

## Role of electronic media in preserving gender roles through advertisements

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**Abstract—** This study examines media preservation of traditional gender roles which are no longer parallel with the modern Pakistani society. 500 primetime commercials were recorded in March 2016, afterwards, analyzed by using already accepted coding categories by Gilly (1988) and Bresnahan et.al (2001). The results of the study support the proposed hypothesis “Depiction of men in commercials is positively align with traditional gender roles”.

**Keywords:** male depiction , traditional , exaggerated roles , content analysis

### INTRODUCTION

Gender depiction in media especially in advertisements have been undeniably fascinating subject for researchers since last five decades (Eisend, 2009). Hence, media being an important area of study , it has the power to disseminate the socially acceptable culture and traditions (Carter & Steiner 2004). Media content influences the way we perceive reality and also contributes in shaping gender roles. Despite the importance of media in our modern society which is endowed with new innovations, men are not represented in the media according to their number, social involvement in real life. Several studies examine the representation of men and women in mass media. Despite the fact that gender roles have been changed over the period of time, advertiser still depend on traditional stereotypes in displaying male and female effectively in advertisements using different forms of media (McArthur & Resko, 1975; Gilly, 1988; Knoll & Eisend, 2011).

Explicit gender stereotypes depend upon social interpretations and discrimination of men and women role in our society. Besides, there is substantial dissimilarity in genetic physical appearance of men and women. Naturally, men and women are divided in to dual concept which is called sex. Personal traits and expectations from men and women are defined by society. Generally men are associated with authority and aggression, while women are expected to be supportive and accommodating (Bolliger, 2008).

Disseminating and maintaining such gender roles, Television, as a traditional competitive combat zone for brands, offers engagement , impact through sound , images and motion, to reach large number of audiences instantly (Green, 2014; Cools, 2014). In fact consumers plan and live their lives around TV schedule structures such as the news

or major programming events like matches, season openers. This collectively shows that television commercials has effect on behavior and attitudes of people as a whole (e.g. Kolbe and Langefeldt, 1996; Gilly , 1988). Therefore, the participation of consumers in live television viewing is still an important part of our cultural mindset. Most probably advertisements develop behavior, cultural values, personal orientation, perspectives and attitudes, as well as urge and shape the buying choices (Kahlenberg, Hein, 2010).

In commercial advertisements, gender stereotypes are most frequently used by manipulating the media messages to make some special type of image of the society. These images are consistent with the policy of the dominant group (Khalid and Mohammed, 2010). Men and women are constantly portrayed in exaggerated roles in media. While examining the portrayals and imagery of men and women, it's a common belief that media has played a huge role in building up various stereotypes in our society (Wilbert M, 2011). The way media present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities according to Black et al. (2009, p. 882). The way media portray gender in a stereotypical and traditional way, it doesn't let us see the world out of the box and limits our creativity (Black et al., 2009). As defined by Wikipedia, conventional images are generally accepted faith on the defined social group which people belong. Not just one or two specific advertisements portray stereotypical image but they are continuously bombarded round the clock and as a result absorbed by the people.

Being an important socialization indicator, advertisements worldwide confirm traditional gender portrayals. It contributes to shape gender (Gauntlett, 2009). A study done by Paek, Nelson, & Viella (2011) confirmed the past researches that women are generally portrayed dependent over men and their ratio is very high to be seen in domestic environment as compare to men. Furthermore, Neto & Pinto (1998) found out that Asian media propagate more traditional stereotypes as compared to west. Hence, researches have confirmed that gender stereotypes are more to be found in traditional societies. Female gender portrayal is more or less same, commodified and body focused but male gender is portrayed in very narrow roles from macho, successful businessman to a baby like image.

Unlike studies on women portrayal, very few studies focused solely on how men are being depicted in advertising (Wolhether & Lamm 1980; Skelly & Lundstron, 1981; Kervin, 1990; Kolbe & Albanase, 1996). Men are portrayed as symbol of social norms and authority in advertisements rather than product users. (Frith and Mueller, 2003, p.243). As a matter of fact, men's attributes and physical strength is shown as muscular, solid and strong (Kolbe & Albanase, 1996).

In Pakistan, like rest of the world, manliness is known as independent, dominant, and active. We can easily conclude masculinity is attached to bravery, self-confidence and highly skilled person. It has been argued that in twenty first century there is a great variety men, some are adventurous; some are sensitive; several are rough and tough. All these are visible on media and accepted in society. It has been found by researchers that young boys are more sensitive to media messages than girls. They noted that girls choose according to their imaginary world when it comes to media content. On the other hand, young boys see themselves as super heroes, having superficial powers.

