



# Does Gender Differences in Adult Portrayals in Television Advertisements Influence the Social Behaviour in Indian Children?

Ravishankaran Kamalakannan Chitra<sup>1\*</sup> and Nakkeeran Senthilkumar<sup>2</sup>

Author Note

Ravishankaran Kamalakannan Chitra<sup>1\*</sup>

Research Scholar, Department of Management Studies, Anna University, Chennai 600025, India.

Email: [chitrakamal86@gmail.com](mailto:chitrakamal86@gmail.com); Contact: +91- 9444823434; ORCID: 0000-0003-0968-873X;

Nakkeeran Senthilkumar<sup>2</sup>

Professor, Department of Management Studies, Anna University, Chennai 600025, India.

Email: [sen.nsk76@gmail.com](mailto:sen.nsk76@gmail.com); Contact: +91- 9840257515; ORCID: 0000-0003-4043-7664;

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Ravishankaran Kamalakannan Chitra<sup>1\*</sup> at [chitrakamal86@gmail.com](mailto:chitrakamal86@gmail.com)

## Acknowledgement

This work supported by Anna Centenary Research Fellowship, awarded to R.K.Chitra from 2016 to 2018 by Anna University, Chennai, is gratefully acknowledged.

**Relevant conflicts of interest/financial disclosures:** The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

## Abstract

The current study employs the McArthur and Resko coding scheme to determine the presence of age-related stereotypes in children's television advertising and compares its findings to other Asian countries. The content analysis methodology was used to collect two weeks of a stratified sample of visually prominent adult characters of different age groups from the top six cartoon networks. In addition to younger women, middle-aged women were frequently portrayed as product users, depicted in dependent roles and communicated opinion-based arguments suggesting a probable reversal of previous patterns. Younger women were stereotypically shown in domestic settings for domestic products and offered self-enhancement rewards, while middle-aged men were portrayed as product authority and favoured fact-based argument. Less traditional traits depicted younger women in autonomous roles and delivered concluding end comments, whereas middle-aged men were more likely to offer self-enhancement rewards. In addition to the study's limitations, the theoretical and practical ramifications are examined using social expectancy and social learning theory as a base. The influence of the television media on age and gender stereotyping can be mitigated through gender-neutral portrayals and visual reinforcement of egalitarian role pursuits for men and women in television advertisements aimed at children. Future research should use the

4460



longitudinal study to gain a bigger sample size to investigate additional central character categories, such as humour, fame and physical attractiveness. The study results reveal that age and gender differences do not appear to diminish in children's television advertisements in India.

**Keywords:** Social Behaviour, Age Stereotypes, Television Advertising, Gender Stereotypes, Children and Adults, Content Analysis

**DOI Number:**10.14704/nq.2022.20.8.NQ44476

**NeuroQuantology 2022; 20(8): 4460-4474**

## Introduction

Over the last several decades, a plethora of observational studies have found that television media can profoundly indoctrinate both adults and children with gender-appropriate behaviours (Mayes and Valentine, 1979, Peirce, 1989, Smith, 1994, Furnham and Paltzer, 2010, Furnham and Lay, 2017). At the same time, stereotypes in advertising directed at children are of particular concern (Davis, 2003, Sixsmith and Furnham, 2009), as they have the ability to influence children's gender socialisation and how they regard themselves and others (Smith, 1994). For instance, social learning theory asserts that media content may teach people of all ages about who and what is valued in society (Bandura, 1969). In particular, this theory has established that children observe and imitate same-gendered models' attitudes, values, and behaviours more closely to understand what it means to be male and female (Bandura, 2001, Bandura and Bussey, 2004). Similarly, the Social expectancy theory (Jussim, 1990) posits that media acts as a facilitator and contributes to gender role expectancies when children are exposed to vast information via television. Individuals, especially children, are more susceptible to these expectations because of vague self-perceptions and repeat exposure to TV advertising. Maker and Childs (2003) studied gender roles in children's TV advertising using expectation theory as a reference. Despite the rise in female roles, in all gender dimensions, men outnumbered women (product user, voice-over, and central character), and it remains of concern, as this could affect children with gender-stereotypical expectancies.

Children have a substantial impact on the Indian market; according to the Turner-

NewGen Report (2016), this segment has an annual purchasing power of Rs.22594 crores, which is greater than the combined Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 50 smaller countries globally. Additionally, children aged 0-14 make up 30.76% of India's overall population (MoSPI, 2018), which presents a tremendous opportunity for marketers due to its sheer size. For instance, 98% of Indian households possess one television, and the television industry, which caters to 188 million households, is predicted to increase from \$10.11 billion in 2018 to \$17.60 billion in 2023 (KPMG, 2018). Additionally, television advertising is estimated to have generated \$3.47 billion, placing the television market second only to China (IBEF, 2018). Recent statistics from BARC (2018a) report that one in every four children aged 2 to 14 has a high share of 20% viewing children's channels. These aspects highlight that television advertising has been the dominant form of communication, and advertisers pitching their products on children's media must be conscious of the different stereotypes in television portrayals. Additionally, in a country with a gender ratio of 943 females to 1000 males (MoSPI, 2018), combined with children's strong pester power, marketers should be mindful of the gender and age-based stereotypes prevalent in children's television advertising.

## Age and Gender Stereotyping in Television Advertising

McArthur and Resko (1975) developed one of the earliest and most significant coding frameworks for examining gender stereotypes in American television advertising. It rated central characters on eight variables (sex, credibility basis, role, location, product argument, rewards, consequences of not



using the product, and product type) and found that the portrayal of men and women in television advertising was stereotyped. With its meaningful content categories and acceptable reliability scores across multiple nations, this method has been replicated closely in over 60 subsequent studies on gender stereotypes in advertising. Indeed, there are presently three significant reviews using McArthur and Resko's (1975) coding scheme (Furnham and Mak, 1999, Furnham and Paltzer, 2010, Furnham and Lay, 2017), establishing content analysis as the primary research method for examining gender roles depicted in advertising (An and Kim, 2007). Perhaps it is uncommon to see a coding scheme persist for an extended period, even though content analysis is a descriptive approach termed 'expensive' in data collection and analysis (Furnham and Paltzer, 2010).

