



# Gender Stereotyping: The Role of Traditional and social media: An Analysis of Audience Perception

Aparna S Menon, Shyamali Banerjee

**Abstract:** Gender stereotyping has been rampant since the initiation of broadcast media in the late 50s and early 60s. However, as advertisements are a more persuasive form of communication, the perception and normalization of stereotypes and the degree of persuasion become more evident and probable. Television and social media advertisements differ in their portrayal. Hence, stereotypes and the level of influence through persuasion need to be studied separately. This research compares and analyses television and social media advertisements based on stereotypes. In addition, the audience's perception and the level of persuasion are analyzed. For this purpose, the researcher has used content analysis and survey through questionnaire methods to identify the different socio-cultural factors that strengthened the process of stereotyping through media and to find out a probable solution to minimize, if not eliminate, this problem [1].

**Keywords:** Social Media Advertisements, Gender Stereotypes, Audience's Perception, Influence Through Persuasion

## I. INTRODUCTION

Currently, businesses use social media in different ways. For instance, a company bothered about people's opinions about the brand would monitor social media conversations and respond to valid messages and communication (social media engagement through mentions, tags, and comments). For a business to understand its performance on social media, it has to analyze the reach, attention, and sales with an analytics tool like social media analytics. A business that years to reach a target audience should run highly target-specific social media advertisements [2][3].

## II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The influence of media, especially visual media on the thoughts and actions of people is high. However, the focus has always gone to movies, television, and series, often ignoring advertisements. In a household that watches television every evening, the content that advertisements push in is too much. Similarly, for a person who spends the most time online, social media ads can be influential. Therefore, it is high time to include advertisements in the media for people [4][5][6].

Since the kind of audience each mode of advertising caters to is different, the difference in content and the change in stereotypes and influences are worth studying. This necessitates answering three questions.

1. What are the kinds and frequency of stereotypes shown in social media and traditional media (television) advertising?
2. How does the audience perceive stereotypes?
3. Has social media advertising decreased the extent of gender stereotyping as prevalent in television advertisements?

## III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To identify the change in stereotypes with television and social media advertisements
- To identify the perception of the audience towards stereotypical advertisements.
- To identify the role of social media in television advertisements.

## IV. METHODOLOGY

The researcher viewed, evaluated and analyzed television advertisements and social media advertisements. The list of advertisements were divided into brands that went against stereotypes and brands that portrayed stereotypes. The content was analyzed based on their frequency of stereotypical ads in both media and the kind of acceptance. For eg: since television has become hub of serials, making middle aged women and housewives as target audience, the advertisements can be complementary to the intended audience's mindset, who watch unprogressive serials. The ads that supported stereotypes, that stood against stereotypes were differentiated. The frequency of advertisements that stood against stereotypes in television was studied. Many brands now focus on breaking stereotypes as part of their campaigns [7-10].

### A. Advertisements that stood against stereotypes

#### a. Television

- a. TATA Tea Jaago Re – Inequality is learnt. Equality needs Teaching
- b. Whisper #LikeAGirl
- c. Titan Raga – #BreakTheBias

#### b. Social Media

1. Ariel: Share the load (2015)  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJukf4ifuKs>)
2. Bhīma: Pure as Love  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rTOrKdx5tHM>)
3. Pantene: Labels against Women  
(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=luLkfXixBpM>)

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## B. Advertisements that portray stereotypes

### a. Television

1. Kinder Joy
2. Fair and Lovely
3. Vim

## C. Social Media

### 1. Fashion and Trends

The obsession with fair skin has been reflected in social media ads, especially in a fashion that tends where the models would be fair-skinned and well-bilt. It is said to cause body dissatisfaction in common girls [11].

## D. Questionnaire

The questionnaire has been sent to around 100 respondents of age group 18 to 50. This ensured that people of age groups that watched both television and social media advertisements were included. The questionnaire focuses on the group of audience who are segregated into social media users and traditional media viewers, based on age. It complements in learning about the advertising trends in the media, their perception of it and thereby the influence of the target audience in advertisements [12].

## V. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Instant change in every field of the world has positively and negatively affected people. This applies to the drastic technological advancements and sophistication, which have led to a more educated and broad-minded society on the positive side. Therefore, there would be a difference in contents catered to an advanced group of society by an advanced medium of communication. Considering how powerful communication can be as a tool to persuade or educate and involuntarily influence, the changes can be at times interlinked [13].

## VI. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### A. Media Effects Theory

The world-famous psychologist Albert Bandura created the 'Media Effects' theory, which focuses on the concept that "the media can directly 'implant' ideas into the mind of audiences." The theory also states that audiences adopt attitudes, emotional responses and new styles of conduct through modelling [14].

