

## CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES IN COMMERCIAL ADVERTISEMENTS

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### Abstract

*In prehistoric times females were caring moms and loving partners doing household tasks and males were financial providers of the family, but in this modern age females are employees and performing various jobs in businesses and management. It is generally assumed that commercial advertisements reflect the society, but, in reality, they are unsuccessful to represent the achievements of females; instead they prefer to follow the traditional gender stereotypes. Commercial advertisements represent females as damsels in distresses and they are depicted as feminine being weak and fragile, easily frightened, defenseless, blinded by emotions, dependent on male counterparts and showing their beauty, grace and femininity attraction. Commercial advertisers present females in domestic scenes as femininity objects to promote the brand, but males are presented as attractive, strong and having high status occupations; these gender based stereotypes are continually degrading the status of females. Observing these considerations, the researchers make an effort to detect conceivable gender based stereotypical statements that exist in commercial advertisements. As research instrument the study utilized Critical Discourse and Semiotic Analysis approaches; the Discourse Analysis adopted Furlough's three dimensional frameworks textual features, discursive practice and social practice to expose how the advertisers construct ideologies about the female, while the Semiotic Analysis disclosed various icons, symbols and indexes used to publicize gender stereotypes in commercials advertisements. The data presented in tables' revealed stereotypes, ideologies and role of female in commercial advertisements. In the domain of research this masterpiece work is a precious addition.*

### INTRODUCTION

The female's representation in commercials advertisements is often labeled as exploitation, and derogation of females, which does not represent the contemporary females. Advertising always lags behind in promoting gender equality. Instead, it still reinforces female stereotypes and fails to portray the

females' empowerment. Gender stereotyping in advertising occurs when gender roles depictions deviate from equality. This occurs, for instance when females are pictured in doing domestic tasks, in a high degree of nudity, being dependent on males' protection and making tremendous efforts to get the

'ideal beauty' in order to keep their companion pleased; while males are shown in leading positions being strong and powerful (Tartaglia & Rollero, 2015). Advertising picture males and females the way we think they behave not the way they actually do behave in society. Feminine colleague is marginalized and undervalued in advertisements; they are depicted as passive and subordinate; as femininity objects infatuated in domestic responsibilities (Shaeikh et al., 2015). Further he claimed that publicists are continually assaulting females with the message that they are naturally imperfect. They make females believe that if they are not physically perfect and good-looking, they will not be valued by males (Cortese, 2015). Gender stereotypes in advertisements appealed that females are often represented in a stereotypical manner and have a subservient character and an inferior physical and social position than males (Goffman, 1978). Four decades have passed since but females are still portrayed similarly, therefore representing that advertisers continue to reduce the status of females in commercials advertisements. Gender stereotypes prevail both in texts and images of the commercials advertisements. For the purpose to divulge these stereotypical statements and texts, critical discourse and semiotic analysis were employed to analyze the texts, images, sign, gestures, and facial expressions in the commercials advertisements (Cohan, 2001).

### Research Objectives

The first aim of the present research is to explore stereotypes of modern age related to females in commercial advertisements; the second aim of the present research is to find that how publicists construct ideologies about female stereotypes commercial advertisements, and the third and last aim of the present research is to find out the different roles that are given to female in commercial advertisements.

### Research Questions

1. Explore the stereotypes of modern age related to females in commercial advertisements?
2. How publicists construct ideologies about female stereotypes commercial advertisements?

3. Explore the different roles that are given to female in commercial advertisements?

### Literature Review

Literature review is a written overview of major writings and other sources on a selected topic (Ahmad, 2025). Sources covered in the review may include scholarly journal articles, books, and websites (Rao et al., 2023; Arshad et al., 2025). The purpose of literature review is to gain an understanding of the existing research and debates relevant to a particular research topic (Ahmad et al., 2021; Maitlo et al., 2025). Gender stereotypes in particular, are defined as beliefs that certain attributes differentiate females and males. It is a stereotype that contains the reduction of persons to extravagant set commonly undesirable, character qualities and stressed that stereotyping decreases, naturalizes, and fixes dissimilarities (Zotos & Tsihla, 2014). Females are represented more in the domestic scene, dependent on males' security and seem unable in creating choices (Courtney & Lockeretz, 2019). But males are characterized as durable, dominant and played more working roles than females. Moreover, females perform entertaining and ornamental parts and represented in attractive and seductive dresses than males. The underlying communications of advertisements emphasize femininity presenting females as femininity objects (Nagi, 2014). Female figure is used to take part in advertisements and reached different level with the opinion that femininity is nothing to hide. Advertisements represent females in two positions, housewives and models and males as employee. Goffman (1978) explains that a male may do the female task, but never under the observant eye of the female.

