

## Representation of Women in Online Advertisements: A Content Analysis

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### Abstract

Social network sites may be defined as web based service that allow individual to construct a public or semi-public profile within abounded system articulate a list of other user with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site (Boyd, Ellison, 2007). With a changing media environment, there is a distinct shift in traditional methods of advertising. The Internet has revolutionized the way advertising is done. Not only this, business houses today are making advertisements primarily for Internet users. The arrival of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and many other social media channels have altered the media landscape irrevocably. YouTube, a video sharing website, is one of the most popular internet domains at present times. YouTube has put together a list of ten most viewed advertisements in India in 2013. The role representation of women in these top ten advertisements is the primary objective of this study. This paper reviews related research and identifies how women are portrayed in advertisements at present times. Numerous studies suggest that woman in India, are often portrayed as traditional and stereotypical. This research, therefore, is an attempt to identify the extent to which the representation of women has changed over times. Content analysis method has been adopted for this study. It is noteworthy that the selected advertisement are willingly viewed by the audience and not forced as in case of many other forms of advertising.

**Keywords:** Women, Advertisements, Commercials, Content Analysis, YouTube, Internet

### Representation of Women in online Advertisements use

Representation of woman in advertising is one of the most discussed topics in India. The manner in which the women representation is done reflects the status of women in the society. The early study of women's role portrayals suggest that the advertisements on women reflect stereotypical roles like women taking care of home and not making important decisions. Many advertisements also showcased that women are dependent and need protection by men. In many other advertisements, women are depicted as sex objects. They are also portrayed in stereotypical roles as submissive and hardworking homemakers having the job of cooking delicious dishes for husband or washing clothes. Even in some of the advertisements a girl child is shown as a prospective mother who has to do traditional job of nursing babies, cooking, washing and cleaning. But off late, Indian advertising has witnessed a significant transformation in the manner women are shown. Many contemporary advertisements portray women in a more positive way i.e. as independent, assertive, enjoying life and a career woman. Women are now more exposed to education and are increasingly joining workforce, they have greater social and cultural mobility now than their mothers and grandmothers. Since they have now independent purchasing power, they are now being more valued at home. And therefore, they are no more a commodity or sex symbol. The changing social climate and the evolution of the role of woman in the home and in the workplace have given rise to questions regarding the appropriate representation of women in the media today. In the twenty-first century, the roles of women have changed. Women have liberated themselves through education and occupied prominent positions in large corporations and in government. The paper is an attempt to understand that whether the depiction of women in new media is different from that of traditional media. YouTube was founded in February 2005 and has become the go-to site for video on the web. One hour of video is uploaded to YouTube every second. Google bought YouTube in 2006 and underwent a significant redesign in 2011. The revamped YouTube emphasized "channels" for content and rolled out a bevy of new features. It is a video-sharing website on which users can upload, view and share videos. It displays a wide variety of user-generated video content, including video clips, TV clips, and music videos, and amateur content such as video blogging, short original videos, and educational videos. YouTube took a look back and compiled a list of the most popular YouTube advertisement of 2013. It included Cadbury 5 star ad featuring funny duo of Ramesh and Suresh, Google reunion campaign which reunites friends split by partition and Dove Real Beauty Sketches have shown the success of emotional ads on YouTube. Social advertisements of Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5 campaigns also made a mark. Evian and Nestle Kit Kat baby ads captured the interest of users in an entertaining manner. Other advertisements included product ads of Old Spice, Sony Experia z and Samsung Galaxy S4. Following are the number of views as on February 17, 2014

Dove Real Beauty Sketches	6.21 crore
Lifebuoy (Help a Child reach 5)	1.89 crore
Kit Kat Dancing Babies New Ad India (Official)	0.35 crore
Old Spice India   Mantastic Man	0.214 crore
Evian Baby and Me	7.16 crore
Kajol reacts to Lifebuoy's Help A Child Reach 5 campaign	0.152 crore
New 5 Star Ad - Ramesh, Suresh return home with the patloon	0.137 crore
Sony Xperia z	1.04 crore
Samsung GALAXY S4	1.73 crore
Google Search: Reunion	1.152 crore

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### Objectives

1. To identify the total duration of most advertisements on YouTube.
2. To find out the total number of advertisements on women
3. To study the manner of presentation of the YouTube advertisements on women
4. To evaluate representation of women through YouTube advertisements.
5. To analyse the advertising appeals.
6. To identify the types of advertisement.

### Methodology

Content analysis is a method of studying and analyzing communication in systematic, objective and quantities manner for the purpose of measuring variables. Content analysis is an efficient way to investigate the content of the media. The following description will make it clear how the present research has been planned. Content analysis has been adopted for the study. This is a primary source of data collection. Here we selected the YouTube because this is one the most popular site among social media users.

