

Portrayal of Women in Advertising

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INTRODUCTION

For decades women have been portrayed as housewives, dependent on men & sex objects in advertisements. However from past one decade, representation of women in advertisements has been experiencing a shift from the house wife centric ads to the career women ads. This paper would be analyzing the representation of women in Indian magazine advertisements & billboards. Also, it looks into how in spite of this slight shift, women still are dominantly restricted to the age old gender constructions and traditional roles.

In an attempt to make the advertisement seem 'desirable', advertisers associate their product with an 'attractive' image. This attractive image always is a woman, who provides the "desirable" image for the ad, irrespective of her relevance to the ad. In the above two ads for "Blenders choice" (1) liquor & "Hindware sanitary ware" (2), the women are just means to attract attention. The Blenders choice ad portrays the woman as a thing to be tasted and the Hindware ad strategically places the product on the women's breast. Both ads merely objectify women. The women have no relevance whatsoever to the product that is being promoted.

Women are also portrayed in ads as unthinking beings preoccupied with trivial matters. The ads for "Ansal Plaza"(3) & "Grooms In"(4) as shown above, portray them as shallow, and have mundane thoughts such as shopping and good clothes. The tag line in print ad 3 (above) illustrates "Her husband has an extramarital affair and she knows it", so as to say that she is not worried or bothered about her marriage as much as she is about her shopping in the mall. In print ad 4, two brides are 'willing' to marry the groom, for he is wearing the salwar suits manufactured by their brand. The women in most ads for women's attires are highly sexualized especially so in ads for jeans. The ads for "Levis red loop" (5) which one can see on many billboards of Bangalore, show the model wearing "just" the jeans and covering her torso with her hands. The "Lee cooper" ad (6) shows the female model again "covering" her upper part of her body with a bead necklace. Why must be a woman's torso be exposed for advertising a pair of jeans? The bodies of women have been reduced to an object of exploitation for the male sexual urge in such ads.

Some of the misconceptions that are read, by the target audiences as pre-requisites for women to be considered beautiful are to be thin and perfectly toned with flawless skin as illustrated in ads for Skin care, Health & Beauty clinic(7). One of the popular readings is that, women need to be 'embarrassed' if they are not thin. These ads make women feel insecure about themselves. The women in these ads, who are 'doctored' to appear perfect, are taken up as role models. These ads vicariously influence societal notions about beauty which in turn pressurize women to resort to the stereotypical mould.

The typical portrayal of the housewife, as dependent on her husband is still prevalent in ads. The "ICICI" Insurance ad (8) urges a man "to give his shoulders the satisfaction of protecting" his wife. The wife in the ad is shown resting her head on her husband's shoulder so as to represent her dependence on him. The woman is shown as someone rather "incapable of looking after herself and requires a husband to do so"(9)

Another billboard(10) welcomes "Home Ministers" to their furniture showroom "Nu Looks" to check out the new "modular kitchens". Although women are beginning to be economically independent, the ads continue to delineate domestic arena as the rightful place for a woman. Women celebrities are used as brand ambassadors for endorsing products. Even here, their sensuality is emphasized upon rather than their talent as a celebrity. Their achievements are not focused on enough. For example, a few of "Malaika Arora-Khan's" ads talk about her curvaceous body rather than her success as a video jockey, or an actor. Such ads promote the notion that, in order to be successful one should have 'beautiful' bodies. However there are a few exceptions. The "Movado" ad(11) features "Twinkle Khanna" as a successful award-winning actor. The text in the ad associates the actor's artistic talents with the products quality. Her brand image as being the talented successful actor is stressed on to promote the product. We also have The Allen Solly ad (12) portraying women as independent, educated & successful. But such positive portrayal of woman is very limited.

The portrayal of woman has not changed much over the years. Women in ads represent what the society holds as an ideal

image of her. Women are continued to be predominantly portrayed as sexual beings, unthinking, dependent, caretakers, preoccupied with beauty. My paper through the couple of illustration emphasizes that ads in a large way are responsible in creating societal mindset about women. Ads perpetuate the notions of femininity & reinforce them every time these ads are read or watched by the audience.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For conducting content analysis two national daily newspapers, namely, The Times of India and Hindustan Times were selected. Articles related to advertising were collected from the two newspapers. After collecting the data qualitative and quantitative content analysis was done. A list of issues related to advertising was made and on the basis of the list how many issues were covered in the reports were determined. For conducting quantitative content analysis I tried to find out how many reports appeared in both the newspapers in a month's time. To measure the print area of a report in the whole newspaper total percentage area of a report was calculated.

