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## MALE GENDER STEREOTYPES IN PAKISTANI ADVERTISEMENTS

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### Abstract

*This paper deals with the study of how men are portrayed and perceived in television commercials in electronic media. After reviewing existing literature on gender stereotypes and in advertisements, a research gap has been identified in the field of gender stereotype studies in electronic media: male gender stereotypes and their utilization in advertisements. Hence, this research combines these aspects in an attempt to fill the aforementioned gap. Content analysis is chosen as a method to evaluate male gender stereotypes, if any. The analysis of the study is comprised 60 ads which were further coded for nine distinguished categories and sub-categories. The outcome of this study supports the proposed hypothesis. Stereotypes of male gender roles exist today in our society and dominate the overall portrayal.*

### Key words

Gender stereotypes, traditional stereotypes, masculinity, advertising, society

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## 1. Introduction

In today's intervened and contemporary society, a great part of the discernments and representation of social roles of an individual originate from media (Brooks & Hébert, 2006). Hence, media content influences the way we perceive reality and also contributes in shaping gender roles. In spite of the significance of media in our modern society which is endowed with new innovations, men are not represented in the media according to their number, social involvement, and real life. Several studies examine the portrayal of men and women in all

medium of communication. Despite the fact that gender roles have been changed over the period of time, advertiser still depend on traditional stereotypes in displaying male and female effectively.

With respect to media in Pakistan, television is a very popular medium. Considering this fact, the advertisers spend the most of their advertising budget on television advertisements. A survey by Gallup (2014) 28% people spend weekends watching TV, 29% stay home, 6% in other hobbies, 5% in exercise & walk, 14% go out with friends. According to Gallup, the share of advertising spends on Television is 68 percent. Due to the present situation where large number of people watch television, advertising companies use television commercials to reach men, women and children, there is a significant interest in how gender stereotypes are portrayed in television advertisements. Stereotypes in media have always existed, unbeaten, forever strong and unchanging. Stereotypes have made it easier for the human brain to process information, since they leave out logic while encountering a situation. However, from the beginning of time, the human brain has not undergone much evolution, and so stereotypes have been protected from wear and tear. Knoll & Eisend (2011, p. 869) refer to Vinacke (1975) to define stereotypes as “a set of concepts pertaining to a social category”. Yu, Yang, Lu & Yan (2014, p. 145) argue that stereotypes are one of many cognitive shortcuts that people use in order to navigate through complex daily life. Stereotypes themselves do not necessarily have to be negative judgments and they can prove to be quite useful in everyday life when one is missing orientation.

Despite being epitome of modernization, American society is patriarchal just like Pakistani society which honors individualism and heroism. Pakistani social order indeed is the one in which man dominates in all walks of life. Although, men dominates this society, but woefully misrepresented in the media. Hardworking, self-sacrificing men who are striving hard to earn their living and support their families are shown active, powerful and macho. Although these stereotypes are hard to avoid but portrayal of men in the TVCs are not reflecting the true Pakistani men who are zealous and yearn to take care of their family and friends. After reviewing the current literature, there is a gap between what the reality of men’s life in Pakistan and how they appear in and through the media. Much has been written about the portrayal of women, but past studies confirm that male gender portrayal in advertisements is a less-researched area and scarcely anything is published about the effect or the adequacy of using distinctive male

depictions. Therefore, male gender identity should be included in this kind of analysis since the media also target and shape the perception of being man.

This research will look at the stereotypes that exist today in association with men in television commercials, specifically documenting the current stereotypes and evaluating them in the light of previous studies on gender. This study can serve as the cornerstone to spur future studies of gender role portrayals in Pakistan's advertising. Results are measured and discussed, and future implications for research, including limitations, are posited.

