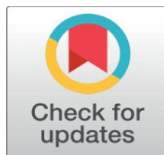
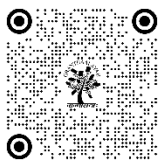


SOCIAL INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN INDIAN ADVERTISING

Dr. Vishwajit Singh  

¹ Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Art, Faculty of Visual Arts, Pandit Lakhmi Chand State University of Performing and Visual Arts, Rohtak, India



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Corresponding Author

Dr. Vishwajit Singh,
vishwajitghanghass@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary Indian advertising is increasingly indulging in the ever more prominent and gripping concerns of societal development, making themselves active participants in empowering women. This paper explores the significance of video and press advertising as a media serving to transform and bring about some crucial changes in concepts and issues related to women's equality, diversity, and inclusivity in society. Our society's age-old projections of the role played by women are sensitive and hold a pertinent concern for the welfare of humanity. Social inclusion is a global dimension that directly impacts the development of our culture, making it an ever more concerning subject dealing with utmost integrity, sincere support, and a holistic approach. The result of this change in our environment may not be immediate, but its significance is gaining rapid recognition and a firm grasp of the psychological roots of people. Advertisements projecting women through equality and inclusivity also give a critical overview. Still, the lead to encouragement is that social inclusion is a need for social diversity, specifically in a country like ours, where the all-inclusive identity of its diverse cultures represents the nation as one. The contribution of advertising as a distinct field in this process is accelerating at a reasonable rate, offering several brands, companies, and services to present themselves to society within the framework of inclusivity perspectives.

Keywords: Social Inclusion, Women Empowerment, Inclusivity, Advertising, Social Concerns, Patriarchy

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a connection between the current happenings of society and an individual. It is a lot more than just promoting a brand or service, as it has the capability of psychologically persuading its consumers. Advertising is proficient in forming perceptions and changing people's mindsets because it represents the transformations taking place in society. It is a mirror that reflects the collective behavior of people, addresses their thoughts and opinions, and has the potential to influence them as well. Appropriately harnessing advertising prospects can serve as a revolutionary medium of cultural change. Since ancient times the traditions and cultures of Indian society have been patriarchal, bounding the system of the community in its practices.

The present times are not much different, although a gradual change in society's norms and values is helping change the mindset of many. Patriarchy has strong roots in Indian culture. Notions of patriarchy are passed on from generation to generation in a social process integral to society. These patriarchal notions often go unnoticed in the community thus, normalize over time. Women subjected to patriarchy usually accept the situation as coherent. It is a relief to see advertisements portraying awareness about this socialization pattern where patriarchy and related issues govern the system. It is crucial to discuss the social inclusion of women, particularly in Indian advertising, because, in the past years, the participation of women in the holistic development of society has remained confined by shackles of prejudice and restricted beliefs. Due to this, the association of women has majority been to household, shopping, family care, bringing up children, etc. The preconceived image of the roles played by a woman in the development of society has been visible in the form of advertisements portrayed on screen and press.

2. METHOD AND MATERIAL

The method used for analysis in this paper is qualitative, where the emphasis is on women's social identity in Indian advertising. This paper includes a study of notable examples of Indian advertising representing women through a perspective of social inclusion. Today, Women empowerment is a subject that is widely accepted by all. Education and awareness about the issue have a crucial role in its acceptance.

3. DISCUSSION

Advertising is a powerful medium that molds people's attitudes and turns them into firm believers of the advertised message. The convictions of consumers gradually become their mentality and are passed on from generation to generation; thus, transformation is a challenging task. A drastic change has occurred in people's outlook toward representation of women in advertising in the past and now. Education and awareness about the subjects related to women inclusivity are a need of the society, where the public is understanding and empathizing with it. Marketing is a success when the advertiser or the marketer understands the need of its people. According to Henry Assael, Marketers have come to realize that their effectiveness in meeting consumer needs directly influences their probability [Assael \(2003\)](#).

