

Engender Media in Gender Roles Reforms: Ethnographic Content Analysis of Pakistan Television Advertisements

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Abstract

Images of both men and women in media develop our ideal of what is desirable for them in a specific culture. Nowadays media is modifying our understandings and expectations about gender roles. Usually media advertisements have more influence on views about gender roles than other media programs. This is because advertisements are repeated multiple times and convey specific messages. Advertisements also portray men and women in their cultural context that contribute in maintaining cultural conformity through socialization process. The objective of this research is to evaluate the representation of assigned gender roles traditional vs. reformed in Pakistan TV advertisements. Pakistan is considered a patriarchal society, where men are heading the family, being the decision makers, dominant and independent, while women are considered as dependent, domestic, and confined. The present study is an observational media study based on ethnographic content analysis of advertisements taken from popular Pakistan Television channels. The study concluded that advertisements of Pakistan Television are depicting men and women in modern and reformed gender roles to promote gender equality in society.

Keywords: TV Advertisements, Gender Roles, Cultural Reforms, Gender Equality, Gender Socialization

Introduction

Media is a strong agent of socialization among people. People spend more than four hours a day to watch television while children may spend even more time than before; therefore social norms are greatly influenced by media.¹ Globally, people are more engaged and committed

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¹ D.F. Roberts, G.F. Ulla and R.J. Victoria, 'Parents, Children, and Media: A Kaiser Family Foundation Survey' (The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Retrieved 14 February 2021 (<http://www.kff.org/entmedia/upload/7638.pdf>).

towards media than in the past.² Nowadays pictorial ideals of both men and women about what they are or should be are being projected in media. Media attempts to portray women and girls in a more traditional way such as domestic, emotional and grooming while men and boys are publicized as fighting, working, and constructing.³ The stereotypical portrayal of men and women is not only found in TV programs and dramas, but is also depicted in advertisements. Advertising influences people more, the reasons being that advertisements are repeated multiple times on television, most of them emphasize on visual images and it is the thinking that people are more immune to watch advertisements.⁴ Gender identity construction is an ongoing complex process.⁵ Traditional masculinity is depicted in advertisements as successful, independent, active, and strong, whereas ideal masculinity is presented by portraying men with muscular bodies, neat haircut styles, white teeth and decent look. In advertisements, men are predominantly portrayed in dominant positions over women and women are depicted in inferior roles. Therefore, the depiction of gender roles in advertising influences society to disseminate gender stereotypes, and suggests behavioral attitudes and norms for men and women.⁶

Moreover, economic support, responsibilities, and independence that are considered as male domain have now been extended to a woman's sphere as well, promoting them to share equal responsibilities and be the financial provider in a family. The reform of gender roles have not been escorted, however, by new patterns in household and care

² L. Kung-Shankleman, R. Towse & G.R. Picard, *The internet and mass media* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007)

³ J. L. Walsh & M.L. Ward, 'Adolescent Gender Role Portrayals in the Media: 1950 to the Present. In P.E. Jamieson & D. Romer (Eds.). *The changing portrayal of adolescents in the media since 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁴ J. Kilbourne, 'You talkin' to me?' In M. Anderson & P.H. Collins (Eds.), *Race, class, and gender: An anthology* (Belmont, CA: Thomson, 2007), 228-33.

⁵ J. Avery, 'Defending the markers of masculinity: consumer resistance to brand gender-bending' (*International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 2012), 322-36; B.A. Kerr and K.D. Multon, 'The development of gender identity, gender roles, and gender relations in gifted students' (*Journal of Counseling & Development*, 2015), 183-91.

⁶ H.J. Paek, R.M. Nelson and A.M. Vilela, 'Examination of Gender-role Portrayals in Television Advertising across Seven Countries', *Sex Roles*, 2011), 192-207. Retrieved 14 February 2021 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-010-9850-y>

work distribution among gender; although in many countries the division of unpaid work has changed according to gender.⁷ Economic participation of women to run households has enhanced challenges faced by women both at work and at home, that increased the importance of new patterns in socializing with equal participation of women and men at domestic and care responsibilities. Gender depiction in TV advertisements describes the social and structural trends that are acceptable in any society. Gender roles in different TV advertisements demonstrate the duties and responsibilities of both men and women they perform in their social lives.⁸

Keeping in view the value of all socializing agents (parents, peer, curriculum); we cannot reject the possible effects of media especially TV advertisements in socialization. Therefore the present study based on the purpose to explore gender roles depiction in Pakistan Television advertisements aired in primetime TV channels.

Literature review

Indigenous literature concerning Pakistan Television advertisements portrayed women as sex symbols to sell various products. Similarly, transnational researches also presented stereotypical traditional gender roles in advertisements. Following literature has been explored to see the overall scenario of media in promoting gender roles.

