

Visual and language attributes portraying gender stereotypes in advertisements: A cross-sectional study in seven Asian countries

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore gender stereotypes in advertisements, in seven Asian countries- India, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, China, Philippines and South Korea.

Design/methodology/approach: A total of 243 candidates voluntarily participated in an online survey, consisting of MCQs on visual and language attributes including color, objects, professions, adjectives; and an open-ended question to analyze the language usage and overall observation on gender stereotypes in advertisements. The participants used their reflective memory to answer the survey.

Findings: The data analyzed statistically showed that overall color *Pink* continues to be strongly associated with females, whereas strong male association was observed with color blue, electronic item (car), activity (boxing) and profession (engineer). Colors of (black and white), objects (watch and perfume), medicine, toothpaste; activities (investments, cooking) and profession (clerk) are associated as being 'Gender neutral'. Regarding language usage, the adjectives '*emotional and soft*' were found to be associated with females; '*powerful and tough*' with males and '*knowledgeable, attractive, perfect, industrious, independent, and ambitious*' were reported to be gender neutral.

Research limitations/implications: The study had limitations as respondents were given limited response choices in MCQs. Also, the majority of respondents were students from an International School in Indonesia which may have led to bias in results.

Practical implications: The findings suggest that advertisers need to have a mindful approach while designing the visual elements to reduce gender stereotyping in advertisements.

Originality/value: Analysis of multiple Asian countries' perspectives as observed by respondents from different countries on usage of visual elements is a key contribution on gender stereotyping.

Keywords: Gender stereotypes, Asian countries, visual elements, semiotics, mold theory, advertisements.

Introduction

Gender stereotypes prevalent in families, workplaces and societies have brought significant disparity in how people associate certain colours, professions, objects and adjectives with males, females or as gender neutral. Advertisements, being the mirror of society, reflect people's expectation of how others should "look or behave or be associated with" as per their gender. Some advertisements are also reported to have a negative impact on the behaviour of people and perpetuates gender inequality (shEqual, 2021). Association of given attributes with particular gender/s in advertising or media campaigns have been observed to strengthen these stereotypes, limiting the capacity of women and men to develop their personal or professional skills which also impacts the perception of men and women differently (Sandhu, 2018).

An onset of second wave feminism in the 1960s paved equal opportunities for men and women and initiated a gradual change in the gender roles in occupational opportunities and domestic roles (Plakoyiannaki & Zotos, 2009; Zotos & Tsichla, 2014). However, the changes are minor. According to (Uray & Burnaz, 2003) women are mostly associated with more family-oriented roles and are mostly portrayed as domestic, submissive and sexualized contexts and in fewer than professional roles while men are depicted as independent, sovereign and professionals (Reichert & Carpenter, 2004), powerful and active professionals (Purplegirl, 2021). This is due to the media's influence in shaping people's view of society (Zotos & Tsichla, 2014) and interpretations they make from the visual data that they consume from various media such as advertisements, magazines, television, pictures, and videos (Bell & Davison, 2012). Moreover, the increased consumption of visual data due to the pandemic (Bao et al., 2020) as well as their stronger influences on consumers over time, the negative impacts of the stereotyping present in advertisements pose a serious issue globally (Tan et al., 2002).

Advertisements often portray common patterns in their depictions of objects, people, or identities, which are called representational conventions. These conventions work with perceptual clues of relative size, colour, and shape to develop consumer cognition and act as essential elements that businesses must consider while creating their advertisements. However, marketing communication research in the past has not studied the impact of visual elements in advertising to a great extent (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2007). Moreover, the language used in advertisements communicates certain ideals to the audience which may reinforce dominant ideologies of gender through the use of semiotics, diction choices, discourse, and connotations, which also impacts consumer cognition of the product as well as gender constructs (Moon, 1999). Through the constant representation of the association between certain words and gender, advertisements can create stereotypical connotations of those words to be associated with a particular gender, hence strengthening gender constructs prominent in society, especially in Asian society, which has its own dominant discourses on gender and power (Zulaikha, 2017;

Das, 2011). Hence both visual elements, as well as language use, play a role in influencing consumer behaviour through stereotypical representations in advertisements.

These representations can cause harm, especially towards children's development and female's mental health and body image (Tabassum & Nayak, 2021), which tend to limit women's opportunities and potential through the stereotypical depictions of ideal women, which women attempt to imitate to be accepted by society (Borgerson & Schroeder, 2007; Nam et al., 2011). However, studies have found that stereotyping also affects males and other genders where representation in the media creates expectations for their behaviours and choices. (Shamim et al., 2021; Sharma, 2021)

There is a perception that gender role stereotyping occurs more frequently in Asian commercials than in Western ones as reported by (Tan et al., 2002; Furnham et al., 2000). Likewise, (Napp, 2023) found that countries which are economically developed and practice gender equality along several dimensions, also have stronger gender stereotypes. Napp further highlighted the "gender equality paradox" which leads to gender imbalances in different spheres of society that are paradoxically stronger in more developed countries. Previous studies show significantly different results from more recent studies, creating the need for more recent studies to reflect modern times. In modern times, there has been a change in the media campaigns and portrayals of women.