## **2. Literature Review**

Gender is a well-known term that is used extensively in different studies i.e. Psychology, education, Sciences and in media studies. Individuality of gender is a feeling that specifies that one is male or female (Attenborough. F, 2014). Society as a whole and many other factors contributes in the discrimination of particular sexual characteristics. Gender specify not only the physical appearance, being a man or a woman, but it is a way of living ,making choices , personal traits and behavior that is acceptable in the society. Gender identity vary from culture to culture, sometimes even within one culture male and females are expected to perform specific duties and jobs that are assigned them by the society they live in. These are basically prejudices, perceptions and ideas about what is right and what is wrong. It leads to create stereotypes and evaluate both genders accordingly. Stereotypes are embedded in our society and they are created in every society, and in every culture. It is a slow process with repeated events already absorbed by the society. It influences the behavior; attitudes and life style .Stereotypes are long lasting and are obvious in the society through people (men and women). According to many social scientists, repeated exposure to stereotyped messages for the long time period affects the attitudes, values and behavior of the society. As indicated by social learning theory, "knowledge from live and typical models (e.g. movies, TVs, and books) is the initial phase in the adoption of gendered-type conduct" (Mischel, 1966) and are urged to imitate the models appeared in TV, whether seen specifically or experienced through the media. Therefore, it unconsciously shape or strengthen the perspectives about sexual orientation suitable practices from TV (Courtney, 1983). Considering its significant impact on people, gender stereotyping in ads has turned into a well-known subject in media and communication.

## **2.1 Advertising in Pakistan**

If we profoundly go through the advertisements in Pakistan, we will come across the fact that the male dominance has clenched the industry hardly. The masculine gender role model emphasizes power, whether in the office or the playing field. Male gender is not recognized by the beauty and fashion, but through the power of choice (Barthel, 1994). You cannot be sure about purchasing a product unless it is guaranteed by a striking male figure, who exactly knows your requirements more than you do and his approval is all you need to go for it. That's why women are shown weaker sex in terms of physical strength and men are continually being given the voice of authority in the society and in media, especially in advertisements (N.Ifezue, 2010).

One of the most vociferous criticisms of the way in which men appear in electronic media specially in ads is that they are portrayed in an extremely narrow range of roles, with depictions concentrated on the traditional occupations of banker , a father , a happy go lucky youngster (McArthur & Resko,1975 ; Culley & Bennett , 1976 ; Lunderstorn & Sciglimpaglia,1977; Schneider & Schneider, 1979).

## **2.2 Central Figure**

Unlike women's studies, only few studies focus solely on the images of men in advertising. Basically, men are used as signifiers of cultural values such as status, strength, power, and success rather than actual users of the product in advertisements (Frith and Mueller, 2003, p.243). Culley and Bennett (1979) noted that older men were pictured with more frequency than women.

## **2.3 Age**

Shavitt, S., Lowtry, P., Haefner, J. (1998) conducted research to investigate relationship between demographic characteristics like gender , age ,education , income , and its affect on the behavior and attitude of audiences about advertisement. The result was significantly related to differences in attitude towards commercials. As a matter of fact, male, younger consumers (18-35years), with less education and income, showed more favorable advertising attitudes than others.

## **2.4 Product User**

Certain products or issues are permanently tied in with the particular gender, for example, nearly all the products used in household are linked with women as if there are no single men living without women at their homes (Mwangi 1996;Neto & Pinto 1998). While, the products used outdoors or that require physical strain are associated with the male figure of society. So, the males usually advertise hardware, auto and financial services. (Mwangi, 1996).

## **2.5 Occupation**

Occupation among men and women in media is clearly imbalanced (Glascock, 2001). The independent or professional role is usually a role that men have in advertisements while women are habitually in the dependent consumer, purchaser role (Ibroscheva, 2007; Furnham & Imadzu, 2002).A study by Lauzen (2008) concluded that women are mostly shown in marital roles whereas men are portrayed in occupational roles in prime-time. A study done in Ghana by Milner (2005) the majority of men in Ghana were portrayed in outdoors settings (46.8%), compared to 24.6% of women.

## **2.6 Voiceover**

An important characteristic of advertisements is the voice that speaks and elaborates the details about the product. “Certainly the tone and timbre of a voice are two things that can help sell the product or service (Corso, 2010). As we know that important feature of male personality is the male voice which is cash in the advertisements and has become a prominent factor in persuasion of customers. A considerable number of studies found male voiceovers to be dominant over the female voice in advertisements such as Wee et. Al.,(1995), Mwangi(1996), Siu and Au(1997), Neto and Pinto(1998) and Childs and Maher (2003).

## **2.7 Product representative**

Product promotion through television is the gold standard and the most effective of all media for consumer products. (Thomas, 2013).Therefore, many stereotypes are caused by ads in their portrayal of a man. These ads tend to promote masculinity, personality orientation and fantasies to establish their market. Ping Shaw and Yue Tan (2014) argue “The male models represent the ideal image of masculinity”. Hence, media largely construct out ideas of reality as

we are exposed to media messages and interpret the meanings of the message we encounter hence develop “faulty beliefs” of the world (Potter,1998).