There was a study conducted on 150 advertisements aired on different Pakistani channel. The results of the study revealed that advertising is portraying women in stereotypical ways. The housewives are involved in domestic activities and caretaking tasks are associated with them and sometimes presented as sex objects in advertisements.⁹

Another research conducted to see gender roles depiction in non-food and food advertisement of Pakistan TV to analyze gender discrimination in advertisements. Content analysis of 103 advertisements

⁷ S.M Bianchi, M.A. Milkie, L.C Sayer and J.P. Robinson, Is anyone doing the homework? Trends in the gender division of household labor (Social Forces, 2000), 191-228; D. Anxo, L. Mencarini, A. Pahlé, A. Solaz, M.L Tanturri and L. Flood, Gender differences in time-use over the life-course. A comparative analysis of France, Italy, Sweden and the United States (Feminist Economist, 2011), 159-95 and OECD, Closing the gender gap (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2012).

⁸ A.R. Huda, & R.A. Ali, Portrayal of Women in Pakistani Media. (International Journal of Academic Research and Reflection, 2015).

⁹ S. Ali, and D. Shahwar, Men, women and T.V. Ads: The representation of men and women in the advertisements of Pakistani electronic media (Journal of Media and Communication Studies, 2011), 151-59.

showed gender discrimination in Pakistan TV advertisements where men are portrayed as dominated.¹⁰

A research examined advertisements that collected through public and private channels in Pakistan TV through qualitative method of critical discourse analysis. It was found that the images of ideal women were relegated to objects of desire and leisure and were sexualized. The study concluded with an assertion that media intensifies and regulates feminine standards with body exposure, beauty and physical appearances.¹¹

Similar study conducted to examine the advertisements taken from Pakistan TV channels and internet (Western) through critical discourse analysis and semiotics. The results indicated that advertisements promoted patriarchal ideology and gender inequality. These advertisements also reinforce decorative, soft, family oriented, ignorant, but intelligent women. Similarly, men are presented in advertisements as bold, sole breadwinner and courageous. The findings also supported the patriarchal structure and social power relations.¹²

TV advertising on private and public TV channels in Germany was examined and results of the study showed that gender stereotypes still prevailed in advertising despite the changes observed in women's role in many cultures.¹³

There is gender stereotyping in advertising but most of the previous researches have not analyzed this aspect of transition in gender roles other than stereotypical roles. A particular research was based on a meta-analysis of gender roles in radio and TV advertising based on 64 primary studies was conducted by M. Eisend. The results of the research indicated that stereotypes are prevailing in advertising that are mainly related to the gender's occupational status.¹⁴

¹⁰ A. Ali, R. Ali, K. Dileep, H.M. Hafeez, and G. Bushra, 'Gender Role Portrayal in Television Advertisement: Evidence from Pakistan', *Information Management and Business Review*, 2012, 340-51.

¹¹ H. Ullah, & N.H. Khan, 'The Objectification of Women in Television Advertisements in Pakistan', *FWU Journal of Social Sciences*, 2014, 26-35.

¹² M. Shaikh, F.B. Ali & S.K. Ali, 'The representation of men and women in advertisements. A Critical Discourse Analysis', *The Women – Annual Research Journal*, 2015.

¹³ J. Steinhagen, M. Eisend & S. Knoll, 2010, 'Gender Stereotyping in Advertising on Public and Private TV Channels in Germany'. In: R. Terlutter, S. Diehl, S. Okazaki (eds.) (Advances in Advertising Research, 2010).

¹⁴ M. Eisend, 'A Meta-analysis of Gender Roles in Advertising', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 2010, 418-40.

A study was conducted on 254 advertisements aired in Philippines television that found differences in gender roles representation. The quantitative analysis of advertisements showed high frequency of stereotypes and gender differences which did not reflect accurate Philippine society whereas study found more males in the workplace and females in domestic setting.¹⁵

Content analysis conducted on studies of 1755 Television advertisements collected from American, European and Asian countries revealed that gender stereotypes are depicted in TV advertisements all around the world.¹⁶

Although, media advertisements promote gender roles; the above literature review supports the viewpoint of media advertisements to endorse stereotypical and unequal representation of gender in term of gender roles formation, globally.

Theoretical framework

Theoretical background for this analysis of TV advertisements in term of culturally defined gender roles is based on following theories i.e. social learning, gender schema, symbolic interactionism (cultural theory of gender), and theory of performativity.

