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From Tradition to Transformation: Exploring Gender Portrayals in Pakistani TV Advertisements

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Abstract

This study examined how gender roles are portrayed in the Pakistani television commercials and analyzed ten selected commercials from different product categories such as household products, personal care, financial services, automobiles, technology, etc. This study utilizes qualitative content analysis to explore themes relating to traditional gender roles, progressive representations, objectification, and empowerment. Television commercials are very significant in establishing norms of society and their representations of different sexes shape society and strengthen cultural ideologies. The findings revealed that the selected advertisement of Nido and Surf Excel aimed to specifically highlight the ambiguous stereotypes, traditional gender roles and how the women in the advertisement are mostly limited to the role of caregiver and homemaker. On the other hand, in Samsung and Sunsilk advertisements, women are embedded as decision-makers, professionals, and independent. Quintessentially masculine advertisements, like Gillette and Honda Civic, continue to re-postulate traditional perceptions of manhood, often portraying individuals as aggressors or powerful authorities. While certain commercials like Coca-Cola and HBL, represent a more balanced gender representation, others still marginalize women or place them in secondary roles. The study also notes that in advertisements for beauty products, physical appearance is often through the lens of objectification, consequently presenting it as a defining characteristic of women. Yet other narratives around empowerment stand, just taking their form in self-affirming advertisements that celebrate financial autonomy and career advancement for women. It suggests advertisers should pursue more balanced and

forward-thinking depictions and remind media contents that reflect and promote gender equality instead of perpetuating tradition stereotypes.

Introduction

Television advertisements in Pakistan are powerful tools that shape and reflect societal norms, particularly concerning gender roles (Abbas et al., 2024). Historically, these advertisements have often perpetuated traditional gender stereotypes, portraying women primarily in domestic roles while emphasizing male dominance in public and professional spheres (Zeb, Saeed & Masum, 2021).

The study builds on existing literature that critiques the objectification and stereotypical portrayal of women in media. Zeb et al. (2021) and Mustafa and Ameen (2023) highlight how deep-seated gender biases is portrayed in Pakistani TV advertisements. Additionally, Iram et al. (2023) discuss the portrayal of women in the advertising industry, while Nasir et al. (2021) focus on the impact of these portrayals on women's body image. The work of Gul et al. (2021) further investigated the influence of education on women's entrepreneurial opportunities as depicted in advertisements. But the studies lacked focus on the impact of these TV advertisements on the targeted audience in Pakistan. By critically analyzing these representations, this research assessed whether recent advertisements are challenging traditional stereotypes and promoting gender equality. This study is crucial for understanding the role of media in shaping public perceptions and the potential for advertisements to foster a more inclusive society. Following are the objectives of the research:

- To examine how women are portrayed in Pakistani TV advertisements, identifying common themes and stereotypes and its influence on societal norms and perceptions of gender roles in Pakistan.
- To explore whether recent advertisements reflect a shift towards more progressive and equitable representations of women.
- To study the impact of media representations on women's body image and self-perception.

In view of this, this study investigates the representation of Pakistani television advertisements with gender roles wherein traditional stereotypes are juxtaposed with progressive portrayals. It looks at how gender roles are portrayed in household goods, personal care items and autos, and how this relationship to societal values reinforces stereotypes. Research gauges how advertisements secure traditional roles or challenge these roles or veer into the realm of objectification using content analysis. The findings from the study are intended to offer points of insight into the cultural battles around gender in Pakistan and implications for advertisers who wish to publish content in tandem with social mores in flux.

This research engages with the debate of the role of media in creating society's views of gender by analyzing how advertisements have historically reflected cultural relevance, traditional gender roles

and progressive representations of gender. They stress the need for balanced depictions of gender that acknowledge the preservation of gender equity but keep in mind diverse contexts.

Literature Review

Gender roles in advertising have been a topic of academic discussion as media content often reflects and reinforces broader societal attitudes (Gul et al., 2021). Historically, advertising is often criticized for reinforcing old traditional gender stereotypes, such as using women in domestic roles such as caregiver and homemaker along with men being bread winner and authority holder, but it has been criticized for reifying stereotypes that limit how people take up space in the world. The studies also show that audience perception of gender roles, especially in younger populations, is more prone to being influenced; they cited (Nasir, Hussain & Waheed, 2021).