## **2.8 Stance**

Showing men in subordinate position or assumes the unstable posture frequently shows obedience and surrender to women raises question on the manliness of men. Masse and Rosenblum (1988) argues that men in TVCs were portrayed in non-subordinate positions and women in subordinate give rise to stereotypes.

## **2.9 Product type**

Representation of male gender role may vary across different product categories (Neto and Pinto 1998; Whipple and Mc Manamon 2002). We often see in a Pakistani advertisement of a food product that a woman is working in kitchen and taking help from the product to please her male partner or even her son and being helped by her daughter that shows the dominance of men over women. It is very rare that we see a male figure in the advertisements, working in kitchen except that he is famous chef. Male dominant food advertisement was found in USA also by Childs and Maher (2003).

## **2.10 Location**

A study done in USA posits men are shown double as compare to women in outdoor location while women are shown in home and domestic setting (Brenham et al., 2001). J. D. Brown and K. Campbell (1986) report men are rarely shown doing house course tasks men are depicted as unconcerned and lack the ability managing home, cooking, and taking care of children. When someone is shown taking care of a child, ‘it’s usually the mother, not the father. This promotes negative stereotype of men as uncaring and uninvolved in family member.

Therefore the research question is:

What are the stereotypes that are associated with men in television commercials?

## **3. Methodology**

Content analysis is well considered as one of the most efficient research tools because of its capability for handling unstructured matter as data in a modest way, which allows researchers

to process data texts which are significant, meaningful, informative, and even representational to others, and coping with large volumes of data that in turn greatly increases its generalizability (Krippendorff, 2004). This research is designed to present how male gender roles are portrayed in Pakistani television commercials. Hence, based on its context-explored nature, content analysis is chosen as the research method to analyze the different aspects related to the meanings of various male gender-role portrayals. These aspects included age, product use, occupation, voiceover, product representation, stance, location and product type.

### 3.1 Coding Categories and Variables

Coding categories were based on proved and effective categories in other recent content analyses. Modifications and additions to the earlier categories were made according to reflect the hypotheses of the study in hand. Total nine variables categorized in the research are:

**Table 1:** *Descriptions of Variables*

Central figure/dominating	A character that captures the screen for longer time than the others It could be male or a female.
Age	Logical hints for age as indicated by the scale: 18-35 young; 36-55 years middle aged; 56 years or above were considered as old.
Product Use	This considers the prime buyer of the item/product.
Occupation	Family/home, Professionals, Business management: a person engaged in any business activity (e.g.: debt reduction advertisement such as the Ameridebt, or bank advertisements or businessman). Media/Entertainment: known public figures in entertainment or sports. Service: waiter , gas station attendants, mechanic or any other service/repair field. Clerical: secretaries, sales associate, clerk. Other- any occupation which was unclear, did not fit into one of the above categories, or fit into more than one category.
Voiceovers/Narrators	A person narrating about the product
Product Representative	The central figures were tested for product representative through the following categories: a) male, b) female, c) both and d) can't say.
Stance Subordination	It is the figures in advertisements are whether shown sitting, bending, lying down, leaning or standing with an out-thrust hip (in other words, shown in subordinate positions).
Product Types	a) foodstuffs: Any type of food or beverages; b) personal hygiene/beauty care: all personal hygiene products with unisexual appeal like deodorants, soaps, shampoos etc. c) home products: included exterior

	and interior household goods like furniture, household cleaners, wall painting , dish detergents etc .d) car/ related products: including all automotive vehicles advertisements, as well as gasoline, oil, maintenance and repair advertisements; e) electronic and tele-communication: all advertisements pertaining to electronic or communication were coded for the gender of the dominant character; f) restaurants; g) insurance/bank; and h) other: includes advertisements for drugs , jewelry, clothing etc.
Location	It is the position of the dominating character whether its home or party (indoor), outdoor activities/socializing in short away from home.

