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The New Face of Business: Comparing Male and Female Gender Stereotypes

in Multi-Level Marketing Facebook Posts in India

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A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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in Multi-Level Marketing Facebook Posts in India

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India's huge financial power and recent economic expansion have been supported by multi-level marketing (MLM) initiatives over the last decade. This type of business structure is notorious for having shady ethics and for enforcing traditional stereotypes, and as MLMs enter the Indian market, they find themselves navigating even more gender and race-based stereotypes. In India—a country where women have one of the lowest labor participation rates in the world and where advertisements have historically portrayed women as submissive—multi-level marketing companies' posts on social media can have large influences on how the public sees gender roles in business.

To better understand the gender stereotypes present in Indian MLM social media posts, this study aimed to study trends and stereotypes in Facebook images posted by India's 5 largest MLM companies. The content analysis sample consisted of photos posted on the India-specific Facebook pages of the five largest MLM companies in India. The content analysis measured 733 images for gender roles by analyzing body language, interpersonal interactions, career roles, and other indications of sexist portrayals. The results showed that in some ways, stereotypical gender roles are still very present in Indian MLM Facebook posts. For example, men are still pictured in leadership roles far more than women. However, in other ways, these posts show men and women as equals. In this sample, men and women had equal representation in posts where they were using technology, being pictured with their family, and other traditionally gendered situations. This denotes social progress and a change in MLM marketing strategy, both of which are significant for this USD$1.9 billion industry.

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Introduction

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Marketing Advertisements in India

India currently has the seventh-largest economy in the world. Its mighty economic weight

has historically been largely disproportionately divided, with social castes often entrenched by

poverty, illiteracy, and neglect from large international marketing directives (Wright, 2017).

However, due to new rural outreaches, the majority of the Indian population is finally getting a

chance to participate in large-scale economy.

A large part of this new rural outreach belongs to multi-level marketing companies

(MLMs), also known as direct selling companies or network marketing companies. These MLMs

include more than 5 million distributors in India and hold a weight of more than USD$1.9 billion

in the Indian economy (Singh, 2015). MLM profits are growing particularly quickly in the

northern areas of the country, especially due to new efforts to market to rural areas (Singh,

2015). Rural Indian areas are ideal for MLM profits for two main reasons: First, because

villagers are able to buy products that they were not previously able to access; and second,

because MLM companies offer commercial opportunities to demographics who wouldn't

typically be able to participate in business, especially Indian women (Singh, 2015).

Because Indian women are a large target audience (Singh, 2015), MLMs need to be

aware of their marketing strategy and should change their social media strategy accordingly.

Historically, MLM-produced media features almost exclusively domestic, middle-aged white

American women (Lin, 2007). MLM participants are approximately 75% women and company

outreaches have usually catered to an American female demographic (Lin, 2007). However,

MLM target audiences are changing rapidly and there is not current literature regarding recent

changes in MLM advertisements in India. This area needs further marketing research if Indian MLMs plan to create effective social media posts for Indian audiences.

Another aspect of branding that MLMs should keep in mind is the way their social media posts may contribute to gender stereotypes. Decades of research have identified how advertisements portray gender stereotypes of men being aggressive and empowered (Garimella, A., & Mihalcea, 2016; Williams & Best, 1982) and women being sexualized and submissive (Rubio, 2018; Kang, 1997; Griffin, Viswanath & Schwartz, 1994). Two such theories that can help explain the effects of advertisements are social learning theory (Bandura, 1969) and cultivation analysis (Gerbner, 1986). Social learning theory posits that people can learn behaviors from the media they consume (Bandura, 1969). Social learning theory indicates that gender stereotypes in Indian MLM advertisements may affect how both men and women choose to act, especially if they become involved in MLM businesses. Likewise, cultivation analysis explains that media can affect one's perceptions and attitudes about the world (Gerbner, 1986).

Because of the vast reach of social media, MLMs have an opportunity to shape their industry brand with their Facebook posts. Per social learning theory and cultivation analysis, these advertisements can influence the way that over 1 billion Indians behave and perceive MLM business conduct. This study endeavors to analyze how Indian men and women are portrayed in MLM advertisements, to update existing literature, and examine the current trends in this new market, as well as identify changes that could and should be made.

Literature Review

India, with its population of over 1.3 billion people, has the seventh-largest economy in the world (Wright, 2017). Home to 18% of the world's population, India is expected to be more populous than China by the year 2050 (Wright, 2017). India is the largest country in South Asia,

and as such, has a varied and complex set of businesses that are driving its economic success (Sathye, 2003).

India has faced unique challenges that have crippled large-scale business marketing in the past (Ahmed, 2013). However, India's explosive growth can largely be attributed to a recent increase in marketing to rural villages (Ahmed, 2013; Hammond & Prahalad, 2004). As the research of Ahmed (2013) explains, one of the primary obstacles to India's economic growth in the past has been the country's huge diversity; its multiple languages, variety of ethnicities, low literacy rates, lack of transportation, and stark economic disparity make it difficult to cater to wide markets. Yet catering to these marginalized rural markets is precisely what is bringing such great success to the Indian economy. Since nearly two-thirds of the Indian population lives in rural areas, rural marketing has proved to be extremely effective. By localizing the language, branding with Indian patriotism, and individualizing distribution channels, rural markets have tapped into the country's vast economic potential (Ahmed, 2013).

Similar to the research of Ahmed (2013), the research of Hammond and Prahalad (2004) emphasizes the importance of including "poor households" when considering markets in developing countries. Hammond and Prahalad point out that India has roughly 170 million households that qualify as poor, yet combined, they account for more than USD$378 billion in income. In developing nations such as India and China, these lower-income populations account for the majority of purchasing power, yet they are the most often ignored demographic in advertising.

This rural outreach has primed India to become such a huge force in the MLM industry (Hammond & Prahalad, 2004; Ragland, Brouthers & Widmier, 2015). MLM companies perform most of their sales on a person-to-person basis (Hammond & Prahalad, 2004), which takes care

of the localization problems noted in the research of Ahmed (2013). Many Indians also prefer buying locally to buying from established institutions (Hammond & Prahalad, 2004), which has further made MLM companies' personal approach successful.

Multi-Level Marketing Companies

When discussing MLMs, it is important to define such a company and understand what differentiates it from a pyramid scheme. A *pyramid scheme*, which is illegal both in the United States (Hyman, 2007) and in India (Mathur, 2018), is a company where employees are "compensated primarily for recruiting other individuals into the organization rather than for making sales on a product or service" (Peterson & Albaum, 2007, p. 319). A multi-level marketing company, however, also referred to as a *direct selling company* or *network marketing company* (Lee, Lau & Loi, 2016), is a company where non-salaried independent agents can indeed recruit other agents, but primarily sell goods--either supplies or services--and then can earn a percentage of the sales of their downline agents (Franco & Gonzalez-Perez, 2016). This narrow difference between recruiting and selling allows MLMs to be legal, although with a tainted reputation from their close association with pyramid schemes (Koehn, 2001).

Ethics of MLMs. Because of its similarity to pyramid schemes, the MLM industry has ethics that are well documented and highly questionable. MLMs are called "fraudulent because they typically promise a large return in return for a small investment…. Those who come in [and become distributors] later, however, make little or even lose money" (Koehn, 2001, p. 153). Of the roughly 13.6 million members of MLMs around the world, each has unique aspirations for their company, but very few make a profit: According to Hyman (2007), 99% of MLM distributors earn only 0.002% of the total profits. The questionable ethics are well documented:

"MLM is without question controversial…. Indeed, the very term *multi-level marketing* seems to raise hackles" (Peterson & Albaum, 2007, p. 318).

Although most of the current literature regarding the immorality of MLMs is centered in the United States, India is not immune from these shady ethics. As this new business structure enters the Indian economy, several "unscrupulous schemes" have arisen that caused independent distributors to lose money and have damaged the credibility of investors (Shenoy, 2018). Ever since MLMs entered India, they have consistently been involved in pyramid schemes, especially because of India's lack of legal regulations for claims about how much money one can realistically make (Babu & Anand, 2015). In an effort to ensure legality and manage business ethics, the *India Business Times* has called for the Indian government to include MLMs under the Consumer Protection Bill as well as enforce product safety guidelines at state levels (Shenoy, 2018).

Aside from the legal aspects, MLMs also have the reputation of being unethical because of the way the recruiting process affects distributors' personal relationships. Distributors usually recruit within their social circles, which can negatively affect close relationships. Higher-ranking MLM leaders may expect, and sometimes even encourage, lower-level MLM distributors to insert their business goals into their personal relationships (Koroth & Sarada, 2012). According to Hyman's (2007) publication, some of distributors' biggest concerns come from the encouragement to "abuse professional-client relationships" and "to recruit new sales associates in socially and psychologically unacceptable ways (e.g., propagating myths that anyone can be a good salesperson and MLM is the road to riches)" (p. 1). Distributors may face role conflicts as they try to combine their personal and professional lives in the recruiting process, especially since many MLMs encourage their members to capitalize on social relationships in order to

increase their commercial success (Koroth & Sarada, 2012). The difficulty of finding recruits can even cause contention among members of the same organization as they bitterly compete for new recruits in the same social circles (Oksanen, 1999).

MLM popularity. MLMs have thrived across the world in recent years (Lin & Hassay, 2009). MLMs have been successful because they have several advantages that regular single-level businesses do not. Krige (2012) suggests possible reasons people still join are empowerment, self-improvement, and entrepreneurship. As a business, MLMs are also attractive because of their low barrier of entry, making it an accessible opportunity for nearly anyone because of their low or nonexistent educational or experiential requirements (Franco & Gonzalez-Perez, 2016). Other MLM companies draw customers with the promise of financial freedom by creating extra income and boosting self-esteem (Reavis, 2014). Others may join for the challenge of trying something new or for work recognition (Schuster, 2010).

In addition to offering the possibility of being financially advantageous on an individual level, MLMs can contribute to a nation's overall economy (Shenoy, 2018). As MLMs expand into developing markets, they offer business opportunities to those who otherwise would not have access to active income streams. For demographics who still experience social stigmas in the Indian workforce, such as women, ethnic minorities, and older people (Spire Research, 2011; Lin, 2007; Franco & Gonzalez-Perez, 2016), MLMs can provide a way for distributors to support themselves and their families. When individuals can support their families, they reduce the need for government welfare and increase the average income level in rural areas. This is particularly important for India, as MLMs are opening business opportunities for women. India ranks 135th out of 144 countries on women's labor force participation and still struggles with discrimination

among social castes (Wright, 2017), so these marginalized groups are jumping at the opportunity to participate in business.

Another factor that makes MLMs popular is the opportunity for leadership. The research of Sparks and Schenk (2001) posits that MLMs offer a chance at "transformational leadership," which is the idea that when people find a higher purpose in their career, they develop leadership skills, team cohesion, job satisfaction, and increased work performance. Since MLMs are usually based on close relationships between distributor and consumer, transformational leadership is more likely to take place (Sparks & Schenk, 2001).

Other characteristics that entice people to join these companies are the social influences. Many people join because their friends are participating in MLMs (Schuster, 2010). The research of Koroth and Sarada (2012) studied Indian MLMs and found that the top reason that people joined MLMS was pressure. Of the 614 MLM distributors who participated in Koroth and Sarada's study, 378 of them (62%) cited pressure from existing members as their top reason for joining, followed by 144 respondents who joined for the company's products, and 92 who joined to try and make extra income. This peer pressure exhibited within MLMs isn't surprising, especially since the success of the distributor heavily relies on creating a positive image of MLMs in order to recruit more people (Wotruba, Brodie & Stanworth, 2005).

