

A Study on the Language of Gender in Indian Advertisements

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Contents

1. Introduction
2. Why This Study Matters
3. Research Question & Hypothesis
4. History of Gender in Ads
5. Stereotypes About Women & Men
6. Breaking Stereotypes
7. Research Methodology
8. Survey Results – Men vs Women
9. Key Insights
10. Conclusion
11. Future Directions
12. References

01

Introduction

- Advertising is more than selling products.
- It reflects and shapes how society views gender.
- From 1970s TV to today's social media, ads influence how we see men and women.

Purpose statement: Why this study matters?



Ads do not just mirror society—they also create norms. They reflect what already exists in culture, but also shape how men and women believe they should behave.



By studying ads, we can understand cultural beliefs about gender.

Advertisements act as cultural texts, showing how ideas of masculinity and femininity are produced and reproduced.



This matters for students, marketers, and anyone who consumes media.

Recognizing stereotypes helps audiences question them and encourages companies to adopt inclusive practices.

Hypotheses



Question:

Do ads reinforce or challenge gender stereotypes?



Hypothesis:

Ads have shifted from reinforcing stereotypes to showing progress, but still rely on gender roles for impact.



1970s–1980s:

Women shown as homemakers, men as breadwinners.

1990s:

“Superwoman” – women managed both jobs and home.

2000s+:

Ads began showing empowerment but often for profit.

History of Gender in Ads

Sources: *“History of Marketing”*, 2025; Das, 2024; Gupta, 2023; ASCI, 2022; Gill, 2007

Breaking Stereotypes

- Newer ads show women as independent and strong.
- Some ads show men cooking or sharing domestic roles.
- Sports ads support women athletes and diversity.



Source: <https://www.bwmarketingworld.com/article/from-stereotypes-to-strength-the-changing-face-of-women-in-indian-media-550097>

Research Methodology



Survey with 143 participants.

Shown people two sets of ads.



Content of advertisement

– One set with gender stereotypes. (Category A)
– One set with progressive portrayals. (Category B)



Participants rated effectiveness and appropriateness.

Category
A/B Ads
shown

1

Least effective

2

3

Rating

4

5

Most effective



Qualitative
post-test
questions

Survey Results

- Men rated both types of ads almost the same.
- Women rated progressive ads more positively.
- Most people still believed stereotypes “work” commercially even if inappropriate.

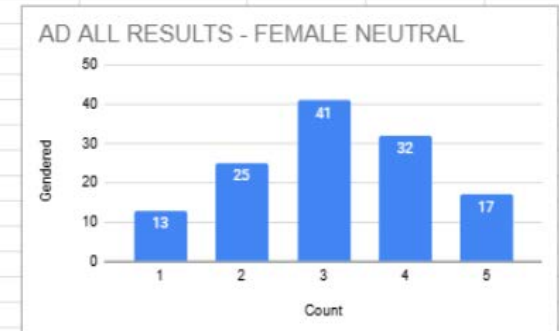
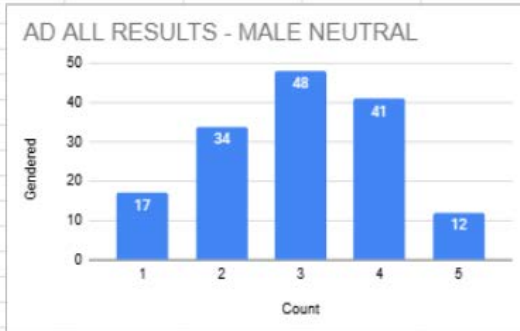
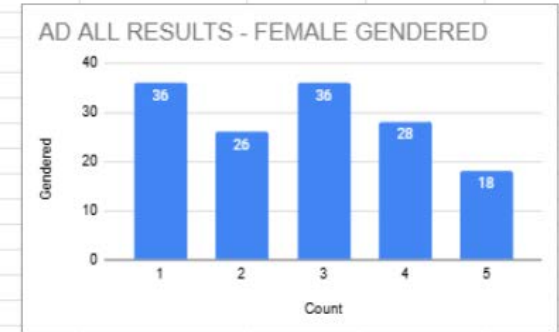
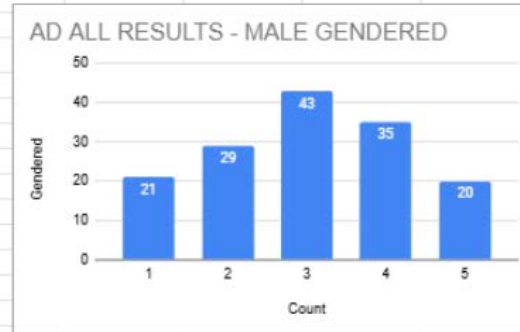