First, social learning theory states that human beings acquire femininity and masculinity by imitating others in term of their responses and behaviors.¹⁷ Children start to mimic the responses and behavior through television, DVDs, and films, as well as from parents, siblings, and teachers. At an early stage, children learn to imitate everything around them and are rewarded on the behaviors that lean towards reinforcing stereotypes, encouraging the child to continue those behaviors. Therefore, social learning theory argues that communication with others imparts girls and boys with the behaviors best suited for them.¹⁸ Since media is a strong agent of socializing for children,¹⁹

¹⁵ M. Prieler & D. Centeno, 'Gender Representation in Philippine Television Advertisements' *Sex Roles*, 2013, 276-88.

¹⁶ J. Matthes, M. Prieler, & K. Adam, 'Gender Role Portrayals in Television Advertising across the Globe' *Sex Roles*, 2016, 314-27.

¹⁷ A. Bandura, and R.H. Walters, *Social learning and personality development* (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1963); J. Burn, *The social psychology of gender* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1996).

¹⁸ A. Kunkel, M. Hummert & M. Dennis, 'Social Learning Theory: Modeling and Communication in the Family context' (Eds.), *Engaging theories in family communication* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006), 260-75.

¹⁹ P.E. Jamieson and D. Romer, *The Changing Portrayal of Adolescents in the Media since 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

therefore traditional gender roles are reinforced when they are exposed to TV programs and computer games where boys are rewarded for performing masculine activities and girls for feminine activities. If a child is exposed to a program in which a man is performing domestic duties, such as caring for his child, and he is admired for it, the child learns that men can look after children therefore, he learns the particular behaviors for care giving.²⁰ Children watch TV characters and react to situations in a similar way which they see.²¹ Second important theory in understanding formation of gender identity of children is gender schema theory that focused on age of gender formation among children by creating schemas. Bem stated that schemas are mental structures that contain knowledge and expectations about events, behaviors, and social roles of people about a situation.²² Further, Campbell explained Bem's theory in terms of a child age to learn schemas. He stated that the child in early age of 2-3 years starts to learn rapidly about gender schemas.²³ Similarly, a child's notion about gender fixes around 5-7 years of age, this is a rigid stage about following gender schemas i.e. only boys can be builder and only girls can wear pink color etc. While 7 years to above age is a flexible age where children show flexibility about gender notions and have no issue regarding girls as builders and boys wearing pink color. Therefore, the focus of the present research is to explore the effects of gender roles schemas in socialization process at early ages of children. As children are more prone to media watching therefore, advertisements and other children programs with gender notion may produce schemas about gender roles formation among them.

The important aspect of symbolic interactionism theory (cultural theory of gender) is the notion of assigned roles particular to men and women in a society. A role is a set of established and expected behaviors and beliefs, which are linked to them. In a culture, a primary way to analyze social life of men and women is through gender roles, where

²⁰ D. Romer, Introduction: Mass media and the socialization of adolescents since World War II. In E.P. Jamieson & D. Romer (Eds.). *The changing portrayal of adolescents in the media since 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3-24.

²¹ M. Rich, Music videos: Media of the youth, by the youth, for the youth. In P. E. Jamieson & D. Romer (Eds.). *The changing portrayal of adolescents in the media since 1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 78-102.

²² S.L. Bem, *Gender Schema Theory: A Cognitive Account of Sex Typing*. *Psychological Review* (1981), 354-36.

²³ A. Campbell, L. Shirley, C. Heywood and J. Candy, 'A Longitudinal Study of Gender Related Cognition and Behavior' *Development Studies*, 2004, 1-9.

women are still considered caregivers, and are expected to fulfill other domestic duties.²⁴ According to this theory, society and culture teach women to acquire roles of caring for others, and have a supporting nature while success in work and public affairs are associated as primary roles of men, which are more prestigious.

Further, to understand gender roles, we can draw insights from the performativity theory which claims people produce identities and characteristics comprising gender through expression or performance in a specific society. Judith Butler argued in her theory of performativity that gender is created through expression and performance. She claimed gender comes into being by doing certain acts in specific time and occasions and all people perform gender in diverse ways.²⁵ According to Butler, we perform and express gender through everyday practices and repetition of acts including dominating in conversations, problem solving and decisions making etc. whereas, individuals may enact traditional sex roles and thus maintain the status quo through performance.

By considering, the lenses of four important theories which emphasize the contribution of socializing agents, schemas, social interaction, and actions about construction of gender roles among children and individuals through media, the purpose of present study is to explore gender roles portrayal in advertisements of Pakistan Television and media ideals to present gender roles in Pakistani society.

Objectives of the study

Following are the objectives of the study:

- To examine differences in portrayal of gender roles in Pakistan TV advertisements;
- To explore the effect of consuming media on children's identity development through schemas;
- To analyze stereotypes related to gender and gender roles in advertisements of Pakistan Television;
- To evaluate reflection of cultural context about gender roles representation in advertisements of Pakistan Television.

²⁴ F. Cancian and S. Oliner, *Caring and Gender* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000).

