

GENDER REPRESENTATION IN PAKISTANI TELEVISION COMMERCIALS

Wafa Mansoor Buriro¹, Ghulam Ali Buriro², and Ghazal Kazim Syed³

ABSTRACT

Gender is a socially constructed entity which is inculcated in the members of society according to their sex type (Bem, 1981). This entity is created and recreated through different media and sources. During this process of creating and recreating, particular stereotypical roles of gender are compartmentalized for males and females. In the modern world, television advertisements are a major way of doing the marketing of products. But what happens alongside is the stereotyping of gender roles. Many studies have been conducted in countries like US, Britain, Italy and Japan where it was found that gender roles are made firm through television advertisements. Pakistani society is not devoid of such phenomena. This study is a replication of the studies conducted in before mentioned countries. However, there is a slight difference between this study and the others i.e. this study analyzes only five of eleven categories which are: gender, role, location, reward and argument. For this purpose, fifty TV commercials from different Pakistani channels were analyzed to ascertain the stereotyping of women and men. These TV commercials comprised of following genres: outfits, cellular mobile networks, beverages, food, cosmetics, electric appliances, kitchen and bathroom products, banking and medical products. This study is qualitative in nature and is the replication of Furnham and Voli's (1989) study which was conducted in Italy. From the said fifty commercials it was ascertained that how males and females are represented and stereotyped in the said categories. The data were coded and presented in the form of percentage and frequencies. Surprisingly only the gender roles category had significant differences in which females are portrayed in more subjugated roles.

KEY WORDS: Gender, Stereotypes, Roles, Sex Types, Advertisements, Television, YouTube.

INTRODUCTION & CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Gender inequality is a very old phenomenon. The traces of male dominance and the subjugation of women are found throughout the course of history (Sanday, 1981; Lerner, 1975). However, the resistance to this started in the second half of the twentieth century in the shape of political feminist movements around the world (Connell, 1993). These movements challenged the monopoly of men in all sectors of life and questioned the social structures that gave women the role of second class citizens.

Among other things that were challenged, stereotypes against women were also a part of it. And since the advent of feminist movements, there have been many studies in the domain of gender. Zotos and Tsihla (2014) have outlined factors for such rise in awareness. According to them, the changes have been brought upon by increased ratio in women to get higher education, their increasing number in job market and demand and urge to go to higher positions at their workplace, and their opting for equal opportunities are some of the factors which are challenging the stereotypes.

An important manifesting field for gender stereotypes is television advertisements. Drawing on a vast quantity of studies, Zotos and Tsihla (2014) have shown the varying roles of men and women in advertisements during the last fifty years. These studies were carried out in various cultures and contexts. Across the timeline, it is clearly visible that roles of women have almost remained the same i.e. decorative, dependent, objectified, domestic, etc. However, there has been a bit of improvement in the portrayal, but largely, the picture remains the same.

¹ Lecturer-English, Sindh Madressatul Islam University, Karachi. Email: wafaemansoor@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Email: gaburiro@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Institute of English Language and Literature, University of Sindh, Jamshoro. Email: ghazal.syed@york.ac.uk

Dominick and Rauch (1972) conclude that women are stereotyped and their role is defined as of decorative (sex objects) or useful (housewives and mothers), but hardly ever as professionals or working wives. Their study shows that women's place is in home and most of the jobs outside home are performed by men. Women were shown in kitchen and bathroom related advertisements in 75% ads. More than half of the women were shown as dependent housewives. Advertisements received a lot of criticism by the writers saying that there are thousands of ladies working in various fields but the ads only show the women working in home or acting as housewives. Even if they are shown outside the home doing any job, these are subordinate jobs or they are found giving beauty tips to each other. Thus, the study confirms the existence of conventional gender stereotyping in society in the tv advertisements.

Signorelli, McLeod, and Healy (1994) found out that gender stereotyping is done in ads on a music channel. They found that women appeared less but when they did their role was that of provocative and an object for men's gaze. Their study confirms that the type of product being used was also characterized with gender stereotyping. Males used most of the entertainment oriented products while women used products related with self-enhancement in terms of physical attraction. The stereotypical roles here once again confirm the prevailing conventions.

The study conducted by Lauzen, Dozier and Horan (2008) yielded the results that in television programs of 6 different channels enacted and maintained the stereotypical roles of males and females. The study showed that women performed interpersonal roles of romance, family and friends most of the times and that men usually performed work-related roles. Quoting various studies, they assert that women are most of the times shown to perform the marital roles whereas men are shown to perform the occupational roles.

