

INDIAN TELEVISION COMMERCIALS REINFORCING TRADITIONAL GENDER IMAGES AND ROLES

Ritwika Biswas

*Department of Geography
Delhi School of Economics
University of Delhi*

INTRODUCTION

Gender refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that a particular society considers appropriate for men and women (WHO). Gender is one of the most studied social paradigms as it is the main paradigm that people use in determining how to act and interact with others. For this reason, it is important to look at the ways in which individuals receive messages about gender norms.

The **objective of the present paper** is to examine portrayals of gender in television commercials and the effects that such gendered images have on viewers. To clarify, gender refers to the social meanings attached to the sexes within a particular social system (Kramer, 2005). The paper analyses gender stereotypes in Indian television commercials. More than hundred advertisements have been observed and closely studied. Almost all of them have been seen abiding by the existing societal structure, thus strengthening the stereotyped gender images and roles. The research about television commercials affecting the gender perceptions of its viewers is extremely relevant.

Cable and satellite television have grown rapidly throughout the developing world. Of all the popular means of mass media, television has the greatest mass appeal and acceptance. The impact of visual media as a very powerful vehicle for communicating ideas and images is known to be tremendous. Television creates a world which seems very real and viewers are unable to differentiate between the contrived world and the real one. Impact of television is more on the young children and adolescents, who sit in front of the television, and for hours, succession of pictures is watched by eyes that are only just opening onto the world and it becomes imprinted on minds that are still impressionable. The availability of cable and satellite television exposes them to new information about the outside world; reinforces stereotypes and beliefs which may affect individual attitudes and behaviors.

Advertisements are prominent and integral part of television viewing. Due to its power and charisma, advertising is the best known and most widely discussed form of promotion. Advertising not only informs but persuades and motivates the consumer about the advertised products, service or ideas. Advertising plays an important role in persuading the public to change their attitudes towards a product, service or idea. The constant flow of advertising images of gender, types of persons, social classes, and other groups influence our social learning process. Several media scholars have

emphasized the role of advertisements as a major agent of social reinforcement because of its presumed power for moulding opinions, attitudes and behaviour.(Anand Meenu, 2007)

PAST RESEARCH

Previous studies on gender stereotyping in television commercials indicate that gender differences are very prevalent in television commercials. Such stereotyping has been found in advertisements from many different countries. But there have been very few studies on gender roles in Indian television commercials.

Past research indicates that in India, as in other nations, men and women are likely to be shown in stereotypical ways in television advertisements (Gupta and Jain 1998; Jha Dang and Vohra 2005; Munshi 1998).

Munshi (1998) examined Indian television commercials in the 1990s and found that women were portrayed primarily as housewives.

Gupta and Jain (1998) also found that Indian television advertisements served to reinforce the traditional and stereotypical images of women as subordinate to men.

The most detailed study on gender role portrayals in Indian television advertisements by Jha Dang and Vohra (2005) confirms the above findings. Jha Dang and Vohra (2005) found that compared to men, women appeared more often for household products and personal or beauty products and were less likely to be shown as being employed than were men.

Das (2000) found that men appeared more often in advertisements for automotive, financial services, and electronic products than did women but that women appeared more often for home and beauty products than did men.

Das (2010) examined both the frequency of appearance and prevalence of gender stereotypes and found that there are more male than female central characters and voiceovers in Indian commercials; stereotypical differences were also found in the type of credibility used by men and women, and the nature of the products they advertised and settings that males and females appeared in. Female central characters tended to be younger than their male counterparts and were more likely to be portrayed in relationship roles.

Note: All the above works have been analyzed on a quantitative basis, but this paper is purely based on the qualitative readings of the hindi commercials which are or have been aired in the prime hindi channels. The advertisements have been viewed through critical lens to look into the layers of gender portrayals, both which have been surfaced and sub-surfaced.

