

ROLE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN INDIAN VERSUS AMERICAN MAGAZINE ADVERTISEMENTS: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

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A comparison was made between the role portrayal of women in magazine ads in an emerging economy (India) and a fully industrialized economy (the U.S.). As expected, the Indian ads were more likely to portray women in traditional roles while the U.S. ads were more likely to depict women in a professional or work role. Indian ads portraying women also tended to be more likely to be for household products. Finally, there were several differences found in terms of the types of appeals used in Indian versus U.S. ads depicting women.

INTRODUCTION

The role portrayal of women in advertisements has long been the object of close scrutiny by feminists, sociologists, researchers and other groups concerned about this issue. The object of such concern is grounded in the belief that advertising can be powerful enough to influence the system of values prevailing in a given culture. This assumption implies that advertisements can virtually dictate to women which roles are "proper," "best," or "natural" (Hawkins and Coney 1976), thus encouraging the creation of role stereotypes for them. In the same vein, Pollay (1986) stated that "simplistic, symbolic stereotypes ... serve as poor models and inhibit sympathetic understanding of individual differences."

However, this is clearly only one viewpoint of the power of advertising. There are also those who maintain that advertising has much less influence than for which it is credited, and that it merely reflects already existing societal values, norms, and behaviors (Courtney and Whipple 1983). While this debate will probably never be resolved satisfactorily, there is most certainly a correlation between the norms and values of society and the advertising themes commonly used within that society, regardless of the direction of cau-

sation. This is as true of advertising depicting women and their roles as it is of any other type of advertising.

Because different cultures have different sex-role norms, one would expect differences among cultures in the portrayal of women in advertising. Few studies have investigated this issue, however, and none has compared the depiction of women in an emerging economy versus an industrialized one. Nevertheless, such a study appears appropriate in the current worldwide economic and political context. India, an emerging economy, traditionally reluctant to open its doors to foreign direct investments, has recently reversed this policy and is now openly courting foreign investors, like so many other emerging economies. As this trend continues and intensifies, attractive opportunities for producing and marketing goods and services in India will undoubtedly arise. This is especially true because of the recent emergence and growth of a relatively large middle class.

Under these circumstances it is important for American advertisers to improve their knowledge of the way middle and upper middle class Indian women - a major market segment - are portrayed in the Indian advertising media, especially as compared with the depiction of women in the American media. Such a comparison can sensitize American advertisers to the Indian cultural context and help them avoid costly mistakes when designing advertising strategies targeting Indian women.

The roles of men and women differ in different cultures as the prevailing sex roles in a society are dictated by

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socialization patterns, schools, peer groups and the media. The present study is interested in roles as they relate to the portrayal of women in the media, specifically, magazine advertising. Thus, the major objective of this article is to take a close look at the role portrayal of women in Indian and American magazine advertising and to identify both differences and similarities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several research streams exist dealing with the portrayal of women in advertising. These include 1) content analyses of magazine and TV advertising (e.g., England and Gardner 1983, Sexton and Haberman 1974), 2) attitudes and intentions toward role portrayal of women in the media (e.g., Lundstrom and Sciglimpaglia 1977), 3) studies dealing with communication effects (e.g., Leigh, Rethans and Whitney 1987) and 4) crosscultural comparisons of the role portrayals of women in the mass media (e.g., Gilly 1988, Lysonski 1985, Wiles and Tjernlund 1991). For the present study two of these research streams are particularly relevant. These are studies pertaining to the content analysis of magazine advertising to evaluate the role portrayal of women and cross-cultural studies involving the roles of women in the mass media.

Women in U.S. Magazine Advertisements

Several studies have attempted to examine the role portrayal of women in U.S. advertisements (e.g., Belkaoui and Belkaoui 1976, Wortzel and Frisbie 1974, Douglas and Urban 1977, Courtney and Lockertz 1971, Wagner and Banos 1973, Lysonski 1983 & 1985, Soley and Kurzband 1986, Mays and Brady 1990, Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz 1993). The principal objective of each of these studies has been an examination of the response by marketers to the changing role of this country's major market segment, women.

An early study by Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) found that advertisements did reflect the world as it was, but that advertisements often failed to show the true range of women's roles within society. Many ads tended to portray women as homemakers, fashion objects or sex objects. Wagner and Banos (1973) replicated this study and found that more advertisements showed women in working roles and portrayed women in more responsible working capacities.

