The dependence of mass media on market is as old as the mass media itself. In European countries, printing was invented in the fifteenth century but print media could proliferate after the industrialization in the Eighteenth century. Printed matter could not have a reach to common man, nor does common man have an access to it till the expansion of market. Newspapers were read by the people when it became affordable for them and affordability or cost effectiveness occurred when it started generating its bulk revenue from advertisements printed in it. Thus, advertisements became, though unwanted, yet inevitable intruder in the life of the reader of print media.

Mass media has its own social and cultural implications. On the one hand the content of mass media is a reflection of our society and culture and on the other hand our society and culture gets affected by its content. It is true in both the cases; it may be the editorial material or the marketing material. In Twentieth Century sociologists, psychologists and communication experts initiated an effort to study the socio cultural implications of mass media. Researches were conducted for the study of editorial content as well as marketing content. The objective of advertising is ultimately to persuade hence it is framed more meticulously than editorial content. Therefore its certain impact has also been observed in studies.

Another facet of advertising is how does it reflect and present the milieu, person or an object in order to sell a product or service or to instill an idea in the mind of its target market/audience. Women constitute fifty percent of the human populace. Since the inception of the vogue of display advertisements they remained either the subject or the object of some advertising efforts. The way of the presentation of the image of women in advertising widely reflects the angle of advertisers and the society at large. Advertisers have myriad objectives behind the projection of female image portrayal. Sometimes it is merely to attract the male gaze, and often to make its female target relate the message with themselves or to sell a lifestyle. Each and every advertisement
of product or service is targeted to a particular audience. Beauty soap sellers first sell the image of women and then the product to the targeted audience. In this process, they present images in the illustrations of the copy in various ways. A number of advertisements use women images in the frame of the copy.

Worldwide, the portrayal of the images of women has remained much discussed issue among scholars, social circles and critics. Feminist critics have slammed the trends of women’s image portrayal finding it to be stereotypical, objectification, or negatively presenting the image of women. Feminist movement, in its third wave, incorporated media and media content in the issues raised. When it examined media and came out with its inference, it spread a consciousness about female role portrayal in advertisements all through the world.

Down the decades, particularly during the turn of the century, drastic changes were visible in the female portrayal of women in advertisements. Print media has a greater retention value and the same is true about the advertisements printed in it. Therefore, the advertisements of print media are taken for the present study. The study intends to examine that in current socio-economic perspective what are the trends of the portrayal of women in Indian print media.

As it has been discussed earlier, market forces ever dominate the content of media as for its existence media depends upon the market. The value system of a society and ethics of the institution also have an impact upon the psyche of the decision makers of media content. Tendencies do change along with the changes occurring in the society. An explicit change in the pattern of advertising is also apparent. Women entered in new walks of life; there is a phenomenal rise in their participation in the fields dominated by men till recent days. After Globalization, Liberalization and privatization in India, several new avenues opened that provided greater opportunity of employment and entrepreneurship for women. There are new products and services targeted only to women and targeted to women also along with men. For instance, once telecommunication services were targeted to male only but in the present scenario
women are parallel users of telecommunication so they are also the target market of these service providers. Now they have become the decision makers in buying of home appliances, not only in groceries and other household products.

With the perspective of women portrayal in advertisements, a number of studies have been conducted in India and abroad and in future also the studies will be carried on. Each study undertaken selects a time frame and specific sample for analysis; hence, it paves a new path, flashes a new idea and gives a different suggestion for further researches and adequate understanding of the subject undertaken.

This is also a step ahead in solving the quest and contributing the vast sea of knowledge.

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