Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India

*Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta
**Dhriti Mehta

Abstract

Advertising can be said to be effective if it reaches out successfully to the Target audience and is able to successfully convey the message so as to not only catch the attention of the target audience but also to convert this attention into a buy decision. It is therefore very important for the creative team involved in preparing the creative copy to recognize and follow the changes taking place in society. In this paper it is attempted to show how the portrayal of social life and roles in Cinema and television reflects the on-going changes and therefore can be a very useful source in the input required to create advertising copy. The portrayal of women in the visual media, specifically, Cinema and Television has been chosen to be studied to understand how advertisements that are in consonance with the portrayed will be received by audiences better as they will relate to them. The research undertaken studies the portrayal of women in India and Japan to show that this is a universal phenomenon and equally applicable to advertisements created in any part of the world.

Key words/phrases: Advertising effectiveness, Content Analysis, Visual Media, Advertising Copy

"The tall, sveltefigure stylishly sat in the drivers seat with one hand resting casually on the steering wheel of a brand new car. Her dress was new and chic, and her make-up freshly painted on her light skin,as she drove to meet her friends at the cinema hall and watch a movie with them that evening."

A far cry from the notion of the delicate, *kimono*-wearing Japanese*shufu (*主婦*/*housewife)*,* or the ideal *sari*-clad Indian *bahu (/daughter-in-law(,* the '*Moga*' in Japan or '*Mem*'in Indiawere both viewed as anomalies and outliers in the context of the ideal traditional women of society. It is interesting to note that in both the Japanese and Indian contexts, this Modern Girl essentially represented the process of '*westernization*'due to outside influences. The evolution of the Modern Girl is thus often the subject of discussion for it is one of the most interesting products of *capitalization*, *modernization* and *globalization* in the Eastern world.

This essay is an attempt to analyze the conditions which created the persona of theModern Girl and to trace the evolution of the '*Moga*' in Japan and '*Mem*' in India through their portrayal incinema.Through this essay, I wish to discuss the impact of movies on the Modern Girl's identity as well as throw light on how the Modern Girl impacted the course that movies took in terms of the numerous kinds of roles essayedand the narrative importance of women in cinema. The essay is divided into three main parts. The first part will aim at gainingan understandingof the Modern Girl in greater detail and willexamine the historicalbackgroundin which the concept took birth.The second part will examine the role of cinema and theatreas a means of *depicting*, *propagating* and surprisingly, somewhat*normalizing* the image of the Modern Girl in both societies as well as explore the classification between the types of Modern Girls that I propose to make. The third part will be acomparative analysis of India and Japan and their representation and acceptance of the Modern Girl as depicted by cinema in the inter-war and post-war period and its effect on traditional society. In this sectionI also propose to explore the cinematic shift of the Modern Girl

Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India
Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta and Dhriti Mehta

10.1

to a more maternal'*Modern Woman*'who was a product of the post-war and post-independence period and took over the concept of *'Maternal love'*.

The role of women in movies was initially neither appreciated, visible or clearly defined. In fact, it is interesting to note that this distaste of women's participation in films and *Kabuki* theatre was apparent in the common practice for men to enact women's roles on screenin both India and Japan (女形). However, with the rise of 'family dramas', there was a demand for female actresses to star in the movies which was facilitated by the increase of women in the urban workforce post World War I who as audiencewanted to see relatable characters on screen. WithWesterninfluencesbecomingstronger in both societies,advertising and media gave birth to the Modern Girl- one who was free, independent and who has adopted a certain '*modern lifestyle*'which permitted her to engage in leisurely activities such as going to the cinema and buying beauty products. Perhaps one of the key identified characteristics of the Modern girls was her adoption of a completely Western lifestyle which was evident in her representation in movies of that time. Hanabusa Yuriko's depiction of rich and modern Yuko in the silent movie '*Souls on the Road'* andactress Sulochna's role in the movie '*Typist Girl*' were both products of this Modern Girl imagery. Interestingly, the Indian actress Sulochna was actually discovered as aregular girl working as a typist before being cast in movies.This suggests that while modern cinema developed as a result of the changing profile and preferences of the audience and to cater to the audience that identified itself with 'modern girls', the real representation of women was changed when modern girls themselvesstarted entering films and further solidified theirscreen presence.