Many studies underscore the persistence of traditional gender roles in Pakistani television advertisements is highlighted by multiple research studies. According to (Zeb, Saeed & Masum, 2021), males are typically shown in active, decision-making roles, while women are usually shown doing homework or in passive ones. The patriarchal social structure of Pakistan is firmly rooted in binary gender norms, which are reinforced by these representations. Although these studies provide useful evidence of long-standing stereotypes, they sometimes fall short in examining the ways in which these representations impact a variety of audiences, particularly those from different socioeconomic backgrounds or urban / rural areas.

The objectification of women in advertising is facing another problem which travels beyond traditional roles. According to roles (Iram, Bukhari & Abbas, 2023), women are frequently portrayed in advertisements in sexualized or decorative roles, which can have a detrimental effect on how society views them and how conflicting women feel about themselves. Subtle aspects of objectification, such idealized beauty standards and the constant representation of women as symbols of grace and elegance, are still common in Pakistani advertising, although the fact that they may not be as openly sexualized as those in western media (Nasir, Hussain & Waheed 2021). These studies, however, frequently concentrate on objectifications symptoms rather than its societal foundations or long-term psychological impacts on views.

Recent research indicates that gender representations are gradually but significantly changing. While males are sometimes shown in loving or domestic contexts, Adil and Malik (2021) emphasize the rise of women in powerful, professional and decision-making roles. This tendency reflects shifting cultural norms and is in line with worldwide initiatives towards gender inclusion. According to Mustafa and Ameen (2023), women are increasingly portrayed as independent, self-assured and socially active

in recent advertisements for goods like cell phones and cosmetics. Though significant, these progressive representations frequently coexist with traditional gender stereotypes, indicating a disjointed and uneven transition.

The portrayal of gender in Pakistani advertising reflects an ongoing cultural negotiation between tradition and modernity. Advertisement must strike a balance between conservative social norms and contemporary representations, which frequently results in message that is conflicting. According to Zeb et al. (2021), some advertisements are able to achieve this equilibrium, while others either alienate traditional consumers or revert to well-known stereotypes. In addition Mustafa and Ameen (2023)) contend that in a culture that places a high emphasis on family values and opposes departures from conventional gender norms, advertising are bound by customer expectations. However, more inclusive and varied portrayals are becoming possible due to globalization and changing societal narratives.

Advertisements have the capacity to both reflect and change the societal standards that are already in place. Younger audiences are especially vulnerable to media impact, according to Nasir et al. (2021), who also claim that advertisement content shapes gender attitudes. However, there is disagreement among researchers over the scope of this influence, and some studies do not provide empirical evidence to back up assertions of long-term societal impact. This highlights a gap in the literature, especially in intersectional or longitudinal studies that take regional, educational, and class differences into account.

While progressive representations of gender in advertising are becoming more prevalent, conventional stereotypes and objectification continue to exist in subtle and culturally specific ways, according to the examined literature. The majority of the current literature is still descriptive in nature, with little critical analysis of the institutional or structural elements that support these representations in Pakistani television advertisements both reflect and influence socio-cultural beliefs; this study seeks to add to the body of existing knowledge. With a culturally grounded analysis of how media content supports or undermines gender equality in Pakistan, it delves deeper into the conflicts between traditional norms and progressive representations.

Methodology

This research uses qualitative content analysis methodology to investigate the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements on Pakistani television. It is a systematic approach to analyzing communication messages and involves identifying recurring patterns and themes in media content as well as underlying messages. The study highlights one of the most dominant platforms, i.e., TVC, which is a strong

medium and can impact on the thought process of society in relation to gender roles and its expectations. With the growing scale and influence of these programs in setting cultural standards, the current study aims to examine the gender portrayal of women and men in advertisements across multiple product categories.

