

An Analysis on the Interaction effect between Advertising Frame and Audience Frame: A Quantitative Study with Young Women of Pondicherry

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Abstract

Advertisements are constantly criticized for stereotyping women. Several studies are done exploring its effects on body image of audience; however, this study is unique in exploring the aspect of 'Influence of advertising frame on constructing the audience frame' in regards to body image. Providing an insight on how images of women are constructed – framed in advertising and how it works in the minds of young women, this study is an effort to examine the potential influence of advertisements on audience frame in the context of body image perception. A quantitative approach was adopted exploring the artifice behind body image perception of young women in Pondicherry. A total of 106 respondents including both students and working women of age group between 17 and 27 are taken as samples. The study revealed that there exist a linear correlation between the 'Ideal women' framed by the advertisements through various media and construction of audience frame in conjunction to their body image.

Keywords: Audience frame, Advertising frame, Body image, Media, Young women.

Introduction

Advertisements play a pivotal role in the economic progress of business enterprises. In the present era of information explosion and media influence, these advertisements play a major role in changing the settled perception or thinking of the audience towards a product. Tania Modleski^[1] – a prominent feminist critic says, "Women who read romance novels will believe they should act like the women in the novels they read". That is, the more we see something, the more we tend to believe it. As well, this study tries to inspect the view "how women are framed in media can potentially impact their perception and audience frame". The study analyses how the images of women are constructed – framed in advertisements, how they are manifested through representations and how these impact the minds of young women.

Advertising is a paid form of non-personal communication about products, services and ideas by identified sponsors through various media.^[2] It is informative and persuasive in nature and has been constantly criticized for its misrepresentation of women. The images of women portrayed by media have been a subject of significant contemporary study by many researchers. Observers of the stereotyping of women point to past and contemporary media portrayals showing very few women in professional roles and lack of women shown as strong, major characters^[3]

As framing is created in the minds of media content creators which affect the perceptions, attitude and behaviors of the audiences, most of the past research are focused largely on analyzing the media frame. A very few study have focused on the construction of audience frame and this study is unique with its ultimate aim to particularly

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analyze the effectiveness of advertising frame and message polarity techniques in advertising aimed at influencing young women and the construction of audience frame among them.

Literature Review

Framing in mass communication is being studied as both positive and negative force. The degree to which the audience adopts and uses the frames similar to media frames in their own information processing is subjected to analysis. Framing theory can be explained as an expanded form of agenda setting theory where, research is focused on how issues are presented rather than what issues are presented.^[4] Gregory Bateson^[5] defines framing as “a spatial and temporary bounding of set of interactive messages”.

Framing is a process through which some aspects of reality are selected and presented with greater emphasis or importance.^[6] Framing enables a holistic study on effect of media on individuals. It can be located in four elements of communication process - Sender, message, receiver and culture.^[7] “The Frame” represents “How issues are presented to audience”. People likely interpret these messages in two distinct ways. One is natural-identification of events as it is occurred in physical and the other is social – observation of events as socially driven, manipulated by other social players. Further the framing can be analyzed in two ways, first is analyzing the media frame – in the minds of creator. Second is analyzing the audience frame – individuals cognitive understanding.^[8] Schefele^[9] identified four processes in framing research. The frame building, frame setting, individual level effect of frames and journalists as audience.

Media have significant effect.^[10] It have a strong impact by constructing social reality, that is by framing images of reality in a predictable and patterned way – social constructivism. Powerful impact of framing can affect women’s body image concerns, self- objectification, and psychological well-being and disordered eating behaviors.

Mass media actively set the frames of reference that readers or viewers use to interpret and discuss public events.^[11] The concept of media framing can include the intent of the sender, but the motive can also be unconscious one.^[12] Repeated exposure to framed content will be a learning experience that increases the availability of new consideration on an issue.^[13]^[14] Both media exposure and socio-cultural influence negatively impact on girls’ body Image.^[15] Media is a powerful tool which constructs and portrays how a woman’s body should be. The thin body ideals of media are an unattainable one for real woman and thus result in body image dissatisfaction and low self- esteem.^[16] The unattainable beauty ideals showcased by media affects the body image dissatisfaction of adolescent girls.^[17] Exposure to gender stereotypic

television advertising creates cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral consequences.^[18]

Advertisements operate as gender scripts, alternatively gender are textually mediated.^[19] Framing women in a negative way has many effects. It can create anxiety by actively portraying women as ultra-thin.

The advertising molds the presenter’s view of world through which it affects the way the audience perceives the reality and shaping their values. In another words, advertising discourse causes shifts in human cognition and imposes on its recipient’s new ideals, standards and moral principles.^[20]

Analyzing how the audience adopts media frames, here this study focuses on the impact of frames in audience behaviors and attitudes, how it affects audience frames and their attitudes to incorporate in the frame building process (framing effect, frame setting and individual level effects).

Objectives

1. To find out young women’s perception towards portrayal of women in advertisements and its relationship to real life
2. To find out young women’s interest towards watching women in stereotyped roles in advertisements
3. To find out the impact of advertisement on audience framing of ideal women

Hypothesis

H1: There is a relationship between young women’s self-framing about their body image and their exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements.

Independent Variable: Exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements (Advertising frame)

Dependent Variable: Young women’s self-framing about body image (Audience framing)

Methodology

A survey method was used to conduct this quantitative study to analyze the impact of Advertising frame on audience frame regarding the portrayal of women in advertising. It consists of a comprehensive analysis of the respondent’s perception towards portrayal of women in advertisements, their view and interest towards viewing the stereotyped women in advertisements. The study was carried out with the help of the self-constructed questionnaire and data were collected from 106 respondents and the collected data were entered and are analyzed using SPSS. Frequency and correlation test were done to analyze the collected data. Thus numerical quantitative data were considered for analysis.

