WOMEN ROLE PORTRAYAL IN INDIAN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS AND PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS

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Abstract: Television, one of the greatest inventions of the world, has been very successful in India over past 50 years in bringing different cultures and regional people together, and became the most powerful media for communication and entertainment. The purpose of this study is to identify the central figure portrayed in Indian television commercials along with the role portrayed by women and to know how adolescents perceive the role and which role influences the adolescents to make the purchase. Content analysis was carried out on 262 ads telecasted in Indian television from three different languages (English, Hindi, and Telugu) and from three types of channels (Sports, Music, and Regional) based on existing literature. Adolescents' perceptions were identified by distributing a structured questionnaire to 318 teenagers' age of 17-19 who were selected by systematic random sampling from engineering colleges of Hyderabad city in India. Results indicated that the central figures of Indian television commercials were women than men, which is contradictory to previous studies. Role portrayed by women still follows the stereotyped role i.e., women as a beauty symbol. Even adolescents also perceive that women were shown in beauty and dependent roles though their status and role in the society is changing. Results show that boys were more influenced than girls. This study provides insights into the changing trends in portrayal of women in Indian television advertisements. Results from this study provide significant contributions for marketing and advertising managers seeking to improve their understanding of the ever-growing adolescent consumer market.

Keywords: Adolescents, Influence, Perception, Television advertisements, Women's role.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since September 15, 1959 when television was first introduced in India, it was continuously entertaining the viewers. Emergence of cable and satellite channels exposed the viewers to more information around the world which in-turn has affected the attitudes and behaviour of individuals (Robert Jenson, 2007). As consumers started seeing themselves in media images (Tiggemann, 2004; Hari Krishna Behra, 2015), which in turn made television advertisement a reliable source of information about product when compared to other media (Ankitasrivastava, 2014).

Over the last few decades, many researchers from various fields' psychology, marketing, and communication have studied gender roles in advertising (Yann Verhellen, 2016). Although gender role portrayals in advertising have been

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extensively studied in Western and other Asian countries, very few such analyses have been done in India. Even the study conducted by Jorg Matthens (2016) about women portrayal across the globe also exempted India from considering as sample from Asian region. India with 50% of population under age of 25 stands first in world's youth population. Because of its huge consumer base India is always a target for marketers. When it comes to research on Indian consumers it is very less.

A woman in India watches' television for 32 hours per week which is 4 hours more than a man (Ingrid Luden, 2012). As most of the television viewers were female, the advertisers started portraying women in their commercials, so that they can influence them. The media in general, is portraying women in stereotyped roles like house maker, dependent, or as a sex object (Jorg Mattens, 2016; Yann Verhellen, 2016; Velandia, 2014; McArthur, 1975; Elizebeth, 2016; Furnham, 2010) which lead to the misconceptions among the public about the way women are, or should be or might hope to become (Gunter, 1982).This is happening not just in India but also in all the other countries. Women are now featuring alongside or even par to men in many fields (Maren Wellenreuther, 2015). Men's previous identities as sole breadwinners, which gave them significant control over decision-making, were being undermined by women's increasing labour force participation. (Mellissa Withers. et. al., 2015). With the increase in literacy rate, the way a woman thinks and her attitude towards another woman had changed (Deb Deepanjali, 2015). Women in India, whether they are in rural or urban, are coming out of the kitchen and entering into working, political, and business arenas, which clearly shows a shift in their status.

Adolescents have become target for advertisers as they are in the process of learning their values and roles (Jean Kilbourne, 2002; Aruna, Nidhi Kotwal, 2008), they are more influenced to buy the TV advertised products, as compared to other ages (Nidhi Rani, 2016). As teens are in learning process they gain knowledge about products and their usage by watching television (Lokesh Sharma, 2014). Television commercials are impacting the lifestyle of today's adolescents as they identify themselves with the character shown and try to imitate it (Archana Kumari, 2015). Comparing themselves with media images has both creative and destructive ways on adolescents (AneeE. Becker, 2004).

