

# Advertisement As a Tool to Empower 'The Women': A Study in the Selected Areas of Kolkata

Sharmistha Acharyya<sup>1\*</sup>, Sweetly Sadhukhan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Economics, Balurghat College, West Bengal, India

<sup>2</sup>Department of Commerce, Kishore Bharati Bhagini Nivedita College, West Bengal, India

\*Corresponding Author's Email: [sharmisthaacharyya@gmail.com](mailto:sharmisthaacharyya@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

Deaths by dowry, gender inequality, child abuse, female infanticide, trafficking, sexual harassments, insecurity in workplace, the violence of killing the fetus, if it is detected as feminine gender and the constant violence inflicted on women make them a highlighted character in the society. With the passage of time, the violence against women increased highly. Social issues usually tend to create advertisement a vital role to play. Previously, advertising depicted a traditional picture of women who are simply a homemaker but in recent times the theme and concept of advertising is changed. Quite a few brands have been quick to plug in a 'women empowering theme' into their brand communication. In this era, advertising in through different forms play a significant role in order to protect and promote the status of women thereby getting them empowered. This paper will specially highlight the role of advertising in empowering women. A total of 300 respondents consisting of women have been selected from the area of Tallygunge, Behala, Joka, New Alipore, Thakurpukur and Sarsuna, (50 respondents from each area) of Kolkata and South 24 Pargana. Regression Model is used to show the impact of advertisement on woman empowerment. Regression result shows that Women with high age groups are less interested about advertisement. Working and educated women are much more interested to follow advertisement on woman theme. Independent women are more prone towards advertisement message.

**Keywords:** *Advertising; Empowering Women; Social Media*

## Introduction

The empowerment of women has emerged as an important issue in recent years. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once remarked, "When women move forward, the family moves, the village moves, and the nation moves." Empowering women is a "must" in India, where the main role of a woman is confined to the house as a homemaker.

According to the National Family Health Survey, 2020–21, India's sex ratio in 2022 will be 1020 females per 1000 males. So, women's society needs a huge push up by means of empowerment. Advertising is a communication channel through which news and other important messages are publicized and reach a number of audiences with the help of newspapers, radio, television, the internet etc. Nowadays, these are necessary for spreading awareness and decreasing gender discrimination. Advertising promotes ideas in different forms and helps increase women's self-expression and decision-making abilities.

Women's empowerment refers to the creation of an environment for women where they can make decisions on their own for their personal and social benefits. The term "empowerment of women" refers to the process of strengthening the hands of women who have been

suffering from various disabilities, humiliation, inequalities, and gender discrimination. Recent studies on women's empowerment give a straight view of women in their society.

'Women's empowerment involves the building up of a society and a political environment where women can breathe without the fear of oppression, exploitation, apprehension, discrimination, and the general feeling of persecution that goes with being a woman in a traditionally male-dominated structure' (Rani, 2021). 'Being a traditional society, women have been given a secondary status, which is reflected in the economic, social, and political spheres.' However, women's equality and empowerment have always remained a priority area and have been taken with the utmost care by stakeholders' (Singh & Singh, 2020). 'Empowerment is a multi-dimensional and dynamic social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Empowering girls and women are the key to economic growth, political stability, and social transformation' (Tembhre, 2018). 'Across the globe, gender disparities still exist with regard to equitable access to resources, participation in the decision-making process, and gender- and sexual-based violence. This is particularly true in fragile and conflict-affected settings, where women and girls are affected by both fragility and conflict in unique ways. While women have been acknowledged as key actors in peace processes and post-conflict reconstruction, evidence on the effectiveness of gender-specific and gender-transformative interventions to improve women's empowerment in fragile and conflict-affected states remains understudied' (Lwamba *et al.*, 2022). 'Empowerment is viewed as a means of creating a social environment in which one can make his or her own decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation' (Kushwah, 2020; Sharma & Singh, 2020). 'Women's ideas of empowerment must differ according to their culture, economic, and social controls, as well as donor-driven definitions. Both similar and distinct positive effects of participating in empowerment activities are felt, highlighting the importance of incorporating women's priorities when planning empowerment projects' (Völker & Doney 2021).