Tools used

A self-constructed questionnaire was employed to collect the primary quantitative data from required samples. The questionnaires were distributed among young women those who were within the age range from 17 to 27 and only those who view advertisements in a regular basis. The questionnaire was constructed with questions regarding some demographic details of the respondents, few multiple choice question, and questions with Likert five point scales (where, 5 = Strongly Agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree) – regarding the statements on perception towards portrayal of women in advertisements.

Sampling Method

This research study makes use of a nonrandom purposive sampling method through which samples who meet the

of the respondents and the dependent variables.

Exposure to Advertisements

Online advertisements were rated as the most viewed (68.3%) followed by Television advertisements (58.7%). About 46.1% of respondents said that they watch more than 3 advertisements a day and 33% stated that they watch at least 1 advertisement in a day.

Interest towards watching women in stereotyped roles in advertisements

A substantial percent (30.3%) of women agree that they like watching these stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements even though they are aware that the portrayed thin ideal in advertisements are not an achievable one. This shows their blind engagement with the advertisements ideal models.

Table 1. Percentage table

	Rarely	Sometimes	Mostly
Exposure to Advertisement	20.9	33	46.1
	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Interest towards watching women in stereotyped roles in advertisements	18.8	50.9	30.3

criteria of i) Age range from 17 to 27 and ii) regular viewers of advertisement were been selected. Thus 106 young women from Pondicherry were got as samples for this study. The respondents include both students and working women from Pondicherry.

Result and Discussion

This study was conducted to analyze the relationship between advertisement frame and audience frame. That is, investigating how young women perceive their stereotyped portrayal in advertisements and how it impacts on construction of their own frames. There were 106 samples aged around 17-27 out of whom 60 women were working and the remaining 46 were into their studies. Descriptive statistics - Frequency analysis and Bivariate Correlation test – inferential analysis were done to analyze the collected data and their inter relationships.

Age and Occupation

35% of respondents are in the age group of 17 to 21 and 65% of the other were in the age group of 22 to 27. Whereas, 43% of the respondents were students and the remaining 57% of the respondents were working. Age and Occupation of the respondents was correlated with the dependent variables – respondents perception towards advertisement frame and their construction of own frame. But there is no observed disparity within the age groups

Perception towards portrayal of women in advertising

Most of the young women respondents (59.8%) state that the advertisements stereotypes women as a beauty ideal. 24% of the respondents say that they always like the models and celebrities whom they watch in media and more than half of the respondents state that they try to shape themselves as those models they saw in commercials. Even though most of the respondents agree that it is not an achievable one, they still try to suit like them.

Advertisements framing of women and its reflection on audience self-framing

77% agree that they compare themselves with the models in advertisement and 64% want to shape their body to look like the body of models appears in advertising. 62.7% felt pressure from advertisements to be thin. 54.3% of the respondents agree that others opinions about their physical appearance is important for them. 53.7% agree that advertisements are important source of information about fashion and being attractive and nearly same percent of them 53.5% stated that they change their way of dressing, hairstyle/colour, make-up, dieting, exercise, etc on watching advertisements. 41.6% strongly agree that advertisement has brought a change in the attitude of women towards their body image. 37% states that they feel pressurized to look and behave in a certain way and 23% agree that they

get inspired at ideal images portrayed in advertisements, 22% of them agree that advertisement's representation of women encourages young women to have a positive self-esteem. 18.8% says that advertisements are main source for feeling insecure about body image and the same percent of respondents agree that advertisement pressurize on their body image. 16.2% agree on the statement that advertisements make those who do not fit into their perception of attractiveness to feel bad. 13.8% respondents agreed that advertisements are capable of molding the minds of the viewers. 13% accepts that advertisements tend to make them live in a dream world of unreality and 8% stated that they would like to change their appearance as someone they saw in advertisements.

Correlation

The correlation test reveals that Young women's exposures to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements have strong correlation (0.194) with their self-framing on body image at 0.01 levels. That is, young women who are exposed to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements tend to frame themselves to resemble like those women ideals they saw in advertisements. Thus there is sufficient evidence to conclude that there is a significant linear relationship between these two observed variables.

Table 2. Correlation between Exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements and Young women's self-framing on body image

		Exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements	Young women's self-framing on body image
Exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements	Pearson Correlation	1	.194*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.048
	N	105	105

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Therefore the study hypothesis 'There is a relationship between young women's self-framing about their body image and their exposure to stereotyped portrayal of women in advertisements' have been proved.

Conclusion

The study was carried out to analyze the impact of advertisement frame on the audience frame especially among young women on their body image. The overall study revealed that the advertising frame has some effect on the construction of body image framing of the young women and it pressurizes them psychologically. This can be seen through the changes in their in life style. Young women respondents believe that advertisements are important source of information about fashion and being attractive and thus they change their way of dressing, hairstyle/ colour, make-up, dieting, exercise, etc. on watching advertisements. Advertisements are capable of molding

the minds of the viewers; it has brought a change in their attitude towards body image. Young women are in some way show interest towards watching advertisements' stereotyped portrayal of women, it tend to make them live in a dream world of unreality and they like watching the models and celebrities in those advertisements. Moreover they try to shape themselves as inspired by those models in advertisements, though they aware that the portrayed thin ideal in advertisements are not an achievable one.

Thus the study suggests that while constructing advertising frames, the content creators should reconsider the ill effects of media content on society. The message should be carefully framed so as to guide the viewers in right direction. The future studies can be done by specifically by taking some advertisements as case study which can further strengthen the result.

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