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Digital Era: Indian Advertisements Breaking Stereotypes

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Abstract:

Advertising today has not just stuck its roots to being a tool of product promotion but also aims to penetrate the public mind with desires and beliefs. Although the Indian advertising industry relied on celebrity endorsements thus far, in recent times many advertisements are using concepts that are challenging and are breaking deep rooted Indian stereotypes. Stereotyping which is the act of passing an unreasonable judgment (on a person or a section of people in the society) based on wrong assumptions and beliefs has always been an antagonist hindering the progress of the world�s largest democracy � India. The purpose of this paper is to study the effects of advertisements of brands like �Vim (Indian Village Women emerging as leaders), Anouk (Homosexual relationship), Wheel (Sharing work load), Tanishq (women remarriage), Whisper (Breaking customs)� which use alternate concepts of breaking stereotypes. The study is based on cognitive behavioral learning theory which explains mental process as it is influenced both by intrinsic and extrinsic factors which bring about learning in an individual. Advertisements of brands � Vim (Afroz) , Whisper (Touch the pickle campaign) , Wheel (Share the load) , Anouk (The visit) , Tanishq (Tanishq Wedding Film) , will be researched upon to understand a) How these advertisements are being perceived by the viewer�s b) Are the viewer�s able to recall the brand , after viewing these advertisements c) Are stereotypes really seeing an end. The research design applied for this paper is a quantitative non probability sampling method using convenient sampling of 50 respondents in the age group of (20-65). The data will be analyzed using SPSS.

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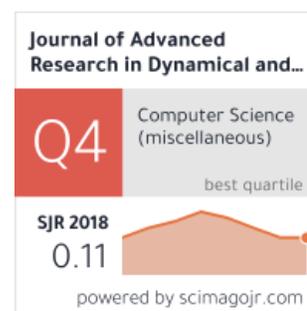
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Digital Era: Indian Advertisements Breaking Stereotypes

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Abstract

Advertising today has not just stuck its roots to being a tool of product promotion but also aims to penetrate the public mind with desires and beliefs. Although the Indian advertising industry relied on celebrity endorsements thus far, in recent times many advertisements are using concepts that are challenging and are breaking deep rooted Indian stereotypes. Stereotyping which is the act of passing an unreasonable judgment (on a person or a section of people in the society) based on wrong assumptions and beliefs has always been an antagonist hindering the progress of the world's largest democracy – India. The purpose of this paper is to study the effects of advertisements of brands like 'Vim (Indian Village Women emerging as leaders), Anouk (Homosexual relationship), Wheel (Sharing work load), Tanishq (women remarriage), Whisper (Breaking customs)' which use alternate concepts of breaking stereotypes. The study is based on cognitive behavioral learning theory which explains mental process as it is influenced both by intrinsic and extrinsic factors which bring about learning in an individual. Advertisements of brands – Vim (Afroz) , Whisper (Touch the pickle campaign) , Wheel (Share the load) , Anouk (The visit) , Tanishq (Tanishq Wedding Film) , will be researched upon to understand a) How these advertisements are being perceived by the viewer's b) Are the viewer's able to recall the brand , after viewing these advertisements c) Are stereotypes really seeing an end. The research design applied for this paper is a quantitative non probability sampling method using convenient sampling of 50 respondents in the age group of (20-65). The data will be analyzed using SPSS.

Key Words: Beliefs, Cognitive Dissonance, Indian Advertising, Perception, Stereotype

Introduction

The ubiquitous nature of technology has influenced us in many ways and as Marshall McLuhan termed has made the world a "Global Village". This global reach has ensured that we share the impact of whatever happens in any part of the world, as a community. The upsurge of competition in the global marketplace, altering consumer demands and expectations of the product in terms of quality, services and benefits are rising with an equal momentum. Inevitable changes can be observed over period of time in the attitudes, styles, behaviors, values etc of the people. The inclining pace of technology and industrialization has not only changed the way man leads his life but also his outlook towards the social constructs around him. This change has had its far reaching impact even in the way media is consumed and produced. We are now witness to changes in the Indian cultural pattern evolving and Indian advertisements today having been major reflections of these changes. Advertisements play a significant role in the modern world, by creating a certain type of message which can effectively manipulate people's attitude and opinions to such an extent that they can even uproot the deep rooted stereotypes of our society. This paper focuses on commercials which break the common ideologies predominant in advertising and hence used as a medium of persuasion. The paper basis its study on, (Festinger, 1957) of cognitive dissonance, which influences people decision-making and behavior It starts with cognition which can pertain to any variety of thoughts, values, facts, or emotions. For instance, the fact that marriage and the ceremonies that go with people have countless cognition in their heads