Wortzel and Frisbie (1974) empirically tested the role portrayal preferences of women in advertisements, and concluded that the effectiveness of role portrayal depended on the product being advertised. For example,

for personal, grooming products, the working woman role was preferred, whereas for household appliances it was a family role that was preferred. In short, women preferred to see themselves in a variety of roles including traditional ones, and did not like stereotyping.

Sexton and Haberman (1974) in their study on women in magazine advertisements found that women in cigarette advertisements are more frequently employed in a decorative capacity, while in home appliance advertisements women were depicted more traditionally. Airline advertisements tended to show women as more alluring or as sex objects. Venkatesan and Losco (1975) analyzed magazine advertisements appearing between 1959 and 1971 and found that while the portrayal of women as sex objects decreased, the portrayal of women as overachieving housewives increased.

More recently, studies have examined whether there is a noticeable trend toward the more realistic portrayal of women in advertisements (e.g., Lysonski 1983, Soley and Kurzband 1986). England and Gardner (1983) analyzed the role portrayals of both men and women in 2000 magazine advertisements appearing between 1960 and 1979. They found that there had been a dramatic increase over time in the portrayal of women in professional roles in advertising. They also found that the percentage of women depicted in professional capacities was higher than that reported in national statistics of women in the professions. Lysonski (1983) examined the existence of "stereotypical" roles of women between the periods of 1974 and 1980 and found that there was an increase in the portraying women as independent. However, he did not find much difference in the frequency of the portrayal of women as "housewife" or "concerned with physical attractiveness." Soley and Kurzband (1986) analyzed six magazines and concluded that there was an increasing trend in terms of bodily exposure of the models in advertisements where women were portrayed as "sex objects." Mays and Brady (1990) analyzed seven magazines for four time periods (1955, 1965, 1975 and 1985) and found that there was an increase in women portrayed in business and social settings while fewer ads portrayed women in decorative roles and roles of "sex objects." More recently, Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz (1993) examined the portrayal of men and women in three popular magazines and found that the "traditional" portrayal of women was on the decline and "equality portrayals" were on the rise.

One overall conclusion from these studies is that the role portrayal of women in magazine advertising has been changing with the times. This was best

summarized by Lareau (1983) who concluded that the role portrayal of women in advertising could best be characterized as a combination of goddess and domestic servant in the 1950's, while American feminism affected the portrayal of women in the 1960's. He further observed that in the 1970's the portrayal of women in advertising made them feel guilty for being housewives, and in the 1980's women finally tended to be portrayed more realistically in commercials.

Cross-Cultural Comparisons of Women in Advertising

Douglas and Urban (1977) compared women in the U.S., the U.K. and France, and found that the main factor differentiating women in these three countries was the degree to which they adhered to the traditional cultural norms concerning the woman's role as a homemaker. Santa Cruz and Erazo (1980), based on an analysis of advertisements in eight magazines from Mexico, found that less than 1% of the ads portrayed women in work roles, thus reinforcing the traditional feminine role. Michel and Taylor (1990) examined three British magazines and found that there exists a polarizing trend. They found that advertisers are targeting two distinct groups of women: one that is more family-oriented than independent-minded and the other that is more independent-minded than family-oriented. Wiles and Tjernlund (1991) examined eight magazines from the U.S. and Sweden and found that there exists a major difference between the two countries regarding portrayal of the sexes in advertisements dealing with non-working activities. Specifically, the Swedish ads portrayed women and men in recreational roles more often, while the U.S. ads portrayed men and women in decorative roles more frequently.

Recently, Lysonski and Pollay (1990) examined the perceptions of people toward the sex-role portrayals across different cultures. Based on empirical evidence, they found that respondents from Denmark, Greece and New Zealand were more critical of sex-role portrayals in the advertisements than respondents from the United States. The major reason for discussing these results is to highlight the fact that the role portrayal of men and women differs from country to country. However, the portrayal of women in advertisements in some countries (e.g., the U.K.) is probably more similar to the portrayal of women in the U.S. when compared to the portrayal of women in other countries (e.g., Mexico).

Since no specific study comparing the role portrayal of women in magazine advertisements in India and the

U.S. has been conducted, literature from a non-advertising context was reviewed in order to gain insights as to the expected role portrayals of women in magazine advertisements in India versus the U.S.