²⁵ J. Butler, *Undoing gender* (Routledge, 2004); J. Butler, *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990).

Methodology

Method: This is an observational media research based on gender roles analysis in Pakistan Television advertisements.

Sample: A sample of sixteen advertisements was collected from popular Pakistan Television channels.

Sampling techniques: Two sampling techniques were applied to collect advertisements. One, purposive sampling technique was used to collect advertisements through internet that aired from 2015-2019 based on representation of gender roles. Second, consecutive-day sampling technique was applied to collect sample advertisements consecutively by watching popular Pakistan Television channels from year 2020-2021.

Data Analysis: Ethnographic content analysis was used to identify the signifiers/signs within visual images of the Pakistan TV advertisements to understand the accepted meaning within the local culture. Signs were evaluated for qualitative representation of data and every image was analyzed in the context of gender, production, purpose, and culture. The Links were organized through signs of each image, which were later converted into respective themes for interpretation.

Advertisements and interpretations

Image 1. Content and context

This advertisement has been collected through internet search. The advertisement was created to promote Lemon Max Long Bar for dish washing that aired in 2015. Famous actors Maya Ali and Fahad Mustafa had taken part to promote the product.²⁶



²⁶ H. Zafar Tapal Danedar TVC feat. Fawad Khan & Momal Sheikh (2015). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.brandsynario.com/tapal-danedar-tvc-feat-fawad-khan-momal-sheikh-bts-shots/>

Links (symbols)

Woman showed sense of confidence

Presence of man in kitchen strengthened women's contentment

This picture of advertisement shows a congenial environment at home

Interpretation

Smile of woman shows confidence as well as strength, and surroundings around her presents peace and harmony. The image reflects a sense of positive relationship between man and woman. The image also breaks the stereotype of rigid masculinity while man standing along woman in the kitchen.

Image 2. Content and Context

The advertisement of Tapal Danedar has been taken from internet aired on TV screen in 2015. Famous Actors Fawad Khan and Momal Sheikh acted in this advertisement as family.²⁷

**Links (symbols)**

Man showed regard for sharing responsibility

Man is a symbol equality, empathy and care for his partner

Woman showed sense of confidence and contentment

The ad image boosts a strong relationship of a couple

Interpretation

The image reflects a pleasant relationship of men and women at family level which is full of happiness and contentment. Smile of woman symbolizes contentment and confidence that displays empowered status of women. Similarly, man's image indicated sensitivity and care towards his counterpart.

Image 3. Content and context

The image related to the Ariel detergent advertisement aired in famous TV channels of Pakistan in 2016 collected from internet. The image comprised of a famous cricket player of Pakistan Waseem Akram promoting Ariel detergent with a group of women.²⁸

**Links (symbols)**

Man is a famous cricket player celebrity participated in washing cloths
Watching a man in a detergent add reflects his interest in domestic chores

Women showed empowerment and self-confidence

Man is the symbol of equal role and compassionate in his behavior

Interpretation

Women symbolized empowerment and self-confidence. Similarly, man's image showed sense of shared responsibilities and liberal.

²⁷ H. Zafar, Lemon Max Long Bar TVC (2015), feat. Maya Ali & Fahad Mustafa. Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.brandsynario.com/lemon-max-long-bar-tvc-2015-feat-maya-ali-fahad-mustafa/>

²⁸ Ambreen, Ariel Dhulai Challenge TVC, (2016). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://youtu.be/5qVP1sh8kYA>

Image 4. Content and context

This image has been taken from internet that aired in 2016 in Pakistani TV channels advertisement. This advertisement is for the promotion of a brand Kolson Pasta in which a famous actor and host Fahad Mustafa made pasta for his whole family.²⁹

**Links (symbols)**

The ad depicted that a man's care for his family at home while cooking food for family

Man showed shared responsibility at home and felt tolerant

Ad breaks the stereotype that men cannot cook

Interpretation

The image reflected the enthusiastic participation of man in the domestic chore like cooking for his family. The image presented potential reforms in traditional gender roles where men can cook food for their families. The image also challenged the stereotype that men can't cook food.

Image 5. Content and context

The advertisement image of Tapal Danedar has been taken from internet that aired on Pakistan TV in 2017. In this advertisement, famous actors

Sanam Saeed depicted as working wife and Adil Hussain showed as a husband making tea for his working wife.³⁰

**Links (symbols)**

Man showed compassionate and caring in relationship to help in domestic chores

Man promoted a sense of gender equality, care, empowerment, and respect for working woman

Woman enjoyed the situation with confidence and contentment

Woman felt independence while working outside

Interpretation

The image reflected an element of surprise in the woman's features because man showed interest to participate in domestic chores. Woman symbolized empowerment and confidence. Similarly, man's image showed sense of sharing responsibilities and reforming traditional gender roles.

