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The Progression of Gender Stereotyping in Pakistani Television Advertisements

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Abstract

This research examines Pakistani television advertisements from the early 2010s to the early 2020s and their progression in terms of their representation of male and female gender roles due to socio-cultural changes. Advertisements of five brands - Ufone, Dalda Foods, Haier, National Foods, and Surf Excel - were analyzed to see in what ways gender role portrayals have changed over the decade, while using Holbrook (1987)'s mirror theory as used in marketing. A qualitative research methodology was adopted and the advertisements were analyzed using content analysis of roles portrayed, tasks performed, and locations used for men and women in the advertisements. In the early 2010s, advertisements portrayed women primarily as mothers or figures involved in household chores such as cooking and laundry and portrayed a certain ideal for women, whereas men were seen as breadwinners and only provided minimal support in child-rearing. Toward the end of the decade, women were found to be included in decision-making and seen more often in the corporate world. The image of men has also progressed, and are shown as more involved in child-rearing and household activities such as cooking and laundry. Several advertisements have become less stereotypical, which cannot be said for some food-related brands, such as Dalda Foods. In Pakistan, socio-cultural shifts have led to diminishing gender role segregation, which is also visible in most advertisements. Diversifying creative teams, monitoring advertising content, and emphasizing collaborative responsibilities can help Pakistani brands eliminate gender stereotypes and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive representation of gender in advertising, fostering positive societal change.

Keywords: *Gender, gender stereotyping, progression of stereotyping, television advertisements, Pakistan*

The Progression of Gender Stereotyping in Pakistani Television Advertisements

Corporations have made use of mass media after the introduction of television, radio, the Internet, and other mediums to spread awareness of products, and services, and simultaneously push strong and influential messages to large audiences (McQuail, 1977). Due to the immense reach of mass media, considering an average Pakistani spends at least two hours a day viewing television (Gilani, 2021), more and more people are exposed to the aforementioned messages that propagate powerful ideals, and Pakistan's media is no different according to Sabir (2012). Pakistan's television advertisements were previously tailored to maintain stereotypical gender roles for men and women limiting perceptions of human capability (Ali, 2018). In comparison, contemporary advertisements depict men and women in defiance of these gender roles due to changing ideals regarding Pakistan's current sociocultural climate.

Several researchers including Tehseem et al. (2018) have noted that Pakistan's television industry has dominantly promoted advertisements in which the set standard of a 'good' woman is someone who partakes in household work such as cooking and child-rearing, supporting the patriarchal fabric of the society. Similarly,

advertisements have also continuously portrayed men as the breadwinners of the household, and rarely participating in household chores or in raising the children, helping maintain the patriarchal status quo of Pakistani society. This paper will explore if a change has emerged over the past decade, as advertisers are slowly noticing the restrictive nature of gender stereotypes.

Research Questions

Q1. Do Pakistani television advertisements reinforce female and male gender roles?

Q2. In what ways do Pakistani television advertisements reinforce or not reinforce female and male gender roles?

Q3. Have Pakistani television advertisements changed in the past decade concerning the representation of different genders?

Research Objectives

- To observe gender stereotyping in Pakistani television advertisements
- To discover how contemporary advertisements reinforce gender roles
- To analyze the change in the representation of different genders in Pakistani television advertisements over the past decade

Significance of the Study

Television advertisements, like all forms of media, can mold cultural values and broadcast and promote strong messages. According to Lasswell's (1938) 'hypodermic needle theory', audiences passively consume media and do not resist messages being 'injected' into their psyches. Therefore, it becomes crucial to analyze these advertisements and understand the underlying message they are sending to the audience. The findings of this research would be important for policymakers who can apply them to creating and executing better advertisements in the future. It is not uncommon for audiences, including children, to be blatantly exposed to high degrees of stereotyping of men and women's occupational status as well as the sexualization of their bodies in the advertising industry. These create significant problems as gender stereotyping can restrict real-life actions and opportunities, especially for women. Similarly, after these stereotypes are set, individuals who do not conform to them can face discrimination and become outcasts in society (Sharda, 2014).

In a day and age where gendered activities are being highlighted and constantly debunked, it is important to compare how far Pakistan has come in understanding and showcasing this ideology and how much the country has progressed when it comes to portraying gender stereotypes in television advertisements.

Scope of the Study

This research attempts to understand how gender stereotyping was done in Pakistani advertisements in the early 2010s in comparison to advertisements aired up to 2021. Particularly, it examines how men and women are portrayed concerning what roles they fulfill (breadwinners, parents, and more), what jobs or tasks they

perform (cooking, cleaning, working), and what locations they are shown in (homes, shopping malls, offices, etc.). This research will focus on advertisements of the brands 'National Foods,' 'Dalda Foods,' 'Haier,' 'Ufone,' and 'Surf Excel' because a majority of the aforementioned roles, tasks, and locations are highlighted in advertisements for the food and home appliances industry.