There are two reasons that increase the importance of this study, first, seldom has any study been done on male gender portrayal in Pakistani media. Secondly, in general stereotypes associated with men in television commercials do exist and are a part of our lives. It can affect people's lives because they promote unreal masculinity, gender superiority and prejudices. This negative portrayal of men causes anxiety and insecurity in men (Dominick & Raunch, 1972; Mc Arthur & Resko, 1975; Culley & Bennett, 1976).

#### RATIONAL OF THE STUDY

- Majority of the population in Pakistan is illiterate and heavily dependent on media for all kinds of information including everyday social life.
- Advertisements are important source of information related to social roles.
- Advertisements play a significant role in influencing peoples' perceptions and expectations of gender roles in society.
- Male roles in society have been evolving and changing with modern technological advancement.
- There is a need to study whether media is catching up with times and playing a role in changing traditional image of men with that of modern progressive men.

#### SIGNIFIANCE

There are two reasons that increase the importance of this study,

- Lack of any focused study on male gender portrayal in Pakistani media.
- The study provides empirical evidence whether media is reinforcing traditional gender role of men

or ignoring the evolving and changing modern men roles in society.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Men and women are in general stereotyped and portrayed in a different way by the media so by evaluating the ways in which negative consequences of this could be reduced according to Aksu, B. (2005).

Stereotypes are embedded in our society and they are created in every society, and in every culture. It is a slow process with repeated events already absorbed by the society. It influences the behavior; attitudes and life style. Stereotypes are long lasting and are obvious in the society through people (men and women). According to Ember, M., & Ember, C. (2009) stereotypes associated with gender are psychological traits and attributes that are associated with two gender groups (i.e. women are nurses and men are doctors) to support classic gender roles. They ignore the fact that individuals are different and attribute overlap between both groups.

Advertisements manipulate men how they should look and behave. Ads eventually tell the way men should appear in front of society how men should act in certain situations. It has been observed that men are represented significantly different manner than they actually are. Kolbe and Albanese (1996) conducted a content analysis of sole male images in men's magazines and found that the majority of the bodies in advertisements were not "ordinary", but those of strong and hard "male icons". In short, masculinity is not matter of the mind, but of body and physical strength (Kimmel, 1996). As such masculinity is expressed physically through muscles and the consumption and adornment of mass-produced goods that are regarded masculine (Barthel, 1994; Jhally, 1995; Kimmel, 2008).

To encourage the supremacy of men in society, they portrayed as virile, muscular and powerful. Their powerful bodies dominate space in the ads. For women, the focus is on slenderness, dieting, and attaining a feminine ideal; women are always presented as not just thin, but also weak and vulnerable." (Bordo & Susan, 1993).

According to many social scientists, repeatedly exposure to stereotyped advertisements affects the attitudes, values and behavior of the society. Most of all, youngsters are influenced by gendered messages portrayed by media and long to mimic the models appear in television, whether seen particularly or experienced through the media.

Brands strongly promote traditional stereotypes whether its clothing, games or making choices about food are strictly gendered biased. Media representations of masculinity or femininity influence the self-identification and self-evaluation of individual (Budgeon, 2003). The traditional commercials are boys in blue or green dress, playing games outdoor, whereas girls wear pink and plays with toys and dolls indoor (Frith & Mueller, 2003). It is because of these advertisements that it is considered a taboo

for a boy to play with a doll or a girl to play with a toy soldier or toy gun. James McCoy, research director, said even though parents are self-conscious about the materialistic effects an ad has on their children, but now a days children are well aware and understands that ads are made with intentions of selling the product. Still, parents can't control the children exposure to television ads eventually they are unable to control the persuasion of ads on their kids.

Congruity theory stated by Alice Eagly (1984) which is a social role theory proposes that a group will be positively evaluated when its characteristics are recognized as aligning with that group's typical/stereotype roles. It also suggests that the division and expectation from the role of men and women in the society is done by the stereotypes prevailing in that society.

Eagly put forward the communal and agentic dimensions of the attributes of gender related stereotypes. The communal role is described as related to emotional expressiveness and associated with the domestic activities and thus, with women. While the agentic role is attributed with characteristics like assertiveness, independence, related to public activities, thus with men. The behavior of the members of the society depends upon these stereotypical roles depicted in the advertisements played on television. If the men and women will be restricted to their respective agentic and communal roles in the advertisements then this would be known as stereotyping which we widely see today and which will be examined in the study also. The men are mostly restricted to the agentic rule, maintaining his masculinity and patriarchal behavior in the advertisement. Being less emotional and expressive is the main stereotypes settled for men.