Women in MLMs. Historically, MLMs have typically tried to recruit women (Krige, 2012) and 75% of MLM participants are women (Lin, 2007). Part of the reason for women's high participation in MLMs is that women feel more comfortable conducting business with men online than they do conducting business with men in person (Ward-Reichert, 2014). Women also tend do see conducting business online as more socially acceptable than speaking about their business in person (Ward-Reichert, 2014). These social mores are critical to MLMs, especially

because MLM participation is tied directly to increased use of technology (Schuster, 2010). Sullivan and Delaney (2016) described selling products over social media as gendered work, designed with stay-at-home women in mind. Social media also allows women to reach a greater audience than they would in person (Ward-Reichert, 2014). Another reason women may be more involved in MLMs is that the business foray into social media offers them support, as there are many women-only chat groups and entrepreneurship support systems (Ward-Reichert, 2014).

Despite international expansion, most women participating in MLMs fit a very narrow set of characteristics. According to Lin's 2007 research, the typical MLM member is "a 43-year-old, married, Caucasian woman who had completed some college courses, had no temporary or permanent disabilities and spoke English at home" (p. 275). MLM ads traditionally show women almost exclusively in the role of a white domestic homemaker (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lin, 2007; Lin & Hassay, 2009), leaving a gaping hole in research as to the new MLM trends in other countries. Since more than 60% of MLM distributors in India are women ("Indian Direct Selling: Facts and Figures," 2016), the historical MLM advertisements are clearly not representative of what the new MLM world looks like, and more research is needed to update the literature on how companies are adapting to increasing international markets and are portraying women in changing social and political times.

MLM expansion in India. MLMs are increasingly expanding into emerging markets. The MLM business model has flourished in developing countries all around the world, including many countries in South America (Franco & Gonzalez-Perez, 2016), but their new investment in Asia has proved strategic. This area is now the world's most profitable region for MLMs, with annual revenues of over USD$37 billion in the South Asian geographic area (Spire Research, 2011). In India alone, the new industry is worth over USD $1.9 billion (Shenoy, 2018). Driven

by increasing urbanization, growing consumerism, and improved income levels, MLMs have been massively successful in India, especially in the northeast regions of the country (Singh, 2015).

There are approximately 5 million people involved in MLM organizations in India ("Indian Direct Selling: Facts and Figures," 2016). Roughly 60% of them are women, which is consistent with previous research about female recruitment and participation in MLMs ("Indian Direct Selling: Facts and Figures," 2016). However, more men are joining MLMs with hopes of entrepreneurship and extra income ("Indian Direct Selling: Facts and Figures," 2016).

Both men and women who join MLMs in India have an extra incentive to spread their business's message. The focus on rural outreach has made MLMs a prime business model to try to keep up with India's increasingly insatiable demand for goods such as cosmetics, vacuum cleaners, water filters, health and wellness products, and other goods that would otherwise be difficult to get (Singh, 2015). The MLM business model means low overhead costs for corporate, especially if most customers can order their goods online, skyrocketing MLMs' business power to 38% of India's non-retail sales (Water, 2013).

Indian representation in MLM advertisements. Perhaps one of the reasons that MLMs have been so successful in India is because MLM companies are willing to represent Indians and Indian culture in their advertisements. This is significant because Indians have been drastically underrepresented in other global advertisements (Mastro & Stern, 2003). In line with previous studies about Asian media representation, this study defines "Asian" as anyone whose ancestors are from the Asian continent, and India is frequently considered part of Asia (WorldAtlas, 2016). Although Asian Americans comprise 4% of the American population, advertisements only portray Asians in 2% of their character cast (Mastro & Stern, 2003). Actors and models from

Asia usually have minor and non-recurring roles (Children Now, 2004). Because there is so little representation, there is also a lack of research in the academic field as well, making it difficult to ascertain more stereotypes about Asians and people of Asian descent (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

When advertisements and other media do feature Asians, the advertisements are most frequently related to technology (Mastro & Stern, 2003). Although the representation of Asians is low, Asians frequently play positive character roles in the ads. Reputation of these characters is high and respectable (Children Now, 2004). Indian, Japanese, Pakistani, and other Asian cultures are typically portrayed in American advertisements as prestigious. Of all Asian representation in commercials, 37% of the characters were considered high-class and in roles of professional positions, which was more than any other race (Children Now, 2004). They are nearly always dressed neatly and conservatively, and their characters have very passive personalities (Mastro & Stern, 2003). However, these racial stereotypes may apply differently to men and women according to gender stereotypes (Mastro & Stern, 2003).

However, MLM companies have been eager to give Indians their turn in the advertising spotlight. MLMs in India are growing quickly due to aggressive corporate advertising that feature Indian people (Water, 2013). Celebrity endorsement is a way companies are breaking into the Indian market. Cricket star Virat Kohli has become a brand ambassador for big-name MLMs such as Herbalife, forcing other MLM companies to advertise more aggressively to keep up (Water, 2013). As MLM brands continue to grow in India, their advertisements have become increasingly tailored to Indian markets, trying to provide products that will resonate specifically with Indian people (Water, 2013).

The Influence of Gender Stereotypes Within Advertising

Gender stereotypes have existed as long as humans have. The roles that each sex is supposed to fulfill have been perpetuated both in both inter- and intra-gender conversations as men and women stereotype the opposite gender as well as themselves (Doyle & Paludi, 1991). The differences in social expectations between men and women are usually influenced more by environment than genetic predisposition or biological determinism (Brannon & David, 1976; Pleck, 1981). Matsumoto (2001) noted that children can learn gender stereotypes from adults and from other children, and these stereotypes serve as socialization models for children. Following a social-learning perspective, these gendered norms are exacerbated and perpetuated by media (Doyle & Paludi, 1991). Many of these gender stereotypes are linked to traditional societal roles (Eagly, 1987), but are still being perpetuated in the present day in many forms of media and advertising.

To better understand how advertising affects gender stereotypes, this study needs definitions of certain terms related to gender stereotypes. This research uses definitions from Matsumoto's (2001) textbook on gender and culture to help clarify concepts. In both Matsumoto's book and in this study, gender is a way "to distinguish male and female members of the human species, but with emphasis on social, rather than biological, factors" (p. 196). This study also uses Matsumoto's (2001) definition of gender roles: "The social roles, including familial, occupational, and recreational activities, that men and women occupy with differential frequency" (p. 196). Similar to gender roles, sex roles are "beliefs concerning appropriate relationships between the genders" (p. 196). Additionally, this study defines gender stereotypes as "the psychological traits and behaviors that are believed to occur with differential frequency in the two gender groups" (pp. 197).

To explore how gender stereotypes permeate societies worldwide, this study examines gender stereotypes in several different contexts. The following sections examine general male gender stereotypes, followed by male stereotypes in advertisements, male stereotypes in the workplace, and gender stereotypes of Indian men. This literature review will then examine female stereotypes in each of the same areas.

Gender stereotypes of men. In media, men are stereotyped as proactive, strong, and sexual. Williams and Best (1982) conducted a study on gender stereotypes that encompassed more than five thousand individuals from 30 different countries. In the study, researchers asked participants to read through a list of 300 adjectives and decide if the adjective was more associated with women or with men. The participants also classified each adjective as positive or negative. The results varied from country to country: The United States, Italy, and Australia tended to view women more positively, whereas countries such as Nigeria, Japan, and Israel viewed men more positively. However, the overall trend in the research of Williams and Best (1982) was that men were considered more proactive, as men were more frequently associated with traits such as aggression, dominance, and achievement. Many of the traits associated with men were also unfavorable: Of the 47 traits assigned exclusively to men, 17 of them were unanimously negative.

In a study similar to Williams & Best's, Fiebert & Meyer (1997) conducted research that asked a sample of college students to assess gender stereotypes. In their study, students completed the sentence "A man (or woman) is…" with a stereotype they felt was common in their society. The researchers recorded each student's response, then coded the responses as positive, neutral, or negative. Some of the common responses for men were "mechanical,"

"competitive," and "unemotional." The results showed that stereotypes of men were significantly more negative and more agentive than stereotypes of women.

A third study also used adjective association to identify gender stereotypes. Bem (1974) asked a large pool of participants to rank a series of descriptive traits according to how desirable that trait was in a man or a woman. Bem instructed participants to rank the adjectives the way they thought best fit society's standards rather than their personal opinions. The traits that participants ranked fitting for men included analytical, independent, and self-sufficient. Stephan, et al. (2000) also found similar results regarding the "traditional male type of aggressiveness, competitiveness, and lack of compassion" (p. 64).

While many of these stereotypes of males seem to be cross-culturally consistent, as shown in Williams & Bests's (1992) research, it is also important to note that male stereotypes also differ slightly from situation to situation. Male stereotypes can be influenced by family situations, social institutions, community mores, school environments, media consumption, and a variety of other factors (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2000). Although many stereotypes are consistent across the world, Europe and the United States show the strongest gender role differences, even though they are the two regions in the world where sex roles are most emphatically minimized (Costa, Terracciano & McCrae, 2001). This is perhaps because people in Europe and the United States associate gender norms more with societal roles rather than any biological differences in traits (Costa, Terracciano & McCrae, 2001). The research of Costa et al. (2001) also suggests that gender norms differ the most in countries that stereotype men as ambitious. This supports Hofstede's (1980) research on cultural views of gender stereotypes. Countries that have more masculine stereotypes of men are more likely to associate men with having higher earnings and being more ambitious (Hofstede, 1980). Later, Hofstede (1998)

elaborated on masculine cultures and found that gender role differences are larger when men are stereotyped to be unemotional, factual, and are discouraged from crying.

Stereotypes of men in media. The research of Williams & Best (1982), Bem (1974) and Fiebert & Meyer (1997) all support Brannon and David's (1976) observations that men are conditioned by both society and by media to meet stereotypes of being tough and insensitive to criticism. These rough stereotypes occur frequently in advertising, but they occur especially frequently in ads for healthcare services. In public health campaigns, men are often stereotyped as violent or uninterested in others (Barker et al., 2010), which can discourage men from seeking healthcare out of fear of being seen as weak. Men can internalize the media's portrayal of male figures, especially from the Internet, television, and advertisements (Barker et al., 2010). The advertisement portrayals of men frequently "encourage risk-taking behaviour, competition and violence" (pp. 541).

Another consistent stereotype of men in media is that men are obsessed with sex. Advertisements, particularly for products with a male target audience, often feature male characters with strong libido, and their definitions of strong male characters encourage men to believe that they need sex more than women do (Barker et al., 2010). Advertisements also encourage the idea that men are constantly focused on sex and that sexual prowess is an advantageous trait (Ter Bogt et al., 2010). Although advertisements typically portray men as being very sexual, the attitudes men portray on television toward women and sex are non-relational (Ter Bogt et al., 2010). This means that men do not have any emotional attachment to the woman with whom they are sexually involved, and men do not see the woman as fully human (Ter Bogt et al., 2010). Advertisements typically portray women as passive, compliant objects that exist for men's sexual gratification (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014). Galdi, Maass

and Cadinu (2014) reported that media tends to present men as having non-relational attitudes toward sex, such as perceptions that sex does not need to be consensual or emotionally intimate.