Vande Berg and Streckfuss (1992) in their study came up with the results that it is not just the advertisements but also workplaces where the gender roles are enacted. Even within the domain of an organization, women are seen to perform the interpersonal tasks like counseling and motivating while men did the occupational tasks. This shows how stereotyping is deeply entrenched in the different layers of social fabric.

Gender stereotypes are a crude reality the existence of which cannot be denied. It is widespread and is manifested at every place where two sexes interact. For example, gender discrimination based on stereotypes at workplace (Heilman & Eagly, 2008); at negotiation table, an exhaustive synthesis of empirical and theoretical research (Kray & Thompson, 2004); the role of a country's masculinity-femininity index on the gender stereotyping in advertisements (Odekerken-Schröderk, Wulf & Hofstee, 2002); in the medical profession (Arrizabalaga, et al. 2014); and in sports (Bolche, et al., 2013) and so on.

Many of the gender stereotypes studies have taken place in Western and other parts of the world. It is important to conduct such studies in Pakistani context where advertisers have many vistas open for them (Ali et al. 2012). This study was carried out to ascertain the gender stereotypes in Pakistani television commercials. The study is adaptation of an Italian study carried out three decades ago which was further inspired by studies carried out in United States. The study was carried out with a purpose to know whether stereotypes are the same in Pakistani television as in West. Though there is a long time gap between this study and the study being adapted, but researchers saw the relevance according to them there is a huge need to conduct such studies in Pakistani context. The study from Ali et al. (2012) has shown that males were more dominant in their roles in food and non-food TV commercials of Pakistan.

OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study was to ascertain how gender is portrayed in the television commercials of Pakistan. Traditional stereotypes for superiority of masculinity and inferiority of femininity exist in the patriarchal society of Pakistan. Researchers wanted to see if the same are reflected in the advertisements.

Then the aim was to compare the results of studies primarily with the model study, Furnham and Voli (1989) and other studies carried out in varying contexts of the world.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How is represented in the television commercials of Pakistan?
2. How the males and females are represented in the television commercials of Pakistan from the perspective of gender, role, location, reward, and argument?

METHOD

Procedure

Unlike Furnham and Voli (1989) who focused on one TV channel and divided their analysis of advertisement to different time sections of the channel, this study extracted its sample from YouTube. The reason behind doing it was that the commercials are displayed at various Pakistani channels at different timings. The focus was not on the channels but on the commercials. Initially 70 commercials were selected covering the following genres: outfits, cellular mobile networks, beverages, food, cosmetics, electric appliances, kitchen and bathroom products, banking and medical products. The central figure in the advertisement was the reference point for analysis. But twenty out of those seventy commercials did not clearly specify who was the central figure. . That is why such commercials were discarded and the analysis was done on the remaining fifty commercials. Following factors: gender, role, location, reward and argument.

The original study of Furnham and Voli (1989) analyzed eleven factors but researchers felt that in this study only five were more relevant. Further description of method of analysis is given in the following table:

Table 1.

Category	Sub-Category
Gender	Male, Female
Role	Dependent, Professional, Others
Location	Home, Occupational, Leisure, Other
Reward	Social approval, Self-enhancement, Practical, Pleasure, Other
Argument	Factual, Opinion, None

CODING

Coding was done manually by the researchers looking at the number of advertisements at the hand. Initially, 70 advertisements were selected, but 50 were shortlisted for the analysis because 20 were not fit as they did not conform to the selection criteria of the advertisements which are as under:

Advertisements were marked on the basis of their recency, i.e. all the advertisements ranged from the last 05 years and not older than that. Secondly, they were all available at YouTube, a social website, and had been or still were a part of display on television channels. Third, all advertisements were recorded in Urdu language with a little code mixing of English. Fourth, only the central figures were to be analyzed for the study and all the other characters i.e. less important or minor ones were not deliberately made a part of analysis as it would have become a complexity and a cumbersome research work to do.

It is pertinent to mention here that in other studies of the same sort, in other countries, a huge chunky number of advertisements were taken. However, in current study, the researchers had initially opted at selecting like number of advertisements but soon after 50, researchers had reached a saturation point and things were being repeated across all the ads, therefore, researchers had to stop there and compile the results.

