

**SUBSCRIBING DOMINANT CULTURE: A SEMIOTIC STUDY OF GENDER IDENTITY AND
SOCIALIZATION PATTERNS IN PAKISTANI MEDIA DISCOURSE**Dr. Muhammad Haseeb Nasir¹**Original Article**1. Assistant Professor, Department of English, NUML, Islamabad. Email: mhnasir@numl.edu.pk**Abstract**

The present study seeks to highlight the contemporary gender socialization narrative in Pakistani media discourse. Media discourse tends to represent dominant gender ideology mechanism which is implicitly employed by the advertisers through semiotic modes. It has the power to (re)frame the ideology of larger audience through significant visual/linguistic content and paves the way for social change through viable social institutions which disseminate information to a wider audience. The study follows theoretical stance propounded by Dyer (1982) in Advertising as Communication. The domain of semiotics (order of signification) is a reliable and valid tool for investigating meaning making process in media discourse. The data is comprised of some popular television commercials which are broadcast on the most viewed channels during the peak time viewership in Pakistani context. Purposive sampling technique has been taken into account for data collection process including only those commercials which largely reflect gender socializing patterns. The study finds that the commercials present layers of meanings via several orders of signification where gender socialization patterns are stereotypically displayed, subscribing to patriarchal structures.

Keywords: Gender, Media Discourse, Socialization, Semiotics, Subscription**Introduction**

The present study aims to explore socially constructed gender-socialization patterns in Pakistani television commercials. It investigates the representation of gender in electronic media commercials and highlights the dominant representational mechanisms such as dominance, power-relations and gender stereo-typical roles and patterns. In any of its form, media discourse frames the ideology of the people. Media plays vital role in representing the social roles/patterns assigned to gender and the current study examines whether the television commercials are representative of traditional view point of females/males. The gender treatment with regard to their role, depiction, activity and identity has been analyzed in the commercials being aired on several Pakistani broadcasting channels.

The phenomenon of gender disparity has been a debated issue in various fields of inquiry, such as, media, sports, academia and professional domains since 1970's. Although, researches have increased awareness among people about equality of gender in modern era, yet the stereo-typical portrayal of gender still prevails in different contexts. The Dakar Framework of Action 2000 (UNESCO, 2002) is an initiative to reduce such gender discriminations and attempts have been made to eradicate the existing gender differences in the social interaction. However, in the Pakistani context, there is a need to conduct studies on existing gender imbalances in different dimensions to overcome such gender discriminations.

1.1 Research Objectives:

The objectives of the study are stated below:

- To examine gender socialization patterns in Pakistani television commercials
- To highlight the semiotic representation of gender identity in Pakistani televised content

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The manifestation of gender varies from country to country and its representational mechanism is context dependent, making gender research a purely social construct. Though past studies conducted in gender studies have delineated correlational value of gender and advertising explicitly, yet there are certain areas which still remained unexplored. According to Furnham and Bitar (1993), the focus of previous studies remained on developed English speaking countries but there has been deficiency of a critical gender research in third world developing countries like Pakistan. With an aim to address this gap, the current study examines the gender structures in Pakistani television commercials and analyzes what underlying ideological assumptions these commercials promote.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The research appears important in a way that it signifies a complete system of the existing gender representational status which helps to identify the position of the men and women in Pakistani societies. It also seeks to analyze the powerful, dominant and hegemonic masculine/feminine voices, (re)producing cultural myths in the commercials. Moreover, the study is also significant for academicians, providing them new insights as to analyze multimodal texts from a different perspective.

1.4 Research Questions

- How do Pakistani Electronic Media represent gender socialization patterns in the television commercials?
- What semiotic modes are employed in the construction of gender identity in Pakistani televised content?

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

The study is delimited to Pakistani television commercials. The television advertisements pertaining to human representation have been only included for the analysis. The data comprises the commercials which are only broadcast/ aired on Pakistani television channels such as PTV, GEO, ARY and HUM, DUNYA, SAMA and EXPRESS. In total, 20 television commercials were brought under consideration for analysis, out of which twenty 15 commercials were excluded on account of content duplication to avoid monotony.

2. Literature Review

The persuasive power of media in present era, is an undeniable fact that it directly influences our lives in every sphere of human activity. Wykes and Gunter (2005) suggest that studies conducted on the media content have traced its influence on audience that resulted in a rapid increase of research in highlighting the relationship between media portrayal and self-image. Cashmore (2006) is also of the view that the power of media has made researchers realize its lasting effects on the thoughts, feelings and emotions of people. We live in technology oriented world where every single day media presents innovative symbols, images and signs. These signs influence audience by presenting socially constructed visuals.

Harris and Lester (2002) describe that visual signs in commercials suggest deeper cultural meanings. Power and hegemony of media in present era, lies in the power of image and such a heavy profusion of images in the advertisements have made people rigorously visual dependent.

Images reflect the real face while depicting the emotions and feelings in a more vivid and realistic fashion. Ross & Lester (2003) give preference to message conveyed through visual signs because signs/visuals leave lasting imprints on memory and can be retained for a longer span of time. An image does not only contain visual effects but it also contains ideological assumptions which constitute social reality. Production of an image involves different stages where socially fabricated norms are manifested. It includes the lightening effect, content, signs and physical appearance of the human subjects. Berger (2008) informs that such editing and reproduction of an image affirms the social values where representation of human subjects is incorporated at symbolic level. The signs associated with men and women identify their roles and positional value in the social domain. The logic involved in extensive editing of these images lie in persuasive power of the advertisements. An image is purely a social construct that makes people believe, whatever, they see in the advertisements.