Literature Review

Gender roles in television advertisements in Pakistan constitute discussions on the dominance of men in the public sphere and their absence in the domestic setting, with women being limited to the roles of caretaker and homemaker, primarily working alone in the kitchen and engaging in child-rearing as well. A critical analysis of advertisements showcases principal characters, settings, tasks performed by principal characters, the nature of the product, the gender and tone of voice-overs, the latent message, and the nature of gender portrayal. Women are often portrayed in relation to their male counterparts while men are depicted in relation to their tasks and jobs (Khan & Anwar, 2016).

Advertisements, hence, reinforce traditional stereotypical images of the female body, mind, and soul to serve male patriarchal purposes (Barbara, 2005). Researchers reiterate that gender-sensitive advertisements and their disparaging discourse on Pakistani television must be replaced with gender-sensitive discourse to meet the demands of gender equality. While the literature underscores the need for gender-sensitive discourse in Pakistani television advertisements to promote equality, a critical gap emerges in understanding whether this discrepancy between the evolving aspirations of the current generation and societal expectations in advertisements has been resolved, which this research paper will directly discuss.

It is concurred that social values and ideologies are reinforced by advertisements (Shaikh et al., 2015). Gender roles highlighted in advertisements can also be problematized by applying 'a propaganda model' (Herman & Chomsky, 1988). Advertisers use various strategies to naturalize the stereotypical roles of males and females. They emphasize decorative, ignorant, family-oriented women, while men are shown as courageous, bold breadwinners. It becomes imperative then that critical analysts must reveal and challenge implicit social values, exploring how the role of women can be presented beyond their traditional role in a patriarchal society. This research paper takes into account the aforementioned findings and further analyzes whether social and cultural changes have been taken into account in recent Pakistani television advertisements.

Pakistani TV commercials form a female identity (Iftikhar & Islam, 2017) and represent women as glamorized sex objects while seeking beauty objects to entertain men or gain their attention (Ullah & Khan, 2014), thus not depicting the varied and progressive roles of women which has serious implications in a male dominant society like Pakistan where these portrayals can be taken as the ideal to be implemented in the society (Bushra, 2011). Ufone is one such example, whose past advertisements consistently depicted women as objects, not people, which this research will discuss at length, and how this portrayal has changed, which is a gap that persists in past literature on the topic.

This trend is prevalent throughout television commercials from various genres such as fashion, cellular mobile networks, cosmetics, food, and beverages to ascertain the role men and women play in them, the locations they occupy, rewards and arguments that ensue in the narrative (Buriro et al., 2019). Men not only dominate the screen time but are also independent and occupy more professional spaces as compared to women. With regards to reward and self-enhancement products and narratives, women were considered to be more timid and unacceptable before social approval whereas men were already accepted. Therefore, it can be stated that male and female depictions are narrower in range in TV advertisements (Barthel, 1994). This is relevant to our research since the research method of content analysis of forming categories and subcategories of how gender roles are represented in commercials acts as a blueprint for our methodology.

A less studied and problematized area in analyses of Pakistani television advertisements includes male gender stereotyping which can be divided into categories and subcategories to assess male gender stereotypes. These stereotypes include age, product use, occupation, voiceover, product representation, stance, location, and product type (Mirza, 2016). On avidly viewed television channels such as Hum TV, Dunya News, and Express News, it is found that men are also subject to oppressive stereotyping with images of unrealistic bodies, successful businessmen, and happy-go-lucky people. Men also dominate TV screens and voiceovers more, while women are product users and not product authorities the way men are (Browne, 1998). They are, moreover, dominating figures that are depicted in occupational settings (McArthur & Resko, 1975; Wee et.al, 1995). In this manner, they face the unattainable expectations of being the “ideal man” and advertisements feed into these stereotypes further. This research allows us to present a holistic view of gender stereotyping and how it has evolved not just for women but men also.

Like the aforementioned literature, most of the scholarly research surrounding gender stereotyping highlights the depiction of women as passive and dependent on men, hence reproducing traditional ideas of gender performance. However, newly emerging trends in the representation of women in media in the last decade, reconstruct ideas surrounding women as physically active, multidimensional, authoritative, daring, and success-oriented (Alkan, 2016). In this way, we would be filling an existing research gap in studies of the representation of gender roles in Pakistani television advertisements by placing this change in television advertising in Pakistan’s context and by also examining the stereotyping of men as well as women. These gaps underscore the need for a comprehensive examination of gender roles in Pakistani television advertisements, integrating changing perspectives and considering recent shifts in societal expectations.

Stereotyping seems to be prevalent in advertising which frequently employs “gender roles to promote products” (Eisend, 2010, p. 1). It depends on gender-related developments (such as occupational status of either gender), socio-cultural milieu, and value changes within the society that will benefit from the reinforcement or denouncement of the stereotypical behavior. The relationship between the values of society and gender stereotyping can be condensed into the “mirror” versus “mold” argument (Holbrook, 1987; Pollay 1986, 1987). The advertising that

consumers are exposed to is a reflection (or “mirror”) of the society they inhabit and reinforces cultural expectations pertaining to gender. Representation in advertising, however, is prone to under-representation which highlights only a certain reality while obscuring another. As advertisers adapt their content to promote their brands rather than challenge the status quo, they ensure that they portray what is soporific for consumption. On the other hand, it is argued by cultivation studies (Gerbner et al., 2002) that advertising content can “mold” the values of its target audience through subliminal messaging, eventually influencing a change in behavior. This research study primarily employs the “mirror” versus “mold” theory to justify its arguments and scrutinize the changing trends in Pakistani television advertisements.

