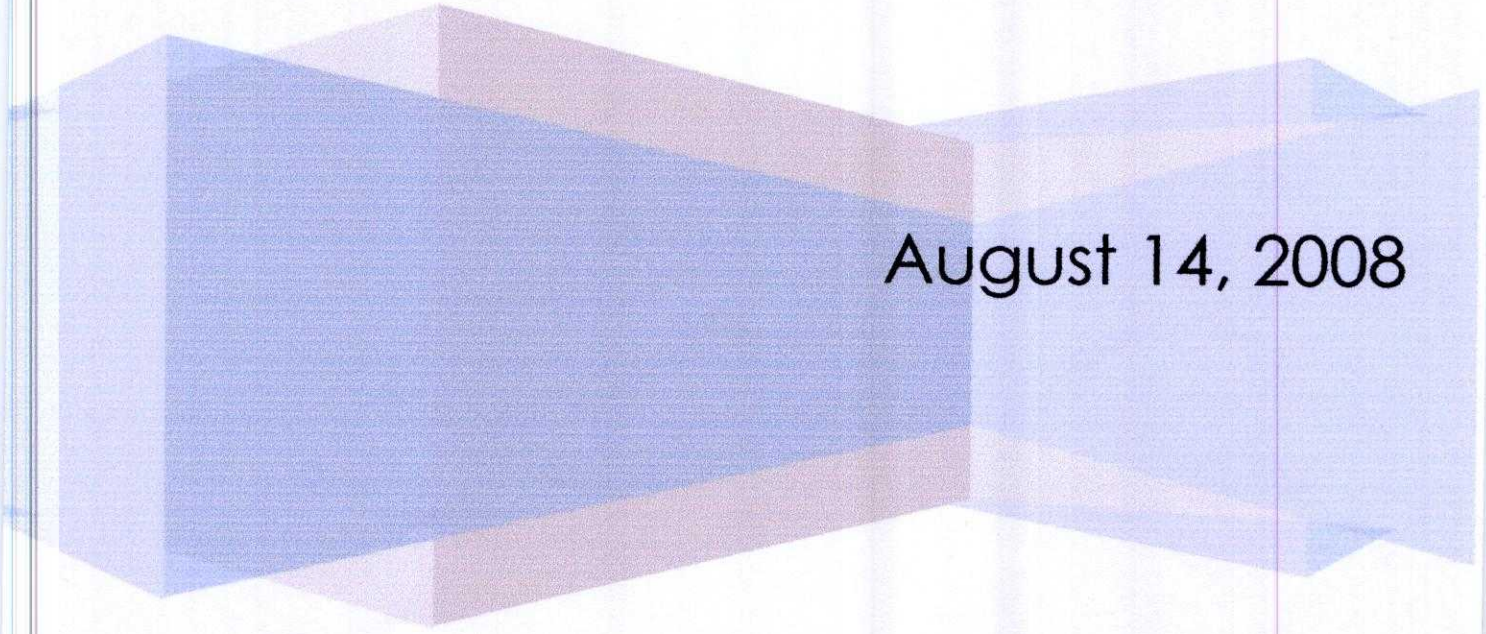


Representation of Women in Advertisements

An abstract graphic consisting of several overlapping, semi-transparent 3D rectangular blocks in shades of blue and purple, creating a sense of depth and perspective. The blocks are arranged in a way that they appear to be floating or stacked, with some blocks partially obscuring others.

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Representation of Women in Advertisements

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By

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents and dear friends.

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Introduction

Advertising is a part of our magical media sector. It is a profitable industry and affects all of us throughout our lives. We are each exposed to so many advertisements everyday, representing perhaps the most powerful educational tool in society. Every day, women and girls are bombarded with advertisements, which encourage them to meet unattainable ideals of physical beauty. Most of the people spend lots of time watching different types of commercials in television channels and in paper and magazines as well. The advertisements sell a great deal more than products. They sell values, images, and concepts of success. They tell the general audience who we are and who we should be. Advertising transforms the practical value of using products into the symbolic value of exchanging products into commodities. British writer and critic Judith Williamson calls this the "metastructure," "where meaning is not just 'decoded' within one structure, but transferred to create another" (Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, Dec, 1997 by Mee-Eun Kang)

Advertising is the foundation and economic support of the mass media. The primary purpose of the mass media is to deliver an audience to advertisers, just as the primary purpose of television programs and paper advertisements is to deliver an audience to commercials. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the messages of advertisements because they are new and inexperienced consumers and are the prime targets of many advertisements. They are in the process of learning their values and roles and developing their self-concepts. Since visual media appeal more to teenagers, they fall victim to the messages that advertisements convey. These

messages often perpetuate dominant cultural values and practices irrespective of whether or not they convey discriminatory picture of the society.