Although decades of studies have documented this type of masculine representation in advertisements, many ads do not seem to change. In the work of Furnham and Bitar (1993), a study gathered advertisements from Canada, Italy, Britain, and the U.S. The study compared how these countries represented men in their advertisements and found that ads still stereotype men as successful and sexual. The stereotypes in this study are identical to the same advertisement stereotypes that were in advertisements in similar studies 15 years earlier, indicating that male roles in ads are not changing (Furnham & Bitar, 1993).

Gender representations of men on Facebook. The same stereotypes that are present in general media, as discussed above, are also present in social media posts—especially on Facebook. Facebook is the world's largest social media site, boasting the widest demographic makeup of any major social media site (Social media fact sheet, 2018). Although there are fewer men on Facebook than women (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007), male gender stereotypes still exist in Facebook posts.

According to the research of Brandtzaeg (2017), men are stereotypically more aggressive than women when it comes to interacting with political and government-related information on their Facebook profiles. Brandtzaeg (2017) also argues that men on Facebook tend to follow the trends that Twitter and blogs are showing—that men are more likely than women to voice their opinions on economic and social issues and interact more with political news.

Gendered representations of men on Facebook tend to be overly sexualized (Manago, Ward, Lemm, Reed & Seabrook, 2015). Although this has been an issue considered exclusive to women and is well researched (Meier and Gray 2013; Vandenbosch & Eggermont, 2012), it

affects men as well. In the research of Manago (2013) and the research of Siibak (2010), men tend to post sexually alluring photos of themselves on social media dur to pressure to appear attractive and measure up to stereotypes of being manly, muscular, or athletic. Many representations of males on social media, and on Facebook specifically, are sexually proactive and even aggressive (Manago et al., 2015), and when men do not measure up to these stereotypes, they can feel shameful about their appearance (Manago et al., 2015).

   Stereotypes of men in work settings. Research finds that the stereotypes of men in advertisements can affect men's perceptions and behaviors in real life, and these behaviors extend to public situations such as school and work settings (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014). When looking to hire for certain roles in the workplace, hiring professionals tend to believe that upper management and executive positions require characteristics that are traditionally male and that men are capable in these functions (Heilman, 2012).

   Gender stereotypes also affect relationships between coworkers in the workplace. Gender-based stereotyping and harassment is more commonly perpetrated by coworkers than by any other relationship (Keyton, 1996; Leskinen, Cortina & Kabat, 2011). In the research of Galdi, Maass and Cadinu (2014), the type of media that men consumed significantly affected the way they treated female peers. The 2014 study involved 141 male participants who watched short TV clips. Researchers showed each man one of three different clips: A clip that objectified women, one that showed women in professional work or school settings, or a neutral control clip. After watching the clip, researchers asked the men to engage in a conversation with a woman over video chat. As part of the study, researchers gave the men jokes to tell during the conversation. Of the 10 jokes that researchers provided, five were sexist and invoked negative gender stereotypes, such as women not being able to drive a car well and being ridiculed for

having small breasts. The men who watched the video clips of objectified women were more likely to choose sexist jokes to tell during the video chat than the men who watched the clips of "professional" women (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014).

Male gender stereotypes can also influence men's perceptions of women in the workplace. In the work of Rudman and Borgida (1995), researchers exposed male participants to either control commercials with no gender stereotypes, or to commercials that had sexualized stereotypes of women and controlling, authoritative stereotypes of men. After viewing the commercials, the male subjects then interviewed a female job applicant. The men were who had been exposed to the commercials with gender stereotypes were not only more likely to consider women as objects, but they were also significantly more likely to engage in inappropriate interactions with the female interviewee, deem her less competent, and be more controlling and manipulative (Rudman & Borgida, 1995). To add to the work of Rudman and Borgida (1995), other studies find that male gender stereotypes influence men's workplace behavior in other ways as well. Because stereotypes of men tend to include more proactive and agentive qualities, men tend to take more credit when a group project is successful (Haynes & Heilman, 2013).

In addition to encouraging harassment at work, male stereotypes also influence which industries men choose to work in. The heavy media stereotypes of men being autonomous, independent, and proactive give rise to traditionally male jobs, such as construction or military work. Even within individual fields and industries, there are niches that men stereotypically occupy. For example, in academics, men are stereotypically seen more in the sciences than in the humanities; in the medical field, men are more likely to be surgeons than pediatricians (Heilman, 2012).

Stereotypes of Indian men. Much like general stereotypes of men, stereotypes of Indian men are strong, successful, and confident. The research of Eagly and Kite (1987) listed some of the top stereotypical traits of Indian men as "proud," "honest," and "self-confident." The research of Eagly and Kite (1987) also noted that when people recounted stereotypes of India as a country, their descriptions were actually the stereotypes of specifically Indian men—not women. In the research of Das and Singh (2014) on Indian men who advertised themselves on dating websites, the stereotypical traits were aggression, leadership, industriousness, and dominance, especially because India continues to be a patriarchal society.

Perhaps one of the largest differences in gender stereotypes was that advertisements are much more likely to picture Indian men having a career than Indian women (Anand, 2013). Society also stereotypes many middle-class Indian men in their careers, and Indian men usually appear in advertisements as having a technical job (Fuller & Narasimhan, 2007). Another study found that Indian men were much more likely than men from other countries to stereotype males in a managerial position (Rajgopal, 2009). Punia (2005) noted that within Indian stereotypes, men were so used to the male manager stereotype that they were uncomfortable being supervised by a woman. Many Indian men hold deep stereotypes against women, especially in the workplace. In India, there are approximately two women in managerial positions for every 100 men, far less than the US and Canada (which average 67 and 68, respectively) (Basu, 2008). Indian men also associated managerial success with other men and much less with women (Basu, 2008).

Even with this literature, there is still a noticeable lack of research concerning intersectional gender and race analysis in consumption advertising, especially regarding anyone of any kind of Asian ethnicity (Kim & Chung, 2005). The little literature that exists highlights

heavy patriarchal gender roles in media, although this is beginning to change. Not only is the literature outdated in this subject, but the climate of India is changing rapidly and has not been thoroughly examined in several decades. India has the fastest growing economy in the world and more women are entering the workforce, which has changed both the social and the economic landscape. As MLM companies tap into India's massive economy, their advertising strategies open a new area of gender portrayals to analyze.

Gender stereotypes of women. While society tends to stereotype men as more individualistic and agentive, society is more likely to stereotype women as communal (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Lueptow, Garovich, & Lueptow, 1995; Schein, 2001), meaning that women usually work together in groups and prefer cooperation over confrontation. In addition to being communal, stereotypical female characteristics include other community-building and interpersonal traits, such as liking children, avoiding harsh language, and being understanding (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Like male stereotypes, societal roles of women also tend to be largely similar across various cultures (Heilman, 2012).

These largely ubiquitous female stereotypes also include being compliant, passive, and dependent on men for support (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014). Many cultures worldwide still cling to traditional gender roles, such as women being gullible, weak, and sensitive (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). More stereotypes suggest that women are selfless and consistently concerned about others' welfare (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). The more women comply with these expectations, the more likely they are to be accepted in society and allowed to participate (Prentice & Carranza, 2002).

Stereotypes of women in media. Advertisements, especially in television, are a powerful tool for disseminating and enforcing gender stereotypes. Most media channels across history and

various cultures portray women as "decorative elements whose value is based solely on their physical appearance" (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014, p. 2). When researching stereotypes of women on television, Lin (1998) conducted a content analysis of 505 commercials on major television broadcasting networks over the course of a week. Lin's study found that although television ads portrayed both men and women as sensual beings, the advertisements depicted women far more frequently as sexual objects.

These media stereotypes enforce the idea that "for women, looks and sexiness are all important" (Ter Bogt et al., 2010, p. 844). Television shows set up expectations that women should be sexually attractive and that their worth is based on beauty; at the same time, women's behavior should not be proactive, aggressive, or enjoy or seek out sex (Ward, 2002). Like traditional cultural stereotypes, the sexualized stereotypes of women in media are consistent all around the world (Ward, 2002).

Women have long been stereotyped in media, and the research of Goffman (1979) has become a hallmark study on the subject. In his analysis of television and magazines, Goffman noticed five trends about gender roles, all of which have been expanded upon by many other researchers. The five trends in Goffman's study are relative size, feminine touch, function ranking, ritualization of subordination, and licensed withdrawal. Goffman's categories have two unique strengths in comparison to other ranking instruments used in gendered advertising: First, Goffman's categories explore relationships between men and women, rather than focusing on one or the other, giving a more complete image of gender stereotypes and how stereotypes of women are reinforced by stereotypes of men; and second, these categories offer a more concrete way of analyzing the less obvious elements of advertisements to understand gendered messaging (Sirakaya & Sonmez, 2000).

Relative size. First, Goffman (1979) noted that advertisements depicted women as significantly smaller than men. Biologically speaking, men tend to be taller and heavier than women, but advertisements seemed to portray extremes. Printed ads in magazines frequently featured women who were unrealistically shorter and drastically smaller than men. This phenomenon became known as "relative size" and served to emphasize a man's power while creating women as the physically and socially weaker sex. In the research of Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000), the trend of relative size continues today. Their research included a content analysis of travel brochures in the United States and confirmed that relative size is still a prevalent way of physically diminishing women in advertisements and showing women as a sort of recreation while traveling. Even as recently as 2017, research found that media related to exercise and fitness continues this trend (Lane, 2017).

Feminine touch. Goffman (1979) observed that when advertisements pictured women alongside physical objects, women frequently held the objects gently or caressed them, rather than manipulating the objects or using them practically. Women also tended to touch their face and neck needlessly and seductively. Whichever type of feminine touch the advertisement displayed, the woman was never using her touch in a utilitarian way. This trend appears in many forms of mass communications, such as travel brochures (Sirakaya & Somnez, 2000), European advertisements (Wex, 1979), and magazine ads (Kang, 1997). The research of Masse and Rosenblum (1988) also found that women tended to touch themselves, products, or surrounding surfaces much more than men did, indicating that women are defenseless, need physical support, and are dependent on the products they sell.

Function ranking. Goffman noted that in heterogeneous environments, men and women consistently held different roles. Men were more likely to be in a role of authority, and men-

women pairs usually showed the man teaching a woman. Goffman was one of the first to note this trend in advertisements, and since his publication, multiple studies have supported this finding. For example, when companies need to hire an employee to fill a higher-ranking role, executives believe that men are more likely to be capable in these functions (Heilman, 2012). When completing group projects in the workplace, men take more credit than women when the project is successful, which leads to more promotions and higher-ranking positions (Haynes & Heilman, 2013). Additionally, advertisements tend to feature women in domestic scenes rather than work scenes, and when women are shown in work scenes, they occupy lower-level positions such as food workers, secretaries, and assistants (Basu, 2008).

Ritualization of subordination. The phrase "ritualization of subordination" refers to women repeatedly shown in physically subordinate poses. Advertisements are more likely to portray women sitting or lying down than men, even in scenarios when that is not a socially appropriate behavior (such as at work or at social gatherings). Other behaviors in advertisements that fall into this category include women who are being held, leaning on someone for support, or canting their head to one side. Other studies have confirmed Goffman's theory in this area. In television especially, women are much more likely to be scantily clothed, more likely to be suggestively posed, and usually assume a submissive physical stance, as though women are mere bodies without a personality (Bartky, 1990; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997). The research of Masse and Rosenblum (1988) also supports this finding. When researching advertisements in United States magazines, Masse and Rosenblum found that women are more likely than men to have a subordinate stance.