Methodology

The current study is qualitative in nature and content analysis was done to uncover the progression of portrayal of women in Pakistani advertisements from 2010-2021. Content analysis enabled us to identify prevalent themes, discern evolving trends, and gain valuable insights into the changing dynamics of how women have been represented in the advertising landscape over the specified period. This systematic approach facilitated the categorization and examination of visual and textual elements, providing a nuanced understanding of the shifts in cultural norms, societal perceptions, and marketing strategies influencing the depiction of women in this context. It further helped reveal any power relations and implicit biases within the media since such biases are often deeply rooted in cultural norms making them undetectable otherwise.

The roles of men and women were closely examined. We assessed the roles of women in the house and analyzed how men behaved in the given situation. The roles of girls, mothers, and mothers-in-law were taken into consideration. Women took on the traditional roles of housewife, cook, and mother. For the variable ‘reward type’, inspiration was taken from Neto & Pinto (1998), in which they outline a coding scheme. The reward type varied from social approval, self-enhancement, practical, or pleasure. Additionally, lyrics of any jingles used in the backgrounds of advertisements and any relevant slogans were further transcribed and analyzed.

Along with this, Holbrook (1987)’s mirror theory in marketing was further used to reinstate the argument that advertisers expose consumers to a reflection (or “mirror”) of society and further reinforce cultural expectations pertaining to gender.

Sample

A sample size of 25 advertisements from 5 Pakistani brands was taken: Ufone, Haier, Dalda Foods, Shan Foods, and Surf Excel. According to research conducted by Khan & Anwar (2016), broadcast advertisements in Pakistan are dominated by brands that promote food and beverages. Out of a total of 150 advertisements aired on television, 49 belong to corporations such as Dalda Foods and Shan Foods. Amongst other frequent categories are mobile phone networks, household appliances, detergents, and cleaning products (Khan & Anwar, 2016).

Additionally, since most of the aforementioned categories are associated with the household, and closely linked to feminine traits, an analysis of the

advertisements is an accurate assessment of whether brands have progressed in terms of their depiction of gender roles in the past decade. To ascertain the change in women's roles portrayed in the advertisement, advertisements of the same companies were analyzed from the year 2010 to 2020. The substantial timeframe of 10 years was chosen in order for the study to capture shifts in marketing approaches targeting women, adaptability to changing consumer preferences, and the impact of technological advancements on media platforms. The broad dataset also enhances the statistical significance of findings, providing a concrete foundation for drawing conclusions about several patterns and nuances in the representation of women in the advertising landscape. All these advertisements were made for the consumption of Pakistani audiences, so the advertisements were in Urdu with a few English words dispersed throughout.

Purposive sampling was used to select these advertisements. This was done to meet specific criteria relevant to the research question, rather than using random sampling methods (Acharya et al., 2013). The selection of brands and the focus on specific product categories (food and beverages, household appliances, detergents, and cleaning products) were selected to capture a range of advertisements that are more likely to reflect gender roles in the given context. The justification for this sampling approach is grounded in the aim of exploring gender portrayals in advertisements of specific product categories associated with household and traditionally 'feminine' traits. Additionally, well-known brands were considered as they are more representative of the broader media landscape in Pakistan.

Data Collection Process

Data was collected through an Internet-based resource, namely YouTube, as it contains a wide catalog of old and new advertisements. Secondary sources of information like journal articles, books, and other reliable internet resources were also consulted.

Data Analysis Procedure

Thematic analysis was the major data analysis procedure used in this research paper. Steps to conduct this analysis were done by evaluation and comparison of elements in regards to gender roles ascribed to men and women with a focus on Pakistani society, the child-rearing responsibilities taken by the mother or the father, their role in the household, including their respective occupation and relevance as well as other concepts associated with a particular gender. Additionally, the reinforcement of these gender roles and other societal norms and their effect on children was also analyzed. Furthermore, this thematic analysis helped us understand whether depictions such as these have changed over the decade analyzed.

Discussion & Analysis

The 'Ideal' Woman & Her Role in the Household

Holbrook (1987) claims that advertisements simply reflect established societal values about gender, rather than influencing them. Pakistani advertisements, therefore, reveal the broader social norms and values that are already present in society. Cooking, for instance, is a life skill that has been associated with women in not only a stringently patriarchal society like Pakistan

but also in most societies the world over, which is why representation of women in food-related brands like National Foods, especially in advertisements a decade ago, primarily features women in the kitchen. For example, one of the advertisements released in 2010 depicts a newlywed woman in highly traditional clothing preparing her first meal for a huge family as other women look on in anticipation. She serves food on the table, looks toward the matriarch for approval and gets a piece of jewelry as a reward. This implies that a woman's place in her family hinges upon being able to cook well without aid or input from others and her worth is tied to impressing the heads of the household with her skills. Men, on the other hand, are rarely found in the kitchen but are with the rest of the family waiting to be served. These products advertised are, therefore, used to amuse and entertain the husband while he relaxes with the rest of the family.