Hofstede (1980) found, from his extensive study involving 40 different countries, that one of the dimensions along which societies differ is masculinity/femininity. Masculinity as opposed to femininity refers to a culture where a clear differentiation exists between the sex-roles. In a masculine society, men are expected to be assertive and ambitious while women are expected to serve and take care of the quality of life for children and for the weak. A more feminine culture would refer to a culture where there exists a certain overlapping of the social roles for the sexes. A masculine culture would stress the values of material success and even assertiveness while a feminine culture would value interpersonal relations and concern for the weak.

Hofstede (1980) found the U.S. culture to be more masculine than the Indian culture. Based on this finding one can reasonably expect that women in the U.S. would be portrayed in more diverse roles than women in India. For example, since feminine cultures emphasize concern for the weak and also interpersonal relations, one would expect to find more advertisements depicting women in family roles in Indian advertising than in U.S. advertising.

Ross (1977) examined the "home roles" of business women in India. Based on interviews with 55 working women from Delhi, she concluded that as the country had become more industrialized and economically developed, more women had moved into the labor force and become financially independent. She also found that, although more married women were working, in most cases men still expected women to perform household tasks, such as child care or shopping. She suggested that these attitudes toward working wives would change over time, however. Based on this study, one would expect magazine advertising in India to portray women primarily in domestic roles, but also, to a lesser extent, in working roles.

Bellur and Bellur (1992) conducted a study to analyze the impact of socioeconomic changes on marketing in India. They concluded that westernization had brought about substantial changes in the social environment. A breakdown in traditions and a higher literacy rate had contributed to a new market environment. Again, in light of these findings one might expect advertisements

to portray women not only in traditional roles, but also in modern roles.

As shown, considerable literature deals with the role portrayals of women in advertising in the U.S., but no one has done a comparative analysis of the role portrayal of women in the U.S. with those of an emerging economy such as India. As Douglas and Urban (1977) have suggested "greater attention must be given to examining the implications of alternative international segmentation and in particular, the implicit assumptions concerning differences and similarities between customers in various countries."

As previously stated, the objective of this paper is to examine the extent to which the role portrayals of women in advertisements are both similar and different between an emerging economy (i.e., India) and an industrialized one (i.e., the U.S.). Given the premise that advertising reflects cultural values, of which role structure is an integral part, it is expected that the majority of Indian advertisements will portray women in traditional roles. However, since India is an emerging economy, it is expected that many advertisements will also portray women in more diverse roles. In short, it is our expectation that Indian advertising may portray women in various roles, but not to the extent that this is true in the U.S. Thus, the following research proposition is presented:

Major Proposition: Indian ads will portray women in more traditional roles than American ads. This will result in, but will not be limited to, the fact that:

H_{a1}: Indian ads will be more likely to portray children.

H_{a2}: Indian ads will be more likely to be set in the home.

H_{a3}: Indian ads will be more likely to depict household products.

RESEARCH METHODS

Sampling and Coding

Two magazines from the U.S. and one magazine from India were selected for this study. The American magazines were *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Working Woman* while the Indian magazine was *Femina*, an English language publication. The latter magazine's editorial content and target audience is a combination

of both traditional and modern/professional women. It was, therefore, necessary to select both a more traditional American magazine such as *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Working Woman* in advertisements.

For *Femina* (published twice monthly), 14 issues were randomly selected from the period May 1990 to May 1991. For the two American magazines (both published monthly), 6 issues were drawn randomly from the 1991 issues.

Every advertisement of a quarter of a page or larger that featured at least one woman was included in the analysis. The coding sheet was based partly on the Courtney and Lockeretz (1971) classification procedure and provided information on the following categories:

- 1) Number of women in the ad.
- 2) Role of women in the ad.
- 3) Number of men in the ad.
- 4) Number of children in the ad.
- 5) Women's relation to others in the ad.
- 6) Women's relation to the product.
- 7) Advice given or received by women in the ad.
- 8) Activity of women in the ad.
- 9) Size of the ad.
- 10) Environment of the ad.
- 11) Product category.
- 12) Information content of the ad.

The last category (information content of the ad) was measured by using most of the evaluative criteria chosen by Resnik and Stern (1977).