Supplements are excluded while calculating total percentage area of news report or feature.

Research Design:-

Universe:-

The entire population in East Delhi.

1. Area of Study:-

East Delhi

2. Sampling Technique:-

Random

A sample 50 respondents.

3. Method of Research:-

Survey Method

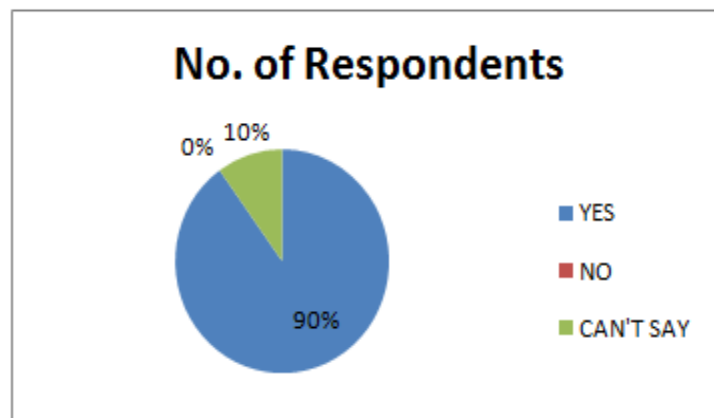
4. Tools:-

Questionnaire

DATA ANALYSIS:-

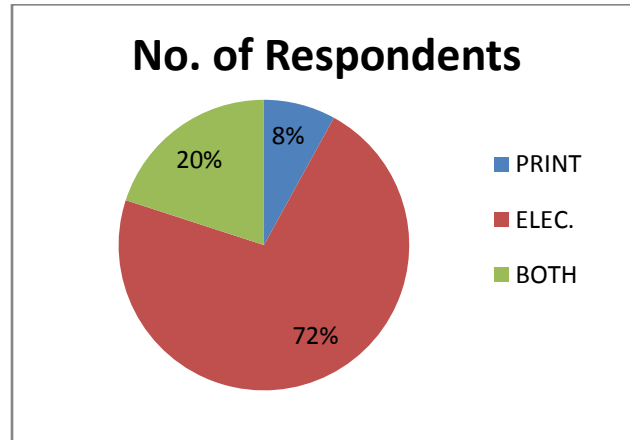
Q1. Do You Watch Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 45 | 90 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Sometime | 5 | 10 |



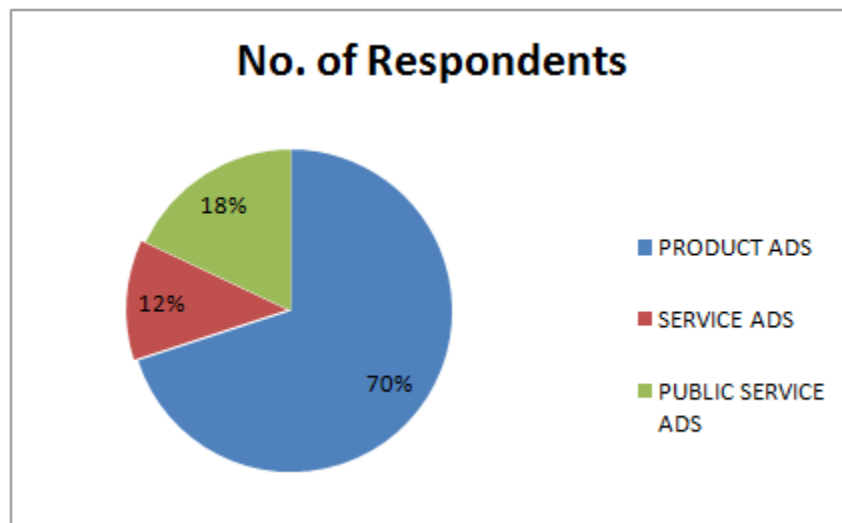
Q2. Which Type of Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Print | 4 | 8 |
| Electronic | 36 | 72 |
| Both | 10 | 20 |