Referring to Indian advertising's past, women have been more on the disadvantaged side with having to face many hurdles concerning their independence at home or at work. The Indian woman represented in video and press advertisements in the past is either a mother concerned for her children or a wife shopping for groceries or selecting detergent for super white clothes and sparkling utensils. Seldom had she been portrayed in advertisements that focused on her self-growth, independence, prosperity, and career possibility. A comparative analysis of past and present ads depicting women's social inclusion includes several brands portraying gender sensitivity, inclusive marketing, and breaking gender stereotypes. In research from Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Social inclusion is defined as the process of improving the terms of participation in society, particularly for people who are disadvantaged, through enhancing opportunities, access to resources, voice, and respect for rights [Department of Economic and Social Affairs. \(2018\)](#). Amongst the several commercials showcasing the social inclusion of women, to state is Dove that strides toward women's inclusivity by stopping the

beauty test; Vim presents equal partnership of both genders in household chores such as washing dishes; Saffola, the cooking oil brand, challenges the stereotypical role of a woman taking care of her family and introduces the husband concerned for his wife's health [BrandEquity \(2020\)](#). Cadbury reverses its year-old advertisement by portraying the boy feeling emotions and cheering for the girl partner [Sharma \(2021\)](#).

Figure 1



Figure 1 [BrandEquity \(2020\)](#)

Gender bias is mainly prevalent in Indian society, where the social inclusion of women becomes challenging. According to our traditions and culture, women have forever been associated with household and family caretaking. In situations and circumstances where a woman's potential and power related to her self-growth is not recognized, advertisements that present the other side of the coin can change the game altogether as it sows the seed of improvement and change.

The power of imagery in advertising has a great deal to play with the mind of its viewers. It is so because the advertiser can use the iconicity of images to induce emotions [Chattopadhyay \(2014\)](#). Therefore, sensitive touch to advertisements portraying women's inclusivity and subjects related to it can aid in spreading the concerned message positively. The status of women as being non-privileged has been prevalent in many cultures across the globe since the past several years. Society's constraints have been a hindrance to the growth and prosperity of women, restricting them to flourish with all their potential and capabilities. Indian women are indulging themselves in the ever more prominent and gripping concerns of societal development, making themselves active participants in empowering women and building their status to hail glory and freedom in a country that offers them to make the best out of the challenges and opportunities simultaneously. There are many issues concerning the empowerment of women that are at an increasing rate being addressed by the community of women themselves. The digital age has been a boost to showcase the efforts of such promising young talent by connecting them with the world so big in a physically consuming space so small. Social media apps such as Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, etc. are immensely powerful mediums that present an opportunity to promote and enhance the status of contemporary women in Indian society through the digital language of advertising. Indian

advertising is increasingly portraying advertisements concerning sensitivity and awareness about the social events concerning the challenges, threats, injustice, prejudice, and opportunities governing the identity of a woman.

According to Sumanta Dutta, “Advertising is one of the major media that affect our daily life consciously and unconsciously and are responsible to play a significant role in shaping the society in a much broader perspective” [Dutta \(2013\)](#). It prospers and builds on the terms of its acceptance in the society that it represents itself as a powerful tool to fight against stagnated mindsets, which are a setback to the growth and development of humanity. Kisholoy Roy speaks of understanding advertising in the context of brand promotion by stating, “Every product today needs strong differentiation for its long-term sustenance in the market, and hence they need to be promoted in different ways by the marketer” [Roy \(2017\)](#). Addressing social concerns such as issues related to women’s growth in society has given a boost start to brands and firms as they not only bring about awareness but also win hearts for putting in efforts to voice such concerns.

But it is not to be forgotten that women charm the dignity and possess the power to transform rigid norms of inequality and discrimination that have held them back for so long. According to the current trends and developments, advertising is one of the most powerful tools of media that has undergone significant transformation in representing the status of women on the big screen. Along with women's empowerment and equality being substantial representations of the transformed society, advertising also addresses several social issues which have been taboo on the success story of a woman. The widening opportunities for women’s employment make them active participants in social issues and concerns, where they often voice subjects such as women’s equality, inclusivity, and diversity.

