The Role and influence of Mass Media in Promoting Gender Awareness” Review and Recommendations.
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Abstract
Mass media play a significant role in a modern world, by broadcasting information in fast pace and giving entertainment to vast audiences. They consist of press, television, radio, books and the Internet. The most developing medium; however, TV also has a wide field of influence. By creating a certain type of message, media can manipulate people’s attitude and opinions. I would like to focus on this problem by investigating commercials structure (Lukas, 2002). Mass media means technology that is intended to reach a mass audience. It is the primary means of communication used to reach the vast majority of the general public. The most common platforms for mass media are newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the Internet. The general public typically relies on the mass media to provide information regarding political issues, social issues, entertainment, and news in pop culture (Cited at: www.study.com). No doubt that the media in Pakistan imitates the gender bias in our strictly patriarchal society, the enormous influence the media has on forming social change is also incontrovertible. However it seems progressively futile to rely on the media to bring about any change in the regard as long as Pakistan’s leading newspapers are still carrying by-lines such as “lady” reporter.

For the Culturally and socially constructed difference between men and women (as indicated by terms such as 'gender affairs' and 'gender politics') that varies from place to place and time to time. In comparison, 'sex' denotes biologically determined, thus unchangeable, difference between them (Cited at: www.businessdictionary.com). Mass media becomes a primary tool that introduces, encourages portray, aware and promoting of gender (Krijen et al, 169). The media has a very powerful effect on culture, shaping societal structures and operations.
Dominant media forms have heavily assisted in constructing gender and generalized norms. Advertising and mass media forms display codes that are associated with representing and promoting gender attributes. These gender codes shape the way in which society views gender and assists in determining what acceptable gender performance is. It is through media’s reinforcement of gender promotion and displays that shape the way in which society perceives and constructs genders. Gender is not formed at birth, this self-identification of being male or female is shaped through cultural, and social conditions. Media forms often present these social and cultural aspects and set these as ideals for gender performance (Jerry, Hogg, 1996).

Of the many influences on how we view men and women, media are the most pervasive and one of the most powerful. Woven throughout our daily lives, media insinuate their messages into our consciousness at every turn. All forms of media communicate images of the sexes, many of which perpetuate unrealistic, stereotypical, and limiting perceptions. Three themes describe how media represent, influence and creating awareness about gender. First, women are underrepresented, which falsely implies that men are the cultural standard and women are unimportant or invisible. Second, men and women are portrayed in stereotypical ways that reflect and sustain socially endorsed views of gender. Third, depictions of relationships between men and women emphasize traditional roles and normalize violence against women. (Basow, 1992 p. 159), Mass media forms set societal standards for men and women. These forms shape the way in which society views and identify male and female characteristics (Pyant, & Yanico, 1991). Mass media has different types of projects regarding gender awareness. Men within the media are constructed to be powerful aggressive figures, embracing financial stability and dominant control. Whereas the media projects women to be constructed as nurturing figures, concerned with family and sustaining feminine beauty. Often these gender assumptions cast negative representations that place barriers on women to develop and reach their true potential within society. Benoit’s findings indicate that the media’s influence constrains both men and women, as the sexes are forced to conform to gendered ideals (Benoit, 2004).

If we talk about Pakistani context than we
observed that It is observed that with the ratio of one in 20 female reporters in Pakistan, a fair and balanced gender representation in the media is nonexistent. The bigger misfortune is the lack of gender sensitive material that is currently being produced by the news media. The portrayal of women in roles that are neither positive nor realistic, some are victims nor others are objects of sexual pleasure; and the far and few in between news stories about gender violence being more judgmental than factual.

Gender attributes are become heavily assimilated within mass media and marketing, as many advertisers display men and women to portray stereotypical gender norms and roles. Often these advertisements illustrate men and women differently, altering the way in which society views the sexes. Women within advertisements are often displayed in a sexualized nature that exposes females as vulnerable defenseless figures (Jhally, 2009). Men within ads are often seen in stances that embrace power and status. Male advertisements conform to gender stereotypes and use body language to convey men as powerful, aggressive beings. (Jhally, 2009). Body language within advertisements allows companies to construct gender identity and reinforce generalized norms. Creating advertisements that construct to gender enables these companies to effectively market, as they are able to evoke identity through these products. No doubt that the advertiser are creating aware about gender through advertising techniques (Bem, 1974).

It becomes apparent that gender is socially and culturally constructed through media outlets. These media forms are extremely influential and can alter the way in which society perceives gender. Advertisements are influencing on exposing of gender identities and roles. Media images and mass messages in advertisements also source of gender awareness. Gender becomes constructed through advertisements. These advertisements assimilate roles deemed as male and female. One will notice that women within these ads are represented in domestic housewife roles and are displayed in a more sexualized manner. Men within these ads are portrayed to assimilate more powerful aggressive roles. This becomes a prime example of how gender norms and roles become enhance with advertisements. These advertisements geared toward men and women provide
examples of how gender becomes enhance within media entities.