Age is an extensively studied variable that refers to the central figure's physical characteristics in advertising and serves as a significant indicator for detecting gender-related variances (Eisend, 2010). Previous research indicated that women dominated the younger segment while males dominated the middle and older sectors (Gilly, 1988, Furnham and Mak, 1999, Furnham and Paltzer, 2010, Matthes et al., 2016). Only one study showed a dramatic reversal of previous findings in the United Kingdom, where central figures were dominated by middle-aged males and females (Furnham and Skae, 1997). Previous studies that used McArthur and Resko coding (1975) to identify age stereotypes in television advertising observed surprising little change, with women's central characters remaining younger than men, more visually appealing, users rather than authorities on primarily domestic products, less professional, and more likely to be portrayed as in the home. These themes, which include Asian countries, have remained consistent over time and in several countries, implying that skewed gender manifestations favoured women over men, with men predominantly depicted as middle-aged, as professionals and preferred as voice-overs

(Hong Kong and Indonesia: Furnham et al., 2000, Turkey: Uray and Burnaz, 2003, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea: Prieler et al., 2015). Exceptional studies like Arima (2003) classified women into three clusters (beautiful and wise homemakers, young ladies attracting people's attention, and young celebrities) and men into two clusters (middle and old-aged people enjoying private time and middle-aged workers bee) in Japanese television advertisements. Similarly, Kim and Lowry (2005) pointed out that women were frequently depicted as unmarried in Korean television advertisements.

Although the sensitivity of how age is portrayed in television advertising is examined globally, a comprehensive search in India yielded only a few research articles. Among the few, most were concerned with gender depictions and none with age representation. For instance, Bakir (2013) examined the cross-cultural portrayal of television characters' self-presentation behaviours in Indian and American children's networks. Male voice-overs accounted for more than half of advertising in both countries. Similarly, Jaggi (2017) pointed out that cartoon characters depicted in television programs showed a highly skewed representation of gender-stereotyped content. Prior research on adult television advertising found that women were stereotypically depicted as housewives and in decorative roles (Gupta and Jain, 1998, Munshi, 1998, Jha-Dang and Vohra, 2005). But recent research has revealed a shift toward more positive roles for women compatible with modernity and changing culture (Das, 2011, Moorthi et al., 2014). Jha-Dang and Vohra (2005) conducted the first age study on television advertising and found that, while there was no statistically significant difference in the age of male and female characters, the difference was the same, as women tended to be portrayed younger than males in India. In line with that, Das (2011) found a substantial difference in the age variable, with women predominantly portrayed as younger, lending support to Jha-Dang and Vohra's findings (2005).



Apart from gender representations, it is worth noting that none of these earlier studies on Indian television advertising explored age differences, as the McArthur and Resko (1975) coding system for assessing age stereotyping is noticeably lacking. Das (2011) used the same coding system to examine a few variables using gender data from 2004, but this present study provides a good starting point for exploring how age stereotypes are portrayed for young children using data from children's television advertising in 2018. Additionally, delving deeper into additional variables in a single country analysis (i.e., credibility basis, role, location, product argument, product type, end comment, and reward type) would help paint a complete picture of age-related stereotypes research in a South Asian country. Likewise, comprehending existing portrayals would be beneficial for marketers and advertisers, and by evaluating it, any progress that has been made in depicting age-related portrayals can be noted.

### Research Hypotheses

This study aimed to examine age stereotyping in advertising on Indian television and determine whether adults of different age groups are portrayed in more traditional or contemporary ways. There have been negligible Indian studies in this field that examine age, and this study will look at adults to see how gender is represented in children's television advertising. This content analytic study employs the McArthur and Resko coding method to examine the frequency with which men and women feature in television advertisements and contextualise the findings with comparisons to other Asian countries.

Since the initial research in all cultures through three decades, female primary characters have been consistently portrayed as younger than males in television advertising (Gilly, 1988, Eisend, 2010). Although there is evidence to indicate gender stereotyping is much more robust in traditional Asian countries (Neto and Pinto, 1998, Furnham and Mak, 1999), Furnham and Paltzer (2010) noted that for few variables

(i.e., credibility, role, age, and product type) the degree of stereotyping seemed to decrease. Based on the previous findings from other countries, the following research questions were developed to test whether gender stereotyping concerning age is present and to what extent in India.

**Research Question:** What variables contribute to age differences or similarities based on the central character's gender in television advertising shown on Indian cartoon channels?

For age-based differences:

**H1:** Females will be frequently portrayed as younger adults in Indian TV advertisements, while males will be frequently portrayed as middle-aged adults.

**H2:** Young-aged females will be shown more often as product users, while middle-aged males will be shown as product authorities.

**H3:** Young-aged females will be more often shown in dependent roles, while middle-aged males will be shown in autonomous roles.

**H4:** Young-aged females will be shown more often in domestic settings than males.

**H5:** Young-aged females are more likely to make the opinion-based argument, while middle-aged males are more likely to make fact-based arguments.

**H6:** Young-aged females will be associated more frequently with domestic products than males.

**H7:** Middle-aged males are more likely to make more end comments than females.

**H8:** Young-aged females will be more frequently associated with advertised products that offer self-enhancement rewards than males.