## TABULATION AND ANALYSIS

**Table-1 (Total Number and Duration of Advertisements)**

Advertisement	Duration (in minutes)
<b>Dove Real Beauty Sketches</b>	3:00
<b>Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5</b>	3:16
<b>Kit Kat Dancing Babies</b>	0:45
<b>New Old Spice India</b>	1:15
<b>Evian Baby and Me</b>	1:16
<b>Kajol in Lifebuoy's Help A Child Reach 5</b>	1:27
<b>New 5 Star Ad</b>	0:45
<b>Sony Xperia z</b>	2:07
<b>Samsung Galaxy S4</b>	4:23
<b>Google Search: Reunion</b>	3:32
<b>Total</b>	<b>20:26</b>

Table-1 describes the duration of ten YouTube advertisements. The total duration of these advertisements is 20 minutes and 26 seconds. The advertisement of Samsung Galaxy S4 is of maximum duration i.e. 4 minutes and 23 seconds. This is followed by the duration of advertisement by Google (3 minutes 32 seconds), Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5 (3 minutes 16 seconds) and Dove real beauty sketches (3 minutes). It is noted that this duration is much more than the advertisements that are shown on the television. The duration of other advertisements that are of more than one minute include Sony Xperia z (2 minutes 7 seconds), Kajol in Lifebuoy's Help a Child reach 5 (1 minute 27 seconds), Evian Baby and Me (1 minute 16 seconds) and New Old Spice (1 minute 15 seconds). The advertisements of Kit Kat Chocolate and 5 Star Chocolate is of 45 seconds which is the lowest duration. All ten advertisements carry some or the other kind of woman representation in them.

**Table-2 (Types of Advertisement)**

	Types of Advertisement			Total
	Product Advertisement	Social Advertisement	Service Advertisement	
Dove Sketches	1	0	0	1
Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5	0	1	0	1
Kit Kat	1	0	0	1
Old Spice India	1	0	0	1
Evian Baby & Me	1	0	0	1
Kajol in Help A Child Reach 5	0	1	0	1
New 5 Star Ad	1	0	0	1
Sony Xperia z	1	0	0	1
Samsung Galaxy S4	1	0	0	1
Google Search	0	0	1	1
Total	7	2	1	10

Table-2 illustrates the types of advertisement. There are four major types of advertisement i.e. product advertisement, social advertisement, service advertisement and institutional advertisement. It is found that seven advertisements (Dove Real Beauty Sketches, Kit Kat & 5 Star Chocolates, smart phones Sony Xperia z & Samsung Galaxy S4, Old Spice after shave lotion and mineral water Evian Baby & Me) are product advertisements, two advertisements (both of Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5 campaign) are social advertisements and only one advertisement (of Google search engine) is service advertisement. The fourth category of advertisement which is institutional advertisement is missing among these ten advertisements.

**Table-3 (Advertising Appeals)**

	Types of Advertising Appeals				Total
	Emotional Appeal	Rational Appeal	Fear Appeal	Sex Appeal	
Dove Sketches	1	0	0	0	1
Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5	0	0	1	0	1
Kit Kat	1	0	0	0	1
New Old Spice India	0	0	0	1	1
Evian Baby and Me	1	0	0	0	1
Kajol in Lifebuoy's Help A Child Reach 5	0	0	1	0	1
New 5 Star Ad	1	0	0	0	1
Sony Xperia z	0	1	0	0	1
Samsung GALAXY S4	0	1	0	0	1
Google Search	1	0	0	0	1
Total	5	2	2	1	10

Table 3 explains the various advertising appeals used in YouTube advertisements. The researchers have considered only the most prominent advertising appeals for the study. It is found that the emotional appeal is the most used advertising appeal. Five out of ten advertisements (includes advertisement of Dove, 5 Star, Kit Kat, Evian and Google) make use of emotional appeal to attract its customers. The two advertisements of smart phones (Sony Xperia & Samsung Galaxy S4) make use of rational appeal and focus on describing the product feature. Two other advertisements (both of Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5 campaign) use fear appeal to reach the public. These advertisements with fear appeal are social advertisements. Lastly, the advertisement of Old Spice India focuses more on female and use sex appeal to enchant its viewers.

**Table-4 (Language used in Advertisements)**

	Language used in Ad			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>English</b>	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
<b>Hindi &amp; English</b>	5	50.0	50.0	90.0
<b>Regional, Hindi &amp; English</b>	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-4 depicts that maximum number of advertisements (50%) use a mix of Hindi and English language for communicating with their consumers. Four out of ten advertisements (40%) are in English and one advertisement (10%) uses a combination of Regional, Hindi and English language. The analysis of this table indicates that there is not even a single advertisement that is completely in Hindi.