#### 4. Data Analysis & Interpretation

Advertisements were recorded for one week at prime time (7:00 PM-10:00PM PST).Commercials was selected from three television channels i.e. Hum TV, Dunya News and Express news. After excluding public service messages, paid political content, property dealing ads, and animated commercials, 60 ads were selected which had at least one male character in it. Each ad was coded for 9 variables as mentioned above in the table. Two coders coded 60 ads after the intensive training of one week. Total number of coding categories for each advertisement was 9.Therefore, total number measured would be  $60 \times 9 = 540$ .Where disagreement of the coders was on twenty cases. The inter coder reliability was recorded using two methods for nominal data that are Percentage of Agreement Method and Perreault and Leigh’s Method (1989). The overall interceder reliability coefficients using both methods were between 0.96 and 0.97.

#### H1: Men are more central character than women in advertisements

H1: A frequency test was run in SPSS to check the percentage of central figure (male & female). Results shows 46.7% men were depicted as central character which is four times more than women. Whereas, men and women in “both” category were 21.7 %. Remaining 18.3% was found in “unsure” category. Hence, proposed hypothesis is supported.

**Table 2:** Frequency distribution of central character

Central Figure	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Male	28	46.7	46.7	46.7
Female	8	13.3	13.3	60.0



Unsure	11	18.3	18.3	78.3
Both	13	21.7	21.7	100.0
Total	60	100.0	100.0	

## **H2: Men in television commercials are older than their female counterparts**

A Chi-square test is run in SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and age variables. Indicates significant difference found between central figure's gender and age variables ( $X^2 = 25.970$ ,  $df=9$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The hypothesis 2 (H2) is accepted and significant difference was found in this regard.

## **H3: More women than men are product users in television commercials.**

A Chi-square test is run in SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and age variables. The hypothesis 3 (H3) is rejected and no significant difference was found in this regard. ( $X^2 = 1.017$ ,  $DF=3$ ,  $p > .05$ ).

## **H4: Men's primary occupation is high profession in television commercials .(banker/doctor)**

To evaluate the "Occupation" variable, Chi-square test was run using SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and age variables. "Pearson Chi-Square value" is .348 which is greater than .05. Hence, there is no significant relation between the two variables.

## **H5: Men dominate voiceovers in current television commercials.**

A Chi-square test is run in SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and age variables. Significant relationship was found between gender and voiceovers variables ( $X^2 = 14.031$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p = .003$ ). The hypothesis 5 (H5) is accepted.

## **H6: Men are portrayed as product representatives more than women.**

A frequency test was run in SPSS to check the percentage of product representation of (male & female). Results show 55% men were depicted as product representative which is three times more than women that is 13%. Whereas, men and women in "both" category were 16.7 %. Remaining 15% was found in "can't say" category. Hence, proposed hypothesis is supported.

**H7: Men are shown in non-subordinate positions in most advertisements.**

A Chi-square test is run in SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and stance variables. Results indicate significant difference found between central figure's gender and stance variables. The hypothesis 7 (H7) is accepted and significant difference was found in this regard. ( $X^2 = 15.872$ ,  $df=3$ ,  $p=.001$ ).

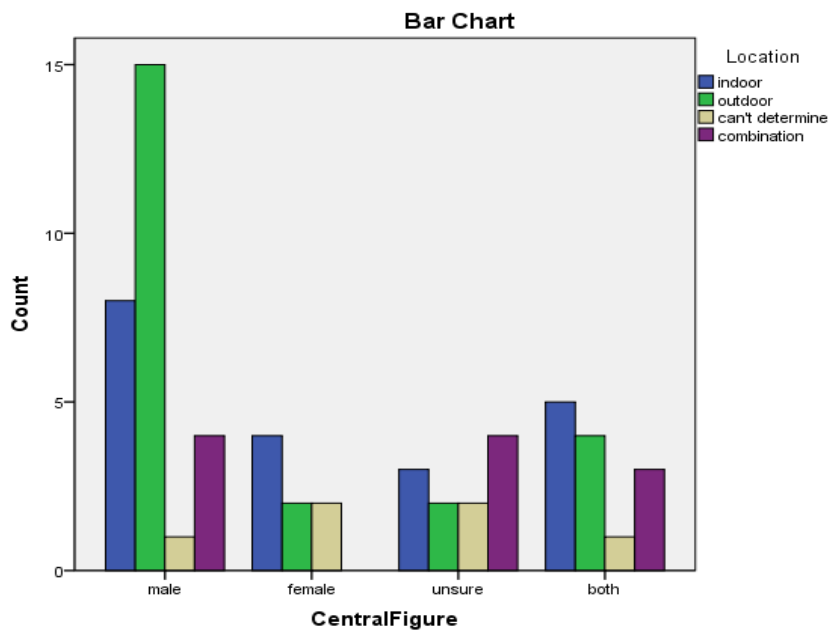
**H8: Men are primarily associated with automobiles and telecom/electronics products.**

A Chi-square test is run in SPSS to see if there is a significant relation between central figure and product type variables. Result indicated no significant difference found between central figure and product type variables  $X^2 = 17.565$ ,  $df=18$ ,  $p=.485$ .