In another one of their advertisements, 'Rang Bharti Ja', the wife in a rural setting is once again found in the role of the caretaker of the household. Even though the advertisement is devoid of any dialogue, the background music reinforces gender roles with lyrics like "with all the good qualities you know, weave them together," forming the basis for subliminal manipulation (Van Dijk, 1985) which sets the standard of what a good woman is, hence a wife possesses the capability to cook and serve her family well. There is segregation that exists in the roles that each gender performs, and the man's place is not in the kitchen. The absence of male representation in these spaces and their presence barely felt at the dining table as consumers and appreciators of the food speaks volumes. The same idea is reinforced in one other National Foods advertisement where as a matriarch, a woman is responsible for managing the entire household and the kitchen for several family members. This romanticizes women's unpaid labor and restricts the roles they play in wider society while also reinforcing gender stereotypes to maintain the status quo of women's position as compared to men to the audiences.

Other food-related brands such as Dalda Foods also feature women dominantly as housewives who participate in household chores, specifically cooking. For instance, in an advertisement that was aired in 2010, Dalda Foods follows the life of a young girl through the eyes of her mother: her first word, her first birthday, her first day of school, and the first time she learns to cook, amongst other moments. In this narrative, the daughter is shown as central to the mother's life. While showing the daughter's first day at school, the mother is prominently shown helping her daughter pack, which is cut to a scene where her daughter leaves with her father, who is dressed in a business suit, implying he is on his way to work. This suggests that a woman's main purpose is to only help their husband manage a household while they act as the breadwinner.

When considering the advertisements of Surf Excel, it can be observed there too, how chores and activities related to cleaning are linked with the women of the household, even if the focal character in the promotion is a male. Through this, we can note that even though the product itself is stereotypically linked with

women, the characters that have a sense of agency or are active are boys or men (in the form of children and elders, respectively), while the women are usually passive. For example, in an advertisement from 2010, a boy is shown to be making 'foam arms' for the washing machine through a process that makes his clothes stained with paint. When the mother's character arrives, he explains that he did so as his mother washes clothes with her hands even though they have a machine, and thus he gave the machine hands. The mother figure then smiles and tells him that now that they have Surf Excel, she will not need to wash clothes with her hands anymore.

In the home appliances market in Pakistan, Haier dominates and offers a broad range of products to its consumers such as refrigerators, air conditioners, washing machines, deep freezers, ovens, and more. These products are made to assist people in housekeeping and homemaking; they ease the processes of cooking, cleaning, preserving food, etc. In Pakistani society in particular, housekeeping chores have always been associated with women and not men, so this kind of ubiquitous stereotyping is also prevalent in Haier advertisements – which aim to pitch products to a population that firmly believes in gender roles. For instance, in one of its advertisements from 2011, a family of four is shown happily using Haier products. The mother, per the 'ideal woman' stereotype, appears to be a housewife who diligently feeds her family, does the laundry, is around the children more than her husband, and seems very content with her life. This implies that it is a woman's job to be able to run a house (as a consequence of which she can operate a washing machine, an air conditioner, a microwave, a refrigerator, etc), and make her family happy. Child rearing in particular is only held to be a woman's responsibility. The husband, on the other hand, does not partake in domestic tasks as he functions as the breadwinner, and when at home, is only seen playing with the children or eating out of the bowl of popcorn the wife has made; so, his role is unconcerned with homemaking.

Women as Caretakers

Child rearing is also a responsibility of the mother first and foremost since the female characters are shown to be doting on them and feeding them in several advertisements. For instance, a 2017 Haier washing machine ad revolves around an adolescent boy playing in a garden and getting his clothes dirty, whilst his mother is shown working in the kitchen preparing food for the guests; after playing and exploring, the boy operates the washing machine himself to clean his stained shirt only and goes back to playing with his dog. After his mother sees him in a stainless shirt, she gives him a smirk to signify that he did something cleverly that wasn't his job – to get out of trouble. In this scenario, the father is nowhere to be seen. Therefore, laundry, among other household chores, catering to guests, and looking after children are the mother's responsibilities. Showing women in domestic settings only restates their role, which is confined to the four walls of the house and nothing more. This is representative of Pakistani ideals and values that existed at the time. As stated by Holbrook (1987), gender roles in advertising reflect real cultural expectations towards gender.

Among the brands most popularized by their advertisements, Ufone takes the lead. It has successively made many advertisements in the past that created a buzz in the consumer market for its unique and humorous take on life while showcasing its brand. In one advertisement by Ufone in 2011, viewers are introduced to a scene in which the days leading up to Eid cause a huge demand for tailors. The women in this advertisement are lined up outside a tailor shop while shouting angrily at the shop owner for not opening his shop. At the same time, the other male tailors are panicking while their supervisor is content that overbooking on Eid is beneficial to make profits by unfairly jacking up the prices of their services. The panicked tailors are trying to get a hold of the situation while women call them up to get a status on their orders. The boss appears to be angry at his tailors while avoiding calls for a follow-up.

