

Women in Media: A Conceptual Analysis
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Abstract

In India women is always worshipped as goddess but with modernization the image of an Indian women has drastically changed. Women of today are, no doubt, empowered but somewhere she is lacking the due respect from the society and advertising plays a major role in reshaping their image. This study will present an analysis of the evolution of advertising's portrayal of women focusing on print media. Many advertisements make use of women for effectively communicating their message to the customers. But while doing so, sometimes the advertisers project women in a bad shape. This study will show the credibility of the sources that were found and use them to better understand the stereotypes and opportunities for women in the advertising world in print advertisements. This study talks about the projection of women in print media based on the opinion of people towards it.

Keywords: Women, gender, media

1. INRODUCTION

In present world where advertisement plays a pivotal role in positioning of a brand, various modes are being used to disseminate the information leaving strong impact on our lives. But somewhere the inclination of media is moving towards negativity where, the story or creativity of an advertisement is to promote the product but behind that somewhere they are distorting the image of women. The power to modify the image of any person is in hands of the media person, and in order to make the profit the basic ideology behind the scene is hidden. The portrayal of women in various Medias is a serious concern for modern time researchers to probe into, so that the transformation of their image can be notified.

Women & Media

Indian society is full of diversified cultures, traditions and beliefs. Our mass media's role as a social constructor and representative of people has greater responsibility in binding these complexities of culture and processes with the people of the society.

According to P. Anbarasan (1995), in India as a whole the status of women is undergoing a perceptible change. Women entering the labour market are on the rise, there is increase in the number of educated women, and heightened awareness of their mobilization to fight discrimination.

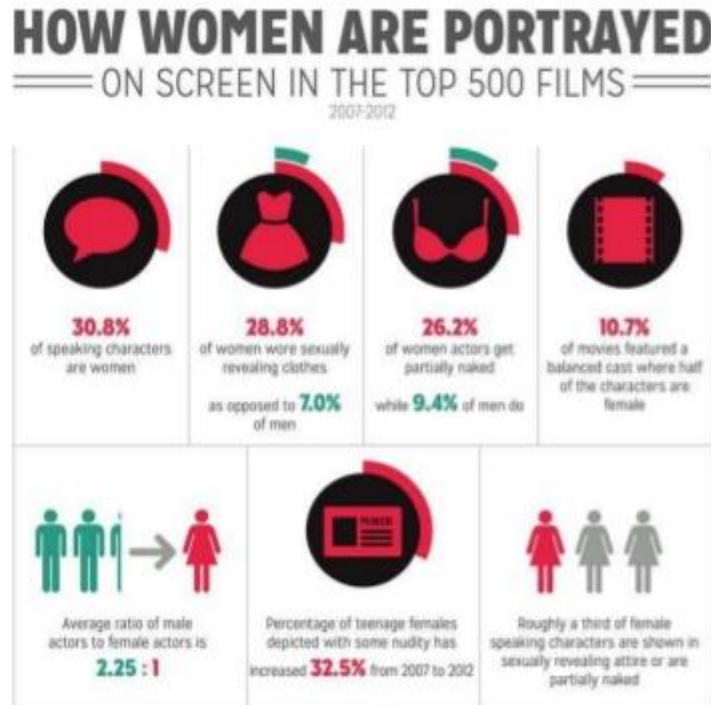
The role of women in the family life has undergone significant changes. As an educated housewife, or as a working woman she has acquired a respectable place in society. Today's women are increasingly aware. Magazines especially women's magazines carry a lot of information on social issues and personal family issues. Media has confined to the women in the middle and the higher classes, whether in the rural or urban areas, and more particularly in the urban areas- whether as passive consumers or as active players.

Role of Women in Media

Over the years, and especially during the last decade, India has developed a fairly extensive communication infrastructure. The subject of portrayal of women in Indian media has drawn the attention of media critiques in the present times. It arises especially when our society is going through a period of social change.