Image 6. Content and context

This image is selected from an advertisement of Pakistani TV channels through internet. It is for the promotion of famous brand of spices 'Shan Foods' aired in 2018. Advertisement showed a man from Karachi who came to meet his in-laws in Lahore. He did not possess the muscular

²⁹ Naureen, and Ambreen, Fahad Mustafa & KiranTabeer in Kolson Pasta TVC (2016). Retrieved 14 February 2020. <https://www.pinterest.com/pin/497084877602157630/>

³⁰ A. Hasnain, Tapal's Latest TVC Ft. Sanam Saeed and Adeel Husain is Being Loved by Pakistani Wives (2017). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.brandsynario.com/tapals-latest-tvc-ft-sanam-saeed-adeel-husain-loved-pakistani-wives/>

physique his numerous brothers-in-law had but to prove himself to the family, he offered to cook Biryani for them.³¹



Links (symbols)

Man performed domestic task of cooking with keen interest
Environment in kitchen showed the interest of the man in cleanliness and discipline
Heavy utensils for cooking showed the man's capabilities and strength
Man's interest in domesticity showed shared responsibilities and contentment
Only man in the kitchen tries to break stereotype of merely woman as domesticated

Interpretation

The image reflected the willing participation of men in cooking for their in-laws. The image also showed cultural reform in gender roles where men can single handedly take care of domestic activities.

Image 7. Content and context

The image has been taken from internet aired in Pakistan TV channel in 2018 from Pampers Pants. The advertisement showed that healthy baby growth needs equal participation from parents in early life of a child.³²

³¹ EZ Fun Channel TVC=Shan Masala Thematic-one Biryani (2018). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://youth.be/5no2kQn8gq8>

³² Pampers Pants TVC #DadsCanChange, (2018). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://youtu.be/-VGOxKxsvk0>



Links (symbols)

Child linked to strong relationship between husband and wife
Man remained supportive and caring in childcare
Man in this image showed great interest in sharing responsibilities to look after family
Help of man to change pamper of a child links to break stereotype that woman as the only care taker of family
Woman looked confident, independent, and happy in this picture

Interpretation

The image focused on the joint interest of man and woman in child rearing. It breaks the stereotype that men are not caring, nor can they be gentle; hence do not take care of babies. Overall, the image depicted sense of accomplishment along with the spouses being at equal footing and showed reform in gender roles. The Hashtag of DadsCanChange is also impactful reflecting the double meaning, the obvious one referring to changing diapers, in which men are typically expected to be disinterested in. The second meaning has a deeper implication of a change at the societal level of what is expected of fathers. In Pakistani society, a father's duty is often seen solely as breadwinner for his family, but this advertisement actively encourages fathers to assume a deeper, more meaningful role in their relationship with their children, pushing them to break away from their traditional role.

Image 8. Content and context

This advertisement image has been taken from the internet search that aired in Pakistan TV channels in 2018. This ad is for the promotion of famous brand Lemon Max, dishwasher liquid. In this advertisement, a

contest of dishwashing is conducted, in which both a male and a female chef took part.³³



Links (symbols)

Man and woman showed great interest in utensil washing
 Man is the symbol of sharing responsibilities at all levels
 Woman showed self-confidence and equality, and assertiveness
 Man represented the symbol to break stereotype of that only a woman's responsibility to do dish washing.

Interpretation

The image showed equal participation of both man and woman in domestic chore of cleaning. Again, the presence of a man in this image of advertisement depicts men could have an equal interest in domesticity thus reforming gender roles in society.

Image 9. Content and context

This image has been taken from internet that aired in Pakistan TV channels in 2018. This ad is for the promotion of famous brand Lemon Max Dishwashing Bar. Famous actors Imran Abbas and Sajal Ali are shown as a modern married couple in domestic setting where the husband is helping his wife in washing utensils in kitchen.³⁴

³³ B. A. Peter, This Pakistani ad is defying gender roles and we are here for it (2018). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://cutacut.com/2018/07/10/this-pakistani-ad-is-defying-gender-roles-and-we-are-here-for-it/>

³⁴ A. Rahim, Lemon Max's new TVC is every woman's dream come true (2018). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.hipinakistan.com/news/1155626>



Links (symbols)

Man showed capability to participate in domestic chores
 He proudly shared the responsibilities with his wife
 Woman felt self-confidence and be contented
 The relationship between them based on cooperation

Interpretation

The image disproves cultural and traditional gender stereotypes, showing that men can indeed participate in domestic chores. It also goes far in showing men can be willing participants, appreciating that they can be sensitive to the workload on their wives and can help out.

