

A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION FROM GENDER STEREOTYPES' PERSPECTIVE IN PAKISTANI ADVERTISEMENTS

Ayesha Khadim (MPhil Scholar, GCUF, ayeshakhadim077@gmail.com)

Dr. Wardah Azhar (Assistant Professor, GCUF, Wardah.azhar@gcuf.edu.pk)

Ayesha Slamati (Mphil Scholar, GCUF, chghulamsabir70@gmail.com)

Abstract

The research utilizes a quantitative corpus-based method to study how Pakistani advertisements display women through traditional gender norms. The research examines five different advertisements which serve different product categories between beauty products and household items as well as technology. Through language developers maintain traditional gender roles because they mirror social norms. The tools from corpus analysis (Voyant and AntConc) carry out quantitative assessments which discover reoccurring linguistic features by counting words and their groupings and their context. The research shows women are specially linked to phrases “beauty” “gentle” and “motherly roles” confirming physical attractiveness and caretaking and home duties have an essential connection to femininity. The media shows women mostly nurturing or beautiful figures within their homes. The society has chosen to emphasize stereotypical family caretaker roles and beauty practices over the display of women with independent professional lives. Research shows that Pakistani media needs to create different and modern representations of women to build an equal society beyond traditional storytelling. The evolving landscape of advertisement and media production now presents a chance to portray women more inclusively in their society through media creation which leads to gender balance in Pakistani advertising.

Keywords: Quantitative analysis, Gender stereotypes, Women's representation, Pakistani Advertisements, Corpus-based

Introduction

Advertisements shape societal norms by reflecting and reinforcing cultural values. In Pakistan, they are integral in shaping gender roles by representing women through visual and linguistic elements that reinforce stereotypes of women, at times through traditional lenses.

1.1 Background of the Study

Moreover, commercials play a crucial role in forming society's opinion about gender roles. Commercials in Pakistan tend to reinforce patriarchal norms and portray women as homemakers or preoccupy themselves with appearances. Although Western scholarship such as that of Lakoff (1975) and Goffman (1979) offers insights into these phenomenal patterns, no investigation exists to explore the role of culture in how Pakistani media play such political victimhood frames. Buying sentiment while this limitation affects public perception of women's social, economic and political contributions, it also normalizes traditional and constrictive social norms.

1.2 Importance of Analyzing Gender Representation in Media

To challenge stereotype representation in media, it is important to analyze gender portrayals in that media. Advertising reflects gender roles, showing women primarily as caretakers or as objects, restricting their roles. This is one way to explain how this study can inform inclusive portrayals, and, hence, equitable representation of women in co-enactment roles. It promotes positive changes in the media industry by addressing stereotypes through representations, empowering diverse narratives that challenge gender inequality and expand societal perceptions of women's potential.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study examines how women are represented in Pakistani commercials through linguistic elements, focusing on gender stereotypes. Using a qualitative approach, it investigates advertisements across product categories to examine the reinforcement of traditional roles or diverse portrayals. The purpose of this study is to help understand how media is used to portray women in Pakistan in gender specific advertisements and how they can modify the way women are perceived in society to help guide advertising practices toward more balanced and empowering portrayals of women in Pakistan.

1.4 Research Gap

Although gender equality in media representation is a widely discussed issue, the vast majority of existing literature regarding media portrayals of gender is based on Western contexts, while very little research has been done on media representations in South Asia, especially in the context of Pakistan. Current literature on Pakistani media largely ignores television advertisement as a space to examine gender stereotyping. This study fills this gap by integrating linguistic analysis to uncover how words and visuals create gendered identities in Pakistani advertisements.

1.5 Problem Statement

In Pakistan, television commercials are powerful forces that shape society's norms, yet they depict women in stereotypical roles as a beauty object, caregiver or domesticity. Such portrayals restrict women's identities and challenge gender equality. With a paucity of research specifically focused on the subject of gender representation and portrayal in the Pakistan media, this investigation critically explores linguistic devices present in advertisements to highlight the perched ideologies which reinforce stereotypical portrayals of gender which may be used to provide realisation on how to create progressive and inclusive media for all.

1.6 Rationale

This study examines how Pakistani media advertisements shape perceptions of gender roles, empowering individuals to critically analyze and challenge harmful stereotypes. Socially, it explores media's impact on societal attitudes and advocates for gender equality. Politically, it

informs policy to address patriarchal systems. Globally, it compares gender representation across contexts, promoting inclusivity. Academically, it fills gaps in research, pushing forward theoretical and methodological approaches to gender and media studies.

