

A Comparative Representation Analysis of Girls' Education Advertising Campaigns in India"

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Abstract: This study finds that girls' education is represented in selected Advertising campaigns in India. Advertising campaigns play a vital role in promoting social change. It focuses on two advertisements: Mahindra Rise and Nanhi Kali, to understand how the media constructs and emphasises future-oriented, independent, and empowered girls in society. This current research aims to understand the social issue of girls' education in the context of socio-cultural factors and patriarchal ideology in India. An analysis of the role of advertising campaigns is also done to understand their impact on shaping social perceptions and change. A comparative representation analysis of two girls' education campaigns in India is conducted. A mixed-methods research design is followed to understand the representation of the girl child in terms of role, agency, education framing, and social context. It is concluded that representation plays a significant role in shaping perceptions and attitudes towards girls' education. Empowerment content in the advertisement narrative fosters aspirations for girls' education within society.

Keywords: Empowerment, Campaign, Aspiration, Patriarchal, Societal perceptions, Representation, Inequality.

1. INTRODUCTION

Educate a girl, you educate a nation. It is truly the world's empowered nations. The World Bank has recognised that investing in girls' education is the most effective way to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (Kofi Annan, 2003). Educated girls not only contribute to the economy but also help eliminate social evils and inequalities in our society (Mahindra Education Foundation, 2016). Girls deserve education and equal opportunities. Education can inspire hope and motivate society to break the wall of inequality. The education of girls is a key driver of social and economic development. The right to education is a fundamental right. India is the second most populous country in the world. The population of the Girl is 48.5% of female. Education for girls is the main aim of the generative idea of gender equality. This empowers girls' decision-making and promotes the right ideas to break stereotypical societal norms (The Right to Education Act, 2009).

Gender inequality is a major agenda item for India's development. Investing in the girl's education and empowering the population and fostering the welfare of the nation, Jean Drèze and Amartya Sen (1995). Indian girls face socio – cultural economic barriers to education. Dropout of girls' education is the reason for early marriage and pregnancy. Some government initiatives and non-governmental organisations are working hard to promote and improve girls' access to education (Kasturi Talukdar, 2025). The government schemes are focused on welfare, girls' education, and empowerment. Educating young girls is a foundation for growing empowerment, self-esteem, and self-efficacy, and it breaks down all barriers. By ensuring that more girls receive high-quality education, Beti Bachao pathos programs help close the gender gap (Beti Bachao Beti Patho, 2015). In India, raising girls' educational attainment can have a big positive social impact. Girls with higher levels of education are more likely to be financially independent, healthier, and able to overcome gender prejudice. They can also contribute to better governance, fostering a sense of collective pride and societal progress.

The media play an important role in constructing and broadcasting gender roles; they do not merely reflect the real-time incidence but actively create the meaning through representation (Hall, 1997). One effective way to communicate

cultural values and identities is through advertising. In the past, advertising perpetuated the stereotype of women and girls as submissive and domestic (Goffman, 2019). These days, advertising takes an active, progressive stance, emphasising themes of women's and girls' empowerment, equality, independence, ambition, and professionalism (Eisend, 2010). The Shift of femvertising, however, connects advertisements to narratives that improve girls' self-confidence. Positive and progressive concepts are influencing the audience's perceptions and enhancing women's and girls' self-esteem and aspirational thinking (Abitbol & Sternadori, 2016). To raise awareness of the importance of educational empowerment, advertisements are crucial. Anand Mahindra and the K.C. Mahindra Education Foundation Trust, which is connected to the Naandi Foundation, were involved in Nanhi Kali (1996). The two major commercial organisations are involved in the social welfare advertisement. It aims to empower the education of underprivileged girls across India. It includes rural and scheduled communities. Focuses on tackling the barriers of poverty, gender bias, and early marriage. Nanhi Kali Nestle India's ad campaign #EducateTheGirlChild highlights the necessity of educating girls. Script for an advertisement conversation about hesitating to go to school due to fear, and the importance of realising the value of education. It encourages overcoming fear to access learning opportunities (Nanhi Kali Foundation, 2016).

The Mahindra Group, along with the project Nanhi Kali, aims to break the stereotype around girls' education. They created a fresh perspective on the typical term of #LadkiHaathSeNikalJayegi (2018). The objective of this Ad campaign explains the opportunities that result from educating every girl child (Mahindra Rise, 2018). The concept of this advertisement is semi-urban life, where the father breaks the barrier for the girl child. The complete advertisement is the conversation between the daughter and father, in which the empowered mindset is challenged by providing a new idea. "Ladki Haath Se Nikal Jaayegi"- an old phrase turning concept into a dream, achieving celebration of ambition and independence. It depicts a girl attending school, setting lofty goals, and directing her own destiny. It demonstrates freedom, choice, and the strength of education rather than fear. (CSR India, 2018).

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Gender representation and sociocultural norms are shaped in large part by advertising. An early study on gender roles in advertising shows the predominance of stereotypical depictions of women. According to Courtney and Lockeretz (1971), women were typically portrayed in domestic roles in ads, which reinforced conventional notions of femininity. In a similar vein, Bartos and Dunn (1974) noted that advertising often adhered to social norms by depicting women as subservient and limited to domestic duties. Goffman (1979) further analysed gender representation and argued that advertisements communicate underlying power structures, often positioning women in subordinate roles. These portrayals contribute to the normalisation of gender inequality in society. More recent research indicates a gradual shift in representation. In a meta-analysis, Eisend (2010) found that, despite persistent stereotypes, there has been a rise in non-traditional and powerful depictions of women in advertising. According to Kaur and Singh's (2007) analysis of gender representation in ads in India, women are still portrayed in patriarchal frames. In a similar vein, Das (2011) observed that while some modern commercials signal change by portraying women in more active and independent roles, television ads in India frequently perpetuate old gender norms. Overall, research indicates that although gender stereotypes have historically been perpetuated by advertising, there is a slow shift toward more progressive representations. Comparative research on how various advertising efforts create diverse portrayals is nevertheless lacking, especially regarding female education.

3. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Despite multiple advertising campaigns promoting girls' education, there is a limited comparative analysis of how these campaigns represent the girl child, particularly with respect to agency, empowerment, and social context.

4. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the representation of the girl child in selected campaigns
- To examine levels of agency and empowerment
- To identify the presence of stereotypes and patriarchal ideologies
- To compare the framing of girls' education across campaigns

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is grounded in the field of Representation Theory, which explains how the media constructs meaning rather than reflects reality. Advertisements are a representational system that shapes audience and societal perception through the portrayal of identities and social issues. According to Stuart Hall (1997), representation is a process through which meaning is produced and communicated. In the context of girls' education, representation of the girl child is related to how she is perceived in terms of identity, power, and social position.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The mixed-method approach is used to design the comparative case study. Quantitative methods are the primary methods of content analysis, and interpretations are used for qualitative Analysis. The purposive sampling technique is used for two advertisements related to the concept of educating girls.

Advertisement Campaign 1: #Ladki Haath Se Nikal Jaayegi (Mahindra Rise)

Advertisement Campaign 2: #Educate the Girl Child (Nanhi Kali – Nestlé)

The structured coding and Quantitative analysis identify the patterns. Moreover, the qualitative provides deeper meaning and construction.

7. CODING FRAMEWORK

Variables	Codes
Role	R1 Victim/R2 Independent/R3 Aspiring/R4 Empowered
Agency	A1 High/A2 Medium/A3 Low
Stereotype	S0 No stereotype /S1 Reinforces stereotype/ S2 Challenges stereotype
Education	E1 Basic need E2 Right E3 Empowerment
Social context	SC1 Restrictive / SC2 Neutral / SC3 Supportive
Resilience	RE1 No resilience / RE2 Strong resilience / RE3 Strong

8. ANALYSIS

8.1. QUANTITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Table 1 - Advertisement Campaign 1 (#Ladki Haath Se Nikal Jaayegi (Mahindra Rise, 2016)

Variable	Code	Interpretation
Role	R4	Empowered
Agency	A3	High
Stereotype	S2	Challenged
Education	E3	Empowerment
Social context	SC3	Supportive
Resilience	RE3	Strong

Table 2 - Advertisement Campaign 2 #Educate the Girl Child (Nanhi Kali – Nestlé, 2017)

Variable	Code	Interpretation
Role	R1	Victim
Agency	A1	Low
Stereotype	S2	Partial Challenge
Education	E1	Empowerment
Social context	SC1	Patriarchal
Resilience	RE2	Emerging

8.2. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

Table 3 – Comparative Analysis A1 and A2

Variable	A1	A2
Role	Empowered	Victim
Agency	High	Low
Stereotype	Challenged	Partial Challenge
Education	Empowerment	Empowerment
Social context	Supportive	Patriarchal
Resilience	Strong	Emerging

8.3. QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

The qualitative study reveals several distinctions between the two campaigns' approaches to meaning construction. In Table 1 - Advertisement Campaign 1 (#Ladki Haath Se Nikal Jaayegi (Mahindra Rise, 2016). The girl is portrayed in the Campaign 1 Representation as a self-assured, self-reliant, and progressive figure. Autonomy, a professional goal, and individualistic independence are all reflected in the conversation. By redefining a culturally built term to represent empowerment, the advertisement challenges traditional preconceptions. The father figure likewise changes, moving from a position of authority to one of support, signifying a movement from progressive acceptance to patriarchal dominance.

In contrast, Table 2 - Advertisement Campaign 2 #Educate the Girl Child (Nanhi Kali – Nestlé, 2017). Campaign 2's narrative highlights a reality where the girl child is denied an education due to gender discrimination, illustrating a highly patriarchal society. The girl child's attempt to change her identity to access education reflects oppression and a lack of agency. The portrayal emphasises the struggle for access to education, while the campaign shows some elements of resistance; however, transformation is not a dominant theme.

9. DISCUSSION

The findings suggest that representation plays a major role in defining social issues. Campaign 1 represents an Aspirational image of progressiveness, while Campaign 2 emphasises the problems faced by girls. These campaigns serve different objectives. One aims to influence through a positive image, while the other aims to inform by raising awareness of social issues and realities.

10. CONCLUSION

This study examines how the topic of girls' education is portrayed in advertising campaigns, which is important for influencing how important people think it is. Table 3 –discuss the Comparative Analysis A1 and A2. The Mahindra Rise and Nanhi Kali campaign serves as an example of how society communicates about girls' education. This study concludes that Kanhi Kali's narrative reflects the realities and restrictions of gender inequality and restricted access to education in a patriarchal framework. The Mahindra Rise Campaign: Aspiration, Empowerment, Drive Narrative. It is perceived either as a problem or as an opportunity for empowerment. The way the construction of representation influences changes in public attitudes and affects girls' education. Empowerment-based representation can inspire change, while problem-based representation creates the need for change. Both are important in effectively addressing the societal issues. It is crucial to acknowledge that these campaigns are often linked to institutional or corporate identities alongside their social messaging. These commercials actively address social welfare and societal upliftment issues in addition to promoting products, even when they are associated with commercial brands. These campaigns help shape public discourse and promote progressive attitudes by connecting brand communication with social causes such as girls' education. As a result, advertising serves as a medium for social change in addition to being a communication tool. These campaigns' portrayals of girls' education show a move toward more empowering and inclusive narratives, demonstrating the media's capacity to affect social change and advance gender equality.

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