Review of literature:

A study (Kilbourne, March 1990) on Female Stereotyping in Advertising involved an experiment in which involved two kinds of advertisements were shown to men and women. In one kind, women were portrayed in stereotypical settings with products that support the stereotypes. After the experiment, the subjects were asked to evaluate a photograph of a woman which was neutral on traits like aggressiveness, leadership, analytical ability, rationality and liking for doing complex tasks. After viewing non stereotypical advertisements men subjects rated the neutral woman as

higher on these dimensions as compared to the rating after the viewing of stereotypical advertisement.

(Cohen-Eliya, 2004) in his research paper 'Advertisements, stereotypes and Freedom of Expression' explains that Arguments and information are not presented in modern advertising. Instead visual images of desirable life-styles are presented which appeals to emotions. Stereotypical images of gender and race give certain connotations to belonging to a given gender or ethnic group. Contemporary advertisements are filled with traditional stereotype images. Because the messages in advertisements are transmitted indirectly, repetitively, and at a fast pace, the audience cannot contend with them on the cognitive level and is not aware of the changes the advertisements makes in preferences.

(Malini) argues that in spite of the significant presence of the stereotypes in commercials, advertising specialists use non- schematic ideas of promotion of products and services. Nowadays, women are being presented as Liberated, strong and independent of social expectations. The most popular, non-stereotypical Commercial is the "DOVE CAMPAIGN" aimed at women at every age and with different kinds of figures. It emphasizes natural beauty instead of perfect shapes. The female viewers prefer to watch women with whom they can identify. Male roles in advertising are redefined as well - British commercial of cleaner called "Ajax" presents handsome men cleaning the kitchen with this product. Citing another Example, a new "Airtel" commercial on TV titled 'BOSS'. The ad show that a woman and her husband both work at the same place where she is the boss. She orders a task to the husband as an employer and at the same time she cooks dinner for him and waits at home. At one hand, the ad perpetuates the Stereotype that no matter how successful a woman is, she still cooks for her husband but we can say, this ad is half way to gender equality by portraying the wife as superior (Boss).

Stereotypes

Stereotyping means mentally placing people in categories. Stereotyping is functional when we say for instance that the Germans are punctual since they are. For the Germans dinner at 8 O' clock

would mean 8 and not 9 or 10 as with the Spanish. Stereotyping could be dysfunctional when mentally placing people in a certain category. For example, the British find the French dirty, oversexed and ludicrously obsessed in their culture. While for the French the British are cold, uncultivated and hypocritical. It is important to understand that culture is relative and stereotypical attitude are as we say eyes of the beholder's culture.

Stereotyping commercials

Stereotyping has also found its way into the making of T.V commercials because they are adapted to specific target, and therefore not only need to create a demand in their targets but also satisfy them. This explains why we see Indian women oftenbeing shown in the commercials as doing the household work and responsible for everyday purchases. Below mentioned are a few common type of stereotypes portrayed in Indian advertisements:

Skin color based: Advertisers of skin-lightening creams and other products have shown womenwith dark skin as having problems when it comes to achieving certain professional and personal aspirations like finding jobs, getting married and acceptance in the society. Most of these fairness creams are nonprescription products, and generally targeted to the young female population of the society through TV commercials (Shankar, 2006).

Gender based: stereotyping is also a common phenomenon. It is not uncommon to see that men models are more prominent in advertisements automobiles, banking and investments and which involves a rationale decision whereas women are predominantly shown in the commercials for fashion, cosmetics and domestic products. According to Mathews. J.L. is the Fascism phenomenon in the commercials, which consists in showing the entire figure in case of women and close-up shots in case of men (Matthews, 2007). The commercials always show women with no brains but as a sex symbol while men are being shown as the outdoor smart one, with intelligence to go with it.

According to (Craig, 1997), women are presented in commercials in several variants. The first one is the most popular: a housewife obsessed by a stain on her son's shirt or the one whose main difficult decision is what to cook up for dinner. The other roles such as the Hammam where a woman alone is bothered about her kid's cleanliness and diseases may be less traditional, but are

still very stereotypical. The too common female roles in commercials are the female vamps – sexy seductresses, the objects of desire of every man. They frequently advertise cosmetics, but also a central part of commercials directed at men such as men's perfume, automobiles etc. Another type is a woman we commonly come across in the commercials are those whose major concern is to preserve her beauty. Hence, most of the cream and cosmetics ads where they present her in a healthy life style, is physically active, and uses a wide range of body and facial cosmetics. However, in such commercials one can see that these women are very thin actresses, thus leading to the fact that only thin women can be beautiful and healthy. As a result, many female receivers fall into the obsession with their weight, which sometimes can have negative effects.