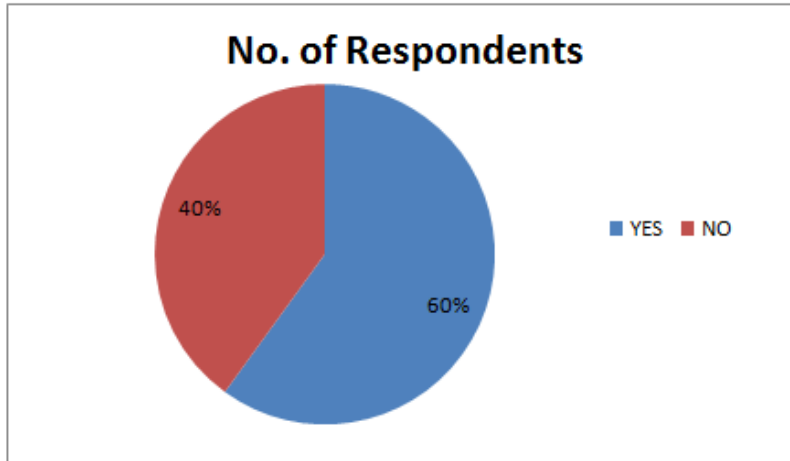
Q3. Which Kind of Advertisements You Like to Watch or Read?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of respondents |
|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Product Ads | 35 | 70 |
| Service Ads | 6 | 12 |
| Public Service Ads | 9 | 18 |



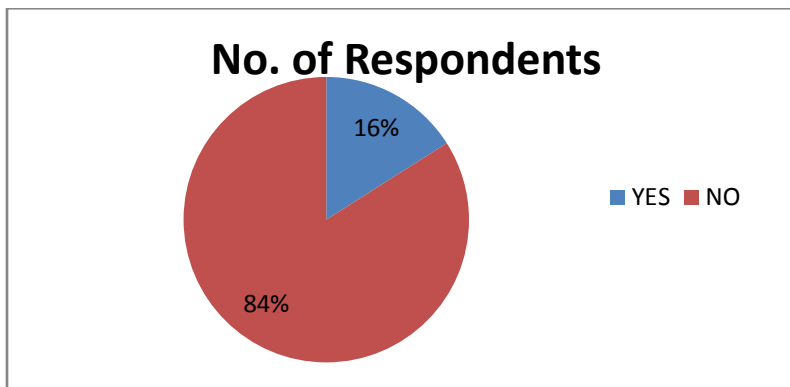
Q4. Do You Like to Watch Women in Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 30 | 60 |
| No | 20 | 40 |



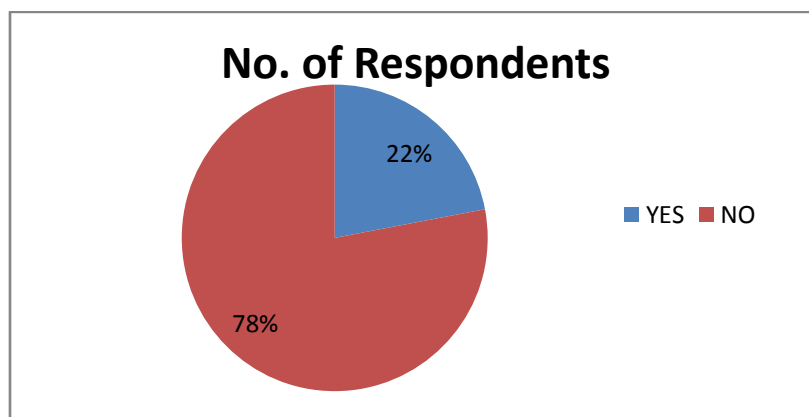
Q5. Do You Like The Fair and Handsome Advertisement?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 8 | 16 |
| No | 42 | 84 |



