

# Use of Gender Marketing in the Movement of select Gearless 2 – Wheeler Vehicles in Bengaluru

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**Abstract:** Gender marketing is a concept wherein the marketer uses targeted marketing policies depending on the gender being marketed to. Simply put, it involves gender segmentation, bias and even at times pulling down or stereotyping of one gender over the other. Gender marketing as a concept is extremely prevalent in the marketing and selling of automobiles in India. While attitudes aren't out rightly patriarchal anymore, the notion of women driving is still a bit fragile. Driving any vehicle (2 wheeler or a 4-wheeler) has been associated with freedom, status, technical skill & prestige; all of which, have been largely dominated by men. Marketers have been guilty of using this ego filled divide to make "masculine" vehicles and tagline, promoting the male "macho" look.

In this paper, the whole aim is to study the gender segmented marketing efforts of selected & reputable 2-wheeler manufacturers in South Bangalore & Mysore. The paper investigates what constitutes as gender-based marketing, how successful has it been over the years, what is the perception it creates in the mind of consumers and how is it correlated with movement of vehicles.

**IndexTerms:** Gender Marketing, Gender stereotypes, Consumer perception

## 1.1 Industry Profile

According to the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM), FY 18 automobile sales have surpassed the 20 million mark, this speaks a lot about the industry upon which the research is based. The contributing factors to these figures have been the Big four -Bajaj Auto, Hero MotoCorp, HMTI and TVS Motor Co. with the addition of Royal Enfield and Suzuki Motorcycles India.

HMTI (Honda Motorcycle & Scooter India) stands out as the largest seller of 2-wheeler vehicles in the Indian market, this is followed by Hero Motocorp and TVS. There is an outstanding difference between all three players, showing the dynamic nature of this industry where every company struggles for market share. The reason for this vast vacuum in market share can be associated to a lot of factors: marketing, pricing, positioning, advertising, brand loyalty etc.

## 1.2 Company Profile

### 1.2.1 Hero Motocorp

Hero Motocorp is the second largest 2-wheeler manufacturer in India, directly below HMTI. It has performed exceptionally well in FY 17 and is tipped to break its previous year's sales records as well. This can in part, be attributed to its sales campaigns, on point segmentation and use of the Hero-Honda brand to establish a wider market previously. It is the largest producer of 2-wheelers in the world and boasts a 46% market share of the Indian market, but in the scooter segment, it currently lags behind HMTI. Hero Motocorp started out in the Indian subcontinent as a joint venture between Hero and Honda, also commonly called as Hero-Honda. Over the years, HH has superbly attached itself to the Indian market and had almost become a staple for the consumer. In the year of 2010, Honda decided to split with Hero and its shares were purchased by Hero, subsequently meaning a new distinct entity being formed that now had to create another brand for itself. Although it may seem like a tough task, within 7 years, Hero has reclaimed its position in the Indian market via continuous product pushing to the right customer and at the right time. Its strength lies in the immense brand equity it has garnered over the years, coupled with excellent distribution, a wide and diverse product portfolio & sponsorships at the right place and time. While rising incomes, increased purchasing parity, decreasing government regulations, good R&D etc. all are amazing opportunities for Hero, its lacklustre innovation and tough and intense competition are easily its biggest threats.

### 1.2.2 TVS Motors

TVS Motors is the third largest 2-wheeler manufacturer in India and in a market so diverse, vast and seemingly unsatisfied, that is an achievement in itself. TVS has scored revenues of up to 15,000 crores approximately in the last financial year (FY 17). Its close competitors are HMTI, Hero Motocorp and Suzuki motors. With a strong presence in India and multiples successful efforts at gearless 2-wheeler innovation in India, TVS has used concepts of gender marketing across its tenure in India to market its products. Right from associating pink colour scooters (Scooty pep+) to using idols such as Anushka Sharma in ads describing feminine freedom provided by these scooters, we can say that TVS, along with Hero Motocorp, have been the starting points of gender marketing in India, making a very compelling case to place them in the analysis of the study at hand.

