

Masculinity and Gender Stereotyped Commercials in Hindi News Channels- A Content Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The portrayal of men and women in the television commercials is usually stereotyped. It causes adverse effects on achieving gender equality. The media being the "Fourth Estate" has substantial role to play in promoting gender equality. Our patriarchal society has laid down certain norms specifically on the basis of gender, which forms the gender identities. These gender identities increase manifold when it is portrayed through the media. Repeated portrayal of gender stereotyped messages creates hurdles and widens the gender disparity. Advertisements play a significant role in creating trends and conveying messages and shaping the masses about lifestyle, fashion, behavior, attitudes and help in building opinion. The study has been conducted on 2 Hindi news TV channels using specific codes through constructed sampling for 3 months. Cultivation Theory forms theoretical framework in the analysis. The study reveals the stereotypes reinforced through the selected commercials appearing in Hindi news TV channels during prime time.

Keywords: Television Advertising, Gender stereotypes, Masculinity, Gender Inequality, Women, Hindi News TV Channels.

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INTRODUCTION

Advertisements have an enormous and strong influence on our life as they persuade and create awareness among the receivers. Advertisements are received through various media forms in this fast world - Television, Newspapers, Online, Mobile, social networking and so on. Advertising is said to be the form of communication where the audience is persuaded to purchase goods or avail the services being provided for. As Vikram Doctor and Anvar Alikhan (1997) have said, "Advertising is essentially a thing to induce consumption to make people buy things they do not want." A person persuaded by the advertisements often unknowingly absorbs the "Masculine" ideas. A person imbibes gender roles and notions through society, other social institutions and mass media. Though, women have been achievers and are at par with men in all sectors, yet certain stereotypes generated through the advertisements undermine the role of women played in the society. Invariably, most of the advertisements of men's products depict women as "sex objects".

Advertising is said to be manipulative and conveys false or exaggerated messages to consumers and glorifies materialism. It could be argued that advertising is the most influential institution of socialisation in modern society. Advertisements structure mass media content, play a key role in the construction of gender identity, where consumerist values are adopted and it has impact on the relationship between children and parents as it creates unnecessary needs.

The sponsors and marketing agencies cannot do without advertisements as it generates huge revenues. Each film or television programme is sponsored by well-known brands. Historically, advertising was associated with the selling and marketing of goods. However, of late there is seemingly a very thin relationship between the object advertised and the plot of the commercial. Marketing and promotion are integral to the working of a capitalist economy, in which goods have to be sold to consumers within a market place. Advertising is integral to the finances of the media. It is clear that both media and advertisers are interested in reaching audiences.

Masculinity exists in unequal gender based social system, where there is unequal gender division of labor. It refers to possessing of manhood or manliness. The concept is entirely socially created. It is an idea which is created, modified and redefined over time and across different cultures. Masculinity is all about authority, domination, physical toughness and heterosexuality. Masculinity refers to embodying certain standard norms and values. It is association of power. As marketers claim, "Sex sells", hence, the commercials resort to the age old gendered ideas to connect with the audience. In fact, surrogate advertisements too resort to sell their banned substances by persuading people to consume it and become "manly" and achieve success overnight.

The power of mass media to say has grown manifold with the invention of new technologies especially in the field of communication. Along with culture, customs, traditions or institutions, mass media too has a mammoth task in shaping our perceptions and views regarding social reality. It is a known fact that media continuously feeds messages which may not cover all aspects of reality.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Some advertisements provoke a person to consume, through its captions and punch line. The captions are such which incites a person to take alcohol or tobacco substance to prove that he is superior or classy among the rest. As, Haran Jyotsna Dr., Nepalia Rishi (2013) has stated, "One of the most controversial and ethical issues in advertising is regarding subliminal advertisements. Inserting subliminal messages in an advertisement is an inherently misleading action. It is an attempt to manipulate a person's thinking without the person realizing that any such manipulation is occurring."

Schroeder Jonathan E. & Zwick Detlev (2004) stated that, "Within this system, iconic masculine activities such as shaving the face, driving fast cars, having a hearty appetite, smoking cigars, and drinking liquor are juxtaposed to feminine visions of applying makeup, driving a minivan, eating

“light,” doing the laundry, and decorating houses.”

