Home (household products); (iii) Food and beverages, (iv) Auto and auto accessories; (v) Clothing (men and women), (vi) Fashion/jewellery/accessories, (vii) Financial services/banking, (viii) Electronics/consumer durables, (ix) Telecom/mobile services, (x) Travel/tourism/hotel, and (xi) Others.

Location: Central figures were categorized according to whether they were depicted in a (i) Home; (ii) Office; (iii) Store/ Restaurants; (iv) Outdoor; or (v) Other.

III. Coding Reliability

In this study, an inter-coder reliability test was conducted using Holsti method (modified version of Scott's pi). In order to assess the reliability of the coding 'at least two different researchers must code the same body of content' (Mouter & Noordegraaf, 2012). Therefore, two management students, one male and one female coded 20 advertisements in order to test inter-coder reliability. Both the coders underwent seven days training to code the advertisements efficiently and appropriately and were given detailed description of the variables of content analysis. In Holsti method, the level of reliability for coding is determined by an inter-coder agreement coefficient which is calculated by dividing the number of agreed upon items between two coders by the number of total items they both coded. The Coefficient of percent agreement is .83 (83 per cent).

Results

H1: Majority of the advertisement depicts women in stereotyped role.

Women portrayal as housewife, sex-object have been defined as stereotyped. Table 5.0 indicates that in 62.9 per cent advertisements, women were depicted in stereotypical role. Majorly they were shown either performing daily household activities or merely an object to ensure eye balls of the customers. The chi-square analysis $\chi^2(6, N=275) = 210.6, p < .05$ supported the hypothesis that women are more likely to be portrayed in stereotyped roles.

Table 5.0. Frequency of female portrayals in Indian advertisements

Role Portrayal	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Housewife	73	26.5
Sex-object	100	36.4
Career-oriented	19	6.9
Non-traditional	6	2.2
Authority/Celebrity	56	20.4
Neutral	12	4.4
Others	9	3.3

H2: Women are having high preference by the advertisers to endorse products which are considered to be female oriented.

To test this hypothesis, products were grouped into three categories: (i) Female-oriented, (ii) Male-oriented, and (iii) Others. Products which are related to personal care, home, food and beverages, clothing and fashion have been defined as female-oriented products. Male-oriented products include auto, financial services, consumer durables, and telecom. The frequency distribution table (see Table 5.1) indicates that women are primarily preferred as brand endorser for female oriented while their appearance in commercials are very low in case financial services and telecom. The chi-square analysis $\chi^2 (2, N=275) = 131.3, p < .05$ supported the hypothesis that women are more likely to be portrayed in female oriented products.

Table 5.1. Frequency of appearance of females across product categories

Product Category	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Personal Care	70	25.5
Home	28	10.2
Food & Beverage	32	11.6
Auto	15	5.5
Clothing	15	5.5
Fashion	20	7.3
Financial Services	13	4.7
Consumer Durables	15	5.5
Telecom	10	3.6
Travel and Tourism	13	4.7
Others	44	16.0

H3: In majority of the advertisements, young female models are employed/used most often to promote the brand.

Table 5.2 indicates that out of 275 ads examined, women were mostly shown as young i.e. less than 35 years (88 per cent). Young female models are mainly used to gain visual attention to the advertisement. The chi-square analysis $\chi^2 (2, N=275) = 373.8, p < .05$ supported the hypothesis that women are more likely to be portrayed as young. Only in three advertisements woman was portrayed in older age.

Table 5.2. Age-wise female portrayal preference

Age (in years)	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Less than 35	242	88.0
35-55	30	10.9
55 and above	3	1.1

H4: Majority of the advertisement depicts women in home setting.

Consistent with the findings of previous studies, of 275 ads examined, only in 4 per cent ads women were shown in office settings (see Table 5.3). The chi-square analysis indicated that women are likely to be presented in home settings than office settings and verified significantly, $\chi^2 (4, N=275) = 111.5, p < .05$, hence the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5.3. Preference of location of advertisements

Location of advertisement	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Home	111	40.4
Office	11	4.0
Store/Restaurant	28	10.2
Outdoor	73	26.5
Others	52	18.9

H5: Majority of the advertisement depicts women as product representative than as expert.

The result supported the findings of previous studies that women are mainly shown as product representative or as user (see Table 5.4). In 61.8 per cent of ads, women were shown as product representative and only in 17.5 per cent ads they have been shown as expert. The chi-square analysis $\chi^2(3, N=275) = 204.6, p < .05$ is significant, hence the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5.4. Credibility of females in advertisements

Credibility	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Product User	170	61.8
Expert	48	17.5
Non-user	37	13.5
Unclear	20	7.3

H6: Females will be shown more often without any indication of employment status.

The result supported that women are mainly shown either unemployed or without any indication of their work status in majority of the print advertisements (see Table 5.5). In 52.4 per cent of ads status of women with respect to their employment were unclear which indicate that they are overrepresented in the 'unclear' category. The chi-square analysis $\chi^2(3, N=275) = 113.3, p < .05$ is significant, hence the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5.5. Employment status of females in advertisements

Employment Status	Frequency (n=275)	Per cent
Employed	33	12.0
Celebrity	55	20.0
Unemployed	43	15.6
Unclear	144	52.4

H7: Television commercials dominate male voiceover in comparison to female voiceover.

Table 5.6 exhibits the result of voice-over preference in television commercials. It indicated that male voiceover (50.3 per cent) has dominance in television commercials as compared to female voiceover (41.3 per cent). The chi-square analysis $\chi^2(3, N=155) = 110.94, p < .05$ is significant; hence the hypothesis is supported.