Licensed withdrawal. In addition to being physically subordinate, Goffman (1979) posited that women are also less psychologically agentive. Many advertisements portray women

who are experiencing licensed withdrawal, defined as a promoted state of absent-mindedness, withdrawal from the situation, or a lack of interaction with other subjects or with the environment (Goffman, 1979). Some signs of licensed withdrawal in advertisements include women gazing off into the distance, not looking directly into the camera, not making eye contact with other subjects in the photo, unnecessarily covering their eyes or mouth, or smiling expansively. Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996), experts in visual semiosis, studied how an image featuring licensed withdrawal affects the viewer. This research found that when a women in an ad displays licensed withdrawal, her position fractures the relationship between the viewer and the advertisement, especially when there is a lack of eye contact between subject and viewer. Another study that confirmed this trend was Masse & Rosenblum's (1988) research on United States magazines. Their study found that magazines frequently portray women as detached from people and disengaged from their surroundings in general. Since women are more likely to exhibit licensed withdrawal in advertisements, women make fewer psychological demands on the viewer (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996).

Goffman's variables are so comprehensive that many more studies have used them as measuring tools for decades. For example, Kang's (1997) study used Goffman's variables as a base to develop 17 measures. These 17 measures helped researchers to analyze how frequently advertisements portrayed women as submissive. The study compared women in advertisements from 1979 and 1991. In 12 of the 17 categories, there was no statistically significant change, indicating that despite political and social pushes for feminism, women's submissive image did not significantly change in that 12-year span.

In addition to Goffman's (1979) and Kang's (1997) research, another study supported the trend that gender stereotypes still exist. Döring and Pöschl (2006) found that gender stereotypes

of women in advertisements for cell phone companies still followed Goffman's observations nearly three decades later. In an analysis of over 200 images, Döring and Pöschl applied Goffman's variables and added two more: Revealing clothing and fields of action. Their study found that advertisements depict women with what researchers referred to as "feminine touch," or unnecessarily touching to one's face or neck, and with ritualized subordination, or lying down or sitting more than men. The research of Doring and Poschl (2006) also found that women are more likely to wear revealing clothing and are more likely to fulfill a decorative function in advertisements. However, it is significant that their study also found that Goffman's variable of relative size has largely faded, with men and women being pictured with more realistic physical height.

Another notable study is Lindner's (2004) research. The research of Lindner (2004) found that although advertisements have changed the way they portray women since the 1950s, women are still the weaker gender. Although women appear more frequently in business settings and less regularly in domestic environments than they used to, advertisements still depict women as submissive according to Goffman's measures. Women still have high instances of licensed withdrawal and ritualized subordination through their poses and body posture. Additionally, Lindner noted that advertisements positioned women in physically restrictive situations--being wrapped in a blanket, being held tightly to a man's side, etc., Women were also more sexually depicted than in the 1950s, suggesting that objectification is still prevalent in contemporary advertisements (Lindner, 2004).

Gender representations of women on Facebook. The same stereotypes that are present in general media, as discussed above, are also present in social media posts—especially on Facebook. In social media posts, women were judged more harshly than the women would be in

real life (Bailey, Steeves, Burkell & Regan, 2013). In photos posted on Facebook, women who were pictured in bikinis or were making the "duckface" expression were considered annoying, fake, and cliché (Bailey et al., 2013). If women posted about their male partners, research participants said the women "indicated immaturity and insecurity" (Bailey et al., 2013). Some feminists had hoped that Facebook's breadth would enable women to expand their sphere of social engagement and influence (Bailey et al., 2013), and indeed, there are far more women than men on Facebook and on social media in general (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007). However, female representations on Facebook focus on the narratives of white, middle- and upper-class women, with a large gap in both social media representation and in academic literature concerning representations of women of other racial and economic backgrounds (Ringrose & Renold, 2012). The representations of women that do exist on Facebook tend to show women—and even girls as young as 12—as sexualized, using their social media posts and photos to appeal to men (Kapidizic and Herring, 2011). Another study of 1,500 Canadian women's Facebook profiles showed trends of women depicting themselves as popular with an active social and work life as well as overemphasizing their romantic partners and appearing partially clad or sexually posed in the photos they posted (Bailey et al., 2013).

Women on Facebook also tend to follow the stereotype that women are sympathetic to suffering. Many representations of women on Facebook support humanitarian causes more than men do, and women are more likely to post content that reinforces their social relationships (Brandtzaeg, 2015).

Stereotypes of women in work settings. When social media shows women in the workplace, the posts can affect the real-life working conditions of women. Women stereotypically talk far less in work meetings and other work-related settings, and men to not see

women as experts in any field of work (Andsager & Roe, 1999; Arnett, 2002). Women are far more likely to be homemakers than men, and the women who do participate in the workforce tend to occupy lower-level positions (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). The research of Eagly and Steffen (1984) also noted stereotypes that women are easily influenced by others' opinions in career settings, and that even though the majority of women have a job outside the home, the image of a homemaker is one of the most prominent perceptions of females.

Other stereotypes of women in the workplace influence salary expectations. In the research of Eagly and Steffen (1984), researchers asked participants to read brief descriptions about people who had a job. The description always included whether the employee was male or female along with the job duties, but the job title was only sometimes included. Participants then estimated the salary of the employee. The study found that participants judged women as having lower salaries than men, even when both male and female employees had the same job title. When the descriptions omitted job titles, the salary estimates for women were even lower. A second part of the study asked participants to read the job descriptions that had no job title and guess what the job title should be. For the same job duties, participants assigned lower-ranking job titles to female employees and higher-ranking job titles to male employees. The stark difference in "gender stereotypes implies that perceptions of lower status persons resemble those of average women and that perceptions of higher status persons resemble those of average men" (pp. 740).

While women may worry about men judging them as less capable or skilled than their male peers, women often encounter even worse stereotypes while on the job. Women who hold leadership positions in the workplace are viewed as threatening (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014),

and are much more likely to experience gender-based harassment when they do not comply with expected gender roles (Dall'Ara & Maass, 2000; Maass, Cadinu, Guarnieri, & Grasselli, 2003). In a 2003 study, Maass et al. (2003) researched the reactions when researchers told male participants that women would be better at tasks. The study began when researchers gave 80 participants--all male—each a computer and told them they would be participating in tasks that involved visual memory. The participants in the control group were not told anything about gender differences. In the experimental group, however, researchers told participants that women are usually much better at this type of task. During the study, the participants could communicate via computer chat with two other "participants" (one male and one female, but both fake accounts). In the chat, the fake male account sent sexually harassing images and messages. The female account objected and was angry. The study then observed and compared the differences of the participants' reactions. The men who had been told that women were better at the task were far more likely to harass the female chat account. Maass et al. (2003) posited that these men felt threatened by the thought that a woman could be superior to them, and attempted to gain power by insulting her, harassing her, and calling her a feminist. This study highlighted not only the gender stereotypes that exist, but that those who break those stereotypes--especially women-- suffer drastic social consequences (Maass et al., 2003).

Stereotypes of Indian women. In addition to the stereotypes that women in general face, Indian women have faced historical portrayals of subservience. When advertisements have female Asian characters, including Indians, the Asian women had effeminate, obedient, and submissive characteristics (Kim & Chung, 2005). In fact, women of color have historically been portrayed in companies' advertisements "to expand their market share to a racially diversifying

population of consumers…[and] have also used the visual consumptions of women's bodies--and the bodies of women of color in particular" (p. 72).

Advertisements also associate Indian women with mystical symbolism and use Indian women to highlight traditional cultural ideals (Rao, 1989). More research delineates the consistent portrayals of women in Indian media as caring homemakers or as sexual objects of desire (Das, 2007; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003). Although advertisements of Indian women are slowly beginning to follow western trends, Indian women are still portrayed in long-standing stereotypical ways. Griffin, Viswanath, and Schwartz's (1994) study compared the way women were portrayed in popular American magazines (*Newsweek, Life*) against popular Indian equivalents (*India Today, Illustrated Weekly of India*). These scholars found that Indian magazines were three times more likely to depict women in domestic work in magazine advertisements than American women. The research of Griffin, Viswanath, and Schwartz also found that the advertisements seldom portrayed Indian women taking charge or participating in professional or recreational activities, nor did they show women who were sexually assertive or who participated heavily in consumerism.

Other research has confirmed the heavy media stereotypes of Indian women as submissive homemakers. Eagly and Kite (1987) conducted a study to determine stereotypes of each gender within a variety of ethnicities, including Indian. Their study revealed that some of the top qualities of Indian women were "family oriented," "conforming," and "conservative." Additionally, the study found that participants' stereotypes of Indian women were that Indian women are less agentic--or less self-assertive and less able to master their environment--than Indian men.

Despite a dismal historical precedent, Indian women are beginning to have much more positive stereotypes of themselves. They are less likely to pigeonhole themselves and others into workplace roles and were much more balanced in their views of both male and female colleagues (Basu, 2008). However, women still struggle to reach the upper echelons of management. Many of them are still culturally bound by stereotypes of being domestics. Although times are changing, many men still stereotype women into positions such as secretaries and service industry workers, and even then, usually only in urban areas (Basu, 2008).

In the research of Rao and Rao (1985), university students from both India and the United States took a survey to help researchers understand general attitudes toward gender roles. The study included both male and female participants in each country, and researchers asked the participants what types of traits women in their culture should and should not possess. Although Indian students supported traditional gender roles much more than American students, women from both countries held more liberal, modern perspectives (Rao & Rao, 1985). The Indian women who hold the most empowering views for themselves tended to have their nontraditional gender stereotypes because they had educated mothers and they had white-collar jobs or were working toward a career-oriented discipline (Ghadially & Kazi, 1979).

Theoretical Framework

As MLMs create advertisements for their new customers in India, they are influencing the public opinion on how women feel about themselves, what social expectations women have, and what career choices they should make. This study uses cultivation analysis and social learning theory as a background to understand the social significance of MLM advertisements in the relatively new market of India.

Cultivation analysis (Gerbner, 1986) is a theory developed by George Gerbner, a professor of communications at the University of Pennsylvania. After seeing the assassinations of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and Bobby Kennedy and the American involvement in Vietnam, Dr. Gerbner wondered if the rising number of societal attacks could be related to increasingly violent mass media. Dr. Gerbner, under the direction of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, began to research, began to examine violence in society as it related to television (Baker & Ball, 1969).

The results of the study were monumental. Gerbner created a set of baseline measurements for long-term monitoring of television's effects on people's perceptions. These baselines, called "Cultural Indicators," laid the foundation for hundreds of later studies. Time after time, the same patterns emerged: Television and other mass media affects viewers' perceptions. The more people view media, the more they believe that media accurately reflects the world around them, particularly in relation to violent content (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986).

This theory has become one of the most influential in all communications studies. Decades of research have used this theory to study the effects of violence, sexual content, educational goals, gender stereotypes, and racial stereotypes in advertising (Signorielli & Morgan, 2009). For example, research uses cultivation analysis to show that advertisements frequently present black individuals as impoverished and linked to crime, which has influenced public opinion that blacks in general are poorer than they are in real life (Clawson & Trice, 2000). Cultivation analysis was also a key part in Diefenbach & West's (2007) study, which examined how the disproportionately large depiction of mentally ill people as criminals in

television advertisements affected people's real-life perceptions of those who suffer from mental illness.