1.7 Objectives

This research aims to investigate certain objectives to:

- Analyze the linguistic and visual features used in Pakistani media advertisements to identify and understand how they perpetuate gender stereotypes.
- Investigate the language which is used to describe women in Pakistani media advertisements, including any gendered language that reinforces stereotypes.

1.8 Research Questions

1. What linguistic features perpetuate gender stereotypes in advertisements?
2. What language is used to describe women in advertisements?

1.9 Significance

This study employs gender stereotypes in Pakistani television advertisements using a quantitative corpus-based linguistic analysis. Analyzing five ads, it identifies recurring linguistic patterns, such as terms like “beauty” and “mother,” that reinforce caregiving roles. The study contributes to global discussions on media, gender, and social norms, promoting understanding of stereotypes in non-Western contexts.

Literature Review

2.1 Theories on Gender Stereotypes in Media Advertisements

2.1.1 Feminist Stylistics in Media (Mills, 1995)

In *Feminist Stylistics* (1995), Sara Mills analyzes how the language in texts mirrors and perpetuates gender inequalities. Women are described by adjectives focused on their beauty, youth and subservience in media advertisements while men occupy the domains of power and competence. Despite acknowledging a high degree of linguistic equity and the paternalistic approach underlying patriarchal authority reflected in the linguistic divide, this linguistic challenge justifies outdated gender roles and patriarchal ideals that promote women’s appearance and emotionality over self-determination and agency and reflect a steadfast adherence to gender inequalities in representation.

2.1.2 Challenging Gender Stereotypes (Zotos & Tschla, 2014)

Zotos and Tschla (2014) explore the shift in gender representation in advertising, with a growing trend of portraying women as empowered and independent, especially in sectors like technology, finance, and sports. This reflects societal changes towards gender equality. Our

research will assess how contemporary television commercials challenge traditional gender stereotypes, analyzing a range of advertisements to determine whether these shifts are meaningful or superficial in shaping gender representation.

2.1.3 Objectification of Women in Media Advertisements (Belknap & Leonard, 1991)

Belknap and Leonard (1991) explain how women are often portrayed as passive objects of desire in advertisements, especially beauty and fashion ads. This objectification also reinforces the belief that a woman's value is tied to her looks. Studies by Fredrickson & Roberts (1997) and Kilbourne (1999) supported this view, detailing the damaging impact on self-esteem, body image as well as cultural perceptions of gender, power

2.2 Corpus as a Tool in Media Studies

Javed et al. (2024) employed a mixed-method semiological approach to analyze language in TV ads, revealing ways in which language upholds gender identities, whilst corpus analysis allows for identifying language trends present in large datasets and thus demonstrates how all these trends shape up to tell the story of how gender identities are constructed. Ahmad et al. for cross-cultural analysis of gender in ads (2024). Our research will apply corpus linguistics on television commercials to look for these recurring themes and linguistic structures in order to explore representation of gender in advertising more thoroughly.

Research Methodology

The present study is based on quantitative techniques to analyze gender stereotypes in advertisements.

3.1 Nature of Data and Corpus Size

This study consists of 5 video advertisements from YouTube, focusing on the representation of women in various product categories (e.g., beauty, household, technology) to capture a diverse and relevant sample of Pakistani advertisements. Transcriptions of these videos serve as the corpus for linguistic analysis, while still images of the advertisements are used to analyze visual patterns, providing a comprehensive view of gender stereotypes across different sectors.

3.2. Data Collection

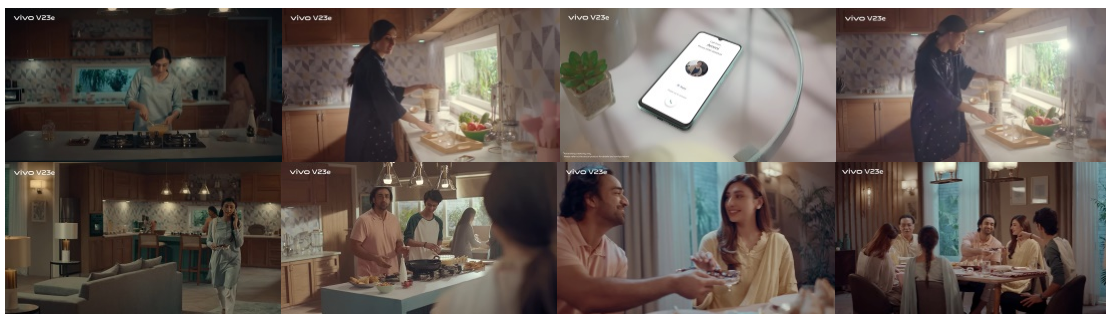
The advertisements are taken from YouTube and then transcribed using an AI tool named **Turboscribe**, which provides accurate transcription services that support the linguistic analysis of spoken content in advertisements. The data is then cleaned to remove irrelevant elements, such as extra spacing, and saved in .txt format for compatibility with corpus analysis tools.