Pawlica, Widawska (2001) has stated that, advertisers use the male friendship or “buddy narratives” quite often to portray the bonhomie or camaraderie men share over something adventurous and interesting. For instance, friends sitting at a pub relaxing or watching a football match together. But women when shown together are shown to be gossiping or discussing about family. Men are depicted to be taking life more easy and casual.

According to Goffman (1979) the portrayal of men and women in the commercials are involved in different gestures and behaviors which eventually leads to objectification of women.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The main aim of the research study is to understand the frequency and content of gender stereotyped advertisements in Hindi TV news channels.

1. To study how the facets of gender disparity are highlighted and downplayed by the advertisements.
2. To analyze the content of the TV advertisements telecast in Hindi News Channels portraying masculinity.

METHODOLOGY

Advertisements were studied on two Hindi news TV channels- “Aaj Tak” and “ABP News”. The commercials of these two channels were studied for three months from January to March 2015. The days were selected through random sampling. Prime time 8.00 pm to 10.00 pm was selected for study. Content analysis is the method of study found appropriate for studying the topic of this nature. It took 624 hrs to extract TV commercials needed for the study. The findings have been analyzed in the context of George Gerbner’s Cultivation Theory.

Coding : The following are the codes for analyzing the advertisements:

- Theme
- Stereotype

- Target groups
- Caption
- Role of women

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Around 26 commercials have been found to have gender stereotyped elements. Advertisements have immense social responsibility to mould public opinion, yet the certain stereotypes are asserted which is detrimental for the well being of the society. The table - 1 shows the level of stereotype portrayed by the products. The stance adopted by the ad has been determined for each code.

Table 1. Brand and Gender Portrayal in TV commercials

Code vs Brand	Product	Relation Between Theme & Product	Caption	Stereotype Asserted	Role of Women	Target Audience
01.	Link Locks	No	<i>Timeless security, stylish designs</i>	Women are sex objects	Women as objects, camera focusing on her thighs, chest & posterior area	Everybody
02.	Airtel My Plan	No	<i>The smart phone network</i>	Man is head of family & decision maker	Women as passive & dominated.	Everybody
03.	Garnier for Men	Yes	<i>Take care</i>	Manliness	No women	Male product
04.	Shudh Plus Pan Masala	No	<i>Tum mein bhi, main hoo</i>	Men's camaraderie	Scantily clad, camera focus on chest	Surrogate product
05.	Nivea Men All-in 1- Face Wash	Yes	<i>It starts with you</i>	Achiever, successful, fun-loving, easy, not complicated as women	Women swooning over	Male face wash
06.	Ashok Chole Masala	Yes		Kitchen is women's world	Women cooking happily	Cooking ingredient

07.	Aeroplane Basmati Rice	Yes	<i>Taste the best</i>	Use of slim, petite girl to sell product	Slim, petite, sexily dressed	Everybody
08.	Metro Tyres	No	<i>Attitude matters</i>	Adventurous, fun loving, performs dangerous stunts	Object of desire	Everybody
09.	Intex Aqua Power Mobile	No	<i>Yeh sirf smart phone nahi, power phone hai</i>	Boys impressing women	Passive, scantily clad, submissive	Everybody
10.	Pan Bahar Pan Masala	No	<i>"Pehchan kamyabi ki</i>	Successful, achiever	No women	Surrogate product
11.	Catch Sabzi Masala	Yes	<i>100% Indian women ka match, sirf catch</i>	Cooking is a woman's job, but lack of time is compensated by masala.	Managing household chores as well her profession	Cooking ingredient
12.	Old Spice Deodorant	No	<i>Mantastic man</i>	Manliness, youth attained after using perfume & immediately gifted with a female	Seductive, glam doll, submissive	Male deodorant
13.	Amul Macho Vest	No	<i>Bade aaram se</i>	Vest helping in fighting villains	Submissive, trophy, pseudo-coy	Male Innerwear
14.	Shera Vests	No		Vest helping in defeating villains		
15.	Maestro	No	<i>Such a Boy thing</i>	Casual, fun loving, carefree, nonchalant. Bike associated with boys	Dominated, sincere, earnest, seeking long lasting relationship	Everybody
16.	Euro Innerwear	No	<i>Accepted by women worldwide</i>	Innerwear attracts women	Seductress, pseudo-coy,	Male Innerwear
17.	NP Dishwash Bar	Yes		Women's job to wash utensils	Homely, managing household chores	Everybody

