

# INDIAN ADS FURTHER GENDER STEREOTYPES, SHOWS STUDY

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Rights & Welfare of Women - Schemes & their Performance, Mechanisms, Laws Institutions and Bodies

An analysis of Indian advertisements on television and YouTube has shown that while they are superior to global benchmarks insofar as girls and women have parity of representation in terms of screen and speaking time, their portrayal is problematic as they further gender stereotypes — they are more likely than male characters to be shown as married, less likely to be shown in paid occupation, and more likely to be depicted as caretakers and parents.

These are some of the findings of a study released on Monday by UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media (GDI) titled “Gender bias and inclusion in advertising in India”. The research measures over 1,000 television and YouTube advertisements aired across India in 2019. The ads analysed were those that received the most reach.

The study finds that women characters dominate screen time (59.7%) and speaking time (56.3%), but one of the drivers of this is their depiction for selling cleaning supplies and food and beauty products to women consumers. For example, almost all the detergent and food commercials depicted a woman caretaking for her family who speaks directly to women viewers about caring for their families. In comparison, in a separate study by the GDI for setting global benchmarks, it was found that ads in the U.S. show women with half the screen time (30.6%) and nearly half the speaking time (33.5%).

A greater percentage of female characters is depicted as married than male characters (11.0% compared with 8.8%). Female characters are three times more likely to be depicted as parents than male characters (18.7% compared with 5.9%). While male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters (7.3% compared with 4.8%), the latter are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).

Female characters are more likely to be shown doing the following activities than male characters — shopping (4.1% compared with 2.3%); cleaning (4.8% as against 2.2%); and being involved in the purchase or preparation of meals (5.4% against 3.9%).

For characters where intelligence is part of their character in the ad, male characters are more likely to be shown as smart than female characters (32.2% compared to 26.2%). Male characters are almost twice as likely to be shown as funny than female characters (19.1% compared to 11.9%).

Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) in Indian ads have light or medium-light skin tones — a higher percentage than male characters (52.1%). Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as “stunning/very attractive” than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%). Female characters are also invariably thin, but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising

“Misrepresentation and harmful stereotypes of women in advertising have a significant impact on women — and young girls — and how they view themselves and their value to society. While we do see female representation dominate in Indian ads, they are still marginalised by colorism, hypersexualisation, and without careers or aspirations outside of the home,” said Geena Davis,

Academy Award Winning Actor, Founder and Chair of the GDI adding that the stark inequality must be addressed to ensure an equitable society.

**END**

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