‘TARGETING THE AUDIENCE’

The economic structure of the television industry has a direct effect on the placement and content of all television programs and commercials. Large advertisers and their agencies have evolved the

pseudo-scientific method of time purchasing based on demographics, with the age and sex of the consumer generally considered to be the most important predictors of purchasing behavior.

As a market, India is an extremely attractive one to multinationals for “India is at an exciting tipping point in its socio-economic progress that makes it the cynosure of global investors” (Reddy-2007). India is the fourth largest economy in the world with a sizeable middle class of over 300 million people; it also has the third largest television viewing market in the world (Bowman 2004; Forrester 2007). These factors make understanding gender role portrayals in this country is important to both local and multinational companies.

Experience, research, and intuition thus yield a demographic (and even psychographic) profile of the "target audience." Advertisers can then concentrate their budgets on those programs which the target audience is most likely to view. The most economical advertising buys are those in which the target audience is most concentrated (thus, the less "waste" audience the advertiser must purchase). (Barnouw, 1978; Gitlin, 1983; Jhally, 1987)

In a country like India, the advertisers have to be extra conscious while conveying their message to the viewers. The country has its own confinement in regards to its culture and values. Hence the advertisers always tend to be on the safe side and try to slowly permeate within the audience's mind through the existing patriarchal set up of the society, thus reinforcing the stereotyped gender images and roles. They just try to churn the existing practices and bring out something new and attractive out of that.

GENDER PORTRAYALS IN THE COMMERCIALS

The commercials are designed to give pleasure to the target audience, since it is the association of the product with a pleasurable experience that forms the basis for much Indian television advertising. Yet patriarchy conditions, males and females to seek their pleasure differently. Advertisers therefore portray different images to men and women in order to exploit the different deep-seated motivations and anxieties connected to gender identity.

WOMEN'S COMMERCIALS

Most of the commercials abide by the gendered division of the private and public space, thus they fortify the existing scenario. Hence women are mostly shown in domestic settings. In those domestic settings female characters were more likely to be involved in housework and childcare than men. When men were shown performing domestic tasks, they are often depicted as incompetent, mostly meant to be a source for humor. These portrayals of failure and humor may reinforce traditional gender roles by implying that “men are somehow „naturally“ ill-suited for certain types of work, and therefore those chores are best left to women” (Scharrer).

There is always a tendency among the advertisers, that daytime is the best time to reach the woman who works at home. Especially important to advertisers among this group is the young mother with children. Older women, who also make up a significant proportion of the daytime audience, are

generally considered less important by many advertisers in the belief that they spend far less money on consumer goods than young mothers. Prime time (the evening hours) is considered a good time to reach women who work away from home, but since large numbers of men are also in the audience, it can also be a good time to advertise products with wider target audiences.

The range of products targeted for women varies from beauty products to household products to child care products. She is the ideal Indian woman- a good home-maker, a caring wife, a responsible daughter-in-law and a great „mommy“. In other words she is the „super-woman“, having multifarious qualities- beauty, elegance, passivity, loyalty, devotion. She is responsible, caring, and compassionate, her domain is the private sphere and her very existence is justified by the family. Her family gives her the identity and is the world for her.

For the advertising world, the sari clad, large bindi, mangalsutra and sindoor sporting women has become the Indian symbol of marriage (Anand. Meenu, 2007) Women are mostly shown in the household set-up specifically kitchen and washroom. She is portrayed with a husband, two small kids and a nice home. She is interested in kitchen electronic devices (refrigerator, microwave) and healthy food products (soups, cholesterol lowering oils, fat free products) to meet her family's needs, but keep them fit and healthy at the same time. Her need for an attractive body (calorie less diet, beauty products, anti-aging creams) is her need to maintain her husband's interest and maintain her family's unity and security.

The advertisements also projects women as the torch bearers of cultural heritage as advertisers have long been enamored with women and culture (Anand 2007). Advertisements of life insurance picturizes the transformation of the sindoor of woman into the company's logo. These advertisements seem to promote the idea of insurance as more important for women than the men.

