



IAA and Hansa Research findings on

CHANGING TRENDS IN PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN IN INDIAN ADVERTISING

December 2014



Advertising Council of India (ACI)
(A Division of STACA Trust)





For many years the advertising industry has been faced with a piquant situation

On the one hand we are made the favorite whipping boy of women's activist groups and even the Government for the way women are depicted in advertising and related creative content. Words like stereotyping, objectifying, commodification have been freely used.

On the other, several well-intentioned industry-professionals have argued that times are changing and advertising only reflects the changing mores and values of the generation that consumes it.

Personally, I have felt the truth probably lies somewhere in between. At the India Chapter of the International Advertising Association (IAA) we are committed to the adage "what's good, is good for business" and have implemented several engagements with the community to foster this.

The engagement titled "Changing Gender Frames" on 10th December, coincides with the release of this commissioned Research. They represent small steps in that direction.

We shall endeavor to apply a healthy amalgam of scientific temper and good intentions to pursue the goal of gender equality.

Shorn of the emotion and rhetoric this is a serious pursuit of what we believe is right.

Srinivasan Swamy
President, IAA India Chapter

The survey outlines the changing portrayal of women in Indian advertising and what this means going forward.

Why is this the relevant time to discuss this subject? The changing role of women in Indian society is evident in every sphere of life. Age-old beliefs have been challenged and the roles played by women continually redefined.

Media attention generated by the Nirbhaya case challenged the ingrained social stigma attached to rape. It brought about changes in attitudes and forced the country to confront its appalling treatment of women.

Despite many positive changes, much remains to be done when it comes to the status of women in society.

Advertising is known to reflect societal norms and should be a torch bearer of change. Does advertising showcase the changes in women's roles? This survey of key personnel in advertising and marketing seeks answers to this question.

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- One-on-one personal interviews conducted with professionals by researchers and qualified interviewers
- 94 professionals – 55 from Advertising (Creative Directors and above) and 39 from Marketing (Marketing Managers and above)
- Spread across Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai.
- Both men and women.
- Interviews conducted in October / November 2014

It is common knowledge that we organize our awareness about the world around us by sorting and simplifying received information. In today's connected and networked times, the role of media in shaping and forming public opinion and perceptions has been well documented.

One such area is that of gender stereotyping. While such stereotypes have existed in every culture from times past, societies are beginning to question the stereotypes and work actively for change.

The position and status of women in India is complex. While we deify her as Shakti, Lakshmi and Saraswathi, we are also guilty of incredible day-to-day male chauvinism, dominance and even violence.

One of the ways to change the attitude towards women could be through the change in portrayal of women in media and advertising.

Through this research, we met key Marketing and advertising professionals, to assess and understand the status of gender stereotypes, the perceptions of the portrayal of women in advertising and an understanding of the effect of communication that challenges gender stereotypes.

Professionals resoundingly endorsed that it is education and financial independence that is empowering women, giving them more decision making power and helping them enter public spaces and conversations.

There was almost unanimous agreement that gender roles are less clearly defined these days, and stereotyping and accompanying social pressures are on the wane, especially for aspects like women working out of the house and men doing housework, both of which have become acceptable. But women still feel that children are more their responsibility than that of the father.

However, there is some ambiguity on the whole sexuality or body image aspect. Women still report that men normally judge them on the basis of beauty and sex appeal.

Professionals are of the opinion that in advertising today women are being portrayed more as energetic, confident and modern multi-taskers than as “homely”. This then leads to the question of whether a new stereotype of supermom has arrived.

While most professionals feel that the changing trend is sustainable, it rests on the fact that marketers now look at women as a potential segment which will facilitate growth; thereby making it important to tap the potential of this segment which is now experiencing independence on the financial as well as decision making front.

Using women “provocatively” in advertising is seen as a sure shot way to grab attention even today by both men and women.