With a plethora of industries under its belt such as Automobile, Aviation, Education, Electronics, Energy, Finance, Housing, Insurance, Investment, Logistics, Service and Textiles, Hero is present in almost all spheres in the Indian subcontinent. It contains around 90 companies under its umbrella and is arguably the hardest working brand, boasting a strong financial position, market reach and R&D.

Although as in the case of Hero and Honda, open markets, rise of income and standards of living and deregulated markets by the government are all opportunities for TVS, its overdependence on the Indian market is still a point of major concern. This coupled

with cheaper options, environmentally conscious customers and improvement in public transport challenge TVS to innovate on a daily basis.

It's of no surprise that this specific brand was chosen for the study here as it perfectly fits the theme of the study at hand.

### 1.2.3 Suzuki Motors

is a Japanese manufacturer of 2-wheelers, 4-wheelers and speciality vehicles. Suzuki has over 45,000 employees and has 35 production facilities in 23 countries, and 133 distributors in 192 countries.

Being Japan's 4<sup>th</sup> largest automobile manufacturer, they bring to the Indian table, vast amounts of experience, capital and R&D facilities. Its partnership with Maruti motors has also meant that it has already identified, segmented and positioned its products as per Indian standards. On the road, Suzuki scooters are increasingly gaining popularity for its sharp looks, moderate price and excellent mileage.

Suzuki's focus on R&D, scale of operations and focus on quality marketing have always been its strong points. Its partnership with Maruti motors has opened its distribution channels that Suzuki can exploit. Their stronghold in the 2-wheeler industries is an advantage with the growing scooter market. Export of bikes and scooter is another potential market for Suzuki who will look to go global post their success in India.

## 2. Review of literature

### 2.1 Breadwinners, Homemakers and Beasts of Burden: A Gender Perspective on Transport and Mobility: (Peters, 1998),

The article here focuses here on the apathy faced by women with male dominance in the automobile field. Women's mode of transport has traditionally been determined via an interplay of various socio-cultural factors. This article also talks about how males dominated women in the past and how society has ingrained into them that home is where they should be and nowhere else.

. The barriers of orthodox thought have also broken and common notions of women being "adventurous" and not of right morals have moved away from the issues attached to their movement. Although to this day and date, women in developing countries are still restrained by the shackles of poverty and society.

### 2.2 The Gender Gap in Price Negotiations: Evidence from New Car Sales (Sallee, 2013)

The study here studies the gender price negotiation of vehicles gap that existed in NA region from 2004 to 2006. It considers the product purchased, purchaser demographics, trade characteristics and transaction characteristics. The study was carried out with the application of several statistical tools and it was found that increasing education standards and a closing wage gap over the past years have helped women bargain quite a bit, helping the younger generation quite significantly. The use of internet has also given the bargaining edge to a newer generation of women. In a nutshell, this case relates the socio-economic development of women to their purchasing power in the real world and gives us a glimpse into the dark reality of the gaping gender gap that exists till this day.

### 2.3 Demographic Preferences and Price Discrimination in New Vehicle Sales (Langer, 2009)

The study at hand focuses on price discrimination and pricing methods of automobile retailers across the US for both men and women, in a bid to conclude whether price discrimination exists or not. This article also tells us the improvement in socio-economic wellbeing of women who are now able to purchase prestige goods such as 4-wheel vehicles without much discrimination.

**2.4 Gender, Advertising and Ethics: Marketing Cuba (Morgan, 2017)** The article here focuses on the consequences of unethical marketing and gender stereotyping. This was faced by the women of Cuba, who faced the brunt of blatant racism and overt sexualisation. The main focus of the article here is gender stereotyping to attract customers. Ads portraying women as sensuous & exotic has often boomed the thriving sex trade of Cuba. the tourism industry, among several other, thrive on images of colonialism, racism and sexism.