18.	Rajnigandha Pan Masala	No	<i>Mu mein rajnig andha, kadmon mein duniyaa</i>	Achiever, decision maker, successful	Dominated, no say.	Surrogate product
19.	Ralco Tyres	Yes	<i>The World is yours takes risks</i>	Tough, adventurous,	No women	Everybody
20.	Nivea Men Fresh active Deodorant	Yes	<i>It starts with you</i>	To have girls and achieve over-night success	Submissive, coy.	Male Deodorant
21.	VI-John Shaving cream	Yes	<i>World's largest selling shaving cream</i>	Smooth shave and get girls swooning immediately	Seductive, submissive, coy.	Male shaving cream.
22.	J.Hampstead Sutings	Yes	<i>A different league.</i>	Fine Suiting to impress world, a girl gets tempted immediately	Seductive, tempting, biting her lips.	Men's suiting.
23.	Wildstone Talc	No	<i>For men</i>	Using a women's talcum powder is a sin	Seductive, swooning over the man.	Men's talcum powder.
24.	Mahindra Centuro		<i>It is great to be men</i>	Women cannot ride particular bike as it is not for "beautiful women"	Sexy, provocatively dressed attracted towards bike she wants to ride.	Bike which can be rode by anybody
25.	Seagrams Royal Stag Music CD's (Ranveer Singh)	No	<i>It is your life, make it large</i>	Casanova, taking life casually, over-night success	Tempted, coy.	Surrogate product.
26.	Seagrams Royal Stag Music CD's (Arjun Kapoor)	No	<i>It is your life, make it large</i>	For a regretless life, consuming product is necessary	No women	Surrogate product

“A society that is unable to respect, protect and nurture its women and children loses its moral moorings and runs adrift.” (The Hindu- Opinion

Sept, 15 2012). There are very common notions which differentiate women and men on the basis of gender roles. Some of them are like "Men are dogs, women are cats." Women cry over petty issues, men do not cry". More or less these are the basic foundations based upon which advertisers create images which are taken up by the audience. These images persuade audience to believe that using or doing a particular thing will make them man enough or woman enough. Role of women has been changing. Women are managing both household and professional work with efficacy yet the content portrayed through advertisements depict women in poor light. Realistic roles are quite rare.

Cultivation Theory asserts the fact that continuous exposure to the content of television can lead to imbibing those particular notions and executing in real life. Audiences cannot distinguish between "real" and "reel" content and takes everything portrayed in the television to be real. Hence, repetition of certain images and messages force us to believe the same. (Gerbner, 1998).

Mass media has undergone a drastic change both in terms of content and role. It is instituted to serve the basic communication needs of information, education and entertainment. But, the gender layered content as well as discriminating themes and views have played a decisive role in further widening the gap of gender equality. The patriarchal culture does not guarantee and hand over equal rights to its women and the stereotyped images reinforce the notions into the masses. Television as well as advertising together forms a deadly combination of reaching and creating an impact upon the minds of the audiences. Television advertisements are catchy because of its audio-visual effect. Television when it started was primarily a mode of information and education, but of late the sole objective of television has become entertainment.

Male bodies as well as the attitudes are a tool to gain advantage over other sexes. Society ranks men higher as per the physical fitness and capability. The appearance of a giant, muscular strong body conveys the

message that men are the advantaged and the female, weak and dependent. As Kimmel (1996) has expressed, “masculinity is not a matter of the mind, but of the body”. Advertisements project male body as a macho, muscular, hunk, for whom girls are swooning over. In the advertisement of *Rupa Euro* Innerwear, the man is seduced by a lady and the climax shows him sporting the underwear and lipstick marks all over. These images show women as vulnerable and the man as the ultimate hero, who is craved for. There is no relation between the product advertised and the characters, theme and plot. *Nivea Men All-in-1* face cream tries to portray that men are very different from women in all aspects, hence a men’s face will give them an added advantage and make women fall for their charm.

