

Body Image: Women in Jewellery Advertisement

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Abstract: *The perspective of this article is to consider how media is utilizing the bodily attraction of women to cater the eyes of the viewers and the consumers, especially in the jewellery industry. They are dealing with the most powerful force of this universe, i.e the sensual attraction of humans. In one hand these ads are making the female audience to correlate them with the gorgeous beautiful models, to be like them, but on the other hand these ads are just exploiting the body image of women in a way. It objectifies women's body. For jewellery advertisement women are generally produced and reproduced as decorative pieces where the image of a women turns into a 'sign' but this 'sign' is not the real sign of that particular women rather it creates simulation among the consumers. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body in order to catch men's attention on them. This paper reviews that how the body images of women in jewellery advertisement plays a crucial role in influencing consumer's social interaction and how the modern society is dominated by the mediated image created by the mass media and/or Patriarchy. This paper also includes four case studies of renowned jewellery brands, and how they have incorporated sensual elements in their ads through women body and how body image is reflected in the ads.*

Keywords: body image, women models, patriarchy, advertisement industry, commodification, ideal body, sexuality.

Introduction

In this 21st century women are gradually occupying a prominent position in the advertisement industry, as a mark of participation in outdoor activities, thereby challenging the patriarchal domination. The world of advertisement, which is growing fast alongside the spread of consumer culture, offers wide-range of employment opportunity to the women in general and attractive younger women in particular. It is generally believed that work participation of women makes them economically self-reliant and brings them higher social status. The women are playing an increasingly significant role in all advertisement industry and working as models, endorsing all kinds of products such as 'general products, women products and the products

for men uses' (Vani 2010: 173). They have become a cultural image in representing themselves in every professional field. The professional field can range from residential work to the world of beauty. The young women engage themselves in advertisements thus turning their body-beauty-personality as a human resource, if not as commodity. The women's body thus 'becomes a key site of political, cultural, social and economic intervention' (Hancock et.al. 2000: 1). One can also notice cultural legitimacy in production of body-beauty in the advertisement world, which is looked into as a means of empowerment and a new way of life.

The process of appropriating women image in advertisement is based on an idea of "ideal body image", which is a social construct in a given point in time and in a given social space. This ideal body (physical appearance and beauty) of women is reproduced in the mass media in a given time, but it can change with changing time and context. Women imagine themselves in the light of the media projected "ideal body", which works like a "discourse" that manifestly influence the women who are in advertisements and on the women in general, even those who do not feature and not even think of featuring in advertisements. The appeal of the fetish called "ideal body" is so deep and grand to cover the self-image of women, and men's sense of "beautiful women", which is directly linked to sexuality.

Conceptualizing body image

Sociology of body is principally concerned with the symbols and meaning of the physical aspects of human behaviour and actions in society. Body image of woman is always shaped, reshaped and "deconstructed" by socio-cultural factors which define how individuals, groups or collectivities view women in terms of colour-complexion, height, weight, shape, legs, hair, eyes, smile, size and so on. The selection of women models for advertisement would depend on whether they come close to the 'beautiful' body thus conceived because a model can be sensuous and can work on the mind of the consumers only if they fit into their perception of beauty. The classical positivist sociologists explain *body* in terms of physical appearances but the post-structuralists, feminists, phenomenologists argue that '...body no longer remains fixed in essence. The changes it undergoes are no longer regarded as wholly dependent on natural philosophical process...' (Hancock et.al. 2000: 3). Anthony Synnott says:

The body social is many thing: the prime symbol of the self, but also of the society; it is something we have, yet also what we are; it is both the subject and object at the same time; it is individual and personal, as unique as a

finger print or oudourplume, yet it is also common to all humanity.... The body is both an individual creation, physically and phenomenologically, and a cultural product; it is personal, and also state property (Waskul and Vannini 2002).

When a woman enters the advertisement industry she is represented as sex object; she finds a place in the glamour world exposing her beauty and thus gains a self-identity. According to Berger, 'Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at...' in this way woman 'became trapped in a male gaze' (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 354). Advertisement produces subjective body image in an objective form. And when the body is objectified, the image of a woman turns into a "sign", which is not the real sign of that particular women rather it creates simulation among the consumers. From this perspective 'body of an object cannot be separated from the body as a subject...' (Waskul and Van der Riet 2002).