As in patriarchal society, till in India women in being considered as inferior sex. Though after many revolutions to empower Indian women, still women is considered as an object, a beautiful thing to be decorated or used in a house for the use of other members of the family. Male dominance is still being celebrated in society. Though women plays an essential role in shaping a home, shaping the future of children. Even they are contributing to the nation's economy, still there are few hindrances which are not supporting the independence, safety and liberty to women and to a major extent advertisement plays major role in designing their negative shape. As said by R. Akhileshwari (1988), who made a scathing comment on the negative aspects of the portrayal of women in Indian mass media. The woman who is educated is considered to be self-centered, rude, independent, or economically strong women are seen as very rough, dominating,

careless, etc. However, ad seems to be the most common source of damaging the image of women.



What does this mean for Ideology and gender

Remember, ideology is defined as follows:
The body of doctrine, myth, belief, etc., that guides an individual, social movement, institution, class, or large group

Given how women are portrayed in these top 500 films, which ideologies (and hegemonic ideas) are being disseminated, and how does this get internalized by the audience?

Source:Jordi Roth(2014)

In my study I have used the portrayal of women via Print media. Print media is something which includes magazines, newspapers, newsletters, etc. in our society the print media is considered as the platform for criticism. According to P. Kumar; 1995, the media reflects events taking place in society and provides a platform for dialogue and debate on issues which can generate social changes. While electronic media carries more immediate weight on focusing attention on various issues, it is print media which has more persistent and lasting effect. It is felt that the way women are being projected in the print and electronic media is a reflection on the whole society.

Though there is no authentic research done in this area it is estimated by those working in this field that print media, both daily and weekly, that only about 7 to 10 % of the total coverage on women's issues and about half of these are related to sex, prostitution, glamour, entertainment and crime.

The English press and the language papers in India have been doing well as far as the coverage of women is concerned. Lead reports, articles, editorials, features and news analysis have been published on women's issues. Nonetheless the last decade has seen the setting up of women's publishing houses (Kali, Mandira, Horizon and others), some of which publish exclusively on women.

Impact of portrayal of women in Advertisements on Society

Advertisement is the mirror of the society, it reflect the value, beliefs and the norms of the society. The way in which women are depicted in television advertisements might be linked to their feet is in the society. With the changes in time, there are changes in the society and also in the mind-set of the people. So it is important to examine and study the mind or attitude of the people constantly from time to time. Advertisement is something to make profit by selling the image of perfection to the prospects. Sometimes, the advertisements lack on ethical grounds and they mostly show the women as sex objects, physically beautiful and subordinate to men in advertising. They were most often portrayed in home settings and for household products. After the industrialization as women started to work in increasing number, the gender role portrayals in advertisements have changed according to the changing roles of the woman in society. The image of the ideal woman began to be transformed women in advertisements became Central characters and worked as working outside the home in non traditional progressive occupation.

Need for this study

The main purpose of this research is to analyse the image of women being portrayed in the advertisements of done by print media. About how, why and where they are being negatively shown which leaves poor impact n the minds of the consumers, especially women. Also the

study uncovers the issues related to the portrayal of women, specifically in print media, followed by some suggestions for the government and other agencies to probe and highlight such issue so that the image of women should be safe and protected. Various scientists have done various studies on this issue, but still though this study it will be an addition to the knowledge in the context of fluctuating role of women in media.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Various researches have been conducted on the issue of portrayal of women in the research world. Following studies were being critically analysed and noted down.

Mtambalike (1996), in his study found that the messages which the media shows are very powerful and it influences the value and perception of society for women.

Jha, Rama, (1992) in his book has very clearly examined the role of men and women in the magazines. His results indicate men and women in media are still shown in stereotypical ways, though with time other things have changed.

Alexander and Hanson (2001) have questioned the mass media about portrayal of women's self-concept. Most of the time the media impose a sense of inadequacy on self-concept by the use of advertising and using their physical attractiveness but on the cost of other relevant attributes.

Englis, Solomon and Ashmore (1994) concluded that appearances matter, and "attractive people are better like are assumed to be more sociable, independent and exciting".