Because of link between consumed media and affected perceptions, content analysis provides a backdrop to analyze the effects that MLM advertisements can have on women. The effects of advertising are well established to have a significant influence on how women view themselves (Paluso, 1999; Gong, 2011; Sheehan, 2003). Body image, in particular, is at stake for women when they view other women in advertisements (Paluso, 1999; Sheehan, 2003; Trampe, Stapel & Siero, 2009). Specifically, when ads contain images of a woman with a product, female viewers are more likely to feel negatively about themselves than they did after seeing a similar ad that contained only the product (Trampe, Stapel & Siero, 2009). Advertisements on television that repeatedly feature thin women can affect women's perceptions and influence women to overestimate how large their own bodies are, and women who watch advertisements with thin female models are much more likely to develop anorexia nervosa, depression, and body dysmorphia (Myers & Biocca, 1992). These findings further underpin the importance of the portrayal of women as they sell their MLM products.

Because cultivation analysis offers insight into how advertisements influence viewers' perceptions, this theory qualifies the study of women in advertisements in India. India is a relatively unexplored area in the world of marketing, and there is not research to show how these advertisements portray women's appearances, career statuses, and other aspects of their lives. If the advertisements only present women as lower-level employees and as sexualized product displays, it's possible that both men and women who view these ads can begin to believe that is how women do--and should--act. As MLMs and other companies expand into this region, the

advertisements they publish can influence how more than 550 million women in the region view themselves and how they are treated by others.

To add to cultivation analysis, this study also builds on social learning theory. Much like cultivation analysis, Bandura's (1969) social learning theory supports the idea that advertisements affect the behaviors of the people who view them. Social learning theory posits that individuals can learn behaviors from watching others. Whether watching certain actions on television or watching them performed in person, Bandura argues that individuals sometimes imitate what they seen and model those same behaviors (Bandura, 1969).

While Bandura's original research was designed to test how mass media influences violent behaviors, social learning theory offers a rich backdrop to understand how advertisements affect behaviors in different areas of life. For purposes of this study, social learning theory is a lens through which to view the effects of MLM advertisements, especially as the advertisements are portraying MLMs as a business opportunity for women. The way women's careers are portrayed in advertisements can affect the way girls choose and plan their careers, according to the research of Yuan Gong (2011). Gong's research, which was also based on Bandura's theories, surveyed 105 women. Of the total sample of participants, 53 received images of "homemaker imagery," such as pictures of women with children or doing domestic tasks, and 52 were sent "professional imagery," including pictures of women at work and in significant social or leadership roles. After viewing the images, the participants were asked to rate their own career interests and rate their self-efficacy to perform well in job fields. The results of the study showed that girls who viewed the professional images ranked themselves more highly regarding their abilities to do jobs competently, and they were more interested in the

types of careers they had seen in the advertisements. Conversely, participants who viewed the homemaker images showed reduced interest in any nontraditional work fields (Gong, 2011).

As Gong's research illustrates, female representation in advertisements affects the job predilections of the women who viewed the ads, just as social learning theory posits. Following the same trend, MLM companies can influence women in India to model their behaviors after the behaviors of the women in their advertisements. These media effects can help define what are and are not socially acceptable career paths, including being a distributor for an MLM.

As MLMs and other companies expand into India, the advertisements they publish can affect how more than 55 million women in the region view themselves and how they are treated by others. These portrayals can influence viewers, who can learn from the behaviors in the ads and extend the same expectations into their society. These influences will be particularly interesting to observe in MLMs. MLMs have tended to follow traditional gender stereotypes as previously discussed. Yet as a Western form of business, MLMs offer an interesting image of a domestic housewife with a business opportunity. This study aims to note the changes that may occur in this interesting combination of cultures and gender roles, which are already beginning to change in India due to rapid urbanization, increasingly easy access to the Internet, and exposure to Western influences and business practices (Mathur & Parameswaran, 2004; Malhotra & Rogers, 2000).

Based on this literature review, this study seeks to better understand the differences in how men and women are portrayed in Indian MLM advertisements. Considering the lack of literature on Indians in advertising since the 1990s and the new expansion of MLMs, this study endeavors to update existing literature and identify trends in this new business sector. Based on

Döring & Pöschl's (2006) measures for assessing gender roles in advertising, this study proposes the following research questions:

RQ₁: Will men or women be more frequently portrayed in executive company

roles in Indian MLM ads?

RQ₂: Will men or women be more likely to practice licensed withdrawal in

Indian MLM ads?

RQ₃: Will men or women be more likely to show ritualization of subordination

in Indian MLM ads?

RQ₄: What are the differences in the fields of action in which men and women

are presented in Indian MLM ads?

Method

Content Analysis

This study used a content analysis to better understand how men and women are portrayed in Indian MLM social media advertisements. Content analysis is a method that uniquely explores content "in aims of illuminating patterns and themes between communication domains" (Danowski & Robinson, 2012, p. 337). This study followed Chou & Chang's (2010) four steps of performing a content analysis: First, sampling for content selection; second, conceptualization by defining specific research questions; third, operationalization by creating a coding book that identifies variables and outlines measurement procedures; and fourth, a coding reliability check.

Sample

The sample for this study consisted of advertisements that were collected from the Facebook pages of five MLM companies that have large presences in India. The companies used in this study were selected from the India Direct Selling Association's (2018) list of the largest MLM companies in the country. From that list, the researcher then checked Facebook to find India-specific Facebook pages for each of the companies. The top five largest companies that had India-specific presences on Facebook were Oriflame, AVON, Amway, Tupperware, and TIENS.

For the purposes of this study, an "ad" was defined as a photograph posted by the company on their Facebook page that features human subjects (Sirakaya & Somnez, 2000). Infographics, photos of products without human subjects, and other posted images were not included for this study (Sirakaya & Somnez, 2000). All photos that qualified as ads from each of these companies' Facebook pages from the year 2017 were included in this sample--a total of 733 images.

Variables

The variables from this study were based on and adapted from the research of Döring and Pöschl (2006), which also explores the differences in the way advertisements portray men and women. The measures in the research of Döring and Pöschl consisted of seven categories used to determine gender stereotyping in visual communications. These seven categories were relative size, feminine touch, executive roles, licensed withdrawal, ritualized subordination, revealing clothing, and fields of action. Of those seven categories, three were not applicable to this study. Relative size was not included in this study because the research of Döring and Pöschl (2006) and found that this is no longer common in advertisements featuring human subjects.

Additionally, the categories of feminine touch and licensed withdrawal were very similar, as both involved touching the face and covering one's eyes or mouth (Goffman, 1979). For coding purposes, feminine touch was merged into the category of licensed withdrawal, similar to the research of Sirakaya and Sonmez (2000). Lastly, this study omitted the category of revealing clothing. After coding this sample, the researcher found that because these advertisements were focused on a largely professional audience, all the photo subjects were dressed appropriately for their setting. Many of the subjects in the ads did not have their entire body in the photo—in fact, many were only from the shoulders up--so it was not possible to accurately code. This category was not part of the original research of Goffman (1979), and the study by Doring and Poschl (2006) did not include a clear measuring instrument for defining "revealing." The researcher therefore did not include the category of revealing clothing. Instead, the researcher focused on the four relevant categories. These four categories were executive roles, licensed withdrawal, ritualization of subordination, and fields of action.

Executive roles. The category of executive roles is largely based on Goffman's (1979) category of Function Ranking. Originally, Function Ranking was Goffman's instrument for measuring the social status of an individual in an advertisement, such as working at corporate offices, holding awards, conducting meetings, speaking at conferences, or other indications of corporate success. The research of Döring and Pöschl (2006) used Function Ranking as a base and added a few more characteristics to form a new, expanded category they termed as "executive roles." The category of executive roles focuses on which gender performs more executive responsibilities in a mixed-gender setting. Executive roles encompass all of the characteristics of Function Ranking, plus a few other ways of measuring social status, such as interacting with social superiors, dressing in business clothes, and being on a stage.

Licensed withdrawal. The category of licensed withdrawal is defined as "expansive smiling, covering one's face or mouth, withdrawing one's gaze from the situation" (Döring & Pöschl, 2006, p. 176). Based on Goffman's (1979) category of licensed withdrawal, this category is coded by noting how many images include subjects that are smiling, looking away from the camera, looking away from other subjects in the photo, covering the face or mouth, or folding arms.

When coding this category, the researchers realized that coding licensed withdrawal was more complicated than previously thought because some photos contained advertisements and some were simply candid photographs at events. For instance, advertisements contain posed subjects, and if the subject wasn't looking in the camera, it was a deliberate choice on the part of the ad creator. However, for the candid photos, subjects who were looking away may not have been trying to act subordinately—they may just have been not aware of the camera's presence, they could have been watching a speaker or another person, or they may have been ignoring the photographer. Because of this, it was necessary for the two researchers to specify when licensed withdrawal was and wasn't applicable. They decided that for a subject in a photo to be truly displaying licensed withdrawal, the photo needed to be clearly staged and the subject was deliberately posed to look away from the camera.

Ritualization of subordination. The category of ritualization of subordination in Döring and Pöschl's research is based on Goffman's (1979) description. An advertisement was coded for this category if the subject needs physical help to stand or needed to be protected, such as having a another adult hovering close over them or leaning on someone for support. Other qualifications for this category included any subject in a submissive body position, such as canting the head to one side, lying down, sitting, or being held.

Field of action. Finally, the fourth category is "field of action," which was specific to Döring and Pöschl's (2006) study. Although it was not one of the original categories in the research of Goffman (1979), this category builds upon Goffman's idea of function ranking, which was the idea that in a setting with both men and women, men's functions ranked socially higher than women's functions did.

Function ranking described ads that showed men in positions of teaching a woman how to perform a task, a man speaking to a large crowd of women, or men performing more complex tasks as women looked on (Goffman, 1979) (See Figure 1). By building off of function ranking, the new category of "field of action" designed by Döring and Pöschl (2006) encompasses environment and context as a factor in analyzing gender roles in advertising.

Fields of action include settings that have historically been assigned to one gender or the other: For example, advertisements have historically portrayed men using technology much more frequently than women. Men also more frequently appear in ads in the workplace and ads that show a relationship with a social superior. Conversely, advertisements portray women in domestic settings or with children. For a complete coding guide, please reference the author's codebook in Appendix A.

Intercoder Reliability

To increase reliability and ensure consistency in the way the images were coded, the author completed an intercoder reliability test with an undergraduate student in Communications. Using the codebook (found in Appendix A), the two researchers coded a sample of 110 photos, more than the standard 10% usually required for accurate reliability (De Swert, 2012). After gathering the results from this sample, the researchers' intercoder reliability was calculated using Krippendorf's alpha. Krippendorf's alpha is frequently considered a gold standard in intercoder

reliability because it accounts for the possibility of chance agreement; however, it has its limitations. Overall, this particular study averaged an alpha of 0.81, which exceeds the reliability standard of 0.7. However, on a few questions where answer variation was low, a single mismatched answer between the two coders results in a 0, even though percent agreement is nearly 100% (De Swert, 2012). When this happens, intercoder reliability is still technically high. To compensate for this limitation in Krippendorf's alpha (and Cohen's kappa, and all other methods of intercoder reliability that attempt to account for chance), percent agreement is listed in addition to the Krippendorf's alpha score for certain categories as a valid way of displaying viable and highly accurate results (De Swert, 2012).