RESULTS

Gender: Central figure

In this category, men outnumbered women i.e. males 54% and females 46%. This was the division of representation of two genders as central figures which is quite a reflection of the recent census of Pakistan in 2017 (<http://www.pbscensus.gov.pk/>) in which males have outnumbered females as the statistics according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics stand like there are 51% men (106,449,322) and 48.76% women (101,314,780). So, results in this category conform majorly to the census results.

Role

Table 2: Percentage of males and females in performing various roles in advertisement

Role	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
1. Dependent	0	0%	7	14%
2. Professional	12	24%	4	8%
3. Other	16	32%	11	22%

Not surprisingly, no men were shown as dependent. However, on the contrary, women were shown to be dependent on a significant level. Secondly, and again not surprisingly, more men than women were shown to be the part of professional roles. In other categories came the roles like a biker or a guy outside or a girl in shopping mall performing miscellaneous roles, even there, women were outnumbered by men as shown in Table 2.

Location

Table 3: Locations which men and women were shown performing their respective roles.

Location	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
1. Home	13	26%	14	28%
2. Occupational	5	10%	2	4%
3. Leisure	2	4%	3	6%
4. Other	7	14%	2	4%

The results again are somewhat surprising, only this time, because the percentage in location is the same. Normally, men are shown more outside, but in this case, there is almost a symmetry between males and females percentage in home location as is seen in Table 3. In the similar manner is the representation of males and females in leisure places. It can be inferred that the stereotypes regarding these two locations have seen a shift in at least urban part of the country as almost all the advertisements were shot in urban settings. However, stereotypes are confirmed in occupational and other locations such as market etc. that males have more representation than women.

Reward

Table 4. Percentage of males and females getting the types of reward by using products in advertisements

Reward type	Male	Female
-------------	------	--------

	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
1. Social approval	6	12%	6	12%
2. Self-enhancement	3	6%	4	8%
3. Practical	6	12%	7	14%
4. Pleasure	3	6%	1	2%
5. Other	9	18%	5	10%

It is interesting to note that in almost all categories, males and females were getting similar rewards. Social approval is when by supporting the product, the central figure gets accepted positively by other social members e.g. family, neighbors, etc. However, women were represented more timid and unacceptable prior to reward; albeit men were already accepted, the reward just intensified that acceptance. Self-enhancement is a type of reward when central figure gets a benefit from a product e.g. health, beauty, etc. In this category, women were seen using beauty products so as to be better objects and center of attention for men and women. Men, however, appeared in health-related rewards. Thirdly, practical reward refers to benefit at home or in finance, for instance, benefit in bank account or saving of money by buying a product. Men were shown extracting more pleasure as reward and other miscellaneous rewards more than women.

Argument

Table 5. Percentage of males and females presenting types of argument in favor of product

Argument	Male		Female	
	n	Percentage	n	Percentage
1. Factual	4	8%	5	10%
2. Opinion	7	14%	8	16%
3. None	16	32%	10	20%

Argument refers to the type of justification central figures presented in support of their product. Factual referred to rational arguments, here, and astonishingly, women are seen more rational than men; opinionated arguments however are subjective and here women are slightly more in number conforming to traditional stereotypes. However, breaking stereotypes, men are represented as more silent and passive in this category than women. In the category of arguments, women are winning the game and challenging the stereotypes.

DISCUSSION

In a study based in Turkey, it is shown that more than half of the gender represented in television advertisements are women (53%). In other studies like McArthur and Resko (1975), Mazzella, et al. (1992), Neto & Pinto (1998), and others, it is clearly shown in different countries and contexts that men appear more in advertisements. However, in (Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007) the gender representation is almost exactly equal for men and women. In the context of South African television commercials (Luyt, 2011), men appeared more than women in the advertisements as possessing the central role (55%). In a study (Paek et al., 2011) conducted throughout seven countries i.e. Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, South Korea, Thailand, and the United States; it was deduced after extensively and exhaustively analyzing the television advertisements that men appeared in more number than women. In the seminal study (Furnham & Voli, 1989) we are modelling, the males appeared twice as much than women did. Results of this study are in conformity with most of the studies cited here. Men outnumber women, but not significantly and at the same time reflecting the general division of males and females in recent census in Pakistan.