The commercial only features women as customers at this urgent time, while men are nowhere to be seen in terms of caring about the clothes. The male shop owners are indifferent to women in their easy-going way and don't respond to their inquiries. The advertisement depicts gender bias in household chores as only the women are responsible for the clothing of the household. Their male counterparts are devoid of the picture, and it is made the sole responsibility of women to make preparations for the family before Eid. The carefree attitude of the shop owners does not help as they are just in it to make the money. The pressure on women during this time is immense and is only shouldered by the wife.

The same idea is reiterated in National Food's Rang Bharti Ja advertisement, in which the wife in a rural setting is once again found in the role of the caretaker of her husband and her child. She must wake up earlier than her husband, adorn herself, prepare food lovingly, feed her daughter, and then her husband as well. In this way, women are secluded only from domestic affairs and have nothing else to occupy their time. The life of a woman in the city is no different as she is also a housewife and restricted to the kitchen and taking care of the household. Any reward or appreciation she receives is in the form of female neighbors marveling at her prowess in the household. It is, moreover, only women who help each other in the kitchen.

Even in other advertisements, such as those by National Foods and Haier, women come to each other's aid and provide advice on household issues. In one of the Haier advertisements from 2018, a couple goes to see a therapist, and the wife constantly complains about having difficulties doing laundry; while she is protesting, her husband listens obediently and does not utter a word. The therapist (who is also a woman) then tells her to purchase a Haier washing machine. The fact that a woman is giving another woman advice on laundry appliances speaks volumes about how Pakistani society has associated the function of washing clothes with women; men inquiring about or doing laundry would be seen as an anomaly. In addition to that, this particular advertisement ends with the tagline – in a male voiceover – “When Haier washing machine is at home, the woman of the house remains stress-free.” By referring to women

specifically in this tagline, the brand has naturalized women's role in society as that of unpaid housekeepers and launderers. This advertisement also features women in relation to men – as a wife – and not as a separate individual. Therefore, the role of women in society is constantly being reiterated.

Gendered Roles

The women's caretaking abilities are further nurtured and passed on to the next generation as children, particularly daughters, observe and absorb these behaviors from a young age. The aforementioned advertisement by Dalda Foods released in 2010 features the daughter as someone who learns to cook at a very young age. The mother and daughter are seen together in the kitchen, looking at recipes and cooking, once again implying it is the mother's job to teach her children – specifically her daughters – how to perform household chores. After learning to cook, the daughter also serves food to her father, the household patriarch. His response is to praise his daughter with a thumbs up. In comparison to the role of the mother, the father relaxes and does not participate much in raising the child. He provides minimal to no assistance in the kitchen or child rearing, insinuating male figures are not meant to partake in such activities. The stereotypes portrayed in these advertisements help further establish Pakistan as a patriarchal society.

Similarly, one of Dalda Foods' Ramadan advertisements, which was aired in 2015, also shows women and their daughters in the kitchen, further reinforcing stereotypical gender roles. In this specific advertisement, a clear comparison can be made between the sons and the daughter depicted with the former engaging more in the public sphere and the girls remaining in the domestic sphere to help their mothers with household chores and how the disparity helps reiterate gender roles. The difference in activities implies that boys are allowed a certain independence by leaving the house, while girls are not. Additionally, the trio of mothers are shown preparing the food in the kitchen, the third with the help of her daughter, but none of the sons aid in the household work. The women in all the households are shown tending to their children and are always placed in areas within the house, even if their children are not. The idea that daughters should help with household chores is also shown in a Dalda Foods television commercial that was aired in 2011. While the father and the son enjoy their time together by playing and relaxing, the mother and the daughter have to set up and prepare the food. This advertisement also showcases women shopping or doing simple tasks, in comparison to men, who partake in activities such as exercise, again reiterating that women are meant for tending to household chores, while men get to relax and simply enjoy the food.

Even in the 2010 National Food advertisement, the male child sits with the rest of the family while his sister helps with household chores. This illustrates that these gender roles are instilled in children from an early age and are socially and culturally constructed (Pryor, 1997). Such stereotyping and portraying men and

women in their binary roles is detrimental because they are taken as the ideal to be implemented in their daily lives and reinforce their unequal social position.

An advertisement by Surf Excel, specifically the aforementioned one from 2010, details how boys are considered to be more active and creative in their actions and are thus portrayed so as well, while women are often absent from the narrative altogether until the last moment, and too only concerning the primary male character, as explored by Khan & Anwar (2016). This is furthered by another Surf Excel promotion from 2011, where a boy is shown struggling to tie his shoelaces, getting dirt on his clothes in the process, when the only female figure depicted is through a voiceover. It must also be noted that regarding voiceovers in Surf Excel advertisements, generally, a female voiceover is given when something 'ordinary' or usual must be explained. A male voiceover, however, such as in the promotion discussed previously, is used to explain something technical or scientific about the way the product works, while also delivering the tagline, as seen by (Mirza, 2016) as well. This could connote how men are considered to be more authoritative and trustworthy than women, and how consumers viewing the advertisement would be persuaded more if they hear a male voiceover. However, the opposite side of the argument is that having a female voiceover only reaffirms that this is a solely 'female' product, which implies that cleaning is the woman's job and thus reinforces gender roles.