Recent studies show that gender-role stereotyping seems to be declining (Taneja, 2016; Shamim & Hassim, 2021; Pongsapitaksanti, 2021), especially in Western culture (Furnham et al., 2000), but there are still several issues in the portrayal of gender roles in advertisements which are yet to be eliminated (Tan et al., 2002). It was observed that the previous studies done by (Das, 2011; Taneja, 2016; Tan et al., 2002; Furnham et al., 2000; Nam et al., 2011; Prieler et al., 2015) have adopted a coding method. The participants were given questionnaires to fill out after viewing a recording of TV advertisements or selected advertisements from magazines.

Literature survey revealed that the majority of gender stereotyping research has been limited to two or three nationalities (Furnham et al., 2000). Fewer researchers used traditional binary (male and female) gender and some of them focused on Indian television advertisements (Das, 2011), while some focused on television advertisements in Hong Kong and Indonesia (Furnham et al., 2000); advertisements and its effects on cross-gender effects (Åkestam et al., 2021). The previous studies were done under a conditioned setting such as specific advertisements where participants were asked to fill in their responses. Authors were keen to observe the reflexive responses of respondents from different countries on the overall portrayal of gender and their association of different colours, professions, adjectives and use of language in advertising campaigns in their respective countries.

A survey was done to explore the reflexive responses of the participants of India, Singapore, Indonesia, China, Japan and Philippines and South Korea; with the freedom to use any of the advertisements that the participants remember or observed. The purpose of this study is to analyse how visual elements and language in advertising campaigns influence gender stereotyping in various Asian societies through these representations.

Literature Review

Gender stereotypes are culturally dependent and keep evolving over time. Responses to gender stereotypes in advertising vary across different cultures and time periods (Eisend, 2010, 2019). A number of studies were done by various scholars on gender stereotypes in advertisements. For example, according to Furnham et al., (2000) "*An Asian Perspective on the Portrayal of Men and Women in Television Advertisements: Studies from Hong Kong and Indonesian Television*" showed that gender role stereotypes are comparably stronger in Southeast Asia as

compared to Europe where females are depicted more in body-product advertisements and males were more likely to be interviewers. Similar study on “*Gender Role Portrayals in Indian Television*” conducted by (Das, 2011) showed that there is a regressive portrayal of women in advertising with many incidences of objectifying and sexualizing women. There are stereotypical differences in the type of credibility used by men and women, and the nature of the products they advertised, reflecting the glaring gender inequalities existing within Indian society. Female central characters tended to be younger than their male counterparts and were more likely to be portrayed as passive and unassertive.

Cross-gender effects of gender stereotypes in advertising showed that advertising portrayals of women and men have a negative influence on others, leading to higher levels of ad reactance, which has a negative impact on brand related effects across model and participant gender (Åkestam et al., 2021). Similarly (Bui, 2021) research on “*Gender language in modern advertising*” proved that there are differences in language among advertisements of similar products for male and female consumers. There are other significant studies in the context of gender stereotyping in the chosen countries which have been highlighted in Table 1. From the previous research on gender stereotypes in the advertisements, it is evident that the participants are either from one focused country: China (Gan, 2020) or two countries: Hong Kong and Indonesia (Furnham et al., 2000) or East Asian countries (Prieler et al., 2015). Based on the author’s literature review, none of the research has been conducted to explore the combined response of selected Asian countries. In addition, the methodology adopted by the researchers was mostly in a conditional environment such as the participants were given a particular advertisement / advertisement from a particular country etc. While some research is done using advertisements in specific media: Media such as magazines, television (Furnham et al., 2000; Tan et al., 2002; Das, 2011; Prieler & Centeno, 2013; Gan, 2020), the given study focuses on responses related with gender stereotyping from a general array of advertisement campaigns in Asian countries.

Table 1: Gender Stereotyping in Advertising in East and Southeast Asian Countries since 2013

Study Title & Author(s)	Main Findings
Gender representations in Philippine Television Advertisements - (Prieler and Centeno, 2013)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High prevalence of gender stereotypes in Philippine television advertisements. - More males were shown at a workplace and females at home; females were more often suggestively dressed; more male voice overs; product categories based on gender. - Religion may have an impact on determining traditional gender roles, presence of Christianity in the Philippines. - Strong gender divisions in society, exaggerated by advertisements. - Television favors a patriarchal society. - Constant repetition of gender stereotypes in advertisements normalizes them.