But what do people, especially teenagers, learn from the advertising messages? On the most obvious level they become aware of the stereotypical norms of society. Advertising creates an ideal world where people are beautiful, slim, rich and successful. In this world, people talk only about products and the advertisers sell the products through creating a world of fantasy. To create such world the advertising agencies often use female models in almost every possible advertisement. Women are portrayed differently in different types of advertisements and the most models do it without any objections.

Women are often represented as a product in advertisements. They tend to take the role of helper or object. Men are still represented as strong characters and their appraisal seems to be the central concern of the female models. The representation of women on page and screen are often stereotyped in terms of conforming to social expectations. In media the physical beauty of women gets more value than any of her other talents. The scarcity of strong female role models and the artificial nature of such portrayals bear very little resemblance to the reality experienced by women worldwide.

From the very beginning women have been portrayed as housewives, dependent on men & sex objects in advertisements. However for past one decade there have been some changes in the images of women. Representation of women in advertisements has been experiencing a shift from the house wife centric advertisements to the career women advertisements. She is generally

presented as a superwoman, who manages to do all the work at home and on the job with the help of a product, of course, not of her husband or children or friends. However these new images do not represent any real progress but rather create an illusion that using the products anyone can make their lives easier. The images of women are always attractive, who provides the desirable image for the advertisement, irrespective of her importance to the advertisement.

In the media the portrayals of women have only served to reinforce rather than challenge men's suppression of women. In this paper I would like to discuss that women in ads represent what the society holds as an ideal image of her. Women are continued to be predominantly portrayed as a sexual object, thoughtless, dependent, caretakers, preoccupied with beauty. To illustrate this I will look at some television commercials and analyze them.

Chapter: 1

Literature Review

1.1 Introduction:

Nowadays, advertising is omnipresent in our lives. It has a really strong influence in our decisions as consumers. The aim of advertisement is no longer restricted in to informing us about the product and its use. It is more about having a product. It can make us laugh; it can shock us as well. Advertising has a link with our custom and codes, which govern our society. This is why we believe that advertisements represent our lifestyle and our thinking. What we see we believe it. Advertisements portray women in different roles such as mother, wife, girlfriend, friend, sister, daughter and many other roles. Among these different roles their main placement in advertisement is surrounded by either housewives or career women. Though women have different roles to play but their representation in advertisements is limited. This chapter will mainly focus on some literary aspects of representation, female representation and advertisements.

1.2 Representation:

There is a great deal of attention paid to the very word representation in the media. However, literary representation refers to “the act of representing or the state of being represented”. Representation is used in almost every social field like art, culture, politics, science, law and in many other fields. It represents an image or likeness of something. More precisely American Philosopher Richard Rorty has said representation is, “The picture which holds traditional philosophy captive is that of the mind as a great mirror, containing various representations – some accurate and some not – and capable of being by pure, non-empirical methods”. It is also the most important part of scientific practice and deals with the process of knowledge production. Many great people like Richard Rorty, Michel Foucault and Martin Heidegger has worked on the philosophical aspects of representation. All of them agreed in the same point that representation and knowledge are two inseparable elements in modern philosophy. Representation is incomplete without knowledge. At beginning representation was a theory of knowledge and as time passed representation became a practical tool of knowledge in nineteenth century. According to Foucault, “if representation remains an epistemological model in the Modern Age after 1800, representations as product of knowledge touch their limits as practical cognitive tools at the beginning of the nineteenth century.” (Cultural Geography)

In advertisements representation refers to the presentation of the social aspects using the elements of fantasy. Advertisements represent those ideologies, which are related to the social, cultural and religious fundamental objects. To portray the reality in front the eyes of the people advertisements uses such thing like people, places, objects, events, ideologies, cultural

characteristics and other concepts. Representation in advertisement involves the “process and products of creation” (<http://www.genderads.com>). Process refers to the method where the producers mixed the sociological and psychological aspects of human. They represent world of fantasy to attract the customer and product is the outcome of the creation. Representation occupy not only how “identities of each person are represented within the text but also how they are constructed in the processes of production and reception by people whose identities are also differentially marked in relation to such demographic factors” (<http://www.genderads.com>). Advertisements play with the emotion and weakness of people and represent a false image to ensure the people that they can be what they think. Most of the audiences believe that what they see in the advertisements is real and they can surely become what they want.