To summarize the whole thing, the advertisements portray women as the „multi-tasking“ wife who take cares of domestic responsibilities and her family. If she is shown to be working then the focus is mainly on her „balance of roles“. Thus she is the ideal complete Indian wife!

MEN'S COMMERCIAL

Men are mostly portrayed in the workforce. In the workforce, men were twice as likely to hold high-level business roles, and four times more likely to have white collar positions than females (Hong, 1997). Men are shown in stereotypical roles of authority and dominance (Craig, 1992). They are depicted as the „real owners“ or the „masters“ of the public space and „the head“ of the private space.

Men when shown in private domain are shown as untrained, incompetent and inefficient worker boosting the fact that they are only suitable for office jobs. If they are shown taking care of children, they are more likely to appear outside, are more likely to be shown with boys, and are hardly ever depicted with an infant. To the extent that men are shown as more involved in family life, they still tend to depend largely on knowledge and activities that are stereotypically male (Kaufman, 1999).

„FEMALE IS THE MALE FANTASY“- WOMEN GETS COMMODIFIED

Abiding by the existing societal norms products like liquor and cars are mainly targeted towards men. Advertisers use women as "decoratives" or sex objects, attracting the masculine fantasy, as a promotional strategy. Men's women are portrayed as physically attractive, slim, and usually young and white, almost always dressed in revealing clothing. There are hints of sexual availability in men's women, but this is seldom played out explicitly. Men's women are also frequently portrayed as admirers (and at times, almost voyeurs), generally approving of some aspect of product use (the car he drives, the beer he drinks, the deodorant he uses or the credit card he uses). Thus the product he uses is a sign of masculinity, a status symbol that would attract women towards them. This traditional woman-as-sex-object profile may hence reflect a hegemonic ideology that reinforces the primacy of men in the society.

‘ANALYSIS OF CHOSEN COMMERCIALS’

In order to illustrate the variations of gender portrayals, I have chosen ten Commercials. Each was selected to provide an example of how men and women are depicted to themselves and to the other sex. The chosen commercials are or were shown in all prime Hindi channels. These commercials, I have chosen to analyze, are fairly typical and were chosen to permit a closer look at the practices. They are categorized under different divisions of some pre-conceived notions of gender roles and images. The analysis part of the commercials is my reading of the scenario and is completely my interpretation.

WOMEN- THE ‘DELICATE’ WEAKER SEX

Commercial 1: Detergent powder

A school going boy and girl of around 8-9 years of age is shown. The sister falls down, gets dirty due to the mud and starts crying.

Her brother beats the mud, saying "u hurt my sister, let me handle u ...apologize!!" then after beating the mud he tells his sister "Sorry bola" (the mud has said Sorry). Sister is happy and smiles. They walk back to home.

The brother turns back and warns the mud again. "dubara maat karna" (don't dare do it again !)

Then advertisement tagline: "Daag accha hai" (If something good happens because of cloth stains, then stains are worth it)

Analysis:

This advertisement has always been in the list of favourites of the audience. Always referred as „the cute ad“. But if seen through the critical lens, it is very much evident that the commercial has portrayed the subtle gender construct of the two kids. While the girl falls down and cries, it is her brother who though, is as young as her, performs that „masculine role“ and beats up the mud that has made his sister cry. A common scenario which has been and is assumed is the crying part for the females and the males fighting for them.

Commercial 2: News channel on ‘eve teasing’

The advertisement begins with four men of around 25 years of age manages to get up on a running public bus. Then one of them misbehaves with a young lady of 20 years of age, desperately keeps his hand on her shoulder for few seconds.

The lady gets irritated and just looks at them once. The man continues to laugh. Everyone sees that but no one reacts.

