PERCEPTION OF PEOPLE ON THE IMAGES OF WOMAN IN ADVERTISEMENTS AND ITS IMPACT ON THE BRAND

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ABSTRACT

Advertising is usually found everywhere. A woman in advertising is one of the most important areas in advertising and is more concerned by the advertisers. The present study, “perception of people on the images of woman in advertisements and its impact on the brand” was conducted with the objectives of studying the perception of people on the images of women in advertising, to study the perception of people on the stereotypic image of women in advertising and to determine the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand. The study was conducted on a sample of 500 respondents of whom 230 were female and 270 were male respondents. An interview schedule was used to elicit the required information. The results of the study revealed that the majority of the respondents’ were of the opinion that women in advertising were portrayed as alluring and decorative objects. As far as the stereotypical images of women in advertisements were concerned, the respondents agreed that advertisements portrayed women in most of their daily activities. Women in advertisements were hardly depicted as intelligent and in various career settings. With respect to the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand, the respondents agreed that regardless to advertisement they continued purchasing a particular brand of product if they were comfortable with that brand.

Key Words: Advertising, Women in Advertising, Images of Women in Advertising, Portrayals of Women in Advertising.
INTRODUCTION

The advertising industry generates more than $180 billion a year. It has been estimated that most people, on average, see 3,000 advertisements each day (Kilbourne, 2000). Advertising surrounds us on television, billboards, magazines, newspapers, and buses. Advertising images can be found in nearly every direction we turn. According to Kilbourne with the media “containing so many images of women and men, and messages about men and women and sexuality today, it is highly unlikely that these ideas would have no impact on our sense of identity” (Kilbourne, 2000).

As far as showing women in advertisements is concerned, things seem to have worsened over time. In most of the advertisements of recent times a women is either washing clothes and utensil, cooking, serving food to family members or trying to make her husband feel better who at that time reading a newspaper or suffering from cold. The media still portray women as objects showing who in certain way can catch the attention of people. Advertising is one of the most effective media of communication. And it is a form of communication used to influence individuals to purchase products and services which are newly introduced into the market. Human beings especially women are used to represent these products in the advertisements. Maximum advertisements which we come across daily are focused on women and family needs since women are the perfect home makers, and she is the one who makes majority purchases for her family. The advertisements basically depict the image we shape of women in our culture. Since 1990’s, and subsequently, advertisers are continuously making an attempt to build multiple possible identities for women in an effort to change their stereotypical image of a mere housewife.

Advertisements have started portraying women more frequently as career oriented and in non-traditional roles and are constructing the persona of the new Indian women. On the other hand there are certain groups of people who are misusing this image by portraying women in sexual roles and as a decorative object. There are advertisements which are showcasing that if a woman wants to explore her talent she has to display her physical attributes. In the advertising industry, whether a woman is promoting cosmetics, jeweler, fabrics domestic gadgets or any other products she is always projected as an object. Empirical studies have indicated that women are overwhelmingly targeted more for objectifying treatment than men.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been done on different types of images of woman in advertising. Bardwick and Schumann (1967) examined the portrayal of men and women in American television commercials taking into consideration various television advertisements. The images of men and women in television commercials were analyzed and they noted that to an amazing extent women were associated with dirt, her place was in the kitchen, the television woman [in commercials] was shown as housebound and she was hardly depicted in the roles out of home. Women were portrayed primarily as homebound or as housewives. And women were portrayed in an extremely narrow range of roles, with depictions concentrated on the traditional occupations of a housewife, a mother and a secretary. Courtney and Lockertz (1971) analyzed the roles portrayed by women in magazine advertisements by reviewing 729 advertisements appearing in the April 18, 1970 issues of life, look, News week, The New Yorker, Saturday review, Time and U.S. News and World Report and the April 1970 issue of Reader's digest. They classified and analyzed the advertisements on the basis of male and
female roles related to occupations, non-working activities, product categories and sex roles and came out with the findings that:

1. A woman's place is at home
2. Women do not make important decisions or do important things
3. Women were dependent and needed men's protection.
4. Men were not interested in women as people.
5. Women appeared primarily in decorative roles and relatively very few women appeared in occupational roles.

