

## **Religion Wise Differences in Female's Attitude towards Role Portrayal of Women in Tv Advertisements**

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### **Abstract**

Among various factors which help in shaping the attitude of consumers, religion too play a very vital role. This research aims to inquire differences in attitudes of females towards women's role portrayal in advertisements on the basis of religion. Responses were taken by distributing a questionnaire to a convenience sample of 241 College students of Northern India which includes females affiliated to Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism. Data were analyzed using descriptive, factor analysis, reliability, ANOVA and Post Hoc test. The findings confirmed that there is a significant difference in the attitude of consumers on the basis of religion.

**Keywords:** female, attitude, portrayal of women, TV advertisements, religion.

## Introduction

To better fulfil the needs of society marketers segmented it on the basis of different demographic factors like gender, age, income, religion etc. In previous researches a significant difference is found in the attitude of consumers on the basis of such factors. (Srivastava, 2010; Wang, Zhang, Choi, and D'Eredita, 2002; Shavitt, Lowrey and Haefner, 1998; Boush, Friestad and Rose, 1994). Due to presence of such differences every segment of the society cannot be targeted in a same manner. Companies communicate and persuade their customers by the use of advertising. Advertising helps companies in selling their products, to educate the customers, to raise the economy and standard of living. A study by Zanot (1984) in America stated that the period of around 20 years, from 1930s to 1950s, claimed favourable attitude of consumers towards advertising. But the unfavourable attitude towards advertising was first noticed by the pioneering study of Bauer and Greyser (1968). Since then many other studies also reported unfavourable attitude of consumers towards advertising (Srivastava, 2010; Shavitt *et al.*, 1998; Michell and Al-Mosawwi, 1995; Boush *et al.*, 1994). The reason due to which advertising was considered unfavourable includes falsity, illicit content, materialism, etc. There is an issue regarding role portrayal of women in advertising which is widely discussed by the researchers ([Jaffe, 1994](#); Ford and La Tour, 1993; DeYoung and Crane, 1992; La Tour, 1990; Mays and Brady, 1990; Ferrante, Haynes and Kingsley, 1988; Loudon and Delia Bitta, 1988; Soley and Reid, 1988; [Leigh, Rethans & Reichenbach Whitney, 1987](#); Soley and Kurzbard, 1986; [Whipple & Courtney, 1985](#); Lysonski, 1983; D'Amico and Hummel, 1980; Kerin *et al.*, 1979; Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Roberts and Koggan, 1977; Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976; Venkatesan and Losco, 1975; Sexton and Haberman, 1974; Wagner and Banos, 1973; Dominick and Rauch, 1972; Weiss, 1972; Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). The features regarding role of women in advertising which made this issue very serious and offensive includes the adoration of violence against women, depiction of women as sex object or objectifying the women by using it unnecessarily, portraying her lesser to men in rank and in many other ways. Advertisers continued committing the fault by erroneously portraying women in society (Ferrante *et al.*, 1988). On the contrary, the research of Jaffe (1994) focused on women's response to female portrayals that are almost in accord with established roles, relationships, and situations in society.

It has been well discussed over the past decades that advertisers could not present an

authentic view of women and their roles in society. This issue of unauthentic and unnecessary portrayal of women in advertising still prevails in the society. Progressively, women are adopting a wider role in society. The rising number of women working in different organizations is emerging as a stronger group, which can go for boycotts in case of any sort of injustice to them. So, it is not good for the advertisers to neglect the sentiments of the female class of the society. Everyone should take care of such issues which can be troublesome for women, otherwise it may induce negative attitude of females towards the source of that cause, i.e., advertiser's company or products. Now the question arises that whether the population of female class is having same attitude across different regions, ages, races, religions, etc.? Some studies regarding portrayal of women have been done on the basis of different women groups (Ford and La Tour, 1993). On the basis of demographic variables some differences are found in perceptions of these portrayals (Leigh et al, 1987; Bartos, 1982; Venkatesh, 1980; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977). Whether the reason of differences in attitude is education or age or particularly, it may be religion. Bailey and Sood (1993) emphasized the importance of religion due to its role in shaping the attitude and values. So, no such study regarding difference in female's attitude towards role portrayal of women in advertising on the basis of religion is seen by the researcher. Whereas the discussion over whether or not advertisers portray women authentically goes on, the main concern is how women affiliated with different religion feel about the portrayal of women in advertising. Do females of different religions consider that advertisers portray female in authentic ways or do they consider they are portrayed in wrong manner, i.e., as sex objects or inferior to men?