Shots from Lux Soap's Advertisement (Advertisement 1)



Shots from Palmolive Soap's Advertisement (Advertisement 2)



Shots from Vivo Advertisement (Advertisement 3)





Shots from Ahmed Foods Advertisement (Advertisement 4)



Shots from Eva Cooking Oil's Advertisement (Advertisement 5)

3.3 Corpus Size and Distribution

The corpus of this study consists of 5 transcribed advertisements. This size is sufficient to reveal recurring linguistic patterns. The distribution covers various advertising contexts to ensure that gender representation is examined across different product types and advertising strategies.

3.4 Research Model and Instruments

- **Quantitative Analysis:** The transcribed corpus is analyzed using **AntConc** and **Voyant Tools**, both of these are established corpus analysis tools. These tools facilitate the identification of patterns in language use, such as the frequency of gendered terms, collocations associated with women, and other linguistic features that may indicate

stereotypes. The choice of these tools are based on their efficiency in handling and visualizing corpus data, as demonstrated in past linguistic and discourse studies (Asghar & Akhter, 2022).

3.5 Procedure of Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Analysis:** The cleaned text files are uploaded into AntConc and Voyant Tools, where frequency lists, concordance lines, and keyword analyses are generated to identify dominant linguistic patterns. The present corpus consists of textual data from advertisements, revealing a total of 628 tokens and 279 types. The frequency analysis sheds light on the linguistic patterns and thematic elements that dominate the advertisements.

AntConc:

The word list in AntConc contains 278 word types and 623 tokens. The word "she" has 2 collocate types and 9 collocate tokens. The word "he" has 2 collocate types and 4 collocate tokens. The word "mom" has 3 collocate tokens and 1 collocate types. The word "beauty" has 5 collocate types and 12 collocate tokens.

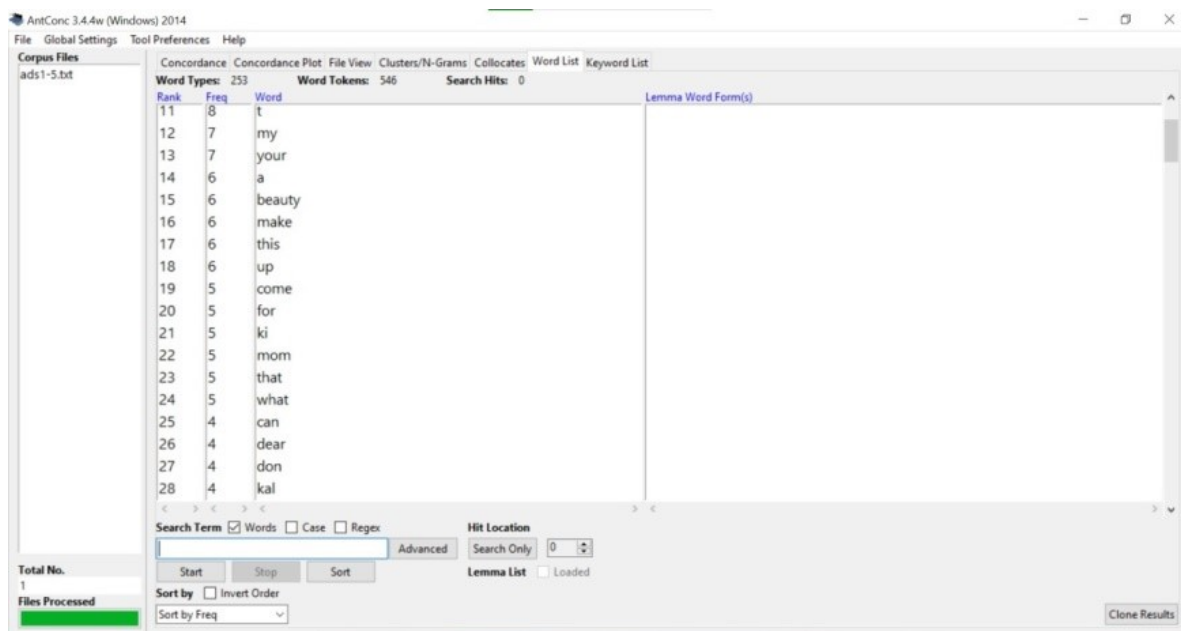


Fig. Results from AntConc

Voyant Tool:

Voyant tools is an online corpus tool used to analyze the text and give multiple results, for example: visual display of frequent words, graph of frequent words, summary of the whole text, phrases used in the text, and the contexts and collocation in the given

text. Here are the results of the existing study; visual display of word cloud of most frequent words and the graph of those words.