Reliability

All advertisements were coded by two independent judges not associated with the writing of this manuscript (e.g., research assistants). The first author then had the responsibility of reviewing the coding for all advertisements and of reconciling any disagreements between coders. However, since the overall reliability between judges was high, reconciliation was needed for only about 10% of the comparisons. A total of 586 advertisements were analyzed, broken down as follows: *Femina* (271 ads), *Working Women* (117 ads), *Ladies' Home Journal* (198 ads). The overall interrater reliability was estimated by analyzing a randomly selected sample of 223 advertisements (38% of the total) and by computing the percentage agreement between the raters for each category. The reliability for the *Femina* ads was .901 while for the U.S. ads it was .885. The overall interrater reliability was .893. These

reliabilities are all above the 85 % regarded as satisfactory for this type of research (Kassarjian 1977).

FINDINGS

Portrayal of Women

There was little difference between the U.S. and Indian ads in terms of the number of women appearing in the ads. In both cases, approximately 86 % of the ads depicted only one woman. However, as expected, there was a significant difference between the U.S. and Indian ads regarding the role of women. As Table 1 indicates, only 16.2 % of the U.S. ads examined portray women in the role a housewife whereas 34.4 % of the Indian ads do. Additionally, over 12 % of the U.S. ads portray women as high-level business executives or professionals compared to only 4.3 % of the Indian ads. It is also interesting to note that only 1.1 % of the Indian ads depict women as sex objects compared to 4.4 % of the U.S. ads. Finally, the majority of ads in both countries tend to present women in a decorative or nonactive role, pictured primarily for aesthetic purposes.

Portrayal of Others

There was little difference between the U.S. and Indian ads in terms of the percentage of "ads for women" that also depicted men. In the case of the Indian ads, 15.9 % showed at least one man while for the U.S. the percentage was 14.9 %. There was, however, a significant difference in terms of the percentage of ads showing

children. In the U.S. ads, only 8.9 % also showed children while 19.9 % of the Indian ads showed at least one child. Table 2 compares the two countries in terms of the specific number of children in the ads. These differences are consistent with the higher percentage of Indian ads portraying women in traditional roles as housewives and mothers.

There was also a sign significant difference between U.S. and Indian ads in terms of the apparent relationship of the women in the ads to other persons in the ads such as other women, men or children. In 70.4 % of the Indian ads with more than one person in them (versus only 34.8 % of the U.S. ads), women were depicted in a familial relationship. Again, as expected, this supports the notion that women are likely to be depicted in more traditional roles in an emerging economy such as India. Additionally, only 3.1 % of the Indian ads with multiple persons depicted women in a business relationship compared to 13.5 % of the U.S. ads. Table 3 gives a detailed distribution of these differences for women in relation to others in the ad.

Relation to Product

Indian ads were more likely to show women actually using the product whereas a large percentage of the U.S. ads tended to show women in a non-functional or decorative role relative to the product. In addition, more Indian women were givers of advice in the ads than were U.S. women, but a higher percentage of U.S. women were receivers of advice as compared to Indian

TABLE 1
ROLE OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING

Role of Women	U.S.	India
Housewife or Mother	16.2 %	34.4 %
Decorative or Idle	64.4 %	54.0 %
High-level Executive or Professional	12.1 %	4.3 %
Sex Object	4.4 %	1.1 %*
Low Income Employee	2.2 %	2.5 %
Other or Unable to Determine*	0.6 %	3.7 %
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276

Chi-square (6 d.f.) = 49.16 (.000)

* represents a combination of 2 categories.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN ADVERTISING

Number of Children	U.S.	India
None	91.1%	80.1%
One	5.7%	17.4%
Two	2.2%	2.2%
Three or More	1.0%	0.4%*
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276
Chi-square (3 d.f.) = 20.81 (.000)		

TABLE 3
RELATION OF WOMEN TO OTHERS IN THE AD

Relation to Others	U.S.	India
Family	9.8% (34.8%)*	25.0% (70.4%)*
Social	8.6% (30.3%)*	6.9% (19.4%)*
Business	3.8% (13.5%)*	1.1% (3.1%)*
Impersonal or Unrelated	6.0% (21.4%)*	2.5% (7.1%)*
No Others in Ad	71.7%	64.5%
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276
Number of Ads With More Than One Person in the Ad	89	98

Chi-square (4 d.f.) = 30.03 (.000)

* figures in parentheses are for that subset of ads with more than one person in the ad.

women. Finally, a higher percentage of U.S. women were engaged in physical activity in the ads than were their Indian counterparts (see Table 4).