For age-based differences, hypothesis H1 (age) have found to hold true in several Asian countries, including India, as women characters have consistently been portrayed in younger roles while men have been portrayed as middle-aged characters in adults television advertising (Gilly, 1988, Furnham and Mak, 1999, Eisend, 2010, Furnham and Paltzer, 2010, Das, 2011). However, the remaining hypotheses (H2 to H8) based on Kay and Furnham's (2013) findings have not



been tested in the Indian context. As a result, seven hypotheses based on the McArthur and Resko coding method (H2 to H8) were not evaluated for age-based differences in Indian television advertising for adults and children's channels. Additionally, the hypothesis (H1) was examined in a prior Indian study using 2004 data on adult television advertising (Das, 2011), though not exhaustively in children's television advertising. Hence, the findings of this study using 2018 data would provide an in-depth examination of the age stereotypes.

## Methodology

### Cartoon Channels and Advertisements

Based on BARC's weekly impressions (2018b), India's top six cartoon channels, namely Nickelodeon, Disney Channel, Hungama, Cartoon Network, Discovery Kids, and Pogo Tv, were selected for recording. Additionally, according to BARC (2018b), Nickelodeon, Pogo TV, Discovery Kids, Cartoon Network, Disney Channel, and Hungama receive 58%, 56%, 54%, 50%, 45%, and 43% of viewership from children aged 2 to 14 years, respectively. Since all six cartoon channels are available in four languages (English, Telugu, Tamil, and Hindi), the advertising covers most regional children's audiences from different states, ensuring sample representativeness. Based on BARC's report (2018b) on time frames and peak timings, the data were gathered for two consecutive weeks in mid-November 2018 from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. on weekdays (Monday to Friday) and 12:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. on weekends (Saturday and Sunday). The sampling technique employed in this descriptive study was stratified constructed week sampling, with 224 unique advertisements, including marketed products

from national and international advertisers. As with previous content analysis research, any repetitions and advertisements featuring children, animals, fantasy characters, local/political ads, and sex unidentifiable central figures were removed (McArthur and Resko, 1975, Furnham and Farragher, 2000, Arima, 2003, Uray and Burnaz, 2003, Nassif and Gunter, 2008). Following this exclusion process, 189 distinct advertisements were selected for further coding and analysis from 102 hours of television viewing.

### Variables and Unit of Analysis

The coding categories were modelled initially from the well-established coding concepts by McArthur and Resko (1975), Manstead and McCulloch (1981), and Furnham and Voli (1989). This study selected nine variables, and the category modifications that happened through the years are shown along with their operational definitions in Table 1. The unit of analysis is the central character or figure in each of the 189 advertisements. The central figure was defined as *an adult character or adult humanoid cartoon figure with a speaking role or the most prominent speaking lines or a visual appearance of at least three seconds length in an advertisement* (Gilly, 1988, Milner and Higgs, 2004). Like in McArthur and Resko's (1975) study, adult central figures who were visually prominent were coded, and when more than two were present, the most central or dominant were chosen. The central figure's gender is the independent variable, whereas the eight dependent variables are age, credibility basis, role, location, product argument, product type, end comment and reward type. All nine content variables have been calculated using nominal measures.

4464

**Table 1**  
**Variables included in the study**

Variables	Categories <sup>3</sup>	Basis of Categories <sup>4</sup>
Central Figure's Gender (100 <sup>1</sup> ; 1.0 <sup>2</sup> )	It refers to adult characters playing a dominant role visually. 1. Adult Male, 2. Adult Female	McArthur and Resko (1975)
Age (98.94; 0.91)	1. Younger Adults (19 to under 30 years), 2. Middle-aged adults (31 to 60 years), 3. Old-aged adults (over 60 years)	Schneider and Schneider (1979); Furnham and Bitar (1993); Furnham and



		Farragher (2000)
Credibility Basis (98.94; 0.95)	1. Product user, 2. Product authority, 3. Other	McArthur and Resko (1975); Manstead and McCulloch (1981)
Role (98.94; 1.0)	1. Dependent (as a parent/caregiver, spouse, child, homemaker, gender/sexual object), 2. Professional (an expert or a researcher on the product, leader, celebrity), 3. Narrator (when the central figure describes the advertised product), 4. Other	McArthur and Resko (1975); Kay and Furnham (2013)
Location (99.29; 1.0)	1. Domestic setting, 2. Occupational / Outdoor Environment, 3. Leisure setting, 4. Store setting, 5. Unknown	McArthur and Resko (1975); Furnham and Bitar (1993)
Product Argument (97.53; 0.96)	1. Opinion-based argument, 2. Fact-based argument, 3. No argument	McArthur and Resko (1975); Harris and Stobart (1986)
Product Type (100; 1.0)	1. Domestic products, 2. Toys/Game products, 3. Other Products	McArthur and Resko (1975); Kay and Furnham (2013)
End comment (98.94; 1.0)	1. Present, 2. Absent	Harris and Stobart (1986)
Reward Type (97.18; 0.94)	1. Social-Enhancement Reward, 2. Self-Enhancement Reward, 3. Practical Reward, 4. Pleasure Reward, 5. Other Reward, 6. No Rewards	McArthur and Resko (1975); Harris and Stobart (1986)

4465

**Note.** <sup>1, 2</sup>Percentages in parenthesis indicate inter-coder reliability score for 189 units; Krippendorff's alpha reliability value for 26 units.

<sup>3</sup>The operational definition of the categories for each variable is explained in the results section.

<sup>4</sup>The authors are listed in this order as 'Original Author: Subsequent modifications in categories by other authors (s).'

### Coding and Reliability

Three coders (one male and two females) fluent in English and Hindi were trained for three hours to become familiar with the coding sheet and written description of each variable using 15 non-sample advertisements. Following clarifications with the researcher, each coder independently coded the recorded 189 advertisements, with the researcher ensuring that the coders were blind to the study hypotheses. The entire coding took 12 to 14 days for a coder, and the discrepancies were examined jointly by three coders in front of the researcher. After explanations, the agreed-upon codings were pooled for data analysis. The reward type and product argument variables had the highest number of disagreements (16 and 14,

respectively) of the 74 coding differences. This procedure yielded a sample of 189 visually prominent central figures from a total of 319 central figures. The 130 central figures that were voice-overs were eliminated since determining the age of a voice-over character in television advertising was difficult.