Table 5.6. Use of voice-over in television commercials

Voice-over	Frequency(n=155)	Per cent
Male	78	50.3
Female	64	41.3
Chorus	2	1.3
No Voice-over	11	7.1

Table 6. Chi-square test statistic

Variables	Df	Chi-square (χ^2)
Product category	2	131.3*
Location	4	111.5*
Role	6	210.6*
Age	2	373.8*
Employment	3	113.3*
Credibility	3	204.6*
Voice-over	3	110.9*

* $p \leq .05$

Discussion

As results indicate, stereotypical depiction of women persists in Indian advertisements. The dominant female role portrayals in advertisements were identified as sex-object (36.4 per cent), housewife (26.4 per cent), and as celebrity (20.4 per cent). Portrayal of women in the role of a housewife reflects the fact that in India the prime responsibility of a woman is towards her family where she is expected to invest more time and energy in the wife and mother roles than any other roles (Moideen, 1993). Though advertisers are giving preference to female celebrities (mostly film and sports personalities), yet the study finds that they either served as a decorative item in the ads or their endorsements are confined mainly to household products.

Moreover, the findings also indicate that in most of the advertisements, women were not depicted in office setting or a working role; but most often shown without a clear indication of their work status. This reveals that advertisers prefer to underplay the employment status of females while depicting them in ads. It was also found that majority of the female models are depicted as young and advertisers hardly employ women of older age. It is worthwhile to realise that the Indian consumer market also comprises of a significant percentage of middle-age and older women consumers (Census of India, 2011) and advertisers do not take into account the changing demographic pattern.

Overall, our findings were consistent with past findings (Munshi, 1998; Das, 2000, 2011; and Dwivedy et. al., 2009) which reiterates the fact that even today women are portrayed in traditional ways (shown as housewives and involved in household chores). Such portrayals in advertising media are reflective of societal and cultural expectations of the role to be performed by women as caregiver and nurturer (Eagly, 2000).

Further in line with the findings of Das (2000, 2011) and Dwivedy et. al. (2009), our study also indicates that the frequency of appearance of women is high for products related to personal care, home, food and beverages, clothing and fashion. This is because gender preference of brand with similar gender image generally results in such stereotyped gender-product pairings (Whipple & Courtney, 1985). It is also believed that women are the prime consumers of these product categories and that's "their" domain.

Presence of beautiful, young and sex object images of females in products of personal care, automobile, clothing and fashion explains advertisers' belief that an attractive representation may prove to be an effective way to gain and hold viewers attention (Solomon & Rabolt, 2006; Schaffer, 2006).

In contemporary advertising practices in India, drastic role reversals of men and women in ads have not occurred and majority of the advertisers seem to bank upon the traditional portrayal of women. They are still in a dilemma whether to portray women in positive portrayals (in progressive/non-traditional roles) or continue with inappropriateness of such images.

Managerial Implications

The findings of the present study offer many implications for marketing managers, practitioners and advertising strategists for advertisers—both national and international—to approach Indian consumers in terms of gender image in their advertising communications.

The current ad assessment in India reveals that gender stereotyping by advertisers and have ignored the significant progress women have made in the society which may lead to poor connect between the brand and consumers. For better connect and effective communication impact, it is advisable to marketing practitioners to review their strategy of gender portrayal. By employing more contemporary gender role representation and appropriate gender-product pairing in communication strategies, companies can enhance their competitive positioning by being more convincing and realistic.

Advertisers should consider the changes that are taking place in the Indian market - especially the evolving cultural and socio-economic contexts. Since urban India now, is moving towards more egalitarian society and is shedding traditional Indian attitudes toward family and work (Kotwal & Sahni 2008; Reddy et al., 2007), marketing practitioners should refine their messages in order to communicate effectively. The findings of our study suggest that probably the advertisers have not adequately captured the positive aspects of women's progress and their contribution to national development.

Further, from economic perspective, with the reforms in FDI policy in India, companies willing to tap the fast developing economic landscapes of major emerging markets (like India) can also benefit with the findings of this study and formulate better promotional strategies suited to local requirements. Khairullah & Khairullah (2008) observed that 'the recent socio-economic prosperity in India as a BEM (big emerging market) presents a major opportunity for international marketers to develop culturally sensitive advertising campaigns to effectively reach the growing affluent urban middle class Indian consumers'.

Conclusion

This study explored how women are depicted in the contemporary Indian print and television advertisements. The results indicated that even though women's role in the society has changed from being housebound to independent, advertisers today are paying no heed to these changes and remain locked to traditional image of women. Yet they are continued to be portrayed in advertising messages as engaged in household activities. Moreover, they are not even preferred for endorsing products and services of high involvement, for instance, consumer durables and financial services. They are mostly preferred for products belonging to personal care and self-grooming. In case of voice-over preference, male voice-over is generally seen to be dominant as compared to female voice-over especially while communicating key messages. The hypotheses of this study pertinent to the content analysis have been proven strongly by the results. Overall, the result of content analysis establishes the prevalence of gender typecasting in Indian advertising. Therefore, it is suggested that companies should review and relook their advertising message strategy to make their communications more realistic and identifiable, in order to create a desirable impact.

The study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed. The present study examined a small sample of ads from three magazines and does not focus on impact of magazine type on female portrayals. Future study should extend gender portrayal research not only to other conventional media but also to internet and digital marketing space. Besides, this research can also be extended to a survey of consumers to find out their preferences as unacceptable image may affect the buyer behavior.

Note

^a This category was merged with Housewife category due to low number (n=1)

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