Females are raised in attractive and emotional characterization without skillful mechanism above actions; on the contrary, males are involved in leading and influential positions with motivation and bravery but inadequate emotional revelation (Cankaya, 2013). Additionally, advertisers portrayed females with unrealistic beauty that is unattainable in reality; females in advertisements are generally portrayed as gorgeous, having fair, soft, smooth, shining and perfect skin; moreover expressed with youthful characteristics, containing wide eyes, full lips, high cheekbones, faultless skin, pleasurable

appearance (Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015). Investigators found other aspects of stereotypical portrayals of females that are manifested in advertisements; they were portrayed in lower positions like sitting, inclined and lying down, in contrast to the male colleague. Females were often portrayed using their fingers and hands to hint the plans of an item.

Females' figures appear often than pictures of males' bodies, males expressions are snapped more often than their bodies. Females in beer advertisements are represented through body shots; besides, they found that most females in these advertisements appeared in either sportswear or in swimming costume, while the males constantly dressed in work clothes (Tehseem & Kalsoom, 2015). Moreover, they argued that this strengthens the stereotype that females are femininity objects, while males make choices and look after females. Females were not portrayed in the office setting; in fact they are frequently presented without any clear indication of employed position; this specifies that advertisers prefer to minimize the employ position of females in the advertisements. Females were depicted as femininity objects commonly young, skinny, gorgeous, impassive, reliant, and unskilled. She proceeds by appealing that the perspectives females looked in often had to do with home and children, and working females were represented as very feminine and gentle (Cankaya, 2013). Males were represented as independent and dominant; females adopted the role of a submissive and helpless supporting character that is inactive and waiting for males' consideration.

**Research Methodology**

The research methodology is the process which is used by the researcher to gather data for resolving problems of investigation and design of the research

comprises of the whole procedure which is conducted research (Jalbani et al., 2023; Maitlo et al., 2024; Ahmad et al, 2025). The qualitative design was used in this research to disclose all the gender stereotypes displayed in commercial advertisements. Four print advertisements were analyzed with the help of a critical discourse analysis and a semiotic analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis approach was used to disclose those ideologies that were enacted in these commercial advertisements which present females in stereotypical characters. The critical discourse analysis was based on Fairclough's three dimensions framework: textual, discursive and social-cultural level. The textual analysis involved the analysis of rhetoric devices and the vocabulary that advertisers have used to stereotype women. The discursive analysis focused on the level that deals with the text production and interpretation while the social practice analysis is related to the ideologies disseminated in the advertisements. This study also employed semiotic analysis to explore the sign, symbols, gestures, body language, facial expression and color manifested in the commercial advertisements.

**Analysis and Discussion**

**Textual Analysis**

Here the tagline is targeted at the woman. By emphasizing on the word woman here the advertiser fortifies on the stereotype that kitchen is the place for women only and not for men. Furthermore, the brand enhances the idea that it will match the expectations of the contemporary Indian women who like get 100% satisfaction from everything, especially when it comes to pleasing their husbands. The above sentence legitimizes on the unequal distribution of power between genders.

Table: 01

**Discursive Analysis**

Strategy Used In Advertisement	Linguistic Devices
Celebrity endorsement	"Woman ka match sirf catch".
puffery	100%, match
Emotional words	Woman

- ❖ **Social Practice Analysis:** Females are still portrayed happily in the household product. This ad shows that women are confined to domestic chores, while men are associated with power and authority. It proves that female stereotype still continues to persist, especially in India, where women do not have power in decision making and their place are believed to be in the kitchen. Whether a female celebrity is powerful or independent, still advertising considers women as inferior and never fails to depict them in stereotypical roles.
- ❖ **Textual Analysis of the Ideal Beauty:** With lotus White Glow Gel Crème, it's just easy

to get this attention arresting skin. As it comes enriched with saxifrage extracts and milk enzymes that help lighten and brighten your skin in seven days. Therefore, go for lotus White Glow Gel Crème and get uninterrupted admiration. The underlined words signify the importance of being beautiful. It conveys the idea that being beautiful and attractive is a girl greatest weapon to make men fall for them. The ad here tells women to attain such glow and perfection like the stunning model so that they can seduce men with their beauty. And if they use the lotus White Glow they will get numbers of admirers.

