

WOMEN FOR CHANGE

Building a Gendered Media in South Asia

An Overview of Advertising Industry in South Asia

Dr. Jaishri Jethwaney

An overview

- In this short presentation an effort is made, based on the input from all the nine south Asian countries, to showcase the state of advertising sector in various countries, the commonalities and the areas for policy implications

Limitation of the presentation

- The data is wide-ranging from various countries. While some presentations have followed the RQs shared with the participants during the capacity building workshop held at ISID in May 2018, others have not fully followed it for various reasons.
- Wherever possible through net search some gaps have been filled in.

Overview

- Inappropriate portrayal of women in the paid space is a worldwide phenomenon and often resented upon.
- About half a dozen large international conglomerates control more than 75% of advertising business in both the developed and the developing economies.
- South Asia in general is a great hub of economic activities and therefore the concomitant need for advertising.
- Global agencies are often criticized for not only killing the homespun ad agencies in the developing countries but also bringing in Western style of narrative on sexuality that includes inappropriate woman imagery and body display, often not in consonance with the local culture and milieu.

Snap shots of advertising industry and related areas in South Asian countries

- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Myanmar
- Maldives
- Nepal
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

Research focus and RQs

- Size and Sociology of ad sector
- Women in ad sector
- Prevalence or absence of gender policies in ad industry
- Are ads regulated/ pre-censored
- State of teaching in mass communication
- Laws and policies on gender sensitivity
- Self regulatory bodies and professional associations
- Empirical research on gender portrayal in advertising

Size and Sociology of ad sector

- The ad sector in all the nine countries is varying in size and turnover, but the fact that is common among all the countries under review is a general lack of information available in the public domain on the functioning of their ad industry.
- There is not only opaqueness about its functioning but also processes and business models.
- All the countries except for Afghanistan Bhutan and Maldives have the presence of global ad agencies in the respective countries.

Women ratio in the ad sector

- There is no confirmed data available on the total women workforce in various countries. According to inference or industry insiders, it varies from 10% to 30% in various countries.
- It is interesting to find that out of listed 325 agencies in Nepal, 17 are headed by women, which is an encouraging sign but the reason could be that most of these may be family run enterprises.
- With thousands of agencies in India, there is only one woman heading the agency at the time of the field survey in 2018, but quite a few at branch and supervisory levels in creatives and account management.
- In Bangladesh one finds 10-15% women working in the creative and management side in both global and local agencies.

Are ads regulated/ pre-censored?

- Ads as per the information available from various countries are not pre-censored.
- The Ministry of women and Child in India is proposing the creation of a body that would look at the media content including advertising for aiding and advising the government on policy.
- Public Broadcaster Doordarshan in India has a code for advertisers that covers stereotyping of women in ad space.

State of teaching in mass communication

- None of the countries as per the data available has gender component in the mass communication curricula, except a India in a very small measure and Bangladesh is large measure.
- India teaches mass communication including advertising in over 300 universities and institutions, but except for just about 5% none of the syllabi are gendered.
- The only exception among the South Asian is the data from Bangladesh. Out of 24 departments in journalism and mass communication, 18 have courses in gender, a feat not achieved by any other country.

Laws and on portrayal

- There is varying information available from the nine countries. India has a law on the *Indecent Representation of Women Act, 1986*, which is under revision. There are mass media laws in most countries that invariably talk of protection of women and children. There are no specific laws on portrayal. Bhutan and Myanmar have the draft media policy in place but it is yet to be formally adapted.

Prevalence or absence of gender policies in ad industry

- None of the advertising industries in any of the nine countries as reflected in the research have defined gender policies on either portrayal in ads or women working in the ad sector. While in some countries, the ad industry may have professional associations that are supposed to self-regulate content, but in reality, these associations are not able to exert much pressure on the advertisers except when there is a public outrage on a certain advertisement and the government also intervenes.