Gender is deeply rooted in our actions, existing dogmas and institutions. These institutions play a vital role in propagating gender narrative and make such representation of men/women appear natural. There is a need to explain gender before going into detail of the subject matter. According to Butler (1999) gender can be defined as socially elaborated difference between men and women. It is something that we 'do' or perform instead of being born with something. Society draws a line of demarcation between the roles assigned to men/women and treats them differently. Gender also deals with the concepts of masculinity and femininity in view of certain social patterns (Fourie, 2009). The social views of gender bank on the biological bifurcation of men/women which leads to their stereotyped representation and specified roles. Research in gender studies attempts to provide an overview of social, political and cultural treatment of gender. It focuses on the real representational value of gender, in line with social constructs and displays gender biased images in media discourse.

Many theorists reported that gender identity relies on the traditionally perceived roles of men/women in society. Some important theories from psychological perspective in the development of gender identity are: Evolutionary Theory (Buss, 1995 & Shields, 1975), Object-relations Theory (Chodorow, 1989), Gender Schema Theory (Bem 1981, 1993) and Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987). All of them highlight the image of men and women from a psychological perspective.

Zucker and Bradley (1995) defined "gender identity" as one's recognition of himself/herself on account of biological bifurcation into male/female. They have categorized gender identity at two levels: one dealing with gender on individual level and the second at collective level. Individual identity refers to recognition of one's self being male/female. On the other hand, collective identity signifies the social imposition in categorizing humans being male/female as society determines the role, status and positional value of men/women. It implies their socially constructed collective identity. Maccboy (1998) and Ruble et al. (2004) further explain that individual categorization of gender identity lays stress on one's self like 'me boy' or 'me girl' while collective functions as social group or gender group using pronouns like 'we boys' and 'we girls'. The concept of gender realization being male/female starts early from childhood.

Bell and Hollows (2005) are of the view that life style and identity are deeply interwoven. The life style of an individual determines his/her identity within a social group or community. In contemporary modern world, the significance of living style is a non-negligible phenomenon which includes: interests, activities, likes and dislikes. Johansson and Miegel (1992), pointing out the relation between lifestyle and identity suggest that lifestyle posits the self-identity within social, cultural and historical perspective.

The current study aims at exploring the gender socialization patterns in Pakistani television commercials with an intention to highlight as to what extent the televised content subscribes to or subverts the cultural gender structures.

3. Research Methodology

This part delineates the methodological stance of the study to investigate the representation of gender socialization patterns in Pakistani television commercials. It comprises an overall research design which is followed by the method of data collection, sample, theoretical underpinning of the study and the data analysis procedure. In the light of the theoretical framework, key variables of the theoretical model have also been explained one by one.

In the broader qualitative approach, the study is descriptive and exploratory where the purpose of the descriptive inquiry is to objectively portray the position of human subjects in social interactive process. On the other hand, exploratory refers to gain new insights into the representation of gender structures in Pakistani television commercials.

The data includes commercials being aired on some of the most viewed television channels. The researcher has observed some of the most viewed television channels during the prime time that is, 8 PM to 9 PM to acquire the required data. The selection of the commercials is based on the frequency of occurrence of each advertisement during prime time viewership. This frequency has been mentioned in the analysis section commercial wise. The rationale of selecting the time period is based on researcher's observation of the data and plan of the study. The timeframe for the process of data collection spans over 5 months. Moreover, with this intention, the researcher has tried to include the latest commercials but there were few categories which lacked the most recent commercials. In order to overcome this issue, a few commercials from old categories were included to fill that gap. The sampling technique involved in the present research is nonprobability purposive sampling and the rationale of choosing purposive sampling technique is to include only those commercials which reflect gender representation in the commercials.

3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

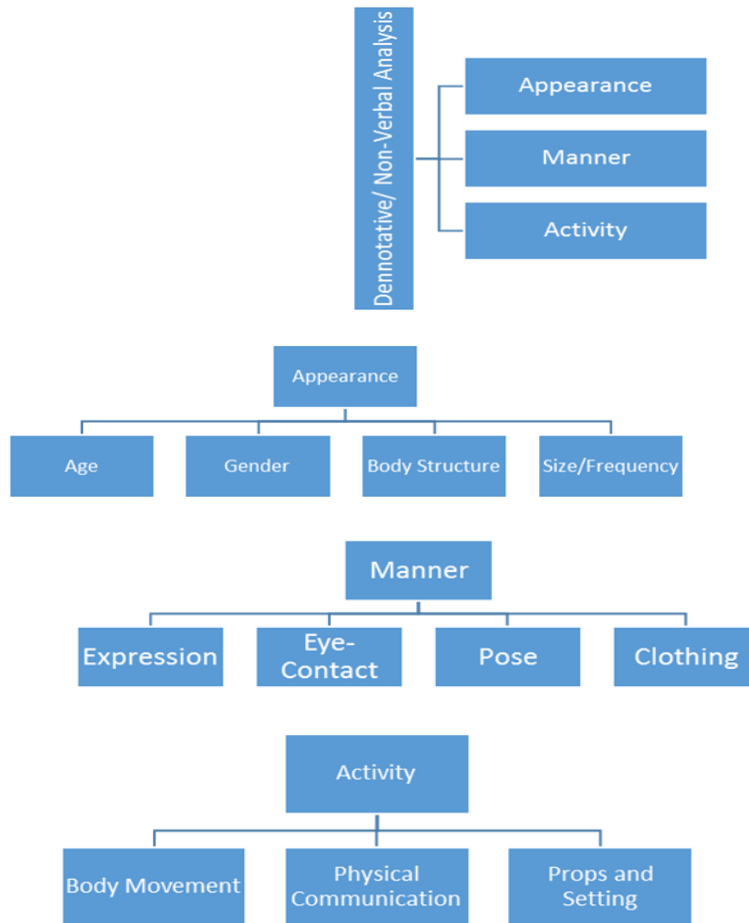
The theoretical framework of the study is based on Dyer's (1982) semiotic model.