Body signifies the women as an object to be gazed by both men and women. Women gaze does a subjective analysis of their body in the light of "ideal concept of female body" whereas men gaze the image as a sexual objects. Charles Horton Cooley's concept "looking glass-self" explains that the embodiment of "self" is reproduced and replicated into one's imagination of her own self and how other observe the image of a "self" thus created. This imaginary perspective plays an important role for the advertisement models or the brand ambassadors of any jewellery production house or any other commodity. Such self-feelings of looking good or bad, depend on how the consumers perceive them as an object. Women's body image in an advertisement sometimes gives them a satisfaction and honour, when their own "self" resembles "other self" (i.e. how consumers perceive body image of women in advertisement); and if it does not resemble the woman may be ashamed of her own self image created in advertisement. Thus Cooley's concept of self in "looking glass-self" represents "body image" in a perspective where the objective-body becomes subjective-body. The embodiment of the body image of women in advertisement is produced, reproduced, sustained and transformed from object-body to subject-body in the social field.

Goffman, in his work 'Territories of the self', has explained that the body signifies 'identity, social order, and emotional order and in a manner that is personal and communal, private and political, confidential and public all at once' (Waskul and Vannini 2002). Thus women's body image in advertisements gives a new identity publicly as well as in private sphere of their life. Jewellery is very intimate and inseparable material object for

women's everyday life. While playing a part in jewellery advertisement women emotionally get involved with the jewellery since it symbolizes their sense of beauty. Thus the role in jewellery advertisement is pre-ordained to women because women wear jewellery more than men; and the beauty of her body flourishes with its use. This explains that the advertisers look only for the body image of women in jewellery advertisement because jewellery constructs an image of an authority for women. Side by side, as body image of women in advertisement is associated with the body shape and size even sexuality also becomes consumer-oriented (www.mediaandwomen.org). The beautification regime thus determines not only relations between men and women but also the relations of women to themselves (Cohen and Kennedy 2007: 354).

In Marxist cultural theory, much emphasis is laid on the production and consumption of the cultural artifacts where material objects are the central things of aesthetics. In this fashion the cultural products like jewellery promoted through advertisements in television, news papers, magazines, hoardings, and brochures reproduce societal sense of aesthetics, which is artificial (fetish). So the "art" of designing jewellery and advertisement is not a "pure" aesthetic realm rather it represents the producer and commercial actors (Nayar 2013: 143).

Turner has explained that the body must be understood as something socially constructed. He argues that human body is now regulated, trained, disciplined in line with the dominant social norms or standards which not only help construct the "discourse of beauty" but also regulate the self reproduction; the emphasis is on "self-preservation and self-maintenance" or "care of the self". Young women are more concerned with their physical appearance prior to marriage as they wear all types of jewellery in different part of the body which fits into 'women-self-image' and the socially constructed image of a bride, which transcends class and caste barriers. This women-self-image is associated with the physical appearance throughout their lives (Turner 1984).

Thus in jewellery advertisement women are obsessed with the beauty care regime - weight reduction, dieting, and looking sensuous. They make all efforts to improve their appearances in order to look beautiful and attractive. Women try to wear jewellery for all parts of the body in order to catch men's attention. Thus the body image of women presented and reproduced in jewellery advertisement leaves a huge appeal not only on women's self image but also on the men who have a big role in decisions relating to

jeweller purchase. Advertisers usually recruit slim, beautiful, fair, clean face and young women for company advertisements, because that fits into the socially shared image of beautiful women. Therefore, these body images of women in advertisement play a crucial role in influencing consumer behaviour. This post modern society is a space which allows the dominance of mediated image created by the mass media.

Women's Body Image in Jewellery Advertisement

Media plays a significant role in shaping self-image. It objectifies women's body. The use of women models in advertisements is rooted in consumerism. For jewellery advertisement women are generally produced and reproduced as decorative pieces. The contents of the advertisement includes how to choose jewellery, what type of jewellery is perfect for what kind of occasions or how with ornaments would make women's body beautiful, smart and graceful. Here are some illustrations.

Below is the collage of few jewellery advertisements featuring Bollywood strars in traditional dress and ornaments that give them gorgeous looks, enough to leave an impact on the consumers. These actresses in jewellery advertisements easily grab the attention of the viewers or consumers before a catchy slogan completes the advertisement.



Figure 1: Bollywood Actress right from Sridevi to Susmita Sen adorned in Traditional Jewellery

The femininity of the jewellery products are portrayed only for women. Advertisers prefer the popular actresses since they add extra value to attract the consumers more than any unknown model. The women in such attires become the role model and leave an impact on the psyche of the consumers.