Empirical research on gender portrayal in advertising

- There is huge empirical research available on the representation and portrayal of women in the commercial space in the media across societies. This reflects the importance of the subject among researchers
- It is a hot topic for dissertation among sociology and women studies scholars.
- Most of the books on the subject are not from communication specialists, but from sociology and women studies scholars.
- Data from all the countries suggest a growing disgust among stakeholders on the inappropriate portrayal of women in media and in advertising.
- The research findings and insights suggest many areas for policy intervention within South Asian countries in general and the region per say in particular

Commonalities among countries

The research work emanating from various countries suggest the following:

- The ad industry per say is opaque in every country in South Asia
- There are lesser women than men working in the ad sector in various countries
- None of the ad industry in any of the countries have written gender sensitive policies either on portrayal or women working in the ad sector.
- Global agencies have made a foothold in most south Asian countries
- Obscenity and indecent portrayal is is lesser issue than stereotypical portrayal of women.
- Mass communication as a discipline is being taught at graduate and post graduate levels. The syllabi however is not gendered, except in the case of Bangladesh that can provide a guidance on the areas covered and how gender course is amalgamated in the media curricula.

Areas for policy considerations

- Make Mass Communication Course Curricula Gendered
- Advocate for Gender Sensitivity Indicators on Advertising Content
- Bring in Gender Sensitive Laws/Policies
- Exposure on gender, related issues and laws to creative teams
- Engagement with self regulatory bodies to create a mechanism for checking gender sensitivity on campaigns before releasing in the media.
- Industry can consider initiating an award at national level for recognition on gender sensitive campaigns to bring the issue in the public domain and encourage the change makers.
- Certification of courses by robust industry body/bodies to ensure that those certified enter the field. A
- continuous evaluation required to continue with certification.

In summation

- Advertising has an important role to play in the marketing activities, but at the same time, gender sensitivity in the ad narrative is not a matter of choice on the part of the content creators, but an obligation. A constant hammering and advocacy, supported by the requisite laws and policies would hopefully pave the way for a gendered advertising narrative.