After ensuring high intercoder reliability in the testing sample, the two researchers then evenly divided the rest of the images. The coding questionnaire, which researchers used both for the intercoder reliability sample and for the rest of the data, is included in Appendix B. Reliabilities were accounted in the following categories: Number of men in photo (0.934), number of women in photo (0.935), presence of executive roles in men (0.83), number of men exhibiting executive roles (0.879), presence of executive roles in women (0.800), number of women exhibiting executive roles (0.747), presence of licensed withdrawal in men (0.705), number of men exhibiting licensed withdrawal (0.623), presence of licensed withdrawal in women (0.8.00), number of women exhibiting licensed withdrawal (0.712), presence of ritualized subordination in men (0.8.00), number of men exhibiting ritualized subordination (0.896), presence of ritualized subordination in women (0.729), number of women exhibiting ritualized subordination (0.850), number of men in a household scene (1.00), number of women in a household scene (0, but 99.03% agreement), number of men in a family scene, number of women in a family scene, number of men in a paid work scene (0.84), number of women in a

paid work scene (0, but 99.03% agreement), number of men pictured with a product (0, but 99.03% agreement), number of women pictured with a product (0.741), number of men using technology in an ad (0, but 99.03% agreement), number of women using technology in an ad (0, but 99.03% agreement), number of blank headshots featuring men (0.853), and blank headshots featuring women (0.865).

All of the above data was calculated using statistical analysis software SPSS. Each of the values was calculated in SPSS using Chi Square calculations to test statistical significance of relationships between the variables of male and female for each of the gender stereotype categories.

Results

After the coding was finished, the author compiled the data from the survey. From the total sample of posts (*N*=733), the researcher counted the number of subjects of each gender and tabulated occurrences in the categories used to assess gender roles. Because a single image could feature several people, it was possible for researchers to code multiple categories per Facebook post, or none at all.

The results showed that of the 733 total posts, 484 featured at least one man, while 634 featured at least one woman. However, the total number of men portrayed in those 484 posts was higher (see Table 1).

The data from Table 1 offered an interesting insight into the sample. Although there are nearly 500 more men pictured in this study sample, they appear in fewer posts. There may be fewer women per post, but women are in nearly 150 more posts—giving women a much lower average appearances per photo, even though women appear in 31% more posts than men.

The data results for the first research question ("Will men or women be more frequently portrayed in executive company roles in Indian MLM ads?") showed that men were significantly more likely to be portrayed in executive roles in MLM advertisements ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 18.259$, $p = 0.05$).

Table 1

Frequency of Portrayals of Each Gender in Advertisements

	Number of Photos	Total Number of Appearances	Average Number of Appearances per Photo
Men	484	2720	5.6
Women	634	2253	3.6

The second research question asked whether men or women were more likely to exhibit licensed withdrawal in the photos posted on Facebook. To answer this research question, the researcher only included posts from the sample that truly fit the definition of licensed withdrawal, excluding candid photos where subjects may not have been aware that there was a camera. In the category of licensed withdrawal, the Facebook posts depicted women amore frequently (women with 1078 instances and men with 826; see Table 2), but the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 1.542$, $p = 0.05$).

The third research question inquired about the differences regarding the representations of men and women in ritualized subordination in the posts. Similar to the category of licensed withdrawal, this sample of posts showed women in ritualized subordination more frequently than men (women with 425 instances and men with 301; see Table 2), but again, the difference was not statistically significant ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 3.270$, $p = 0.05$).

Table 2

Differences Between Men and Women in Gendered Body Language

Portrayal Category	Total (*N*=4973)	Men	Women
Executive Roles	580 (11.66%)	311 (54%)*	269 (46%)*
Licensed Withdrawal	1904 (38.29)	826 (43%)	1078 (57%)
Ritualized Subordination	726 (14.60%)	301 (41%)	425 (59%)

*p<0.05

The researcher then summarized the data in order to answer the fourth research question about the differences in the fields of action in which men and women are presented. The most common fields of action for subjects to be in were paid work scenes (14.78%), scenes with a subject pictured alongside the product they were selling (3.52%), and professional headshot photos (2.19%).

Out of the seven fields of action coded, three fields of action showed statistically significant differences in the frequency of portrayals between men and women. Paid work scenes were significantly more common among men than among women ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 25.09$, $p = 0.05$). Moreover, another statistically significant difference was that women were much more likely to be pictured alongside the product they were selling than men were ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 57.48$, $p = 0.05$). Women were also statistically significantly more likely to be pictured in a professional headshot ($\chi^2(1, N = 4973) = 24.33$, $p = 0.05$). The other categories did not show statistically significant differences (see Table 3).

Table 3

Differences Between Men and Women in Fields of Action

Field of Action	Total (*N*=4973)	Men	Women
Household	8 (0.16%)	1 (13%)	7 (87%)
Family	53 (1.07%)	25 (47%)	28 (53%)
Paid Work	734 (14.78%)	380 (52%)*	354 (48%)*
Product	175 (3.52%)	25 (14%)*	150 (86%)*
Tech	8 (0.16%)	4 (50%)	4 (50%)
Headshot	109 (2.19%)	21 (19%)*	88 (81%)*
Other	38 (0.76%)	18 (47%)	20 (53%)

*p<0.05

The results showed statistically significant differences between men and women in four key areas: Executive roles, paid work scenes, scenes containing a subject with the product, and headshots. While each of these areas was expected to have a significant difference, the results were surprising because there were not more categories that were significantly different. This denotes that, although some gender stereotypes are perpetuated in social media posts, other stereotypes are beginning to disappear.

Discussion

The data for this study aimed to identify trends in how MLM companies in India portray men and women in their Facebook posts. After tabulating the frequencies in which men and women appear in each body language category and calculating chi square values for each to

determine statistical significance, the data reveals interesting trends--some of which that support the standing literature (such as executive roles and women being pictured with product, and some that stand in stark contrast to the historical norms of gender stereotypes in MLM companies (such as women no longer being portrayed in licensed withdrawal or ritualized subordination).

The first finding of interest relates to executive roles as proposed in RQ_1. After coding the Facebook posts in this study, the researcher found that men held statistically significantly more executive roles than women (see Figure 1). The literature notes that 60% of MLM distributors in India are women ("Indian Direct Selling: Facts and Figures," 2016), and roughly 75% of MLM participants are women (Lin, 2007). Given these statistics, one could presume that women would be proportionately represented in executive and corporate leadership, but this is not the case. In fact, in this study, only one of the three body language categories showed statistically significant differences

Figure 1

between men and women, and it was executive roles. Men tend to hold more leadership positions and have more corporate authority in this study's data sample, speaking in front of crowds and earning more achievement awards than women do. True to the research of Goffman (1979), men continue to be portrayed in business clothes and leadership positions, and the research on men

holding executive roles still seems to be relevant and accurate (Rubio, 2018). This finding regarding executive roles supports existing literature and continues to enforce male-dominant gender stereotypes in MLM advertisements in India (Das & Singh, 2014; Ramasubramanian & Oliver, 2003; Griffin, Viswanath & Schwartz, 1994).

Although men were far more prevalent in executive roles, the body language categories of ritualized subordination and licensed withdrawal in RQ_2 and RQ_3 did not show statistically significant differences between the frequencies of men and women. These equalizations in the way men and women are portrayed stand starkly against current literature, which states that media still usually portrays women as physically weak and submissive (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lindner, 2004). This was a fascinating finding because it was so unexpected. Given that the data surrounding executive roles was on par with literature, it was surprising that such associated trends as ritualized subordination and licensed withdrawal would also be prevalent, but such was not the case. This could be a sign that, in some ways, gender stereotypes in Facebook posts are slowly equalizing, and that employment hierarchies are a last stronghold for sexism. If such is the case, then this study contributes to the overall body of literature in gendered media by marking a turning of the tides. As body language becomes more equal, then learned behavior may also become more equal, as per social learning theory.

More surprising trends were found in the results of RQ_4. The fields of action included a variety of settings that are usually stereotyped as fitting for either males or females, such as being with families and little children or using technology. As some of these trends showed that there were indeed statistically significant differences between men and women, the data either supported existing literature or went sharply against it.

In the field of action of paid work scenes, this study showed that advertisements are far more likely to feature men working a traditional job than women. This finding fits current literature, encouraging the idea that men's work is more valuable than women's and that men more inherently belong in the workplace (Rubio, 2018). The lack of women in paid work scenes goes hand in hand with the earlier results of men being more prevalent in executive roles: Both trends send the message that the corporate world belongs to men. In an industry that involves far more women than men and that actively recruits more women, this finding is pointedly sexist. If MLMs are geared for women and the stay-at-home mother figure, then this study's findings about executive roles and paid work scenes only reinforces the gender stereotypes that women belong in the home and that a "successful" woman still looks like a domestic (Yan, 2019).

Another prominent finding in RQ4 fields of action was regarding the MLM products. In accordance with existing literature, women in this study were also much more likely than men to be pictured alongside the product they are selling, indicating that women's bodies are part of the consumable and that women are meant to be decorative (Sandhu, 2018). Figure 2 is an excellent example of this. By coupling the product with an image of a beautiful woman, the advertisement sends the message that this product can guarantee attractiveness and happiness to the woman who buys it (Vermeir & Van de Sompel, 2017). Women in these advertisements are depicted as sexual yet untainted objects that owe their beauty to the product (Sandhu, 2018). Not only do these types of ads reinforce arbitrary standards of beauty, but they also send the message to young women that they need these products in order to be accepted by society (Sandhu, 2018). When viewed through the lens of cultivation analysis, the danger with such ads is that they can influence women's perceptions of what their bodies should look like. When female models

display unattainable body shapes or when models only possess a narrow range of physical features, women can feel like they will never match such impossible standards (Kilbourne, 1994; Paluso, 1999; Sheehan, 2003). Some women may go to extreme lengths, such as eating disorders or plastic surgery, to try to look the way that the models
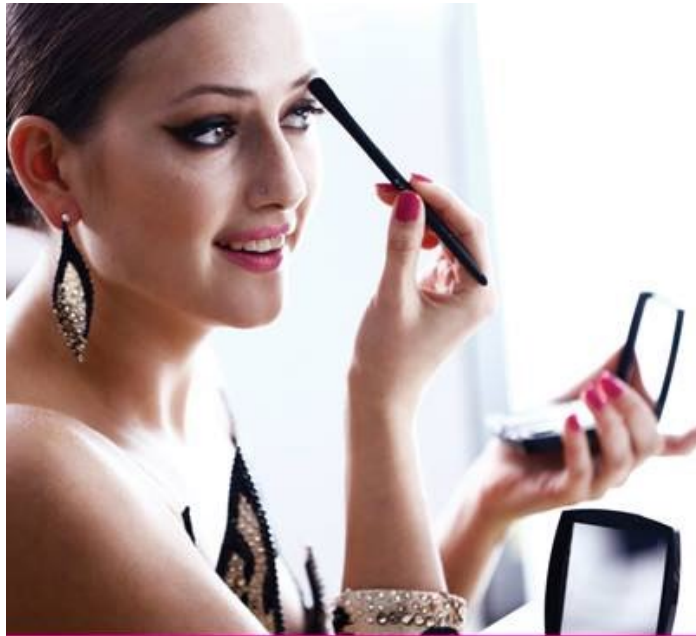

Figure 2

do in advertisements (Kilbourne, 1994). From a social learning perspective, the combination of women's bodies aired with the product also teaches viewers--both men and women--that women acting as purchasable goods is normal, or even expected, behavior.

In addition to paid work scenes and being pictured alongside products, the third field of action that was statistically significant was headshots. Women were significantly more likely than men to be pictured in an MLM Facebook post as a simple headshot. In the sample for this study, most headshots were advertisements for the company that highlighted a distributor who had performed particularly well (see Figure 3). These ads carry the message that normal people were able to be successful with the company, and therefore, it is possible for others to do the same. The fact that women were significantly more likely than men to be in headshots makes sense, given that approximately 75% of MLM distributors are women (Lin, 2007). Although this data point may be due simply to women's high participation rates, it also sends a message to

viewers that women are the primary product distributors, and that men still belong in the executive suite. In much the same way that more men in executive roles indicates that the corporate world belongs to men, the majority-female representation in headshots suggests that MLMs' current strategy on social media is to designate being a top direct seller as the path to women's success (Lin, 2007).