As the influence of youth in decision making has increased, marketers should know what actually influences adolescents to make a buying decision. Influence of adolescents in family decision is substantially increasing (Roberto de Araújo, 2015) especially families with dual-income status are allowing teens influence for family purchases (Hiral Chavda, 2002).

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Around the world women now have influence over the decisions that affect their lives (Tam ONeil, 2015). Such change is because of the increasing purchasing power

of female, which made them as the major influences in decision making process (Asha, 2010). Over the past two decades, women's right to participate fully and equally with men in all aspects of decision making has been enshrined, this in turn making the marketer's to portray female in their television commercials (GADN report, 2016). Advertising always doesn't show an equal balance in representing both the genders (Valls-Ferna´ndez and Martinez-Vicente, 2007). Results indicate that in Indian television commercials, men are portrayed more as central figure and as voice over than women (Mallika Das, 2011). When we look at mode of presentation in Asia, men were given voice overs and women were portrayed visually (Adrian Furnham and Stephanie Paltzer, 2010). Study conducted by Vaishali Shrikhande (1998) says that women have been appearing more as central figure then men.

H1: Women were portrayed more as central figure than men in Indian television commercials.

Despite differences in samples and time periods there is no difference in stereotyping of female roles in television commercials (Elizebeth., 2016), in Indian television advertising female stereotyping is still continuing where they were shown mostly as housewives, and young models were used to promote the products (Shyama Kumari, 2015). According to Moorthi (2014) the nature of portrayals of women in television advertisement is varying depending on the type of product being advertised. Contrary to all the previous studies today women in some advertisements are shown in ambitious and independent roles and are trying to promote women empowerment (Press Institute of India, 2015) and also there was an increase in multi-tasking roles where women are shown as a homemaker, a professional and a responsible citizen, who juggles multiple roles with ease (Deepali Naair, 2016).

H2: Women were portrayed more in home maker and symbol of beauty roles when compared to other roles.

A study conducted by Lokesh Sharma (2014), says that irrespective of gender television commercials not only influence the purchasing behaviour but also results in increase of frequency in purchases and when comes to FMCG products women were influenced by advertising (Nilesh, 2015). Advertisements were influencing more on purchasing behaviour of females when compared to men (Ali Hassan, 2015). Though both genders were influenced, men and women viewers think differently about the portrayal of women in television advertisements (Deva Malar, 2015).

H3: Male were more influenced than women by portraying women in television commercials.

Even though women were influenced by the advertisements they were not happy with the stereotypical roles portrayed by women (Raichaudhuri, 2014). Whether the woman is a regular viewer or irregular viewer of television she doesn't want to perceive women as dependent, attractive, and involve in romantic affairs (Gunter,

1982). Contrary to this men were more influenced by the models which were shown in sensual outfits but not as sex objects (Archana Kumari, 2015). Same opinions also came from study conducted by Arunaand Nidhi Kotwal (2008) on adolescents, that boys wants to see women in glamorous and fashionable role whereas girl wants to see them as independent or ambitious. Even the study conducted by Nichole. J. Thurm (2001) says that men and women responds to advertising differently that women involve in the character and always want them to plot as independent and ambitious character, where men will look at women portrayed and will move on. Most men and women feel that showing women in erotic way is offensive but they will gain attention immediately and the impression which live long (Singda Sukumar, 2014). The results of the study conducted by Shyama Kumari (2015) supports the above by saying that respondents are favourable for the stereotyped portrayal of women that is influencing their intention to buy the products. Adolescent girls were criticizing the female images portrayed but were identifying themselves in natural and conventional roles (Karan Chan, 2012) they also have more negative attitude towards stereotypical portrayal of women when compared to men (Prokopis, 2013).

H4: Adolescents perceive women were portrayed more as symbol of beauty.