Television is the most pervasive form of media, with 96.7 percent of American families owning a TV, according to The Nielsen Company, which takes TV set ownership into account when it produces ratings. This, of course, means that viewers must carefully examine the content of the programs they choose to watch, and decide if they can ethically support and promote said content. Media plays a large role in creating social norms, because various forms of media, including advertisements, television, and film, are present almost everywhere in current culture. Gender roles, as an example, exist solely because society as a whole chooses to accept them, but they are perpetuated by the media. Conspicuous viewers must be aware of what the media is presenting to them, and make sure they're not actively participating in a culture of oppression. Commercials are the powerful tool used for creating and shaping people’s opinions about gender awareness. Their structure is simplified in order to be understood by mass receivers. Advertisement text contains dominant and well known characteristics of the reality. Therefore gender awareness can be used in the commercials as one of the most popular techniques of persuasion. However, they describe specific groups in relation to the whole regardless of individual differences. The main aim of role of mass media is to be universal and suitable for everyone, in order to gather the largest possible audience. Thus television, responsible for providing the central social discourse, is supposed to be “a mirror of the society. Advertising specialists produce gendered based commercials. However, the attempts to break down the stereotypes threaten to reject the message; they affect security and well-established knowledge about the world. Hence, a society has to achieve an adequate level of social readiness, so that messages breaking gender stereotypes could be effective. With the help of media seminar in society we can promote gender awareness and mass media can play major role for the awareness of gender. The influence and of mass media is more as compare to other format. This is another kind of activity which is useable for promotion and awareness of gender. All types of workshops which have applicable for gender awareness should be conducted. Film is less pervasive than television, which means consumers
must be even more particular when choosing movies to support. With the help of film the gender awareness can be create among the audiences. The portrayal of women in roles that are neither positive nor realistic, some are victims nor others are objects of sexual pleasure; and the far and few in between news stories about gender violence being more judgmental than factual, the impact of the media on the Pakistani youth can lead to devastating realities for the country’s future. To what extent we can say that it is also activity that promotes the gender in the society. A courageous resourcefulness by Uks in partnership with UNFPA (United Nations Population Fund) that focuses on empowering the Pakistani youth to design new media content on gender-based violence to counter the negative impact of existing media content.

Media contents influences the way we perceive reality and also contributes to transmitting shaping gender roles. Despite their crucial role in our modern high-tech society, women are not represented in the media according to their number, to their social involvement, to their real life. Actually, there is a gap between what the reality of women’s and men’s lives in Pakistan is and how they appear in and through the media. In relation to the media sector, women are quite present in general, with variations according to countries, but they are seriously under-represented in decision-making in this sector as in most others: in 2000, there were 1.3% women in top management positions in the telecommunications industry in the Pakistan and only 0.5% of women journalists were in decision-making positions. Gender equality means an equal visibility of both men and women in all spheres of public life. The obstacles women face in the media profession are similar to those they encounter in the labour market more generally: discrimination at the stage of recruitment, a pay gap, more precarious conditions of employment.

Media reporting on gender issues and the portrayal of women are influenced by various factors. Media professionals’ gender awareness, which could be reflected in media organizations’ administration or shown in the programme-making process, is one of the determining factors in bringing the media’s role in promoting gender equality and gender mainstreaming to its full use. Considering the harmful effects of negative gender stereotypes on self-
perception, especially with young people and their perception of gender roles and relations in society, all players in media companies including journalists should be made aware of their social responsibility and best practices should be promoted. Owners and managers of media corporations could also be encouraged to promote codes for gender sensitive media communication, which would be more effective and sustainable than if the topic is promoted by individual journalists.

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Daniel Chandler (Television and Gender Roles) also states that television still perpetuates traditional gender stereotypes because it reflects dominant social values and attitudes in the society. If we take into consideration Hypodermic theory of effects which believes in the effectiveness of images and messages, then, reinforcement of such values is seen as ‘natural’. So, in a primarily patriarchal society, men dominate media and its production and, influenced by these stereotypes, unconsciously reproduce a traditional ‘masculine’ perspective, perpetuating dominant gender stereotypes. Viewers are frequently invited to identify
with male characters and to objectify females. This is called ‘the male gaze’, where women are objectified & commoditized. This mode of viewing is called ‘unmarked’: it is an invisible and largely unquestioned bias. The growing trend in advertising seems to be to portray women less often as housewives, but also not more often in non-traditional, career-oriented, or authority figure roles. There seems to be an increase in neutral portrayals of women in a number of ads. Women in recent advertisement though not stick to traditional roles there isn’t much that show them in strong positive side also. This might be attributable to the fact that although Indian society is changing, but it is still a patriarchal society and dramatic changes may not be accepted as easily.

**Recommendations for Gender Awareness through Mass Media:**

Now doubt that media contents have ability to influences on the masses of the society and create awareness about specific issues. Gender awareness is one of the most important issues in our Pakistani society and our kidding media. Our media is now a days on in immature stage. The development and awareness about gender can be increase with the help of different types of mass media contents and strategies. Media workshops are one major source for gender awareness in the society. It is necessary to held different types of media relevant workshops for awareness o gender. It is another aspect that media seminars are also helpful for the awareness of gender. With another dimension of the media contents that dramas, films, show, advertisements, commercials are very helpful for gender promotions and awareness. All types of media it may be print electronic or social media is very helpful for the gender awareness in the society.

**References:**