After acknowledging the statistically significant findings that RQ4 yielded, it is also insightful to discuss the elements that were *not* statistically significant. By not showing large differences by gender, the data also offers several key takeaways that contrasted with existing

literature. For example, the research of Döring and Pöschl (2006) found that men were much more likely to be using technology in advertisements; however, this study showed exactly equal representation among men and women using technology (see Table 3). The observation that there was not a gendered

Figure 3

difference in this category is a stunning finding in and of itself, and this is possibly an indication that MLM companies are slowly beginning to show women as equally adept at using technology. This may be due to the fact that MLM distributors do most of their work on laptops and mobile

devices. Any social media post aiming to depict the alluring promise of the domestic work-from-home lifestyle would necessarily include showing women using electronic devices.

Another finding that is interesting for its lack of statistical significance is the depiction of men in household settings. The researcher included the field of action category "household settings" because the research of both Goffman (1979) and Döring and Pöschl (2006) found that advertisements that were set in homes or included children almost always featured a woman and never a man. Although the Facebook posts in this study still portray women far more than men in household settings and in family scenes, the

Figure 4

differences were not statistically significant. The posts in this data sample surprisingly included men in scenes with children, such as in Figure 4, as well as doing activities in the kitchen and playing outside with family members.

The mixed results from this study show that in some ways, MLM Facebook posts in India cling to old gender stereotypes and enforce societal differences between men and women; yet in other ways, this study shows that men and women are being portrayed equally in certain settings. Women are, unfortunately, still oversexualized and used as selling points for consumable products. Although men still own executive roles and women still fill the ranks of distributors, the lifestyle images show some progressive values regarding family life and access to technology. These distinctions note progress toward the portrayal of gender equality in MLM Facebook posts in India in at least a few ways.

In a broader discussion of stereotypes in general, it is important to note that no single stereotype is "bad." If a woman prefers to forego a career and focus on being a domestic, she deserves the right to do so freely and happily. If men choose to exhibit stereotypical behaviors such as business leadership, they should be able to do so without judgment. In regards to racism, people of Indian descent--and people of any race--should pursue the career of their choice, whether or not that career role aligns with preconceived standards of gender, field, or rank. The danger with advertisements displaying certain trends is, per cultivation analysis and social learning theory, that consumers begin believing that those stereotypes are the *only* appropriate behaviors for a certain group of people.

The results of this study are significant for the Indian people, but they are also informative for the MLM industry as a whole. This study takes note of what types of social media posts MLM companies are posting on their Facebook pages, and since MLM companies are increasingly financially successful, these trends are clearly effective. As more research is done into what types of branding make MLMs effective, MLMs could take note of their success in India and begin expanding into other countries with large rural populations and begin focusing on middle-and lower-class audiences. Furthermore, the results of this study are significant for MLMs because of the lessons about gender stereotypes in India. The docile feminine ideals prized in Indian society are already a huge part of MLM culture (Lin & Hassay, 2009), and this study outlines what can happen if MLM companies understand their market. MLMs have a notorious history for recruiting primarily women (Lin, 2007) and for encouraging a domestic image of women (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lin, 2007; Lin & Hassay, 2009). To be so successful in India, MLMs must have been careful of how their business opportunities resonated with women. MLMs must continue to be aware of the gender stereotypes they are displaying as they recruit

and establish stronger markets in India in order to tap into Indian women's potential. If MLMs have been this successful in India, perhaps this type of business structure would thrive in other places where women still occupy stereotypically domestic roles.

These stereotypes highlight exactly why this study is vital in the field of communications. In addition to filling decades-old gaps in literature, the data in this study indicates that gender stereotypes can have massive social and economic impacts. As advertisements consistently portray certain races and certain genders in a particular way, their consistency produces heuristics, or "mental shortcuts" (Heilman, 2012). Advertisements train consumers to equate certain qualities of a person with a preconceived role or stereotype (Heilman, 2012). The danger of stereotypes is heuristics, causing people to judge prematurely. People are usually not even aware that they are judging by stereotypes, and that's precisely why we need to be aware of them (Heilman, 2012). These heuristics obviously have wide social implications for body dysmorphia and for career influences, but for MLMs, they can have significant economic impacts as well. The rapidly growing MLM industry depends on consumers' split-second impressions of their advertisements, and a heuristic means the difference between multibillion-dollar success and being completely ignored.

Crystallization, Limitations, and Further Research

In discussion of the results of this study, it is essential to acknowledge the limitations of the data-gathering process. Crystallization is described as a part of research that highlights vulnerabilities, limitations, and possibilities for different interpretations of the data (Ellingson, 2009). In acknowledging possible limitations in this study, the author notes possible inaccuracies in the research. While this study will offer insight into the comparison of men and women's portrayals in MLM Facebook posts, this study is limited to only five companies in India. There

may be significant differences in the way that other MLM companies choose to portray women in their social media branding, and there may be differences in how the same company posts in other countries. Single-level businesses may also have different portrayals of women in social media, especially in markets that have not been historically targeted toward women.

Another possible limitation to this study relates to the data sample that was gathered. Data in this study was all from the same time period of 2017, which offers only a brief snapshot into MLM branding strategy. MLMs Facebook posts could have had different gender stereotypes in past campaigns, or MLMs could have since changed their strategies since the researcher gathered this sample. Additionally, this sample was gathered from Facebook only. MLMs advertise heavily on social media (Ward-Reichert, 2014), and this sample did not include data from any other social media platforms such as Instagram or Twitter. This means that even though this study is an important foray into a new area of research, the data offers a limited view of a vast and constantly changing industry, and there are many opportunities for future research.

One possible area for future research is the impact of different races in advertisements. Although not part of this study, the researcher noted that many of the women in this data sample--especially the women pictured holding products--were white, even though these were India-specific pages. If a company was attempting to relate with an audience, it would have made sense to use Indian models in the photos. This would have worked especially well because in a 2002 study, Indians were much more likely than other ethnicities such as Malays and Chinese to approve of using people of their own nationality to promote products in advertisements and promoting brands (Rashid, Nallamuthu & Sidin, 2002).

Additionally, further research could focus on the effects of gender stereotypes in MLM social media posts. Other research could also focus on the effects of gender stereotypes in MLM

social media, rather than just noting trends in the research. This is a particularly application-focused area that needs to be better understood. Cultivation analysis studies find that media can influence women's career choices (Gong, 2011) and impact women's body image (Paluso, 1999; Sheehan, 2003). Scholars could study the effects that gender stereotypes have by conducting pre- and post-viewing surveys of gendered social media posts to see how people's perceptions changed. MLM social media posts could impact the Indian people by either enforcing or breaking down gender role barriers to not only MLMs, but to businesses in general. When MLM ads show more men in executive roles, as this study showed, they are reinforcing hundreds of years of male-power stereotypes in India. India already has one of the lowest labor participation rates in the world for women (Wright, 2017), so championing more opportunities for women could be revolutionary for the country. Because India has also had a strict caste system for centuries (Wright, 2017), MLMs' low barrier to entry is giving business opportunities to ethnic and religious minorities, older people, and others who never would have been accepted in a traditional business setting in India.

Other areas of future research could expand the scope of this study. For example, future research could examine MLM companies other than the ones included in this study, or on how these same MLM companies post on social media in different countries. Since MLMs post heavily on social media, future research could also explore how MLMs use social media channels other than Facebook, such as Instagram or Pinterest. Other research could compare and contrast corporate MLM Facebook posts and the posts that distributors themselves are creating.

Each of these is a valid area to continue exploring, especially as MLMs continue to thrive and expand into new countries. The ever-changing digital landscape continues to offer new

mediums of advertisements as well, meaning that future studies can always update racial and gender-based literature across multiple different advertising channels as well.

Conclusion

This study examined the ways that MLM Facebook posts in India portray men and women as compared to past gender stereotypes. The existing literature shows that although many scholars have researched sexism in advertisements, the gender stereotypes that have existed for decades continue on social media, especially in the areas of executive roles, women being pictured with product, men being in paid work scenes, and women being in headshhots. To update this literature, this study seeks to identify trends in the gender portrayals in Facebook posts of Indian MLM companies. This research identifies three such trends with accompanying suggestions for continued MLM success.

One of the most significant takeaways that an MLM company in India could use from this study is that recognition of successful distributors is a current trend across all five of the MLM companies in this sample. Recognizing the successful distributors in headshots shows that anyone from any background can become successful. One reason that MLMs have been successful in India is because the distributor business model is ideal for rural outreach (Hammond & Prahalad, 2004; Ragland, Brouthers & Widmier, 2015), providing opportunities for anyone willing to work hard enough to achieve success. The many headshots in the data sample in this study reiterate the success of average, rural people who were able to obtain financial success with the company. The researcher strongly recommends continuing this trend. Not only does it give appropriate recognition to hard-working distributors, but it also helps establish North American countries as solidly dedicated to India. Representation of native Indian

people, rather than the white women of earlier MLM companies, is vital to inspire a sense of loyalty to the company (Water, 2013).

A second key trend in this sample was that MLM companies' Facebook posts consistently portray men in executive roles in corporate company positions while women are more likely to be pictured as distributors and sellers. Men tend to hold more leadership positions and have more corporate authority in this study's data sample, speaking in front of crowds and earning more achievement awards than women do. True to the research of Goffman (1979), men continue to be portrayed in business clothes and leadership positions, and the research on men holding executive roles still seems to be relevant and accurate (Rubio, 2018). While men lead on the corporate front, this study demonstrated that women had statistically significantly more distributor headshots, showing that Facebook posts go hand-in-hand with the real-life ratios of women and men who participate in direct sales. While it can be encouraging to make Facebook posts about distributors who do well, one recommendation based on this research is to recognize more men in headshots. This could broaden the audience of direct sellers. In tandem, the researcher recommends highlighting women who work in corporate MLM positions. This can not only show the female corporate workers that the company appreciates them, but it could also appeal to any other ambitious women who wish to have a corporate career.

A third key trend identified in this sample is that women are being empowered in these Facebook posts more than previous literature would suggest. As mentioned in the discussion section of this paper, women and men had equal representation in Facebook posts that involved subjects using technology. Men are being pictured more in family scenes, and women are no longer being pictured in significantly more posts demonstrating ritualized subordination or licensed withdrawal. Women even appeared in more posts overall, too. Based on this trend, the

researcher recommends including more Facebook posts that empower women. Increased Facebook posts of women using technology could be useful in promoting the work-from-home appeal of an MLM distributor career.

As this study examined the gender roles in MLM Facebook posts in India, some traditional stereotypes stayed strong: Men in corporate roles, women as distributors, and women being pictured as consumables with the products they are supposed to sell. Based on the theories of cultivation analysis and social learning theory, the gender stereotypes in these social posts can substantially influence consumer opinions. Social media, "which is widely accessible and intentionally appealing and engaging, makes massive use of stereotypical messages that the majority of people can easily understand." (Galdi, Maass & Cadinu, 2014, pp. 1). Ranging from women in sales to men in corporate offices, these social posts offered insights into the Facebook trends that massively successful MLMs have used to power their expansion into India. Beyond just ethics, MLMs must be aware of the racial and gender stereotypes in their advertisements if they are going to keep up their massive USD$1.9 billion economic force.