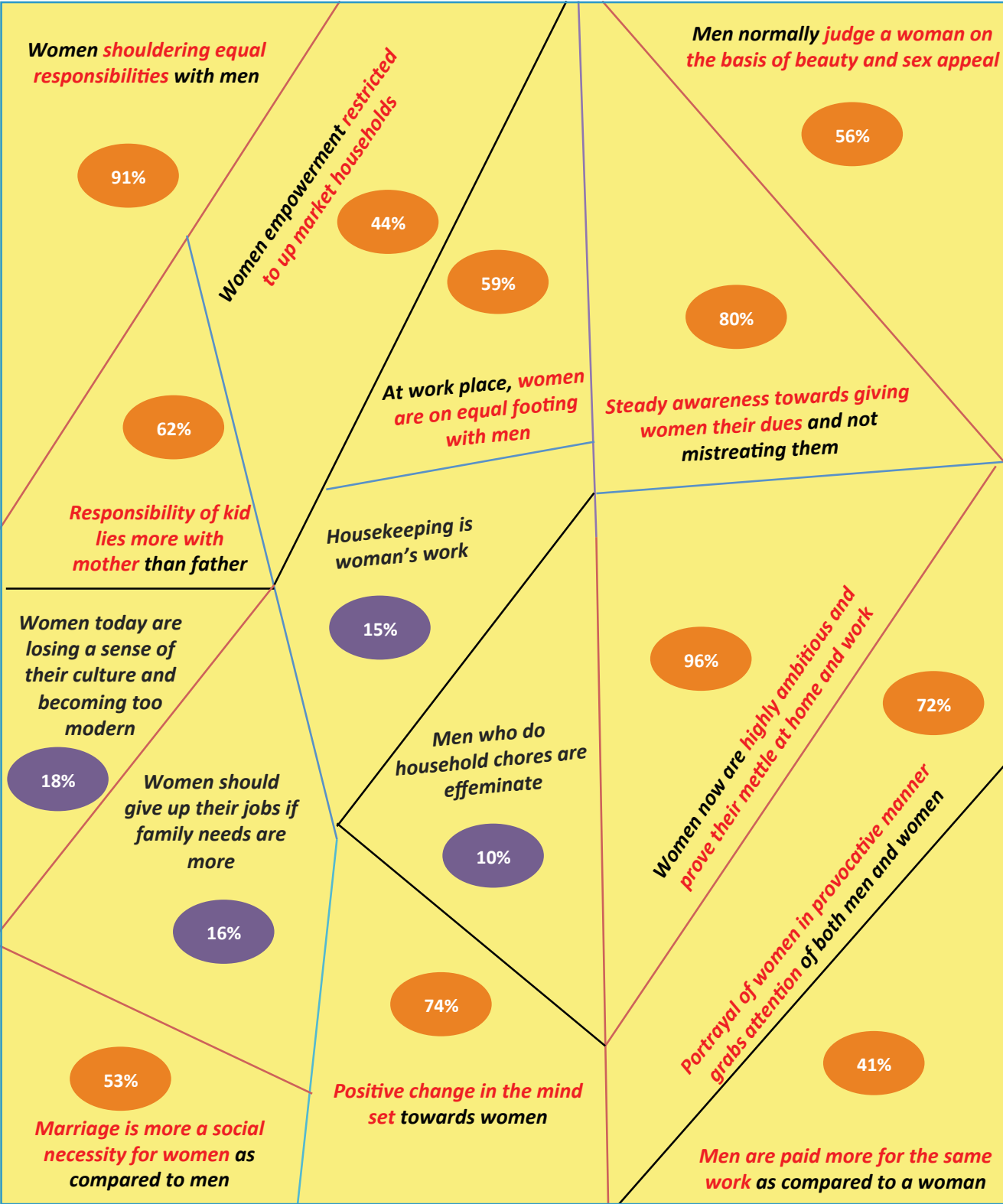
The research also flagged advertising that has been noticed for its challenging of gender stereotypes. Airtel with the wife as boss, the remarriage story of Tanishq and the mother who trains her child in the Bournvita commercial, have emerged as examples of moving to the new gender conversation with style.

However, there is still a majority feeling that advertising has not been able to portray the actual status of women in society. While there seems to be a change in the portrayal of women in advertising due to her newer roles, there still seems to be a lot of opportunity to explore various facets of women and showcase them in advertising.