An old man scolds this group of men. They said that the hand slipped by mistake. Old man says “why don’t your hands slip on a hot oven?” and continues, “Have your hand ever slipped on your younger sister’s shoulder”.

One of them says “are uncle, haath hai, fisaal gaya, sorry bolta hai!” .

The old man slapped the fellow and said “haath tha, fissal gaya, sorry bolta hai!”

The young lady smiles..

Then follows the tagline “the voice reaches to everyone”

Analysis:

To begin with, it is necessary to mention that the commercial is an “award-winning” one. This commercial has been chosen for analysis to continue with the previous discussion. In the previous one a young boy performs the „masculine role“ here it is performed by the old man. The young lady who is the victim of eve-teasing prefers to stay quite, while the old man stands up for her. It is a matter of concern that such is the image portrayed of a „woman“ by one of the country’s leading and famous news channel, and to add up more to such a concern, the commercial has been awarded by the jury consisting of country’s famous “intellects!”

The advertisement clearly portrays the „helpless image of a woman“. Women are „soft, delicate, and fragile“-the common social feminine construct. They cannot stand up for themselves or protect themselves, hence „a man“ is always needed to stand up for them and protect them against the „other“men! This protective man can be of any age but is always capable of performing the „masculine duty“.

Moreover, the common construct, „public space is man’s domain“ has been reaffirmed through this commercial. The group of men misbehaves with a woman openly in front of everyone, but the concerned lady or the other women present there does not fight back; it is another man who takes over the situation. The scenario clearly surfaces the dominance of men in public space- saying it is „there space“ which is confirmed by the silence of the women featuring the commercial.

Commercial 3: Men’s Formal Wear

The advertisement shows a party setup, where a saree clad young girl is seen walking when she suddenly stumbles and her fiance walking by her side quickly saves her from falling.

In the background was standing an old man who was watching this. Camera focuses on him and a flashback begins.

The „girl falling man saving“ act reminds the old man of his young days and how he used to save his kid daughter from falling.

Flashback ends, we know the old man is her father, having found his daughter“s savior in this young man.

He is happy to give off his daughter“s hand to such a man who can take care of her.

Tagline: The Complete Man

Analysis:

To begin with, the most striking feature of the commercial is the hidden patriarchy within it. Man can take care of woman and their sole responsibility lies with the man. For a girl it is always her father and after she gets married it is her husband. The shift of responsibility takes place from one man to the other man. A woman is portrayed as the weaker sex who should be always taken care of, she is even unable to get up by herself if she falls down.. A man“s support is always needed and the father finds the same concern and love in the eyes of the young man. Thus he is relieved to give off his daughter“s hand to such a man who can take care of her for the whole life- the „complete man“ who would complete his „delicate“ daughter!

RESTRICTED DIVISION OF SPACE-‘BOUNDARIES CANNOT BE CROSSED’

Commercial 4: Detergent powder

The scene goes something like this:

In a small family / social gathering a small kid of about 6-7 years age is asked by his proud parents to do his father“s act, “beta papa banke dikhao” (son, act like your dad) somebody says.

The enthusiastic kid immediately starts acting like his father giving punch lines to each his acts.

Act I – “papa office mein.” (Dad at office) – The kid is seen swiftly moving around smiling in style and attitude.

Act II – papa party mein (dad in a party) and the kid starts dancing with super energy. Each time the kid puts up these acts the father is seen to be smiling ear to ear in pride.

The third act – papa ghar pe (dad at home) and the kid takes off his shirt and starts moping the floor with it.

The background music changes from applause to embarrassment, the smile disappears from father“s face and he is seen picking up the kid in the middle of the act and leaving the scene.

A voice over is heard saying, “ho gaya na kuch alag” (There you have, something unexpected)

Analysis:

„A woman“s place is in the home“- A phase gifted to women by the society through out times. It is always assumed that she is „close to nature“ and is meant for reproductive roles. The productive functions are performed by men, bringing in a clear line of division between men“s public space and women“s private space. There are certain man“s job and a woman“s job, none of them can cross the

boundary, particularly women. Men who tend to participate in the domestic work are referred to as „effeminate“, „henpecked husband“ by the society.