Table:

02

Discursive Analysis

Strategy Used In Advertisement	Linguistic Devices
Celebrity endorsement	Aisa Glow Dikhe ,Har Nazr Ruke. Puffery Nazar Ruke,
puffery	Celebrity endorsement uninterrupted admiration, brighten your skin in 7 days.
Emotional words	Attention arresting skin, glow, lighten and brighten

- ❖ **Social Practice Analysis:** Advertisers have shaped a new type of female that does not exist in reality; they are depicted as having a perfect beauty, being young, attractive with fair, smooth, soft and shining skin free from crinkles, blemishes and stains having radiant hair, dazzling and bright eyes. The advertiser has used Jacqueline Fernandez, the former Miss Universe of Sri Lanka to prove such ideology of ideal beauty. Model is depicted in a flawlessly glowing skin and she looks fresh and young. The advertisement here is shaping the ideology that women are only beautiful if they are the white ideal. They should get rid of blemishes and enlighten their skin so that they may look attractive and pleasant to the opposite gender.
- ❖ **Semiotic Analysis:** The model looks young and naturally beautiful as she is pictured in a natural makeup with her hair open. Her lips are slightly opened, revealing her perfect white teeth. These physical characteristics are stereotypically associated with beauty. The model is looking directly to the audience and her direct gaze denotes confidence. Her hand is placed delicately under her chin which symbolizes that females are fragile, delicate and are not meant for masculine work. Model is wearing a sleeveless top which is revealing her bare skin.
- ❖ **Textual Analysis of Femininity Object:** “I am juicy couture” a bold and alluring new fragrance that evokes the glamorous rebel in every juicy girl. Here the emphasized words

pictured the girls as being seductive. The word Juicy is generally associated with young attractive femininity and similarly, in this advertisement the girl is portrayed as stimulating, thrilling and exciting. Rebel is a negative word, but when it is associated with the word glamorous, it indicates the

stylishness of the female. Rebellious is for only juicy girls and they do this in a stimulating, seductive and unabashed manner. The bold and glamorous fragrance will evoke a sensual and passionate feeling among the juicy girls.

Table: 03  
Discursive Analysis

Strategy Used In Advertisement	Linguistic Devices
An interactive model	“I am juicy couture”
puffery	Rebel, juicy
Emotional words	Bold, alluring, glamorous

❖ **Social Practice Analysis:** Sometimes femininity themes in advertising are combined with ideas that are derogatory to women. Sexual objectification refers to using females as decorative or attention getting objects, with little and not relevance to the product advertised. Perfume advertising resorts to emotional appeal, in which the product is symbolically associated with sensuality, eroticism and mystery. These advertisements try to create a mood rather than provide information about the solid properties of the product. The word juicy depicts how the girl is regarded as a femininity object by males, and males prefer to have a bold, attractive and at the same time a stimulating partner.

❖ **Semiotic Analysis:** The advertisement portrays an attractive young woman with a daring look who is wearing a black dress. The gaze of the girl depicts her as being bold and daring. Her bright red lipstick evokes an erotic feeling. The flowing water from the roses blends with the word juice. The squeezing of the roses pictured her as being wild and dangerous and the roses indicate her incurable attractiveness. Her well fitted black dress is illuminating her breast cleavage, making her reachable as a femininity object. Her black dress denotes rebellion, strength, elegance and mystery.

Her looks, her red lipstick and the crushing of the roses portray her in a femininity aggressive mode.

❖ **Reliant on on Males’ Safety (Semiotic Analysis):** In advertisements, Males are shown steady while females are shown usually holding hands, leaning on shoulders, thereby suggesting that females are much in need of support, help and safety Goffman (1978). In this advertisement we can see a female leaning on the shoulder of a male and the male is delicately holding her waist; such movements indicate the impression that the female needs the safety of the male and her adventurous gaze portray the fact that nobody can dare to hurt her as she is now under the protection of the male and she is safe. According to Khan (2016), advertisements are often criticized for stereotyping females and portraying them as inferior, submissive, dependent and helpless while presenting males as self-assured, self-governing and dominant. Her bare legs are a sign of femininity; the surfing board behind her back may denote her as a strong and bold lady, but she is still under male dominance. She still needs to be taken care of by a male. The ideology of the advertisement is that females are weak, and they always need their mates for their safety; no matter how strong, bold and courageous

a female may appear, they are always under male dominance.

### Conclusion

The conflict of gender equivalence is a continuing practice and publicists continuously catch a technique to discredit females in character. The purpose of this research is to examine gender stereotypes in commercial advertisements. By using Fairclough's critical discourse analysis and semiotic analysis, the research found that advertising maintains female stereotypes from the happy housewives to femininity objects. They are still pictured as weak, dependent and inferior beings. Both textual and visual elements are used to reinforce gender stereotypes. The research also reveals that the stereotypical representations of females as weak and powerless were found to have been substituted by the representations of influential, bold and perfect-looking females. Likewise, it was perceived that they were continuously characterized with perfect attractiveness in diverse characters.

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