3.1.1 Dyer's Analytical Model

3.1.1.1 Denotative Analysis

Human beings carry vital significance in any commercial as they are the driving force communicating feelings, traditions, social values and binary power relations. According to Dyer (1982), some non-verbal features like facial expression, contextualized body movement, visual image, color, gender, manner and activity convey social constructs within a particular socio-cultural context. The deconstruction of signs incorporated in the advertisements vary from society to society and rely on cultural values.

In order to delineate meanings from human representation in the commercials, the following three broad categories ranging from appearance, manner to the type of activity are important to be brought under discussion. The variables providing help for the denotative analysis of the commercials are explained separately.



3.1.1.2 Connotative and Ideological Analysis

Dyer (1982) argues that semiotics has moved forward from its simple interpretation of advertisements to the investigation as to how and what factors are involved in the generation and naturalization of meanings within socio-cultural context. The symbolic cultural meanings incorporated in advertisements can only be understood by studying the internal and external system of signs. Here, internal relation indicates as to how signs are organized within a text whereas the external system seeks to analyze the impact of signs in relation to the social values attached to them.

Dyer (1982) considers denotation and connotation as two analytical parameters which help reader/consumer critically analyze any advertisement within a sociocultural context. Denotation refers to description which an advertisement offers to the audience. At denotative level of analysis, objects and some key signifiers are identified which apparently make an advertisement more attractive and lucrative. Barthes (1977) also suggested that denotative is the first level of analysis which further extends support to analyze the second level that is connotation. Connotation is a bit complex and a next level of analysis which requires the contextual, social, cultural and historical understanding to unveil the culturally embedded signs employed in an advertisement.

This step involves the interpretation of pre-identified signifiers and seeks to analyze the meanings which they construct keeping in view the existing cultural norms. In order to analyze the commercials, a researcher has to have cultural knowledge that is the pre-requisite as explained by

Barthes (1977) in his essay Rhetoric of Image and Dyer (1982) in her book Advertising as Communication. Televised content represents the true picture of socially elaborated gender-binary relations. The analysis aims to highlight the said gender-binary relations through signs and develops a detailed discussion about the media representation of gender by providing instances from the previous studies either to endorse or to nullify patriarchal ideology in the Pakistani context.

4 Data Presentation and Analysis

The researcher has tried to gather data from diverse domains comprising human representation in each category. In total, five commercials have been screened for the analysis purpose.

4.1 Phoenix Battery Commercial

This commercial provides an insight into an electronic battery item which is utilized in almost all mechanical as well as electrical domains. The name of the said product refers to a bird 'phoenix'; and the role/action of the male central character is quite in line with the characteristics of the bird (brand name). The commercial is analyzed according to steps outlined in the framework.



4.1.1 Denotative Analysis

This commercial is about a vehicle's battery named as 'Phoenix'. The commercial starts with a sound of hustle and bustle, depicting the busy life of the commercial area. The male actor passes through a busy street, where women are shown busy in shopping. He enjoys the sight and settles his hair to attract the attention of the females in the market. He is caught by the eyes of a girl with a red shopping basket, hanging the balcony of a double story building, who passes a romantic smile to him. He is shown sharpening his Moustache symbolically representing valor. Fixing his eyes on the girl, he forgets to see the big gutter awaiting, next. The background music starts to change from normal lyrics to romantic. Suddenly, the girl gets worried while observing his advancement towards the ditch, fixing his eyes on her, but he safely crosses even without looking at it. He confidently passes the first danger.

He moves on and again passes through the next street without paying any attention to his surroundings. Three men are depicted busy in lifting up the poster of a movie, from the road, with the help of a rope where he is again saved by inches as the men failed to pick the poster up rightly and it came down with a greater force. The poster scene gives way to the scene of workers busy in the construction of a new building. In front of building, there are some boards indicating safety instructions and warning. A yellow Crane machine is displayed lifting a huge weight of cement and a person is shown giving instruction to machine driver. Billo, without any fear seems passing under the huge weight of cement which is being lifted in the air. The moment he approaches to crane, the rope

of the heavy mass of cement attached to it loses its grip and splashes down the ground while instructor kept on shouting, but actor without bothering him escapes from the danger again.