In the congruity theory, stereotype is defined as the over-generalized beliefs or characteristics of people based upon their membership in one of many social categories. While gender stereotypes may vary on the basis of traits, role behaviors, physical appearance and occupations, out of which men are mostly stereotyped on the basis of their occupation and physical characteristics like being more muscular, taller or having thick voice which will be analyzed in detail in the research. Apart from having their agentic role, men are considered as the bread earners of a family and are depicted as such on the TV screens though today many of the women contribute in earning side by side men. Also, in the role of parents, women are showed as contributing the most in raising children while men are only shown sitting and providing minor guidelines or advices to their children while women perform all their chores.

Studies have also indicated that female characters tend to be portrayed as being at home while men were more likely to be shown outdoors (Bretl & Cantor, 1988; Gilly,

1988;Uray & Burnaz, 2003, Furnham & Mak, 1999). Furnham and Paltzer (2010) noted, in a meta-analyses of 30 studies performed in this area in the last decade, that the level of stereotyping in regards to location were lower in countries such as Kenya and New Zealand though women were still far more likely to be pictured at home in Mauritius, the United States and Malaysia. Bresnahan et al. (2001) observed that Malaysian men were overall more likely to be portrayed in the workplace as expected of a country with a patriarchal society.

All the stereotypes are meant to put a social pressure on men and women to act accordingly in a society. They are accepted on the bases of roles they assigned and portrayed by the media. Most often, the men and women are judged on the basis of those stereotypes. We see in the advertisements that whenever a workplace is depicted, the woman is shown in a lower status position than the man that stereotypes that the men are supposed to be in the higher places and so if any man would be in a lesser position he will feel a pressure on himself.

After reviewing the existing literature and theoretical framework, hypothesis formulated are:

H1: Depiction of men in TV ads is positively aligned with the traditional male role expectations of the society.

H2: Depiction of men in TV ads is positively aligned with the modern male gender expectations of the society.

## METHODOLOGY

Content analysis has been used to examine male gender depiction in Pakistani electronic media. After making none or few changes, coding categories used by Gilly (1988) and Bresnahan et.al (2001) are used that are comprehensive and equally relevant today.

Coding Categories and Operational definition of variables:

Few additions were made according to reflect the hypotheses of the current study. Total six variables categorized in the research are:

Variables	Operational definitions
Central figure	number of times male or female character appeared in the prime time
Product user/authority	Main target of the product; male / female or both
Voice over	Voice used to narrate about the product ; male/female/both/none
Social role	Role played by the central character; spouse , parent, friend , worker, celebrity,

Variables	Operational definitions
	athlete/sports , professional
Product type	Food & beverages, Personal/beauty Products, home products, telecom, drug & med, electric gadgets, finance or real estate and other
Physical appearance	Body built of the central character ; muscular , average or thin
Place	Position /location of the central character ; indoor , outdoor ,combination, can't determine

Table 1: Operational definitions of Variables

Two coders, researcher herself and a professional student were used to decode the advertisements. Inter-coder reliability was measure using Perreault and Leigh's Method (1989) which is 0.96.

#### DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Data was analyzed using SPSS 20.0. Chi square test was used to check the relationship between variables. We used critical p-value (0.05) to examine the statistical significance.

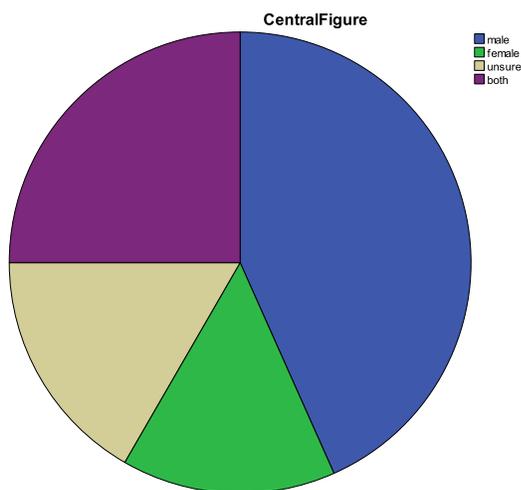


FIGURE:1 FREQUENCY OF CENTRALFIGURE

Product Use	Frequency		Valid
	Frequency	Percent	Percent
user	40	66.7	66.7
Non- user	20	33.3	33.3
Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 2: Frequency test of Central figure and product use

Voice Over	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
Male	51	85.0	85.0
Female	9	15.0	15.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0

Table 3: Frequency test of central figure and voice over

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	12.505 <sup>a</sup>	3	.006
Likelihood Ratio	14.461	3	.002
N of Valid Cases	60		

Table 4: Chi square test of Voice over and central figure  
The P-Value is 0.005839. The result is significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Physical Appearance	Central figure		Total
	Female	Male	
Average	2	22	26
Muscular	0	6	9
Thin	5	3	10
Attractive	12	10	15
Total	19	41	60

Table 5: Crosstab of central figure and physical appearance

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	10.007 <sup>a</sup>	3	.019
Likelihood Ratio	9.825	3	.020
N of Valid Cases	60		

Table 6: Chi Square test

The P-Value is 0.018507. The result is significant at  $p < 0.05$ .