In another advertisement in 2011, a female voiceover was given at the end, while the video itself also featured important female characters that had some level of agency and were not simply one-dimensional. A few male bullies are shown teasing and annoying a female student in class, while a new male student enters and is not accepted by the other students in class, teasing him as well. The girl calls him over to sit with her, however, the bullies place mud on his seat, dirtying his clothes. The teacher enters class, and while calling the new student forward, berates him for his dirtied clothes. The girl, forming an idea, takes the mud and puts it on her clothes as well, going to the teacher and telling her that she and the boy were planting trees on account of 'Environment Day'. The teacher praises them and all the students clap. This marks the first advertisement from Surf Excel from this study's sample that shows a girl as one, if not the only, focal character with some level of agency, and one that is not depicted concerning the boy (as she was introduced to the viewers first), showing that portrayals have evolved.

Reinforcement of Societal Norms in Ufone Advertisements

Most viewers fail to recognize the subtle gender bias that exists in television advertisements. Several companies have been utilizing advertisements to reinforce societal norms and promote positive social values. Through its carefully crafted campaigns, Ufone has consistently depicted scenes that align with traditional Pakistani customs and expectations. In one advertisement from 2010 titled 'Teri Meherbani,' the male lead looks over at a girl from his car and is immediately captivated by her beauty. He begins to pursue her to a cafe, sitting

across from her while silently gazing at her from behind the menu. A band plays a song in the backdrop which is a love song complimenting a woman's voice for the trace it puts a man under. From the get-go, the advertisement implies that a woman alone in public is not safe from the peeking eyes of men, the innocent and carefree way to maneuver the 'male gaze' by the advertisement sets the tone that the woman is not only comfortable with his prying gaze, but she invites him by constantly smiling back. This projects the wrong message that looking at women in public is acceptable, and the idea that the woman would reciprocate the same feelings; showing interest in the person looking at her this way.

The advertisement continues with the woman leaving her phone behind at the table. The male lead runs over to her to hand over the mobile, expecting a warm thank you in the process. The woman says 'Teri Meherbani' showing how grateful she is, but her voice comes off-putting to the male lead because it sounds unnatural to her. The advertisement further normalizes judging women based on their looks, seeing her face with the band playing makes the viewer expect a small and soft voice but it is entirely different than expected. Women in Pakistani society are expected to have a low voice and hearing an outspoken or loud woman is generally regarded as unattractive. The band ends abruptly as soon as her real voice is revealed, and the man runs away. Watching this advertisement aids in the stigma against women who like to convey themselves and teaches that a certain standard of voice is fancied by them.

In comparison, an advertisement by Ufone which aired in 2011 showed the location of 'Ushops' in different cities of Pakistan. The overwhelming majority of the cast in the advertisement is male but the women's representation, especially in terms of going out of the house to go to the shops is noted. In this regard, this advertisement fared better than others in terms of displaying women as having the mobility to travel. Inside the house, they were still doing the typical tasks associated with women. Ufone takes the first steps to break traditional societal norms with this advertisement.

Early 2020s: A Step Towards Change

A contrast is found in contemporary advertisements which are meant to reflect the changing culture surrounding gender roles due to feminist movements, more women entering higher education, and the workforce, and moving away from the joint family system to the nuclear family. According to Iftikhar et al. (2011), this change can also be attributed to cultural deviation from traditional Pakistani-Islamic culture to a more homogenous global culture where men's and women's roles become less segregated. This is supported by the central theory as put forth by Holbrook (1987). They argue that advertisers do not alter the values that exist in society. Instead, they use existing values to promote their brand. This is why advertisers adapt the images they portray as well. Changes in any social climate will be presented on screen through advertisements, and otherwise.

Other research also showed that young girls want to see women as independent professionals (Kotwal et al., 2008). One of the advertisements by National Foods as part of their 'Nayi Soch Ke Naye Zaiqe' (New Flavors for New Ways of Thinking) campaign depicts husbands and wives sharing the burden of the kitchen. Cooking then becomes not a chore performed by one or the other but a shared bonding activity and men are not just receiving the end of affection but active participants in household affairs which subvert societal expectations. Under the same campaign, another advertisement features a mother and son, a father and daughter, spouses and friends cooking together.

The spouses, in particular, are depicted to be working jobs. Even the lyrics of the background music represent a change by mentioning changing traditions and evaluating them with "a new dawn" and "traditions of old have changed today" which implies that a cultural change has taken place which is being reflected in the advertisement. Even then, the wife is the one preparing the food before leaving for work. While it is reflective of sociocultural changes taking place where more women have entered the workforce, it also takes into account the double shift that women have to do because their value is still tied to domestic work and is supposed to be their primary duty. Changing imagery in advertisements in Pakistan post 2020 further reinstate Holbrook (1987)'s theory that advertisers adapt the images they portray as changes continue to occur in society. Stereotypes need to be challenged in this manner as well because when presented in the media, they can in turn impact real-life prejudices and discrimination against the minority gender i.e., women.