Expressions and body movement of actors are indicative of their socially learned conventionalized behaviors. The expression of valor, energy and fearlessness shown in male central character are socially associated attributes to men. The smiling expression of a girl, standing in the balcony, signifies a natural instinct of young girls as Goffman (1979) suggests that girls are mostly presented with a pleasant and smiling face in commercials to grab the attention of their counterparts. Eye-contact and other paralinguistic features employed in commercial are also shown positively communicative. The eye-contact between male central character with client and girl is highly suggestive.

The setting of this commercial suggests outdoor paradigm where most actions have taken place representing men and women indulged in various activities. The central actor has been displayed in an active state, roaming from place to place, and finally reaching his destination where the task had to be accomplished. During his journey on bicycle as projected in commercial, other minor actors are also presented in active mode performing their desired tasks such as household shopping, fixing the hoarding and transportation of factory material from one place to other. The positional communication between characters connote socially acquired behavior. The communication between the male central character and the girl is reciprocal in nature where each actor is shown to be other's center of attention. The communication between the male central character and the factory workers/hoarding fixers is semi-reciprocal. The attention other minor actor's is directed towards protagonist shouting, yelling and forbidding him to pass by danger zone.

4.1.2 Connotative/Ideological Analysis

The notion of masculinity has been represented in this commercial by showing the male central character (*Billu*) involved in public activities. His actions, over the course of advertisement, are reflective of socially assigned role to him. Whereas, the representation of women has either been portrayed confined to domestic range, or related to household shopping affairs. Roy (1998) categorized portrayal of men and women in two broad spheres that are public and private respectively. Men in this commercial are depicted in public activities: running a battery shop, working in a factory and fixing the hoardings in commercial area while women are depicted in private range, such as a young girl standing in balcony.

Signs are thought to be significant semiotic modes which convey meanings symbolically to promote an underlying ideology. Signs used in the present commercial are: bicycle, battery, hoarding board, three dangers (ditch, heavy hoarding board and mud filled ditch), crane machine and market. Bicycle is an old mean of transportation which requires labor to drive it. The male protagonist is displayed performing this laborious task which highlights the element of power associated to men in this commercial. Hoarding board is also used as a signifier, symbolizing force and strength required to erect it in commercial area. Male actors are shown utilizing their energy to accomplish the assigned task. The representation of the male actors in public domain affirms their physical strength. Three danger zones represent the difficulties faced by men in their routine affairs. Crane machine as shown in commercial for construction purpose also signifies the male domain of activity which demands strength, power, energy and vigilance to be controlled. The market depicts overall picture of social setting, depicting men and women in their stereotypical roles. The commercial incorporates three various work sites and presents men actively participating for the completion of each task. Such stereotypical portrayal of men develops an ideology regarding the male representation in public paradigm, endorsing patriarchal narrative.

The feminine image in this commercial has been limited to domesticity as housemaker. The absence of the female characters in public domain implies their inability to perform laborious tasks. Women are seen purchasing edibles and some other crockery items in the background while the protagonist was passing through the market. It indicates that responsibility of the female characters is to look after the domestic affairs. They are also held responsible to cook and maintain the housekeeping. The representation of women in fruit and vegetable market shows their involvement and domain of interest. Such description of female roles restricts their domain of activity that is domesticity. Advertiser's intention in the commercial seems to bestow the male actors' superiority over women. A girl modern dressed standing in balcony is presented as an object of beauty, who grabs the attention of male (protagonist). Her body movement and eye-contact give an impression of attaining the attention of her counterpart. This projection of female character leads to identify her passive role and objectification of women as a commodity.

The binary oppositions highlighted in commercial are: masculine/feminine and superiority/inferiority. Male actors are shown superior, authoritative and powerful whereas female characters are depicted passive, subservient and are commodified as an object of sexual pleasure. This commercial reproduces gender identities by presenting a common census that men and women are totally separate gender and their domain of influence completely differs from each other. The survival of the male protagonist from all dangers resembles the battery disclaimer of "Long life".

4.2 Shezan Pickle Food Commercial



4.2.1 Denotative Analysis

This commercial picturizes a pickle named as ShezanAchar. There are five female characters in the commercial; three young girls, their mother and a grandmother. The commercial starts with the name of the product that is displayed on the screen. Three young girls come out of the house smilingly, with stuffs in their hand and join their mother and grandmother who have already seated in the veranda. Various vegetables are shown spread in front of them. The three girls; one with a plate full of lemons, the second with a jar and the third with a plate full of carrots, join their grandmother and mother in the veranda. The girl with lemon is shown playing with the lemon, the girl with jar is shown peeling off garlic and the girl with carrots shows the carrot to her grandmother. There are various things lying in front of them, like plates full of vegetables, and peppers in various caddies. They are busy in the synthesizing all mentioned vegetables to make a spice filled pickle. The next scene displays the sliced lemons been thrown on an oily surface. The characters in commercial are shown happy and the grandmother adds pepper to the vegetables on the tray for pickle. The commercial is concluded,

highlighting the two girls leaving the veranda with jars in their hands. The commercial ends up, showing the prepared product in various packings.