Gender representations in East Asian advertising: Hong Kong, Japan, and South Korea - (Prieler et al., 2015)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender stereotypes in Hong Kong, Japan and South Korea due to a common cultural background in Confucianism. - Females are depicted as younger, wear less clothing, and are more frequent in advertisements for cosmetics/toiletries. - More males are shown at a workplace while more females are shown at home.
Female Image in Chinese TV Advertisement from the Perspective of Gender Theory - (Gan, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There has been a breakthrough in female images in TV advertisements with the improvement of women's social status. - Advertisements still promote the stereotype that successful women are responsible for housework to satisfy men.
The Changing Roles in Advertising: Past, Present, and Future - (Tsichla, 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women in advertisements were likely to be depicted in domestic roles and were excluded from professional settings. - Some progress has been made to change male and female depictions and include LGBTQ+ communities - Stereotyping is becoming subtler but still present.

Methods

1.1 Participants

A total of 243 candidates (145 Females, 98 Males) voluntarily participated in the study by answering an online google survey form. Majority of the respondents were High School Students from BINUS School Simprug, Jakarta, Indonesia- from grades 9-12. The respondents selected were in the age category of 14 years onwards, belonging to Asian countries of Indonesia, Singapore, India, China, Japan, South Korea, and the Philippines. The authors selected these seven Asian countries as most of the participants who responded to the survey were from these nationalities. Overall, there were 42 Singaporeans, 50 Indians, 45 Indonesians, 25 Chinese, 29 South Koreans, 24 Japanese and 28 Filipinos respondents who completed the survey. The participants of the age group ranged from 14 to 40+ years. This vast age bracket was selected to gather the views of both the older and younger generations.

1.2 Procedure

The study adopted a different method to identify the gender stereotypes in advertisements among the participants of Asian countries. The survey questionnaire was created to identify the frequent association of gender stereotypes in visual elements such as colours, objects and professions and the use of language applied in several campaign advertisements.

The survey consists of 9 questions: which comprised questions on demography (name, age, gender and nationality) and 4 multiple choice questions, in which participants were asked to choose the most suitable gender (male, female, gender neutral) that they can associate with selected colours, objects, adjectives and profession and one open-ended question regarding

their overall observation on gender stereotypes in advertisements, they have watched in their respective countries. The participants were not given any specific advertisements and were asked to use their reflective memory to answer the survey questionnaire. The authors have created the survey questionnaire by identifying the frequent use of visual elements such as colours, objects and professions and the use of language applied in several campaign advertisements, in particular the advertisements that are associated with gender stereotypes in South East Asian countries. These countries (India, Indonesia, Japan, South Korea, China, Philippines and Singapore) were specifically selected because the majority of the participants were the students from one school, BINUS school, Indonesia and the other participants were friends and families of the students of Binus. Moreover, the majority of the participants were all born and brought up in Indonesia which may have led to biases in the results.

The variables used in the study are as follows: The colours associated with gender : Pink, blue, black, white and multicolour. The professions associated with gender: clerk, flight attendant, engineer, teaching, banking, lawyer and artists. Activities associated with gender: shopping, cooking and boxing. Adjectives associated with gender: powerful, ambitious, emotional, soft, independent, industrious, tough, perfect, attractive and knowledgeable. The authors in this study adopted the colours, profession and adjectives from the most recent research done by Sidhu et al., (2021), Abigail Frisoli (2019), Mallika Das (2011) and Nam et al., (2011) that are related to gender stereotypes. Moreover Pink is commonly associated with females and blue with males. The author wished to see if there are any changes to the association of colours with gender. The distinction for the individual variables of each category were: female, male, gender Neutral (both) and transgender. The authors have used gender neutral because only fewer researchers used binary gender and the authors wished to find out if adding this gender neutral will make any difference. The study performed qualitative analysis to examine the gender stereotypes in Asian advertisements.

1.3 Data Collection

The authors have created an online survey questionnaire that was prepared through Google Forms and shared with people of seven nationalities: India, China, Singapore, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. The online survey questions consisted of demographic variables and the participants had the chance to choose the gender they associate with common visual elements such as colour, activities/professions, objects - and adjectives, as well as a subjective question was asked where the participants had the chance to express their opinions based on their experience on gender stereotypes. The researcher took approximately one month to collect the data, starting from 10th July 2023 to 11 August 2023.

1.4 Data Analysis

Data was categorized by nationality, age and gender of participants. The collected data was further categorized into two sections namely (1) visual elements: the use of colours, adjectives, objects and activities/professions (2) the use of language. The distinction for the individual variables of each category were: female, male, and gender neutral (both) and transgender. Transgender option was given only for the colours, as professions, activities and adjectives (irrespective of sexuality) are categorized as masculine, feminine and gender neutral.