Instead of quantifying the frequency of individual representations, a qualitative research approach was adopted, so that the emphasis would be on the signified meanings and implications of gender representations unfolding in the advertisements. Qualitative content analysis allows the researchers to capture the subtle messages contained in advertisements about both consonants chat, and social when analyzing how a certain idea about gender roles gets formed, reinforced, or dismantled (Cañón Martínez, 2024). By highlighting visual and narrative aspects, the study aims to analyze the implicit and explicit gender-related concepts in Pakistani television commercials.

The study focused on ten TV commercials which appeared on Pakistani television channels. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select advertisements to ensure that the selected advertisements presented divergent gender representations and broad coverage of product categories. The advertisements chosen are done for big brands like Nido, Surf Excel, Sunsilk, Gillette, Dettol, Horlicks, Coca-Cola, Samsung, Honda Civic and HBL. The inclusion/exclusion criteria were rigorously specified to focus the investigation. Include advertisements that feature human characters prominently and touch on themes regarding gender as shown in Table 1. In contrast, spots that were rarely aired did not feature any humans, or did not show any gender-specific portrayals were dropped from the study.

Table 1. Inclusion Criteria

Advertisement Name	Product Type	Target Audience	Time Frame	Popularity	Clear Gender Representation	Inclusion Criteria
Nido	Milk Powder	Families	Prime time	High	Both genders	Family-oriented, commonly aired during prime time
Gillette	Razor	Men	Prime time	High	Male	Targets male consumers, includes grooming products
Sunsilk	Shampoo	Women	Early evening	High	Female	Targets female consumers, personal care products
Horlicks	Health Drink	Families, Children	Early evening	High	Both genders	Promotes children's health, commonly aired during early evening
Surf Excel	Detergent	Families	Prime time	High	Both genders	Household product, commonly used, family-oriented
Coca-Cola	Soft Drink	General Audience	Prime time	High	Both genders	Popular beverage, frequently aired
Samsung	Mobile Phone	General Audience	Prime time	High	Both genders	Technology product, frequently aired during prime time
Honda Civic	Car	General Audience	Prime time	High	Both genders	Automobile, frequently aired during prime time
Dettol	Antiseptic	Families	Early evening	High	Both genders	Health-related product, promotes hygiene, commonly aired
HBL	Bank	General Audience	Prime time	High	Both genders	Financial services, commonly aired during prime time

The selection of advertisements in this research is based on the following criteria that would make the sample more diverse and representative of multiple aspects of gender portrayal in Pakistani television advertisements. These advertisements should have been aired in the last one year on some of the most-watched Television channels in Pakistan like PTV, GEO TV, ARY DIGITAL, HUM TV etc. One will only consider only the advertisements with high television audience index and social media engagements. This assists in ascertaining that the selected advertisements have delivered the intended message to the viewers. Therefore, only the adverts that clearly portray gender roles will be selected to ensure an analysis of gender portrayal is conducted with a lot of focus. The adverts to be selected will be family adverts, male product adverts, female product adverts and neutral adverts to have a big picture of gender sensitive adverts.

The advertisements were then analyzed through thematic coding, which entails dividing the advertisements into categories according to gender representation. The analysis was performed over multiple steps. The advertisements were transcribed, capturing conversations, imagery, and context. Main themes linked to gender representation as well as early codes were generated. Those codes were then aggregated into broader categories including traditional gender roles, progressive representations, objectification, and empowerment. The identified patterns were then contextualised with regard to existing gender theories and media studies to evaluate whether or not advertisements reinforce and/or undermine normative gender expectations. The analysis covered a range of topics including the foils of men and women, portrayals of masculinity and femininity, representations of stereotypes and depictions of agency and empowerment. We focused on how visual imagery and dialogues, background music, and product association constructed gendered narratives.