Male stereotypes are also numerous. The men are portrayed as being athletic, successful, and professional and also seducer with a beautiful woman hanging on his side. These men are almost always seen in branded car and a smartphone. Men are very rarely presented in sharing the household chores and if they are it's to play fun on them. The other very commonly used casting of the men is that of male friendship, were friends do things together such as watching cricket, drinking out. They share the same interests and opinions, and they enjoy spending time together by doing something extremely interesting and adventurous (Pawlica, Widawska 2001).

With respect to children : It's very common to come across advertisements of powdered milk mix, in which children (especially boys) are shown as being unhappy or not having any friends because of minute reasons like ' low height'. The advertisement tries to convey the idea that, by consuming their milk mix powder, these kinds tends to grow taller and hence begin to lead a happy and a successful life with everybody's acceptance. The idea conveyed here is that an ideal child has to be tall to be respected and loved by his peers.

A lot of gender based stereotyping can also be observed in ADS targeting kids. Girls are mostly shown having a tea party, studying, and playing with their dolls or showing aggressive interest in decking up themselves whereas boys are shown as the active and the naughty ones who like getting dirty in the mud or who want to get taller and stronger. Girls are mostly shown indoors (happy at home) and boys are generally shown roughing it up outdoors.

Breaking stereotypes

In spite of noteworthy presence of the stereotypes in commercials, advertising specialists often use non-schematic ideas of the promotion of products and services.The medium of advertisements is also used effectively to put an end to the same gender based stereotyping which was found earlier. Women are presented as liberated, strong and independent of social expectations and Men are beingdepicted as more cooperative with a helping hand to lend to the women in his life promoting and encouraging them.

The most popular and successful non-stereotypical commercial is Dove campaign which boldly questioned the definition of beauty and glamorization. Celebrating diverse skin tones, textures and all kinds of physical attributes of a woman, the commercials do not feature glamorous models but normal Indian women. The female viewers prefer to watch women, with whom they can identify, have cognitive resonance with andthus the campaign proved to be a great success.

Male roles in advertising are redefined as well – Raymondwhich is a premium men's suiting material brand always portrays the male protagonist of their ad as a man who possess the qualities of compassion, love, humility and having a supportive and encouraging personality, unlike the common portrayal of a macho man.

In our research we have examined three advertisements which boldly defy stereotypes. Our aim was to understand the impact of these ads on the viewers, understand if the perceptions of our viewers are undergoing a change as a result of the concepts depicted in the Ad and last but not the least, the purchase intention of the buyer towards the product.

Research Design

Advertising today has not just stuck its roots to being a tool of product promotion but also aims to penetrate the public mind with desires and beliefs. Although the Indian advertising industry relied on celebrity endorsements thus far, in recent times many advertisements are using concepts that are challenging and are breaking deep rooted Indian stereotypes. The purpose of this paper is to study the effects of advertisements of brands like Anouk (Homosexual relationship), Tanishq

(women remarriage), Whisper (Breaking customs)' which use alternate concepts of breaking stereotypes. The objective of the research paper was to see a. How these advertisements are being perceived by the viewer's, b were they able to rethink on the concept of the ad and underwent a perceptional change on viewing these ads. c. these ads able to motivate them to buy the product and also recommend the same. d) Are stereotypes really seeing an end?

For the purpose of the study a quantitative exploratory research method was adapted. The sampling method used was a virtual forced exposure non probability method. The researcher adapted the snowballing technique using a pre-structured Questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of both open ended and close ended questions and also consisted of 5 point likhert scale as well as semantic differential scale. The number of respondents were 40 of the age group of 20 to 55. The questionnaire was uploaded using the tool of Google forms where the links of both the advertisement and the questionnaire were sent to the respondent's mail. The study is based on cognitive behavioral learning theory which explains mental process as it is influenced both by intrinsic and extrinsic factors which bring about learning in an individual. In the analysis percentage was used. As the paper is an ongoing study we propose to use factorial analysis and regression tests for our future study using SPSS.