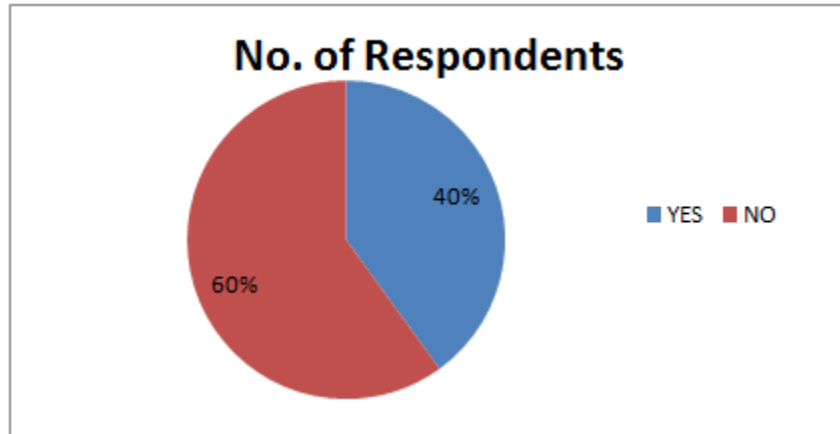
Q6. Do You Like The Ad of Innerwear, Which is Glamourised By Women “Ye to Bada Toing Hai”?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 11 | 22 |
| No | 39 | 78 |



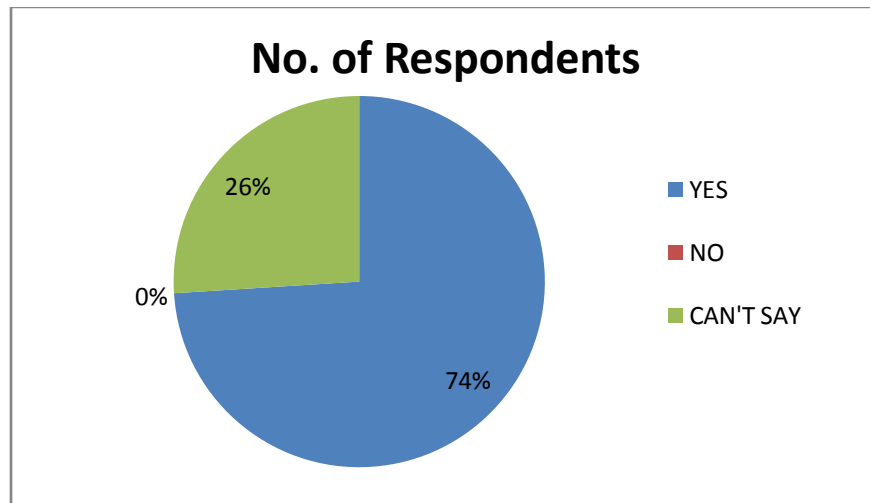
Q7. Do You Think Women Should Be There In The Ads of Male Oriented Products?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 20 | 40 |
| No | 30 | 60 |



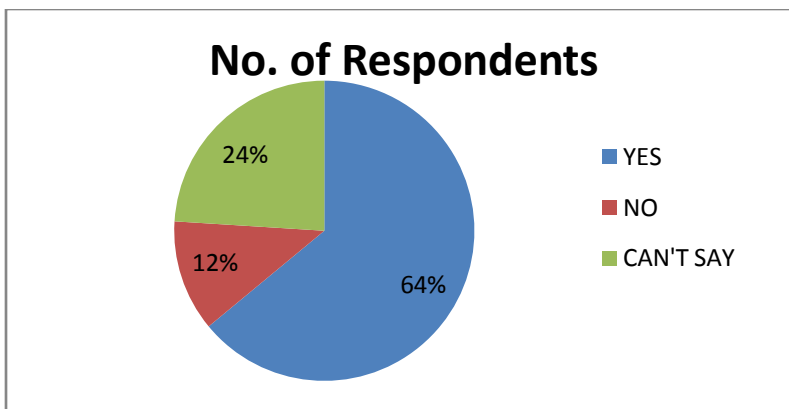
Q8. Do You Agree Women Potrayal Leads to Higher Viewership?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 37 | 78 |
| No | 0 | 0 |
| Can't say | 13 | 26 |