To improve the credibility and dependability of content analysis, various methodological precautions were implemented. To keep the procedure as objective as possible, the advertisements were coded separately by 2 different researchers, and the results were compared. Differences were resolved by discussions until consensus was reached. To ensure the reliability of the coding process, two researchers independently analyzed the selected advertisements using the predefined coding scheme. Intercoder reliability was assessed using Cohen's Kappa, which yielded a value of 0.82, indicating a strong level of agreement. This statistical measure enhances the validity and consistency of the content analysis findings. To verify the consistency of the content analysis findings, cross-checking was conducted against earlier studies in this area focusing on media, for men and women involvement. The analysis is done with appropriate care for the cultural and social context of Pakistan, which means that the resulting interpretations are based on reality rather than imposed mediating frameworks. Since this investigative analysis includes a review of readily available television advertising material, there is no question of whether people were harmed, the rights of image and personal data were violated. To safeguard the ethical compliance conditions of the researcher, the most important conditions are the

objectivity of data collection and analysis, lack of bias, and the acceptability of female representations within the media space in Pakistan.

This study systematically examines how gender roles are represented in Pakistani television advertisements using open qualitative content analysis. This approach allows an in-depth investigation of the underlying concept and representations in advertisements focusing on the seminal work of Siegfried Kracauer in 1950s highlighted the interpretative and sociological aspects media substance. Finding recurrent themes, symbols, and visual-narrative cues that express concept of masculinity and femininity within the Pakistani cultural setting is the main goal of the investigation.

A purposive sampling of television advertisements from three product categories automotive, personal care and household goods was selected for analysis. To ensure significance and diversity, the advertisements were selected from mainstream national television channels over a specified time frame to ensure relevance and diversity.

Three main theme categories were used to categorize and evaluate the content.

1. **Traditional Gender Roles:**

   Representations reinforcing traditional norms, such as men making decisions and women taking care of the house.

2. **A progressive or Non-Traditional Roles:**

   It depicts that challenge or subverts traditional gender expectations (e.g., women in leadership and men in domestic settings)

3. **Objectification and Stereotyping:**

   Instances where characters, especially women, are portrayed in decorative, sexualized superficial ways.

Each advertisement was examined for visual imagery, dialogue, expression, narrative structure and character roles were analyzed. The repetitive nature of the analytical method allowed topics to arise inductively while being rooted in theoretical concerns about media and gender

By using this method, the study seeks to understand not only what is depicted in advertisements but also how these representations connect to underlying sociocultural values and continuous changes in gender norms in Pakistani culture.

Employing qualitative content analysis, this study offers a systematic analysis of the portrayal of gender roles in Pakistani television commercials. It provides a detailed, systematic, and sociocultural approach to understanding how men and women appear in media, challenging stereotype-based

portrayals with progressive alternatives where possible. This framework facilitates thematic analysis of discourses around gender roles, inscribed within a larger context of media representation.

Results and Discussions

Content analysis of the advertisements provided much detail on how the role and stereotype of gender were represented in Pakistani TV advertisements. Advertisements were broad spectra from traditional stereotyped to progressive depictions, illustrating the simultaneous continuity of entrenched norms and freshening of societal attitudes.

Table 2. Description of Focused Gap

Advertisement Name	Product Type	Infrequent Airing	Irrelevance to Target Audience	Lack of Focus on Product Type	Lack of Cultural Relevance	Other Exclusion Criteria
Nido	Milk Powder	✓				Advertisements not featuring family scenarios
Gillette	Razor			✓		Advertisements that do not focus on male grooming
Sunsilk	Shampoo	✓				Advertisements that do not focus on hair care
Horlicks	Health Drink		✓			Advertisements not featuring children or family health
Surf Excel	Detergent	✓				Advertisements that do not focus on household cleanliness
Coca-Cola	Soft Drink		✓			Advertisements not featuring beverages
Samsung	Mobile Phone	✓				Advertisements not featuring mobile phones or technology
Honda Civic	Car	✓				Advertisements not featuring vehicles
Dettol	Antiseptic				✓	Advertisements not focused on health or hygiene
HBL	Bank	✓				Advertisements not focused on financial services

This table 3 showed a list of advertisements that were excluded from the study sample based on specific criteria. These criteria include infrequent airing, irrelevance to the target audience. Lack of focus on the main product category, lack of cultural significance, and other content-based exclusions are some examples of these criteria. To make sure that only relevant and contextually acceptable advertisements were examined in the study, the table shows exclusion factor applied to each item. This helped maintain consistency and focus in the qualitative content analysis. Low impact advertisements or advertisements placed on obscure channels have been cut-off in favor of content that people consume in large volume. This means that any advertisement that does not directly portray gender roles or depict them in quite ambiguous ways will be removed from analysis. It is important to indicate that the advertisements to be included in the study will not be compared with other advertisements containing similar content or those advertisements that have been used in other similar studies. Thus, the study remains impartial and offers an all-round evaluation of gender representations in Pakistani TV advertisements to improve understanding of gender in society.