**Table-5 (Category of Products or Services)**

	Products or Services category			
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Personal care</b>	4	40.0	40.0	40.0
<b>Food and Beverage</b>	3	30.0	30.0	70.0
<b>Services</b>	1	10.0	10.0	80.0
<b>Electronics</b>	2	20.0	20.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-5 describes the product and service category of most watched YouTube advertisements. Maximum numbers of advertisements (40%) are that of personal care. These personal care items include soap and deodorant. On the other hand, 30% advertisements fall in the category of food and beverage including products like chocolate and mineral water. 20% advertisements fall in the category of electronic ads. Both of these electronic items are smart phones. The last category of advertisement (10%) is that of service advertisement.

**Table-6 Total Number of Characters**

	T. No. of Characters	T. No. of Female Characters	T. No. of Female Characters in Lead Role	T. No. of female characters in prominent support role
<b>Dove Sketches</b>	15	10	5	5
<b>Lifebuoy Help a Child reach 5</b>	30	15	0	3
<b>Kit Kat</b>	15	1	0	0
<b>New Old Spice</b>	2	1	0	1
<b>Evian Baby &amp; Me</b>	16	3	0	3
<b>Kajol in Lifebuoy's Help a Child Reach 5</b>	1	1	1	0
<b>New 5 Star Ad</b>	3	1	0	1
<b>Sony Xperia z</b>	17	7	0	7
<b>Samsung Galaxy</b>	26	13	0	7
<b>Google Search:</b>	9	1	1	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>134</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>27</b>

Table -6 describes the total number of characters and the total number of female characters in leading and prominent supporting role. The total number of characters (includes males, females and children) in these advertisements are 134. The total number of female characters in these advertisements is 60. Among these 7 women are playing the lead role and 27 women can be seen in prominent supporting role.

**Table-7 (Age of women in Advertisements)**

Age of Women in Advertisements				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Teenagers (13-19 years)</b>	2	5.9	5.9	5.9
<b>Young (20-35 years)</b>	19	55.9	55.9	61.8
<b>Middle-Age (36-54years)</b>	10	29.4	29.4	91.2
<b>Old Aged (55 years &amp; above)</b>	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-7 points out the ages of women in lead role and prominent supporting roles. Maximum numbers of women in YouTube advertisements are shown in the young age category i.e. 19 women are between the age group of 20-35 years. The next leading age category is middle age (36-54 years). The role of middle-age women are played by 10 female characters. Three women are shown in old age category (55 years and above) and two women are shown as teenagers (13-19 years).

**Table-8 Costumes of women in Advertisements**

Costumes of Women in Advertisements				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Western but non-exposing	17	50.0	50.0	50.0
Western but exposing	11	32.4	32.4	82.4
Indian but non-exposing	4	11.8	11.8	94.1
Indian but exposing	1	2.9	2.9	97.1
Not Clear	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-8 depicts the costume of women in these advertisements. It is seen that the majority of women i.e. 17 (50%) women are seen in western but non-exposing costume. 11 (32.4%) women are in western but exposing outfit and 4 (11.8%) women are in Indian but non-exposing outfit and one woman (2.9%) is in Indian and yet exposing costume. The costume of one woman (2.9%) is not clear.

**Table-9 (Grooming Style of Women in Advertisements)**

Grooming Style of Women in Advertisements				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Make up</b>	11	32.4	32.4	32.4
<b>Minimal Make up</b>	4	11.8	11.8	44.1
<b>Ordinary Women without Make up</b>	16	47.1	47.1	91.2
<b>Not Clear</b>	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-9 describes the grooming of women in YouTube advertisements. Maximum number of women (16) is shown as carrying themselves without make-up and 11 women are shown in make-up. Four women are shown in minimal make-up. However, the make-up of three women character is not clear as they are not facing the screen directly

**Table-10 (Indian /Foreign Female Characters)**

Indian /Foreign Female Characters in Advertisements				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Indian</b>	7	20.6	20.6	20.6
<b>Foreigner</b>	26	76.5	76.5	97.1
<b>Not Clear</b>	1	2.9	2.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-10 describes whether the female characters are Indians or foreigners. Maximum number of women i.e. 26 (76.5%) are foreigners in YouTube advertisements. The remaining seven women (20.6%) are Indians. In the case of one female character it is not clear that whether she is foreigner or Indian. This is because she is not facing the camera.