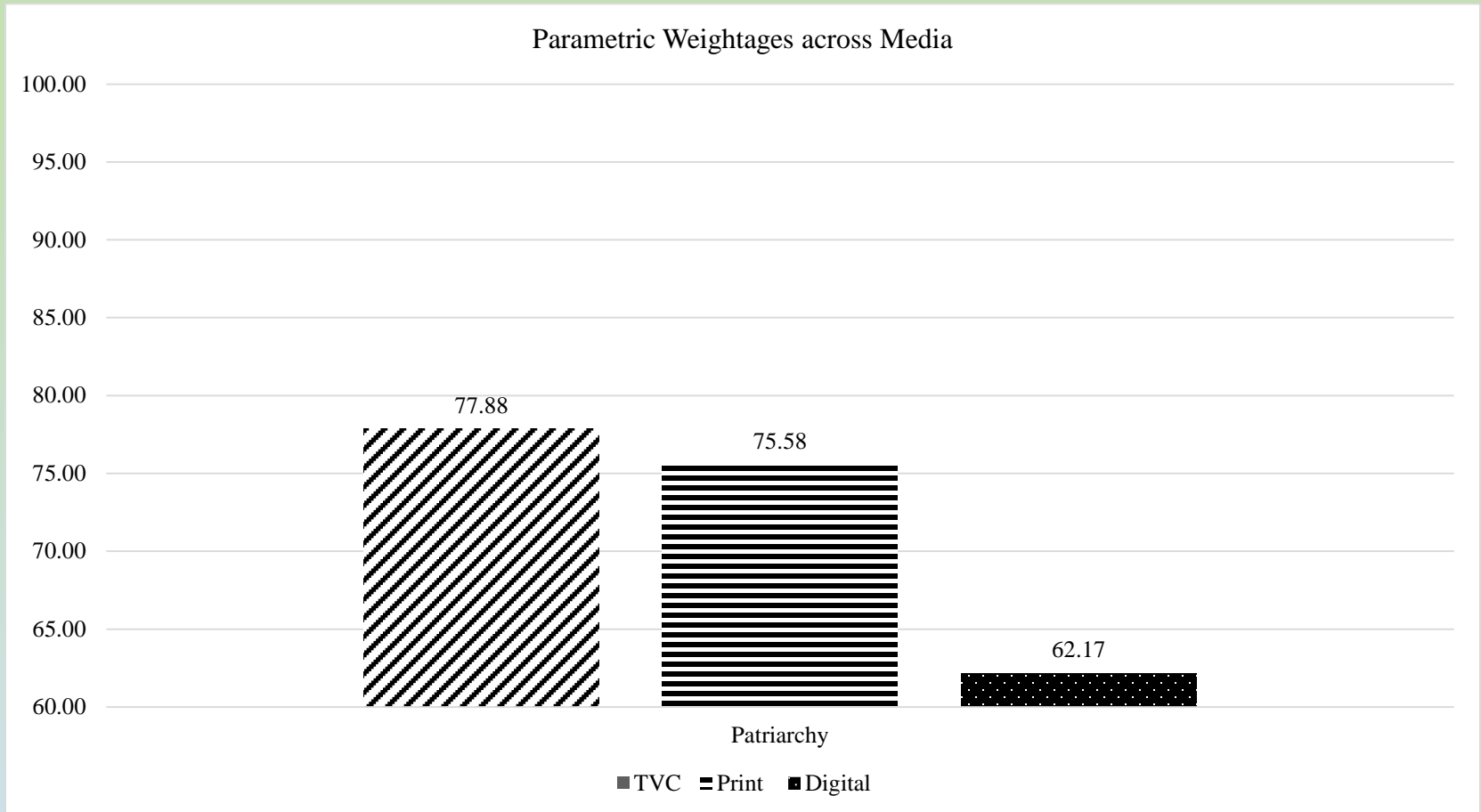
Some glimpses

Content analysis of Indian ads

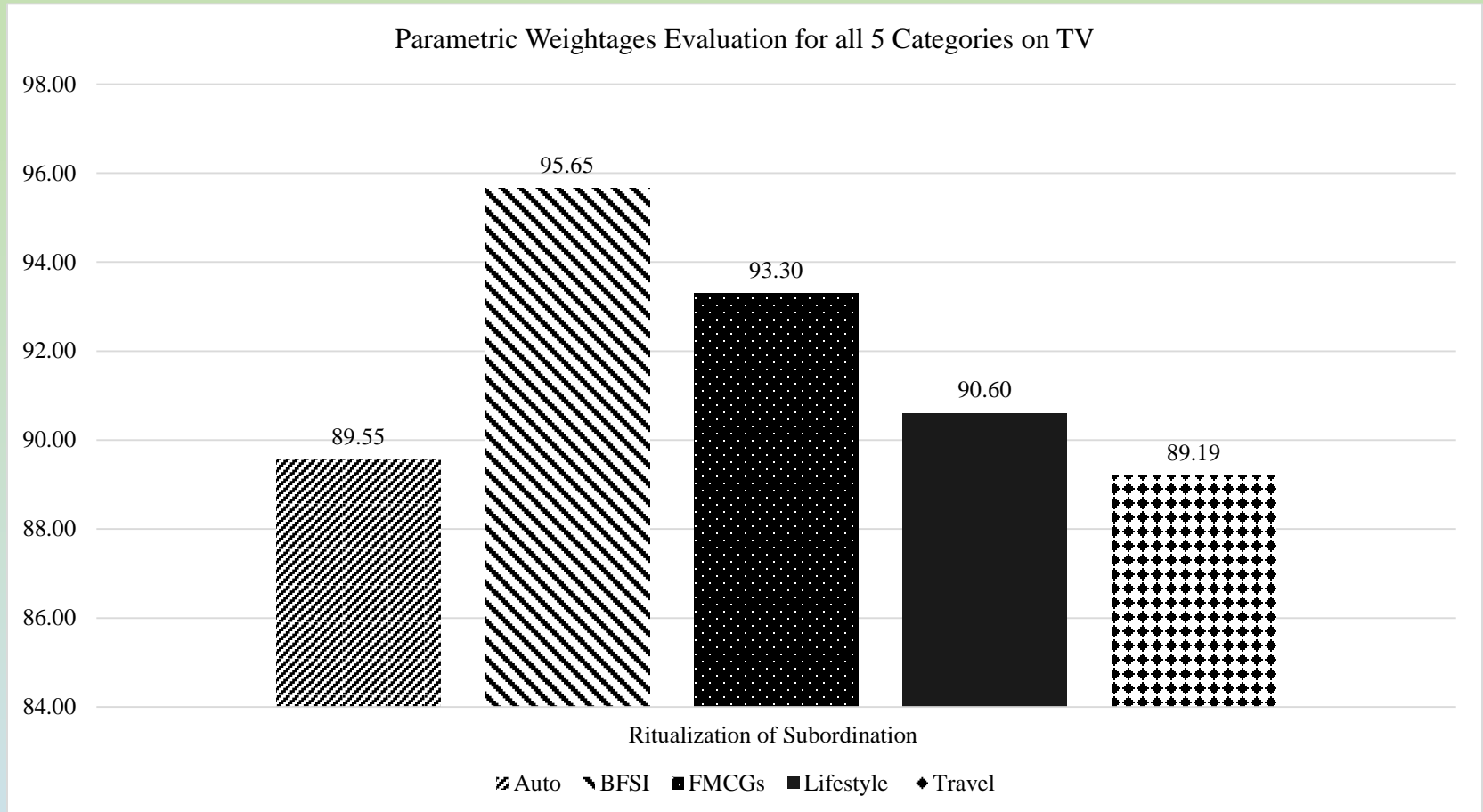
Highlights

- **Stereotyping of Women in Indian Advertising across Brand Categories.**
- Subordination of women, treating them as inferior to men, low in intellect and social hierarchy comes across in over 80% of ads across five brand categories, that include FMCG, Lifestyle, BFSI, Automobile and Travel and Leisure, more than 30 sub categories and 164 brands and more than 1160 campaigns across three decades (1990s to present).