Rajagopal and Gales (2002) conducted a content analysis of research on women in advertising and found that women are typically portrayed in advertising in one of three roles—mother, beauty or sex symbol—none of which "represent women's diversity". They found that the stereotyping of women in advertising places undue stress on a woman's appearance; however, they argue that the blame lies with the media and not the affected women.

Holtzhausen, Jordaan & North (2011), in his study has analysed the women portrayal in south African television advertisements. The major objective was to identify the role played by women on selected South African television channels and it was found that rational appeal of advertising was mostly used and it was mainly featuring women in their commercials.

Haji Mohammadi (2011), in his study emphasised on gender roles in television ads in order to decode the most dominant discourse of various main elements and focused on ideologies, power relation, etc. in reproducing dominant discourse.

Sethuraman, Kavita, Lansdown, Richard and Keith, and, Sullivan. (2006) examined the role of sociocultural determinants in maternal and child under nutrition in tribal and rural communities in South India. Women's lack of empowerment is believed to be an important factor in the persistent prevalence of malnutrition.

Ford, La Tour, and Lundstrom (1991) examined the attitudes women had towards female role portrayals in advertising. The survey was based on one survey made in 1977 by Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia that measured women's general perceptions of their portrayals in advertisements. The results of the 1991 study showed that women were still critical of the way in which they were portrayed in advertising.

In a study conducted by Rudman and Verdi (1993) the researchers compared the sexual and violent imagery of females and males in advertising and came out with the findings that female model were more likely than male models to be placed in submissive, sexually exploitive, and violent positions.

In a study conducted in the year 1999 Reichert et al. (1999) examined how sexual explicitness in advertising continued to increase by comparing various magazine advertisements from 1983 and 1993, and found that in 1993 both female and male models were more likely to be dressed in a

sexually explicit manner; and in both years, female models were three times as likely as males to be dressed in a sexually explicit manner.

Krassas et. al., (2001) examined the sexual objectification of women in magazine advertisements by comparing Cosmopolitan and Playboy magazines which demonstrated that the sexual objectification of women through the reinforcement of the male gaze was clearly the dominant rhetoric in both magazines, even though one was a pornographic magazine and the other was not.

Frith&Mueller,(2003) found that the attractive female bodies and sexual stimuli had been historically used in the U.S advertisements to attract the attention of the viewers and to make an attempt to create interest in a product or service.

Lindner (2004) examined various female photos from general interest magazines and few fashion related magazines from year 1955 to 2002, by comparing the advertisements in general interest magazines, and fashion magazines from 1955 to 2002 and came out with the findings that women were portrayed more in decorative roles and decorative portrayals of women had increased significantly in both magazines of general interest and fashion magazine advertisements.

Based on the above review, the objective framed for this study was to do the content analysis of the images published in print media consisting of various magazines. A critical analysis was being done, in order to evaluate the portrayal of women in print media. In order to carry out this research a standard research methodology was being designed within conceptual framework.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to fulfill the objectives of the study, the critical evaluation of the content was being done, where the available facts and information of Indian print media was used. For the analysis,

few renowned magazines were being selected in which the thematic articles on portrayal of women was read and analysed. The name of the magazines undertaken for this study is: Vogue, Femina, Filmfare, Miami, Cosmopolitan, GQ.

Vogue: This is a lifestyle and fashion magazine of United States. It usually covers the topics like fashion, beauty, living, culture and runway. It was founded in year 1892. It's a monthly issued magazine and has been called as the top fashion magazine of world.

Femina: It is the oldest women's magazine in English in India. It is Indian owned by worldwide media. It was first issued in July 1959 and covers topic like beauty, fashion, career, women icons, etc.

Filmfare: This magazine was intrigued in 152 published by worldwide media, times group. It gives awards like Filmfare awards, etc.

Miami: This magazine basically is based in Southeast Florida's city. It was founded in year 2005 and deals in areas as people, life, politics, culture, etc.

Cosmopolitan: This is again an international fashion magazine. It is centered to women readers. It was published in year 1886 in United States. It discusses issues like sex, beauty, horoscope, celebrities, etc.