1.3 Female Representation:

Female representations in advertisements are based on the some criteria's such as “childlike/maternal, jobless, seductive/provocative, dependent upon a man, perfect, ditzy/unintelligent, and manipulative” (Representation of Woman in Advertisements by Kendra Bermosk). The advertisers “focus on body image, inadequacy, and subservience” of female model (Sex, Lies, and the Media: Questioning Representation by Ryan Saxby Hill). The creation of the images that make women derisory in the society, “there are new markets for products to fix these shortcomings” (Sex, Lies, and the Media: Questioning Representation by Ryan Saxby Hill). This is the reason for which the women are becoming more conscious about their weight and following weight loss regimes, anti-aging products, and many other beauty products to make them perfect. Images of women in advertisements are designed to sell products. Women are a

common element in advertising for both products of male and female. In most advertisements, male characters are rewarded for self-control and the control of others aggression and violence, financial independence, and physical desirability. Advertisements represent the dominant social norms for us. What we see in the ads can over time develop into what we view as normal or right. The viewers think that the ads are always presenting the right images in front of them. So advertisements play the powerful role in portraying the images of women in advertisements. In a seminar a well known producer of the Bangladesh media world Mustafa Sarwar Foruqi said that they also think about the position of women in creating any commercial and they do not create any negative images of women consciously. They portray women more in ads because women take majority decisions in shopping. He took the example of detergent and said that as it is a household product so using a female model in this ad would be a better choice for the manufacturer to sell the product. He also talked about the advertisements of fairness cream. He said that women are conscious about beauty from the ancient age so these ads will naturally have female models and there is nothing wrong about it. But he pointed out that the message they are giving to the society of getting a better husband by using the fairness cream is wrong. This is how we are actually hurting a woman's self respect. Representing women in advertisements is not bad but representing them in a negative way and spreading the wrong message in the society is bad (18th March, 2008 Prothom Alo edition).

1.4 Advertisements:

Advertising holds a special position within the economic organization of a modern society. Advertising deals with ideas, attitudes, values and give them cultural form. Advertising gives meaning to words and images. Raymond Williams call advertisement the 'magic' which can transform commodities into glamorous signifiers. The growing culture of advertisements has stepped into what we read, what we care about, the ways we raise our children, our ideas of right and wrong and many other activities in both our public and private life. "It is a social practice, and it does not operate in a vacuum" (Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, Dec, 1997 by Mee-Eun Kang). The social role of advertising involves a number of "interconnected relationships - those between person and object, use and symbol, symbolism and power, and communication and satisfaction as it reflects the light of cultural expectations" (Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, Dec, 1997 by Mee-Eun Kang). As a socializing agent, the visual imagery provided by the advertisements can have a powerful impact on our attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors, as it greatly significce our identity through its meaning.

A revolution of images in advertisements began about 150 years ago with the invention of photography. For the first time, visual representation of objects in space could be reproduced on a mass scale. Image communication was born. It only took about 50 years for this new method of representation to become a major player in the communication of social values in society. The images conveyed by advertisements have become so sophisticated and persuasive that they now organize our experiences and understanding in a significant way. According to the

Raymond Williams essay "Advertising: The Magic System" the development of advertisements took place in the time of Industrial Revolution and the development occurred due to the growth of trade and commerce. But still in the 1850s advertisements were not taken as a respectable medium. "Advertisement is resorted to for the purpose of introducing inferior articles into the market." (Raymond Williams). But in the last hundred years advertisements slowly captured its seat and became one of the most successful industry in the world.

The power of advertising has its ability to manipulate people. It has the ability to turn the audiences into unconscious and addicted consumers. Standard ideas were offered through "mythology, legend, literature, art and history are now born and sustained in advertising" (Ravi @ Rsingh.net). Looking at the acts of the standard models we form ourselves. Even the most monotonous advertisements affect us by the power of the image, and representations of people which suggest us that how we could and should model ourselves. The difference in advertisements picture and in the real life is that we do not experience the same pleasure suggested by the images advertisements when we use the product. Yet, it is the images that force us to buy the product, whether "it is of Michael Jordan soaring through the air thanks to his magical Nike sneakers or of Halle Berry whose beauty is credited to her use of Revlon cosmetics" (Ravi @ Rsingh.net). We are buying the images of advertisements, not the product. This lie is replaced with our thin truth that we are buying quality products, but actually we are just buying the artificial images.

Modern advertisements depend on images. Since an advertisement reaches millions of individuals daily, it is affecting the minds of the audience, especially women who are becoming

more fascinated by the models of different ads. Advertisements portray the stereotypical images of women like a woman's place should be in the home, women do not make important decisions or do important things, women are dependent and need men's protection. Advertisements have consistently confined women to traditional mother at home and beauty or sex oriented roles that are not representative of women's diversity.