In this advertisement a similar thought has been revealed. It is proud for a man to be in his office or in party (both are public space) but when the child enacted his washing of clothes, that was a source of embarrassment in front of others, a shameful act because that’s a woman’s job and not man’s! The commercial has reaffirmed the restricted division of space through a funny act.

Commercial 5: Product yet not revealed!

The advertisement shows a man washing clothes and dish and comments “biwi ka maadat kar raha huun”

He is seen lost in his activities like washing clothes, cleaning dishes when he suddenly spots the camera eyeing him.

Startled and annoyed he says, “apni wife ki help kar raha hun bhai, kya problem hai?” (I am helping my wife, what is the problem brother?)

Analysis:

The advertisement is picturised on one of the bollywood’s well-known actor, most probably with the intention to „add on“ to the positive note, which the commercial wants to highlight through the story-line (Even such a big personality is „helping his wife“) But actually, viewing it through critical lens, it is found that the traditional division of private and public space is deeply embedded within the story-line.

Putting it in simpler words- the first message is (the hidden one) - washing clothes and cleaning dishes are wife’s job, second message is (the highlighted one) still he is helping his wife. Hence it is felt; he is not doing „the work“ but a „favour“ on his wife. The commercial begins with the same basic assumption of a woman’s job and hence is no exception! Whatever may be the story-line, how positive it intends to be, all goes meaningless when the assumption is so biased!!!

Commercial 6: Life Insurance Company

The commercial begins and ends with the tagline- „-karo zaada ka irada“ (wish for more)

In the advertisement, each character is shown wishing for something more

An old bald man sees a man with hair on his head and he wishes for more.

A kid was shown hoping for more chocolates.

A boy of around 20yrs of age, is shown fantasizing a stylish bike, which is parked at the roadside.

Then a girl of around 23 yrs of age is shown sitting behind her boyfriend on a bike, and she watches a woman playing with her two small kids. For the girl that was the quest to have more (wishing for more)

Analysis:

Focussing more on the last two characters, the pre-concieved division of space was re-affirmed confidently through them. The male character wishes to have a bike, through which he can mobilize the public space, whereas the female character desires to have a settled life along with husband and kids. Thus emphasizing on her „reproductive role“ in the private domain.

WOMEN HAVE TO ‘LOOK GOOD’ AND ‘YOUNG’ ALWAYS....

Commercial 7: Cornflakes

The advertisement begins with a woman(around 35 years of age) moving around the house in a red saree. Her husband keeps on noticing her, and comments, “these days something have changed.. did u change your hairstyle?”

She serves him breakfast, but he keeps on watching her and again says, “oh..got it, you are wearing new sarees these days..”

She says a “no” and points towards her „low fat breakfast“

Then the husband embraces her and says “that“s why you look so special”

Then the tagline- “Be special”

Analysis:

The whole story line focuses on the woman who is getting noticed by her husband due to some change in her. It is the low fat breakfast which brought the change, making her „special“.

The product „specially“ targets the sentiments of women, because there is a continuous craze among females to look good so as to maintain the interest of their partners. Hence a woman has to be „slim“ and „slender“ to be attractive and for that she has to follow „a fat less, calorie less diet“ to „be special“. The commercial completely erases the fact, that, in a pure institution like love and marriage feelings, emotions, respect makes someone „special“, hence the whole thought gets transmitted among people in a very wrong direction!

Commercial 8: Anti aging skin care products

The advertisement begins with a beautiful lady dressing up and then reading a card “dinner at 8”.