Lyonski, (1983) studied the female and male portrayals in magazine advertisements by taking into consideration a variety of men's, women's, and general interest magazines and came out with the findings that women were presented in various roles in advertisements such as housewife, decorative element, sex object, and dependent on men, housewife, concerned with physical attractiveness, sex object, career oriented, and neutral. Belknap & Leonard, (1991) examined the gender in advertisements by extending his study based on Goffman's study of gender advertisements and came out with the findings that women in advertisements were the central characters; they were portrayed as working outside the home, in nontraditional, progressive occupations. In contemporary advertisements, women were presented increasingly in professional roles requiring decision making on items and topics other than household, hygiene or beauty products, and sometimes they were portrayed as autonomous and equal to their male counterparts.

Chafetz, Lorence et.al (1993) examined the advertisements in six trade publications between 1960-1990 to assess whether there had been an impact on female participation in professional occupations and if an editorial staff with more women had helped reduce gender stereotyping of professional women. The researchers found that greater relative numbers of women in the occupation over time and an increased share of women in the editorial staff had resulted in portraying women as professionals, confident, independent and attractive. Gender composition of editorial staff had a consistent and a positive effect on how women were portrayed in advertising. However, women were still portrayed less favorably in male-oriented professional publications.

Coltraine & Messineo,(2000) examined the race and gender imagery in 1990s television advertising by taking into consideration various television advertising and came out with the findings that women in television advertisements were often portrayed as cleaning, cooking, caring for children, or catering to men. In addition, women were more frequently portrayed in a very sexual manner in advertisements.

Kwangok and Dennis (2005) analyzed the representation of gender roles in Korean television advertising and compared the results with previous studies conducted in other countries. A sample of 878 Korean television advertisements from the MBC network in 2001 was content analyzed. Findings indicate that women in Korean television advertising were portrayed as young (48.2%), as dependent (37.5%), and as nurturing the children (12.1%); they were often depicted in the home (37.2%). The researchers argued that these stereotypical images of women were found in television advertising in many countries. They also came out with the findings that Korean society had changed a great deal in recent decades, but the images they analyzed did not reflect the current situation.
NEED FOR THE STUDY

The literature review reveals that many studies have been conducted to show the different types of images of women in advertisements. A very few studies carried on research on, perception of people on the images of women in advertisements, and no study has tried to analyze the stereotypic image of women in advertisements. And a very few studies throw light on the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand. As a result, the present study is undertaken to understand and analyze the perceptions of people on the images of women in advertisements, to study the stereotypic image of women in advertisements and also to examine the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand. Hence, the present study has been taken up to throw more light on the above said issues.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To study the perception of people on the images of women in advertising.
2. To study the perception of people on the stereotypic image of women in advertising.
3. To study the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand.

HYPOTHESES

1. Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects.
2. Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities.
3. Regardless to advertisement people continue purchasing a particular brand of product if they are comfortable with that brand.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on the perception of people on the images of women in advertising in Bangalore city. Both primary data and secondary data were used in the study. The secondary data relates to the review of literature focusing on the images of women in advertisements. The primary data were collected from the field survey by using questionnaire schedule. The opinion of the respondents on the stereotypic image of women in advertising, perception of the people on images of women in advertising and the impact of images of women in advertisements on the brand were measured by requesting the respondents to indicate on five-point Likert-type scales, anchored on “strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree”. Selection of sample and fixation of sample size has followed simple random sampling method consisting of 500 respondents from Bangalore city. The population of the study was males and females who were 18 and above who watched advertisements. University graduates and post graduates, house wives, working men and women comprised the sample. Finally, the data were collected and interpreted by applying the Chi-square test to arrive at meaningful conclusions.

LIMITATIONS

1. The scope of the study was confined only to the Bangalore city.
2. In this study questionnaire is used as an instrument for a sample population; therefore this study may not gather all the information from the whole population of Bangalore city.
INTERPRETATION AND ANALYSIS

Table 1
Opinion on ‘Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>0.387</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26.5%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(62.2%)</td>
<td>(7%)</td>
<td>(4.3%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>0.455</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(13%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(60.7%)</td>
<td>(10%)</td>
<td>(15.9%)</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>0.842</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>307</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19.2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(61.4%)</td>
<td>(8.6%)</td>
<td>(10.6%)</td>
<td>(2%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

*SD=Strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NR=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>29.830a</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>31.734</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Assoc</td>
<td>29.265</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

The above cross tabulation presents the information about opinion on ‘Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects’. It is found that, 0.2 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 10.6 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 8.6 percent of the respondents were neutral with the statement, 61.4 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, and 19.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement ‘Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects’. The mean value obtained for female respondents was 1.79 and the mean value of male respondents stood at 2.10. The standard deviation of female respondents was 0.387 and the standard deviation of male respondents was 0.455.