### **Literature Review**

For some years, the studies regarding attitude towards the role portrayal of women in advertisements are being given special attention (Lin, 2008; Royo-Vela, Aldás-Manzano, Küster-Boluda and Vila-Lopez, 2007; Wolin, 2003; Ford, Voli, Honeycutt Jr and Casey, 1998; DeYoung and Crane, 1992; Soley and Kurzbard, 1986; Lysonski, 1983; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Dominick and Rauch, 1972).

In his research Wortzel and Frisbie (1974) suggested that women are both sensible and reasonably balanced in their preferences with respect to role portrayals in advertising. Rossi and Rossi (1985) suggested persistent care to avoid negative attitude towards advertising due to undesirable portrayal of gender specific.

In the researches before 1971, portrayal of women in advertising is found genuine and modern by some researchers (Belkaoui & Belkaoui, 1976; Venkatesan & Losco, 1975). After going through studies regarding role portrayal of women in advertising, [Whipple and Courtney \(1985\)](#) suggested that contemporary and progressive role portrayal of women in advertising would be more effective as compared to traditional one. The study of [Ford and LaTour \(1993\)](#) also confirmed the findings. In order to check whether the depiction of women in advertisements by the advertisers is genuine and exact, content analysis of the advertisements is done by lots of researchers over the past few decades (Royo-Vela *et al.*, 2007; Ford *et al.* 1998; Sexton & Haberman, 1974; Wagner & Banos, 1973; Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971). Female stereotyping regarding their role in advertising remained in the society for later years (Royo-Vela *et al.*, 2007; LaTour, Pitts and Snook-Luther, 1990; Loudon and Delia Bitta, 1988; Soley and Reid, 1988; Roberts and Koggan, 1975). Ford *et al.* (1998) found in their Japanese study that women were stereotypically portrayed in ads as being more related with physical attractiveness than men, as being younger than men, and as product users and presenters more often than men, and less frequently portrayed as product authorities than men. They also found women in decorative and in home settings rather than in occupational and sporting settings.

The results of the research by Courtney & Lockeretz (1971) confirmed that women have been portrayed as not sound in decision making, as sex objects, dependent on men, or as home-maker. After going through exhaustive review of several empirical studies Roberts & Koggan (1977) concluded that sex role stereotype was still prevailing in society and no sign of reduction was noticed upto then. Soley & Reid (1988) revealed that the stereotypical depiction of women continued to live on in the 1980s. Lipovenka (1985) reported in his content analysis based study that sex-stereotyping of women in advertising is still persisting in Canada. Some remarkable progresses regarding attitude towards portrayal of women in advertising are perceived (Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977).

On the basis of demographics different studies regarding attitude towards role portrayal of women in ads has been done (Bartos, 1982; Venkatesh, 1980; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977). Roberts & Koggan's (1977) research suggested the demographic variables or the product itself as main basis for attitudes toward the portrayal of women in advertising.

Religion too performs a significant role amongst those factors which contributes in the formation of attitude and values (Bailey & Sood, 1993). It is considered as a main determinant of attitude (Waller, Fam and Erdogan, 2005). It also helps in determining the attitude, lifestyle, consumption pattern and choice of products (Digout and Tayeh, 2015).

So, this study aims to identify that whether the attitude towards the role portrayal women in advertising of females with different religious affiliations varies or not.

### **Research Methodology**

The researchers conducted a survey to collect the data using a structured questionnaire adopted from Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia (1977). A few questions were modified by the researchers to match the objectives of the research and the target respondents. The questionnaire was divided into 2 sections. The statements in the first section of the questionnaire were based on a five-point Likert scale and were intended to measure female's attitude towards women's role-portrayal in advertisements. The second section of the questionnaire was meant for collecting the demographic data (i.e. age, educational qualifications and religion) of the respondents. The sample for this study was chosen through a non-probability convenience sampling design. The targeted population for the study were the students from two different states of Northern India, i.e., Jalandhar, Punjab and Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.

A total of 300 responses were collected out of which only 241 were found usable for the purpose of analysis. The collected data were statistically analysed and interpreted using the statistical software SPSS 20.0. The data obtained were analysed by performing reliability test, factor analysis, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Post Hoc test.