Then she sees a beautiful set up for dinner and her husband is dressed up as a chef and tries to impress her..Both are shown happy with each other, the husband madly in love with his wife

And then in the background a female voice says, “Revive the romance in your marriage, as you revive your glow with (the cream“s name)”

Tagline – „miracles do happen“

Analysis:

The advertisement gives a clear cut message to viewers that to renew the interest and romance, it is only the woman who has to renew her glow and catch the attention of her husband. Husbands are „freeman“ and it is always the duty of wives to maintain the relation through her looks and keep it intact forever. She has to be “young and pretty” to rejuvenate her love life.

Moreover the husband is shown preparing the whole dinner set up for his wife, there where lies the „miracle“ – man doing a woman’s job(role reversal) just because he is completely mesmerized by his wife’s beauty.

It is really depressing to see such notions still existing and being lived upon in today’s world. Patriarchy has been so deeply ingrained within the society that each and every thought somewhere reinforces the superiority of men pushing women to the submissive and passive stage of life, which is though sad but an undeniable truth!!

THE LIST OF PRE-CONCIEVED NOTIONS ABOUT WOMEN CONTINUES.....

DAUGHTERS ARE MEANT ONLY AND ONLY FOR MARRIAGE- BETI ‘ PARAYA DHAAN HOTI HAI’

Commercial 9: Gold jewellery

The scene goes as- a father drops his small daughter to school. Seeing her sad for being away from him,he tries to make her smile and finally consoles her.

The next scene is shown of her marriage, where she is dressed up as a bride, covered with designer jewelry. She breaks down into tears,while leaving her house and her father. He tries to console her in the same way as he used to do, while she was young, finally cheering her up.

Analysis:

The advertisement confines the whole act within the boundary of „daughter-marriage equation“, The girl goes to the school, but the very next scene is of her marriage, narrowing down the whole concept to the single thought- daughters are meant only for marriage! While she is young she is given education but the actual and sole purpose is always her marriage.

NOT TO FORGET, THE INDIAN WIFE!

Commercial 10: Direct to home (DTH) service provider, satellite tv

The commercial begins with conversation of two friends on a dining table. One of them requests to tell his wife to allow them to see the match instead of the tv serial.

The other friend lectures his friend on the virtues of their wives, saying “kitne selfish hote hai hum maard log! Haamare biwiya hamare liye vraat rakhte hai, kitni mannate mangte hai, jab tak hum ghar

nahi laut te hai khanna nahi khati hai... Aur „aise biwi“ k liye match kya tournament bhi qurbaan!”(we men are so selfish, our wives stay on fast, praying for us. Until and unless we return they don’t even eat. For such a wife, even a tournament can be sacrificed!)

Then he slowly joins his wife and sits beside her. He is so relaxed because his match is getting recorded while she is watching the serial.

Analysis:

The advertisement provides some distinct divisions between gender reaffirming certain definitions and ideas.

Man goes to office while wife is the „typical Indian one“ - who prays for him, keeps fast for his well being and long life and waits for him to return and have his food, then only she can have it. „Such“ is the „ideal wife“ for whom a tournament can also be sacrificed keeping aside a match.

Each line seems to have a hidden intention of pointing towards what and how an Indian ideal wife should be. Idealness is always attached to the thought how you treat your husband thus reinforcing the patriarchal form of society.

Also a special mention is required about linking of Indian wives with Hindi serials which has been common. Men watch matches while women watch „saas-bahu“ (mother and daughter – in – law) serials- a gendered division in the media space as well! Thus another way of targeting the viewers is slowly approaching through their respective media spaces, confirming their portrayed images.