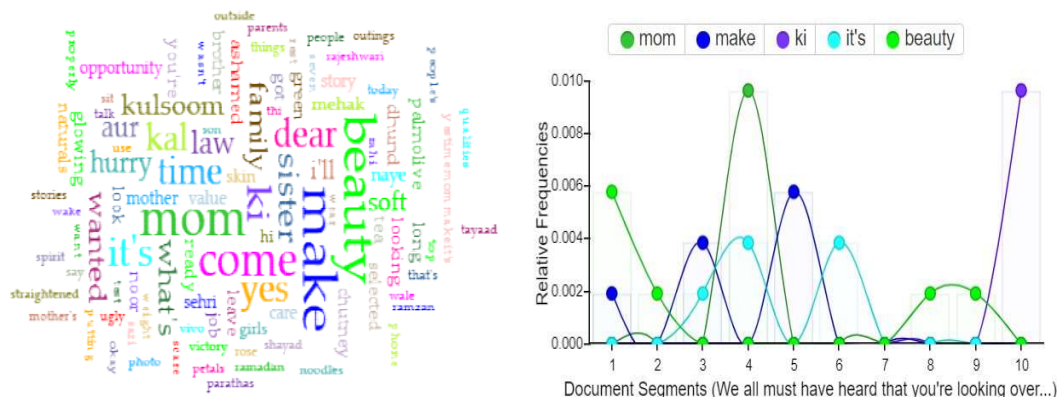


Fig. Results from Voyant Tools

Results

The current study utilizes corpus linguistics tools, Voyant and AntConc to analyze the representation of women in five Pakistani television commercials. The corpus includes 628 tokens and 279 types, with frequency analysis highlighting dominant linguistic patterns and thematic elements. Through the quantitative approach, the study examines how language contribute to gender stereotypes, reflecting and reinforcing traditional gender roles and norms in media.

4.1 Linguistic Patterns and Collocations

The linguistic analysis that describes recurring patterns emphasizing women’s physical appearance, domestic roles, and societal compliance is identified using corpus tools such as Voyant Tools and AntConc. High-frequency terms used in the advertisements like "beauty," "soft," "skin," "mother," and "home" reflect an overarching narrative linking femininity to beauty and caregiving.

- i. **Emphasis on Physical Appearance:** In Voyant Tools and AntConc, a word search shows the words that come up in advertisements such as "beauty," "soft," "smell," and "glow" in beauty-related advertisements such as LUX and Palmolive Soap. The phrases such as “soft, glowing skin,” reinforce the notion that a woman’s worth is related to her looks. Such terms further the idea that women’s bodies should be judged according to beauty standards and that appearances are the measure of a woman’s worth.



Fig. 1 Palmolive Soap (most frequent words used in the text from Voyant Tools)

- ii. **Behavioral Restrictions and Societal Judgment:** Advertisements directed at women often use phrases like “don’t laugh too loud” or “sit properly,” reflecting cultural expectations of modesty, reserve, and submissiveness. Such language upholds patriarchal ideals, discouraging bold behavior while emphasizing social pressures on women’s compliance. Phrase like “She doesn’t speak” in the advertisement describes that she is not able to speak but it’s her quality to cook delicious food which point out woman’s worth is in what she’s doing; not in what she’s saying and perpetuating patriarchal gender roles.



Fig.2 LUX Advertisement (most frequent words used in text from Voyant Tools)

- iii. **Associations with Domestic Roles:** Domestic products’ advertisements often use themes of caretaking such as “mother”, “home,” “serve,” when depicting women. In advertisements such as Eva Cooking Oil and Vivo Ramadan, women are portrayed in caregiving roles performing functions around cooking, cleaning and maintaining the household. Expressions like “She cooks so well” that tie women’s identity within domestic spheres only serve to undermine women’s recognition beyond the home and imprison them under the same roof they were born in, limiting their contributions to society as a whole to the home as the old habits die hard.