**Table-11 (Role portrayed by Women in Advertisements)**

Role portrayed by Women in Advertisements				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Celebrity</b>	1	2.9	2.9	2.9
<b>Model</b>	4	11.8	11.8	14.7
<b>Professional</b>	2	5.9	5.9	20.6
<b>Sex Object</b>	1	2.9	2.9	23.5
<b>Decision Maker</b>	1	2.9	2.9	26.5
<b>Independent Women</b>	17	50.0	50.0	76.5
<b>Ordinary woman</b>	1	2.9	2.9	79.4
<b>Village woman</b>	2	5.9	5.9	85.3
<b>Free Spirit</b>	2	5.9	5.9	91.2
<b>Mother</b>	3	8.8	8.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Table-11 describes the role representation of women in most watched YouTube advertisements. It is seen that the role representation of woman has been drastically changing with total 17 (50%) women being shown as independent woman and one woman (2.9%) as the decision maker. One female character (2.9%) is that of a celebrity and 4 women (11.8%) are categorized as models. Two women (5.9%) play the role of village woman and one woman (2.9%) is shown playing the role of ordinary woman. Other role portrayed is that of free spirit (role played by two female characters i.e. 5.9%) and mother (role played by three female characters i.e. 8.8). One woman (2.9%) is also shown as playing the role of a sex object.

**Table-12 (Use of Product by Women)**

Use of Product by women				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Women using the product</b>	8	23.5	23.5	23.5
<b>Women not using the product</b>	22	64.7	64.7	88.2
<b>Product not applicable</b>	4	11.8	11.8	100.0
<b>NA</b>	34	100.0	100.0	

Table-12 explains the use of product by women in YouTube advertisements. It is identified that the maximum number of women i.e. 22 women (64.7%) are not using the product advertised. This is followed by eight women (23.5%) who are using the product advertised. For the remaining four women (11.8%) in these YouTube advertisements, the use of product is not applicable as they are advertising for public service advertisements.

**Table-13 (Setting/Location/Environment of Ad)**

Setting/Location/Environment of Ad				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Domestic</b>	1	10.0	10.0	10.0
<b>Indoor</b>	4	40.0	40.0	50.0
<b>Outdoor</b>	2	20.0	20.0	70.0
<b>Both indoor and Outdoor</b>	2	20.0	20.0	90.0
<b>Animated</b>	1	10.0	10.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	10	100.0	100.0	

Table-13 describes the location/setting or the environment of the advertisement. It is found that the maximum numbers of advertisements i.e. 40% are shot indoors in set-up like studio setting and domestic setting. 20% advertisements are shot outside and 20% include a combination of indoor and outdoor shooting. Only 10% of advertisements are completely animated.

**Table-14 (Voice Over in the Advertisement)**

Voice Over				
	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Male</b>	3	30.0	30.0	30.0
<b>Only background Music</b>	7	70.0	70.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	10	100.0	100.0	

Table-14 describes the voiceover and the background music of the most watched YouTube advertisements. It is found that only 30% advertisements carry voice over in them. These voiceovers are given by male characters only. The remaining 70% advertisements carry only background music without any voiceover in them.

### Findings

- I. *The most watched YouTube advertisements are of much longer duration than the advertisements that are shown on the television.*
- II. *The most watched advertisements of YouTube vary in product and services offered.*
- III. *The result indicates that there is a presence of women in all ten YouTube advertisements. More than 50 women characters have been used in various roles in these advertisements.*
- IV. *The most frequent type of advertising among these top ten advertisement on YouTube is product advertising*
- V. *It is identified that emotional advertising appeal is the most used in most watched YouTube advertisements.*
- VI. *Most of the advertisements are in Hindi with a mix of English language use. It is noteworthy that although these advertisements on YouTube are most watched in India but there is not even a single advertisement that is completely in Hindi.*
- VII. *The findings reveal that Personal Care or beauty advertisements are most frequently advertised.*
- VIII. *The study identifies that most of the women in these advertisements are young i.e. between the age group of 20 to 25 years.*
- IX. *The analysis indicates that most of the women in these advertisements are in western attire. However there dresses are non-exposing.*
- X. *Maximum number of women are seen without make-up followed by number of women with make-up*
- XI. *The study indicates there is a presence of women strengthening roles like that of a decision maker or a woman with a free spirit. The most prominent role representation was that of an independent woman less prominent representation included mother, ordinary woman or seductress. Thus the stereotypical roles are not emphasized in YouTube advertisements*
- XII. *It is found that the maximum numbers of women in these advertisements are not using the product advertised in YouTube advertisements.*
- XIII. *The maximum number of YouTube advertisements are shot in indoor locations*
- XIV. *Most of the YouTube advertisements carry background music only and voice over has been used only in 30% advertisements. These voiceovers are given by male artist only.*

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