### 2.5 Gender stereotypes in advertising (Popova, 2010)

The article at hand focuses on the definition of gender and how advertisements around the world exploit the concept of masculinity and femininity. Stereotypes exist as they are easier to comprehend rather than try to get to know every man and woman. According to the research here, traditional household roles, subordination, stable sexual relationships and hobbies are all strongly associated with feminine ads whereas power, testosterone, promiscuity, danger, adventure etc are associated with masculine ads.

## 3. Research Methodology

### 3.1 Statement of problem

Gender marketing has taken commonplace in today's business environment. With a concept so vast and significant, the use of gender marketing can either make or break the company's reputation. With significant advertising investments there must be returns, and there is very little documentation of the effectiveness of gender marketing in a 2-wheeler automobile segment, hence the study looks to explore the same.

### 3.2 Objectives of the study

1. To determine the ethicality and validity of the gender marketing concept and assess its impact on its target audience.
2. To determine the overall efficiency of gender marketing as opposed to a more neutral stance of marketing.
3. To correlate gender marketing efforts and customer perception.

### 3.3 Methodology

1. A detailed questionnaire consisting of questions pertaining to 3 adverts will be circulated among a stratified sample consisting of various age groups.

2. The questionnaire presents a male centric, female centric and a neutral ad in front of the respondent and asks them questions pertaining to
  - a. Ad appeal
  - b. Likelihood of product purchase
  - c. Effect of background colour on purchasing decision
  - d. Influence of a model/actor/actress on purchasing decision
3. The respondents are limited to the city of Bangalore only as the study looks to understand how a cosmopolitan city such as the city of Bangalore, responds to various gender segmented messages.
4. Correlation of numerical values and chi -square method for analysing association between two or more categorical variables.
5. Shapiro-Wilks test for normality i.e. if it's free from any skewness.

### 3.4 Population and sampling techniques

1. Respondents are 2-wheeler users and prospective users in Bangalore.
2. The population is stratified according to age.
3. The number of respondents analysed in the paper are 180.

## 4. Analysis and Interpretation

The following 3 ads were placed to the respondent:



Figure 1.1 Ad 1 HERO MOTOCORP – Male Centric Ad



Figure 4.2: Ad 2 TVS – Female Centric Ad



Figure 4.3: Ad 3 Suzuki – Neutral Ad

For each of the advertisements, respondents were asked the following:

1. How appealing the ad was to them
2. How much influence the background colour had on the respondent
3. Whether the model/actor/actress portrayed in the ad had any effect in the respondents purchasing decision.
4. Overall purchase decision.

The whole feedback can be summed up in one statistic.

### Overall advertisement preference of respondents.

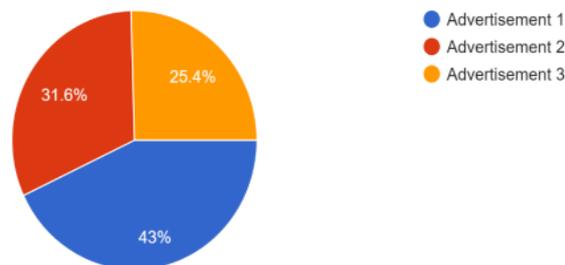


Figure 4.4: Ad appeal

Clearly, the Hero Meastro edge (HERO MOTOCORP) had appealed to majority of respondents. Subjective reasons were provided for the same, but the top reasons that stood out were:

1. **Favourable Colour Scheme:** solid and bold colours were more preferred as opposed to extremely vibrant colours as gathered.
2. **Bike Style:** A bolder bike style was preferred over feminine bike style for reasons that pertain to functionality.
3. **Brand Loyalty:** better ride experience is also factored in by the respondent when answering the questionnaire.

These were subjective factors. Diving into data we try to answer if there existed any sort of correlation between Age and Gender marketing ethicality and validity in the modern day based on likert scale ratings.