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objectives are to highlight the impact of advertising on empowering women in the age group and to shed light on the changing outlook of society towards women.

### **Methodology**

The present study is empirical and explanatory in nature. The study is based on both primary and secondary data. The primary data have been obtained by administering a structured questionnaire, and the secondary data have been sourced from the relevant books, e-journals, newspapers, and websites. For administering the questionnaire, the respondents have been selected through judgmental sampling. A total of 300 respondents consisting of women have been selected from the areas of Tallygunge, Behala, Joka, New Alipore, Thakurpukur, and Sarsuna (50 respondents from each area) of Kolkata and South 24 Pargana. The selection of these localities is made on the basis of judgmental sampling. The age range of the respondents in the selected sample ranges from 15 years to more than 45 years, which has been taken to get a clear view of the impact of feminism in the minds of the women in different age groups. The questionnaire has been distributed through personal contact and e-mail. After the collection of the responses from 300 filled-out questionnaires, the analysis has been done. A regression model is used to show the impact of advertisements on women's empowerment.

## Different form of Advertisement

The medium of advertisement includes two forms: traditional or conventional media and modern or new media. Traditional media is a one-way communication process and includes news channels, TV, radio, banners, newspapers, magazines, etc. New media is a two-way communication process that includes digitally driven tools like Facebook, Twitter, blogs, WhatsApp etc.

Advertisement is not only the promotion of goods and services; it also promotes an idea or a concept. Previously, advertisements depicted a traditional picture of women who are simply homemakers, but in recent times, the theme and concept of advertisements have changed. Quite a few brands have been quick to plug in a 'women-empowering theme' into their brand communication. In 2014, quite a few leading Bollywood actors and actresses leveraged the 'respect for women' theme on social media to gain massive support from their followers. A few examples of such female advertising are as follows:

- Tata Tea 'Jaago Re' Campaign
- Vivel by ITC 'AbSamjhautaNahi'
- Scooty pep+ 'why should boys have all the fun?'
- Dove 'Real Beauty' Campaign
- Titan Raga 'Women of Today'
- Nirma Ambulance
- Havell's Coffee Maker 'She is not a Kitchen Appliance'
- Stayfree 'Army'
- Stayfree's 'women for change' campaign
- Vatika Hair Oil
- Prestige Pressure Cooker 'Jo biwi se kaarepyaarwoh prestige kokaisekareinkaar'
- Pro- Ease Go Long 'SirfEkShart, Ke Koi ShartNahi'
- Airtel Boss
- Vogue Empower 'Start with the Boys'
- Nestle supported 'Nanhi Kali' for the girl child
- Mahindra Rise 'LadkiHaath Se NikalJaayegi' with Project Nanhi Kali
- Nihar Naturals 'Akai Aiksho Woman'
- Reliance Fresh 'JeeLeZara'
- Ariel Matic campaign 'Is laundry only a woman's job'
- Brooke Bond Red Level (shatter the stereotype concept-pink is for girl, blue is for boys)
- Tanishq celebrates the concept of the remarriage of a mother
- PC Chandra Jewellers in calcutta takes a provocation stance on women's day, stating 'let's uncelebrate women's day and celebrate women everyday instead'
- Joy cosmetics- focus on inner beauty and not with body size or type.

## Results and Discussion

**Table 1: Occupational Status of Respondent**

Occupation	Percentage
Housewife	35.08772
Service	56.14035
Others	8.77193

Source: Researchers' Own Calculation

Table 1 shows the occupational status of the respondent, and they can see that more or less 35% are housewives, 56% are service women, and 9% belong to other categories like students.

**Table 2: Time to Follow Advertisement**

Time to follow advertisement	Percentage
Always	1.754386
Often	35.08772
Sometimes	63.15789

Source: Researchers' Own Calculation

From Table 2, it can be said that approximately 2% of the total respondents always follow advertisements. 63% follow sometimes and 35% of respondents said that they often follow advertisements.

**Table 3: Impact of Advertisement on Woman Theme**

Impact	Percentage
Always	7.017544
Often	22.807022
Sometimes	63.15789
Not at all	7.017544

Source: Researchers' own calculation

Table number 3 shows the impact of advertising on women's themes in society. As they told earlier in the data methodology portion of the paper that the study is based on an opinion survey, about 63% of the respondents thought that advertisements on women's themes were effective sometimes. 22% opined that the impact of advertisements is very often felt in society. Interestingly, 7% of participants said that advertisements are ineffective, and another 7% thought that advertisements are always effective in society.