Expressions are perceived socially constructed notions which cultivate cultural implied meanings. As stated by Goffmann (1979), women are mostly presented in gleeful and smiling expressions as required by their counterparts. In this commercial, all female characters are shown passing smiles and are gleeful which symbolizes their natural instinct to remain happy as well as to keep others happy, too. The eye-contact of characters is directed towards the intended audience, implying certain cultural meanings elaborated at connotative level of analysis. As the commercial only incorporates female characters, therefore, the frequency of occurrence is only focused on young and elderly figures performing diverse roles.

The whole activity is set indoors, reflecting a general prevailed custom and suggesting the confinement of ladies to the house. The background setting of this commercial seems natural which signifies the real existence of such places as shown in advertisement. The positional communication highlights the strong intimate relationship between family members where elevated position of grandmother is symbolized by the sitting arrangement of characters. The props have movement of the performers suggest about the activity; they are involved in. Several props have also been used in this commercial such as jar, plates, trays and knife. The whole activity reveals the busy domestic life of women and their special care for the health of their special ones.

4.2.2 Connotative/Ideological Analysis

Signs are key part of any commercial which are also thought bedrock of communicative process. Dyer (1982) and Barth (1967) are of the view that a sign stands for an idea which can only be interpreted within socio-cultural frame and there is no ideology free sign in the world. The key signifiers incorporated in this commercial are: the brand name (Satrangi Pickle), jewelry cum artificial accessories used to enhance beauty and different vegetables used to prepare tasty pickle. According to Dyer's (1982) view, selection of a word entails more than just a name rather a single lexeme carries feelings in it which helps in description. Advertisers are well informed about the social behavior and intend to name an object pragmatically, signifying the richness of words in communication. The manufacturer of the product intends to give a distinctive and unique brand name which attracts the attention of audience. More than naming, a brand name is attributed some specific qualities which help in developing maximum consumers. In this commercial, the word satrangi refers to fusion of seven different colors of vegetables which the pickle is made of. It also resembles the colors of dresses worn by girls, to look attractive and luminous. In Pakistani context, satrangi also signifies a brand of clothes which provides a wide range of women suiting in accordance to latest fashion trends.

The commercial is void of male representation which connotes that domesticity is not male domain of activity. The setting of the commercial focuses the domestic range indicating the gender biased element of socialization. The whole advertisement centers the feminine socially constructed expectations/ideals because masculine voice appears absent, signifying the dominance and authority of women in domestic paradigm.

The dominant image of femininity is related to the traditional role of women performed within domestic paradigm. In this commercial, female characters are shown deliberately preparing food item with their own hands to confirm the hygienic property of the prepared food for the well-being of family. Showing them willingly and smilingly perform such roles affirms the sub-ordinate position of women. The targeted audience of this commercial are women viewers. According to Fisk (1990 b); those who

idealize and imitate the role as highlighted in advertisement position themselves low, submissive and meek in gender relations.

The binary oppositions promoted in this commercial are of old/young feminine voices. The commercial explicitly presents the conventional position of women confined to domestic setting and passing on to next generation. In this commercial, the grandmother, the mother and the young girls are representatives of their respective ages and timeframes. The demonstration of grandmother symbolizes her traditional role and, in the similar manner, she has been shown training her granddaughters to perform the same tasks as a housewife or mother. This demonstration connotes their cultural orientation of responsibilities which are deeply rooted in preconceived norms, passed from generation to generation. This commercial implies the way mothers incorporate the feminine ideals related to domesticity among their daughters. Chodorow (1989) claims that daughters learn the concept of womanhood from their mothers which entails a gradual process of learning on account of more intimate relation with mothers.

The jewelry such as gold/artificial chain, bangles and earrings are used as signifiers. These signifiers identify the predominant beauty ideals of women to look prettier. Such associative descriptions in commercials portray women as a commodity. The objects used by females not only differentiate them from their counterparts but also serve to reproduce their identities. The accessories worn by girl presented in commercial such as necklace, bracelet, golden bangles and wrist watch symbolize the feminine identity. Apart from objects, visual analysis of sexes with reference to their appearance, body movement and general behavior work as a source in the construction and reproduction of gender identities. The feminine urge of getting fairer look, loading themselves with jewelry, and wearing bright colors is to gain the attention of male-gaze which eventually grades them submissive and weak in gender relations.

4.3 Panadol Commercial



4.3.1 Denotative Analysis

This television commercial is about a medicine used for pain and is named as 'Panadol'. It has been shown that it brings instant relief within no time and keeps patient in normal condition. When the advertisement starts, a young lady wearing doctors white gown sits on a chair and her face reflects exertion. She gets involved in loud thinking so that the audience may know the real situation. She says that she always keeps Panadol tablets with her because she needs them when she feels pain after long hours of work. In Pakistan, most of the doctors suggest these tablets because of their effectiveness as a medicine used for pain relief. She takes two tablets of Panadol to get rid of exertion and then she has been shown performing domestic roles normally. She sits with her family

and helps her children in their homework. Her husband looks at her and passes a smile. She says that she trusts Panadol so that she may always be trusted by her family.

This commercial entails a female central actor who has been shown involved in different activities. Advertisers have allocated her responsibilities in outdoor as well as indoor premise. Some other minor characters are also portrayed like her husband along with her children, but their role in advertisement is limited. The age of female central character may range between 25 and 35. Her overall appearance such as dress, style and behavioral notions indicate her sober personality and cultural background which is a general tendency of advertisers to broadcast the actors who confirm the ideal conventions.