Image 10. Content and Context

The advertisement was selected while watching TV on consecutive daily bases that were presented in Pakistan TV channels in 2019. The advertisement is about a famous tea brand Tapal Danedar in which a son showed love and care for his mother by making tea for her.³⁵



³⁵ A. Raza, Tapal Danedar - Mother and Son TVC (2019). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8t9OG5wbE-k>

Links (symbols)

Man showed care, empathic and tolerance to participate in domestic chores

Woman depicted contentment and pride

The advertisement also illustrated that man can support his family, while looking after his elders.

Man showed capability of work-family balance

Interpretation

The image showed a strong relationship between a mother and her son, built on mutual love and respect, highlighting the importance of appreciating mothers. The son willingly made time for his mother despite a busy schedule, indicating how men too can care for their elders, and that is not the sole responsibility of women.

Image 11. Content and Context

The advertisement image was selected through watching Pakistan TV on daily bases that aired in 2019. The advertisement is for the promotion of Kashmir Cooking Oil and Banaspati. Famous singer Ali Zafar and actor Maya Ali are seen as a happy family.³⁶

**Links (symbols)**

Famous singer in advertisements is breaking the stereotype of domesticity

Man expressed pride in participating in household work and be contented

Man showed care and empathy towards partner

Woman linked to confidence and empowered and contented

³⁶ FHM Pakistan, Reliving the Essence of Food as an Expression to Life with Kashmir Banaspati (2019). Retrieved 14 February 2021 <https://www.fhmpakistan.com/fhm-breeze/reliving-essence-food-expression-to-life-with-kashmir-banaspati/>

Interpretation

This image also worked to subvert cultural and traditional gender stereotypes that men can't participate in domestic work, thus reforming gender roles. The image reinforces that mutual effort goes into making a relationship a strong one.

Image 12. Content and Context

The advertisement image has been taken from Pakistan TV channel aired in 2019. Famous actor Iqra Aziz has taken part in the promotion of famous spices National Recipe Mixes, where both husband and wife are shown enjoying making food in kitchen.³⁷

**Links (symbols)**

Man showed interest in domestic chores with partner

Man symbolic as liberal, caring and tolerant in behavior

Woman exuded confidence, assertiveness, and contentment

Interpretation

The woman smiled with self-confidence and comfort standing next to her partner that also showed a positive relationship between the spouses. The image also tried to break stereotype of rigid masculinity.

Image 13. Content and Context

The advertisement image has been taken from Pakistan TV channels that aired in 2020. The advertisement is for the promotion of Bake Parlor recipe Mix. Famous actor Shahood Alvi acted as father and Kiran Khan acted as an affectionate and sensible daughter. In this advertisement

³⁷ Creative Ads. National Recipe Mixes-Nayi Soch ke Naye Zaiqe (2019). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://images.app.goo.gm/n5A6LF5xpk5Tc7cM8>

daughter requested her father to teach her driving and father made a deal with her to teach him to cook pasta. Daughter guides her father in kitchen to make pasta with Bake Parlor recipe Mix.³⁸



Links (symbols)

Father is friendly to his daughter and showed interest to cook food with daughter in kitchen.

Daughter amazed to see her father's cooking ability and interest to learn it

Man showed compassion, care, and tolerance in domestic chores

Man learnt to cook delicious food that proved domestic work can be shared.

Interpretation

Gender roles can be changed, modified, and transformed with time, there just needs to be a willingness to do so. The image showed reforming gender roles at domestic level and symbolized hope for the coming future to develop gender roles in way that is more productive rather than traditional where men of the family will take interest to share domestic responsibilities by learning and participating in domestic chores.

³⁸ Best Pakistan ADS, Shahood Alvi and Kiran khan in Bake Parlour The Pasta Expert Ramadan Ad (2020). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhKQ0-t-w0w>

Image 14. Content and Context

The advertisement image has been taken from Pakistan TV channels that aired in 2020. The advertisement is for the promotion of Shan Foods spices. In this ad, father cooked food for his working daughter and she was pleasantly surprised that it tasted exactly like the dish her mother made.³⁹



Links (symbols)

Daughter showed confidence, empowerment to see her father's cooking

Father presented shared domestic chores and empathy for his working daughter

Father also showed care, companionate and tolerance to perform domestic activity

Interpretation

Gender roles can be changed, modified, and transformed with time, there just needs to be a willingness to do so. The daughter also challenges gender roles by being the sole breadwinner for the family and supporting herself and her father, while the image shows transforming gender roles at domestic level and symbolizes hope for the coming future to develop gender roles in way that is more productive rather than traditional.