There is an enormous variety of images or representations of females in advertising starting from a simple housewife to a glamorous and eye-catching model. The consumers are always surrounded by an ideal of female beauty, which is impossible to achieve because it is artificial. Images themselves are created artificially, by studio lighting, by airbrushing, and by computer enhancement. Even the models often construct their bodies through different types cosmetic surgeries get the perfect look. Yet, in spite of being so unrepresentative of real women, this artificial looks are found everywhere in the advertisements. Women have a tendency to judge them against this artificial standard and failure is expected. By judging themselves with the artificial look many women feel that they are overweight and beautiful enough. That's why the women always remain anxious about their look and stay on dieting for the whole year. These idealized images of female beauty means women must transform themselves because their natural is not good enough. In the advertisements women are often transformed into a doll, a puppet or a mask, a thing rather than a human being.

In most visual advertisements the images of women are shown inside the home rather than in the office. Females are mostly taking in ads for cleaning products, food products, beauty products, drugs, clothing, and home appliances. On the other hand males are most often shown in ads for cars, travel, alcoholic beverages, cigarettes, banks, industrial products, entertainment

media, and industrial companies. It seems that women should only think about themselves and their family, whereas men are mostly related with the economic flourishment. Even in the sports advertisements the beauty of the women comes before their performance as a sport person. There is no different scenario in the print advertisements as well. We often see newspaper is publishing advertisements seeking a "tall, fair and beautiful bride looking for an impotent bridegroom." There are advertisements where potential grooms are forever asking for "beautiful, slim, fair and well educated girls." They have the right to the freedom of expression. But what can anyone say when a female medical graduate looking for a life mate mentions in the ad that she is "very fair, beautiful and 162 cms tall?" Or, when a successful young fashion designer of 25 insists that she is "fair and slim?" These things show that the women are just considered as valuable products not as human being. Their talent is insignificant in front of their beauty.

1.5 Advertisement in Bangladesh:

Advertising is a very influential tool for communicating information about products, services or ideas of different promoter. It is profitable for both the producer and consumer of goods. Due to the insufficient industrialization there were only three specialized advertising company in Bangladesh and they are Bitopi, East Asiatic now Asiatic) and Interspan. They used to provide their services to multinational companies like Lever Brothers Ltd which helped the multinational companies to increase their product range. The advertising sector started to grow more rapidly after independence. According to the formal source there are about 150 agencies registered with Bangladesh television and more than 350 unregistered agencies in Bangladesh. The registered agencies hold almost 70% of the total market share whereas the informal agencies

hold only 13% of the total market share. The rest is added by the in-house advertisements of business firms and enterprises. The advertising agencies, which hold the maximum number of market share are Adcomm, Asiatic, Bitopi, Unitrend, Grey, Interspeed, Popular, Madona, and Matra.

Advertising sector in Bangladesh is divided into two categories and they are Above the Line (ATL) category and Below the Line (BTL) category. Both the category preserves almost 50% of the total revenue. ATL includes newspapers, magazines, radio, television, satellite and cable television. BTL includes event management, in-house advertisement (company's own advertisement) at purchase, outdoor advertisement (billboards, hoarding, neon signs, and bell signs), innovative activities (*jatra*, street drama) and advertisement on vehicle bodies or fliers. In 1999 the registered agencies earned about Tk 2 billion and the informal agencies earned about Tk 1 billion. The levy structure depends on the media type and time or space of various advertisements. A 30-seconds advertisement on Bangladesh Television is charged Tk 9,450 at peak hours which starts from 7 PM till the end of day's transmission. The amount increases by surcharge consequently 50% for fixed time, 70% for immediately before or after the news, 80% for mid-breaks in films and 100% for mid-break in news. Rates are almost half during transmission hours before 7 PM. The commercial time allowed to a sponsor in a 60-minute program is up to 180 seconds and the rate charged per episode or program is Tk 80,000 early time, Tk 100,000 for peak time.

The advertisements of books and magazines, which do not contain any advertisement and activities of registered cultural organizations and voluntary organizations get 25% concession

from Bangladesh Television. But this offer is not valid for guidebooks for admission tests and competitive examinations, test papers and publishing houses. Bangladesh television however, imposes Nevertheless an additional surcharge of 60% is imposed by the Bangladesh Television on spot and sponsored advertisement for all products, which are produced or assembled outside the country.