A brief description of Sample Advertisements:

- The Visit by Anouk:Anouk which is a leading brand in 'Contemporary Ethnic Fashion Wear' for women, often comes up with bold Ads in which the idea of feminism is conveyed through powerful characters of women who question the status-quo and do not succumb to Stereotypes. The concept of Homosexuality is portrayed in 'The Visit', in which two young women are shown getting ready to meet their parents with an idea to reveal about their relationship with each other and their sexuality. Homosexuality which is a very natural phenomenon all across the world, is still considered to be a taboo in our country. Homosexuals are often stereotyped as abnormal, unnatural people. This stereotyping has strengthened owing to the support of the legal system. Anouk however chose to defy and question the stereotype by saying 'Being Bold Is Being Beautiful'.
- The Wedding by Tanishq : Tanishq which is a renowned jewelry brand in our country came up with an Ad in which a lady is shown getting ready for her marriage in which she

is shown wearing a beautiful necklace from Tanishq. The beauty of the Ad is that the bride has her daughter to accompany her at the wedding. The Ad goes on to show how the groom accepts the little girl as his own daughter and makes her a part of the wedding. Indian married women have always been targets of stereotypes, where our cultural construct does not encourage polyandry. This Ad however brishes the stereotype aside and gives more priority to love.

- Touch The Pickle Campaign by Whisper: Whisper which is one of the most preferred brands of sanitary napckins in India, ran a campaign called 'Touch The Pickle Campaign', in which a young girl who is on her menstrual cycle is shown as doing all those activities like touching the pickle, jogging etc which women are normally prohibited from doing during their periods. Since ages women have been considered to be impure and are kept at a distance when they are on their menstrual cycle. This campaign defies such silly and unnecessary restrictions by asking them to lead a normal life like how they would if they weren't on their periods.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The data were collected using a pre structured questionnaire among 41 respondents and 80% of the respondents were students and therefore the results cannot be generalized. The three advertisements which were shown to the respondents were whisper touch the pickle advertisement, Tanishq (the Wedding) Anouk (the visit), Whisper (Touch the pickle Campaign).

Role Models and Perception of Consumers

Characteristic	Highly positive	positive	NEUTRAL	Negative	Highly Negative
Coherence	28.2%	48.7%	23.1%	-	-

Effectiveness	39%	39%	17.1%	4.9%	-
Purposeful	36.6%	46.3%	14.6%	2.4%	-
Understandable	39%	43.9%	9.8%	7.3%	-

- Many researchers have documented the role of women in TV and Print Advertisements such as the women doing all the household chores and men being helpless in domestic roles and dependent on the female for example in the Hammam ads and also the Detoel ads where the female model show more intelligence than her male counterpart. These images are of importance to marketers as the consumers do not make purchases just on the product quality but also because of the image they recognize the product to have, whether actual or fictional. Several studies have investigated recently the extent to which various types of products possess gender (Allison, 1979). Products found to have masculine images include a pocket knife, tool kit, shaving cream, cuff links, and a briefcase, to name a few (Allison et al.). Allison also argues products with feminine images include a scarf, baby oil, hand lotion, bedroom slippers, gloves, and sandals. (IBID).   Most audience felt that the advertisements were positive, because across all characteristics positive carries the maximum weight age.

- This also implies that the audience were not swayed away by the ads .

- The fact that, some respondents did find the ad negative, in terms of effectiveness, purposefulness and understandability means that the advertisement wasn't welcomed by all.

Thus it shows that although the earlier studies have documented that the roles of the models play a significant role in the perceptions of the consumers, this study shows that the attitude towards

stereotyping is changing and consumers are able to break the stereotypical images and accept the alternate concepts of imaging the model.

Revolutionary Ad concepts and Believability:

All advertisements rely on the cultural knowledge and the background of the reader. People make sense of ads by relating them to shared belief systems and thoughts that are held in common with the society. The concepts of the advertisements taken for the study are revolutionary in nature and respondents were analyzed whether this had an effect on them. Using the semantic differential scale respondents were tested as to whether their culture which deeply embedded into them resonate with the concepts of the advertisements show.

Characteristic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
Honesty	19.5%	41.5%	34.1%	4.9%
Believable	7.3%	70.7%	17.1%	4.9%
Credibility	14.6%	41.5%	36.6%	4.9%

- Most Audience agreed to the fact that the ads were honest, believable and credibility.

- A surprising 4.9% of like minded audience felt that the ads were not honest, believable and credible.