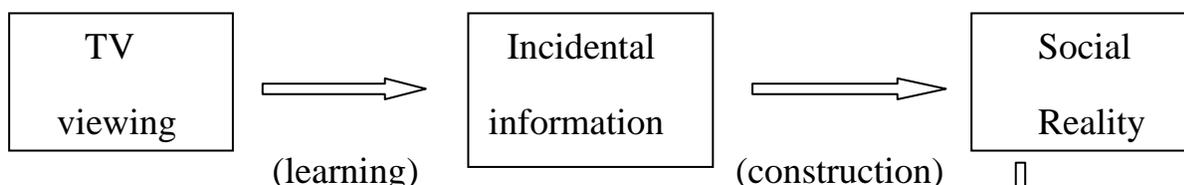
EFFECTS OF GENDER POTRAYALS ON THE AUDIENCE

The role of advertising “is to verbalize...the possible meanings of things and to facilitate the exchange of meanings occurring in social interactions” (Leiss, Kline, and Jhally, 1986); it provides a visual representation in order to negotiate between people, things, and social meaning. Television commercials permeate everyday life, yet they often create false images and cause social dissonance; as commercials are an extension of our message system, they reflect social asymmetries that exist in our culture (Yanni, 1990), such as the gender divide. (Hooper, 2008)

In examining the effect television advertisements have on the viewers, two theories are prominent: social learning theory and cultivation theory.

Cultivation theory states that the more a person is exposed to a message provided by the media, the more likely that person is to believe the message is real.

CONCEPTUAL MODEL:





IIII

Cultivation theory(Source: Hawkins and Pingree 1983)

Social learning theory (also known as Social Cognitive Theory) is the idea that people learn by watching what others do and that human thought processes are central to understanding personality. Social learning theory stemmed out of work by N.E. Miller and J. Dollard in 1941. Their proposition posits that if humans were motivated to learn a particular behavior that particular behavior would be learned through clear observations. By imitating these observed actions the individual observer would solidify that learned action and would be rewarded with positive reinforcement (Miller & Dollard, 1941). Social learning theory simply states that individuals learn through observation. In the case of television, people learn through observing the characters within the commercials.

Advertisements are very influencing in the sense, that they are of short duration and in that fifty seconds act, they try to convey a complete powerful story. Both the theories emphasis the fact that viewers observe and learn through that act and believes it to be real, thus the notions are ingrained in their thought process and they tend to follow that. The whole functioning process begins with those pre-concieved notions reinforcing the narrow set of traditional defined activities and gender roleshence bringing in gender inequalities within the society. Many a times messages are given by the commercials in a wrong way, which are immediately caught by the targeted customers. For example, beauty products are endorsed with the messages that a girl has to be fair and pretty to get noticed bythe boys, hence such products should be used to be fair and pretty. Many women are seen obsessed with beauty and wasting lots of time to improve their looks. Moreover the very approach adopted to define marriages and love goes in a complete different direction. One has to be beautiful young and attractive to sustain the interest of the partners, which is completely meaningless. The entire process ofthinking gets trapped in the „vicious circle“ adding on to the existing problems.

CONCLUSION

Gender images in television commercials provide an especially intriguing field of study. The ads are carefully crafted bundles of images, frequently designed to associate the product with feelings of pleasure stemming from deep-seated fantasies and anxieties. Advertisers seem quite willing to manipulate these fantasies and exploit our anxieties, especially those concerning our gender identities,

to sell products. Due to the fact that gender stereotyping is still used in advertising, critics state that advertising does not reflect the significant in many societies. Basically, there are two general conclusions: pessimistic and optimistic. Pessimistic studies stress that women are still being portrayed in a negative, stereotypical way, and this kind of stereotyping are even becoming worse. Optimistic studies consider women as gaining substantial ground on their male counterparts and breaking out of negative stereotyping. They suggest that role portrayals in commercials are more representative of contemporary women and are gradually becoming equal to men.

Individuals receive messages from all levels of analysis, including family, peer groups, schools and other social institutions. In order to end the division of roles between genders and accept norms outside of the constrictive boxes of masculinity and femininity, change must occur at all levels. Therefore commercials must be more conscious while conveying their messages and should offer to break through the traditional gender images and roles instead of reinforcing them.

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