Findings

Survey responses to the association of gender stereotypes in visual elements such as colours are presented in Table-2, and to those with the adjectives, objects and professions are presented

in Table 3. The total number of responses that associated each visual element to a particular gender from all seven nationality was combined and listed in the tables 2 and 3 below:

Table 2: Color association with a particular gender

	Female	%	Male	%	Gender Neutral	%	Transgender	%
Pink	193	79.42	4	1.65	45	18.52	1	0.41
Black	7	2.88	68	27.98	164	67.49	4	1.65
Blue	6	2.47	120	49.38	114	46.91	3	1.23
White	18	7.41	15	6.17	206	84.77	4	1.65
Multi-color/rainbow	42	17.28	4	1.65	103	42.39	94	38.68

Table 3: Gender association with particular adjectives, activities/professions and objects

		Female	%	Male	%	Gender Neutral	%
Adjectives	Powerful	19	7.82	119	48.97	105	43.21
	Perfect	53	21.81	24	9.88	166	68.31
	Emotional	136	55.97	8	3.29	99	40.74
	Soft	164	67.49	6	2.47	73	30.04
	Industrious	22	9.05	84	34.57	137	56.38
	Knowledgeable	30	12.35	25	10.29	188	77.37
	Attractive	85	34.98	9	3.7	149	61.32
	Tough	23	9.47	118	48.56	102	41.98
	Ambitious	28	11.52	60	24.69	155	63.79

	Independent	38	15.64	38	15.64	167	68.72
Activities/ Professions	Shopping	155	63.79	3	1.23	85	34.98
	Flight Attendant	144	59.26	17	7	82	33.74
	Boxing	6	2.47	169	69.55	68	27.98
	Clerks	58	23.87	33	13.58	152	62.55
	Engineer	5	2.06	130	53.5	108	44.44
	Lawyer	21	8.64	59	24.28	163	67.08
	Cooking	77	31.69	20	8.23	146	60.08
	Artist	43	17.7	12	4.94	188	77.37
	Banking	38	15.64	47	19.34	158	65.02
	Teaching	81	33.33	6	2.47	156	64.2
Objects	Shampoo	87	35.8	3	1.23	153	62.96
	Jewelry	189	77.78	3	1.23	51	20.99
	Cars	6	2.47	155	63.79	82	33.74
	Sewing Machine	169	69.55	8	3.29	66	27.16
	Watches	9	3.7	83	34.16	151	62.14
	Perfume	95	39.09	4	1.65	144	59.26
	Investments	7	2.88	77	31.69	159	65.43
	Medicine	21	8.64	12	4.94	210	86.42
	Mobile Phones	8	3.29	19	7.82	216	88.89
	Toothpaste	16	6.58	8	3.29	219	90.12

Discussion and Conclusion

This section addresses the answer to the research question: How do visual elements and language use in advertising influence gender stereotyping in Southeast Asian society? It is answered under two sections: (I) Visual elements and (II) the use of language.

I. Visual elements

The visual elements are grouped into three categories. They are (a) colours; (b) objects and (c) activities and professions. The colours utilized in this study are pink, blue, black, and white. For the second section, the objects are grouped according to the usage (i) objects connected to beauty products (ii) personal care products (iii) investments and (iv) electronics and tools. The third section is about the adjectives associated with activities and profession.

1. a. Colours associated with Gender

Generally, the colour pink and white are associated with girls, while blue and black symbolize confidence, power, authority and most parents stereotypically expect their young sons to possess these attributes (Frisoli, 2019). The findings are identical to that of (Frisoli, 2019). Out of 243 Asian participants, an overwhelming majority of 79.4% have associated pink with females while surprisingly only 1.6 % of participants have associated pink with males. It was interesting to note that the Japanese responses had the strongest association, with 91.7% agreeing with associating pink as feminine, while the Philippines showed the least association with 64.3%. This could be because Southeast-Asian countries with Confucian backgrounds like Japan and Korea tend to have more patriarchal mindsets from an early age (Furnham et al., 2000; Prieler et al., 2015; Nam et al., 2011).

The results for the colours blue and black had varying responses. Overall, a majority of 49.4% affiliated blue as masculine. The strongest association of blue with males was shown by the Japanese (62.5%), while the least association was made by China (52%). The results support the view of Frisoli (2019) that blue and black often symbolize power and authority of the male society (Frisoli, 2019). The participants from Indonesia and Singapore showed no association of the colour black with females. In summary, findings of the present study show that black is affiliated with males; pink for women as it allows them to meet stereotypical beauty standards which is in accordance with the findings reported by (Nam et. al., 2011).