Talking about gender roles, the famous psychologist, Lacon (1975) says that it is the gender-roles assigned in childhood that culminate into the gender identity, and this proposition actually rejects the idea of an innate or in-born gender type. Gender roles are one of the most studied aspects of gender in advertisement

and there are a number of meta-analyses available for them e.g. (Collins, 2011; Eisend, 2010; Paek, Nelson, & Vilela, 2011) and many more. This is an area which has been widely researched all over the world. For example, in one study based in Korean context, advertisements reflected that Korean women in advertisement were shown as young (48.2%), dependent (37.5%) and as nurturing children (12.1%) (Kim & Lowry, 2005). In one other study set in German context (Döring & Pöschl, 2006), women are shown to be more feminine and delicate in mobile advertisements so as to attract more audience towards the products. A study conducted in Turkey (Uray & Burnaz, 2003) reverberated the same story i.e. the traditional gender stereotypes are prevalent in the Turkish television advertisements and the roles are assigned to men and women accordingly. It is well-known that Turkey largely is a patriarchal society where women are treated more as objects than free beings. In a study carried out in Spanish context (Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007) women are represented more for beauty products, childcare roles and they performed more house chores than men, as also shown in this study as well and men are given roles related to automobiles and other outdoor and more professional tasks. Peak et al. (2011) also point out in their study conducted across seven countries that men appeared in more dominant roles than women. Furnham and Voli (1989) also found the same thing i.e. women were portrayed performing dependent roles and men were depicted carrying out more professional roles. In Pakistani context, in the light of this study, story is the same. Women are portrayed as more dependent and less professional than men. Therefore, this study conforms the universally practiced stereotypes of role-assignment in advertisements.

In a study conducted in Spanish context (Valls-Fernández & Martínez-Vicente, 2007), when it came to location or the setting of representing gender, women were shown more in domestic settings; men on the other hand were shown in rather more professional and official settings. This is in confirmation with our study too. In South African context, too (Luyt, 2011) men were shown often more away from home and in professional settings. On the contrary, women were seen in domestic location and especially in Kitchen most of the times. Furnham and Voli (1989) confirm that women were shown in highly more domestic settings and men on the other hand were shown in professional and corporate settings. But, they found roughly the same percentage of men and women performing things in leisure settings. However, in current study, some of the stereotypes have been broken such as exactly equal percentage of men and women are located in home settings. This comes as an emancipatory step. However, in other locations, stereotypical assigning of settings is repeated.

In a study conducted by Luyt (2011) in South African television commercials context, women were shown more with beautification and self-enhancement products and men, on the contrary, were shown in products which got more social approval and were indulged in more practical activities such as banking, marketing, finance, automobiles, etc. Furnham and Voli (1989) however find out that women were getting more rewards in shape of social approval. In this study, however, rewards for both males and females across all categories were almost the same. This again is an emancipatory finding as equality is being observed in this aspect.

As far as the types of arguments are concerned, Furnham and Voli (1989) observed that men were represented as giving more rational and factual arguments and women, on the other hand, were represented as giving more opinion-based arguments or they did not give any argument at all. In this study, however, breaking the stereotypes, women have given more factual arguments, but at the same time keeping the stereotypes intact by giving more opinionated and subjective arguments. But, last not the least, there is another revolutionary finding as men are seen giving no arguments more often than women, which is in contradiction with prevalent stereotype that men tend to give more arguments than women.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study have been largely a confirmation to universal trends of depicting social patriarchal stereotypes in advertisements. However, a few emancipatory changes were observed in terms of home location, reward and factual arguments. Along with that, astonishingly, there were hardly any differences in central figures. However, more women were shown in beauty products. As was expected by the researchers, no man at all was shown dependent. Women were shown to be dependent. More men were shown in professional roles rather than women. And even in the professional roles, women were doing home duties along with performing their stereotypical jobs such as doctor. In other roles, women were accompanying men as the objects of beauty or attraction. All in all, where status-quo is being maintained in advertisements, some positive changes are occurring at various levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The researchers who aspire to take up this research problem for their critical inquiry should analyze the television commercials from the perspective of as many models and perspectives as possible. There should be a meta-study on the various trends in television advertisements over the period of last fifty or more years. Such kind of studies will make it easier for researchers in local context to compare the findings of their studies with the past trends. This comparative analysis will guide the theory in more robust manner.

This study only looked at the representation qualitatively. A large-scale study with a huge data size is required to gauge quantitatively the amount of stereotyping and kind of gender representation. There are many other media on which the model used in this study can be applied such as dramas, movies, radio programs, Vlogs, vines, memes, documentaries, news casting, reporting, talk shows, and so on.