### **Analysis and Results:**

**Respondent Profile:** The survey was conducted on a sample consisting of all female respondents. Majority of the respondents (53.11%) fall in the age group of 20 years to 29 years followed by respondents in age group of below 20 years (40.66%). A majority of respondents were graduates and post-graduates (41.90% graduates and 34.45% post-graduates). The respondents were affiliated with different religions, i.e., Hindus- 32.78% Muslims- 28.22% and Sikhs- 39.00%.

**(See Table 1)**

In exploratory factor analysis, Principal component analysis is used as an extraction method while varimax is taken as a rotation method. The variables were grouped into two factors and all together account for 62% of the total variance. The Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin measure was found to be 0.67 which is considered satisfactory (Kaiser, 1974). Barlett's test of sphericity had a significant value of 0.000. Cronbach's alpha value is 0.773 which is satisfactory (Hair *et al*, 1998). The main results of the analysis are shown in Table 2:

**(See Table 2)**

On the basis of variables loaded in each factor, the names of each factor are given. The statements loaded under factor 1 are related to positive attitude of females towards role portrayal of women in advertising while statements loaded under factor 2 are related to negative attitude of females towards role portrayal of women in advertising. So, entire attitude towards role portrayal of women in advertising is divided into two categories, i.e., Positive role portrayal (PRP) and negative role portrayal (NRP). Overall role portrayal is denoted as ORP. The Cronbach's alpha values for the two factors, i.e., PRP and NRP are 0.724 and 0.571 respectively. The Cronbach's alpha value for ORP is 0.673 which is satisfactory (Hair *et al*, 1998).

To reach to a concrete conclusion, first ANOVA is run on PRP and NRP to find whether there is any significant difference amongst respondents of different religions. Further, Post hoc test is applied to specifically check which groups are significantly different with each other. The difference in female's attitude towards role portrayal of women in advertising amongst different religions is determined by using the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance). The results of the ANOVA are shown in the Table 3.

As shown in Table 3, a significant difference is found in attitude amongst the respondents of different religions. All the statements related to PRP, i.e., '*Ads accurately portray women in most of their daily activities*', '*Ads suggest that women make important decisions*' and '*Portrayal of women in advertising is changing for the better*' have significant value less than 0.05, it means there is a significant difference in attitude amongst different religions. But, whether the difference lies among respondents of all religions or it is in between any two religions. This issue is dealt by using Post hoc test. As shown in table 4, for '*Ads accurately*

*portray women in most of their daily activities*' a significant difference is found between Hindu and Muslim respondents and between Muslim and Sikh respondents while no significant difference is found in between Hindu and Sikh respondents. Similarly, for *'Ads suggest that women make important decisions'* and *'Portrayal of women in advertising is changing for the better'* a significant difference is found between Hindu and Sikh respondents and between Muslim and Sikh respondents while no significant difference is found in between Hindu and Muslim respondents. **(See Table 3 and Table 4)**

As shown in Table 5, a significant difference is found in attitude amongst the respondents of different religions. All the statements related to NRP, i.e., *'Ads suggest that women are fundamentally dependent upon men'*, *'Ads treat women mainly as 'sex objects''* and *'Portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive'* have significant value less than 0.05, it means there is a significant difference in attitude amongst different religions. To check whether the difference lies between two groups or amongst all groups, a Post hoc test is used. As shown in Table 6, for *'Ads suggest that women are fundamentally dependent upon men'* a significant difference is found between Hindu and Sikh respondents while no significant difference is found between Muslim and Sikh respondents and in between Hindu and Sikh respondents. Similarly, for *'Ads treat women mainly as 'sex objects''* a significant difference is found between Muslim and Sikh respondents only. While, for *'Portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive'* a significant difference is found amongst all three groups. **(See Table 5 and Table 6)**

Hence, it is cleared from the results that there is a significant difference found amongst attitude of female respondents towards role portrayal of women in advertising on the basis of religion.

## **Discussion**

The results regarding attitude of Indian females point out that role portrayal of women in TV advertisements (1) is not changing for the better, (2) shows women as not sound in making important decisions, (3) does not accurately portray them in advertisements, (4) shows women as not dependent upon men, (5) does not show them as sex objects, and (6) to be offensive. Earlier some studies have been done in Indian context to find out the attitude towards role portrayal of women in advertisements (Das, 2011; Das, 2000; Aruna and Sahni,

2008; Jha-Dang and Vohra, 2005; Gupta and Jain, 1998; Munshi, 1998). But no single study is seen by the researchers which discover the differences in attitude towards role portrayal of women on the basis of religion. Das (2011) mentioned in her study about the importance of India on the basis of religion but relating religion with attitude towards role portrayal of women in India is still untouched. So, connecting religion with attitude towards role portrayal of women in advertisements is considered as a pioneering work in Indian scenario. Analysing responses from respondents of three major religions of India, i.e., Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, it is found that there are significant differences in the attitude of females towards role portrayal of women in advertising.