White is majorly associated with gender neutral, with a majority of 84.8% of overall responses. The strongest association of white with gender neutral was made by Indonesians (97.8%) while the least association was made by Chinese (56%). Multi-colour or rainbow was mostly associated with gender neutral, with 42.4% majority; however it was closely followed by transgender (38.7%). According to (Wolowic et al., 2017), LGBTQ+ communities have positive connotations with the rainbow; hence they have a strong association with the rainbow, supporting the results.

In summary, the colour association with gender is proven that there is a minor shift to the view of (Frassanito & Pettorini, 2008) “*Think Pink is the marketing slogan to convince women to embrace their femininity*” as the obtained results show a changing association of pink with gender neutral and males.

1.b. Objects associated with gender

Advertisements have a great role in influencing society and change one’s perception towards gender roles. Women are consistently associated with beauty and household and cleaning products (Furnham & Paltzer, 2010; Matthes et al., 2016; Tan et al., 2002), whereas men are often portrayed to promote cars, products of telecommunications, electronics, technology, and

computers (Ganahl et al., 2003; Matthes et al., 2016; Royo-Vela et al., 2008; Tan et al., 2002). This study analysed the relevance of the claims made.

The collected data were categorized according to the purpose of the products. They are (i) Beauty products (ii) Personal care products like medicine, shampoo and toothpaste (iii) Investments (iv) Electronics and tools.

1.b.1. Beauty products

This section analysed the beauty products: jewelry, perfume, and watches. The results showed that jewelry and perfume have strong feminine associations and perfume and watches (except for China and Korea - Males) are gender neutral. However, watches showed slightly stronger association with men than women. In general, a majority of 77.8% of responses linked jewelry with femininity. Of these, Singaporeans (95.2%) showed strongest association with women and Indonesians showed least association (26.7%). Perfume is majorly affiliated with gender neutrality, with 59.3% of overall responses. Most countries majorly associated perfume as gender neutral, and Filipino made the strongest association (78.6%). However, Chinese, and Singaporean responses majorly affiliated perfume as feminine, with 52% and 73.8% of responses respectively. This result is in accordance with Neto & Pinto's (1998) findings where women are depicted as product users while men are frequently portrayed as the authorities of products.

1.b. 2. Personal care products

This section analyses personal care products: medicine, shampoo, and toothpaste. The results showed that shampoo, medicine, and toothpaste are associated with gender neutral. Shampoo is affiliated as gender neutral (63%). It is noted that shampoo had the least < 5% associated with males. Medicine, on the other hand, is seen as gender neutral by a majority of 86.4% of overall responses, with the strongest association made by Filipino (92.9%) to gender neutral. Toothpaste is also associated with gender neutral, with a majority of 90.1% of overall responses. However, most countries affiliated medicine with femininity more than masculinity, except for China (24%) and Singapore (7.1%), where medicine is linked as masculine than feminine; Indonesia, Japan and the Philippines showed null response for masculine. Therefore, while all three personal care products are associated as gender neutral, there is a significant association between personal care products and femininity.

1.b.3 Investments

In general, investments are linked to males rather than females as women are considered a minority within entrepreneurial settings (Brooks et al., 2014). In addition, with male ventures dominating, it makes it increasingly harder for women to attain similar exposure, respect, and opportunities (Brooks et al., 2014). The results show that most responses associate investments with gender neutral (65.4%) while 31.7% of responses categorized it as masculine. It is significant to highlight that Singaporeans and Indians opted for strong male association with investments. In summary, while the results show that investments are linked with gender neutrality, there is a strong masculine association present in Singapore and India, supporting the findings of (Shamim et al., 2021; Furnham et al., 2000).

1.b.4. Electronics and tools

The electronics and tools analysed in this section are mobile phones, cars and sewing machines. The results showed that cars have a strong association with masculinity, while sewing machines have a strong link with femininity. Overall, 63.8% of responses associated cars as masculine, of which South Koreans showed the strongest association (75.9%) and least by Indonesians

(48.9%). Some nationalities Singapore, Philippines and China showed null response to the affiliation of cars with females. Sewing machines have a strong feminine affiliation (69.5%) with the highest being in the case of Singaporeans (85.7%). It is interesting to note that Singaporeans, Indians, Indonesians, and Filipinos have not associated sewing machines with males. The sewing machine illustrates the very constructedness and fragility of modern feminine gender identity and gender-based boundaries of public and private sphere in modernity (Friedrichs, 2018). On the other hand, the object mobile phones had the strongest link to gender neutral with Filipinos showing 100%, Indonesia 93.3% and India 92% agreement and Chinese 69.2%. In comparison with males and females, male associations with mobile phones are significantly higher than females. These findings are similar to the results of (Shamim et al., 2021; Tan et al., 2002; Bui, 2021) that men are strongly akin to cars and technology.

