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**Mediatization of Gender:  
An Audience Perspective on Presentation of Women in Pakistani Ads**

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**Abstract:**

Different segments of life have an influence on society, such as cultural values, environment, and relational behavior. Media and advertising represent our current societal social standards while also having the power to alter our views by how things are presented. It is seen as an effective component for molding and propagating societal ideas. Advertisements are one of the strategies used to communicate with the general public in order to disseminate the ideology that behind the messaging. For feminists, gender analysts, academics, and the general public, stereotypical women roles portrayal has long been an essential component of the discussion. Many researchers have been carried out to investigate this phenomenon, and they have yielded substantial results but still this phenomenon is debatable. The goal of this study was to look into the roles of women in Pakistani media advertising. The survey research method is used as a research design for this research. Data was collected from the Pakistani people (from Islamabad city). The sample size of the study was 200 and simple random sampling technique was used for data collection. The finding of the study shows that Pakistani media is not representing the real image of the women. The women are depicted in Pakistani media advertisement like a showpiece. The findings also indicated women are objectified in advertisement as sex object and used for gaining the attention of the peoples. This study is helpful for the media industries for revision of their policies regarding the women role.

**INTRODUCTION**

Different segments of life have an influence on society, such as cultural values, environment, and relational behavior. Media and advertising represent our current societal social standards while also having the power to alter our views by how things are presented. It is seen as an effective component for molding and propagating societal ideas. Advertisements are one of the strategies used to communicate with the general public in order to disseminate the ideology behind the

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messaging. Advertising is one of the most important forms of media that has an influence on our daily lives, both explicitly and implicitly, and is influential in shaping society as a whole. Advertisers utilize a variety of techniques to influence customer perceptions of their products. Storylines, taglines, and female representation are some of the tactics used to elicit particular emotions and make customers feel as though they are missing out on something by not utilizing the items. The media is viewed as a catalyst for societal change. It has the power to mesmerize everyone.

Prior to the development of feminism, women were essentially excluded from almost every aspect of life. The media was not left off of this list. Despite the fact that women are an integral and important component of life, the media's portrayal of women has piqued our interest. Whereas the West was able to break free from gender stereotypes and allow women to thrive over a century ago, Pakistan is still dealing with them today. When it comes to gender issues and unfair treatment of women, only a small minority of Pakistan's educated population has managed to remain neutral. Unfortunately, a patriarchal culture dominated by males still exists, with women having a value comparable to that of a domestic animal (Huda & Ali, 2015). "Every written element has a condescending tone, establishing a feeling of inferiority among women," writes Javed (2005). Women are depicted in the media as weak, childlike, dependant, naive, illogical, and cunning, according to her. Regardless of their education or objectives, their role in society is that of a housewife with a little intellect. Women's representation in commercials has been a source of dispute, argument, and investigation.

Advertising continues to be a hot area of study since evidence suggests that the imagination produced by advertising has a substantial impact on a society's belief system. Advertising, in fact, creates and reflects the values, emotions, and behaviours of the social sphere in which it exists. It offers meaning to words and symbols, and it plays a unique function in the contemporary world's perception frame (Kang, 1997). The most significant form of social communication is advertising. It has the power to manipulate the market by establishing a wide range of personal wants, as well as altering opinions, personality, and preferences. While some perceive advertising as only a commercial activity with a sole goal of selling, others see it as a cultural mirror and creator that not only represents the old and new but also defines the future (Das & Sharma, 2017).

According to Zimmerman and Dahlberg (2008), advertising is the dissemination of information about items or ideas by a specific group or organization through mass media as sponsored contents, which influences viewers' behavior and attitudes. According to Bove and Wood (1995), advertising is the primary source of revenue for every television station, and advertising covers the majority of financial obligations. According to Zimmerman (2008), consumer reaction to advertisements has a little impact on purchase but a significant impact on women's attitudes. According to Stern (2004), the unfavorable representation of women as a sex object and a product has decreased in recent research compared to prior eras, but the portrayal of women in advertisements has remained consistent in most cases. Domestic dwelling, social traditions, and family ties are the most prevalent scenarios in advertising, in which women represent the product. Women are a prominent part in advertising and are frequently employed to strengthen the message. However, most of the time, this presentation of women as products rather than human beings has a detrimental influence on the viewers. Pillay's (2010) research also found that using female characters enhances emotion and influences the message. The available Researches have shown that women in advertisements are

regularly shown as items of merchandise to promote a range of goods. With the passing of time, the mindsets and perspectives of the portrayals of women have varied, and with these fresh concepts in the mainstream, they have shifted, as well (Das, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to conduct research regularly on assessing the portrayal of women. The purpose of this research is to investigate what women's roles are and how they are depicted in various commercials in Pakistani society.