Table 3. Categories of advertisements

Category	Advertisement Name	Product Type	Channel	Airtime
Family Advertisements	Nido	Milk Powder	Geo TV	8:00 PM
Male Product Advertisements	Gillette	Razor	ARY Digital	7:00 PM
Female Product Advertisements	Sunsilk	Shampoo	Hum TV	9:00 PM
Children's Products	Horlicks	Health Drink	PTV Home	6:00 PM
Household Products	Surf Excel	Detergent	Dunya News	5:00 PM
Food & Beverages	Coca-Cola	Soft Drink	Samaa TV	8:30 PM
Technology & Gadgets	Samsung	Mobile Phone	Express News	10:00 PM
Automobiles	Honda Civic	Car	Dawn News	9:30 PM
Health & Wellness	Dettol	Antiseptic	Geo News	6:30 PM
Financial Services	HBL	Bank	Hum News	7:30 PM

Table 4 shows the categorization of selected ads for this research. 10 different categories were selected to represent the different sectors of life related to health, technology, life necessities, gender representations and appliances. Different Pakistani news channels broadcast the advertisements according to the visual targeted population. For example, during morning time, the household ads are on-aired targeting the females to be influenced by the ads. While the male stereotypical-associated adds (automobiles I.e Honda Civic, Gillette razor, finance services I.e. HBL, technology I.e Samsung) are on-aired and at nighttime targeting the male population for more advertisement.

Table 4. Content analysis details of selected advertisements

Adds Name	Product Type	Target Audience	Clear Gender Representation	Representation of Gender Roles	Cultural Relevance	Empowerment and Objectification	Summary of Findings
Nido	Milk Powder	Families	Both genders	Traditional caregiving roles, minimal male involvement	Aligns with family values	Reinforces traditional roles, lacks diversity in gender representation	Mixed portrayal, reinforces traditional roles
Gillette	Razor	Men	Male	Masculine roles, minimal female presence	Culturally resonant with masculinity	Empowers men through grooming, minimal female representation	Reinforces male stereotypes
Sunsilk	Shampoo	Women	Female	Beauty and confidence, aspirational roles	Aligns with beauty standards	Empowers women through beauty, may objectify	Progress in female empowerment, potential for objectification
Horlicks	Health Drink	Families, Children	Both genders	Family health, motherly care	Promotes family health	Neutral, focuses on health benefits	Cultural resonance, promotes family health
Surf Excel	Detergent	Families	Both genders	Domestic cleanliness, mother's role	Emphasizes household hygiene	Traditional gender roles, no objectification	Neutral portrayal, traditional roles
Coca-Cola	Soft Drink	General Audience	Both genders	Social enjoyment, inclusive	Social cohesion	Empowers through inclusivity, no objectification	Inclusive representation
Samsung	Mobile Phone	General Audience	Both genders	Modernity, technology savvy	Cultural relevance with technology	Empowers through tech roles, no objectification	Progressive portrayal
Honda Civic	Car	General Audience	Both genders	Masculine, status symbol	Reflects status,	No objectification,	Traditional portrayal, limited diversity

					masculine appeal	lacks gender diversity	
Dettol	Antiseptic	Families	Both genders	Family hygiene, women's role	Promotes hygiene	Neutral portrayal, no objectification	Cultural relevance, hygiene promotion
HBL	Bank	General Audience	Both genders	Financial independence	Financial services	Empowers through financial literacy, no objectification	Progressive portrayal

Interpretation of Table 4.3

Target Audience:

Out of the ten advertisements analyzed, three (Gillette, Sunslik, HBL) had a specific gender focus with Gillette aimed at men and Sunsilk at women while HBL addressed a general audience with an emphasis on financial independence. Four (Nido, Horlicks, Surf Excel, Dettol) targeted families. And the remaining three (Coca-Cola, Samsung, Honda Civic) were designed for a general audience, reflecting brand consumer appeal.