Gender stereotyping, the offensive portrayal of women, women as sex symbols, and degenerating definitions of women’s beauty are some common causes concerning and questioning the criteria for equality and social inclusion for women. Often there has been an unethical representation of women in advertisements. It is an errand overdue. Consumers are gradually becoming aware of such serious issues and expect them to be addressed justly in future publicity. Advertising is majorly responsible for making people aware of the current trends where dimensions such as women’s diversity, equality, and inclusivity are at the top list. The present times demand equality recognized as a foremost social concern that addresses diminishing the gap between the upheld status of men and women [Schaffter \(2006\)](#). With increased economic self-independence, women are refusing to get their lives invoked now and then. An increase in the percentage of women’s education is also an essential factor in the progress of Indian advertising in representing the true woman of India. It is interesting to come to terms with the fact that the advertising sector of our country is progressing towards addressing women with respect and equality, which they hold a right to. At this point in the society that we live in, voicing such issues becomes a reason for consumer trust and recognition. Many brands are presenting their product through advertisements that directly state their concern for the social inclusion of women.

Indian advertisements frequently portray subjects concerning women's equality, inclusivity, and diversity to address gender stereotyping. Such advertisements strongly impact the issue, fully representing the reality that had been divergent due to the age-old traditions and norms. To abide by and follow the appropriate protocol of Women’s social inclusion is the need of the hour. Several brands are creating advertisements that break gender stereotyping, which has long been responsible for confining women to only specific roles in society’s

development. These brands are also aware that women now are not just independent and educated; instead, they are actively performing the lead roles in breaking gender stereotyping and related issues.

Figure 2



Figure 2 Campaigns of the World® (2019a).

Figure 3



Figure 3 Campaigns of the World®. (2019b)

It is truly fascinating to see that aspects of women's sensitivity are well presented in advertisements, with a constant rise in the number of them showcased. Postpartum depression amongst women is one such example. It would not be odd to state that concerns such as postpartum depression are not much heard of amongst the country's general public. Women dealing with stress post-delivery have not been given much weightage in our country in the past; rather, it would be apt to say that many remain ignorant of the issue's sensitivity. The brand Prega News in its video ad "Your Second Home| Join hands for the cause of women suffering from Postpartum Depression" [Prega News. \(2018\)](#), beautifully depicts the need for understanding the importance of being aware of issues related to women's sensitivity, such as postpartum depression. "Postpartum Depression is a state in

which a woman suffers from insecurity, lack of confidence, irritability and mood swings post-delivery” [Prega News. \(2018\)](#).

Figure 4

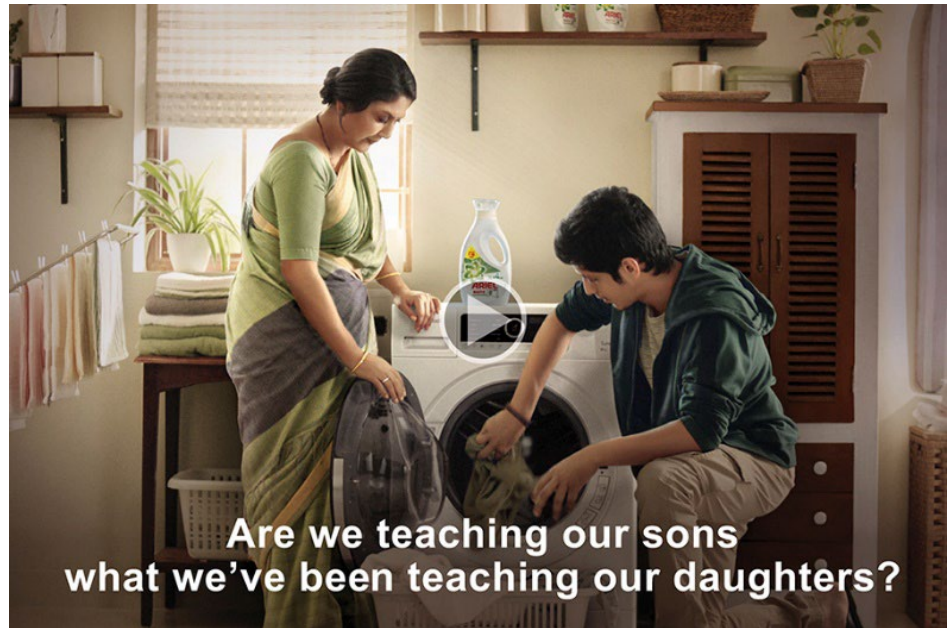


Figure 4 [Singh \(2020\)](#)