I have chosen four ads which show the beauty of a woman and the representation of her body in jewellery ads.

Tanishq - Tanishq's latest ad (*Figure 2*) has de-constructed the regular concept of beauty where with the jewellery an average looking dark-skin woman is turning into a beautiful bride. This ad features a woman as bride having a dusky complexion, flat nose with an average physical feature, not "beautiful" measured in the standard of "ideal beauty" i.e. fair skinned, virgin bride, slim body size and so on.



Figure 2: Tanishq Wedding Jewellery



Figure 3: Remarrying of single mother

The ad in figure 3 is path-breaking. It celebrates the idea of remarriage of a woman with a daughter, which is not yet "normal" even in metropolitan culture. This notion of remarriage is still read as an exception rather than a rule. This ad also challenges the conventional body image of a bride and the idea of "virginity" as essential qualification for marriage. Our society is obsessed with perfect marriage where marriage can occur only once but with the changing time, women are getting chance for remarriage. When widow or divorced women are going for remarriage they prefer registry marriage rather than religious-ritual marriage. Hence this ad redefines our cultural perception for marriage and remarriage. Tanishq ads perhaps target two types of consumers - women with an average physical appearance and single mother.

This ad reveals that the women who feel insecure or miserable about their looks can be made "beautiful" with appropriate use of jewellery. Here, the subjective "self" of women in advertisement has been objectified by the advertisers conveying that an average looking woman can be made attractive only when she has adorned herself with the jewellery; this boosts the confidence of the woman in presenting herself in the beauty market and in social life where slim and fair looking body is considered beautiful and attractive.

The commodity, the jewellery and the brand name together add status to the women, the brides, good looking, average looking, once married, nothing matters much. Jewellery and the social value it carries impact upon the women in two ways, first, it changes their self image from being average looking to good looking and second, they are now presentable and acceptable in society. An image thus created overshadows the natural beauty. The elegance of the jewellery, its exchange values (the price) and the matter uses (gold, platinum, diamond) and the brand name together creates a mystic value to the ornaments which leaves inward and outward impacts. In this whole process *mediated image* largely endorsed by the society leaves a constraining effect on the body image and presentation of self of the women in the light of use of jewellery.

Kalyan Jewellers - The advertisement shows bollywood actress Ashwariya Rai Bachhan floating like an angel in paradise by wearing a golden silk dress. The play of golden colour light rays adds a minimalistic background to focus the model and her dress to symbolise the “golden colour of the Gold”, supporting the the “purity claim” of the product. The golden colour of her dress adds extra glamour to this advertisement (*Figure 4*).



Figure 4: The Touch of Gold in Dress



Figure 5: Dress made up of Golden Bangles

It also grabs the attention of the viewers and the potential consumers. In the advertisement the golden silk transforms into bangle dress which is made up of gold. The *bangles* are shown to be made up of pure gold. The bangles look to be expensive and of high-quality. The message is that after wearing gold bangles female body will become gorgeous and precious as gold (*Figure 5*). It adds status value to the women representing a sense of

superiority and elegance. The ads not only catches the attention of the viewer but also gives the women a feel of looking gorgeous. Here the model is looking straight, having a grin on her face and the body posture symbolises confidence and pleasure of covering her body with “enough bangles...” as the tag line symbolises.

MP Jewellers - In most of the ads, MP Jewellers tries to highlight the upper body part of women. In the Figure 6 and 7 it is visualized that both the models have adorned their bare shoulder with the necklace instead of wearing it on the front of the neck; and their sideways glance of the face enhances sex appeal. Side by side, it exposes the vulnerability of the neck which symbolizes the flirtatious behaviour. Thus, in advertising the jewellery, advertisers use women body to a plan in order to glorify the jewellery.



Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

I am the Reason ????

An exposed neck is a form of submission and is aggressively flirtatious (Figure 8) and the tag line of these ads “I’m the reason” shows what? Flirtatious nature or sex appeal!

Again, the length of the model’s exposed neck in *Figure 6 and 8* shows women’s trust and willingness to submit to men. It can easily catch men’s eyes because it defines beauty and youthfulness of young women. Tossing of earring on the back of her neck in Figure 5 with a tilted head to the side also attracts the viewer’s attention. Avoidance of clothing (*Figures 6 and 7*) helps to avoid distraction of the viewers with the clothes rather than the jewellery. Thus the image of the jewellery products became the main attraction in this advertisement.