Clear Gender Representation:

Although both men and women were included in all ten advertisements to varied degrees, but only three (Gillete, Sunslik, Honda Civic) had a clear gender specific focus, either explicitly showing femininity or masculinity. Although roles were often distorted by traditional assumptions, some provided more inclusive of fair depictions.

Representation of Gender Role:

Five advertisements (Nido, Surf Excel, Dettol, Honda Civic) highlighted traditional roles, often involving women in caring or household tasks. Three advertisements (Sunsilk, Samsung, HBL) challenged traditional roles, showing more empowered or modern portrayals. Two (Gillette and Coca-Cola) offered conflicting representations that included some inclusive or aspirational features while reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Cultural relevance:

Strong cultural relevance was maintained by the majority of the advertisements, especially those promoting family-friendly and household products like Nido, Horlicks Surf Excel, and Dettol. Advertisements for brands like Samsung, Coca-Cola and HBL stuck a mix between contemporary messaging and regional appeal, whilst Gillette and Honda Civic were more in line with stereotypically male idea.

Empowerment and objectification:

Four advertisements (Sunsilk, Samsung, HBL and Coca-Cola) highlighted elements of empowerment. However, Sunsilk walked a line that was potentially objectifying women while simultaneously empowering them via beauty. Gillette promoted masculine domination by emphasizing male empowerment with little female representation. While maintaining neutral tones, Nido, Surf Excel and Dettol supported conventional roles without challenging them.

Stereotypical Behavior about Gender Dynamics in Pakistan:

The Nido advert goes a long way in breaking the stereotypical gender role where women are depicted as being the only caregivers as opposed to the men who hardly feature. This is societal depiction of the typical Pakistani family where it is the mother's responsibility to take care of the children.

The Gillette is stereotypical advert that focuses on masculinity tied to power and dominance that reinforces narrow gender role. Such portraying limited views of male identity, these representations have an impact on Pakistani social standards.

The Sunsilk advert mostly involves women that links beauty to success, self-esteem and confidence, showing women in diverse roles. However, it reinforces the stereotype that physical attractiveness affects social acceptance.

The advert of Horlicks emphasizes child health but reinforces the stereotype of mothers as solo caregivers by labeling them as a women's duty. It reflects gender themes in Pakistani media and shapes societal perceptions of caregiving roles.

The Surf Excel advertisement promotes the idea of women as the mothers and housewives who are primary caretaker who are cleaning houses and washing clothes while promoting positive concept of childhood play. This shapes societal perceptions that it is female's duty in domestic representation and reflects common gender roles in Pakistani media.

The Coca Cola advert: both male and female are equal in family and social settings and also promote inclusivity and unity. It also promotes more balanced views of gender role in Pakistani society by dispelling long-standing gender stereotype.

The Samsung mobile phone advertisement shows both male and female using technology equally and both capable as a modern user. This encourages a progressive perspective on gender role in Pakistan's technologically adopted society and challenges traditional gender stereotype.

The Honda Civic advert promotes themes of independence, reliability and dependability by showing both male and female driving the trust. It also challenging the stereotype that driving is male-dominated activity; it promotes more inclusive gender roles by dispelling the myth.

The Dettol advertisement promotes health and cleanliness as a shaped family responsibility, through presenting both male and female in caring and cleaning duties. By challenging traditional gender stereotypes, it promotes a more equal perspective on domestic representation in Pakistani society.

The HBL advertisement portrays both men and women as financially independent and engaged in the workplace, breaking away the stereotypes from traditional gender roles. It eliminates myths and promotes gender equality in Pakistan's financial sector by showing women businesses.

Overall, the analysis suggests that traditional gender roles predominate in advertising for domestic, family-related items and household-related products, while technology, finance and beverage advertisements show more progressive or inclusive portrayals. Although this exists, empowerment is frequently gendered, with males being empowered by position or control and women by attractiveness or caregiving responsibilities. While there has been improvement, it appears that traditional standards still influence advertising narratives in Pakistan, as seen by the small number of advertisements that aggressively challenge preconception.