REFERENCES

- Ali, A., Ali, R., Kumar, D., Hafeez, M. H., & Ghufuran, B. (2012). Gender role portrayal in television advertisement: Evidence from Pakistan. *Information Management and Business Review* 4(6), 340-351.
- Arrizabalaga, P., Abellana, R., Viñas, O., Merino, A., & Ascaso, C. (2014). Gender inequalities in the medical profession: Are there still barriers to women physicians in the 21st century? *Gaceta Sanitaria*, 28(5), 363-368.
- Bem, S. L. (1981). Gender schema theory: A cognitive account of sex typing. *Psychologica Review*, 88(4), 354-364.
- Boiché, J., Plaza, M., Chalabaev, A., Guillet-Descas, E., & Sarrazin, P. (2013). Social antecedents and consequences of gender-sport stereotypes during adolescence. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 38(2), 259-274.
- Collins, R. L. (2011). Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Media: Where Are We Now and Where Should We Go? *Sex Roles*, 64(3), 290–298. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9929-5>
- Connell, R. W. (1993). The big picture: Masculinities in recent world history. *Theory and Society*, 22(5), 597-623.
- Dominick, J. R. and Rauch, G. E. (1972). The image of women in network TV commercials. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 16(3), 259-266.
- Döring, N., & Pöschl, S. (2006). Images of men and women in mobile phone advertisements: A content analysis of advertisements for mobile communication systems in selected popular magazines. *Sex Roles*, 55(3–4), 173–185. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-006-9071-6>
- Eisend, M. (2010). A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(4), 418–440. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-009-0181>
- Furnham, A., & Voli, V. (1989). Gender Stereotypes in Italian Television Advertisements *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 33(2), 175–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838158909364071>
- Heilman, M. E., & Eagly, A. H. (2008). Gender stereotypes are alive, well, and busy producing workplace discrimination. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 1, 393–398.

- Kim, K., & Lowry, D. T. (2005). Television commercials as a lagging social indicator: Gender role stereotypes in Korean television advertising. *Sex Roles*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-005-8307-1>
- Kray, L. J., & Thompson, L. (2004). Gender stereotypes and negotiation performance: An examination of theory and research. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 26, 103-182.
- Lauzen, M. M., Dozier, D. M., and Horan, N. (2008). Constructing gender stereotypes through social roles in prime-time television. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 52(2), 200–214. DOI: 10.1080/08838150801991971
- Lerner, G. (1971). Women's Rights and American Feminism. *The American Scholar*, 235-248.
- Luyt, R. (2011). Representation of Gender in South African Television Advertising: A Content Analysis. *Sex Roles*, 65(5), 356–370. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-011-0027-0>
- Mazzella, C., Durkin, K., Cerini, E., & Buralli, P. (1992). Sexrole stereotyping in Australian television advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 26, 243–259.
- McArthur, L. Z., & Resko, B. G. (1975). The portrayal of men and women in American television commercials. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 97, 209–220.
- Neto, F., & Pinto, I. (1998). Gender stereotypes in Portuguese television advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 39, 153–165
- Odekerken-Schröder, G., Wulf, K. D., & Hofstee, N. (2002). Is gender stereotyping in advertising more prevalent in masculine countries? A cross-national analysis. *International Marketing Review*, 19(4), 408-419, <https://doi.org/10.1108/02651330210435690>
- Paek, H. J., Nelson, M. R., & Vilela, A. M. (2011). Examination of Gender-role Portrayals in Television Advertising across Seven Countries. *Sex Roles*, 64(3), 192–207. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9850-y>
- Sanday, P. R. (1981). *Female power and male dominance: On the origins of sexual inequality*. Cambridge University Press.
- Signorelli, N., McLeod, D., and Healy, E. (1994). Gender stereotypes in MTV commercials: The beat goes on. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 91-101.
- Uray, N., & Burnaz, S. (2003). An analysis of the portrayal of gender roles in Turkish television advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 48(1–2), 77–87. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022348813469>
- Valls-Fernández, F., & Martínez-Vicente, J. M. (2007). Gender Stereotypes in Spanish Television Commercials. *Sex Roles*, 56(9–10), 691–699. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9208-2>
- Vande Berg, L. R., & Streckfuss, D. (1992). Prime-time television's portrayal of women and the world of work: A demographic profile. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 36, 195–208.
- Zotos, Y., & Tsihla, E. (2014). Female portrayals in advertising past research, new directions. *International Journal on Strategic Innovative Marketing*, 1, 9-26.