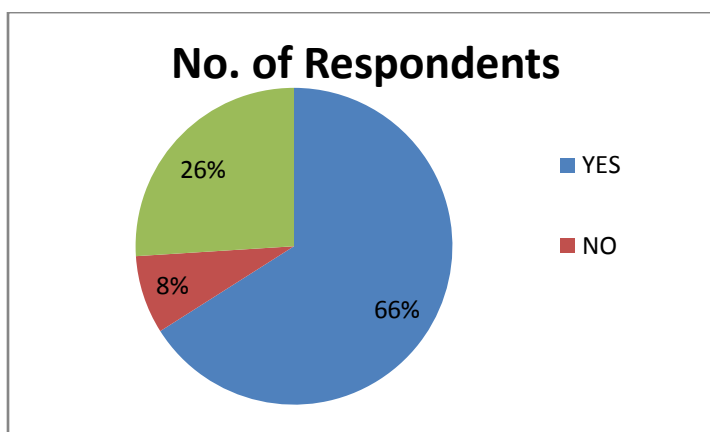
Q9. Do Women Get More Preference Than Men In The Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 32 | 64 |
| No | 6 | 12 |
| Can't say | 12 | 24 |



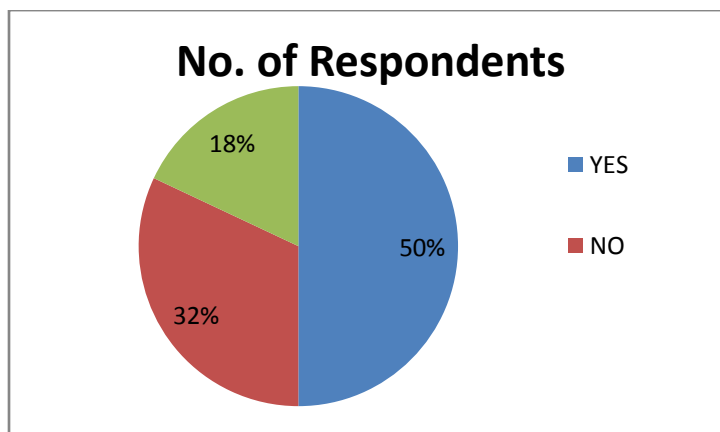
Q10. Do You Think Women Leads To Higher Sales Of Products?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 33 | 66 |
| No | 4 | 8 |
| Can't say | 13 | 26 |



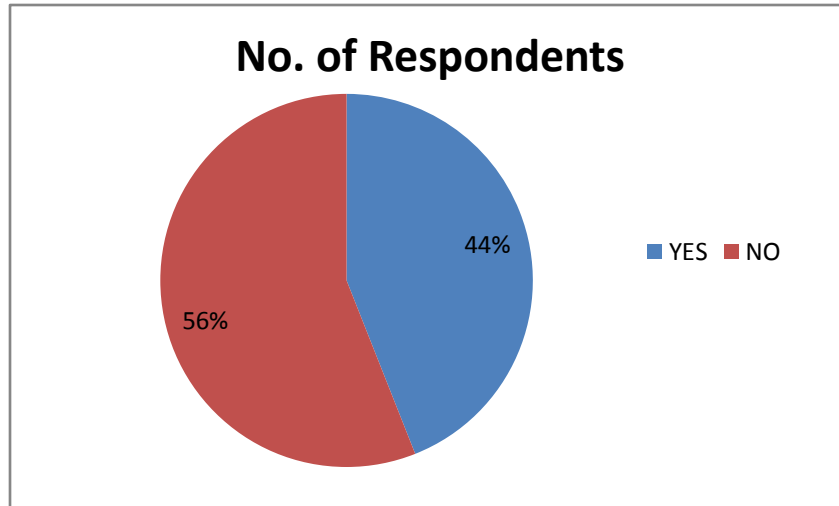
Q11. Is Glamour Only Leads To Females In Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 25 | 50 |
| No | 16 | 32 |
| Can't say | 9 | 18 |