This study used inter-coder reliability, the average percentage of agreement, and Krippendorff's alpha reliability to test the categories' suitability for the Indian context. Each coder coded 1701 items for 189 central figures and nine variables individually, resulting in 5103 coding decisions. The average percentage of agreement between the three coders was 98.694%, computed using the following formula: number of agreements/number of agreements + number



of disagreements X 100. Inter-coder reliability scores for 189 units were satisfactory for all variables, as shown in Table 1. Due to the usage of more than two coders, Krippendorff's alpha reliability value for a pilot sample of 26 units (i.e., 13.76 per cent of the overall sample) was computed using a random sampling approach (Riff et al., 2013). The reliability values in Table 1 indicate that the alpha coefficients for all variables were reasonably high (higher than  $\alpha = 0.80$ ) at a 95% confidence interval (Hayes and Krippendorff, 2007).

## Results

**Table 2**  
*Percentage of adult male and adult female by coding categories*

Content Categories	Male		Female		Calculated Chi-Square $\chi^2$ (degree of freedom)	Cramer's V Correlation <sup>3</sup>
	N	%	n	%		
<b>Age<sup>1</sup> (H1)<sup>2</sup></b>						
Younger Adults (less than 30)	11	18.30	53	51.50	$X(2) = 19.877^{***}$	0.349
Middle Age Adults (31-60)	43	71.70	48	46.60		
Older Adults (+60)	6	10.00	2	1.90		

\*  $p \leq 0.05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq 0.001$  (\*\*\*) significant at 0.001 or higher; \*\* significant at 0.01 level; \* significant at 0.05 level)

<sup>1</sup>163 units of visually presented central figures from 272 units

<sup>2</sup>The relevant hypothesis for age-based differences is given in parenthesis for easy reference

<sup>3</sup>0.15 to 0.25 – strong relationship; 0.25 or a higher – very strong relationship.

**H1:** Females will be frequently portrayed as younger adults in Indian TV advertisements, while males will be frequently portrayed as middle-aged adults.

**Age:** It refers to the age of the visual central figure. Here 163 central figures which are visually presented are considered out of 189 central figures.

The overall differences were highly significant (Table 2). Nearly 60.0% of adults (163 units out of 272 central figures) were considered for the coding process. Single chi-

## Data Analysis

IBM-SPSS software was used to examine the data. All hypotheses were analysed using the chi-square test, and Cramer's V Correlation values for the age variable were calculated to determine the strength of the relationship. When categories with low cell frequencies were present, the categories were conceptually collapsed. After eliminating 26 units from the reliability test, 163 central figures were obtained as the final sample.

square analysis revealed that 51.50% of females were more likely to be depicted in the younger group ( $\chi^2 = 27.563$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ), while both genders were equally represented in the middle-aged group. Hence, hypothesis 1 is partially supported (Table 2), as the differences for males in the middle-aged group were not significant. Due to small cell sizes, old-aged adults showed no significant difference between age and the other variables (Table 2).

**Table 3**  
*Breakdown of Adult Age Groups by coding categories*

Content Categories <sup>1</sup>	Younger Adults n (%)	Middle-Aged Adults n (%)	Older Adults n (%)



	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Credibility Basis (H2)<sup>2</sup></b>						
Product User	8 (72.70)	47 (88.70)	12 (27.90)	36 (75.00)	3 (50.00)	2 (100)
Product Authority	1 (9.10)	5 (9.40)	24 (55.80)	12 (25.00)	1 (16.70)	0
Others/None	2 (18.20)	1 (1.90)	7 (16.30)	0	2 (33.30)	0
<b>Role (H3)</b>						
Dependent	4 (36.40)	34 (64.20)	8 (18.60)	28 (58.30)	4 (66.70)	2 (100)
Autonomous <sup>3</sup>	7 (63.60)	19 (35.80)	35 (81.40)	20 (41.70)	2 (33.30)	0
<b>Location (H4)</b>						
Domestic / Indoor setting	3 (27.30)	34 (64.20)	24 (55.80)	33 (68.80)	5 (83.30)	1 (50.00)
Occupational / Outdoor Setting	8 (72.70)	10 (18.90)	9 (20.90)	11 (22.90)	0	1 (50.00)
Others <sup>4</sup>	0	9 (17.00)	10 (23.30)	4 (8.30)	1 (16.70)	0
<b>Product Argument (H5)</b>						
Opinion based	5 (45.50)	38 (71.70)	6 (14.00)	32 (66.70)	1 (16.70)	2 (100)
Fact-based	1 (9.10)	8 (15.10)	25 (58.10)	11 (22.90)	1 (16.70)	0
No argument	5 (45.50)	7 (13.20)	12 (27.90)	5 (10.40)	4 (66.70)	0
<b>Product Type (H6)</b>						
Domestic Products	8 (72.70)	52 (98.10)	28 (65.10)	36 (75.00)	5 (83.30)	1 (50.00)
Toys and Games	0	0	1 (2.30)	1 (2.10)	0	0
Others	3 (27.30)	1 (1.90)	14 (32.60)	11 (22.90)	1 (16.70)	1 (50.00)
<b>End Comment (H7)</b>						
Present	3 (27.30)	16 (30.20)	23 (53.50)	16 (33.30)	0	0
Absent	8 (72.70)	37 (69.80)	20 (46.50)	32 (66.70)	6 (100)	2 (100)
<b>Reward Type (H8)</b>						
Social-Enhancement Reward	1(9.10)	0	2 (4.70)	2 (4.20)	0	0
Self-Enhancement Reward	3 (27.30)	44 (83.00)	23 (53.50)	24 (50.00)	0	1 (50.00)
Practical Reward	3 (27.30)	2 (3.80)	9 (20.90)	12 (25.00)	0	1 (50.00)
Pleasure Reward	3 (27.30)	6 (11.30)	5 (11.60)	8 (16.70)	4 (66.70)	0
Other Reward	0	1 (1.90)	0	1 (2.10)	0	0
No Reward	1(9.10)	0	4 (9.30)	1 (2.10)	2 (33.30)	0

4467

<sup>1</sup>163 units of visually presented characters from 272 units were considered for the adults' age breakdown

<sup>2</sup> The relevant hypothesis for age-based differences is given in parenthesis for easy reference

<sup>3</sup>Professional, narrator, other - categories collapsed under the autonomous term.