The facial expressions of female central character in this commercial are reflection of her hectic schedule. She has to perform dual responsibilities in domestic as well as professional paradigms. These domestic responsibilities are socially learned behaviors which women have inherited over the generations. In this commercial, initially, the female actor has been shown tired due to her professional commitments, however, after using the advertised medicine (Panadol) her exertion and physical ailment is vanished. She seems quite fit for next domestic activity to be performed. The intake of the advertised medicine has become her permanent behavior, whenever, it is required because the medicine has satisfied her need to remain active. This develops an emotive and behavioral attachment of female actor as shown in commercial, giving a general impression to audience that medicine advertised (Panadol) is the best source to get instant relief from pain and physical exertion.

The eye-contact of protagonist is directed primarily at audience which seems to be suggestive. Her Pose and body movement suggest her super active participation in a composed manner, oscillating between professional to domestic range of activities. Dress worn by female actor as shown in commercial represents her close connection to existing social and conventional values.

The advertisement is shown broadcasted in indoor and outdoor settings. The outdoor actions have been captured in a hospital suggestive of protagonist's role as a doctor whereas the indoor setting focuses domesticity. The female protagonist is presented as wife and a mother, giving an impression of traditional role that leads towards her ritual subordination. The background setting of the commercial symbolizes natural environment which can be observed in our surroundings. A smiling glimpse of male character is presented while he looks at his wife and children towards the end of the commercial. The positional communication in this commercial is object/product oriented where each actors' attention including audience is directed at the same advertised product, i.e (Panadol tablets).

4.3.2 Connotative/Ideological Analysis

The commercial predominantly displays an image of femininity through the female central character. She is shown indulged in professional as well as domestic range of activities. At first level, this advertisement highlights the hustle and bustle of 21st century mechanical life which has transformed simple standards of living into complex system. Men and women have to labor equally in order to meet the requirements of this era. The same concept has been materialized by advertisers, showing women in both spheres of life. The rationale for the selection of female actor (protagonist) for this specific product lies in her authority as a doctor where she has been shown as a consumer of the advertised medicine because of her hectic daily routine in professional as well as domestic spheres.

This section sets out to investigate the symbolic and connotational value of signs and semiotic modes delineating ideological narratives. Signs are the basic unit of a commercial which

help reader understand the implied meanings within a cultural context. The meanings conveyed by signifiers vary from culture to culture. The significant signs employed in this advertisement are: stethoscope, copies, pencils and books lying on the table which symbolize her domain of activities, being a doctor/nurse in outdoor range and a mother cum teacher in domestic sphere.

The feminine image presented in both professional and domestic domains seem typical in nature. The analysis of maximum commercials so far has represented women within confined paradigm of domesticity. This commercial focuses on the necessities of modern life, due to which the portrayal of women has been presented outside the domestic range. Even the representation of women in the outdoor activities is also stereotypical. The female character is projected in some traditional roles such as nursing and teaching. It is a commonly observed phenomenon that women have inborn ability to tender and care which has been passed on to them from generation to generation. The role assigned to female character in this commercial is of nursing and taking care of patients. Such portrayal of women working in hospitals connotes that there has not been any significant change as far as their routine activity is concerned. The apparent change is of just setting, but nature of female job remains the same. Shteiwi (2003) carried out a research in Jordan on the textbooks of 96 schools which were taught at elementary level. He examined that representational ratio of men with reference to public oriented activities was almost 87 % whereas the representation of women was quite low. The roles assigned to female characters such as nursing, teaching were traditional, narrow and submissive. The representational value of female actor as shown in this commercial is quite similar to what Shteiwi (2003) has pointed out in his research that women are stereotypically presented either in teaching, nursing or some other domestic narrow roles.

In domestic sphere, the female (protagonist) is presented again in traditional role of a mother where she is held responsible for proper upbringing of her children. The dominant image of femininity in this commercial is traditional role of a woman as a mother. It represents the image of a lady who functions as a typical housewife and mother attending the needs of her children. As depicted in this advertisement, the mother has been portrayed as a teacher looking after the academic progress of her children. The male character is portrayed smiling in the end of commercial, giving an impression of satisfactory performance of his wife as a mother, as a wife and as a professional. The roles assigned to female central actor are either nursing (in professional domain), or (as a teacher and caretaker in domestic range). This implies her stereotypical, conventional and ritual subordinate position in society which endorses the ideological stance of patriarchal narrative.

4.4 Easy Paisa Banking Commercial



4.4.1 Denotative Analysis

This advertisement is about Easy Paisa Money Transfer service. In this commercial, it has been shown that Easy Paisa is the only service that is available in the remote and rural areas of Pakistan. The male central character (Azam), depicted the only bread winner of the family, sends money to his old mother so that she may purchase her medicines. She lives in a village as the setting reflects the entire atmosphere of a remote vicinity. The sounds of birds and sheep, background music, camels, women with pitchers on their heads, the dress of village people, fields and farmer harvesting crops everything is related to rural life. A small shop in village has been shown where an old woman (the mother) arrives to receive money sent by her son. Inquiring about the money sent by her son, she comes to know that the money has been sent by some other service which is presently not available in their village. She got disappointed when her son tells her that money is mistakenly sent through some other service. Dejectedly, she turns back to leave shop, another male customer witnessing the situation helps the old woman so that she may purchase her medicine. Then, the background male voice-over announces that availability of Easy Paisa service is the only hope of transferring money in remote regions. Then informing about the money transfer confirmation code, male voice over states that Easy Paisa sends messages only from 3737. So, make sure to avoid disappointment because there is no other service like Easy Paisa Money transfer.