Valid	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	20	33.3	33.3	33.3
2	8	13.3	13.3	46.7
3	4	6.7	6.7	53.3
4	4	6.7	6.7	60.0
5	14	23.3	23.3	83.3
7	3	5.0	5.0	88.3
8	7	11.7	11.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

Table 7: Product type frequency distribution

Central Figure	Social Role							Total
	friend	celebrity	spouse	parent	worker	athlete	Prof.	
male	5	4	2	2	3	4	7	27
female	4	2	0	0	2	0	1	9
unsure	3	0	1	1	0	2	2	9
both	3	2	2	1	2	0	5	15
Total	15	8	5	4	7	6	15	60

TABLE 8: DISTRIBUTION OF MALE SOCIAL ROLES

place	Frequency	Percent
Valid indoor	25	41.6
outdoor	18	30.1
can't determine	6	10.0
combination	11	18.3
Total	60	100.0

TABLE 9: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF MEN AT PLACE

Data shows men dominate the central character in ads. 43.3% men played central role whereas, 15% females are depicted in central role. In product use category 66.7% men are depicted as a user of the product and 33.3% men are depicted as a non-user of the product. Voice over category results shows 85% men dominates overall and only 15% women depicted in ads. To check the significance relationship between central character and voice over, chi square test is run in SPSS. The results is significant at  $P < 0.05$ . 43.3% Men are shown physically average and 15% men are shown muscular, Mostly athlete and sports person. 33.3% men are shown in telecom and 13% in electric gadget category. Whereas, 23.3% men are shown in food and beverages category. 11.7% men are shown in finance or real estate. 41.6% men are depicted indoor and 30% in outdoor category.

### CONCLUSION

Worldwide if women are expected to be slim and attractive, men face pressure to be sporty, and muscular (Frederick, 2007). Advertising controls the buying behavior as well as shapes the gender and personality. Boy should wear blue and girl should wear pink starts when a child is unborn. Man learns from his father and family how he should behave. Men are not supposed to cry. Men ought to be rough and tough. Society engraves these traditional roles in the minds of people. As indicated by Eagly in congruity theory, people ought to replicate the part expected by the society and their gender depiction could hence prompt conduct inconsistent with present day social standards, as audiences abstain themselves from going against the traditional roles advertised by the marketers.

The manifestation of static, archaic gender roles in ads may affect a viewer, as men who watch male models in dominating, tends to be more authoritative and women who watch female models in subservient role later reported lower self-esteem, dependent and less professional. Moreover, the rehashed perception of such negative portrayal at adulthood could prompt young generation learning old-fashioned gender roles that are strengthened in later life by persevering traditional roles.

Pakistani social order indeed is the one in which man dominates in all walks of life. Although, men dominates this society, but woefully misrepresented in the media. Hardworking, self-sacrificing men who are striving hard to earn their living and support their families are shown active, powerful and macho. According to Keith Richman (2014) men oppose with the current portrayal of their image in media. Although stereotypes are hard to avoid but portrayal of men in the TVCs are not reflecting the true Pakistani men who are zealous and yearn to take care of their family and friends.

This study confirms that Depiction of men in TV ads is positively aligned with the traditional male role expectations of the society. Hence, accepting the H1. Study at hand describes male gender roles and various terms of serious gender inequalities being exhibited in Pakistani media. As Asia is an under research continent, the protective effect of education against gender inequality should be strong and unambiguous. Mass media has a role to play in advancing such strategy. The quantitative analysis shows that there is a high frequency of traditional male gender portrayal in Pakistani advertisements, which does not accurately reflect the modern society, which is considered quite egalitarian society. The study finds that adverts had settings in which more males were found in the workplace and more product representatives; voiceovers employed more males than females; and cosmetics and personal hygiene were associated with female characters. In contrast, the predominance of female primary characters ran counter to trends in previous studies. It concludes that television actively support the status quo and a patriarchal society, while these representations are clearly damaging for gender equality.

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