Women have also ventured outside the home life and into the public sphere in Haier advertisements. For instance, a 2020 refrigerator advertisement features a woman traveling alone in a metropolitan city, adorned in Western attire, using the social media application Twitter and lunching alone – breaking the age-old stereotype of women confined to domestic settings. She returns home to her husband – which depicts a reversal of roles – and he pitches a new product to her from the Haier line of appliances. He convinces her why the inverter refrigerator is a great product and at the end of it, presents her with an ice cream. This advertisement, unlike its predecessors, breaks the mold in many ways; it revolves around an independent woman who maneuvers the outside world while her husband is at home and deals with domestic matters. It does, however, showcase a married woman – as it has always done in the past – and not an unmarried successful woman, so their roles are still associated with men; therefore, implying that some socio-cultural changes over the past few years have been depicted on television through these advertisements, but some form of stereotyping remains.

With regards to Surf Excel advertisements from the early 2020s, much is seen to have changed concerning female characters and the overall themes of the promotions themselves. Similar to contemporary National Foods advertisements, the focus is on 'a new beginning,' stressing the importance of community and a

collectivist approach to society as a whole. In one advertisement, a woman is shown having a party on account of her promotion at work, indicating right from the beginning that this video is taking an updated, modern approach to gender portrayals. The focal character is still her male child, who accidentally drops food on his clothes while taking it to the poor children outside the house, however, in this case, the scenario of 'coming together to flourish' is made more important and can outweigh this character choice. It must also be noted that a female voiceover is used for this video, explaining the technical aspects of the product and introducing the 'Surf Excel Liquid' as well. However, gender norms may still be reinforced by the fact that the woman's female friend talks to her about the difficulties in the stains being washed out, still implying that cleaning is solely the duty and responsibility of the woman, even if she has a paying profession.

Another advertisement from the current year revolving around children from an orphanage and elders from an old home shows the adult female figure as an attendant or a background character, however, other female characters of varying ages are also given importance, as well as male characters of different ages. As the children and elders interact, with both genders and age groups getting stains on their clothes from paint, spilling food, etc., a song plays in the background about the importance of community, while the female voiceover at the end talks about new relationships as the teachers decide to let the children stay with the elders at the new 'All Ages Home.' This promotional video focused on coming together and forming unexpected and unconventional families that go beyond blood ties and is a perfect example of how far Surf Excel as a brand has progressed in terms of marketing and advertising, touching upon more emotional subjects rather than the simple, stereotypical depiction of a female character (shown in relation to the male character) washing clothes.

Similarly, even recent Ufone advertisements show a comparatively brighter picture than before. One advertisement which features the slogan "Hamesha azad raho, youn hi muskuratay raho, kyun ke Ufone ke liye sab kuch tum hi to ho!" (Which translates to "Stay free and happy, because, for Ufone, you are everything!") shows the emergence of a series of new advertisements for the company that will center around the smiles formed because of Ufone and their connections. The advertisement featured around 15 people of different races, creeds, and religions signifying the diverse cultural and ethnic base of Pakistan. The featured women were from all walks of life from working women to housewives, from old to young. This broke the monotonous role traditionally shown in advertisements regarding women. In the second ad, a male influencer stumbles upon a camel herder making art on his camels by cutting up their coat.

The picture is then shared all around social media and made into a sensation. It gets featured on taxis and t-shirts as a design that propels the popularity of the goat herder. This advertisement furthers the agenda in the 'muskuratay raho' campaign and features women in outdoor as well as indoor activities. The diverse range of women from social media influencers to giving a

mehndi design is shown. This positively builds towards the end as several influencers come to feature the herder on their vlogs.

Women in the past were shown as someone to admire and take advantage of for their innocence. The overwhelming advertisement content played on the stereotypical cues about women and their family-centric lifestyle, showing that their role is dependent on a male figure. The new series of advertisements tries to break this cycle in a newer, more emotionally tuned way. The most notable development was the higher turnover of women in newer advertisements, this gives optimism for the future that more gender-neutral content would be put out for the viewers while giving them higher opportunities.

Consistent Stereotyping in Dalda Food Advertisements

Advertisements aired during the year 2021 further push the stereotypical agenda of Dalda Foods. In a commercial run when the 2020s began, a woman acting as a young child's stepmother cooks him his favorite foods. In particular, the audience is once again introduced to a woman in the kitchen taking care of the food and child-rearing while the patriarch of the household is busy or distracted by his work. In addition to this, the woman also seeks approval of her cooking from both the males; her stepson and her husband. As mentioned previously, this helps push the narrative that a woman's entire purpose is her motherhood and her ability to raise children. Another advertisement aired in 2021 showcases a mother shopping with her daughter, and when they step into the elevator, another lady steps in and sneezes. The mother is then seen saying "Mothers cannot protect their children from all dangers," implying it is only the mother's job to protect their children. Dalda does not mention the importance of a father's job. Similarly, another recurring theme in this advertisement is the minimal support from the father as a household figure. He is seen only once, at the table, feeding his daughter while the mother serves them all the food.

Despite the changes seen in other contemporary advertisements, Dalda Foods continues to churn out similar commercials and maintain its image as a food brand that believes cooking is an act for women and not men. This is further communicated through the company's slogan 'Jahan Mamta Wahan Dalda' which translates to 'Wherever the mother is, so is Dalda.' The slogan places a strong link between motherhood and cooking and implies that the notion of cooking is a feminine activity. One possible reason for the unchanged ideals and stereotypical depiction shown in Dalda Food advertisements is this. Such stereotypes are harmful as several women are impacted both in education, as well as the workforce, by being perceived in a particular way (weak, dependent on men, unable to work or study efficiently, etc.) and further allow society to refrain women from opportunities.