Table 4.1: Age of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	100	35.7	35.7	35.7
2	8	2.9	2.9	38.6
1	3	1.1	1.1	39.6
Valid 3	89	31.8	31.8	71.4
4	17	6.1	6.1	77.5
5	23	8.2	8.2	85.7

6	40	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	280	100.0	100.0	

From the descriptive statistics provided above, we can see the distribution of the age groups that answered the questionnaire. The age segments were grouped as per the following:

- 1 = 16 and below
  - 2 = 16 – 18
  - 3 = 18 to 25
  - 4 = 25-35
  - 5 = 35-45
  - 6 = 45 and above
1. The most respondents (31.8%) belonged to the 18 to 25 age category.
  2. This age group was also the one that broadly encompassed the young influencer group who used scooters on a regular basis and spread positive/negative word of mouth (WOM) about scooters.
  3. This category also belonged to heavy scooter users.
  4. The next heavy usage category belongs to the 45 and above age group.
  5. This is the age group that has seen multiple ads regarding 2-wheelers and rely heavily on word of mouth.
  6. This is also the age segment that purchases 2-wheelers for their children.
  7. The existence of a large population of the 18-25 age group is quintessential to the study as this is the major group that is influenced by gendered ads. They make purchasing decisions based on word of mouth or ad influence.

#### 4.1 The existence of a positive or a negative correlation between gender-based marketing and customer perception.

Table 4.2: Pearson Correlation test between concept ethicality and validity Correlations

		How valid do you think this concept is in the modern day and age?	How ethical is this concept according to you?
How valid do you think this concept is in the modern day and age?	Pearson Correlation	1	.564**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	119	119
How ethical is this concept according to you?	Pearson Correlation	.564**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	119	119

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

While there existed a positive correlation between these factors, the amount of correlation of 0.564 was significant between customer perception of the validity of gender marketing and their perception on its ethicality, telling us that their thought and opinion on the same was constant and one affected the other.

#### 4.2 Analysis of perceived ethicality and validity of gender marketing concept.

Although close to 40% of respondents knew of the concept of gender marketing, they were mostly neutral on its ethicality, a significant percentage shifted to the positive side ( series 4 and series 5), telling us that respondents accepted this concept and perceived it as being a normal part of advertising.

The above set of data presents an image that gender marketing is a widely accepted and prevalent concept that is assimilated on a daily basis, there are no taboos to it.

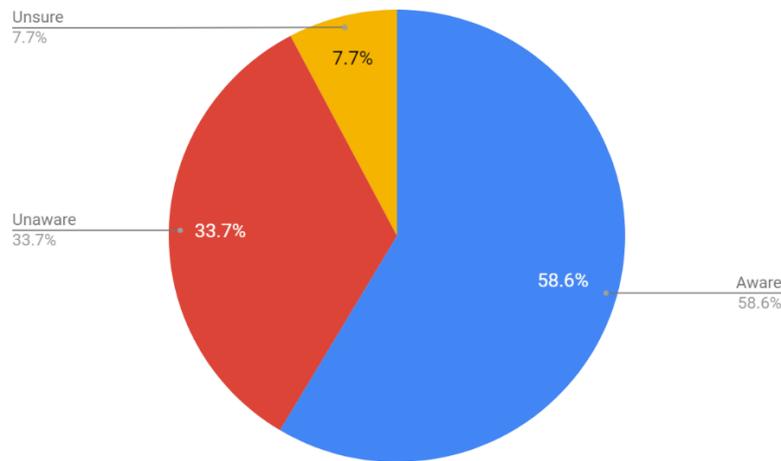


Figure 4.5: Concept awareness response

58.6% of respondents were aware of the concept of gender marketing. They understood the nuances of such type of marketing and were well versed with gendered messages. Only 33.7% of the respondents were unaware of the concept of gender marketing and were unable to differentiate between different gender messages presented to them.