Among the major findings, four findings are found similar to previous studies. The finding ‘portrayal of women in advertisements is not changing for the better’ is found aligned with the finding in previous studies (Aruna and Sahni, 2008; Lipovenka, 1988; Soley and Reid, 1988; Roberts and Koggan, 1977) and it contradicts the finding of some previous studies (Schneider and Schneider, 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977). A significant difference is found on the basis of religion. Hindu and Muslim respondents (around 61% of total respondents) are agreed with the finding that women’s portrayal in advertisements is not changing for the better while Sikh respondents disagreed with the finding. In Post Hoc test, it is found that there is no significant difference in the attitude of Hindu and Muslim respondents while Sikhs are found significantly different.

Another finding ‘advertisements suggests women as not sound in making important decisions’ is similar to the findings in previous studies (Harker, Harker and Svensen, 2005; Lazier and Kandrick, 1993; DeYoung and Crane, 1992; Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). Here respondents from all three religions are agreed with the finding that women in advertisements are shown as not sound in making important decisions. But Sikh respondents’ attitude is found significantly different from Hindu and Muslim respondents.

A finding ‘advertisements does not accurately portray women in most of their daily activities’ is found aligned with the previous findings (Aruna and Sahni, 2008; DeYoung and Crane, 1992; Sciglimpaglia, Lundstrom and Vanier, 1979; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977) while it is contradicting some findings which stated portrayal of women in advertisements as genuine (Jaffe, 1994; Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976; Venkatesan and Losco, 1975).

Respondents from all three religious affiliations are agreed with finding that women are portrayed inaccurately in advertisements. But here Muslim respondents' attitude is found significantly different from Hindu and Sikh respondents.

The finding 'advertisements show women as not dependent upon men' is in favour of study by Aruna and Sahni (2008) which stated that women should be portrayed independent. But it contradicts the findings of previous studies (Furnham, Mak and Tanidjojo, 2000; Gupta and Jain, 1998; Ford, LaTour and Lundstrom, 1997; DeYoung and Crane, 1992; Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). Respondents from all three religions have same attitude that women are portrayed not dependent upon men in advertisements. Hindu and Sikh respondents' attitude is found significantly different.

The finding 'Indian advertisements does not portray women as sex objects' is not in line with the finding of maximum number of studies which acclaimed that advertisements portray women as sex objects (Zimmerman and Dahlberg, 2008; Rachoza, 2003; Mayne, 2000; Ford *et al.*, 1998; Ford *et al.*, 1997; Henthorne and LaTour, 1995; Lazier and Kandrick, 1993; Soley and Kurzbard, 1986; Lipovenka, 1985; Sciglimpaglia *et al.*, 1979; Roberts and Koggan, 1977; Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). While according to some studies percentage of portrayal of women as sex object in India is less than as in western advertisements (Jha-Dang and Vohra, 2005; Das, 2000). Portrayal of women as sex object in advertisements is also decreased in Spain (Royo-Vela *et al.*, 2007). In this study Muslim respondents are found significantly different from Hindu and Sikh respondents. Muslim respondents reported that women are portrayed as sex objects in Indian advertisements which oppose the results from Hindu and Sikh respondents who felt women are not portrayed as sex objects in Indian advertisements.

Now the last finding 'portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive' is found aligned with the previous studies (Royo-Vela *et al.*, 2007; Ford *et al.*, 1997; LaTour *et al.*, 1990; Loudon and Delia Bitta, 1988; Soley and Reid, 1988; Lipovenka, 1985; Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia, 1977; Roberts and Koggan, 1975; Courtney and Lockeretz, 1971). Here, Hindu and Muslim respondents are found considering portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive while Sikh respondents did not consider it to be offensive. Muslim respondents are found significantly different from Hindu and Sikh respondents regarding this finding.