GQ: It is an international magazine focusing on music, food, music, lifestyle, etc. its New York based magazine and was founded in year 1931

Above mentioned few of Indian and International based magazines were used to analyse the objective of this study.

4. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

The analysis of above contents of magazine depicted that women in media are always being underplayed when it comes to their role played at their workplace. The real role of women is always being under determined. It was also found that younger aged women were chosen over women of older age. Thus age plays a vital role in selection of the women in advertisement. It clearly shows that women of younger age are always preferred and demographic aspect was not

taken under consideration. Analysis also reveals that around 70 percent of the advertisements show women as the product/brand user whereas remaining portrays them as expert of the product.

This was supported by the study conducted by Das (2000) and Dwivedy et al. (2009). Advertisers have understood this point that women, from the point of view of advertising, are profitable but their acceptance from consumer as they are portrayed is still unclear. The consumer's still prefer the women to be shown in traditional manner rather than an object playing an independent role. It was found that the image of woman in print media was not shown in a healthy manner, rather it is quite degrading to consider a women and use her as a commercial commodity. The mindset of advertise makers should be changed so that the malpractices and exploitation among female workers in media should be stopped.

As compared to the advertising trends worldwide, in India the portrayal of women is more stereotyped. However, many countries like US, UK, Japan, Korea, Singapore also portray the image of women in advertisement, especially in print media as a sex object. They are always being selected based on their low age, beauty, attractiveness, and product users. Media houses should place more and more women at all levels so as to challenge the traditional media works. Sensitization of news reporters, editors and writers is needed so that they can cover gender balanced news. This study investigated the gender gap in the print media. By studying and analyzing the newspaper editions for a period of one week, this study suggests that there is an urgent need to sensitize media persons towards gender issues. It is important to portray a positive and balanced image of women. The media must refrain from only focusing on women related crime and hence, portraying them as a weak citizen.

Women who are already working in media houses must bear a large responsibility of not only changing the attitudes of people but also shaping public opinions. A woman reporter/journalist must provide useful insights and perspectives to women related news. It is also important for

them to shift their focus towards rural women as well. They must realize the fact that media can play a major role in advancement of women.

The analytical review depicts that still the society is dominated by patriarchic ideologies and still after so much of empowerment changes the mindset of the society is tough to change. The stereotype thinking is not eradicating from the minds of the male section of the society who always predict something objectionable when it comes the portrayal of women in society as well as in media. Also it seems to a cumbersome task to change the mindsets of the people as they always carry some type of stereotyped associations with themselves. It may take long time as well as great deal of experiments to change their mindsets for usage of women in media.

This research is all about the theoretical analysis from various print media sources and the above discussion may open doors for the marketing managers and advertising strategy makers to assess the women participation, stop gender discrimination and value the progress of women, her contribution in media and ultimately in the Indian economy. She should be considered and devalued for their active participation. It may somewhere also lead to poor congruency between the brand and the consumer. Hence it is advisable for the advertising strategy makers to revise their designed strategies and create things which should not be gender biased and the portrayal of gender should be fair and worth accepted by the society.

It is not only the duty of government but many non-government agencies, media, NGO', private firms to stand against the exploitation of women portrayed in media. As many times media fails to provide a clear and balanced picture of female section, their lives and about their major contribution to the society. Still lot of attention is to be paid when it comes to involvement, presentation and participation of women in advertising world. Our country need to present more and more enablement in spite of only imposing rule and regulations. Everything should be streamlined so that the empowerment and advancement of women should be assured. All agencies should come together and design some joint strategies to stops gender biasness and promote equality over disparities so the justice for all can be ensured.

To sum it all, it should be noted that women are underrepresented in all spheres of life, be it education, health, population growth etc. Here, media can play an important role to awaken society so as to make them realise about the true potential of women. Media is an important medium of communication now a day's which can effectively convey information to the masses. In India, women issues are of utmost significance as our nation cannot progress by leaving about half of the population behind. Therefore, media houses must make it an objective to improve women's conditions, status and image in the society.

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