## **WHAT WOMEN'S ROLES ARE AND HOW THEY ARE DEPICTED IN PAKISTANI MEDIA ADVERTISEMENTS?**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the 1980s, women were portrayed as typical women who cared for their families and kept the house in order. Despite the fact that the truth is more girls being equal to boys and women being independent and powerful in today's world, there are advertising that exhibit and perpetuate certain stereotypes from the past, such as depicting women as homemakers and shouldering all domestic tasks. These advertising have also engendered a new picture of a woman in the minds of our culture, one that involves women being tall, skinny, and attractive, as well as satisfying men. Advertisements like this affect not only women's self-esteem, but also men's perceptions of them. According to the findings, advertising depicting women's ideal slim bodies cause greater unhappiness with their bodies, increased expenditure on their looks, and eating disorders among female viewers (Grau & Zotos, 2016) These female-oriented advertising have a direct influence on a girl's self-esteem. Even 30 minutes of watching TV commercials might alter a woman's impression of her body, leading to overestimation of her physique. It also implies that advertising that portrays ideal body ideals might help to reduce these overestimations (Myers & Biocca, 1992).

Previous studies that was conducted on the gender differences or roles of genders in different form of advertisements like (Bardwick and Schumann, 1967 & Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977) found that gender differences emerged in different form of advertisement more often as housewives, sexual objects, physically pretty, and inferior to men. According to Goffman (1979), women in advertising are frequently shown in stereotyped ways. These are preceded by a slew of others. Modernization, the expanding business, and significant progress in work and education have led to a shift in a gender choice and social position, from cumulative dependence on a man and strictly limited to the domestic space to a self sufficient twenty-first-century career woman who is now equivalently contribute significantly to the improvement of her family and the community. Advertisers, on the other hand, failed to notice this shift in women's roles throughout time. Women are still mostly constrained to conventional gender constructs and duties as housewives, reliant on men, cheerfully performing home tasks, inept, and as a sex and ornamental object, i.e. the tool to attract attention. According to Lysonski (1985), women are mostly shown in advertising as preoccupied with their physical appearance, as housewives, and as objects of sexual fulfillment. According to Ganahl, Prinsen, and Netzley (2003), television ads propagate gender stereotypes. They are still portrayed as men's younger and more supportive equivalents. Women are most usually represented as youthful, largely within the house, in mid-managerial and white-collar positions, and in dependent roles in worldwide television ads, according to Milner and Higgs (2004). Plakoyiannaki, Mathioudaki, Dimitratos, and Zotos (2008) found that women are depicted in stereotyped ways in internet ads all around the world.

With the passage of time, a number of reasons such as industrialization, the rising market economy, women's increased engagement in higher education and typically benefits in the labour workforce, and gender equality reforms caused a shift in women's roles and position in society. As a result, the female image was transformed by the new advertising genre. Women began their careers in advertising with diverse positions. However, according to Zotos and Lysonski (1994), there has been an increase in ornamental roles and less depiction of women as professionals in ads, despite a decline in representation of women in home roles and positions of reliance. Women's appearance in commercials has nothing to do with the goods, and women's roles are becoming increasingly seductive and attractive. Women are frequently shown in advertising as ornamental things (Plakoyinnaki & Zotos, 2009), in the conventional position of mother/wife, which does not reflect women's variety (Rajagopal & Gales, 2002). Female adolescence was impacted by unrealistic images of women in the media. These pictures have an impact on society's broader socio-cultural worldview. Women in their forties and fifties had lower self-esteem than women in their forties and fifties. The socio-cultural views on looks are increasingly changing as a result of media images. Women's dissatisfaction with their physical appearance rose as a result of the media's idealized, slender, and beautiful portrayals of women. (Clay & Vignoles, 2005).

Women are overly and needlessly presented in ads, according to Shahwar (2013). However, despite the fact that Zotos and Tsuchla (2014) found a drop in female stereotyping and an increase in casting diverse gender roles in their latest study, female stereotyping still exists in many types and patterns.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Frederickson and Roberts' (1997) objectification theory is used for the theoretical base, which is extremely significant for comprehending female objectification in modern television advertising in Pakistan. The objectification theory of Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) provides a useful paradigm for comprehending, assessing, and construing television advertising in the context of Pakistani culture and society. This objectification theory appears to emphasize that advertising trends on Pakistani television manipulate the female gender by depicting her in a sexually objectified manner and associating her value and important role with this objectification rather than reflecting the true spirit of our culture. Self-objectification and global objectification, according to the idea, increase women's concern about their looks and intensify their physical shame, resulting in eating disorders and sensual relationship dysfunction. As a result, the objectification of women in Pakistani television advertising suggests that the media is promoting the use of particular standards as the sole criterion for women's attractiveness and acceptance. It also employs female pictures as a branding and marketing tactic, reinforcing the common notion that women are appreciated more for their looks than for their knowledge and skill. According to objectification theory, the content of the media is a strong weapon for shaping society's perceptions and attitudes about girls and women.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The survey research method was used for this research. A structured questionnaire was distributed for data collection. The sample size of the study was 200 people of Pakistani society. The data was collected from the people of (Islamabad city). The simple random sampling technique was used for

this purpose. The main objective of the study was to find the image of women in Pakistani media. How Pakistani media presenting the image of the women