DETAILED FINDINGS

Status of Women



Base: All Respondents

Top 2 box scores (Strongly Agree + Agree with the statement)

Status of Women In the workplace

Statements	All	Male	Female
Base	94	63	31
Women are now highly ambitious and are proving their mettle not only on the home front, but also in their respective professions	96	97	94
When it comes to work place, women are on equal footing with men	59	56	65
Men are paid more for the same work than a woman	41	41	42
Women should give up their jobs if the family needs are more	16	17	13

Top 2 box scores (Strongly Agree + Agree with the statement) All Fig in %

The opinions of men and women were not significantly different on these attitudes, which was heartening.

It is interesting that Indian women professionals do not see themselves at a disadvantage either in terms of pay or other work-related aspects.

This is a significant departure in gender perceptions in the global context.

Status of Women In society and home

Statements	All	Male	Female
Base	94	63	31
Women are shouldering equal responsibilities with men in the family	91	89	97
There is steady awareness regarding giving the women their dues, and not mistreating them seeing them as objects of possession	80	78	84
There has been a positive change in the mindset about the way the women are perceived in society	74	78	68
Portrayal of women in provocative manner in advertisements helps grab attention of both men and women	72	70	77
Responsibility of kid lies more with the mother than the father	62	59	68
Men normally judge a woman on the basis of beauty and sex appeal	56	51	68
Getting married is more of a social necessity for a woman when you compare to man	53	56	48
Women empowerment is restricted to up-market households	44	46	39
Today's women are losing a sense of their culture and tradition and are becoming way too modern	18	14	26
Housekeeping is woman's work	15	11	23
Men who do household chores are effeminate	10	11	6

Top 2 box scores (Strongly Agree + Agree with the statement) All Fig in %

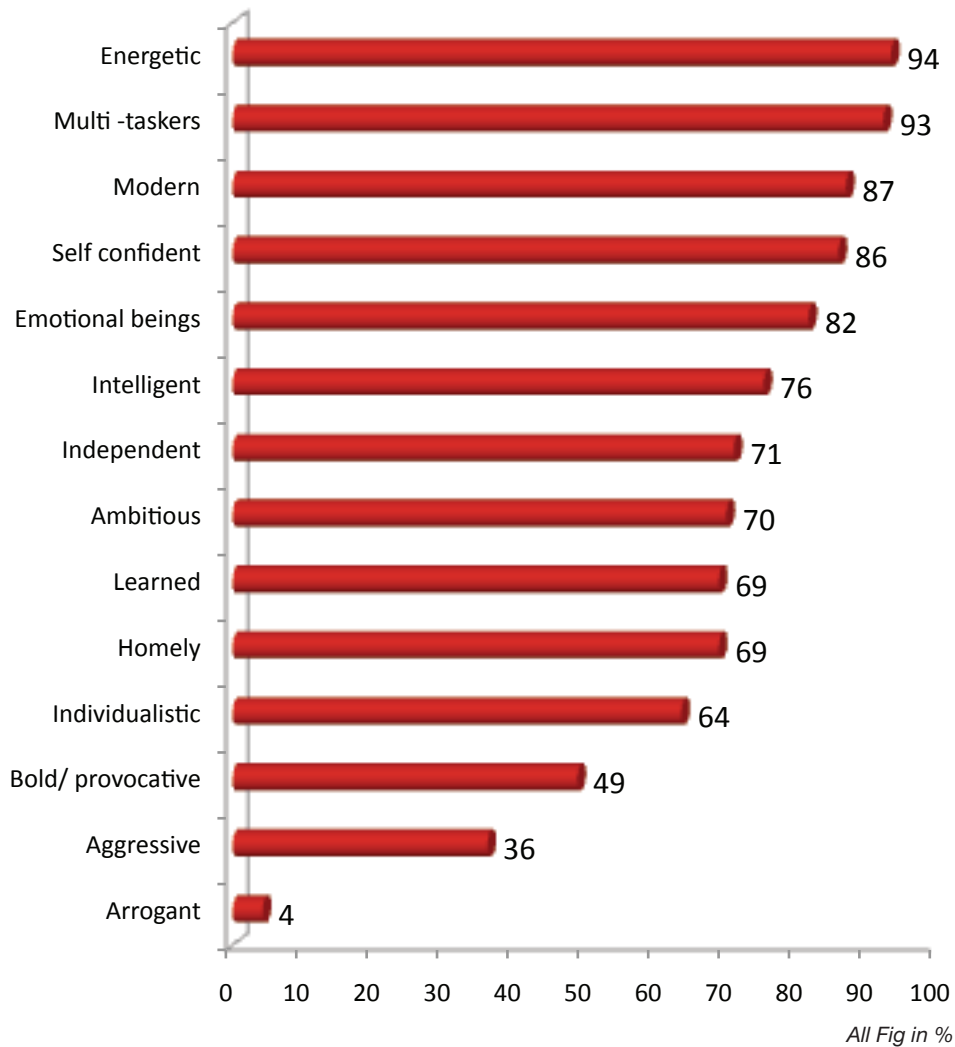
On the home front, men and women's views diverge. The perception that parenting responsibilities sit more heavily on women is endorsed by them and the proportion of women who see an unequal share of housework is double that of men!