- Though the least weight age, 2.4% of the audience strongly disagreed with the credibility of the ads

Believability of Advertisement

When asked about the quality of the concepts and the respondent's perception 41% of the respondents believed the advertisements to be honest, unfortunately around 34% of them did not take a stance and gave neutral responses. These ads were successful among the viewers as 70.7 % of them found the ad to be believable and 46% of them said the ads were credible.

Of late advertising message take a stronger primary position and the products taken the secondary positions especially in the three ads selected. The respondents found the concept of the advertisement to be logical (51.2%) and 31.7% of them found the ads to be impressive. Advertisements have led people to have better lifestyle in view of the growth in retail services. Another reason for the increase in purchase rates are easy availability of the product both online and offline loan and finance schemes and the use of plastic money has brought in change in the consumers buying capabilities and behavior.

Characteristic	Highly Positive	Positive	Neutral	Negative	
Convincing	20%	47.5%	27.5%	2.5%	
Strong	30%	37.5%	32.5%	-	
Compelling	22%	29.3%	43.9%	4.9%	
Justification	31.7%	36.6%	29.3%	2.4%	

- Most audience felt that the ads were positive in terms characteristics like convincing, strength and justification

- However when it came to ' compelling', most audience chose to remain neutral which means that the ads failed to invoke neither positive nor negative interest in the audience

- 2.5% of respondents for the characteristic of convincing rated the ad as highly negative. Which means, that they found it unconvincing.

There are a numerous domestic and MNCs promoting their brands with effective marketing and advertising strategies for luring the consumers. Stereotype advertising is extensively used by the advertisers and marketers to endorse their goods and services.

For advertisers and marketers it is easier to establish rapport with the prospective customers by using societal stereotypes in commercial advertisements. While it is not unknown that a stereotype is a fixed impression of a group of people through which we then perceive specific individuals and advertisers have widely used this technique to persuade their persuasive messages. Tanishq has set the benchmark in the advertising industry by highlighting the social issue very intelligently and inspiring to present the socio-cultural taboos and tried to show the mirror reality of the new-age women consumers with an idea of women's remarriage. The other two ads have also followed the same in breaking the stereotypical images.

Attitude Towards The AD

Characteristic	Highly positive	positive	Neutral	Negative	Highly Negative
Appealing	26.8%	39%	29.3%	4.9%	-
Impressive	31.7%	34.1%	31.7%	2.4%	-
Informative	26.8%	48.8%	22%	2.4%	-

Overall Liking	29.3%	36.6%	34.1%	-	-

- Most respondents gave positive reactions to all the 4 characteristics.

- Most audience felt the ads were informative because it has the highest weight age in the entire table.

- However 4.9% of the audience also felt that the ad was unappealing

- 36.6% of the respondents gave a positive reaction wrt the overall liking of the ads. However 34.1% also gave neutral reactions to the ads , which is the next highest figure. This shows that most people were not able to take a stance wrt the overall liking .

Purchase Intention

Characteristic	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Purchase Intent	12.2%	39%	41.5%	4.9%	2.4%
6 months	4.9%	36.6%	48.8%	9.8%	-
Recommend	9.8%	56.1%	31.7%	2.4%	-

- Most audience gave neutral reactions towards the purchase intention. This means that, though the ads are made to empower the viewers and to create a soft corner for themselves in the minds of the audience, it isn't always that they choose to make a purchase decision.

- However the highest figure in the table which is 56.1% stands for all those respondents who agreed to recommend it to someone they know. Which , does indicate a liking towards the brand.

- However 2.4% of the audience **strongly disagreed** to buy all the products.

Conclusion

Marketing and advertising concepts reflect culture but also add to the formation and continuation of stereotypes. Advertisement is on the whole is a marketing tool, through which it does convey and perpetuate values, attitudes and stereotypes, potentially influencing general behavior beyond purchasing decisions and, in short, proposing an outlook on the world through their cumulative effects. These advertisements pioneer in the depiction of showing concepts which reflect the changing social norms and including the same in their story telling function. The paper shows that the consumers are ready to break the norms and accept the new cultural forms. Many companies also have recognized that such changing social behavior are just not philanthropic activities but to be included in the normal day to day life activities and so have risked in including as means to promote their products thus creating a cognitive resonance among its target group not only for the product by for the concept too.

- However a large portion of them chooses to be neutral and not take a stance

- Though the brand might be creating a soft corner for itself in the minds of the audience, it isn't always converted into a purchase intention.

Limitation of the Study

The methodology used for the study was a convenient non-probability sampling method and therefore the results cannot be generalized. As it is a ongoing paper many complicated analysis methods were not adapted and the paper which would be included in the future

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