1.c Activities and Professions associated with gender stereotypes

This section analyses the activities and professions with respect to their gender portrayal in advertisements.

1.c.1 Activities

The activities analysed in this section are shopping, cooking, and boxing. The overall results show that shopping (63.8%) is associated with femininity; the highest being recorded in respondents from South Korea (82.8%). On the other hand, boxing (69.5%) is linked to masculinity and cooking (60.1%) to gender neutral. From the results, it is evident that there is a minor shift in the gender role where cooking is associated with gender neutral (60.1%). According to (Holm et al., 2015) men's cooking has increased, and women's has decreased over time. However, associating cooking with females is still strong in India (42%). This could be because these countries view cooking as threatening to man's masculinity (Fürst, 1997) and a source of power for women, due to its nutritional and symbolic importance (Counihan, 2018). According to (Ekström, 1990) men do "cooking" as a part of their profession; when men do the cooking, it is mainly public cooking; the food of money and prestige (Ekström, 1990). In addition, the phrase "Child Care" stereotypes females, as it connotes "women's work" whereas men avoid such tasks as they "experience conflict and dissonance in a women-dominated setting" (Murray, 1996) In addition, women are often portrayed in home settings, while men are often shown in occupational roles (Tan et al., 2002) in these countries.

1.c.2 Professions

The professions analysed in this section are: clerk, flight attendant, engineer, teaching, banking, lawyer, and artist. The overall results show that the clerical Profession was viewed as gender neutral by 62.6% respondents, of which India made the strongest association with clerks as gender neutral by a majority of 76% respondents, Indonesians made the next close association with 73.3% and the least association was made by Singaporeans (47.6%). The overall response for flight attendants is connected to females with 59.3%, with the strongest association made by Singaporeans (71.4%). A majority of respondents (53.5%) associate engineers with males, but this value is closely followed by 44.4% gender neutral of which, Indian respondents made the highest association (68%) and the least association was made by Korean respondents (6.9%). On the contrary, teaching was associated with gender neutral (64.2%). It is interesting to note that some countries (South Korea, Philippines, Indonesia, India, and Singapore) showed null (0%) response in associating teaching to males. Henceforth in the remaining text for presenting the results, the word F is associated with Females and M is associated with Males. Additionally, feminine-associated responses are greater than masculine-associated responses

across every nationality (Chinese F (40%), M (12%); Singaporeans F (40.5%), M (0%); Indians F (46%) M (0%); Indonesians F (15.6%) M (0%)). The profession of banking is overall associated with gender neutral (65 %). However, the male associated responses are higher than the female associated responses for the countries like Singapore (23.8%), China (32%), India (16%) and Japan (33.3%). The profession of lawyers is also associated with gender neutral (67.1%) across all nationalities, where the strongest association is made by Indonesians (71.1%) for gender neutral and the least association was made by China (44%). Artists are associated with gender neutral (77.4%) by all nationalities. However, there is a significant connection to females where feminine-associated responses are greater than masculine-associated responses across every nationality (Singapore F (16.7%) M (7.1%); Indians F (14%) M (2%); Philippines F (10.7%) M (3.6%); Koreans F (31.03%) M (6.9%); Japan F (20.8%) M (4.2%); China F (32%) M (16%)). In summary, the study found varying results for the category mentioned above. Generally they are associated with gender neutral (Artists, lawyers, teaching, clerk and banking) with some exceptions where it showed stronger association with either males (engineer) or females (flight attendants).

2. Adjectives used in the advertisements

The adjectives used for analysis are: powerful, ambitious, emotional, soft, independent, industrious, tough, perfect, attractive and knowledgeable. The results showed that the adjective 'Powerful' is strongly associated with Males (49%) however there is a close association shown for gender neutral (43.2%). The word 'perfect' and 'knowledgeable' are generally associated with gender neutral (68.3%; 77.4%) respectively. However, for 'perfect' female associated responses are higher than male associated responses except for China as male associated responses (32%) are stronger than female associated responses (28%). Similarly, for 'knowledgeable' female associated responses are higher than male associated responses except for Singapore (M (11.9%), F (7.1%)) and China (M (28%) F (16%)). It is worth highlighting that Indonesia has null response for males association. 'Soft' is strongly associated with females (67.5%) by all countries. It is interesting to note that Singapore, India, and Japan haven't associated 'soft' with males while other countries expressed less association to males (< 5%). The word 'Industrious' is associated with gender neutral (56.4%) except for South Korea (55.2%) and China (44%), who associated the adjective with masculinity. Similarly, 'ambitious' is associated with gender neutral (63.8%); however male associated responses are higher than female associated responses especially for countries like Japan (M (41.7%), F (12.5%)), Singapore (M (33.3%), F (0%)), South Korea (M (34.5%) F (10.3%)) and China (M (40%) F (16%)). In contrast India has female associated responses more than male associated responses (F (20%) M (16%)). It is significant to highlight that 'ambitious' showed null response by Singaporeans. The adjective 'independent' was associated with gender neutral (68.7%). Most of the countries had shown greater association with males than females except for Singapore (F (11.9%), M (9.5%)), Indonesia (F (15.6%), M (4.4%)) and Philippines (F (28.6%), M (10.7%)).