A quarter of women agreed that they are losing their sense of culture and becoming too modern – significantly more than men.

Portrayal of Women in Advertising



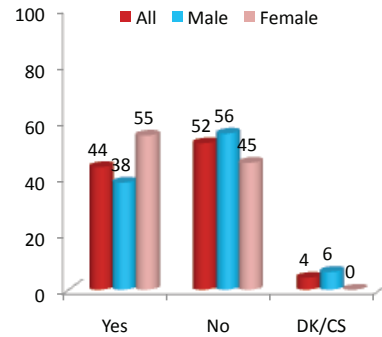
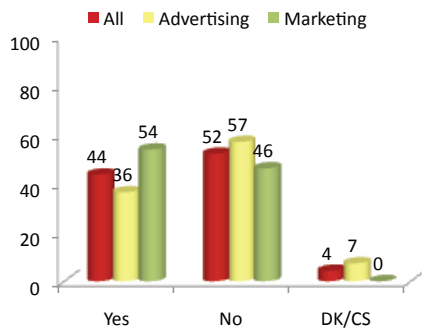
How are women being portrayed in advertising?



The portrayal of women is no more synonymous with merely homely , individualistic or just being provocative. Today's women are being portrayed much more than these. They are shown as multi taskers, energetic, self confident and modern in advertising

Women professionals strongly believe that the portrayal is more energetic and multi taskers while the male professionals believe that the portrayal is modern and self confident

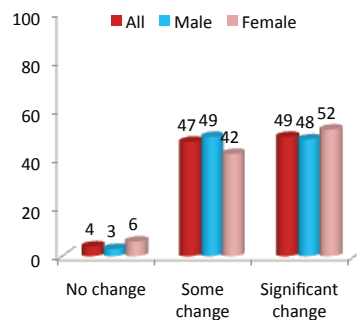
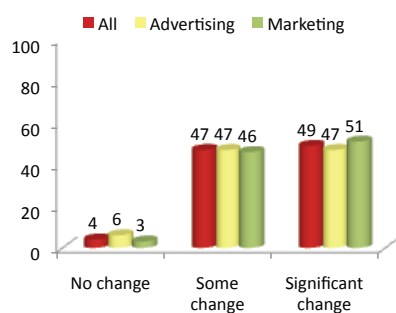
Is their portrayal in sync with their status in society?



All Fig in %

- But is the portrayal of women in sync with their status in the society. The answer is more 'No'.
- Majority of the professionals feel that advertising has not been able to portray the actual status of women in society; particularly advertising professionals.

Has there been a change in this portrayal?



All Fig in %

- Though the portrayal of women in advertising is not in sync with their actual status in the society, the comforting point is that there has been a change in the way women are being portrayed in recent times.
- Around half of the professionals are of the opinion that there has been a significant change in the way women are being portrayed in advertising.