The types of products advertised may explain some of these results. For example, a much higher percentage of Indian ads are for household articles (18.8% versus 3.8%). This could explain why more Indian ads showed women actually using the product. It might also explain why more women in the Indian ads were givers of advice than were women in the U.S. ads. The higher

percentage of health care ads in the U.S. publications (16.2% versus 9.4%) might also explain, in part, why more U.S. women were engaged in physical activity in the ads. Table 5 shows the distribution of ads by product type.

Characteristics of Ads

In general, Indian ads tended to be smaller and tended to show a greater percentage of settings at home than U.S. ads. This latter result is again consistent with

TABLE 4
RELATION OF WOMEN TO PRODUCT

Relation to Product	U.S.	India
1. Participation in Product's Use		
Participates in Product Use	51.7%	75.7%
Not Related to Product/Decorative	46.0%	20.3%
Unable to Determine	2.2%	4.0%
2. Advice - Leading Character is ...		
A Receiver of Advice	9.2%	0.7%
A Giver of Advice	15.2%	27.5%
Neither Giver nor Receiver	75.6%	71.7%
3. Activity - Leading Character is ...		
Engaged in Physical Activity	24.4%	15.6%
Inactive	75.6%	84.4%
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276
1. Chi-square (2 d.f.) = 43.60 (.000)		
2. Chi-square (2 d.f.) = 31.07 (.000)		
3. Chi-square (1 d.f.) = 7.14 (.008)		

TABLE 5
PRODUCT CATEGORIES ADVERTISED

Category of Product	U.S.	India
Beauty Aids	37.8%	32.6%*
Household Articles	3.8%	18.8%*
Drugs and Health Care Products	16.2%	9.4%*
Clothing	9.2%	16.3%
Food and Nonalcoholic Drinks	11.1%	12.0%
Cigarettes and Tobacco Products	8.6%	0.4%
Autos and Automotive Products	3.2%	0.0%
All Other Categories*	10.0%	10.5%
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276

Chi-square (16 d.f.) = 83.17 (.000)

* represents a combination of 10 separate categories.

expectations that India, as an emerging economy, will depict women in more traditional roles in the home. Table 6 summarizes these results.

In terms of the types of appeals used in the ads, the percentage of ads mentioning price or value were about the same in Indian and U.S. ads (12% versus 14%). However, there was a significant difference in terms of other kinds of appeals. For example, 40% of the U.S. ads mentioned availability of the product, but only 24% of the Indian ads used this appeal. Quality-related issues were mentioned in almost all of the U.S. ads (96%), but were apparent in only 27% of the Indian ads. In addition, special offers were mentioned in 13.3% of the U.S. ads as compared to only 6.2% of the Indian ads. Guarantees and warranties were common appeals in the U.S. ads (22.5%), but were almost non-existent in the Indian ads (1.4%). There was a big difference in terms of health and safety appeals as well with 33.7% of the U.S. ads mentioning this factor, but only 6.5% of the Indian ads mentioning it.

The presentation of research (either independent or company-sponsored) to support product claims was not common in India with only 1.4% of the ads presenting such substantiation. However, in the U.S., 18.4% of the ads included some kind of substantiation of claims. Perhaps, Federal Trade Commission guidelines concerning advertising substantiation in the U.S. explains this difference. Finally, the advertising of new ideas or

new products was more common in the U.S. ads than in the Indian ads (9.8% versus 0.4%).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the present study provide some valuable insights for designing promotional strategies within the Indian environment. Before we discuss these implications, however, it would be pertinent to acknowledge certain limitations of the study.

Limitations and Future Research

Data were collected from only three magazines (two from the United States and one from India). Although this is not uncommon in research involving cross-cultural comparisons, more diverse magazines (e.g., general and male audiences) and a broader time frame may have provided greater insights. Future research is needed because of the relatively limited scope and exploratory nature of this study. First, this study should be replicated across other industrialized versus emerging economies to test the generalizability of the results. In addition, other women's magazines within India and the U.S. could be used in future studies. Another recommendation for future research would be to conduct a longitudinal study of the role of women in U.S. and Indian advertising to examine trends in the two cultures. Finally, cross-cultural research examining