Figure: Distribution of Responses to the Advertisements

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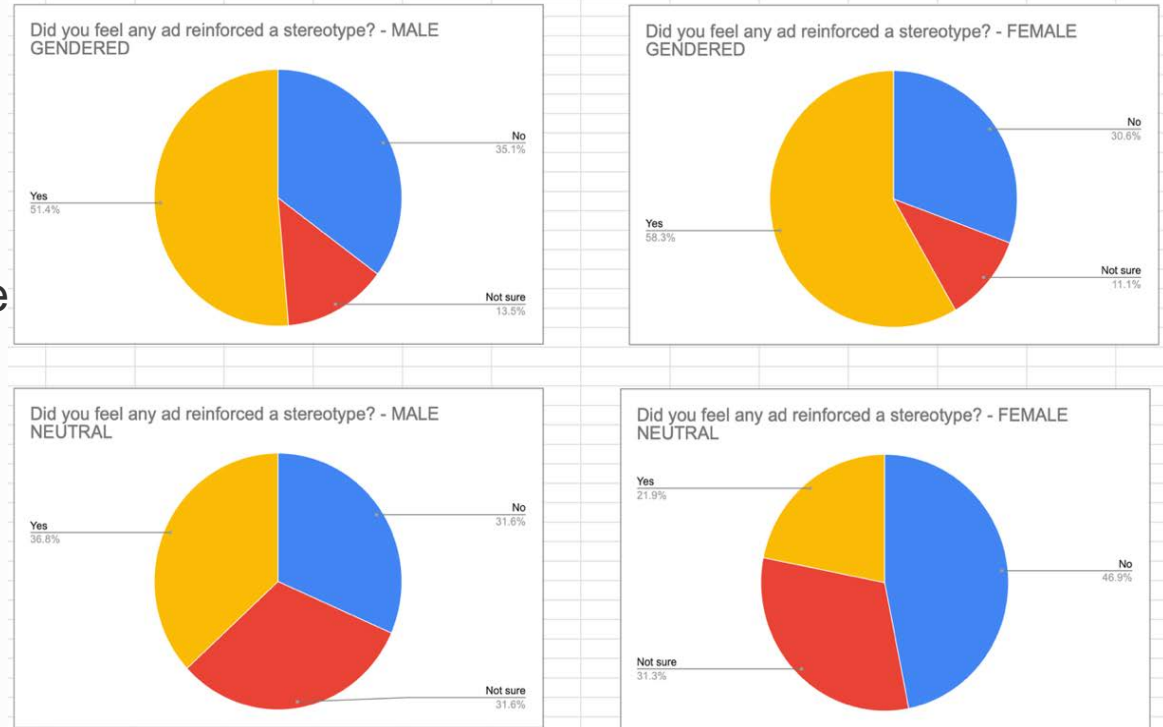
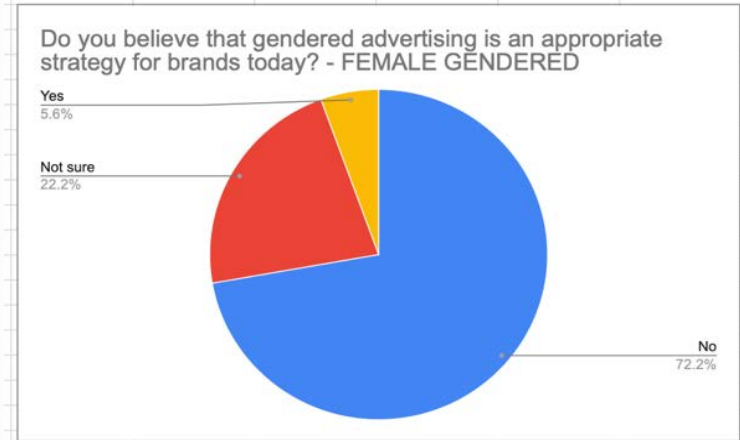
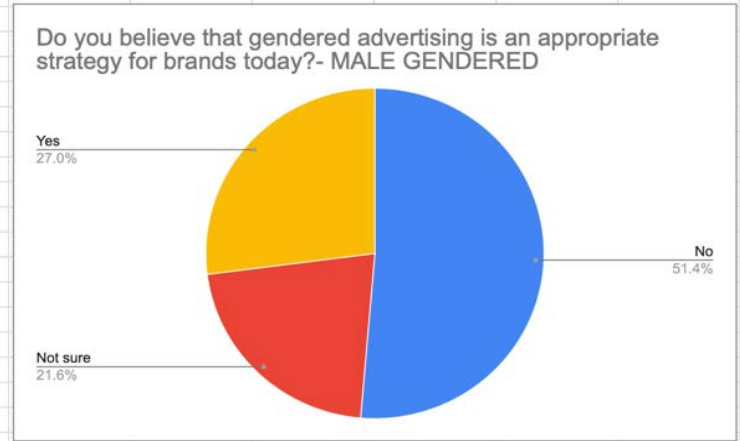


Figure: Charts on Stereotype Recognition

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Figure: Appropriateness of gendered advertisements, responses by men (top) versus women (bottom)



Conclusion & Future Directions



This Study

Key Findings

Indian ads often rely on gender roles—either traditional or “progressive”—because they sell.

Audience Reactions

Women were more critical of stereotypes, while men showed greater acceptance or indifference.

Cultural Impact

Even when seen as inappropriate, stereotypes remain commercially effective and shape social norms.

Next Steps

Future studies should explore how ads portray class, caste, and sexuality alongside gender.

Literature review

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Thank You