What are the changes?
-spontaneous reactions

“The content and message has changed, the characterization is different, innovative approaches have been deployed”

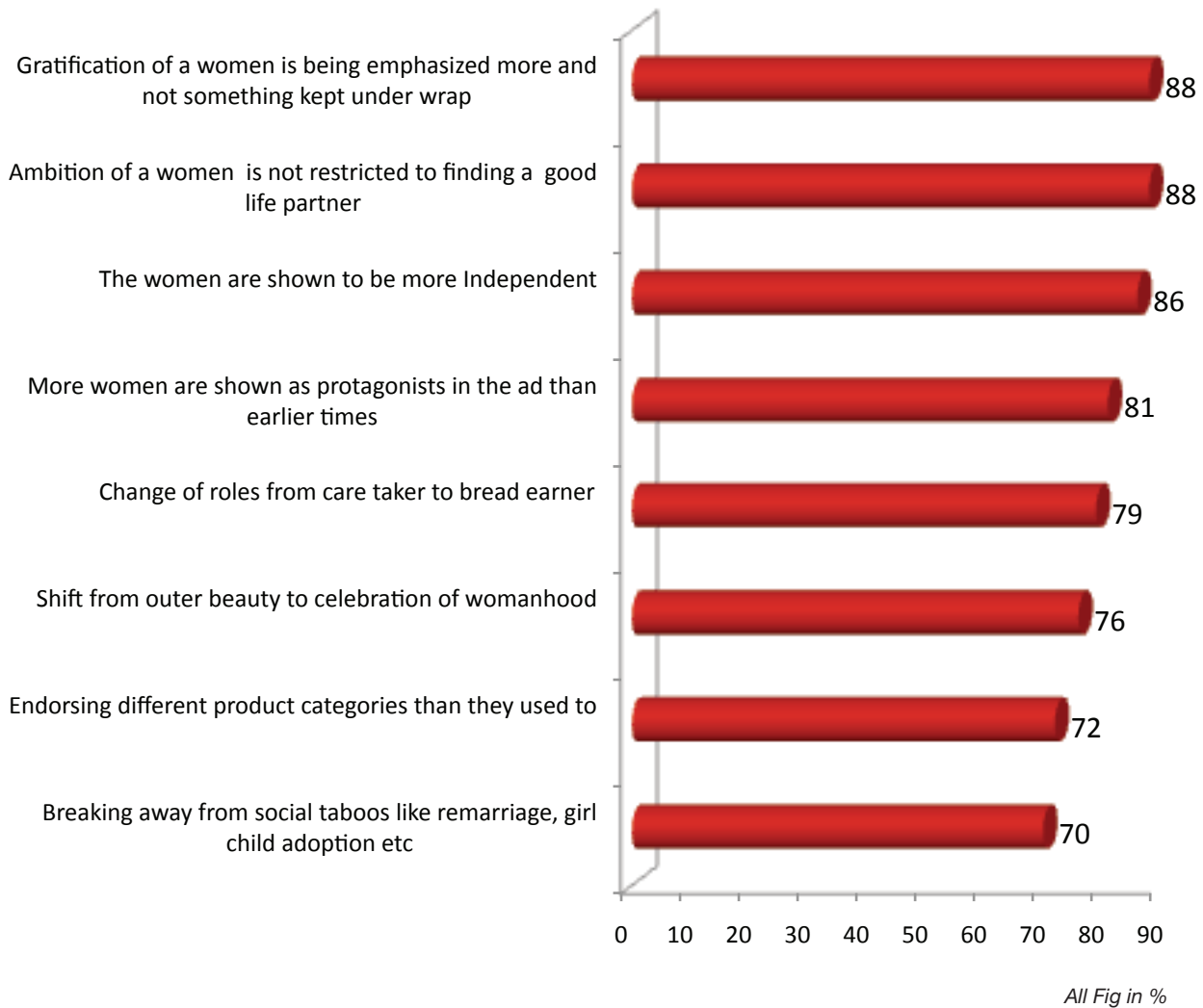
“Showcasing social issues surrounding women more openly and expressing them simply”