It is found from the chi-square test that the difference in opinion about the statement is significant at five percent level. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement ‘Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects’.

The association test reveals that the difference in opinion about the statement between men and women is also significant at five percent level. Therefore, there was significant difference of opinion between men and women about the statement ‘Women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects’.


Table 2
Opinion on ‘Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.73</td>
<td>0.412</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(19.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(57%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(9.1%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>0.483</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(12.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(60%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(14.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>0.895</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(15.8%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(58.6%)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(13.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

*SD=Strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NR=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>5.037</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>5.030</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear</td>
<td>2.516</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

The above cross tabulation presents the information about opinion on ‘Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities’. It is found that, 1.6 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 10.4 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 13.6 percent of the respondents were neutral with the statement, 58.6 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, and 15.8 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement ‘Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities’. The mean value obtained for female respondents was 1.73 and the mean value of male respondents stood at 2.04. The standard deviation of female respondents was 0.412 and the standard deviation of male respondents was 0.483.

It is found from the chi-square test that the difference in opinion about the statement is not significant. Therefore, respondents’ opinions were scattered regarding the statement ‘Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities’.

The association test reveals that the difference in opinion about the statement between men and women is not significant at five percent level. Therefore, there was no significant difference of opinion between men and women about the statement ‘Advertisements portray women in most of their daily activities’.
Table 3
Opinion on Regardless to advertisement I continue purchasing a particular brand of product if I am comfortable with that brand

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.331</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(42.2%)</td>
<td>(48.3%)</td>
<td>(1.7%)</td>
<td>(7.4%)</td>
<td>(.4%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>0.390</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(38.5%)</td>
<td>(57.4%)</td>
<td>(3.0%)</td>
<td>(1.1%)</td>
<td>(.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>0.721</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(40.2%)</td>
<td>(53.2%)</td>
<td>(2.4%)</td>
<td>(4.0%)</td>
<td>(.2%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

*SD=strongly disagree, D=Disagree, NR=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly agree

Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>16.561</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood Ratio</td>
<td>17.915</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Assoc.</td>
<td>1.929</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of Valid Cases</td>
<td>500</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Field Study Data

The above cross tabulation presents the information about opinion on ‘Regardless to advertisement I continue purchasing a particular brand of product if I am comfortable with that brand’. It is found that, 0.2 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement, 4 percent of the respondents disagreed with the statement, 2.4 percent of the respondents were neutral with the statement, 53.2 percent of the respondents agreed with the statement, and 40.2 percent of the respondents strongly agreed with the statement ‘Regardless to advertisement people continue purchasing a particular brand of deodorant if they are comfortable with that brand’. The mean value obtained for female respondents was 1.97 and the mean value of male respondents stood at 2.32. The standard deviation of female respondents was 0.331 and the standard deviation of male respondents was 0.390.

It is found from the chi-square test that the difference in opinion about the statement is significant at five percent level. Therefore, the majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed with the statement ‘Regardless to advertisement I continue purchasing a particular brand of product if I am comfortable with that brand’.

The association test reveals that the difference in opinion between men and women is not significant at five percent level. Therefore, there was no significant difference of opinion between men and women about the statement ‘Regardless to advertisement I continue purchasing a particular brand of product if I am comfortable with that brand’.
CONCLUSION

Advertisement is a very powerful medium designed to sell products, aspirations, and communicate concepts of acceptable behavior and gender roles. Advertisement though boring, leaves an indelible mark on the impressionable minds of people. All advertisements by and large depict sports, work situations as man’s existence and as a woman’s world, hardly is a woman shown as an equal partner who is employed and a person of her own will. The question of women’s portrayal in advertisements has been a matter of debate for considerable time now; hence the present study entitled perception of people on the images of woman in advertisements was conducted with the objectives, to ascertain the response of people on the images of woman in advertisements and its impact on the brand.

Regarding the perception of people on images of women in advertisements, the research findings reveal that the majority of the respondents’ were of the opinion that women in advertising are portrayed as alluring and decorative objects. As far as the stereotypical images of women in advertisements are concerned the respondents agreed that advertisements portrayed women in most of their daily activities. Women in advertisements were hardly depicted as intelligent and in various career settings. With respect to the impact of images of woman in advertising on the brand, the respondents agreed that regardless to advertisement they continued purchasing a particular brand of product if they were comfortable with that brand. The findings also indicate that the respondents purchased and used those brand of products with which they were comfortable by giving less regard to the decorative and alluring images of woman in advertisements.

REFERENCES