### B. Cultivation theory

The theory proposed by George Gerbner states that people after being regularly exposed to media are more likely to consume the realities as they are presented through media, which in turn affects their character and behavior. People's exposure to various media has already influenced their dressing styles, food habits and social culture. Globalization of media is a major factor for the invasion of western food, fashion and culture [15].

### C. Exemplification theory

Exemplification theory argues that the collection of simple knowledge based on experience serves better than the knowledge that comes from an unreal event, particularly major events will stick better in the minds of people than irrelevant events. Human beings group similar events in order

to assess the true delivery of information [16] [17].

The cognitive process that occurs when reclaiming "exemplars" depends on events that remain best and most in a person's memory along with the categorizations of simple and abstract knowledge based on experience.

Through media, which in turn affects their character and behavior. People's exposure to various media has already influenced their dressing styles, food habits, and social culture. Globalization of media is a major factor in the invasion of Western food, fashion, and culture.

## D. Research Gap

Many articles have studied stereotypes in the media. Advertisements and stereotypes were differentiated based on different media. The research focused on causes, effects, and perception of stereotypes. The studies that compared social media and television advertisements predominantly discussed metrics, opportunities, and real-time social media response to TV advertising [18][19].

Here, the research focuses on social media and television advertisements so as to compare and analyses them and find the influence of social media on television advertisements and the level of persuasion.

- The involuntary exposure to television advertisements and the voluntary approach to social media advertisements play a vital role in the level of influence through persuasion.
- The liberty to watch advertisements on social media, and the decrease in the degree of influence of stereotypes.

The rate at which advertisements reach the audience is different for both television and social media advertisements. Several factors including the duration contribute to it. The voluntary and involuntary exposure to advertisements in social media, and television respectively, has not been a central matter of study in research that focused on advertisements and stereotypes. Through media, which in turn affects their character and behavior. People's exposure to various media has already influenced their dressing styles, food habits, and social culture. Globalization of media is a major factor in the invasion of Western food, fashion, and culture [20-30].

## VII. RESULTS

- Advertisements that stand against stereotypes became prevalent in television predominantly after 2015. Although there are not many ads that talk against stereotypes, the change can be seen as a reflection of educating people regarding stereotypes with the help of activists who could widely reach people through social media. For instance, mental health advocacy and feminist movements were normalized only after taking it to social media platforms and after a large group of people discussed them, and learned about them.

- The length of a social media ad can be as long as five minutes on the other hand the length of a television ad be a maximum of 20 seconds. Television ads are involuntarily displayed and do not give the audience the time to differentiate if it is good or bad. As most stereotypical ads are portrayed as normalized scenarios in every house people, do not take a moment to think otherwise. On the other hand, a lengthy social media ad gives the audience the choice to watch it and gives them time to decide on the elements portrayed.
- Sophistication and advancements in technology have increased the number of social media users and have noticeably decreased the number of television viewers. As a medium that caters to a wide range of audience, social media content are constantly monitored and criticized. The introduction of social media influencers is a help in this case. Any social media content that stands against gender equality, or supports racism and other stereotypes would be criticized widely protested against, and can even be taken off.
- An increase in global knowledge as part of social media emergence has led to an audience's change in perception. The present-day audience is exposed to the cultures and lifestyle of every part of the world and thereby has the privilege to rethink the established societal norms. Social media has given the platform to generate opinions and it is reflected in the kind of content it delivers. On a whole, the globalization of media has helped in people's opinion formation and therefore, the content.

In the questionnaire, the respondents listed out a few stereotypical ads they noticed. All the listed ads were television commercials. This can be perceived in two ways.

1. The influence of television advertisements on the audience is higher than on social media advertisements. This can be because of the involuntary exposure to advertisements amidst any television program and the short duration television ads have gets into the audience's mind more than social media ads that would be about 3-5 minutes long. Moreover, social media ads give the audience the liberty to choose to watch them, also the personalization of advertisements on social media platforms plays a vital role in delivering vital ads only.
2. The frequency of stereotypical advertisements on television is higher than advertisements. When a sudden question causes the audience to recall a stereotypical television advertisement. It proves that the number of times audiences are exposed to stereotypical ads through television is higher than the frequency of exposure to stereotypical advertisements on social media.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

People do not necessarily pay attention to advertisements voluntarily. However, being constantly exposed to ads that pop up quite often, influences them involuntarily. In the case of social media advertising, the personalization of ads plays a vital role in the content delivered. In addition, the constantly improving media analysis and influencer scrutiny has led to more filtered content on social media. This has a lot to do with the target audience, who are predominantly youngsters. On the other hand, television has now shrunk into

homemakers and middle-aged. These viewers are less likely to scrutinize the content, although they will not find it inappropriate as it is what they have been exposed to all the time. Producers are not bothered about the influence and effect their products are going to make, in a profit-driven, TRP-driven media industry. Producing materials that satisfy the progressive or non-progressive thoughts of the intended audience supplements the audience's egos, beliefs, and thereby the program's viewership.