**H9: Men are more often associated with public sphere (outdoor) rather than Private sphere (indoor).**

To evaluate the distribution of occupation of men, bar chart was created in SPSS. It clearly shows men in outdoor sphere. New trend has been seen that men are also shown indoor. Hence, hypothesis 9 is supported. Men are more depicted outdoors as compare to women.

**Figure 1: Bar chart presentation of Location**



## 5. Discussion

This particular study at hand confirmed the gender stereotypical displays are heavily communicated through advertisements in Pakistani society. Elliott & Elliott (2005), who posits, men are also subject to oppressive stereotypes and also confront unrealistic body images or stereotypical categories such as the successful businessman or happy go lucky person. On the whole, this study complements previous research about gender stereotypes in advertising (e.g. Kolbe & Albanese, 1996; Thomas & Treiber, 2000; Knoll & Eisend, 2011).

Past researches shows relatively higher number of male gender portrayal in central character. However, a study by Furnham & Li (2008) found equal representation of male and female gender in advertisements. McArthur & Resko (1975) found male portrayal as central character in USA and in contradiction to this Uray & Burnaz (2003) found females as primary character in Turkey. The result of this study indicates men appeared as a central figure more frequently than women in television advertisements. Hence, H1 was supported. In product type researchers suggest men endorse sports and auto most ( Neto & Pinto,1998; Mwang ,1996). This study revealed that men are increasingly (15%) being portrayed in food ads.10% in electronic and telecom category, 5% in auto related products and 5% in banking/insurance category. Women are portrayed 5% in food stuff category as a central character.5% in beauty and hygiene products. Hence, proposed hypothesis is partially accepted. A study from late 1960s shows men as product representatives because they were depicted as more authoritative and confident to take decision (McArthur & Resko, 1975; Child & Maher, 2003). The results of this study shows same stereotypical trend as 55% of whole sample depicted male representation of the product. Therefore, proposed hypothesis is accepted. This study found overwhelmingly male dominance over voiceover in ads. Previous studies also confirm men dominance in this category. Courtney & Whipple (1974) reported men narrated 88% of all voiceovers in TVCs. Childs & Maher (2003) found male gender preference with respect to voice over as well. Data of this study revealed that trend remains same as 47% of the ads used male voiceover. Hence, results support the hypothesis proposed. Previous researches has indicated, in most television ads women as product users and not product authorities (Neto & Pinto,1998) .Though findings of this study indicates men dominates the product use category rather than women. According to Whipple & McManamon (2002) male are portrayed as central figure and dominates being product users. Consequently, Hypothesis was not supported. Male gender is portrayed relatively more

dominating characters and having more control over product (Browne, 1998). Study done by Masse & Rosenblum, Nigro, Hill, Gelbein, & Clark (1988) concluded that ads clearly show dominance of one character over the other. Their study reported men dominance and women's subservience pattern. Men are more often positioned above the women are frequently portrayed in sitting, bending position. Men are depicted 33% in non subordinating position as compared to women i.e. 10% of the total sample. Therefore, proposed hypothesis was supported. Data for this study reveals even today, men are mostly portrayed in professional, service provide and in business management roles. Studies from early 1970s shown men in occupational setting. Being employed at banks or at managerial positions. (McSrthur & Resko, 1975; Wee et.al, 1995). Men are also shown from successful business executives and professional entertainers (Siu & Au, 1997). Females are portrayed in more recreational roles than man (Khair Ullah & Khair Ullah, 2009). This study's findings indicates new trend in family category. Men are equally portrayed in domestic environment. Professional and family degree revealed equal results. Females are always shown younger in ads (Siu & Au, 1997; Neto & Pinto, 1998). Men are shown rather mature and experienced than their female counterpart. This study in hand showed men mature and experienced as compare to their female counterpart were supported. Stereotypes occur when men are shown outdoors, doing activities or socializing and females are shown at home with home products. A study Australia concluded location for men outdoors (37.8%) while private residence (i.e. home) was the most common for females (32.8%). Another study in United States reported (Bresnahan et al., 2001), women as double in amount as compare to men in private residence (27 vs. 13%) while men are shown 29% more often than women 18% outdoors. This study revealed 25% men outdoor, women 3%. While men in domestic setting 13% and women 6.7%. Hence, proposed hypothesis was supported.