Although many women nowbegan to act in movies, they tended to appear in roles of mothers, wives, vamps, whores or damsels in distress- all of which perpetuated the idea of a male-dominated society. In this period, a common theme while depicting women was the distinctive identity of the traditional woman and the modern girl which aimed at reinforcing the 'idealness of the traditional woman' and 'negative associations with the modern girl'. This is quite evident in 1929 Japanese film, '*Undying Pearl'* (*Fue No Shiratama*) directed by Hiroshi Shimizu where in the end the '*Moga'* is left by the male leadfor her elder, moresociallyconforming and traditional sister despite the attraction between the '*Moga'* and the male lead. This dichotomy of the Modern as bad and Traditional as good is quite evident in films of this period which depicted the '*Moga'*.

The depiction of the Modern Girl can be categorized into two distinct categories- the '**Good Modern Girl'** and the '**Negative Modern Girl'**. The '**Good Modern Girl'** was depicted as the 'ideal' heroine wholistened to her parents, family, was hard-working and educated and if at all worked, went into a noble profession such as being a teacher or nurse. She was selfless and caring, and performed household duties with great adeptness while perfectlybalancing her work life. She was the Modern Girl who was promoted precisely due to her*harmony between the modern and traditional*. On the other hand, there wasthe '**Negative Modern Girl'**- the one whosmoked cigarettes, drank alcohol and was more likely a spinster or seductresswith loose moralsand who worked as a cabaret dancer or bar maid. She was shown as the vamp, house-wrecker or villain in the movie. With the intention of catering to the neo-liberal market demand, there was an apparent sexualization of women in movies. However, this was also dealt with by assigning these roles to the Negative Modern Girl. So while the movies dealt with more risqué topics, they managed to gain viewership without compromising on the idealization of the Good Modern Girl. This presented the audience with the idea that being a modern girl was *acceptable* and even *normal*; however,being rooted to traditional thought and values was equally important.In India, the 'Good Modern Girl'became increasingly

Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India
Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta and Dhriti Mehta

10.2

popular and idealized on screen and thus also became the target consumer for many cosmetic companies in reality for young Indian girls who all aspired to be the modern girls they watched in movies. In this way, the Modern Girl was not entirely a Western product but rather became more relatable as she became localized.

It was in the inter-war years that one could feel the shift from purely modernization to a prevalent sense of 'nationalism' in the representation of the Modern Girl in Japan. This was a time period in Japan wherein movies promoted the '*nationalism'*and emphasized on the distinction between a '*home-identity'* and that of '*foreignness'.* Around this time, while there had beennumerous movie productions in India, they were mostly concerned with fantasy and mythological movies and strictly controlled by the Colonial power, thus not permitting much freedom in the choice of movies being produced. Nevertheless, one could sense the growingnationalist thought in India where the struggle of independence from the British was now apparent. This period was marked with an increase of foreign cosmetics advertisements, however modified to appeal to the traditional society. However, the Modern Girl and her consumer habits were soon sidelined and the depiction of the Good Modern Woman or Mother in Japanese and Indiancinema cinemagrew extensively in the post-war period in Japan and post-independence period in India. 'Mother' (*Okaasan*) by MikioNaruse(1952) and 'Mother India' by Mehboob Khan (1957) are two such movies that follow a similar theme of family, wherein a single mother facing tough times after the death of her husband assumes the role of the head of the family. Interestingly,theactresses in both the movies- Kinuyo Tanaka and NargisDuttwere the quintessential modern girls in their earlier movies. Thus, a common trend in both societiesis a shift to a depiction of Motherly love' which changed the 'Modern Girl'.Claimingthat this was the end of strong women in cinema is rather far-fetched, yet one can agree that this was the transition of the 'Modern Girl'on screen to the 'Modern Mother' due to the increasing spirit of Nationalism.