H5: Adolescents were influenced more by portraying women as symbol of beauty when compared to other roles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research was Conducted in Two Phases

To identify the central character and different roles portrayed by women in television commercials, advertisements from music channels and sports channels of Hindi, English and Telugu were recorded for 4 hours a day from 6 to 10 pm for six days i.e., on Saturday and Sunday of every week in the month of May, 2016 as this is the time adolescents view television more. Advertisements chosen were from three types of channels like Sports (Star Sports, Sony max), Music Channels of both Hindi and Telugu language (9x, Maa music, Gemini music, Mtv) and also from Telugu regional channels (Gemini TV, Maa TV, Etv, and Zee TV). Most of the recorded advertisements were of Hindi and Telugu language.

Sampling Frame

Commercials which portray adult male or female or both as central figures are only recorded. Commercials in which children appeared as central figures are not recorded. Ads which were repeated, ads sponsored by government, institutional ads, channel self-promotion ads, and movie promotional ads were excluded from the study. By following this procedure, a total of 262 (18 English, 93 Hindi, and 152 Telugu) commercials were recorded. In sports channel most of the ads were repeated because of that the number is less.

Variables considered for coding are explained below.

(a) *Central figure:* Male or Female adults appearing in the commercial visually for more than 3s (Mallika Das, 2011) were considered as central figure.

(b) *Roles played by women:* The Roles of women were categorized according to the roles in which women were portrayed (McArthur, 1975). The roles categorized were

(c) *Home maker:* Role is coded as Home maker if the central figure is shown as a house wife who always cares for her family and wants her house to be clean.

(d) *Symbol of Beauty:* Under this role women were portrayed as so beautiful either having fair skin, long hair, thin personality, white teeth, well dressed.

(e) *Ambitious:* In this category a women is shown as a person who has some ambition and at any cost she wants to reach that goal.

(f) *Independent:* Role which is coded as Independent is that in which Women are shown where they can make decisions and do the work by themselves without taking the help of other people.

(g) *Dependent:* Under this category the ads which show women as persons who are dependent on their family members and feel insecure.

(h) *Multi-Tasking:* Ads showing women playing more than one role are coded as multiple- tasking like she manages both her house and office work.

(i) *Sex object:* If women were shown as those who gets attracted to men just for sexual cause, then that type of ads were coded under sex object.

Coding Reliability

Once the data have been recorded by the two coders, inter-coder reliability was checked using Scott's Pi statistic. The quality and agreement of the coders is highly satisfactory. Results of the coding were given in the Table 1.

TABLE 1: RESULTS OF SCOTT'S PI

Number	Variable	Scott's Pi value
1	Central Figure	1.00
2	Home maker	0.97
3	Symbol of Beauty	1.00
4	Ambitious	0.86
5	Independent	0.83
6	Dependent	0.95
7	Multi-tasking	0.98
8	Sex object	0.87

An empirical field research was conducted to identify the role perceived by the respondents and also to know which role influences them. A structured questionnaire was developed containing series of statements regarding women portrayal (Deva Malar, 2015) was distributed to undergraduate students between the ages of 17-19. 318 respondents were selected from selected engineering colleges of Hyderabad, Telangana, India. Questionnaires were distributed and collected in the month of June,2016.

Likert scale was used to record the perceptions of these respondents.

Data Analysis

Results for each stage were discussed in this section. SPSS was used for data analysis. Chi-square test was used to test all the hypotheses. Significant level was considered at $p = 0.05$. Out of 262 ads women appeared as central figure in 153 ads and men as central figure in 109 ads and both as central figures in 17 ads. So totally women appeared in 169 ads and men 126.

H1: Women were portrayed more as central figure than men in Indian television commercials.

Out of 262 commercials296 characters were coded in which 126(48%) were male and 169 (52%) female. χ^2 (1; N = 295) = 6.268, $p = .012$, which supports H1.

H2: Women were portrayed more in home maker and symbol of beauty roles when compared to other roles.