<sup>4</sup>Leisure, store, unknown - categories collapsed under others term.

**H2:** Young-aged females will be shown more often as product users, while middle-aged males will be shown as product authorities.

**Credibility Basis:** This refers to the central figure's perceived credibility in the advertisement: A central figure was categorised as a product-user if she/he was

depicted primarily as a user of the advertised product. As a product authority when depicted as an expert concerning the product and as other when the character was depicted as neither user nor authority.

For females, there was a significant difference in credibility for younger adults





(88.7%) and middle-aged adults (75.0%) as product users ( $\chi^2 = 27.655$  and  $12.000$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ). For males, a significant difference was seen for 55.8% of the middle-aged group as they were more likely to be the authority of products ( $\chi^2 = 4.000$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.046$ ). Hypothesis 2 is supported (Table 3). A noted observation was that women in their young and middle-aged groups tend to make most purchases as product consumers in Indian television advertising.

**H3:** Young-aged females will be more often shown in dependent roles, while middle-aged males will be shown in autonomous roles.

**Role:** This refers to the central figure's apparent role in everyday life as depicted in the advertisements as a dependent or autonomous role.

For females, there was a significant difference in the portrayed roles for younger adults (64.2%) and middle-aged adults (58.3%) in dependent roles ( $\chi^2 = 23.684$  and  $11.111$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ). Conversely, 35.8% younger females were significantly more likely to be shown in autonomous roles ( $\chi^2 = 8.067$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.005$ ), compared to middle-aged males. While males outnumbered females in the middle-aged group in autonomous roles, it was numerically and not statistically. Hypothesis 3 is partially supported (Table 3).

**H4:** Young-aged females will be shown more often in domestic settings than males.

**Location:** It refers to the place where the central figures were portrayed in the ads and sometimes inferred from the people present. It is categorised as domestic setting, outdoor setting and others.

There were no significant differences for all male age groups. Nearly 64.20% of younger females were more likely to be shown in domestic settings ( $\chi^2 = 25.973$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ) than males. Hypothesis 4 is supported (Table 3). A noted observation in domestic settings was that females marginally outnumbered males (68.80% vs. 55.80%) even in the middle-aged group but numerically and not statistically (Table 3).

**H5:** Young-aged females are more likely to make the opinion-based argument, while middle-aged males are more likely to make fact-based arguments.

**Product Argument:** It refers to the central figure's reasoning for using the advertised product. An opinion-based argument was nearly a personal comment about the quality of a product/service based on preference and experience. In contrast, a fact-based argument tries to marshal facts explaining why the product or service was innovative or superior in some other way, and No argument if the product was simply displayed.

Nearly 71.70% of younger females and 66.70% of middle-aged females were significantly more likely to make opinion-based argument ( $\chi^2 = 25.326$  and  $17.789$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ). While 58.10% middle-aged males were significantly more likely to make fact-based argument ( $\chi^2 = 5.444$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.020$ ). Hypothesis 5 is supported (Table 3).

**H6:** Young-aged females will be associated more frequently with domestic products than males.

**Product Type:** It refers to whether the central figure is depicted in advertised products categorised as either domestic (food, home appliances and products, health and body-related products), Toys or games and others (products related to services and mobile applications, finance, entertainment, leisure and sports).

There were no significant differences for all male age groups. For females, 98.10% of younger adults were significantly more likely to be shown as product consumers of domestic products ( $\chi^2 = 32.267$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 6 is supported (Table 3). A noted observation in domestic products was that females marginally outnumbered males (75.0% vs. 65.1%) even in the middle-aged group numerically and not statistically (Table 3).

**H7:** Middle-aged males are more likely to make more end comments than females.

**End comments:** This refers to whether the central figure visually made a final remark or

comment at the end of the advertisement, i.e., 'a product slogan or the product name repeated at the end of the advertisement'.

For end comments, although males outnumbered females (53.50% vs. 33.30%) in the middle-aged group, it was numerically and not statistically. Conversely, 30.20% of younger females were significantly more likely to be portrayed to make an end comment for the advertised product ( $\chi^2 = 8.895$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.003$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 7 is not supported (Table 3).

**H8:** Young-aged females will be more frequently associated with advertised products that offer self-enhancement rewards than males.

**Reward Type:** For product users, rewards were those received by central figures or indirectly the consumers, while for product authority, rewards were those offered by the same. They are social Enhancement (opposite sex approval, family or friends approval, social or career advancement), self-enhancement (psychological improvement, attractiveness, cleanliness or health), practical (saving time, labour or money, useful or functional), pleasure (when the use of the product has yielded satisfying or gratifying results), other rewards and no rewards.

There were no significant differences for all male age groups. For females, nearly 83% of younger adults were significantly more likely to prefer self-enhancement reward ( $\chi^2 = 35.766$ , d.f. = 1,  $P < 0.001$ ). Hypothesis 8 is supported (Table 3). A noted observation was that both males and females were almost equally represented in the category of self-enhancement reward (53.50% vs. 50.0%) in the middle-aged group numerically and not statistically (Table 3). In addition, 66.70% of old-aged males were preferably shown in product advertising involving pleasure reward in numerical and not statistical terms.

Therefore, hypotheses (H2, H4, H5, H6, and H8) fully supported the age-based difference. Likewise, it was partially supported (H1 and H3). However, middle-aged males showed no significant difference in making

end comments (H7) for the advertised products.