The customers of advertising agencies include private national companies (PNC), multinational companies (MNC) and organizations (NGO). The MNC holds more than 60% of the media share and whereas the PNC holds 25% of it. The world of advertising is a very competitive field and those products get more privilege that has high demand in market. The higher portion of advertising budget is allotted for the consumer-oriented products. The demand for the industrial goods advertisements is in a growing stage in local market. Looking at the usefulness of advertisements, the export-oriented companies are also putting their step into the world of advertisements especially in the brochure development part.

Advertising agencies cannot publish what ever they want. There is specific legal notification for printing, publishing and mass communication, which is governed by the Ministry of Information of Bangladesh government. The advertising agencies cannot promote any banned product and also take any unethical decision regarding the advertisements. In Bangladesh the advertising sector is growing rapidly. This growth is enhancing the economic growth of the country in a positive way. It is proving various choices to the consumers and increasing the purchasing power the people of Bangladesh (Syed Farhat Anwar, Banglapedia)

Chapter: 2

Images of Women in Advertisements

2.1 Introduction

Everyday we are entertained with different kinds of advertisements in our everyday life. In this paper the images of women are discussed in advertisements under three categories. These are the household product advert, the beauty advert and other advert.

2.2 The Household Product Advertisements

Over the past decade, more and more women have either been doing the housework solely, or managing their career along with housework. Today most women with pre-school children are either in full or part-time employment and to compliment this, an increasing number of husbands are doing household chores. If these facts are real then why is it that women still stand as the predominant feature in household product commercials? According to Dow (1995:200, cited in Holtzman 2000:80), 'one of the reasons why television is resistant to the messages of feminism... is that they (sponsors) view those messages as conflicting with woman's desire to consume.' Advertisers do not want to present a liberated woman because this new woman does not want anything magical because she knows that life is not a bed of roses. So she will not buy the magical products, which can solve any problem relating personal or professional life. For this reason the advertisers' most of the time uses the images of homely woman. Another reason for this could be the fact that men dominate the workplace, as very few women are in the

position of decision making. The advertising industry itself has particularly high male to female ratio.

Women are still being portrayed as being dependent on men. In the most recent advertisement *Herpick toilet cleaner* for example, the housewife's attempt at cleaning the toilet proves unsuccessful. Then the male actor Mahfuz Ahmed comes to help her in cleaning the toilet. So he is a successful toilet cleaner. The voice tells us that *Herpick*, an active liquid cleaning agent, which washes away all the grime from the toilet and makes it safe for every member of the family. It is not explicitly stated but by tough male appearance encourages believing that the product is really very active. It also indicates that the woman needs a man to invent powerful products in order for her to do the work well. The man is the adviser and the woman shows her gratitude by following his steps. She could not do it without him, resulting in the traditional message that women need men.

Another example of household product advertisement can be the ad of Surf Excel. The ad starts with showing a lady buying some vegetable in a market. In that place a man who is not visible to the screen but only his voice is heard enter into the scene like a journalist. He asks the lady that "how much detergent do you need in a month to wash the cloths of your whole family". First she refuses to answer then she said that she needs approximately one and a half kg of detergent and three to four soaps in a month. Then the male voice reveales the most important and interesting information about the product "Surf Excel" that she will need only half kg of Surf Excel worth of eighty (80) taka to wash the same amount of cloth in a month. The lady does not believe the claim of the male voice but still tries the product. The next scene shows that she is

standing in her balcony surrounded by cloths and the male voice is asking her about the performance of Surf Excel. She answers humorously with a smile that “the product worked really well and a packet of half kg surf excel covered the whole month. May be there were fewer cloths than the previous month. Let me try another month.” Again in this ad the man became the adviser and the pathfinder for the woman. She was able to save her money and energy. Her cloths became cleaner then before. The female model in this ad is just to try the product and give her “valuable” comment about the product. The male model by remaining invisible in the screen became the ultimate introducer of the product.

2.3 The Beauty Product Advertisements

Women have always been very beauty conscious and insecure about their appearances. Advertisers have exploited this by bombarding them with ways in which to improve their appearance. For example we all have seen the ads of fairness creams where the advertisers pass the message to the audience that only using their product a woman can be successful in her career and also can get all the attention of her male partner. Now a days there are other type of ads, which have become very influential among women are the anti aging creams which promises women a regeneration of their youthful days. The advertisers create such an atmosphere that we, the general audience blindly believe that only by using their products all our dreams will become real. But, does our dream really come true?