The factors that affect the degree of influence through persuasion in social media advertisements and television advertisements are many. To begin with, social media advertisements do not force users to watch an advertisement. The social media interface that lets people scroll or swipe away any content that they find irrelevant is an advantage. However, television advertisements do not provide this liberty. The only choice for a viewer to skip an advertisement is by changing the channel. When a person is much indulged in a program, chances are very less that; they change the channel to skip a 20 seconds advertisement.

The duration of advertisements is another factor that can affect the rate of influence. Television advertisements have a maximum duration of 20- 30 seconds. Whereas, social media advertising can be 3 to 5 minutes. Firstly, apart from the interface, this difference in duration of advertisements has a vital role in making social media advertisements skippable and therefore gives the audience the liberty of choice. Shorter television advertisements do not pose the need to skip.

This has a huge impact on the degree of influence on a collective level. Firstly, this is the main cause of an involuntary, more frequent exposure to television advertisements. This involuntary exposure plays a vital role in unknowingly feeding the message with no scope of analyzing it.

To be more precise, a person is less likely to interpret and analyze a message they do not purposely watch. In television, approximately 10 minutes are allotted for advertisements for a 30-minute program. A person who is too much indulged in the program is most likely not to change the channel to skip advertisements that are segregated into two 5-minute slots. This is the kind of subtle, yet planned frequent exposure to advertisements. A person spends 1/3 of the total time spent in front of the television on advertisements. The shorter duration of television advertisements makes it easier to incorporate more than five advertisements in a slot.

On the other hand, social media advertisements that would be more than a minute long have a lesser frequency of exposure. Apart from selective exposure, the rate of social media advertisements is lesser. While around 2 to 3 television advertisements can be shown in a minute, longer social media advertisements cannot keep up with the rate.

Television caters content collectively to every kind of audience. Similarly, advertisements are collectively delivered. There is no categorization and customization of products and contents. This adds up to the rate of being exposed to irrelevant advertisements. However, social media works on personalization.



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The contents and advertisements are catered to depending upon the interests of the audience. This decreases the frequency of exposure to irrelevant and inappropriate advertisements.

The perception of stereotypes has a lot to do with societal norms too. Often media effects and the audience's mindset are interlinked in either way. It is not necessarily that people's perception and the media's influence and persuasion affect their mindset. It can happen the other way around. According to the uses and gratification theory, preconceived notions and real-life consequences affect people's perception of media information.

To decrease the degree of influence through persuasion, apart from monitoring and regulating advertisements, it is also necessary that people's knowledge about stereotypes and their effects increase. The first step to decreasing the influence is to identify a stereotype, which is possible only with proper knowledge of what a stereotype is, and how it can be in evident and subtle.

A huge shift in the trend of television advertisements post-2015 can be credited to the expansion of social media usage. Social media has become a constantly active and vigilant platform that holds open discussions and forums on topics that were once unnoticed, hidden it, and get it treated is one among many of the changes social media discussions brought for anyone to open up their opinions and make changes. In addition, the constantly alive instant monitoring and scrutiny of television advertisements and content is rather impossible. In general, the interactive nature of social media platforms plays a crucial role.

Society's awareness of harmful stereotypes has increased. The biases exhibited by the advertisements explicitly bombard the audience with limited data and tend to plant outdated stereotypes of culture, gender, race, interests, and careers. Creates standards by launching a product or service to show that a product is desirable. Advertisement. In some other cases, stereotypes are tools for legal reasons or to create an offer secure solution for the advertiser in some cases. Still, increased analysis can also provide positive or negative results for the advertiser.

Unfortunately, how advertisements portray people does not always represent reality. Some approach often results in criticism. Stereotypical advertisements need to be analyzed and criticized because apart from selling their products, they also sell the idea of a good homemaker, or in general, an ideal woman.

Therefore, their products give the audience an illusion that a particular kind of perfection can be achieved using their products. In When the Goods Get Together, Luce Irigaray says, "Women exist only as of the possibility of mediation, transaction, transition and transference between men and himself," and such advertisements depict just this.

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