Facial expressions and paralinguistic features are socially learned behaviors which may be interpreted within a cultural paradigm. In commercials, the adeptness of product advertised is represented through facial expressions and emotional attachment of actors who are actual utilizers and consumers of the product. The facial expressions of elderly figure (the mother) have been projected pessimistic when she gets to know that money sent through other service, is not available in this locality. The emotional and behavioral attachment of mother with Easy Paisa portrays her level of satisfaction with the only brand she is acquainted with. Eye-contact between actor to actor and actors to audience communicates signals/messages which are held significant in field of advertising. For instance, the eyes of the mother (the female actor) are reflective of her extreme happiness when she arrives to collect money sent by her son for medicine. In the same manner, lowering of her eyes after realizing that money has not been transferred depict helplessness, dependency and sadness.

The setting of this commercial appears natural by showing mountains, river, sheep, birds, fields and rustic life which is indicative of its real existence. Most of activities shown in commercial have been set outdoor but a slight reflection of indoor activity has also been given. The amalgam of both settings give an insight into comparative roles assigned to men/women engrossed in the accomplishment of diverse tasks. Traditional clothes worn by actors are representative of their traditional cultural dress code, highlighting rustic environment. Positional communication is portrayed in a positive and optimistic manner where every actor is ready to help other without considering the element of social class or position.

4.4.2 Connotative/Ideological Analysis

Signs are the carriers of meanings and cultural interpretation of such identified signs promotes underlying ideology. Signs incorporated in this commercial are: lush green mountains, maize fields, splashing sound of river water and sheep. These signs are indicative of natural environment, shot in this commercial. They are also reflective of implied cultural values prevalent in such a pure and gleeful atmosphere. The old female character of mother signifies dependency and physical weakness of women. Such portrayal of women implies that generally women are financially dependent upon male members as mother has been shown financially dependent upon her son.

The binary oppositions in the first segment/half of this commercial are: knowledge/ignorance which are directly related to women in general and with special focus on those who belong to remote and rural areas. This binary opposition connotes that women are equipped with less knowledge of things which they are not exposed to. This indicates that exposure of women is restricted because their domain of activity is domesticity which confines their approach towards other aspects. The dejection of old female character for not getting money through Easy Paisa is evidence of her limited knowledge about the multiple company services which are working simultaneously to transfer money across Pakistan. This highlights that the range of her exposure is confined to domestic affairs. On the other hand, male actors are shown well aware of the fact that amount has been transferred through some other source which may not be as effective as Easy Paisa.

Maize fields and sheep are used as signifiers in this commercial, symbolizing the domain of male activity. The commercial contains the visual imagery of maize fields, depicting men working in the fields. The inclusion of Sheep and fields in commercial gives an impression of men's association with agriculture which defines their role in society. Men are shown indulged in more laborious, hard, active and difficult tasks which indicates their physical strength. Shields (1975) suggests that the paradigms of men and women functioning vary according to their roles and these complementary functions which they perform staying in their capacity are significant for their survival. Lewin (1984) differentiates the current gender stereotypes from that of before 19th century as men and women both used to work together in the fields till Victorian era. Industrial Revolution has brought drastic changes in the lives and attitudes of people. It has drawn a line of demarcation in the roles and representation of men and women. Men handled business outside the home in industries to earn money leaving women at home to look after the domestic chores. These two different styles of life generated two separate doctrines and spheres of life which portrayed men and women differently. The results of under analysis commercial are quite similar to what Lewin (1984) has pointed out after the advent of Industrial Revolution.

A glimpse of visual imprints regarding indoor activities imply the representation of women. Women have been shown in diverse contexts each indicating to their stereotypical representation. A crowd of girls wearing traditional dress have been shown crushing the spice items used for cooking purpose. Their representation gives an impression of culturally conventionalized and ritual subordinate role within premises of domesticity. On the other hand, another female character is shown with a child laughing and purchasing dolls in the market. As Goffman (1979) suggests that women are shown easily to be pleased and they are often projected in child-like expecting pleasure. He further argues that whether in reality or in commercials women are found smiling, gleeful and cherishing the bits of life as compared to their counterparts. Women are also regarded as heavy consumer of products, which is why, most commercials directly address and appease women. In this commercial, scene captured in desert signifies a que of women, having pitchers on their head, are shown responsible for the supply of water at home. They have been again portrayed involved in the range of domestic affairs. Such confined repetitive projection of women engrossed in traditional roles, endorses patriarchal ideological narrative.