### **Conclusions and Implications**

The results indicate that there is a serious concern among the female consumers of India regarding portrayal of their image in advertisements. Females across different religions feel that they have been stereotyped in certain roles by the marketers. A significant difference is found in the attitude of females towards portrayal of women in advertisements across different religions. And the role of religion in shaping the attitude has been discussed in previous studies (Waller *et al*, 2005; Fam, Waller and Erdogan, 2004; Bailey and Sood, 1993). Hence, the time is ripe for the marketers to reconsider their advertising strategies. There is a pressing need that marketers should align their advertising messages with the recent empowerment of women in Indian society. The marketers should realize that female consumers constitute an important segment and as reported by earlier studies the role of female consumers is growing in family decision making. Hence, it would be dangerous to continue the current trend of advertising. The future belongs to those marketers who adapt their advertising messages according to the changing roles of women in society.

### **Limitations**

The study was of cross-sectional type; hence we could find the significant difference in the attitude of female students affiliated to different religions. Longitudinal studies should be performed to find out the reasons due to which these differences occur. The sample, conveniently selected and representative of the population from which it was drawn, was somewhat small and from two colleges in India. Attitudes of women may vary across India and perhaps research involving a large national sample would offer greater insight into the issue. The use of students sample may also be called as one limitation of our study as students belong to a specific age group and education level so their sample cannot be considered as a representative for entire population.

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**Tables**

**Table 1: Respondent Profile**

	Frequency	Percentage %
<b>AGE (in years)</b>		
Under 20	98	40.66
20-29	128	53.11
30-39	15	6.23
<b>QUALIFICATION</b>		
UG	101	41.90
PG	83	34.45
Ph. D.	57	23.65
<b>RELIGION</b>		
Hinduism	79	32.78
Islam	68	28.22
Sikhism	94	39.00

**Table 2: Factor Analysis**

**Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component	
	1	2
Portrayal of women in advertising is changing for the better.	.857	
Ads accurately portray women in most of their daily activities.	.848	
Ads suggest that women make important decisions.	.700	
Ads treat women mainly as 'sex objects'.		.797
Portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive.		.755
Ads suggest that women are fundamentally dependent upon men.		.666

(Source: Prepared by the researchers)

**Table 3: Religion-wise differences in positive attitude towards role portrayal of women in Advertising (PRP)**

		N	Sig.
Ads accurately portray women in most of their daily activities.*	Hinduism	79	0.001
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	
Ads suggest that women make important decisions.*	Hinduism	79	0.000
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	
Portrayal of women in advertising is changing for the better.*	Hinduism	79	0.000
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	

**Table 4: Post Hoc Test**

**Multiple Comparisons**

**Tukey HSD**

Statements	(I) RELIGION	(J) RELIGION	Sig.
Ads accurately portray women in most of their daily activities.	Hinduism	Islam*	.003
		Sikhism	.749
	Islam	Hinduism*	.003
		Sikhism*	.001
	Sikhism	Hinduism	.749
		Islam*	.001
Ads suggest that women make important	Hinduism	Islam	.786

decisions.		Sikhism*	.000
	Islam	Hinduism	.786
		Sikhism*	.003
	Sikhism	Hinduism*	.000
		Islam*	.003
Portrayal of women in advertising is changing for the better.	Hinduism	Islam	.187
		Sikhism*	.000
	Islam	Hinduism	.187
		Sikhism*	.000
	Sikhism	Hinduism*	.000
		Islam*	.000

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

**Table 5: Religion-wise differences in negative attitude towards role portrayal of women in Advertising (NRP)**

		N	Sig.
Ads suggest that women are fundamentally dependent upon men.*	Hinduism	79	0.013
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	
Ads treat women mainly as 'sex objects'.*	Hinduism	79	0.001
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	
Portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive.*	Hinduism	79	0.000
	Islam	68	
	Sikhism	94	

**Table 6: Post Hoc Test**

**Multiple Comparisons**

**Tukey HSD**

Statements	(I) RELIGION	(J) RELIGION	Sig.
Ads suggest that women are fundamentally dependent upon men.	Hinduism	Islam	.957
		Sikhism*	.011
	Islam	Hinduism	.957
		Sikhism	.343
	Sikhism	Hinduism*	.011
		Islam	.343
Ads treat women mainly as 'sex objects'.	Hinduism	Islam	.071
		Sikhism	.087
	Islam	Hinduism	.071
		Sikhism*	.002
	Sikhism	Hinduism	.087
		Islam*	.002
Portrayal of women in advertising to be offensive.	Hinduism	Islam*	.036
		Sikhism	.056
	Islam	Hinduism*	.036
		Sikhism*	.000
	Sikhism	Hinduism	.056
		Islam*	.000

\*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.