Roles were categorised into seven types. An overall Chi-square test was conducted to test the roles portrayed. 169 roles were identified in which 36 (22.5%) were homemakers, 58 (36.25) were symbols of beauty, 27 (16.87%)were ambitious, 15(9.37%) were independent, 21(13.12%) were dependents, 6(3.75%) were multi-taskers and remaining 6 (3.75%) were sex objects. χ^2 (6; N = 169) = 84.781, $p < .001$, which supports H2.

H3: Male were more influenced than women by portraying women in television commercials.

Out of 318 respondents 188 were male and 130 were female. χ^2 (4; N = 318) = 27.681, $p < .001$, which supports H3.

H4: Adolescents perceive women were portrayed more as symbol of beauty.

Out of 188 male respondents 77 respondents (41%) perceived that women were portrayed as symbol of beauty, 36 (19.1%) perceived as homemaker, 14 (7.4%) as ambitious, 16 (8.5%) as independent, 6 (3.2%) as dependent, 36 (19.1%) perceived women in multi-tasking role, and 3 (1.6%) as sex object. In 130 female respondents 52 (40%) perceived that women were portrayed as symbol of beauty, 14 (10.8 %) perceived homemaker, 18 (13.8%) as ambitious, 12 (9.2%) as independent, 6 (4.6%) as dependent, and 28 (21.52%) perceived women in multi-tasking role, and no one for sex object. χ^2 (6; N = 318) = 9.328, $p = .156$, which supports H4.

H5: Adolescents were influenced more by portraying women as symbol of beauty when compared to other roles.

In 188 male respondents 82(43.6%) were influenced by portraying women as symbol of beauty, 6 (3.2%) by homemaker, 10 (5.3%) by ambitious, 32 (17%) by independent, 8 (4.3%) by dependent, 47 (25%) by multi-tasking role, and 3 (1.6%) by sex object. In 130 female respondents 30 (23.1%) influenced by portraying women as symbol of beauty, 4 (3.1%) by homemaker, 14 (10.8%) by ambitious, 20 (15.4%) by independent, 62 (47.7%) by multi-tasking role, no one said that they were influenced by dependent and sex object roles. $\chi2$ (6; N = 318) = 31.513, $p < .001$, which supportsH5.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the results show that women are portrayed more as central figure than men which is a remarkable change from previous research done by (Mallika Das, 2011; Verhellen, 2016; Furnham, 2010; McAurther, 1975;) but it is in line with the results of Vaishali Shrikhande (1998) and Furnham (2011) who say that women are presented visually more as central figure than men. Men were portrayed as central figure more in sports channel when compared to music and regional channel. This is because more viewers of sports channel were men, who like to relax with live programming (Flint Stephens, 2016) and sports channel cover men played sports more when compared to women (Nathalie Koivula, 1999).Women were portrayed as central figure in regional languages as women like to watch soap operas.

The research for the past five decades shows that women were still portrayed in same stereotyping roles of beauty, home maker, and dependent (Jorg Mattens, 2016; Verhellen, 2016; Velandia,2014; Furnham,2010; Mc.Aurther, 1975; Elizebeth., 2016; Furnham, 2010). The results of this study support the results of previous studies. Most of the commercials coded show women as beauty symbol and homemaker when compared to other roles. Best thing to note is portraying women in ambitious role have been increased which is supporting the results of the study that is conducted in Hong Kong where women were portrayed more in professional and occupational roles (Furnham, 2010) and study of Krishna (2011) says that women were projected as confident, dominant, and as extrovert, which is also supported by 123helpme.com which says that women were increasingly seen in Career-Oriented role and as working women. Although media is trying to portray women as working women it's not close to actual reality (Deva Malar, 2015). Commercials in which both male and female were as central figure women were portrayed in dependent role. This supports the results of Furnham, (2010), McAurther, (1975). Results from content analysis were showing a steep decrease in portrayal of women as sex object. These results are because of respondent's negative attitude towards sex image (Gunter, 1982) which leads to rejection of the products featuring women in offensive way (John, 1996). Analysis done by Velandia (2014)

says that half of the commercials have been showing high level of sexism. This is contradictory to our results. As cultural values of the country play an important role in portraying of women (Prokopis, 2013; Furnham, 2011),Indian television commercials portray women as sex symbol to a minimum extent.