“Women’s education, changing income and the general status of women”

“Their need for being meaningful and different is seen these days”

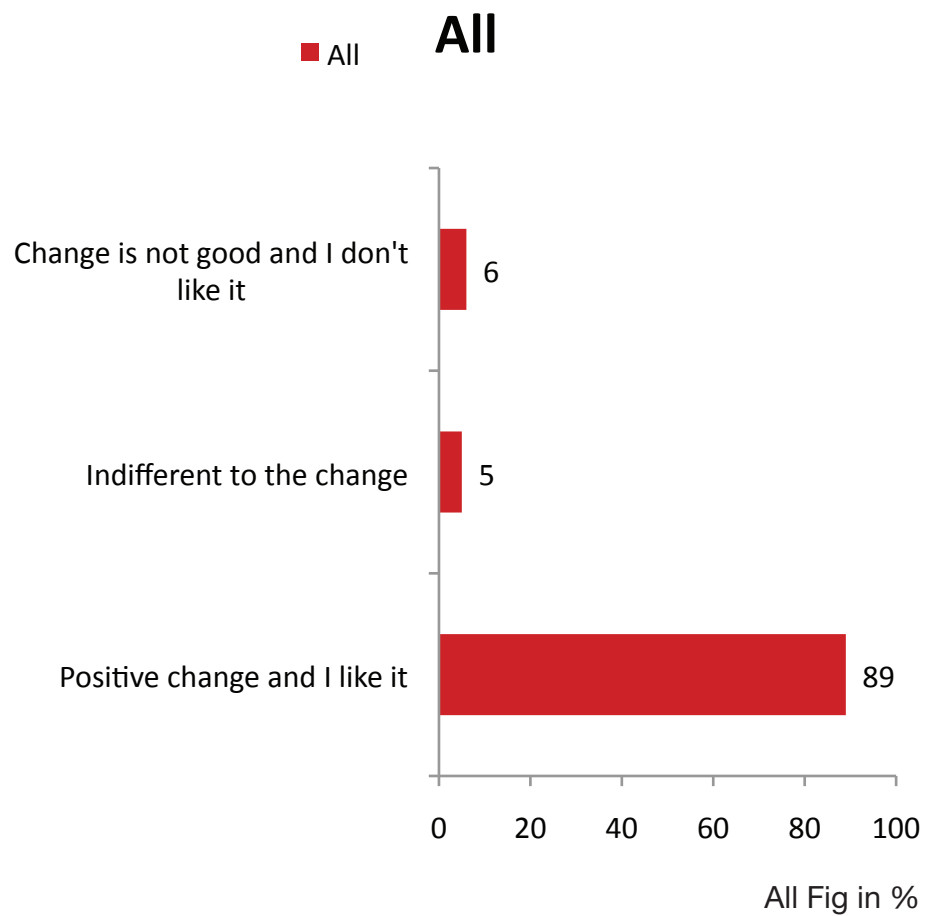
“They are shown as financially independent, decision makers for more categories”

What are the changes? -Aided response



- With financial independence and decision making power, women are being shown as independent and living on their own terms.
- Advertising professionals are also not shying away from depicting the ambition and gratification of women in the communication, to connect with the audience

Is the change for the better?



- Almost all the professionals are of the view that the change has been positive and they like the change