### Discussion and Implications

The present study found that age-based hypotheses centred on the central figure's gender had more differences than similarities (7 out of 8 were significant), with 87.50% of content categories portraying young females and middle-aged males in stereotypical ways in children's television advertising. In the current study, 39.26% of the central characters were under 30 years of age, 55.83% were between 31 to 60 years, and 4.91% were above 60 years or older adults. Moreover, in particular, the likelihood of females being visually portrayed is nearly 1.7 times that of males.

The age of the visual central figures was significant, with women 4.8 times more likely than men to be depicted in the younger group in children's television advertising. The proportion of younger women (51.5%) in this study was lower by 34.5% than in a previous Indian study (86% in Das, 2011) and by at least 10% in several Asian studies concerning adults television advertising (74.1% in Indonesia: Furnham et al., 2000, 60.1% in Turkey: Uray and Burnaz, 2003, 85.4 % in Hong Kong, 71.0 % in Japan, and 73.8% in South Korea: Prieler et al., 2015). In this study, compared to men, women were more likely to be represented in the middle-aged group numerically but not statistically in children's television advertising. In addition, the proportion of women's value (46.60%) was higher than in studies conducted in Indonesia, Turkey, India, Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea concerning adults television advertising (25.9%: Furnham et al., 2000, 33.9%: Uray and Burnaz, 2003, 10.3%: Das, 2011, 10.2% in Hong Kong, 25.5% in Japan, and 21.5% in South Korea: Prieler et al., 2015). Likewise, in the current study, the proportion of men's value (10.0%) in the old-aged group was higher than in a previous Indian study (4.20%: Das, 2011) and in several Asian countries (1.50% in Indonesia: Furnham et al., 2000, 9.60% in Turkey: Uray and Burnaz, 2003, 9.90% in Hong Kong: Prieler et al., 2015),



except for Japan and South Korea (26.20% in Japan, and 10.7% in South Korea: Prieler et al., 2015). Conversely, the proportion of old-aged women (1.90%) in this study was lower by 1.80% than in a previous Indian study (3.70% in Das, 2011) and by at least 1.60% in several Asian studies (6.0% in Turkey: Uray and Burnaz, 2003, 4.30% in Hong Kong, 3.50% in Japan, and 4.70% in South Korea: Prieler et al., 2015).

Younger and middle-aged women were frequently depicted as product users, as dependent purchasers in customer roles, and stated their argument in the form of opinions for the advertised product in this study, more than six times for the former and three times for the latter. On the other hand, Middle-aged males were twice as likely to be portrayed as product authorities and provide factual reasoning for the products. This presumed inequality may reinforce the notion that women are better suited for sharing their opinions alongside supporting characters, as they rely on social networks and hierarchies for validation (Lim and Furnham, 2016) and not clearly as the 'voice of authority,' which remains a male domain, even in children's television advertising. Conversely, compared to middle-aged men, younger women were 2.7 and 5.3 times more likely to be visually depicted in autonomous roles and provide end comments for the promoted products, respectively. In other words, younger women may have visually displayed control and independence over children and decisions primarily in domestic settings, reinforcing the conventional housewife role. It may also explain the frequent association of younger women with domestic products (6.5 times more likely) in children's television advertising. It also suggests that women may have been portrayed in autonomous roles inside domestic settings, which could be a promising future investigation area. The current study found that younger women were 14 times more likely to be portrayed for self-enhancement products in terms of rewards. It is possible that observers, particularly girls, may begin to accept these regular patterns of skewed gender

representation as societal standards and act accordingly (Ganahl et al., 2003). Moreover, as per social learning theory, children learn more quickly when they see an enticing model whose behaviour is rewarded for their actions (Bandura, 1969, Smith, 1994). Surprisingly, this study found that middle-aged men, like women, favoured self-enhancement rewards numerically but not statistically in Indian advertising. This finding indicates a healthy trend shift, as this reward, being considered a woman's domain, refers to meeting one's self-esteem requirements through enhancing one's confidence when utilising the product (Furnham and Paltzer, 2010).

A prominent pattern was identified in the current study, i.e., nearly 61.37% of advertisements were depicted in home settings, a pattern also reported in earlier studies on children's television advertisements (Dominick and Rauch, 1972, Schneider and Schneider, 1979, Gilly, 1988, Moon and Chan, 2002). The rationale being related to children's unfamiliarity with work-life, advertisers seldom prefer occupational settings. Additionally, such portrayals replicate the home environment for children viewers, as television viewing is a more family-oriented activity in India, which may be due to the collectivist nature of Asian cultures (Furnham and Paltzer, 2010). Besides, because 98% of Indian households own a single television, co-viewing acts as a defining key feature for advertisers and showing advertisements not intended for children on this platform functions as leverage to target parents simultaneously. This tendency also explains why Indian advertisers prioritise young and middle-aged adults, particularly women, because females in the 22-30 and 31-40 age groups spend 22% and 30% of their TV viewing time with children, respectively (BARC, 2018a). According to Furnham and Paltzer (2010), while the character's age is related to the product or service, advertisers consider the sexual stereotypes of the attractive young consumer and the wise avuncular expert, providing substantial evidence for the age differences between central characters in television advertising. In



general, this shift in Indian advertising representation may reflect a changing trend or reaffirm the assumption that, in addition to younger women, advertisers are considering middle-aged women for their perceived attractiveness and appearance and middle-aged men for portraying in authoritative roles.

