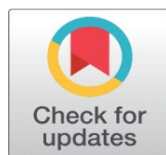
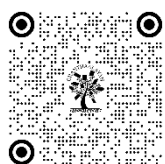


REPRESENTATION OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN INDIAN ADVERTISEMENTS: AN ANALYSIS ON ARIEL'S #SHARETHELOAD CAMPAIGN

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ABSTRACT

Advertisement is a marketing tool that influences customers to purchase goods and services from companies. The advertisements do this successfully by presenting the product/services in an attractive manner. In doing this, advertisements propagate certain social, cultural, and ideological value systems within society. Most of the time, this act is dependent on the market space. Directly or indirectly advertisements inculcate right or wrong systems of thoughts and beliefs in the mind of the customers.

Gender representation is crucial in advertisements as it tends to stereotype gender roles. Marketing advertisement in India has become increasingly focused on gender roles, family hierarchy, and traditional marriage practices. Gender stereotypes are not new, and they are especially visible when looking back at decades-old commercials. These depictions of men and women even carried over into the digital age. The paper aims to discuss an Indian advertisement by Ariel that challenges stereotyping gender in the Indian context. The advertisement's message is unique and aims to break away from the conventional approach typically used in Indian advertisements.

Keywords: Stereotype, Gender Equality, Advertisement

1. INTRODUCTION

Advertising is a powerful tool for shaping social attitudes and beliefs, and it has the potential to either reinforce or challenge stereotypes about gender, race, and other characteristics. In India, where traditional gender roles and social hierarchies are deeply rooted in the culture, the impact of advertising on shaping social norms

is particularly significant. Over the years, Indian advertisements have reinforced negative stereotypes, including portraying women as submissive and docile, men as aggressive and dominant, and people from certain castes or religions as inferior or subservient.

According to study by American Psychological Association (APA) Gender stereotypes are deeply ingrained beliefs about the attributes, roles, and behaviors of men and women that are widely shared and culturally transmitted. They act as powerful socialization agents, shaping the ways in which individuals perceive themselves and others, as well as influencing opportunities and expectations in various domains of life. These stereotypes are often perpetuated through various means, including advertising. Gender stereotyping in advertising can have adverse effects on individuals and society. It can limit opportunities, create, and reinforce biases, and restrict personal and social growth. For example, ads that portray women as passive or overly sexualized can contribute to a culture of objectification and undermine their power and agency.

Breaking gender stereotypes in advertising is an important step toward promoting gender equality and combating gender-based discrimination. It can challenge outdated notions of gender and promote diverse and inclusive representations of gender identities and expressions. By creating ads that are more inclusive and representative, advertisers can reach a broader audience and connect with consumers who value diversity and equality.

This paper aims to emphasize the significance of challenging stereotypes in Indian advertising by examining Ariel's #sharetheload campaign and the advancements made in this regard in recent times. [9 Indian ads that Tried to Break Gender Stereotypes: Verve Magazine. \(2017\)](#)

2. BREAKING GENDER STEREOTYPES

Gender stereotypes are oversimplified generalizations or preconceived notions about the attributes, behaviors, and characteristics of men and women. These stereotypes have been perpetuated by society, media, and other cultural institutions, which can have a significant impact on individuals and society as a whole. Fortunately, there has been a growing awareness of the harm caused by these stereotypes, and advertisers have started to shift away from the traditional methods.

For decades, many advertisements have reinforced negative stereotypes about gender, race, and other characteristics. However, in recent years, there has been a huge focus on breaking stereotypes in advertising. Advertisers are creating more inclusive ads that feature people from diverse backgrounds and challenge traditional gender roles. For example, many ads now feature men doing traditionally feminine tasks like cooking or cleaning, and women doing traditionally masculine activities like playing sports or working in male-dominated industries. Not withstanding improvement, there is still a long way to go in terms of breaking down preconceptions in advertising. Advertisers must continue to challenge themselves and their audiences to think beyond stereotypes and create more inclusive and representative advertisements. By portraying individuals in a variety of roles, traits, and behaviors, regardless of their gender, advertisers can create a more inclusive and representative view of society, promoting gender equality and acceptance of gender diversity. [6 Indian ads that Broke Gender Stereotypes Over the Years - #breakingstereotypes. \(n.d.\)](#)

There are numerous instances of advertisers breaking gender stereotypes in India, such as detergent brands encouraging men to share household chores, noodle brands showing mothers teaching their sons to cook, jeweler brands celebrating different aspects of womanhood, and brands challenging period taboos. By embracing diversity and promoting inclusivity, advertisers can help create a world where individuals are not limited by their gender and can be recognized and valued for their unique talents, personalities, and contributions.