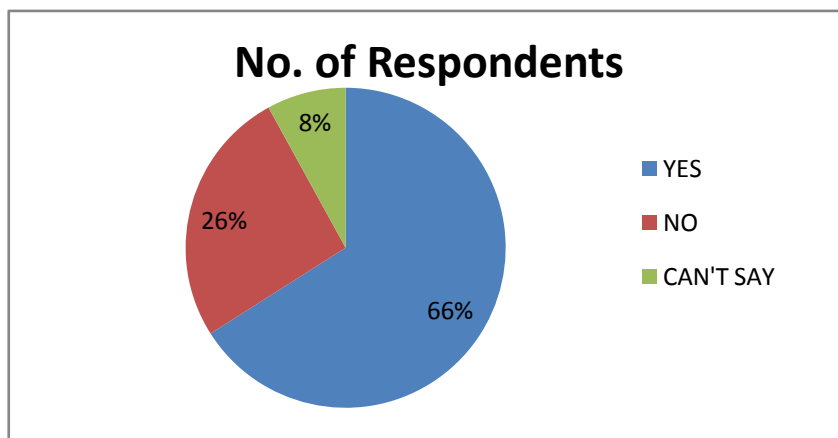
Q12. Men & Women Both Are Having Equal Opportunity In Media’... Is It True?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 22 | 44 |
| No | 28 | 56 |



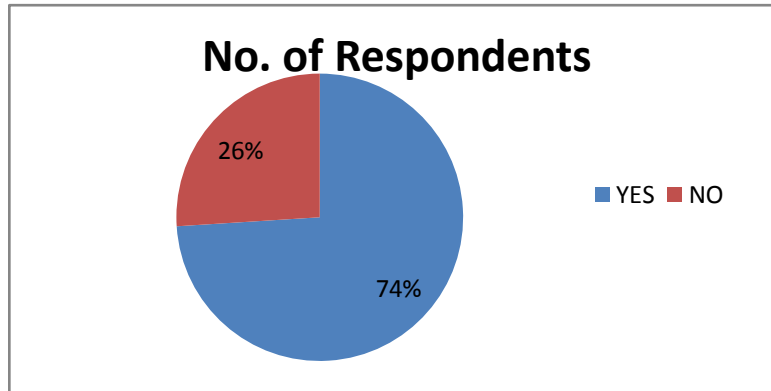
Q13. ‘Women Are Enjoying A Special Privileged In Advertisements’.... Is It A Correct Statement?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 33 | 66 |
| No | 13 | 26 |
| Can't say | 4 | 8 |



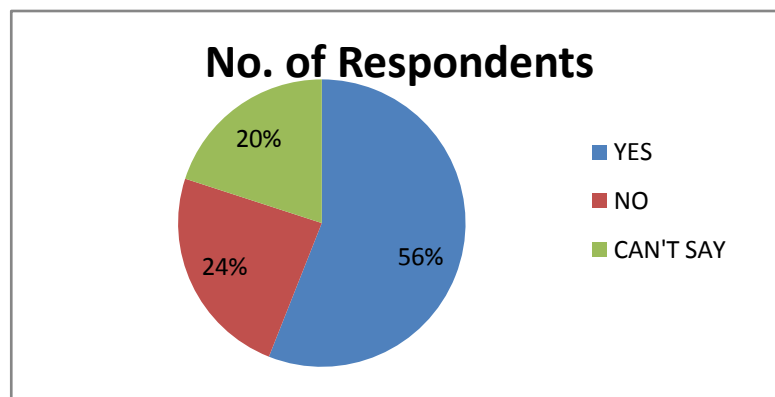
Q14. Do You Think That The Image of Women In Advertising Should Undergo A Change?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 37 | 74 |
| No | 13 | 26 |



Q15. Do You Think That Men Should Also Get the Same Importance As Women Holds In Advertisements?

| Basis | No. of Respondents | Percentage of Respondents |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Yes | 28 | 56 |
| No | 12 | 24 |
| Can't say | 10 | 20 |



CONCLUSION

I worked on this research project portrayal of women in advertising. My hypothesis proved to be wrong by the respondents on which the survey was conducted. The final review of the survey states that women were never used as a sex symbol in advertising. People like to watch women in advertisement as point of attraction, a little bit of emotional touch, business promotion & brand recognition. Women represents what the society holds as an idol image of her.

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- [4]. Grooms In. Advertisement. Elle. Nov. 2005.
- [5]. Levis Red Loop. Advertisement.Elle. Nov. 2005.
- [6]. Lee Cooper. Advertisement.Elle. Nov. 2005.
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