Looking at this from a descriptive stats perspective, we can see that the result obtained is agreeing with the data graphs above. While a healthy 38.7% answered that the concept is “Valid” (4), they are leaning towards a neutral opinion when asked about its ethicality. The descriptive statistics is in accordance with the graphs above and prove the same. Hence, while respondents/potential customers accept this concept, they are sceptical about its ethicality, which means that they are extremely sensitive to gendered messages.

**4.3 Analysis of purchasing decision and the influence of a model/actor/actress presented in ads.**

- 79% of the total respondents felt no affinity/pull towards an ad that had a model/actor/actress in it.
- Although the number of “Yes” mildly spiked for an ad containing a popular young actress, most of the responses was a decided “No”.

Respondents showed very little care for which model advertised the product/brand. Although pop culture might dictate visual response to a certain ad (eg. Anushka Sharma ads are more recognizable), overall the participants judged the product and brand based on previous personal experience instead of getting carried away by the ad and the model in it.

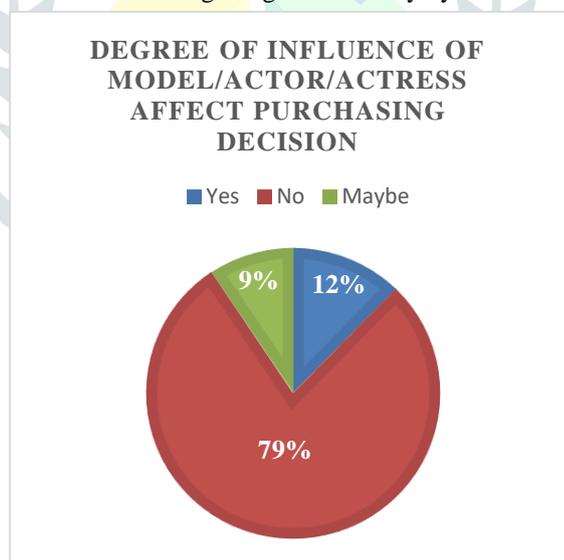


Figure 4.6: Model/actor/actress influence summary

**4.4 Analysis of dynamics of ad appeal.**

The questionnaire had yielded several subjective responses, the most prominent ones being shown in the chart below. The most prominent reason for ad appeal as seen is the colour scheme of the ad.

Respondents like a bolder bike style which could be attributed to a shift in tastes and preferences. Respondents also preferred ads that did not assault their senses, basically ads that were more simplistic, employed one colour scheme and had bolder fonts tend to be more favoured.

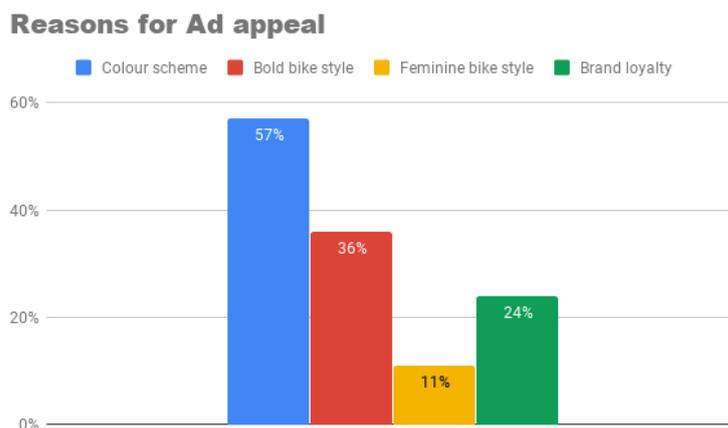


Figure 4.7: Ad appeal reasons summary

It is obvious that background colour made a huge impact on the overall favourability of an ad. **With reference to the most popular ad (Ad 1 of HERO MOTOCORP)**, The degree of this favourability can be shown here in the statistic below. The overall response has seen to be strongly leaning towards “neutral”, “agree” and “strongly agree”. While we should acknowledge the population that is not affected by the background colour, the trend of responses is clearly leaning towards the positive side.