The adjective 'attractive' is strongly associated with gender neutral (57.2%). China (F (28%) M (24%)), Indonesia (F (17.8%), M (2.2%)) and Japan (F (29.2%), M (4.2%)) had higher female association than male association while Singapore, South Korea and Philippines had null male association. It is significant to note that India showed stronger association with females (F (52%) M (2%)). The adjective 'Tough' is highly associated with male in South Korea (82.8%) Singapore (54.8%), Japan (50%) Philippines (53.6%) and China (44%). However it had a closer association with gender neutral (42%) in particular India (46%) and Indonesia (66.7%). The adjective 'emotional' had the contrasting result of 'attractive' and 'Tough'. It is strongly associated with females (56%). It is significant to note that Indonesia has gender neutral

(62.2%) responses that are higher than feminine responses; India and South Korea had null connections with male; and the other countries are <10% for male association.

In summary, the adjectives 'emotional' (56%) and 'soft' (67.5%) had strong association with females except for Indonesians as they associated it to gender neutral (62.2%). 'Powerful' and 'tough' are strongly associated with males (49%; 48.3%) respectively; however there is a close association with gender neutral (powerful 43.2%; tough 42%). The adjectives associated with gender neutral are knowledgeable, attractive, perfect, industrious (except for China and South Korea - males), ambitious, and independent; however they have a close association either with females or males: 'knowledgeable, attractive and perfect' with females, and 'independent and ambitious' with males.

C Language use

This section analysed the use of language in the responses. The participants answered the question, "Have you ever experienced stereotyping in your country's advertisement campaigns? If yes, can you briefly describe the advertisement?" The use of semiotics (connotative and denotative meanings): (i) semiotics stereotypes for females and (ii) semiotic stereotypes for males, mold theory, diction choices, and connotations related to gender stereotypes in the advertisements are identified.

C.1 Semiotics

The semiotic analysis of advertising assumes that the meanings are designed by their creators to shape and lend significance to reality. In this study, semiotics are anything that carries meaning to us in advertisements. So, linguistic signs (words) act as a sign adding to create meaning in the social context (Jha et al., 2017). These signs can denote something, an object or people that they represent, or they can carry connotations, meanings that have social and cultural relevance. The responses from the participants show significant semiotics stereotypes for males and females. Therefore, this section is analysed under two subtopics (i) Semiotic stereotypes for females and (ii) semiotic stereotypes for males.

C.1.a Semiotic stereotypes of females

In the responses given by the participants it is proven that working mothers, wives still do most of the housework and childcare, especially cooking (Coltrane & Adams, 1997; Okimoto & Heilman, 2012). Although the advertisements claim that there is an increase in the sharing of household work, women still do most of the domestic work even though they also have careers (Setiasih, 2005). It is evident in the responses given by the participants. Many responses included semantics like "cooking", "childcare", "home care" and "washing powder". These signs connote home based activities typically performed by a woman (Vestre, 2007). The term "cooking" connotes females as men do not "cook" as this kind of activity "would threaten a man's masculinity" (Fürst, 1997). Moreover, the society and culture they live in demands women to adopt the role of a family-caregiver (Papastavrou et al., 2010). The participants have associated the term "Washing Powder" to females as "women's principal task is doing the washing". Moreover, according to (Hal, 2021) women must learn how to do the laundry if they seek marriage. It is interesting to note that the participants have connoted "shopping", "plastic surgery", "emotional" and "jewelry" to females. This is due to the repeated concepts that are used in the media, especially in advertisements. "Shopping" is associated with females as women view "shopping as a leisure activity and an opportunity to socialize" (Dennis et al., 2018). While "plastic surgery" is associated with females as they were "taught to look good and disguise their real or imagined defects" and "men are taught to deal with little defects" (Dull & West, 1991) which makes them care less about the way they look. "Emotional" is often

connotated with females as “women are being emotional and do actions involving physiological and psychological behaviour”(Aryani, 2013). The object ‘jewelry’ is often connotated with females as women are often depicted as decorative objects (Revathy and Hemmige, 2022) and “women use their first form of property to seduce and to please others with their beauty, chiefly men but also other women” (Russell, 2010).