**Table 4: Age Wise Following Advertisement**

AGE	Follow Advertisement on woman theme (figures are in %)				Follow advertisement (figures are in %)	
	Always	sometimes	Often	not at all	Sometimes	Often
15-25		20	80		20	80
25-35	9.52	19.04	57.14	9.52	38.09	61.90
35-45	20	18	50	12	50	50
45 and above		11.05	39.47	49.03	47.61	42.85

Source: Researchers' own calculation

In the age group 15–25, 20% of respondents sometimes follow normal advertisements and advertisements on women's themes, and 80% often follow the same. Though 38% women follow normal advertisement in the age group 25-35, only 19% follow advertisement on woman theme. This low percentage is due to work pressure and family pressure. About 57% to 62% of women in this group often follow advertisements. About 49% of women never follow advertisements at an age above 45. From Table 4, it can be seen that as age increases, interest in advertisements on women's themes decreases. But age does not affect the preference of normal advertisements. Indian women are very prone towards their families. They prefer those things that the family members like. This common story of Indian women is reflected in the above table. 'Women in the age group 51 and above are most empowered, followed by women in the age group of 36–50 years. Women in the age group 20–35 years are least empowered as compared to other groups. (Menon & Sharma, 2020).

**Table 5: Educational Qualification Wise Following Advertisement**

Education	Follow Advertisement on woman theme (figures are in %)				Follow advertisement (figures are in %)	
	Always	sometimes	often	not at all	Sometimes	Often
undergraduate		30	20	50	30	70
graduate	10	40	40	10	40	60
masters	7.41	58.52	34.07		33.33	66.66

Source: Researchers' own calculation

In table 5, 30% of undergraduate women sometimes follow normal advertisements and advertisements on women's themes, 20% often follow them, and 50% never follow advertisements on women's themes. Among the graduates, 10% always follow, and 40% sometimes follow advertisements on a woman's theme. As the level of education increases, that is, at the master's degree level, approximately 58% of women sometimes follow and 34% often follow advertisements on a woman's theme. That is, level of education and preferences of advertisements on women's themes are proportionally related to each other.

**Table 6: Family Type Wise Following Advertisement**

Family type	Follow Advertisement on woman theme (Figures are in %)				Follow advertisement (Figures are in %)	
	Always	sometimes	often	not at all	Sometimes	often
joint	1.33	16.66	54.17	27.84	25	75
nuclear	10.06	28.88	61.06		45.45	54.54

The respondent belongs to a nuclear family, which is more exposed to the effects of advertisement on women than a joint family. 10% of women in nuclear families always follow it, 28.88% sometimes follow it, and 61.06% often follow advertisements on women's themes. In cases of joint families, only 16.66% of women sometimes follow, and 54.17% often advertise on a woman's theme. Approximately 28% never follow advertisements on a woman's theme.

**Table 7: Occupation Wise Following Advertisement**

occupation type	Follow Advertisement on woman theme (figures are in %)				Follow advertisement (figures are in %)	
	Always	sometimes	often	not at all	sometimes	Often
Housewife	5	25	45	25	50	50
Service	6.25	31.88	61.87		28.13	71.87
Others		20	80		20	80

Source: Researchers' own calculation

Table 7 indicated that working women are more interested in following advertisements on women's themes and normal advertisements than housewives. The reason may be that working women are more up-to-date about technology and follow advertisements. 'Working women are highly empowered concerning work, home, and freedom of choice or movement, and their total empowerment is better than that of women who are not working.' (Menon & Sharma, 2020).