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Appendix A: Coding Sheet

1. Executive Role

The category of executive roles focuses on which gender performs more executive responsibilities. For purposes of this study, each photo will be coded for instances of executive roles. Executive roles can be performed by one person or many people at once in a single photo. A subject participating in an executive role means that the subject is doing something that shows some kind of organized leadership. Executive roles could include:

- Being pictured working at a corporate office building
- Holding some kind of physical representation of corporate success, such as a check, an award, a celebratory cake, a poster, etc. (see example 1a)
- Conducting meetings, speaking in front of a group of people, or holding a microphone


Example 1a: These distributors from TIENS are holding a small cardboard cutout of a car, indicating that they have reached a status in the MLM company that puts them one step closer to winning a company car. This is an example of a subject holding a physical representation of corporate success.

2. Licensed Withdrawal

Licensed withdrawal is some kind of physical movement or gesture that indicates a socially acceptable act of withdrawal or submission. Examples include:

- Covering one's face or mouth in a photo; unnecessarily touching one's face or neck (see example 2b)
- Deliberately not looking into the camera when other subjects are
- Folding arms or having hands clasped in front of the body (see example 2a)

- Smiling expansively for a posed photo (research indicates that women smile more in advertisements than men do because it is less socially acceptable for women to be unhappy)

\
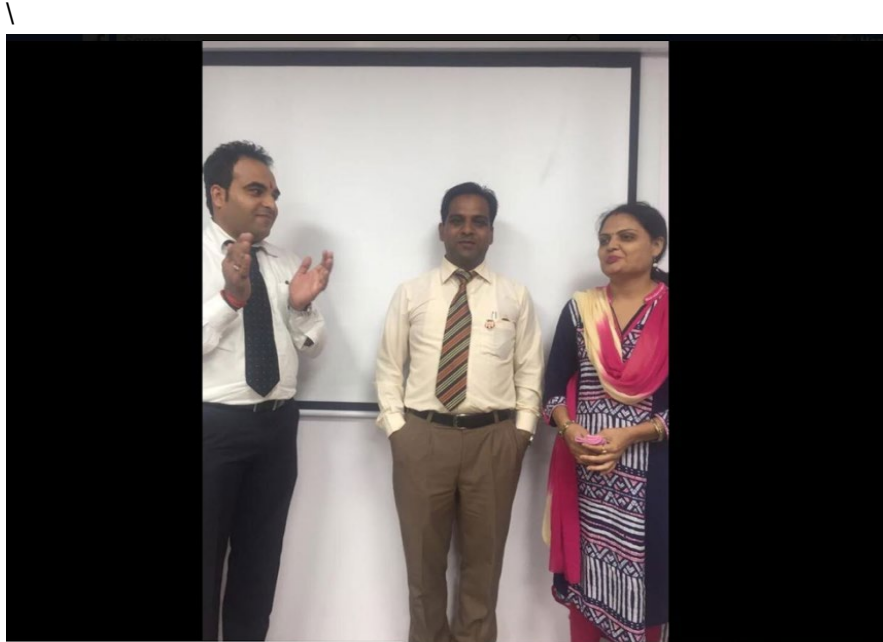
Example 2a: In this TIENS example of three distributors leading a business meeting, the woman gives a classic example of licensed withdrawal: clasped hands in front of her

Example 2b: In this Avon example, the subject is deliberately not looking at the camera in a posed way. She is also unnecessarily touching her face

3. Ritualisation of Subordination

Ritualisation of Subordination is also a physical movement that indicates submission, but it's usually on a larger scale, such as a full-body movement, than licensed withdrawal, which is usually a smaller gesture. Examples include:

- Being embraced (hugging someone, having someone's arm around them, leaning on someone)
- Physical contact (holding hands with someone, having someone hovering close behind them) (see example 3b)
- Sitting or lying down
- Canting the head to one side (see example 3a)
- Being in a group (Research suggests that women are more likely to be pictured in groups and men are more likely to be pictured alone, so this study will also be coding whether the photo shows a subject alone or in a group as part of the ritualisation of subordination category)

Example 3a: The subject is both canting her head to one side and unnecessarily touching her face (from category 2).

Example 3b: This woman is not only in a group, but she's also being held onto by the man

4. Field of Action

Field of action is basically the setting. According to Doring and Poschl (2006), there are six main categories for field of action. Women are usually pictured in settings of household, family, and fashion, while men are usually portrayed in fields of paid work, sports, and technology.

- Household scenes include scenes in a home, cooking in a non-restaurant setting, or cleaning in a domestic setting
- Family scenes include scenes with a spouse and/or children (Example 4a)
- Fashion scenes include women wearing clothes for the purpose of advertising their clothing; applying makeup for the purpose of advertising the makeup; or otherwise being pictured with the product they are selling (see example 4b)

- Paid work scenes include scenes in an office, being at a convention or work conference, or meeting with a social superior (see example 4c)
- Sports scenes include subjects playing sports, lifting weights, performing an active activity outdoors, or running (see example 4d)
- Technology scenes include a subject who is using a laptop, cell phone, or other electronic device

Example 4a: This Oriflame photo clearly shows the subjects together in a family setting

Example 4b: This Avon ad shows a woman putting on makeup for the sake of advertising the makeup products

Example 4c: This TIENS example shows men meeting in business offices

Example 4d: These Oriflame distributors gathered to play a game of cricket, an example of a sports setting

Appendix B: Coding Questionnaire

The following questionnaire is copied from the survey software that the researchers used. Please keep in mind that some data was gathered that was beyond the scope of this study and therefore was not included in the above research.

Hannah thesis coding

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Your name

o Camilla (1)

o Hannah (2)

Filename of picture

_____

Company name

o TIENS (1)

o Oriflame (2)

o Amway (3)

o AVON (4)

o Tupperware (5)

How many males are in the photo? (Only count if their face is not cut off at the edges of the photo)

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (5)

o 5 (6)

o 6 (8)

o 7 (9)

o 8 (10)

o 9 (11)

o 10 (12)

o more than 10/crowd (13)

 How many females are in the photo? (Only count if their face is not cut off at the edges of the photo)

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (6)

o 5 (7)

o 6 (8)

o 7 (9)

o 8 (10)

o 9 (11)

o 10 (12)

o more than 10/crowd (13)

Are these kinds of executive roles present in males?
(If there are no males in the photo, just click "no" for each executive role)

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Holding some kind of reward (1)	o	o
Working at a corporate office (2)	o	o
Speaking in front of a crowd (3)	o	o

Are these kinds of executive roles present in females?
(If there are no females in the photo, just click "no" for each executive role)

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Holding some kind of reward (1)	o	o
Working at a corporate office (2)	o	o
Speaking in front of a crowd (3)	o	o

Are there any males exhibiting executive roles in this photo?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Are there any females exhibiting executive roles in this photo?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

How many males exhibited executive roles?

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (5)

o 5 (6)

o 6 (7)

o 7 (8)

o 8 (9)

o 9 (10)

o 10 (11)

o more than 10/crowd (12)

How many females exhibited executive roles?

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (5)

o 5 (6)

o 6 (7)

o 7 (9)

o 8 (10)

o 9 (11)

o 10 (12)

o more than 10/crowd (13)

Are these kinds of licensed withdrawal present in males?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Covering one's face or mouth in a photo; unnecessarily touching one's face or neck (1)	o	o
Not looking into the camera (when in doubt, say they're not looking at the camera) (2)	o	o
Folding arms or having hands clasped in front of the body (3)	o	o
Smiling expansively for a posed photo (showing teeth) (4)	o	o

Are these kinds of licensed withdrawal present in females?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Covering one's face or mouth in a photo; unnecessarily touching one's face or neck (1)	o	o
Not looking into the camera (when in doubt, say they're not looking at the camera) (2)	o	o
Folding arms or having hands clasped in front of the body (3)	o	o
Smiling expansively for a posed photo (showing teeth) (4)	o	o

Are there any males exhibiting licensed withdrawals?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Are there any females exhibiting licensed withdrawal?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

How many males exhibited licensed withdrawal?

o 0 (2)

o 1 (3)

o 2 (4)

o 3 (5)

o 4 (6)

o 5 (7)

o 6 (8)

o 7 (9)

o 8 (10)

o 9 (11)

o 10 (12)

o more than 10/crowd (13)

How many females exhibited licensed withdrawal?

o 0 (2)

o 1 (3)

o 2 (4)

o 3 (5)

o 4 (6)

o 5 (7)

o 6 (8)

o 7 (9)

o 8 (10)

o 9 (11)

o 10 (12)

o more than 10/crowd (13)

Are these kinds of ritualized subordination present in males?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Being embraced (hugging someone, having someone's arm around them, leaning on someone, being carried) (1)	o	o
Physical contact (holding hands with someone) (2)	o	o
Sitting or lying down (3)	o	o
Tilting head to one side (only if the subject has face and body facing forward and is making eye contact with the camera. When in doubt, mark no) (4)	o	o

Are these kinds of ritualized subordination present in females?

	Yes (1)	No (2)
Being embraced (hugging someone, having someone's arm around them, leaning on someone, being carried) (1)	o	o
Physical contact (holding hands with someone) (2)	o	o
Sitting or lying down (3)	o	o
Tilting head to one side (only if the subject has face and body facing forward and is making eye contact with the camera. When in doubt, mark no) (4)	o	o

Are there any males exhibiting ritualization of subordination?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

Are there any females exhibiting ritualization of subordination?

o Yes (1)

o No (2)

How many females exhibited ritualized subordination?

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (5)

o 5 (6)

o 6 (7)

o 7 (8)

o 8 (9)

o 9 (10)

o 10 (11)

o more than 10/crowd (12)

How many males exhibited ritualized subordination?

o 0 (1)

o 1 (2)

o 2 (3)

o 3 (4)

o 4 (5)

o 5 (6)

o 6 (7)

o 7 (8)

o 8 (9)

o 9 (10)

o 10 (11)

o more than 10/crowd (12)

Are males pictured in these fields of action?

	Yes (1)	No (2)

	o	o
Scenes in a home or household, cooking in a non-restaurant setting, or cleaning in a domestic setting (1)	o	o
Family scenes include scenes with a spouse and/or children (2)	o	o
Paid work scenes include scenes in an office, being at a convention or work conference, or meeting with a social superior (3)	o	o
Pictured alongside a picture of the product itself (holding a Tupperware, applying the company's makeup, consuming the company's nutritional supplements, etc.) (4)	o	o
Being outdoors/ paying sports, lifting weights, performing an active activity outdoors, or running (7)	o	o
Technology scene--subject is actively using a laptop, cell phone, or other electronic device (8)	o	o
blank background/headshot/ any identification photo/CGI photo (9)	o	o
other setting (10)	o	o

Are females pictured in these fields of action?

Yes (1)   No (2)

Scenes in a home or household, cooking in a non-restaurant setting, or cleaning in a domestic setting (1)	o	o
Family scenes include scenes with a spouse and/or children (2)	o	o
Paid work scenes include scenes in an office, being at a convention or work conference, or meeting with a social superior (3)	o	o
Pictured alongside a picture of the product itself (holding a Tupperware, applying the company's makeup, consuming the company's nutritional supplements, etc.) (4)	o	o
Being outdoors/ paying sports, lifting weights, performing an active activity outdoors, or running (7)	o	o
Technology scene--subject is actively using a laptop, cell phone, or other electronic device (8)	o	o
blank background/headshot/ any identification photo/CGI photo (9)	o	o
other setting (10)	o	o

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 1

Any qualitative notes you'd like to add?

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