Fig. Eva Cooking Oil Advertisement (most frequent words used in the text from Voyant Tools)



Fig. Vivo Advertisement (most frequent words used in the text from Voyant tools)

The findings from the analysis are synthesized to show how language cooperates to form gender stereotypes. In general the linguistic patterns support traditional stereotypes about gender. Through their repetitive connection of women to beauty and domesticity, these advertisements reinforce a limited view of femininity, which leaves out characteristics such as autonomy, intelligence, and professional achievements.

4.2 Linguistic Implications

The frequent repetition of key terms demonstrates how language choices in media advertisements perpetuate societal norms and values. This linguistic pattern reaffirms established gender roles while subtly embedding themes of subordination and withdrawal into everyday discourse.

Discussion

The linguistic analysis reveals that gender stereotypes are deeply embedded in Pakistani commercials, where women are often portrayed in roles emphasizing beauty, caregiving, and compliance with societal expectations. These stereotypes align with broader South Asian media trends, where women are restricted to domestic and beauty-focused roles. The focus on beauty products promotes unattainable beauty standards, particularly around fairness and softness, perpetuating colorism and Eurocentric ideals. Advertisements encourage women to conform to these narrow standards, fostering pressures related to appearance. Domestic ads, like those for *Eva Cooking Oil* and *Ahmed Foods*, reinforce caregiving as women's primary role.

Implications and Future Recommendation

This study has significant implications for media practitioners, advertisers, policymakers and scholars. These stereotypes present it in a way that Pakistani advertisements constraints to the perception and identity of gender in public which ultimately restricts the concept of gender equality as well. Tackling these issues falls on the shoulders of advertisers and media creators who can use their influence to present women as self-empowering and able beings rather than stereotypical representations. The research highlights how generally incorrect, unbalanced image reinforces the collective unconscious, demanding more inclusive, balanced portrayal and

fulfilling empowerment, agency and diversity. Future studies should address these issues by increasing the sample size, surveying the audience, employing longitudinal research, and exploring the effects of policy initiatives on gender representation in consumer advertising. These recommendations can pave the path for future research on this topic, allowing for greater nuance and understanding in gender representation that can further support the movement to make media a more inclusive space that represents diverse and empowering narratives for all.

Conclusion

The findings of this study show that Pakistani Commercials repetitively normalize traditional gender roles, and restrict women to the roles which emphasizes on caregiving and maintaining physical beauty. Linguistic patterns, like the high frequency of words pertaining to beauty and domesticity reinforce a narrative that confines women's identities to these stereotypes. The media's persistence in embedding traditional gender norms echoes ingrained cultural expectations of women, attributing more value to their role within the household than in professional life or their own leisure time.

Global efforts to promote gender parity even in portrayals have not penetrated the mainstream Pakistani media that influence societal perceptions which set the tone of how the society views roles of women. It urges the need for a radical rethinking of how women have historically been portrayed, arguing that society must take steps toward depictions of women that are diverse and empowering, not just about beauty and caregiving. Advertisements have a powerful ability to reflect cultural norms and even reshape them, through equitable representations of women, challenging stereotypes and a progressive vision of gender roles in the media.

References

- Ahmad, B., Khan, N. H., & Ullah, I. (2024). A mixed method comparative analysis of socio-linguistic features in the genderlect of American and Pakistani English TV talk shows. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(2), 292-302.
- Asghar, S., & Akhter, U. (2022). Representation of women: A mixed method analysis of Pakistani English newspapers. *Journal of Communication and Cultural Trends*, 4(2), 61-80.
- Belknap, P., & Leonard, W. M. (1991). A conceptual replication and extension of Erving Goffman's study of gender advertisements. *Sex Roles*, 25(3-4), 53-118.
- Fredrickson, B. L., & Roberts, T. (1997). Objectification theory: Toward understanding women's lived experiences and mental health risks. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 21(2), 173-206.
- Goffman, E. (1979). *Gender Advertisements*. Harper and Row.

- Javed, H., Asif, M., Tariq, M. J., Ali, B., & Ayoub, M. T. (2024). Gendered ideologies in TV advertisements: A semiological discourse analysis. *Al-Qirtas*, 3(1), 16-32.
- Kilbourne, J. (1999). *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. Simon and Schuster.
- Lakoff, R. (1975). *Language and Woman's Place*. Harper and Row.
- Mills, S. (1995). *Feminist Stylistics*. Routledge.
- Zotos, Y. C., & Tsihla, E. (2014). Female stereotypes in print advertising: A retrospective analysis. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 148, 446-454.