In the ads of “Fair & Lovely” fairness cream they portray that women can make their dream true by using their product. In one of the ad they showed that by using their product an

ordinary girl becomes a winner of a dance competition. The ad opens with the conversation between a father and a daughter. The father is telling off his daughter that there is no use of dancing in her life rather she should concentrate on her study which will bring success in her life. But, on the other hand, the daughter strongly set up her mind that she will obviously dance and win the competition because she has the “ultimate power”, the fair & lovely cream in her hand. After using the cream for twenty-eight days she becomes fair and beautiful and apparently she achieved her success. She becomes the winner of the dance competition. So without hard work and practice an ordinary girl becomes the winner of a dance competition by the magical help of Fair & Lovely, fairness cream. This ad conveys the message that beauty is the ultimate key to success. They actually reduce the value of education in a woman’s life. To make their dreams come true they just need to become beautiful and glamorous, nothing else.

In most of the beauty product ads there is a common picture that the woman wants to attract the man. It seems that women have only one motto in their lives and that is to draw the attention of their husband by their beauty. The ad of “Joi Hair Oil” says the same story. The ad starts by showing that a newly married wife is trying to attract her husband smiling and flirting. But he does not notice. Then she dresses herself wonderfully and again tries to attract her husband. Unfortunately this time he also ignores her and remains busy in his calculation. She becomes angry and sits opposite of the dressing table. The busy husband suddenly notices his wife’s beautiful hair in the mirror and goes close to her. She asks him ‘what you are looking at?’ and he replied ‘your beautiful hair’. Then she give a look to the bottle of joi hair oil on the dressing table and mischievously tells him that you do not have to look at my hair, rather you work on your calculator. From that moment he falls in love with her beautiful hair. The ad ends

by saying that this is the beginning of a romantic life indicating the bottle of joi hair oil. So joi hair oil made their happy and romantic.

2.4 Other advertisements

Don't we feel strange when we see a woman in cigarette advertisements? But in present days a woman almost always accompanies a man in the ads. Women are portrayed in the cigarette advertisements to increase the style, elegance and power of the men. But it's not the woman who is smoking. She is just standing beside the man. So what is the necessity of portraying her in those ads where she has no role to play?

In sanitary fittings advertisements women are merely objectified. Often times women have no relevance whatsoever to the product that is being promoted. The advertisements of Fahim Sanitary fitting product can be a good example in this case. The ad starts with a sensuous silhouette of a woman. But when the advertisement ends we come to know that the model is actually touching and appreciating the product (hand basin). The beginning of the advertisement does not match with the ending. So to understand what is the advertisement about the audience has to really wait till the ending. In this advertisement the physical feature of the female model was unnecessary.

Like the cigarette ad women are often portrayed in ads of male accessories. A current example of this is the *Gillette* advertisement *Mach 3* (a razor.) A handsome, muscular man shaves with a Mach 3. He is demonstrating that the blade shaves smoothly to the skin. A

beautiful female model feels the smoothness of his face and the female voice-over tells the male audience of the razor's attributes. It gives a close shave but the appeal for this look will have for a woman: 'you'll (men) love the difference and so will we.' Doesn't it look very funny that a female is telling the qualities of a razor that males use.

Often in ads women are portrayed as objects. They do not do anything by themselves. It is the power of the product, which leads her to do something. This rule is applicable for both the housewives and modern career women. The typical portrayal of the housewife, as dependent on her husband is still prevalent in advertisements. The advertisements Insurance Company urge a man to give his shoulders the satisfaction of protecting his wife. The woman is shown as someone rather incapable of looking after herself and requires a husband to do so. The scene is little bit different in the case of the modern career oriented women. Though she does not need the help of her husband but she cannot manage her work and home without the help of the products advertised.

Chapter: 3

Criticism

3.1 Introduction

The world- wide trend towards consumerism has created an atmosphere in which advertisements habitually portray women as their primary source of attracting consumers. The aim of advertisements is to influence someone to buy a thing and therefore, to attract the consumers especially the male consumers the advertisers often portray women who are treated as commodities in advertising. Women are shown in advertisements to be totally responsible for household tasks. The patriarchal society wants to see women in the acts of cooking, cleaning and child rearing. Beauty and youth are given significance in the representation of women.

Maximum of advertisements use women to promote products. Advertisements that sell products of men also carry images of women. The people of the ad world know that it is appealing if there is an attractive female in the ad. Thus a woman's body is used for sexual representation in advertising. Even women do not get the appropriate position in those advertisements such as household product ads where the patriarchal society wants to see them. The female models are always accompanied by a male partner in the advertisements who act as an adviser for the female models. If the advertisers want to make the male models the center of the idea then there is no need to portray the gorgeous and attractive female models in the ads. In the advertisements such of unconstructive pictures of women gives a down worthy image of real women in the society. Sometime the implication may become more severe than what we may have thought.