- Objectification and indecent portrayal as per the definition in the law generally in some lifestyle and FMCG categories, viz., apparel, deodorants, condoms, alcohol, cigarettes, beauty creams

Negative weightage across five categories (patriarchy)



Negative weightage across five categories (subordination)



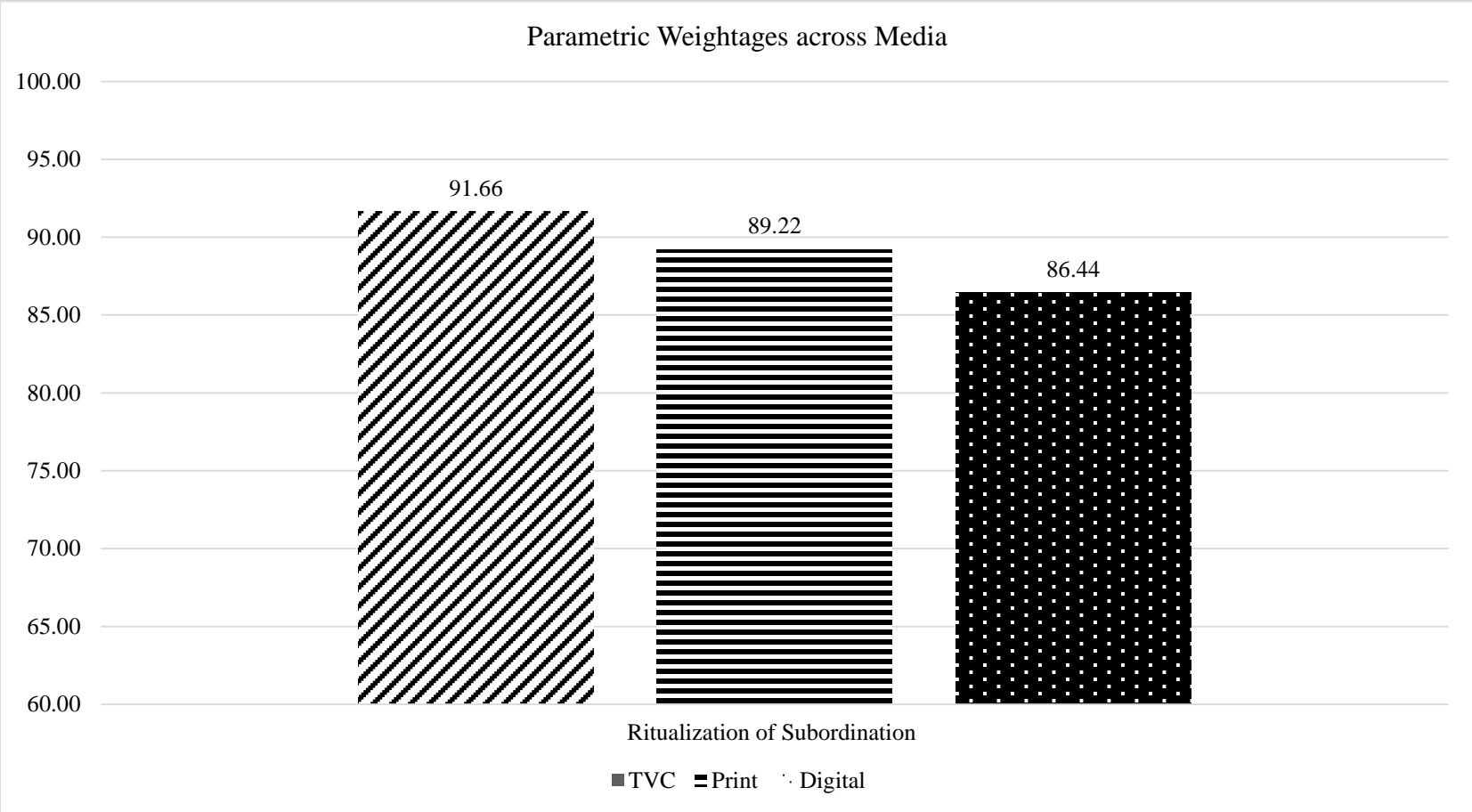
Liberalization of Indian economy in 1990s brought a shift in the narrative

