

Diversity and Sensitivity – through an Advertising Lens

Abhirami Menon

Shiv Nadar Institution of Eminence, Delhi-NCR

ABSTRACT

Advertising strategies have undergone numerous transitions over the years, which stems from the businesses' need to adapt to market conditions. As much as advertisements are crucial to a business' survival, the influence they have on shaping purchasing decisions of consumers have been extensively studied. Conversations surrounding gender-sensitivity have been on the rise with increasing feminist discourses around the world. This has urged a rethinking of the portrayal of gender stereotypes in advertisements. While businesses have taken strides towards inclusivity, the prevailing level of gender sensitivity is still inadequate. This paper elucidates whether gender diversity in the boardroom positively correlates with the deliverance of gender-sensitive advertisements. There are increasing gender-based mandates across the world, including the 2013 legislation in India that made it mandatory for publicly listed companies to include at least one independent woman director on their board. It is expected that such diversity will impact business performance. It is also pertinent to understand if a higher level of diversity in the boardroom brings about gender sensitivity in the non-financial activities of the business. This study focuses on two industries - FMCG and financial services. Content analysis and focus group discussions are employed to analyze advertisements, followed by an OLS regression that is carried out with the identified variables. The results indicate that while a strong causal relationship cannot be found prior to the legislation, there is a lagged relationship between gender diversity and gender-sensitive advertisements subsequent to the implementation of the legislation.

Keywords: Advertisements, Board of directors, Financial Services, FMCG, Gender