Previous studies showed that the influence of women in advertising varied from male and female (Ali Hassan, 2015; Nilesh, 2015; Nidhi Kotwal, 2008; Nichole, 2001; Deva Malar, 2015). The studies say that the women were more influenced by portraying women, but the results from our study say that men were getting more influenced than women. This contradicts all the previous researches. But this is in line with study of Vinod Kumar Bishnoi (2009) who says that male teenagers are more influenced than female. Varying results have come may be because of female respondents of this study who perceived that women were shown as symbol of beauty which is different from their influencing role which is multi-tasking. Women will get influenced only when they are portrayed as they are in the society (Claudia Rosa Acevedo, 2013).

Results of the study show that irrespective of gender respondents perceived that women were mostly shown as symbol of beauty in Indian television commercials, which coincides with the identified role portrayed by women through content analysis in this study. As observed by (Claudia Rosa Acevedo, 2013;Verhellen, 2016; Mallika Das, 2011) and all these says that viewers perceive women in beauty role only.

Results show that influencing role vary according to the gender, where male were influenced by portraying women as symbol of beauty but female were influenced by portraying women as multi-tasking person. The results were same as the results from studies conducted by (Archana Kumari, 2015; Nidhi Kotwal 2008; Nichole, 2001). Female students showed more agreement with typical stereotypical representation of women in traditional role or as a sex object and they felt a need of regulation on the content of media when compared to male (Archana Kumari, 2015).

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

As all studies, this study also has limitations while coding the roles of women portrayed in the television as it depends on the judgement of the coders. India has 23 constitutionally recognized official languages but only ads telecasted in three languages were selected for content analysis. Sample selected is only from Hyderabad. Future researchers can concentrate on comparing the advertisements portrayed in regional languages as India has diversified cultures. Some studies showed that apart from television advertisements there are many factors which effect adolescent buying behaviour like peers influence is more in adolescent buying (Han-Jen Neu, 2013). Adoption behaviour of an adolescent is highly influenced by their friends, financial status, and family members especially for durables (Sang Yup

Lee, 2014). Research can also be done on adolescents and television advertisement influence on different stages of consumer buying process. The current trend is that most of the adolescents are moving away from television to smart media so it's time for the advertiser to change the role portrayed by women to the role which influence them more.

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Annexure

SPSS Table for H1

TABLE 1: CENTRAL FIGURE OF INDIAN TELEVISION COMMERCIAL CENTRAL FIGURE

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Male	126	147.5	−21.5
Female	169	147.5	21.5
Total	295		

TABLE 1: (A) CHI-SQUARE VALUE FOR H1 TEST STATISTICS

	Central figure
Chi-Square	6.268[a]
df	1
Asymp. Sig.	.012

SPSS Table for H2

TABLE 2: DIFFERENT ROLES PORTRAYED BY WOMEN IN INDIAN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS ROLE

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Homemaker	36	24.1	11.9
Symbol of beauty	58	24.1	33.9
Ambitious	27	24.1	2.9
Independent	15	24.1	−9.1
Dependent	21	24.1	−3.1
Multitasking	6	24.1	−18.1
Sex object	6	24.1	−18.1
Total	169		

TABLE 2: (A) CHI-SQUARE VALUE FOR H2 TEST STATISTICS

	ROLE
Chi-Square	84.781[a]
df	6
Asymp. Sig.	.000

[a]0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 24.1.