### DATA ANALYSIS

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Media presents women in an unproductive role.	70 (35%)	90 (45%)	10 (5%)	22 (11%)	8 (4%)
Women in advertisements not following cultural and social values.	15 (7.5%)	110 (55%)	17 (8.5%)	49 (24.5%)	9 (4.5%)
The depiction of female models and the surroundings of commercials do not reflect our cultural values..	17 (8.5%)	119 (59.5%)	8 (4%)	40 (20%)	16 (8%)
Media using sensual language for women.	72 (36%)	96 (48%)	7 (3.5%)	21 (10.5%)	4 (2%)
The portrayal of a female model in the advertisements is not presenting the actual status of women in our society.	122 (61%)	37 (18.5%)	3 (1.5%)	22 (11%)	16 (8%)
Commercials are only depicting female models as eye-candy.	50 (25%)	120 (60%)	9 (4.5%)	7 (3.5%)	14 (7%)
Media promotes the gender biases.	77 (38.5%)	107 (53.5%)	2 (1%)	11 (5.5%)	3 (1.5%)
The depiction of female models in advertising Is diminishing women's esteem in our societal structure?	130 (65%)	44 (22%)	7 (3.5%)	14 (7%)	5 (2.5%)

The table indicated that the responses of the people regarding portray of women in television advertisement. From 200 respondents 70 strongly agree, 90 agree, 10 neutral, 22 disagree and 08 strongly disagree with the statement “media presents women in an unproductive role”. Its show that media is not presenting the real image of women. This image show that women are not involved any productive role. In response of 2<sup>nd</sup> question 15 strongly agree, 110 agree, 17 neutral,

49 disagree and 09 strongly disagree with the question statement. The response of the respondents shows that advertisers or media organizations ignore the social and cultural norms and ethics of the society when they are portray the women in their advertisements. The response of another question describe that 17 strongly agree, 11 agree, 8 neutral, 40 disagree and 16 strongly disagree with the statement. In response of a question 72 strongly agree, 96 agree, 7 neutral, 21 disagree and 04 strongly disagree with the statement "Media using sensual language for women". These findings show that media employs sensual diction for females, which conveys a negative picture of women in society. In response of another question 50 strongly agree, 120 agree, 9 neutral, 7 disagree and 14 strongly disagree with the statement "Commercials are only depicting female models as eye-candy". Its means that women are objectified in advertisement as sex object and used for gaining the attention of the peoples. "Every written element has a condescending tone, establishing a feeling of inferiority among women," (Aved 2005). Women are depicted in the media as weak, childlike, dependant, naive, illogical, and cunning, according to her. In response of another question 77 strongly agree, 107 agree, 2 neutral, 11 disagree and 3 strongly disagree with the statement Media promotes the gender biases. The respondents also agreed that the respect of women is decreasing day by day due to negative portray in advertisements.

## CONCLUSION

The right role representation becomes a crucial problem when a marketer decides to portray a woman in advertising. This is especially pertinent in today's advertising circumstances, since data suggests that women are more conscious of stereotypical female images in advertising than males (Lull, Hanson & Marx, 1997). Previous research has looked at the stereotyped depictions of women in advertising. This research was intended to be a preliminary effort to quantify how women are now portrayed in advertising. The study's findings show that while there have been some advancements in how women are portrayed throughout time, there are still significant disparities. In reality, the findings of this study for the major person in an advertisement revealed that women are more frequently featured as central people in advertisements than males. As previously stated, more girls than males were depicted in the young age category. Men were more frequently represented as "middle-aged" or "elderly." The findings of this study show little change from past studies in this category, as women are still heavily represented in the young category. This is most certainly not part of a trend toward more realistic depictions of women; rather, it is a marketing ploy on the side of the advertisers, since a youthful and attractive face is more likely to catch the viewer's attention. The study concluded at this point the women portraying in advertisements is like a showpiece for the attraction of the audience or readers or the society. Advertisers or media organizations are not presenting the reality or original image of the women. The study's main conclusion is that advertising enhance and legitimate the female body as visual candy for both female and male viewers. Women are portrayed in advertising to assure product promotion and demand. Women's objectification in advertisements not only affects social fact, but also produces social authenticity that isn't grounded on truth.

Pakistan is an Islamic country and has specific Islamic and cultural values. The type of negative portray of women in society is not acceptable. The majority of respondents believe that women in Pakistani advertising are usually depicted as beautifying objects; women's bodies and body parts are erotically exhibited in advertisements that motivate other women to imitate. Women in

commercial positions are not representative of Pakistan's social and religious outlook, rather than function as a beauty idol. They wear revealing clothing, whilst males seem decent and well-dressed. The proportion of participants said that the media in Pakistan depicts women in a negative light and in contradiction with socio-cultural principles in advertising to gain publicity, while advertisers favour women exclusively to boost product sales. This data also supports the notion that women regard males as an intriguing and enjoyable portion of their lives. This study also perpetuates the perception of women as an intriguing and enjoyable aspect, a perception that frustrates female viewers and diminishes women's esteem in society.

This study is helpful for the media industries for revision of their policies regarding the women role. This study covers how women are depicted in advertisements and future research can be conducted on separately how women are portrayed in electronic media, print media and social media.

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