Stating the importance of women’s equality, the washing detergent brand Ariel portrays women’s equality under the #ShareTheLoad campaign. The advertisement breaks gender stereotyping as the video depicts a mom teaching her son how to wash clothes using Ariel. At the end of the ad, the brand addresses the common public by stating, “#ShareTheLoad is back to raise yet another pertinent question on the upbringing of children. This time, we urge mothers to be the flag-bearers of change and relook at how they raise their sons so they can be equal partners’ tomorrow! Are we teaching our sons what we have been teaching our daughters?” [Singh \(2020\)](#). Twenty years from now, advertisements were direct with the portrayal of the product they advertised, whereas now, social issues are addressed through the product’s utility. As a result, of these changes, several brands are now representing themselves as active social entities, referring to the concerned matters through the current trends in advertising, such as hashtags. Consumers’ responses to advertisements supporting the women’s perspective can be researched, understood, and read as their behavior. Various aspects of such consumer behavior will likely aid the advertising team and the brand managers in their future needs [Kumar \(2022\)](#).

Women inclusivity is no more a mere terminology; instead, it has become the necessary protocol at work, where its practical implementation at corporate levels and in civil society has become the policy speak [Kaul and Singh \(2012\)](#). The contemporary style of professional working requires diversity as the mainstream. Our social life is no longer restricted to boundaries of caste and color, nor is it accepted in the workplace. Big cities are moving forward by adapting the concept of gender inclusivity at a much faster pace. However, this transformation can also be felt in the collective behavioral approach of society. It progresses to see that people are beginning to accept the current change in women’s status by adapting to it, as Titan Raga under Khud se Naya Rishta Campaign, # BreakTheBias states, “Move the

conversation ahead for women, change the way you look at a woman's success. She is unstoppable now" [Titan Watches. \(2016\)](#). The importance of the statement is marked by the intensity with which it is addressed to the cause. Such advertisements have a substantial impact as such issues have not always been bold and out in the open. Equality, diversity, and inclusion are areas of interest for the general public. For Khud se Naya Rishta Campaign, the Indian Television states that Titan Raga this time is questioning the 'ideal' of beauty with its latest TV commercial. The ad showcases women from different walks of life wearing their scars with pride and flaunting their 'imperfections' with confidence.... [Indian Television \(2018\)](#).

Figure 5

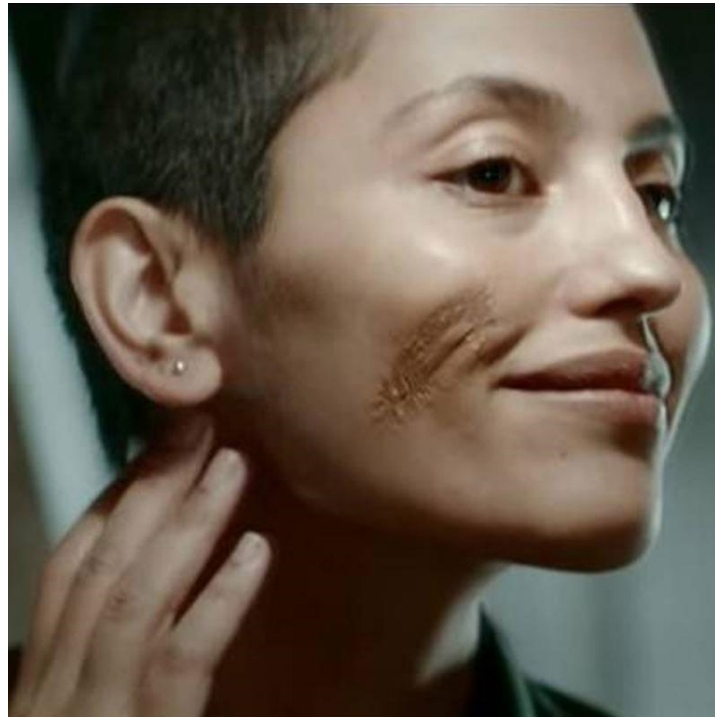


Figure 5 [Indian Television \(2018\)](#)