4.5 Ariel Washing Powder Commercial



4.5.1 Denotative Analysis

This commercial is about a washing powder Ariel which is used to clean the strain filled clothes. In this commercial, a renowned Pakistani cricketer, Wasim Akram, comes in a crowd and challenges which washing powder will clean the cloth in only one wash; a famous powder or Ariel. A female crowd is there and two groups are being formulated for the experimentation: one team claims that the famous powder will clean well while the other team is affirmed that it will be Ariel. Different dirt and strain filled items are thrown on a cloth to make it dirty and then it is being cut into two pieces and put in two washing machines with the different powders. The result shows that in one wash, it is Ariel that cleans the cloth completely not the other famous powder. So, the whole crowd agrees with Wasim Akram that Ariel is the best powder in Pakistan i.e. the tagline of advertised content.

The facial expression of the male and female characters appear inquisitive and determined about the performance of the product in earlier half of the commercial and later they look satisfied and contented. Women are also depicted in the state of expecting pleasure at earlier stage. Throughout the commercial, Wasim Akram has a proper and continuous eye-contact with the audience whom this commercial is addressed to. All actors, performing in commercial, are in active state.

The activity is shot outdoors in street where the whole activity of washing has been carried out. A crowd of girls has gathered to witness the efficiency of the product, advertised in the commercial. This implicitly gives an idea that whole crowd of female characters, shown in the background, are the intended targeted audience/ consumers. Ritual subordination is prominent feature shown through the body movement of female characters in this commercial. Male character is shown explaining the qualities of the product whereas females are shown traditionally indulged in washing activity. Positional communication is very significant for the critical evaluation of any advertisement as it draws the attention towards social and binary relationship between characters engrossed in an activity. It refers to the analysis as to how actors performing roles are positioned whether they are given equal projection or there exist certain superiority/inferiority or imbalances. Here, more close-up and long camera shots are attached with male character Wasim Akram. He has been shown more prominently and his frequency of occurrence with regard to size is greater as compared to other female supporting characters.

4.5.2 Connotative/ Ideological Analysis

This commercial consists of some significant signs which are: digit 1, the map of Pakistan, washing machine, liquid of chocolate cream, oil, juice and color scheme on the Ariel's logo. Digit 1 imprinted on the packet and poster shown in the commercial recommends Ariel as the best product which stands at number 1. What makes it superior is something to be answered in order to authenticate its validity as no.1 product. The advertisers have tactfully represented the consumer of the product contended at the end of the commercial. The inclusion of women crowd in the backdrop of commercial, reinforces the traditional ideological role of women. The targeted audience of the product advertised are women as they are the actual consumers of the product. Their mutual consent for the choice of the said product makes it no.1 round the country. The map of the country has also been shown at the back scene setting which symbolizes that product stands at rank across the country.

Burns and Thompson (1989) are of the view that binary oppositions are considered as basic roots which provide basis for the generation of meanings as nothing has meanings in itself. The product advertised in this commercial is for women which implies that confined domestic role of females has been naturalized by showing them willing acceptance of the product. The exchange of Ariel packs between women at the end of the commercial endorses, the patriarchal ideology where women are seen willingly accepting the male hegemonic attitude. The crowd of women is actually shown as consumer of the product. This highlights the fact that the responsibility of washing clothes is the domain of women activity. Such portrayal of women signifies their stereotypical role of a house maker.

Moreover, the selection of male public celebrity indicates the authority of men over women. WasimAkram has been shown dictating other female characters which highlights their subordinate position in the commercial. Two female characters were selected as rivals symbolically representing two chemical powders used for washing purpose. The task of washing has been completed by female characters signifying their subordinate position in commercial as well as in social structure. The commercial implicitly projects the ideology of women ritual subordination and such ideology strengthens and empowers the status of men. Advertising also subscribes and reinforces such existing gender narratives.

Conclusion

The present study examined the gender socialization patterns in Pakistani televised content (commercials) with special focus on existing gender roles, gender biased process of socialization, gender identity and dominant masculine/feminine ideals, keeping in view the contextualized socio-cultural mechanisms. The study demonstrates that women of today are still predominantly represented in stereotyped and conventional role of a mother or a housewife whose responsibilities are to share the burden of domesticity (housekeeping). On the other hand, men are displayed authoritative, exercising their hegemony in public as well as private paradigms. Most of the commercials depicted men and women in two distinct spheres, implying the role of advertising to develop a biased process of gender socialization. The element of modernity with regard to appearance signifies their urge to find a proper match as presented in the commercials. Apart, their freedom would be coupled, in due course, by the prevalent patriarchal system of marriage.

Therefore, the findings from the past and present serve to point out that 'Liberation' is just a convenient media rhetoric while reality lags a long way behind. Modern values have not yet distanced people from stereotypical beliefs and still we embrace our deep-rooted socio-cultural norms. Many women are brought up in such a manner that they willingly accept the image of the subservient woman. Thus, any personal or marital problem faced by women is attributed to their failing to live up

to traditional norms of feminine behavior. Therefore, the traditional images of masculinity and femininity have come to acquire the status of a peaceful haven where the roles are well defined and identity conflicts are non-existent. The commercials taken as sample for the investigation of gender representational value in the Pakistani context do not seem challenging to conventional power narrative where men and women are stereotypically portrayed. This leads to draw a concluding remark that the Pakistani electronic televised content (commercials) subscribes to existing imbalanced/stereotypical gender structures where men/women are traditionally presented while performing their conventional/stereotyped roles within their socially allocated domains.

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