- Liberalization of the Indian economy that brought with it a host of global players in brands and advertising agencies also brought with it a visible change in the ad narrative, provocative imagery of women and show of skin, being a major fall out of this era.

PARAMETRIC WEIGHTAGES ACROSS THREE DECADES IN FIVE SUB CATEGORIES

Categories	Sub-Categories	Ritualization of Subordination	Objectification	Patriarchy
Life style	Contraceptive	100.00	72.73	90.91
	Alcohol	80.00	93.33	93.33
	Deodorant	85.71	71.43	92.86
	Tobacco	90.91	18.18	90.91
FMCGs	Beauty Products	97.14	97.14	77.14

Subordination



Stereotypical Projection



adani
wilmar

**Khaane mein mithas
bhale hi mana ho,
zindagi ki mithas
bani rahe.**

Pesh hai Fortune VIVO - Jo Rakhe khayal aapke sugar ka.
Taki aap jindagi ke mithhe palo ko ji sake.

WITH GOODNESS OF
SESAME LIGNANS & GAMMA ORYZANOL

Fortune
VIVO

Advertisement for Fortune VIVO featuring a family meal. The text promotes the product's benefits for sugar levels and overall health, highlighting its natural ingredients: Sesame Lignans and Gamma Oryzanol. The brand name 'Fortune VIVO' is prominently displayed.



make **my** trip

**GRAND
TRAVEL
SALE**

07th to 09th November, 2017

Get Amazing Deals on Flights, Hotels and Holidays only on MakeMyTrip.

Advertisement for MakeMyTrip's Grand Travel Sale. The image shows a couple taking a selfie in front of a city skyline. The text announces the sale dates from November 7th to 9th, 2017, and promotes amazing deals on flights, hotels, and holidays. The MakeMyTrip logo is in the top right corner.

Objectionable Portrayal



Inappropriate Portrayal



Double Whammy: Inappropriate and Surrogate



Ad Making Fun of the Law




Fairness Cream Ads: Belittle Women of Dark Skin



Counter Movement against Fair Skin and Ads for the Products

I'm shocked to see the rise in the number of fairness creams and dark actresses looking paler and paler with every film, magazines, hoardings and films and advertisements showing only fair women.

Stay UNfair, Stay Beautiful
- Nandita Das




DARK is beautiful
Celebrating Beauty Beyond Colour
www.darkisbeautiful.in
Happy Women's Day 2013!

www.facebook.com/darkisbeautiful | darkisbeautiful@gmail.com

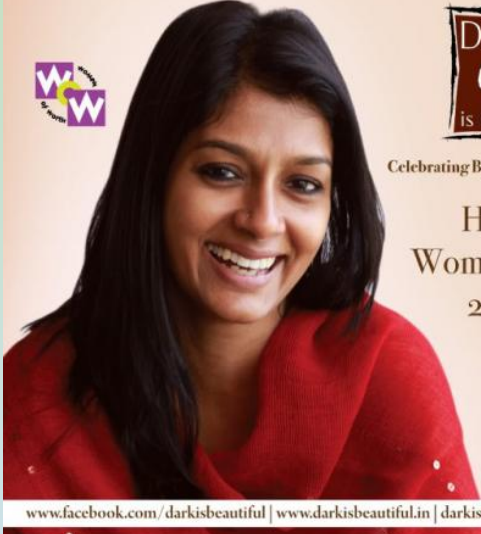
UNfair. Stay Beautiful.

Nandita Das Actress



In a country where
90% of people are dark
it is sad that we grow up with such an
inferiority complex about it.

“Stay UNfair, Stay Beautiful!”
- Nandita Das



DARK is beautiful
Celebrating Beauty Beyond Colour

Happy Women's Day 2013!

www.facebook.com/darkisbeautiful | www.darkisbeautiful.in | darkisbeautiful@gmail.com