Discussion of Findings

The study thus concludes that though certain advertisements have progressed towards depicting more accurate portrayals of gender roles, most are still gender stereotypical. Some commercials, such as those for Sunsilk and Samsung, reflect progress as they portray women in powerful occupations, while others, such as the Nido or Surf Excel advertisements, perpetuate women's stereotypical roles in the home. These findings are parallel to the study of Samanta, Pal and Basu (2023). Consequently, the study portrays the Pakistani cultural change in progress with both conservative and liberal image representations as demonstrated in the study of Shahzadi and Ahmad (2018).

Advertisements on Nido (milk powder) and Surf Excel (detergent) colored traditional ideas about gender roles with pictures of women sitting at home, taking care of the house, and taking care of the children. They reinforced the idea that women were to be at home responsible for their kids, while the men were to be either providers or peripheral to the home, carried over deeply set societal norms as found by Mechlenborg and Gram-Hanssen (2022). The portrayals correspond with past research, which

reveals gendered stereotypes in culturally conservative societies as also found in a study by Nasir et al. (2021).

On contrary, advertisements such as Sunsilk (shampoo) and Samsung (mobile phones) featured women in the field of professions and in self-reliant positions, which challenging the obvious stereotypes as also depicted in the study of Taj and Ameen (2025). Confidence, agency and equality were becoming the watchwords of these portrayals, of growing importance in defining societal attitudes due to the increasing globalization and modernity at play. Progress was made with progressive representations particularly in advertising for technology and personal care, matching trends in other markets parallel to the findings of Adil and Malik (2021). The research also revealed a dual approach to portraying gender in advertisements, where some advertised women through emphasis on physical appearance that objectifies the women, others advertise empowered women role and show diverse, capable roles. For example, while the objectification is not emphasized in Coca Cola (soft drink) and Dettol (antiseptic) advertisements, which were genders neutral giving a sense of inclusion. Yet advertisements for Gillette (razors) which typically reinforced traditional masculinity in a male centric perspective as demonstrated in a recent study (Zeb, Saeed & Masum, 2021).

Implications for Future Advertising

Subsequent advertisements to be aired in the country should ensure that gender portrayal is done in a more balanced and empowering way with less tendency of stereotyping. There is a need for advertisers to always consider how these portrayals will affect the overall perception of society and endeavor to depict gender equality.

Conclusion

This study reveals the twin nature of gender representation in Pakistani television advertisements, of equal part promoting the traditional stereotypes and the progressions. Household product and male grooming product advertisements often reinforce conventional roles, but personal care and technology product advertisements are steering out of the conventional way. And this is reflective of larger social realities in Pakistan, where the cultural and the modern coexist. The study supports a need for advertisers to avert a more balanced approach to gender portrayal — balancing inclusivity and empowerment with respect to cultural sensitivities. Advertisements can support seeking to challenge stereotypes and promote various depictions of women for changing social attitudes towards higher gender fairness.

Recommendations and Limitations

The study recommends that men and women should be shown in nontraditional roles challenging stereotypes for inclusivity and representation, say advertisers. Advertisements should focus on individuals' ways with ourselves, actions, personalities and contributions more than their physical appearance, valuing peoples for who they are and further empowering across gender. To reach a wider and more diverse audience, advertisements must tell progressive stories at the same time as making them culturally appropriate. By working with groups such as advocacy groups and cultural experts, advertisers can develop content consistent with current values, and gender equity while respecting traditional sensibilities.

The limitation of the study is the restricted sample size that focus on television advertisements in a special cultural context of Pakistan. Future research could take this research one step further by examining advertisements on other media platforms. Future research could explore analysis that includes online, digital, and social media advertisements, where content trends may differ significantly. In addition, it could help to understand how different demographics interpret and react to media messages by investigating audience perceptions of gender portrayals. Finally, the effect of changed media representations on society's attitudes and gender norms over time could be the subject of longitudinal studies.

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