One could argue that if the population ratio is still tipped in favour of males, it is unsurprising that traditional gender roles continue to be portrayed on television media. Another approach would be to debate how to encourage marketers, television producers, and advertisers to portray males and females in more androgynous or gender-neutral roles. As per social expectancy theory (Jussim, 1990), because children lack fully developed reasoning abilities, passive acceptance of stereotyped televised messages could lead to expectancy effects concerning gender, containing misleading or unrealistic information. Accordingly, it is critical to promote gender-equitable behaviours by employing gender-neutral or dual portrayals in product advertisements. Marketers and advertisers should also consider the message's whole context for advertisements aimed at children. Following this line of reasoning, engaging older adults and teachers as central figures frequently as competent experts in gender-balanced roles may benefit television viewers and sponsors alike, as they are the second most influential individuals in a child's life. Furthermore, according to social learning theory, repeated symbolic modelling of egalitarian role pursuits by men and women perpetually in the mass media serves as a prominent extra-familial source of influence, reducing sex-role stereotyping in young children (Bandura, 1986).

### Conclusion

Overall, the study found a significant reversal of previous findings, as middle-aged and younger women were frequently portrayed as product users, depicted in dependent roles, and expressed their opinions as an argument for the advertised product or service. Similarly, younger women were frequently depicted in autonomous roles and

were more likely to offer end comments than middle-aged men. These findings could be a result of increased Indian women's participation in the workforce and their influence on purchasing decisions. Additionally, a few progressive characteristics, such as the increased likelihood of middle-aged men offering self-enhancement rewards, which younger women formerly dominated, imply a probable reversal of traditional patterns. It can be surmised that advertisers may be attempting to represent the target market's interests by limiting stereotypical images based on age and gender. This study has some limitations. While the six cartoon channels were chosen based on viewership, the complete sample was gathered over two weeks during its prime timings. Future researchers should concentrate on a broader pattern and conduct a longitudinal study to obtain a larger sample size and more generalisable findings. This study erred on the side of replication in terms of category, which is why it was used for comparative purposes with other studies conducted in different nations and periods. Future researchers may explore additional categories, such as the usage of types of humour and the physical attractiveness and fame of the central characters concerning product categories. Older individuals were disproportionately underrepresented in this study compared to their younger and middle-aged counterparts, marginalising them as advertisers sideline them. This issue could be due to small cell sizes or advertisers dismissing them as unimportant when selling a product. One possible future remedy may be obtaining a much larger sample of advertisements to alleviate the former statistical challenge. In summary, this study's findings indicate that traditional stereotypes continue to dominate the majority of categories, and less stereotypical patterns were seen in a few areas, implying that differences in age in India do not appear to be declining.

### Abbreviations List

BARC - Broadcast Audience Research Council



GDP - Gross Domestic Product  
 IBEF - India Brand Equity Foundation  
 KPMG - Klynveld Peat Marwick Goerdeler  
 MoSPI - Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation Government of India

## References

An, D. and Kim, S. 2007. Relating Hofstede's masculinity dimension to gender role portrayals in advertising: A cross-cultural comparison of web advertisements. *International Marketing Review*, 24(2), 181-207.

Arima, A. N. 2003. Gender Stereotypes in Japanese Television Advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 49(1), 81-90.

Bakir, A. 2013. Character Portrayal: Examining Gender Roles in Television Commercials Targeted at Children in India and the United States. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 26(2), 57-67.

Bandura, A. 1969. Social-learning theory of identificatory processes. *Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research*, 213-262. Chicago, IL: Rand McNally & Company.

Bandura, A. 1986. *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, US, Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Bandura, A. 2001. Social Cognitive Theory of Mass Communication. *Media Psychology*, 3(3), 265-299.

Bandura, A. and Bussey, K. 2004. On Broadening the Cognitive, Motivational, and Sociostructural Scope of Theorizing About Gender Development and Functioning: Comment on Martin, Ruble, and Szkrybalo (2002). *Psychological bulletin*, 130, 691-701.

BARC 2018a. What India Watched 2018 BARC India

Yearbook. <https://www.thedmti.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/WHAT-INDIA-WATCHED-2018-BARC-India-Yearbook.pdf>

Accessed date: April, 2019.

BARC. 2018b. BARC data shows upwards trend for kids' viewership.

<https://www.indiantelevision.com/television/tv-channels/kids/barc-data-shows-upward-trend-for-kids-viewership-180906>

Accessed date: September 6, 2018.

Das, M. 2011. Gender Role Portrayals in Indian Television Ads. *Sex Roles*, 64(3), 208-222.

Davis, S. N. 2003. Sex stereotypes in commercials targeted toward children: A content analysis. *Sociological Spectrum*, 23(4), 407-424.

Dominick, J. R. and Rauch, G. E. 1972. The image of women in network TV commercials. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 16(3), 259-265.

Eisend, M. 2010. A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38(4), 418-440.

Furnham, A. and Bitar, N. 1993. The stereotyped portrayal of men and women in British television advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 29(3), 297-310.

Furnham, A. and Farragher, E. 2000. A Cross-Cultural Content Analysis of Sex-Role Stereotyping in Television Advertisements: A Comparison Between Great Britain and New Zealand. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 44(3), 415-436.

Furnham, A. and Lay, A. 2017. The universality of the portrayal of gender in television advertisements: A review of the studies this century. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(2), 109-124.

Furnham, A. and Mak, T. 1999. Sex-Role Stereotyping in Television Commercials: A Review and Comparison of Fourteen Studies Done on Five Continents Over 25 Years. *Sex Roles*, 41(5), 413-437.

Furnham, A., Mak, T. and Tanidjojo, L. 2000. An Asian Perspective on the Portrayal of Men and Women in Television Advertisements: Studies From Hong Kong and Indonesian Television. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 30(11), 2341-2364.

Furnham, A. and Paltzer, S. 2010. The portrayal of men and women in television advertisements: An updated review of 30 studies published since 2000. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 51(3), 216-236.

Furnham, A. and Skae, E. 1997. Changes in the Stereotypical Portrayal of Men and Women in British Television Advertisements. *European Psychologist*, 2(1), 44-51.

Furnham, A. and Voli, V. 1989. Gender stereotypes in Italian television

4472



advertisements. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 33(2), 175-185.

Ganahl, D. J., Prinsen, T. J. and Netzley, S. B. 2003. A Content Analysis of Prime Time Commercials: A Contextual Framework of Gender Representation. *Sex Roles*, 49(9), 545-551.