C.1.b Semiotic stereotypes of males

This section discusses the prevalence of semiotic stereotypes in advertising. It appears that many people still hold on to these stereotypes, according to survey responses from India, Korea, and Singapore. Specifically, ads for cars and other vehicles are often marketed towards men because men are seen as the primary consumers of these products. Liu (2022) has also found that men tend to dominate the role of the breadwinner in families, leading to a consumer base that is predominantly male. Meanwhile, women are often portrayed as overly cautious drivers who cause more accidents than their male counterparts. Interestingly, a recent study by Liu (2022) found that in addition to cars and vehicles, alcohol and police are also commonly associated with male gender roles. This is likely due to societal norms that equate drinking and law enforcement with masculinity (Hunt & Antin, 2019). Overall, certain words and themes like "cars", "vehicle", "alcohol" and "police" seem to be strongly associated with male stereotypes in advertising.

C.2 Mold Theory and its impact in Asian Countries

Advertising molds and impacts the values of its target audience (Pollay 1986, 1987) as they are a reflection of society and depict cultural values (Manstead & McCulloch, 1981). The results of the study affirm the view of (Pollay, 1986, 1987; Manstead & McCulloch, 1981). Their responses include the stereotypes of the gender roles and representation of men and women in the society as reflected in advertisements. According to the Indonesian, Indian, Singaporean, and Japanese respondents stated that they experienced gender stereotyping in advertisements. Their responses are given below:

- *Advertisements in Indonesia often depict women as housewives or caregivers, while men are portrayed as authoritative figures. (Indonesian)*
- *When it comes to babies' items in advertisements, only mothers are involved. Same for cooking, washing, cleaning etc. (Singaporean)*
- *Women are projected as housewives whereas in advertising of premium watches men are projected (India)*
- *I think advertisements for plastic surgery use mostly female models. Also, that for gyms uses mostly male models. (Japan)*

It is interesting to note that the response came from varied age groups and different nationalities that gender stereotypes are seen in advertisements especially in Indonesia, India, Singapore, and Japan.

(ii) Male Stereotypes and the expectations in advertisements

Male stereotypes are prevalent in advertisements in general. A Korean participant from the 18-25 age group has stated, “*Korean men must have cars*” which supports the view of (Kim, 2016) that males are imagined as the drivers of the family-owned cars by young fathers. In addition, the expectation of the male gender in the society is stated by one of the Indian participants from the 25-40 age group that “only a male should earn to run a family” which affirms the view of

(Kim, 2016) that males should be the breadwinners of families. It is interesting to note that the expectations of male roles are ingrained in advertisements even in the contemporary world, especially in India. The Indian participants from varied age groups had their responses as follows:

- *There is stereotyping in advertisements with respect to men showing them as powerful, perfect, industrious, knowledgeable, independent, and ambitious. (40+)*
- *Male figure seems to have a certain amount of dominance over the female figure. (14-18)*

The above statements affirm that advertisements reflect and dictate society and the expectations placed on males in terms of their actions and possessions. Characteristics such as "men's expression of masculinity is closely linked to controlling women in their family and ensuring that women fulfill expected roles" (Sivakumar & Manimekalai, 2021) are highlighted. Additionally, from a sociocultural perspective, traditional masculine norms play a role as men are mostly associated with alcohol use (Goh et al., 2022). However, Indian participants from the 40+ age group have given controversial responses, affirming changes to gender stereotypes. Responses such as "changes are hard to accept" and "the perspective seems to have evolved over time" suggest that underlying changes are happening with respect to conventional gender stereotypes in India.

Theoretical Implications

To sum up, this study proved that visual elements in advertisements have an impact on gender stereotypes. The colour Pink is associated with females. On the other hand, the colour (blue), electronic item (car), activity (boxing) and profession (engineer) are associated with males. While the colours (black and white), objects (watch and perfume), medicine, toothpaste; activities (investments, cooking) and profession (clerk) are associated with gender neutrality. Transgender is hardly associated with visual elements and language use except for the association of multicolour. In terms of the second section "language use" the adjectives 'emotional and soft' are associated with females; 'powerful and tough' are associated with males and 'knowledgeable, attractive, perfect, industrious, independent, and ambitious' are associated with gender neutral.

Practical and Social Implications

The findings of this study indicate that advertising campaigns need to be created with a more mindful approach while incorporating the visual elements of language, professions, colours, and adjectives to actively challenge gender stereotypes existing in society (Yaghi, 2023).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The results are subject to limitations. Firstly, the majority of the participants were from one school, BINUS school, Indonesia which may have led to biases in the results. Secondly, there were some restrictions as participants were given limited choice of words associated with colours, objects, and professions. Thirdly, for multiple choice questions, option 'transgender' was given only for the colours, as professions, activities and adjectives (irrespective of sexuality) are categorized as masculine, feminine and gender neutral. Moreover, the study encompassed only seven Asian countries. Future researchers can cover a wide range of participants from more Asian countries for a broader outlook.

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