## **6. Conclusion**

Gender inequality is a universal fact, deeply rooted in many Asian societies. As Pakistan is a patriarchal society where men are the primary authority figures and women are mere subordinates. This study confirms that male gender inequalities and biases are still portrayed in the Pakistani media. The unequal gender roles are perceived as static and enforced by structures imbedded in society. Men routinely face serious workload restrictions and earn bread and butter for the whole family. An 'ideal man' is expected to be not only financially stable but he should

also possess good management qualities, he should be a mature advisor, a decisive person, sincere in whatever he does, highly logical, physically strong, composed and a heartthrob, all at the same time. Same image is portrayed in media to strengthen these stereotypes.

The quantitative analysis shows that there is a high frequency of male gender stereotypes in Pakistani advertisements, which does not accurately reflect the society that is considered quite egalitarian society. The study finds that advertisements had settings in which more males were found in the workplace and more product representatives; voiceovers employed more males than females; and cosmetics and personal hygiene were associated with female characters. In contrast, the predominance of female primary characters ran counter to trends in previous studies. It concludes that television actively support the status quo and a patriarchal society, while these representations are clearly damaging for gender equality. An 'ideal man' is expected to be not only financially stable but he should also possess good management qualities, he should be a mature advisor, a decisive person, highly logical, physically strong, composed and a heartthrob, all at the same time. Same image is portrayed in media to strengthen these stereotypes. Media representations represent major fortifying thoughts regarding what society expects from men to behave in general public. In most media portrayal, male characters are rewarded for being strong, confident and active.

Certain products or images are permanently attached with the particular gender, for example, nearly all the products used in household are linked with women as if there are no single men living without women at their homes, and the products used outdoors or that require physical strain are associated with the male figure of society. This study found out, the benefit of Lux beauty soap is to acquire the attention and appreciation of male figure not for the smoothness or making the skin better in appearance which is the real purpose of the product. There wasn't a single ad for male beauty soap or cream. Men are subject to stereotyping in the ads. They are typically characterized as powerful and dominant. There is little room for alternative visions of masculinity. The media tends to humiliate men in caring or domestic roles, or those who oppose their decisions on women.

Advertisements like cars and bikes are even today targeted at men audiences. It is related to sports and an outdoor activity. So, once again it's stereotyped as being male's utility product. Although, women are now working in sales department but still male dominates automobile market for example Suzuki car ads, Yamaha Bike ad even OLX car selling ads used male models

as protagonists. Jubilee Insurance ads have shown the father being decision maker and worried about the future of his son and daughter. He wants to protect and secure the future of his children. Being head of the family took the decision of taking insurance policy. When beauty products are only associated with women it is another stereotype. Products like Fair & lovely were advertised for women to make their skin fairer and glowing. As a matter of fact, men too need these types of creams to improve their skin complexion and sunscreens to protect it from harsh sun. That's why marketers found it difficult to accommodate and fulfill the need of male market. This is because of the traditional belief that men don't need any care, they look 'man' being rough and tough. Taking care of oneself is equally good for men as women. Taking care of skin or hair is no longer constrained to women only.

## **7. Future Recommendations**

Future research could extend these findings by the following suggestions: First of all, the current study can be replicated using five to six channels. Due to the fact that the selected advertisements for this study at hand only displayed prime time ads, a further suggestion would be to carry out a similar study with a different time of the day for selection of sample. Another option for future research could be to analyze male gender stereotypes in different media. This study focused solely on men's gender stereotypes in three selected channels at prime time. Hence, it would be advisable to explore men's portrayal in print, radio or new media such as websites, blogs, and social media and so forth in future studies. Moreover, this study focused on nine categories, since stereotypes are disseminated in other sectors as well, future studies could investigate further sectors or product categories.

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