3.2 Featuring Female Body In advertisements

Featuring a female model in advertisements becomes a compulsion for the advertisers, which sometimes seems unnecessary. Advertisers seem to sell anything from shaving gel to cars. The women are being projected as merely an object in such advertisements. The advertisement starts with an attractive woman posing in seductive ways followed by the product or the service offered by the company. The beauty of the model already allures the customer, so advertisers do not have to put in more effort to motivate them. It is totally irrelevant to feature a female model or an actress in advertisement promoting men's products. One good example of this point is showing women in axe deodorant commercial. In all the axe deodorant ads the male model is shown always to be surrounded by the beautiful and glamorous female models. In the ads the female models become fascinated by the fragrance of the axe deodorant and want to have the user of the deodorant (the male model) desperately. Here the advertisers do not give preference not to the other benefits of the product. Their main concentration remains on portraying beautiful and glamorous female models. Due to more concentration on the model, the attention deserved by the product is not sufficient. The main focus of the advertisement is lost. Also such unnecessary projection of women is derogatory to them.

3.3 Gender Roles

Portrayal of women in the advertisements claims that it is not only the physical exposure of women that is insulting but also the reinforcements of stereotypes that are more damaging to the image and the dignity of womanhood. Television advertisements go on saying about good mothers who feed their children with health drinks and instant noodles, ideal wives who care about their husband's cholesterols, mothers who wash their babies with soft soaps to ensure soft bottoms and little girls who say they choose certain soap so that it makes them as beautiful as their mother. These are damaging, insulting and humiliating to the woman's image and make the talk of women's emancipation futile. On the other hand men are often portrayed in ads to show the economic growth of country. For an example in the ad of cement, it is the man who is portrayed as an architect or a good businessman or sometime an elderly person with his lifetime experience to convey the goodwill of the cement. But today we have female architects as well in the society but the advertisers don't talk about them. So these kinds of advertisements build an invisible boundary between men and women and convey the patriarchal message that women are not allowed to work outside. Their main task is to work at home and look after their family. For an example in an ad of 'Radhuni Gura Mosolla' the position of women at home is clearly defined. In that ad the mother of the male model tells her son to bring a radhuni (wife), so that everyday she will cook delicious food for him. In reply the son brings some Radhuni spices. So here the advertisers made it clear to the audience that only good female cook can become a good wife. It seems that women have no other quality or talent than cooking well.

People are moving very fast in their life. Today male and female both are earning almost equally for their family and men are helping women in doing the house hold chores.

Unfortunately this real picture of society is still lacking in the world of advertisements. We are considering advertisements as the tool of communicating information, medium of education, mirror of the society then why such a constructive tool is standing so behind than the reality?

Though there are some changes happening in portraying models, but the allegory is as similar as the old wine in a new bottle. Advertisers are now portraying the male models the same way they use to portray the female models. Men are now often represented in the ads of spices, fairness cream and in many other ads featuring male products. They are also portrayed as beauty conscious men of today. Remaining the theme unchanged the advertisers are just using the role reversal method in terms of portraying male models in advertisements. In the earlier period the advertisers portrayed women as an object and now they are doing the same with the men. Now men are making themselves attractive for the women.

3.4 Portraying Women as Inferior than Men

The idea of the advertisers behind portraying female models unnecessarily in advertisements does not carry success every time. For example in a study "*Women's Role Portrayal Preferences in Advertisements: An Empirical Study*" conducted by Lawrence H. Wortzel and John M. Frisbie showed that "women are both reasonable and reasonably rational in their preferences with respect to the role portrayals in advertising. They tend to select role preferences on the basis of product function, rather than on the basis of ideology." That means

female consumers are not attracted by those advertisements, which show women in a derogatory way and they choose the products on the basis of its performance and end benefits. Women don't want to see themselves as a redundant object in advertisements. On the other hand the study also pointed out the fact that men think differently from women. In this article according to male consumers "women are perfectly satisfied (and are probably willing consumers) when portrayed in their traditional homemakers, fashion, or sex-object roles." The male viewpoint is totally different from the female viewpoints. Sometime the advertisers also support the thoughts of the male consumers regarding women consumers. They portray the male models as the main actor in almost every ad. As we can see in the Herpick toilet cleaner ad as discussed in chapter 2, the male model comes out with the solution for the female model regarding her toilet. In this ad the male model is the center of attraction and the female model is just acting as a recipient. The underlying message that most of the advertisements convey is that women can not do anything by themselves and they always need the help of men in every step of their life. Though women are the sole elements of the house hold products advertisements but ultimately the men bring the solutions of all that problems women face in their home. It indicates that women are unable to do their house chores without the help of men. Even at home women are inferior to men.