Movies in both Japan and India have always been associated with modernity and western technology. It is thus not a surprise that cinema has been one of the major influences in the creation and depiction of the '*Moga'.* While it can be argued that the process began as somewhat to *stereotype* the Modern Girl and perhaps even to discourage girls by propagating the negative image associated to her, the representation of the '*Moga'* actually became a means of promoting her cultural identity and role in the fast transforming society of Japan to an audience where many were already enamored and in the process of emulating the developed West. This brings us to a discussion of how advertizements pick up cues from the content of visual media to identify and appeal to their target audience.

In the 80's women were objectified in cigarette ads but recent ads have shown them to be progressive working women who are respected at the work place advertisers' attitudes towards women are changing for the better; These changes reflect how Visual mediums like television and cinema pick up cues from the changes that are taking place in communities and society and in turn provide key input for advertisers.. There are few ads that can   highlight the changes and trave how the evolution   has impacted advertisements.

Till the 80's,Indian advertising still suffered from British influence and most advertising targeted the elite, pushing western lifestyle. This was also the time when a majority of products took to television advertising. Cigarette brands with women in skimpy clothes hovering around the male model were rampant and one would often hear lines like 'for the pleasure of man'. Additionally advertisements such as the Brooke "Bond Special Tea" commercial featuring Anuradha Patel was popular and while it had all the elements necessary for a good commercial, it promoted the stereotype that women were meant to do

Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India
Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta and Dhriti Mehta

10.3

household chores and were identified as successful only when the husband acknowledged and appreciated her efforts. Thus the advertisements till the 90's continued to reflect the position of women in society- they could be black or white characters-either the complete modern girl with all the vices or the demure , housewife. By the year 2000 society was evolving as the post independence generation came of age. This saw some ads that showed an attitude change both in the way women were depicted and in the women themselves. So while a young college girl on a scooty declared, " Why should boys have all the fun?", there was an ad for Femina, where a young girl dressed up for a marriage function walks around and viewers are made to belive that she is the bride, but are delighted to find that the entire scene was set for her widowed mother's remarriage. 2008 saw the HDFC Standard's 'Sar utha ke jiyo' campaign , where a young daughter writes a cheque for her dad's new car with her savings saying, "*Tulika Sharma chahati hai ke uske dad style se travel karein*" and her dad accepts it with a look of pride on his face, after the initial hesitation. A Tanishq commercial is also seen reflecting the breaking the myth of 'only fair is beautiful'and the stigma of remarriage simultaneously,by showing a dusky lady with a child is getting married again in Indian tradition. The ad, released first on the digital platform, was so loved that it garnered almost half a million hits on YouTube in the first week itself and reinforces the belief that when adveriements match the societies aspirations it is better received. In a Bournvita spot a child boxer takes off the helmet to show a little girl, and we are reminded that Modern India has several female sportswomen role models like Mary-com,Sania Mirza and Saina Nehwal.

A study was made to reveal gender portrayal types in Japanese television advertisements through content analysis. Five hundred and thirty-one adult main characters were coded for sex, age, ethnic background, credibility, role, place, dress, background, persuasion type, camera work, camera angle, product type, target, and sex of voice-over. Five types were found by performing quick cluster analysis: "beautiful and wise housewives," "young ladies attracting people's attention," "young celebrities," "middle- and old-aged people enjoying private time," and "middle-aged worker bee." The first three were mainly women and the latter two were mainly men. The results indicated that in Japanese television advertisements men and women are portrayed differently, and the differences corresponded with traditional gender stereotypes.