3. GENDER STEREOTYPES IN INDIAN ADVERTISEMENTS

Gender stereotypes in advertisements have long been a subject of discussion and criticism. These stereotypes often reinforce traditional and rigid gender roles, perpetuating certain expectations and norms within society. In many advertisements, women are often portrayed as passive, submissive, and primarily concerned with their appearance. They are frequently depicted as objects of desire, with an emphasis on their physical attractiveness. On the other hand, men are often portrayed as strong, dominant, and independent. They are shown engaging in activities that require physical strength and assertiveness. These stereotypes not only limit the portrayal of individuals but also contribute to the reinforcement of gender inequalities and discrimination. Advertisements that perpetuate these stereotypes can have a negative impact on individuals' self-esteem, body image, and overall well-being, as they create unrealistic standards and expectations. Moreover, these stereotypes can restrict individuals' choices and opportunities, reinforcing societal norms and expectations rather than promoting equality and diversity. It is crucial for advertisers and society as a whole to challenge and break free from these gender stereotypes, promoting inclusivity, equality, and the celebration of individuality.

Like many countries around the world, gender stereotypes are prevalent in Indian advertising. Indian advertising often portrays women as passive and subservient to men, focusing on their appearance and domestic roles. Men, on the other hand, are often depicted as powerful, assertive, and successful. These gender stereotypes can have negative effects on both men and women in Indian society. For women, such advertising perpetuates gender-based discrimination, limits their opportunities, and reinforces patriarchal norms. For men, these ads may create unrealistic expectations of masculinity, perpetuating harmful gender norms.

Despite this, there have been some positive changes in recent years. Indian advertisers are increasingly recognizing the importance of representing diverse genders and challenging traditional gender roles in their messaging. Advertisements are featuring more women in non-traditional roles, such as in leadership positions or in physically demanding jobs. There is also a growing trend towards using gender-neutral language and avoiding objectification of both men and women. [Joel \(2016\)](#)

4. BREAKING THE BARRIERS OF GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN INDIAN ADVERTISEMENT

Advertisements have long promoted gender stereotypes in India, and it has historically been a patriarchal culture. In recent years the society is made open, several corporations (such as Nike) have begun to mirror the "new" urban Indian lady; a more confident, competent woman who openly expresses herself.

She is excelling in a culture dominated by men. Yet, the traditional system continues to exist, most notably the cultural standards that exist inside Indian families that demand every woman to be the housekeeper. Few companies ventured to deviate from these standards and free women of domestic chores. When a newlywed couple enters into a housewares store and is asked what they want to buy, the young bride mouths "pressure cooker" to her husband rather than the shopkeeper, as any "cultured" Indian homemaker would. The salesperson smugly indicates that a Prestige cooker is best suited for a husband who likes his wife, closing with the catchphrase - Jo Biwi Se Karein Pyaar, Woh Prestige Se Kaise Inkaar. (The one who loves his wife, how can he deny the prestige) [Mum's the Word: How Brands are Breaking the Stereotype, one ad at a Time. \(2022\)](#)

Many advertisements tend to stereotype women, showing them as objects of interest or in roles such as mothers, spouses, and so on. Yet, the Indian advertising and marketing industry has made a few tentative moves towards gender equality and diversity. Ariel brought up gender disparity in 2015 with the controversial question, "Is laundry solely a woman's job?" The #ShareTheLoad campaign drew massive favorable attention to the company, increasing sales by 106%. In India, Ariel released an emotive internet clip that questioned the notion that women do more housework. #ShareTheLoad, produced by BBDO India, is a follow-up to the Procter & Gamble laundry detergent brand's #ShareTheLoad campaign from 2015. [#sharetheload for More Equality. \(2022\)](#), [The #ShareThe Load Journey. \(n.d.\)](#)

5. ARIELS #SHARETHELOAD CAMPAIGN

Over the past seven years, Ariel India has been actively promoting gender equality within households through campaigns like #ShareTheLoad and #SeeEqual. The #ShareTheLoad campaign sparked conversations around the unequal distribution of household chores and encouraged men to take an equal role in doing domestic work. In 2015, the campaign received global recognition, including a Glass Lion Grand Prix at Cannes Lions. Ariel continues to raise awareness about gender imbalance in families with #SeeEqual by asking a fundamental question: if men can share household tasks equally with other men, why can't they do the same with their wives? Ariel's initiatives have not only aroused worldwide debate, but have also inspired other companies to take on social concerns and effect societal change.