³⁹ S. Dadabhoj, National Food Commercial Breaking Stereotypes (2020). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://runwaypakistan.com/national-food-commercial-breaking-stereotypes/>

Image 15. Content and Context

The advertisement image is taken from TV channels that aired in 2020. The advertisement is for the promotion of Shan Foods spices. A son cooked food for his working mother taking online classes from home during Covid-19 situation. She was pleasantly surprised that his son made very tasty food.⁴⁰

**Links (symbols)**

Son showed care towards his working mother while making food for her
 Woman astonished to see her son's cooking ability and felt contentment and confidence

Son showed sense of sharing responsibility with his mother during Covid-19 situation and felt empathy

Son cooked delicious food to break stereotype that domestic work is only female oriented activity.

Interpretation

Gender roles can be reformed and modified with time. During Covid-19 most of the official work was done at home, this is the time to modify gender roles. Son showed great interest in domestic work by cooking food for her mother while she was taking online classes during Covid -

⁴⁰ Tribune, Shan Foods ads, (2020). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2154395/4-shan-foods-khushiyanchakhlo-campaign-wants-us-celebrate-every-woman-whoshetrulyis/>

19. This act of her son made mother happy and contented and she appreciated her son for his interest in domestic activity.

Image 16. Content and Context

The advertisement was selected while watching Pakistan TV on consecutive daily bases that were presented in 2021. In this advertisement, famous actors Asif Raza Mir as father and Sajal Ali depicted as newly married daughter visiting with her husband. The advertisement is about a tea brand Supreme tea in which a father showed love and care for his married daughter and son in law by offering to make tea for them.⁴¹

**Links (symbols)**

This advertisement showed that men can be sensitive and caring
 Man also showed domestic responsibility by offering to make tea for married daughter and son in law

Woman depicted as contented, confident and assertive

Interpretation

The image showed a strong relationship between a father and daughter, built on mutual love, care and respect. Advertisement also breaks the

⁴¹ Pakistan Ad, Supreme Tea/Chai Sajal Ali, Asif Raza Mir, (2021). Retrieved 14 February 2021 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b2pWNj1hAGk>

stereotype that domestic work is only female task by father offering to make tea for daughter and son in law.

Results

Table I: Gender Roles Presented in Advertisements

Gender Identity	Themes	signifiers/signs
Men	As household helpers	Washing clothes, cleaning utensils Cooking food, interest in house chores
	As caregivers	Childcare, elders care, Care of wife, care for family
	As sharers	Sharing responsibilities

Table I showed the qualitative themes that emerged through signifiers and signs of the selected images of the Pakistani TV advertisements. First emerging theme found 'as household helper' in which men were shown participating in domestic activities at home, such as washing clothes, doing the dishes, and cooking food. The second theme emerged as men being 'caregiver,' which included childcare, equal participation of men and women in domestic work and looking after elders. The third theme originated as 'sharers' of responsibilities.

Table II: Gender Stereotypes in Advertisements

Gender Identity	signifiers/signs
Women	Independent Empowered Confident Active Assertive Content

The above table showed a list of the codes for women that emerged from advertisements aired at prime time Pakistan TV.

Table III: Gender stereotypes in Advertisements

Gender Identity	signifiers/signs
Men	Liberal Tolerant Caring Compassionate Empathic Content

The above table showed a list of investigated stereotypes for men that were coded through advertisements aired at prime time Pakistan TV.

Discussion and conclusion

When culture assigns social roles based on gender, it is a consequence of cultural and religious interpretations along with historical and environmental factors.⁴² This study examined depiction of gender roles and responsibilities as presented in Pakistan TV advertisements. Progressive reforms are seen in gender roles presented in advertisements, where men participated equally in domestic chores along with their partners (images: 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 11, 12, 13), and in caretaking and sharing (images: 3, 5, 7, 10, 14, 15, 16). Gender roles are allocated roles and responsibilities to men and women and these roles are byproducts of society and culture so these roles can be altered and modified according to a given culture in a given time. Therefore, the results of the study demonstrated that gender roles are reforming in advertisements of Pakistan television with changing gender development in Pakistani society. Similarly, previous national and international researches about television advertisements showed women as sex symbols, stereotypical and propagating strict ideas of masculinity that were oftentimes unrealistic and disputable. As unrealistic and toxic masculinity not only affects women, but also men by imposing and reasserting attitudes and beliefs about stereotypical gender roles for both women and men.⁴³ Therefore, many prominent brands of eatables, tea and detergents etc. have changed their policies and now present men and women on equal

⁴² G. Hofstede, G.J. Hofstede, and M. Monkov, 'Culturi și Organizații. Softul Mental' (Cultures and Organizations. Mental Software) (Humanitas: București, 2012).

⁴³ L.M. Ward, A. Merriwether & A. Caruthers, 'Breasts are for Men: Media, Masculinity Ideologies, and Men's Beliefs about Women's Bodies' *Sex Roles*, 2006, 703-14.

footing in advertisements that may affect status of women by breaking various stereotypes about women in Pakistani society or culture.