**Table 8: Regression Result 1**

Dependent Variable Y				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
X1	-0.097586	0.055802	-1.748785	0.0862
X2	0.076203	0.059655	1.277387	0.0071
X3	-0.230548	0.088867	-2.594319	0.0123
X4	0.235529	0.096822	-2.432592	0.0185
a	2.381764	0.290307	8.204280	0.0000
R-squared	0.306335	F-statistic	5.741025	0.000664

Source: Researchers' own calculation

Table number 8 summarizes the regression result 1, where the preference of advertisement on woman theme like a dummy variable is regressed on age, educational qualification, family background and occupational status. The entire coefficients are statistically significant at 1% level. The coefficients of age and family background are negative. This implies that preference of advertisement on woman theme is negatively affected by these variables. Women with high age groups are less interested about advertisement. This result support table 4. Family background has negative impact. The women belonging to joint family have less time to follow advertisement on woman theme as they have common television or other means of media. In case of occupational status, the coefficient is positive and significant. Working women are much more interested to follow advertisement on woman theme. Educational qualification has positive impact on advertisement on woman theme. Educated people are more sensitive towards advertisement on woman theme.

**Table 9: Multicollinearity Test of Regression 1**

Variable	Coefficient Variance	Centered VIF
X1	0.003114	1.855539
X2	0.003559	1.123923
X3	0.007897	1.085355
X4	0.009375	1.952088
A	0.084278	NA

Source: Researchers' own calculation

\*VIF – Variance Inflation Factor

a= constant

Y= Preference about the advertisement on woman theme.

X1= age

X2= educational qualification

X3= family background (nuclear or joint)

X4= occupational status

Table 9 depicts the result of the multicollinearity test. They saw that the values of the variance inflation factor (VIF) are less than 10. So, multicollinearity is absent for the quadratic regression model.

**Table 10: Regression Result 2**

Dependent Variable Y				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Probability
X1	0.169029	0.111114	1.521229	0.0341
X2	-0.248172	0.121451	2.043396	0.0460
X3	-0.078337	0.118118	-0.663209	0.0101
a	0.706019	0.345852	2.041391	0.0462
R-squared	0.151585	F-statistic	3.156474	0.032176

Source: Researchers' own calculation

**Table 11: Multicollinearity Test of Regression 2**

Variable	Coefficient Variance	Centered VIF
X1	0.012346	1.124757
X2	0.014750	1.667982
X3	0.013952	1.577705
a	0.119614	NA

Source: Researchers' own calculation

\*VIF – Variance Inflation Factor

a= constant

Y= Preference on advertisement on woman theme

X1= marital status

X2= family type (orthodox and unorthodox)

X3= dependence on family

Table number 8 summarizes the regression result 2, where the preference of advertisements on women's themes, like a dummy variable, is regressed on marital status, family type, and dependence on family. The coefficient of marital status is significant and positive. The reason may be that married women become more concerned about their rights, privileges, etc. Orthodox families want to stick with traditional values and beliefs. They are less concerned about women's rights and education. That's why advertisements on women's themes have

less impact on them. More dependency on family has a negative effect on women's thinking about advertising. Independent women are more prone to ad messages.

The values of VIF are also less than 10 suggested by table number 11. So here too the multicollinearity is absent for the regression model.

A study by Omika Bhalla Saluja, Singh and Kumar 2023 'identified Patriarchy structure, psychological factors, low income/wages, low financial literacy, low financial stability and ethnicity as six prominent barriers and Government and Corporate programs policies, microfinance, formal saving accounts and services, cash and asset transfer, self help groups and digital inclusion as six leading interventions to summarize the literature and highlight its gaps'.

The paper by Seema Singh and Antara Singh (2020) have covered 'about affirmative legislation, plans and programs initiated by the Government, NGOs and Corporate sectors through their corporate social responsibility over a very large spectrums starting from the Indian constitution to development in recent years'.

### **Suggestions and Recommendations**

- Primary Educational System needs to be explored and extended more especially at grass root level.
- More efforts are needed to make 'women' awake in terms of raising their voices against any antisocial activities.
- Proper motivation, inspiration and support are also required for women development.
- Advertisement through social media plays an influential role in the human mind, so it should act with more responsibility before informing and publishing any news.
- The coverage area of advertisement needs to be extended further even among the women in grass root levels.
- Unbiased gender society and empowering women should be supported and further explored through the massive usage of social network.
- Implementation of strong social security on the internet to avoid cyber bullying is desirable.
- Advertisement covers broader view of crimes against women. Necessary provisions are required in conducting a social audit on factors responsible for increasing crimes, particularly against women and children. Investigation procedures need to be encouraged further.
- Various mass media campaigns should be organized at the grassroots level through their understandable medium like traditional form of communication which includes puppetry, story- telling, folk arts, folk music and other vernacular mediums.
- Government should implement sufficient measures for women to look after their safety and security.