According to Ariel's research, a large proportion of women believe their spouses know how to undertake home responsibilities but choose not to do so. Men who prefer to do housekeeping with other men are not performing their fair share of housework with their spouses. This "choice" exposes a severe psychological problem caused by years of unconscious prejudice. Men, according to 83% of women, do not consider women to be equals when it comes to housework. Ariel's inquiry reminds families that genuine equality can only be reached when household chores are shared. In summary, when we SEE EQUAL, we SHARE THE LOAD!

For Ariel, promoting gender equality is not just a corporate social responsibility, but a fundamental ethos that the brand lives by. Ariel's campaigns have taken an active stance to bring about a change and build a more equal world where domestic responsibilities are shared equally, and both men and women can pursue their passions and ambitions. Through campaigns like #SeeEqual, Ariel is taking a step towards making this vision a reality. [Sharma & Singh \(2009\)](#)

The story presented in the #SeeEqual film by Ariel India revolves around a woman who visits her neighbors with her spouse and observes the two men doing their morning activities in flawless harmony. She brings this up to her husband, who

recalls how he and his college roommate used to divide tasks equally. The woman realizes she is not being treated as an equal, and after some thought, she takes a position for herself and insists on being treated equally. This awakens her spouse, who pledges to abandon his prejudice and #ShareTheLoad. The film reflects the reality of today's times, where women refuse to accept inequality in their marriages, and men are changing and capable of contributing equally. While some men have started to do more, many take up their full share of responsibilities within the home and #ShareTheLoad equally. Ariel has been tackling the problem of household inequality in India with their #ShareTheLoad campaign since 2015. The movement began as a response to the unfair expectations placed on men and women at a young age. The campaign has had a major influence throughout the years, with more men sharing the load than ever before. [Sonavane et al. \(2017\)](#)

Ariel's #ShareTheLoad campaign began with meaningful questions that prompted the audience to think, reflect, and act. Initially, two out of every three women believed there was gender disparity in the household, while 76% of men believed laundry was a woman's responsibility. The first entry in the campaign addressed the question, "Is laundry solely a woman's job?" As a consequence of the moving advertisement, over 1.5 million Indian men promised to #ShareTheLoad, opening the path for many millions more to live in a future where laundry responsibility is not determined by gender. This was merely the beginning of a long path towards full equality, and the movement is now pushing for more.

6. DADS #SHARETHELOAD

The #ShareTheLoad campaign's second season gained a lot of attention in 2016 and focused on the father's perspective. Research shows that in India, two out of three children believe that household chores are only their mother's responsibility, which reinforces gender-based stereotypes related to household tasks. Such stereotypes are gradually internalized by children and become their reality, and as a result, household chores such as doing laundry become associated with the mother's domain. Children learn by observing the behavior of their parents, and this discrimination they see in the home can be repeated in their adult life and passed down to their own children.

The campaign's two-minute YouTube video starts with a grandfather playing with his grandson at the dinner table, while his daughter walks in carrying bags and clearly exhausted from work. She hands him his return ticket, answers a work call, and starts making tea for her husband, who arrives home. She then proceeds to remove her son's dirty shirt, clean up the house, and make dinner, all while still holding her phone. Her father watches her busy routine and thinks about his past behavior, saying he feels proud but also sorry for never stopping her from taking on so much responsibility. He apologizes for never telling her that household chores are not only her job but also her husband's. He then promises to start helping his wife and asks other fathers to do the same by pledging to #ShareTheLoad. The video emphasizes the importance of fathers setting an example for their children, as this will shape their perception of gender roles and stereotypes.

The continuous theme of the #ShareTheLoad campaign has been critical to its success throughout the years. Prior to the campaign's launch in 2014, 79% of Indian men felt that domestic tasks were primarily the responsibility of women or daughters, while outside work was the responsibility of men or sons. Nevertheless, by 2016, this percentage had fallen to 63%, and by 2018, it had fallen even further to 52%. The program was successful in altering people's ideas of family tasks and encouraging dads to participate actively in household labour sharing.