Media content through advertising reinforces and further accelerates the idea that men are brave, winners, achievers and are independent adventurers. But what is failed to be understood is that products like bike, *scooty*- two wheeler, talcum powder and face wash can be used by anybody and are not gender specific. *Hero Maestro scooty*- two wheeler can be driven by anybody, yet a touch of “Boyish or “Masculine” is added to it. As men are shown to be casual, similarly the *scooty* is also very easy going and casual. Riding a bike through a metro and performing dangerous stunts or due to *Ralco* tyres, impossible destinations and feats can be achieved are conveyed. A men’s talcum powder becomes very essential to preserve “Manhood” and behaving like women is objectionable. This is the message which *Wildstone* talc provides for its audience. There is no need to be unnecessarily adventurous or showcase women as objects. Masculine ideas are more often than not interlinked with products, images to enhance consumerism. Generally, the theme of the advertisement and its product has no connection. The body language, attire, lifestyle, image perceived from the models showcased in the commercials render a different persona which deviates from the motto of selling the product.

Here, it is necessary to mention that advertisements are not the sole source of images layered with stereotypes. There are a host of reality shows,

soap operas, magazines, feature films and social media content which contribute to the constant depiction of stereotyped images among the audiences. Resorting to stereotypes has always provided that instant trick to build rapport with the audiences and market the product. Advertisements should be more gender sensitive and portray more real images to achieve it.

Ambitious women and traditional home maker images exist in the advertisements, but for men, it is always the muscular, successful, achiever, violent and aggressive who are the penultimate breadwinners and the world is theirs. The cheering and jeering of the women when they see a topless man in an advertisement depicts women as kind of slavish. The advertisements make use of television, film and celebrities from the world of fashion and glamour to attract the audiences. Celebrities dressed up in a provocative manner make them sexy to be gazed at by the audience.

Pan Bahar pan masala or *Shudh plus pan masala* are surrogate products. These are dangerous for health, yet when Saif Ali Khan attributes his success to the *pan masala*, it adds credibility to the product. A businessman attributes his flourishing business and his welfare acts in the society to the *pan masala* he consumes and claims that it will keep the world under your feet.

The father is the head of the family in a patriarchal society and is the ultimate decision maker. Hence, Airtel Post paid plan goes by that notion and the children in the commercial try heavily impressing their dad for getting a post paid plan sanctioned. In fact, the mother in the commercial is seen silently nodding and encouraging the child to move ahead and impress the father. This shows that women are not the decision makers and do not have any say. The man in the family has to be lured and persuaded to get anything.

Stereotypes Infused

- An innerwear can provoke and arouse a lady tremendously, that he will be molested and will end up having lipstick marks all over his body.
- Using women's products might be too complicated, to make it easy

one should use *Whitening Facewash*.

- In order to achieve overnight success or girls swarming around, a deodorant is the key to success.
- Women's talcum is a strict no-no and will turn a man into a woman which is disgraceful. In order to preserve the masculinity, and be a "man" one must use men's talcum powder.
- A shaving cream will smoothen the skin and girls will play with the smooth skin of the face.
- A fine suiting will tempt a woman tremendously that she will end up biting her lips seductively.
- A deodorant will also help in regaining the youthful charm of a man besides getting a beautiful girl.
- A long lasting battery mobile phone will lead to closeness between a man and his girl (read physical proximity)
- In order to gain an appropriate postpaid plan, only the father in the family should be tried, persuaded and impressed. In fact, the mother too silently pushes the children to impress the father. The lady has no say in it.
- Using a tyre of particular brand will usher in with attitude, bravery, courtesy, humanity and kindness.
- Consuming a *pan masala* is the key to flourishing success and will keep the world in awe of you.
- Just like while performing Ballet dance, the man takes control of the female dancer, the parts of the door lock are made with utmost care and perfection. The functions of door lock and its stylish appearance, were compared to a woman's body.

CONCLUSION

Traits like shaving, riding fast cars, hitting the gym to build muscular bodies, hairstyle, piercings, behavior, investments, jobs etc are mainly termed to be very masculine. These identities when we encounter through the medium

of mass media- like films, print media, online media, new media, social media and so on, it reaffirms the gender roles and the attributes associated with it. Thus, a kind of vicious cycle develops where the society imbibes the images rendered by the media and the media showcases those images prevalent in the society. There is need to break the usual routine gender roles in our society and achieving gender equality. Even though, there are some advertisements which have broken the stereotypes and have been applauded, yet the majority of the advertisements portray the gendered notions of our society. Hindi news channels have the prime responsibility to showcase news, if gender stereotyped advertisements appear in every commercial break during the news hour, then it re affirms the inequality prevalent in our society.

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