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Factors driving this change



Women's education



More and more women are becoming financially independent



Changing role of women from looking after family member to bread earner

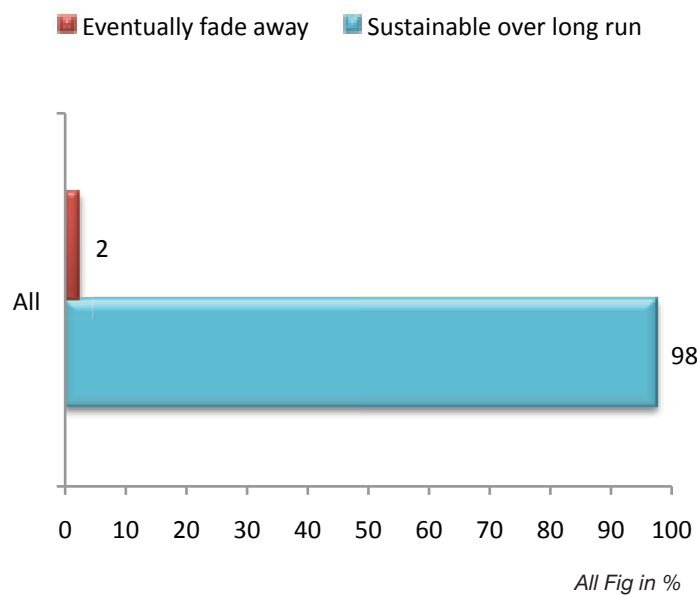


Self realization by women about their rights



Emergence of women leaders as role models

Is this change sustainable



Why do they think the change is sustainable in the long run?

Societal Change – 27%

Financial Independence – 20%

Sustainable as its still the start of a revolution – 8%

Involvement in Decision Making – 7%

Increased opportunities as the outlook has changed – 5%

- The sustainability of this change rests on the fact that marketers now look at women as a potential segment which will facilitate growth; thereby making it important to tap the potential of this segment which is now experiencing independence on the financial as well as decision making front.
- This realization by the marketers will drive this change that is currently being witnessed in advertising.

Advertising where women have been portrayed positively (Spontaneous)



AIRTEL - WIFE BOSS AD (29%)

"Best example of today's woman as multi-tasker. She manages both work and home front with ease. At office she is shown as a tough boss but at home she wears the hat of a loving and caring wife".

"Refreshing portrayal on the backdrop of a feudalistic society"

"The advertisement showcases women on equal footing"

"Women are shown as being in charge"

"Breaking away from stereotypes. Concept of remarriage of a girl in a traditional way in the presence of family members is the refreshing change"



TANISHQ - REMARRIAGE AD (22%)

"Women having a dark complexion with a girl child getting remarried"

"Women have come of age and men are accepting and supportive of their stance"

"Getting widowed/divorced is not the end of life. The women can start her life afresh on her own terms"

"Empowered women of today. Deciding about the life on her own terms and not succumbing to the age old regressive beliefs"



BOURNVITA - MOTHER TRAINING HER KID (13%)

"Presentation of women as tough mother who believes in the betterment of the child. The line between father and mother is getting blurred as the women of today are no more identified as emotional beings but capable of taking independent and tough decisions"

"Being by her child even at the time of failure and not allowing the child to lose confidence in the face of adversity portrays the strong personality of today's mother"

"Girl child shown as practicing boxing which reflects a change in the mindset of the society towards girl child. A girl child is no more restricted to certain fields"

Advertising where women have been portrayed positively (Aided)

Tanishq Ad (87%)



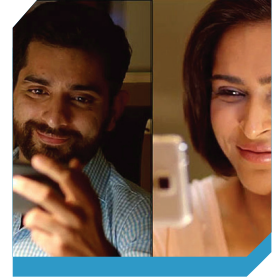
- Bringing the idea of re-marriage to the fore-front
- Captures the aspirations of women
- Incorporating sensitive issues in advertising
- Women living on her own terms

Havells Ad (76%)



- Humorous take on the situation in Indian families and the voices of women calling for change
- Shows women voicing their opinions against the expectations from men in an aggressive manner

Airtel Ad (70%)



- Women is the boss at work but comes back to cook; portrays the man to be the boss at home no matter what
- Women is capable of balancing a successful career alongside that of a homemaker

Bournvita Ad (68%)



- Mother's today are strong, confident individuals with a thought process of their own
- Breaks away from the stereotypical portrayal of mothers

Bharat Matrimony Ad (63%)



- Highlights the importance of men changing their outlook towards women and embracing the women's right to follow her dreams

Nirma Ad (60%)



- Portrays women to be strong, confident and determined individuals
- Women are capable of being the drivers of social change and taking matters in their own hands to do so

We would like to **thank** all those
who have **contributed** and
shared their valuable opinions by
participating in the survey





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