The #ShareTheLoad campaign is an important reminder that gender inequality exists not only in the workplace, but also in the home. In many parts of the world, women are still expected to take on the majority of household chores, even when they work outside the home. This not only creates an unfair burden on women, but also perpetuates harmful stereotypes that limit the potential of both men and women. By encouraging fathers to take an active role in household chores, the #ShareTheLoad campaign is helping to break down these stereotypes and create a more equal society.

Beyond its impact on individual families, the #ShareTheLoad campaign has also inspired a broader movement for gender equality in India and around the world. Many companies and organizations have taken up the call to action, promoting gender equality in the workplace and in society more broadly. By highlighting the ways in which household chores reinforce gender stereotypes, the campaign has sparked important conversations about gender roles and expectations, and has inspired people to think critically about the ways in which they contribute to these dynamics. Of course, changing deeply ingrained cultural norms is no easy task, and the #ShareTheLoad campaign is just one small step towards gender equality. But it is an important one. By encouraging fathers to take on household chores, the campaign is helping to create a more equal society in which women are not expected to bear the burden of domestic work alone. It is also helping to create a new generation of children who grow up with a more equitable understanding of gender roles, and who are better equipped to challenge stereotypes and build a more just and equal society for all.

7. SONS #SHARETHELOAD

While it is true that more men are participating in household chores than before, society still has a long way to go before achieving complete household equality, leading to the continuation of the Share the Load movement. Ariel India's advertisement has initiated a conversation about raising both sons and daughters equally, with a focus on laundry as the central theme in their third film, Sons #ShareTheLoad. The ad shows a mother discovering how unequally she reared her children and fixing the issue by training her son to wash laundry. Ariel believes in not only raising awareness of the issue, but also in proposing a solution for a more equitable future. The campaign aims to teach young boys to Share the Load, so that when they grow up and become husbands, they are capable of sharing the household responsibilities with their partners. The ad highlights how society teaches girls to be independent, but not boys to lend a hand, and how stereotypes are passed down from generation to generation.

8. #SHARETHELOAD FOR EQUAL SLEEP

Domestic responsibilities have been unjustly split for many generations, resulting in women obtaining less sleep than their husbands, with research suggesting that 71% of Indian women are impacted. In response, on World Sleep Day 2020, Ariel unveiled the fourth segment of its #ShareTheLoad campaign, pushing men to share household tasks. The commercial video illustrates the reality of women's lives all across the world, in which they frequently sacrifice their own sleep to care for their family. The campaign's message was particularly relevant in 2020, when men started working from home and realized the importance of sharing domestic responsibilities. The #ShareTheLoad campaign won a Glass Lion for content marketing and was widely recognized for its efforts in promoting gender

equality and challenging traditional gender roles. The campaign has won numerous awards, including the Grand Prix for Creative Effectiveness at the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, making it an example of how advertising can be used to challenge harmful gender stereotypes and promote greater gender equality.

The impact of the Share the Load campaign goes beyond just advertising. The movement has sparked important conversations about the division of labor in households and the need for greater gender equality. It has inspired individuals and organizations to take action towards achieving this goal. Many companies have implemented policies that promote work-life balance and encourage men to take an equal share of domestic responsibilities. In addition, the campaign has prompted individuals to reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors, and to make changes in their own households. Overall, the Share the Load campaign has been a powerful catalyst for change, and it continues to inspire individuals and organizations around the world to work towards a more equal society.

9. CONCLUSION

Many people still feel that housework is solely the responsibility of women. Even though there has been much talk about gender equality, there are still many civilizations where women are not treated as equals in the home. The "Share the Load" campaign by Ariel is an excellent example of how advertising can break gender stereotypes and promote gender equality. Through its messaging, the campaign challenged traditional gender roles by highlighting the importance of men sharing the responsibility of household chores with women. The campaign successfully encouraged a conversation around gender roles and responsibilities within the home, and helped to shift societal attitudes towards gender equality. The campaign was also successful in engaging both men and women, highlighting the importance of shared responsibility and equal distribution of labour in the household.

By promoting more inclusive and diverse representations, the "Share the Load" campaign broke down gender stereotypes and promoted greater gender equality. It demonstrated that advertising can be a powerful tool for social change and that by challenging traditional gender roles, we can create a more equal and just society.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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