The advertising sector has brought about significant changes in broadening the areas and roles of women's representations in advertisements. It has been seen in the past that women have been restricted to traditional biased roles such as doing the laundry and utensils, Women kitchen experts are often presented as serving food to family, and they have also been showcased in advertisements addressing beauty within a very narrow framework [Dasgupta et al. \(2011\)](#). Apart from this, the concept of being obsessed with the fair has always held a rank for being beautiful. For many years, the skin cream Fair & Lovely had been promoting the fair as beautiful in a country that houses brown as the standard and natural skin color. The rise in awareness about subjects related to women's diversity, sensitivity, and inclusion hopefully stops the spread of such issues. Respecting the diversity of beauty in women, the brand has decided to remove the words such as lightening, whitening, and fairness from the brand portfolio used in advertisements and commercials as it was considered to create negative stereotypes for darker skin tones [Editorji \(2020\)](#). Fair and Lovely have changed its name to Glow, and Lovely is an example of understanding the perspective of the diversity of women in India, where several shades of brown govern the skin color.

Figure 6



Figure 6 Kamdar (2021)

Another example of considering diversity as comparative advantage and opportunity is seen in the advertisements by Dove, where women from all walks of life are celebrated for their natural beauty. In the campaign #StopTheBeautyTest, the brand depicts women with actual life incidents of facing criticism and rejection in the context of beauty. According to the BrandEquity.com from The Economic Times, “The campaign aims to address a momentous stage in the life of every young Indian woman subjected to a ‘test of beauty’ that makes her feel unbeautiful and crushes her self-esteem” [BrandEquity \(2021\)](#). With campaigns such as #StopTheBeautyTest women are encouraged to feel free of the traditional standards of beauty such as ‘fair’ and ‘tall’ that result in anxiety rather than confidence.

The practice of gender sensitivity is also forming roots in the advertising sector, where an increasing number of brands are promoting women's equality through their product commercials. Tata Tea's let's Practice Gender Sensitivity at Home is one such example as it stresses the mistaken notion that girls are treated with inequality ever since childhood and the same continues in adulthood giving the wrong direction to men considering themselves as superior. According to Campaign India, “the campaign also encourages parents to take a personal pledge to practice and teach gender sensitivity to their children at home” [Team \(2022\)](#). One of the main reasons that threaten the safety of women is gender inequality that begins to root deep in the psyche of men and women since childhood, where the boy child is more privileged than the girl child who is restricted to outdoors in order to be acquaint with the household chores and more. The campaign's tagline states the beauty of women's equality in precise yet clear words, “Inequality gets learned; Equality needs teaching” [Jaago Re \(2017\)](#).

The right of women to voice their perceptions can increase the growth of a country as restraints removed from job opportunities can increase the broad level of development. The country's economic prosperity boosts with shared and equal responsibilities of men and women at a professional level. Women are characterized by diverse capabilities and qualities that strengthen their character in distinctive roles they play at a personal and professional level. With increased commercials portraying sensitivity towards women's equality, inclusion, and diversity, the progress is unprecedented, encouraging such essential aspects to be central in their lives. According to Jeni [Klugman et al. \(2014\)](#), the importance of women's voice and agency along with empowering shared prosperity is stated as, “Removing

constraints and unleashing women's full potential can yield enormous dividends that help make whole societies more resilient and more prosperous" (2014). Indian women of the 21st century is portrayed in different advertising media as confident, self-reliant, bold, liberated, and potential to perform the task at hand with sincerity and self-reliance [Wejnert and Rodriguez \(2015\)](#). This transformation and attitude change in people has recently begun with a great future ahead that holds an equal share for women in every aspect, creating a transformed identity of her capabilities and potential.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, it would be apt to say that Indian advertising has transformed and progressed in representing women in commercials and advertisements. There is a definite broadening of the horizon in portraying women in different media of advertising. In present-day advertising, several aspects are brought into the mainstream, such as women pursuing their professional life is portrayed through an increase in career opportunities, independence, equality, and assertiveness of women is a highlight and encouragement for women education is displayed as pertinent to the welfare of the society. Gender-sensitive advertising is influential in spreading the word about women's empowerment. To achieve this goal, promoting positive gender roles in Indian advertising is crucial. Advertisement as such is not a mere tool of education and awareness; but rather a life changer for many. Gender sensitivity in advertisements plays a pivotal role in forming the process of gender socialization.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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