TABLE 6
CHARACTERISTICS OF AD

Characteristic	U.S.	India
1. Size of Ad		
Under Half Page	2.9%	8.0%
Half Page to Under One Page	4.4%	10.1%
Full Page	64.1%	69.6%
Over Full Page	28.6%	12.3%
2. Environment for Ad		
Home (Indoors or Outdoors)	14.9%	18.1%
Outdoors (Not at Home)	20.0%	12.7%
Fictional Setting or No Background	55.2%	65.6%
Office	5.1%	1.4%
Store	2.2%	0.0%
Other	2.5%	2.2%
Total Number of Ads Examined	315	276

1. Chi-square (3 d.f.) = 33.23 (.000)

2. Chi-square (5 d.f.) = 20.23 (.001)

other media such as newspapers and even television is warranted.

Comparisons Between U.S. and Indian Advertisements

The results of this study exhibited significant differences between the role portrayals of women in advertisements from U.S. and Indian magazines on these variables: role of women, portrayal of others, relation to others in ad, relation of women to product, product categories advertised, characteristics of the ad and the major appeals used in the ad.

While the Indian ads did depict women in a variety of roles, the primary role seemed to be the traditional one of a housewife and mother. Thus, the Indian ads differed from the U.S. ads in that it was much more common for the Indian ads to depict women in traditional roles. The finding that U.S. advertisements portray women in "traditional" roles less frequently is consistent with the previous research of Wiles and Tjernlund (1991) and Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz (1993). This finding that Indian ads portray women in "traditional" roles more frequently may be due to the cultural beliefs in India where women consider that their role in the family comes first even if they hold a professional job (Ross 1977). This is consistent with the finding that more children were portrayed in Indian ads than U.S. ads, suggesting that marketers, in Indian ads, should include other members of the family in order to provide a "traditional" atmosphere in the ad. This finding is also consistent with the research of Hofstede (1980) that collectivistic societies such as India tend to put a premium on relations with others in the immediate family and on group behavior as opposed to individualistic societies such as the United States. This means that marketers should understand that "traditional" roles are still acceptable as long as they take into consideration the product advertised and the appropriate usage environment (Michel and Taylor 1990). Although the portrayal of women in "traditional" roles in U.S. advertisements is declining (e.g., Klassen, Jasper and Schwartz), the fact that women are still frequently portrayed in "traditional" roles in the Indian advertisements suggests that "traditional" roles may not be displeasing in India as long as they show women as self aware and intelligent (Picher 1982).

The Indian ads also differed from the U.S. ads in terms of the women's relation to the product with a higher percentage of Indian women being givers of advice and a higher percentage of U.S. women being receivers of

advice. This finding suggests that marketers could use opinion leaders in their advertisements who provide advice on the product performance and benefits to the target audience. Finally, there was a difference in terms of the types of appeals commonly used. Value related appeals tended to be more effective within the Indian context than appeals such as quality, safety, guaranty, or research claims, which were more frequently used in U.S. advertisements.

Marketers should continually monitor the prevailing trends and cultural values in designing a promotional strategy. An inappropriate role portrayal might result in a unfavorable attitude toward the ad and in turn affect purchase intentions (Courtney and Whipple 1983). Specific implications for marketers in India would include the fact that they should not ignore the role of Indian women as housewives and mothers. Nor should they ignore a familial setting for their advertising. Even though India is an emerging economy and roles are changing, the traditional roles for women still appear to be dominant. Additionally, the types of appeals that are common in Indian advertising differ extensively from those used in the U.S. and advertisers must be concerned with and aware of this difference.

CONCLUSIONS

The issue of the role portrayal of women has been well researched in the last two decades. This study attempted to contribute to the growing body of knowledge by comparing the role portrayal of women in Indian and U. S. advertisements. Several significant differences were found between the role portrayal of women in the ads of the two countries. As proposed, more ads in the Indian context portrayed women in "traditional" roles compared to the U. S. ads. Thus, this study highlights the impact of cultural values and development on advertising. However, the link between advertising and role portrayals is not a simple one. Much research is needed before one can make any generalizations about role portrayals in developing countries. The authors hope they have raised an important issue that will stimulate further investigation. Marketers in order to be successful must take into consideration not only the product advertised and the target audience but also pay close attention to the prevailing norms pertaining to sex roles in that culture and appropriately portray these roles in advertising. The results of pursuing this stream of research would be to facilitate marketers in resolving the dilemma of determining the appropriate portrayal of women in advertisements.

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