Conclusion

In summation, several socio-cultural changes have taken place in Pakistan in which more women have entered the workforce, and higher education, in part

due to feminist movements, and the family set-up has shifted from a joint family to a nuclear family, leading to gender roles being played by men and women becoming less segregated. This was supported by Holbrook (1987), who states alterations in advertising content will align with changes in society. As the cultural climate undergoes regular shifts, such as evolving perspectives on gender roles, advertisers adjust the images they present to align with widely accepted norms.

This is reflected in the advertisements produced by various Pakistani brands in their representation of such roles. As analyzed in the advertisements of the brands Surf Excel, Dalda, National Foods, Hair, and Ufone from the early 2010s, both men and women played limited roles where the man was endowed with the responsibility of paid labor and providing for the family, women were secluded to the household and child-rearing.

Post-2020s, however, a significant change in trend is witnessed where men's and women's roles are no longer stereotyped and are shared participants in managing the household and childrearing. While this progression has taken place, gender stereotyping still prevails to a great extent especially in food-related brands like Dalda Foods, considering their brand image is one that is based on the gendered role of women being cooks in the household.

In light of these findings, several recommendations are proposed for advertisers and brands in Pakistan. First, diversifying creative teams within the company will support efforts to eliminate gender stereotypes in advertising as individuals from different backgrounds, genders, and experiences can contribute to more well-rounded and culturally sensitive advertising campaigns that avoid perpetuating stereotypes.

Additionally, brands should implement ongoing monitoring of advertising content to ensure alignment with contemporary gender dynamics. Research shows that social and cultural dynamics are continuously evolving, and regularly monitoring and adapting advertising strategies allow brands to stay responsive to these changes. While there has been progress in depicting shared roles, further emphasis on collaborative responsibilities from brands can reinforce the idea that tasks related to family and home management are not exclusive to a particular gender.

By embracing these recommendations, Pakistani brands can play a pivotal role in fostering a more equitable and inclusive representation of gender in advertising, contributing to positive societal change.

There is a need for a further investigation into the phenomenon to check the complete potential of "Echo Chambers." The data which is available

is mostly talking about democracies, but it is also important to check the impact of this phenomenon in post-authoritarian countries. New techniques should also be introduced to check the effects of Echo Chambers on public discourse before and after entering it.

The data was taken from the partisan political Facebook pages in the time span of February 2014 and was related to Thai people in general. The content analysis of these Facebook pages was incorporated having the political posts which were only related to these elections. On top of that, they also did a network analysis and visualized the user interaction in the selected domain to check the relationship. The case study of Thai election was selected as the information was comprehensive and had triggered a huge political debate on social media. It sought out to answer the research question if due to pre

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Appendix

1. [Nayi Soch ke Naye Zaiqe - National Foods Limited](#)
2. [National Recipe Mixes - Nayi Soch Ke Naye Zaiqe - National Foods Limited](#)
3. [Rung bharti Ja - New National Food Recipe \(Pakistani Culture\) - Pakistani TV Commercial - Addict2Adverts](#)
4. [National Recipe Masala Commercial 2010 - TheKumailAli](#)
5. [National Food \(Our Food, Our Culture - Pakistan\) - Addict2Adverts](#)
6. [Dalda Cooking Kit - fanaticgfx](#)
7. [Dalda Cooking Oil & Banspati Ramzan 2015 Commercial - Dalda Foods](#)
8. [Dalda Cooking Oil - Thematic TVC 2021 - Dalda Foods](#)
9. [Dalda Kalonji Canola Oil TVC 2021 - Dalda Foods](#)
10. [Dalda Cooking Oil - daldafoodspvtltd](#)
11. [Surf Excel Matic TVC - Best Media Info Surf Excel TVC Shoelace - surfexcel](#)
12. [Surf Excel My New Friend - surfexcel](#)
13. [Ghulenge, Milenge Toh Khilenge - Surf Excel Liquid - Surf Excel Pakistan Surf Excel Ramazan 2021 - Surf Excel Pakistan](#)
14. [Ufone Ad - Rehber Hussain](#)
15. [Ufone Latest Ad 2011 - Rothschildkiller](#)
16. [Ufone Eid Ad 2011 - brainlara](#)
17. [Hamesha Azad Raho - Ufone](#)
18. [Ufone4G Weekly Internet Plus - Ufone](#)
19. [Haier | Washing Machine TVC 2017 | Creative Ads - Creative Ads](#)
20. [Haier Pakistan New TV Commercial - Hamayoun Bashir](#)
21. [Haier One Touch Washing Machine TVC 2018 - Haier Pakistan](#)
22. [The wait is over, Haier's Digital Inverter Refrigerator....The only Real Inverter is here! - Haier Pakistan](#)
23. [Haier \(Pakistan\) - New AD 2011 \(Amazing\) - Pakistani TV Commercials - Addict2Adverts](#)