There are continue to be certain categories like deodorants, washing powders, automobiles, real estate that remain disconnected to the reality of the changes taking place in societybut it is being noticed increasingly that the the viewer discards them as they no longer reflect the changes taking place in society. One of the most relevant advertisement in recent times is that of the new home loan campaign of Axis Bank have a unique product differentiator, 'Home loans with 12 EMIs off'. The film reflects the changing behaviour of the society perfectly. The film, created by Lowe Lintas breaks the stereotype of the man as a home loan target audience and puts a woman in the centre of the campaign as the key influencer and the decision maker. Lowe Lintas has portrayed an Indian mother as the 'change-maker', by putting her in the 'driver's seat'. Consumer research revealed that home buying discussions are linked to important life events like marriage. Typically Indian moms were infamous for not wanting to let go of their sons, but as society is changing, movies, TV serials and advertisements all show that educated women and emancipated mothers are indeed changing and becoming less clingy and more forward looking.he campaign conceptualised by Lowe Lintas Mumbai and directed by Gauri Shinde showcases actress Revathi and actor Vikrant Massey in conversation with each other while shopping for his wedding.In the film, a mother and her son are shown getting into their car after shopping for the son's wedding. While driving, the mom asks her son to take a home. Dazzled by the request, the son asks if her mom wants him to

Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India
Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta and Dhriti Mehta

10.4

stay away from her. To which, the mother replies that it's better to stay a bit far than having troubles at home by balancing relationships between mother and wife.

Indeed Visual medium such as movies and television borrow their underlying values from the real world and in turn impact the advertisements that are such an integral part of the marketing strategy and communication of a company. A good match leads to the success and acceptance of the marketing communication wheras a mis-match usually means that the advertisement is rejected by the target audience that does not identify with it.

*Professor,
S.S. Jain Subodh Management Institute, Jaipur
**2nd year, PEAK Graduate Student ,
University of Tokyo, Tokyo, Japan

References

1. Wada-Marciano, M. (2008). *Imaging Modern Girls in the Japanese Woman's Film*. In *Nippon Modern: Japanese Cinema of the 1920s and 1930s* (pp. 76-110). Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt6wqztp.9

2. Russell, C. *The Cinema of NaruseMikio (2008)*: Women and Japanese Modernity. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

3. Sato, T. (1982) *Currents in Japanese Cinema: Essays*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

4. Jaikumar, P. (2006) *Cinema at the End of Empire: A Politics of Transition in Britain And India*, Duke University Press Pp. 73.

5. Ramamurthy, P. (2006). *The Modern Girl in India in the Interwar Years: Interracial Intimacies, International Competition, and Historical Eclipsing*. Women's Studies Quarterly, *34*(1/2), 197-226. Retrieved from http://www.jstor.org/stable/40004749

6. Sharma S., &Dr.Narban, J. (2016). Indian Cinema and Women. *International Journal Of Advance Research And Innovative Ideas In Education*, 2(1), 491-494.

7. Suzuki, M. (2009) *Becoming Modern Women: Love and Female Identity in Pre-war Japanese Literature and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford UP. 248.

8. The Modern Girl around the World Research Group, Alys Eve Weinbaum, Lynn M. Thomas, Priti Ramamurthy, Uta G. Poiger, Madeleine Y. Dong and Tani E. Barlow. (2009) "*Cosmetics Advertising and the Politics of Race and Style*." The Modern Girl around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 25-54. Print.

9.   Forum for Citizen's Television. (1991). *Terebi ga utsushidasu "gaikoku" to nihon no kokusaika* [The "foreignness" portrayed on television and the internationalization of Japan]. Kanagawa: Kawamura Publishers.

10. Hotta, M. (2000). Perceived distributions of opinions in young generation and their parents' generation regarding sex roles. *Japanese Journal of Psychology*, *70*, 503-509.

11. Akie N. Arima,Sex Roles, Gender Stereotypes in Japanese Television Advertisements,July 2003, Volume 49, –Issue12, pp 81–90

Understanding the role of Cinema in creating and portraying the Modern Girl to create inputs for relevant Advertizing: A study in Japan and India
Prof.Dr. Jyotsna Diwan Mehta and Dhriti Mehta

10.5