Gilly, M. C. 1988. Sex Roles in Advertising: A Comparison of Television Advertisements in Australia, Mexico, and the United States. *Journal of Marketing*, 52(2), 75-85.

Gupta, A. K. and Jain, N. 1998. Gender, mass media and social change: a case study of TV commercials. *Media Asia*, 25(1), 33-6.

Harris, P. R. and Stobart, J. 1986. Sex-role stereotyping in British television advertisements at different times of the day: An extension and refinement of Manstead & McCulloch (1981). *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 25(2), 155-164.

Hayes, A. F. and Krippendorff, K. 2007. Answering the Call for a Standard Reliability Measure for Coding Data. *Communication Methods and Measures*, 1(1), 77-89.

IBEF 2018. Media and Entertainment Report. <https://www.ibef.org/download/Media-and-Entertainment-Sep-2018.pdf>

Accessed date: October 14, 2018.

Jaggi, R. 2017. Children's Perceptions of Gender Images in Indian Television Cartoons. In Dafna Lemish & Maya Götz (eds.) *Beyond the Stereotypes? Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences*. 153-162. Göteborg: Nordicom.

Jha-Dang, P. and Vohra, N. 2005. Role portrayals of men and women in Indian television advertising.

Jussim, L. 1990. Social Reality and Social Problems: The Role of Expectancies. *Journal of Social Issues*, 46(2), 9-34.

Kay, A. and Furnham, A. 2013. Age and sex stereotypes in British television advertisements. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 2(3), 171-186.

Kim, K. and Lowry, D. T. 2005. Television Commercials as a Lagging Social Indicator: Gender Role Stereotypes in Korean Television Advertising. *Sex Roles*, 53(11), 901-910.

KPMG. 2018. *Media ecosystems: The walls fall down*. [https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg](https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2018/09/Media-ecosystems-The-walls-fall-down.pdf)

[g/in/pdf/2018/09/Media-ecosystems-The-walls-fall-down.pdf](https://assets.kpmg/content/dam/kpmg/in/pdf/2018/09/Media-ecosystems-The-walls-fall-down.pdf)

Accessed date: October 14, 2018.

Lim, G. and Furnham, A. 2016. The Universality of the portrayal of gender in television advertisements: An East-West comparison. *Psychology*, 7, 1608-1623.

Maker, J. K. and Childs, N. M. 2003. A Longitudinal Content Analysis of Gender Roles in Children's Television Advertisements: A 27 Year Review. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 25(1), 71-81.

Manstead, A. S. R. and McCulloch, C. 1981. Sex-role stereotyping in British television advertisements. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 20(3), 171-180.

Matthes, J., Prieler, M. and Adam, K. 2016. Gender-Role Portrayals in Television Advertising Across the Globe. *Sex Roles*, 75(7), 314-327.

Mayes, S. L. and Valentine, K. B. 1979. Sex role stereotyping in Saturday morning cartoon shows. *Journal of Broadcasting*, 23(1), 41-50.

Mcarthur, L. Z. and Resko, B. G. 1975. The Portrayal of Men and Women in American Television Commercials. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 97(2), 209-220.

Milner, L. M. and Higgs, B. 2004. Gender Sex-Role Portrayals in International Television Advertising over Time: The Australian Experience. *Journal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, 26(2), 81-95.

Moon, Y. S. and Chan, K. 2002. Gender portrayal in Hong Kong and Korean children's TV commercials: A cross-cultural comparison. *Asian Journal of Communication*, 12(2), 100-119.

Moorthi, Y. L. R., Roy, S. and Pansari, A. 2014. The Changing Roles Portrayed by Women in Indian Advertisements: A Longitudinal Content Analysis. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

MoSPI 2018. Children in India 2018 – A Statistical Appraisal.

[http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Children%20in%20India%202018%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Statistical%20Appraisal\\_26oct18.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Children%20in%20India%202018%20%E2%80%93%20A%20Statistical%20Appraisal_26oct18.pdf)

Accessed date: April 14, 2019.

Munshi, S. 1998. Wife/mother/daughter-in-law: multiple avatars of homemaker in 1990s



Indian advertising. *Media, Culture & Society*, 20(4), 573-591.

Nassif, A. and Gunter, B. 2008. Gender Representation in Television Advertisements in Britain and Saudi Arabia. *Sex Roles*, 58(11), 752-760.

Neto, F. and Pinto, I. 1998. Gender Stereotypes in Portuguese Television Advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 39(1), 153-164.

Peirce, K. 1989. Sex-role stereotyping of children on television: A content analysis of the roles and attributes of child characters. *Sociological Spectrum*, 9(3), 321-328.

Prieler, M., Ivanov, A. and Hagiwara, S. 2015. Gender representations in East Asian advertising: Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea. *Communication & Society*, 28, 27-41.

Riff, D., Lacy, S., Fico, F. and Watson, B. 2013. *Analysing media messages: Using quantitative content analysis in research*(3rd eds), Routledge.

Schneider, K. C. and Schneider, S. B. 1979. Trends in Sex Roles in Television Commercials. *Journal of Marketing*, 43(3), 79-84.

Sixsmith, R. and Furnham, A. 2009. A content analysis of British food advertisements aimed at children and adults. *Health promotion international*, 25, 24-32.

Smith, L. J. 1994. A content analysis of gender differences in children's advertising. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 38(3), 323-337.

Turner-Newgen Report. 2016. *Indian kids wield an annual spending power of Rs 22,594 cr: Turner New Gen Study*.<https://www.adgully.com/indian-kids-wield-an-annual-spending-power-of-rs-22-594-cr-turner-new-gen-study-66738.html>

Accessed date: April 14, 2018.

Uray, N. and Burnaz, S. 2003. An Analysis of the Portrayal of Gender Roles in Turkish Television Advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 48(1), 77-87.