3.5 Social Implications

Advertisements are convincing and motivating tool, which can leave a deep impact on the minds of the viewers and play a major role in shaping the culture and attitude of the people. After the commercial is shot, the advertisers use graphical technology to alter any kind of imperfection of the body into perfection. In a way it sends out the signal that only perfect people are meant to use the product. These commercials have a negative impact on the society and lead

to problems for the common woman. The major negative impact is the anxiety in women to get those near-perfect bodies. They get so pressurized that they often take the unhealthy way to reach the set goals. These commercials lower the self-confidence of women. The women often visualize themselves as unattractive due to the image being portrayed of the perfect woman in advertisements.

Consumers are often surrounded by an ideal of female beauty, which is impossible to achieve because it is artificial. The images are created artificially by studio lighting, experts' make-up and computer enhancement, and sometimes - cosmetic surgery. In spite of being so unrepresentative of real women, this tends to be the only female body type we see in the advertisements. Women tend to judge themselves, against this artificial standard and failure is predictable. The impact of that is indicated by the fact that most of the normal weight women feel they are overweight and maintain strict diet chart all the time. This idealized image of female beauty means women must transform themselves. Only the beautiful women can achieve success and no one else. In the ad of "Fair & Lovely" described in chapter 2, the girl achieves her dream by using Fair & Lovely fairness cream. She becomes beautiful in 28 days and wins the dance competition. Some people believe in this type of story. There remains the success of the advertisers. The advertisers play with the emotion of the consumers and by showing this kinds of ads they are lessening the value of morality and education in ones life. People get attracted to this world of fantasy and forget the real world.

Conclusion

Gender representation in media has always been important for one to understand what it means to be male or female. So I have looked at advertisements, which are a part of media, possibly considered the most powerful and influential medium in this ever-increasing commercial society. The images imposed upon us by the patriarchal mass media compel us to mould ourselves into a set ideal. For a woman, that means having beauty, elegance, passivity and good domestic ability and for a man that means being tough, rough, competitive and business minded. Living in the 21st century however, it would seem to many of us that these ideals are no longer essential in gaining acceptance into society although they may still be common. Today, many women are self-reliant and career oriented whereas many men 'feel they have the right to self-expression and self-indulgence, to love and be loved' (Barthel 1992:148, internet). The new man and new woman might be present in today's society but to what extent are television advertisements an accurate account of this new picture is a question to ask.

Even today the images of women found in advertisements and commercials have the touch of the traditional homemakers or the sex object. Women are seen as the beloved wife when she is able to cook good food, excellent daughter in law when she follows the tradition of the mother in law and a good mother when she takes good care of her children. Her role remains unchanged even when she is portrayed as a career oriented woman. Though they are shown as a doctor in the ads but their only patient is their child. Even being a doctor her only responsibility is to find out which soap is good for her child. The gender discrimination is greatly noticeable in the ads. Women are always shown in subordinate, subservient and male-pleasing roles. On the

other hand men are portrayed as more career oriented and success persons. They are busy with their business or job and also about their family's future financial security.

But this is not the real picture of today's world. Now a day women are more career focused, independent and rational in their thinking. They are managing their professional and personal life by their own talent, not by the blessing of the advertised products. Now women have started to claim equal rights in terms of making decisions. Even men are also changing their views positively regarding women's position in society. Robert A. Peterson and Roger A. Kerin claim in their study '*The Female Role in Advertisements: Some Experimental Evidence*' that nudity in ads has least appeal among the audience. Men are not only fascinated by women in ads rather they judge the ads in terms of practicality used to visualize the theme, the product quality and the reputation of the company. According to the researchers, "Across product and respondents, the advertisement containing a nude model was consistently perceived as the least appealing, while the associated product and producing company were perceived as, respectively, possessing the lowest quality and being the least reputable."

Along with the changing trend of society the advertisers are also trying to change the patriarchal views in the ads and portray the modern ideas of gender roles in society. People are moving very fast in their life. Today male and female both are earning almost equally for their family. Men are also doing the household chores. In some of today's ads we get the picture of considering the fact that in a family both the husband and the wife have the equal responsibility for doing all the tasks. It is not only the duty of women to look after her family and do all the

chores. The advertisers are now becoming more sensible in portraying women in advertisements, though the change is happening very slowly. This slow change is not only happening in Bangladesh but in the advertisements sector of the whole world. Today both men and women are more conscious in choosing any products. So advertisers need to focus more on the projection of both male and female models to promote any product.

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