Government is seen to implement many more schemes to safeguard the honour and respect of Indian women through 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' scheme, 'Nanhi Kali', UJJAWALA, SWADHAR Greh, NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR and many more. The most important role of advertising is to educate all the needy women through suitable channel.

## Conclusion

Advertisement as a medium of media education is a medium to inform about the changing outlook of society and promote several government initiatives to reduce the vulnerability of women towards poverty, inequalities, and being marginalized in society. But no medium can be successful in attaining women's empowerment unless women understand their inherent capability, because empowerment of women does not only mean strengthening their hands financially but also making them mentally capable of understanding their inherent quality to fight for their identity.

History has proven that 'if you educate a man, you educate an individual, but if you educate a woman, you educate a nation'.

## Acknowledgment

The researcher's gratitude also extended to their college principal for allowing them to conduct their primary data collection in the area of Kolkata. The author is grateful to the joint editors of the book Prof. Bhaskar Bagchi and Dr. Biswajit Paul, University of Gour Banga, Malda, West Bengal, for providing her this opportunity.

## References

- Kushwah, S. V. (2020). Women Empowerment: A Literature Review & Research Agenda. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(7), 10257-10266. <file:///C:/Users/Hp/Downloads/4067-Article%20Text-7798-1-10-20201226.pdf>
- Lwamba, E., Shisler, S., Ridlehoover, W., Kupfer, M., Tshabalala, N., Nduku, P., ... & Snilstveit, B. (2022). Strengthening Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality In Fragile Contexts Towards Peaceful And Inclusive Societies: A Systematic Review And Meta-Analysis. *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, 18(1), e1214. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.1002/cl2.1214>
- Menon, S., & Sharma, S. (2020). A Study on The Status of Women's Empowerment in Urban Bangalore, India. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 21(5), 54-64. [https://kristujayanti.edu.in/SSR-III/3.4.3-Research-Papers/UGC/2019\\_2020/29.pdf](https://kristujayanti.edu.in/SSR-III/3.4.3-Research-Papers/UGC/2019_2020/29.pdf)
- Rani, M. S. (2021). A Study on Women Empowerment In India. *International Journal for Modern Trends in Science and Technology*, 7(11), 120-124. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356782233\\_A\\_Study\\_on\\_Women\\_Empowerment\\_in\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356782233_A_Study_on_Women_Empowerment_in_India)
- Saluja, O. B., Singh, P., & Kumar, H. (2023). Barriers And Interventions on The Way to Empower Women Through Financial Inclusion: A 2 Decades Systematic Review (2000–

- 2020). *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 10(1), 1-14. <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-023-01640-y>
- Sharma, S., & Singh, T. (2020). VUCA World and its impact on Human Resource Function: A roadmap for HR Leaders to navigate the current challenging times. *PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt/Egyptology*, 17(7), 10219-10227.
- Singh, S., & Singh, A. (2020). Women Empowerment in India: A Critical Analysis. *Tathapi*, 19(44), 227-253. <https://graduatewomen.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Article-written-by-Seema-Singh-BRPID-project-findings.pdf>
- Tembhre, M. (2018, March). Challenges and Prospects of Women Empowerment in India. In *105th Indian Science Congress*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340863026\\_Challenges\\_and\\_Prospects\\_of\\_Women\\_Empowerment\\_in\\_India](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/340863026_Challenges_and_Prospects_of_Women_Empowerment_in_India)
- Völker, M., & Doneys, P. (2021). Empowerment As One Sees It: Assessment of Empowerment by Women Participants of Development Projects. *Development In Practice*, 31(1), 125-138. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344744061\\_Empowerment\\_as\\_one\\_sees\\_it\\_assessment\\_of\\_empowerment\\_by\\_women\\_participants\\_of\\_development\\_projects](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/344744061_Empowerment_as_one_sees_it_assessment_of_empowerment_by_women_participants_of_development_projects)