In view of gender socialization, social learning theory it was explained that the frequent messages of gender balance in TV advertisements might influence children's socialization process in which they find gender equality messages in term of schemas as M. Rich stated that children watch TV characters and reproduce similar behaviors in certain situations in their lives. Similarly, researchers found that pro-social media played an important role to foster pro-social interactions.⁴⁴ The findings of the present study showed reform from traditional gender roles to an equal representation of both genders in domestic and professional life, which may affect pro-social behaviors of children, increasing their tolerance and improving domestic responsibilities that also affect their well-being in a way that is more positive and productive to develop an equitable society.

The results also showed dramatically positive changes in stereotypes relating to women and men in Pakistani society. Previous studies evaluated that media promoted gender stereotypes in traditional ways where women were presented as domestic, dependent, and submissive, whereas men were presented as strong, independent and dominant. While the findings of the present study are contrary to previous studies, where reform showed in gender stereotypes and women were presented as independent, empowered, confident, active and content. Similarly, stereotypes about men were found other than traditional, where men were shown as caring, liberal, tolerant, compassionate, and empathic.

The present research also analyzed evolving cultural patterns promoted through media and results found it being more progressive, especially in terms of sharing of responsibility at the domestic level between partners. Reforms in gender roles are the need of time as more women are joining the workforce and are participating equally in economic development. Similarly, women constitute almost half of the world's population so gender equality may not be achieved without the potential use of this half. Workforce economic participation is one of the aspects of women empowerment that triple burdens women with traditional domestic and caretaking roles. Therefore, the results of the study showed that Pakistani media is playing a vital role in reforming gender roles and directing society in a new direction, whose foundation lays on increasing gender equality in society. The altered cultural

⁴⁴ M.L. Mares & E. Woodard, 'Positive Effects of Television on Children's Social Interactions: A Meta-analysis' *Media Psychology*, 2005, 301-22.

patterns of gender roles from traditional to reformed are presented in Pakistan television advertisements is a step forward to improve status of women in Pakistani society. If we reflect over the theory of symbolic interactionism in a culture, a primary way to analyze social life of men and women is through gender roles. The reformed gender roles presented in advertisements gave an idea of changing patterns in the cultural context with regard to gender. This may be due to the struggle of feminist movements (which through activism highlighted gender inequality across political, socio-economic, and cultural spheres) and supported gender related-development.⁴⁵

Gender roles in current scenario

In current situation of COVID-19 people are spending most of the time working from home, so the entire scenario is changed whereas women are now more engaged in domestic and care roles and responsibilities while they are also working from home. Therefore, the current situation provides a chance to pull-down gender stereotypes, change traditional narratives, and show that decision-making and leadership, caring for and teaching children and household chores can and should be shared responsibilities, advancing equality for all. Likewise, marketing communications during the COVID-19 crisis can act as a positive force in thriving gender equality for the benefit of all. Advertising and media marketing can play a proactive role in changing social norms about stereotypical roles of women and men by depicting positive reform in gender roles, and avoiding harmful stereotypes and promoting a balance in the care burden at homes in current pandemic situation.⁴⁶ The results of present study showed progress to create gender equality in our society through media advertisements. Hence, positive reform in traditional gender roles is only possible by educating people, institutions, and society. Social and government bodies are playing a very thought provoking role in promoting gender equality through messages in media both electronic and print that can play encouraging role to break stereotypes about men and women in Pakistani society.

⁴⁵ W. Harcourt, *Body Politics in Development* (London: Zed Books, 2009); W. Harcourt and A. Escobar, *Women and the Politics of Place* (Bloomfield, CT: Kumarian Press, 2005).

⁴⁶ UN Woman, Promoting Positive Gender Roles in Marketing and Advertising in the Context of COVID-19: Key Considerations for Business (2020). Retrieved 14 February 2020 <https://www.unicef.org/documents/promoting-positive-gender-roles-marketing-and-advertising-context-covid-19>.

Conclusion and suggestions

Media is a strong agent of socialization in and outside of home. Therefore, a sensitized media towards gender roles can play a resilient role to transform people's thoughts and behaviors. Especially women's active role in economic development can further uplift the women status from marginalized to economically independent. This balanced picture of gender at both home and workplace also positively affects the well-being of men and women as well as family overall. Following suggestions can be put forward:

- Need to produce multiple advertisements confirming the concept of reform in gender roles;
- To inculcate the concept of reforming gender roles in other TV programs as mini films, dramas, talk shows etc.;
- To organize gender sensitive trainings to train media personals especially, writers, producers, filmmakers etc.;
- Gender specialists, psychologists and counselors can be appointed in media industry.