SPSS Table for H3

**TABLE 3: INFLUENCE OF WOMEN PORTRAYAL IN INDIAN
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS ON GENDER
GENDER × INFLUENCE**

		Influence					Total
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
Male	Count	32	56	30	46	24	188
	% within gender	17.0%	29.8%	16.0%	24.5%	12.8%	100.0%
Female	Count	30	64	20	8	8	130
	% within gender	23.1%	49.2%	15.4%	6.2%	6.2%	100.0%
Total	Count	62	120	50	54	32	318

**TABLE 3: (A) CHI-SQUARE VALUE FOR H3
CHI-SQUARE TESTS**

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	27.681[a]	4	.000
Likelihood Ratio	29.901	4	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	19.394	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	318		

[a]cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 13.08.

SPSS Table for H4

**TABLE 4: PERCEIVED ROLES PORTRAYED BY WOMEN IN INDIAN
TELEVISION COMMERCIALS BY SAMPLE**

			Perceived Role							Total
			Homemaker	Symbol of beauty	Ambitious	Independent	Dependent	Multi-tasking	Sex object	
Gender	Male	Count	36	77	14	16	6	36	3	188
		% within gender	19.1%	41.0%	7.4%	8.5%	3.2%	19.1%	1.6%	100.0%
	Female	Count	14	52	18	12	6	28	0	130
		% within gender	10.8%	40.0%	13.8%	9.2%	4.6%	21.5%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	50	129	32	28	12	64	3	318
		% within gender	15.7%	40.6%	10.1%	8.8%	3.8%	20.1%	0.9%	100.0%

TABLE 4: (A) CHI-SQUARE VALUE FOR H4
CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	9.328[a]	6	.156
Likelihood Ratio	10.493	6	.105
Linear-by-Linear Association	1.156	1	.282
N of Valid Cases	318		

[a]3 cells (21.4%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.23.

SPSS Table for H5

TABLE 5: WOMEN PORTRAYED ROLE IN INDIAN TELEVISION
COMMERCIALS WHICH INFLUENCES MORE

			homemaker	*symbol of beauty*	*Ambitious*	*Independent*	*dependent*	*Multi-tasking*	*Sex object*	*Total*
Gender	Male	Count	6	82	10	32	8	47	3	188
		% within gender	3.2%	43.6%	5.3%	17.0%	4.3%	25.0%	1.6%	100.0%
	Female	Count	4	30	14	20	0	62	0	130
		% within gender	3.1%	23.1%	10.8%	15.4%	0.0%	47.7%	0.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	10	112	24	52	8	109	3	318
		% within gender	3.1%	35.2%	7.5%	16.4%	2.5%	34.3%	0.9%	100.0%

TABLE 5: (A) CHI-SQUARE VALUE FOR H5
CHI-SQUARE TESTS

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	31.513[a]	6	.000
Likelihood Ratio	35.644	6	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	12.404	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	318		

[a]5 cells (35.7%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1.23.

TABLE 6: CODING BOOK

Number	Variable	Coding
1	Central Figure	1 male, 2 female, 3 both
2	Homemaker	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
3	Symbol of beauty	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
4	Ambitious	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
5	Independent	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
6	Dependent	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
7	Multi-tasking	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
8	Sex object	1 yes, 2 no, 3 maybe
9	Influence of women portrayal	1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 neutral, 4 agree, 5 strongly disagree.
10	Roles	1 Home maker, 2 Symbol of beauty, 3 Ambitious, 4 Independent 5 Dependent 6 Multitasking 7 Sex object

Product Categories Analysed

Some of the names of the ads belonging to different products and company considered in content analysis were listed below.

1. Health Care: Dettol, Lifebouy, Move, Ascoril.
2. Beauty Care: Ponds, Cinthol, Fair and lovely, Lakme, Lux, Pantene.
3. Home Care: Horlicks, Harpic, Pril, Hudson Curd, Vim.
4. Food and Beverages: Coca-cola, Pepsi, Lays, Snickers, Dairymilk.
5. Bikes and Mobiles: TVS, Oppo, Hero, Activa, Lava.