4. Anjali Jewellers - One of the most renowned jewellery house in West Bengal is Anjali Jewellers; it draws popularity because of its low weight designer jewellery. The advertiser choose the models having typical Bengali physical appearance such as having almond eyes, broad face, and typical Bengali skin colour (light yellow, brown and black).

The way the advertisers have adorned the model with jewellery, makeup and dress in respective occasions has represented the traditional style of adorning jewellery on Bengali women's body; and the red 'tip' on the forehead symbolizes the Bengali culture. *Figure 9* shows yet another transforming trend of bringing into lime light the image of the dark complexion models into the ad industry. Anjali jewelers have revolutionized the outlook of the Indian consumers, which is primarily a land of "fairness cream". They have challenged the Eurocentric definition of an Indian and localized (Bengali in the present case) one, which in turn is culturally rooted. While drawing home the point that their jewellery is the beauty statement they can connect with Bengali sentiment and culture quite easily. They have been the pioneers in introducing the dark models in the jewellery ads and they are doing it since 2010.



Figure 9: Goddess like feel with the Jewellery

Figure 10 highlights the traditional way of wearing Bengali Saree without blouse. The bare shoulder and neck are covered with the typical Bengali style jewellery which is hanging over the breasts; and the naked right hand of the model refocuses the consumer's attention with the armlet. The model sitting postures shows the forwardly placed upper body portion to bring into notice the adorned jewellery.



Figure 10: Traditional yet seductive



Figure 11: Classical and Contemporary Jewellery

Here we see a very tricky use of the body to merge the traditional outlook with the glamorous jewellery which makes a cultural connection between the Bengali consumers and the jewellery in the advertisement. Now it is not so uncommon to see tan as trend in jewellery industry. Again in *Figure 11*, one can find representation of two different trends, the classical Bengali tradition and the Bengali modern style of the young generations to target two different generations of consumers. It is also recognition of the cohabitation of two contrasting trends, classical and modern, as we find in the sphere of culture. Here the model in red *saree* with the golden jewellery

symbolizes the elite classical Bengali culture and on the other side there is a modern young girl wearing ornaments of contemporary design. The body posture of both the models are different the left model is pointing her 'tip' with her finger which signifies "loyalty to tradition or husband"; and the model wearing silver jewellery reflects the power of a young women; and the jewellery design is so trendy and easy to wear; a perfect combination to attract younger consumers.

Conclusion

In all the above advertisements, women's body is used primarily to promote jewellery in line with the ideology of consumerism, whose appeal is so overwhelming, across the classes and social groups, within the overall frame of patriarchal discourse. The image and the representation of women in the advertisement reinforce an ideology, which deconstructs the popular belief that they are trying to construct women identity as independent, self-sufficient, strong and courageous. The modern women, as in jewellery advertisements, live in fantasies and obsession for looking beautiful, which is counted as a "resource". Neither the women who feature in the advertisements nor the women in larger society in general are free of this consumerist discourse. Both the models and the corporate houses now understand the value not only of the beautiful figure as a whole but also the different body parts like neck, space below the collar bone, cleavage, bare shoulder, skin colour, wrist, fingers, nose, ear and so on. After all, the capital has the power to commodify almost everything.

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Source of the Images

Figure1:http://www.pinkvilla.com/files/imagecache/ContentPreview/Downloads8_1.jpg

Figure 2: <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/variety/tanishq-makes-a-point/article5297558.ece>

Figure3:<http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/tanishq-new-advertisement-on-remarriage/1/320581.html>

Figure4:http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2013/09/16/aishwarya-rai-kalyan-jewellers_n_3934011.html

Figure5:<http://www.pinkvilla.com/entertainmenttags/kalyan-jewellers/aishwarya-raibachchan-kalyan-jewellers>

Figure 6 and 8: <http://www.mpjewellers.com/home/index.php>

Figure 7: MP\tumblr_n7d7vtzmY41rj5wj0o1_1280.jpgFormat

Figure8:<http://satyakighosh.tumblr.com/post/89154321391/2013-mpj-brand-campaign-1-client-mp-jewellers>

Figure9:<https://www.facebook.com/anjalijewellerskolkata/photos/pb.1488933574661737.-2207520000.1452785255./1582321645322929/?type=3&theater>

Figure 10: <https://fbcdn-photos-b-a.akamaihd.net>

Figure11:<https://www.facebook.com/anjalijewellerskolkata/photos/pb.1488933574661737.-2207520000.1452785249./1688578271363932/>