Table 4.3: Correlation test between purchasing decision and background colour of advertisement 1  
Correlations

		2. How likely are you to purchase the product?	3. How strongly did the background color make you want to buy the product?
2. How likely are you to purchase the product?	Pearson Correlation	1	.470**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	114	114
3. How strongly did the background color make you want to buy the product?	Pearson Correlation	.470**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	114	114

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

In the table above, a pearson correlation is made between the purchasing likelihood and influence of background colour on the most preferred ad (Ad 1 of HERO MOTOCORP) and there is a normal amount of significance (0.470) that exists between purchasing likelihood of the Hero Motocorp bike and the perceived background colour.

This is in agreement with a figure presented below that shows us the trend of the effect of background colour on the purchasing decision for the particular brand where opinion towards background colour is towards the positive side, but not completely on one side particularly.

This shows that companies can leverage the background colour of their print advertisements to create a positive response, but that leverage extends only to certain extent.

**4.5 Chi-square**

Chi-square testing is undertaken to test whether there is an association between two or more categorical variables. Prior to that, the data is checked for normality, i.e. if it is free from any skewness or kurtosis.

H0: data is normally distributed across gender

H1: data is not normally distributed across gender

The test for normality assumes the above-mentioned hypothesis. Based on the Shapiro-Wilks statistic tested at 95% confidence interval, we obtain the following results.

Tables for analysis

(a) Test for normality (gender and age)

In Shapiro – Wilks, all the significance levels must exceed 0.05 for us to reject H1. We accept H1 even if some values are less than 0.05.

**Advertisement 1**

Table 4.4: Normality test for Advertisement 1 with respect to gender

Tests of Normality<sup>a,c,d,e,f,g,h,i</sup>

	Gender	Kolmogorov-Smirnov <sup>b</sup>			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
1. How appealing is this ad to you?	Female	.173	41	.003	.907	41	.003
	Male	.185	71	.000	.913	71	.000
	Prefer n	.260	2	.			
2. How likely are you to purchase the product?	Female	.224	41	.000	.903	41	.002
	Male	.217	71	.000	.893	71	.000
	Prefer n	.260	2	.			
3. How strongly did the background color make you want to buy the product?	Female	.183	41	.001	.908	41	.003
	Male	.212	71	.000	.873	71	.000
4. Did the model/actor/actress affect your purchasing decision?	Female	.449	41	.000	.563	41	.000
	Male	.430	71	.000	.519	71	.000
5. How much influence did the model/actor/actress have on your purchasing decision?	Female	.275	41	.000	.773	41	.000
	Male	.273	71	.000	.773	71	.000

a. There are no valid cases for 1. How appealing is this ad to you? when Gender = .000. Statistics cannot be computed for this level.

b. Lilliefors Significance Correction

c. There are no valid cases for 2. How likely are you to purchase the product? when Gender = .000. Statistics cannot be computed for this level.

d. There are no valid cases for 3. How strongly did the background color make you want to buy the product? when Gender = .000. Statistics cannot be computed for this level.

e. 3. How strongly did the background color make you want to buy the product? is constant when Gender = Prefer n. It has been omitted.

f. There are no valid cases for 4. Did the model/actor/actress affect your purchasing decision? when Gender = .000. Statistics cannot be computed for this level.

g. 4. Did the model/actor/actress affect your purchasing decision? is constant when Gender = Prefer n. It has been omitted.

h. There are no valid cases for 5. How much influence did the model/actor/actress have on your purchasing decision? when Gender = .000. Statistics cannot be computed for this level.

i. 5. How much influence did the model/actor/actress have on your purchasing decision? is constant when Gender = Prefer n. It has been omitted.

**Inference**

From the above table, we can infer that all the present significance values are lesser than 0.05, in such a case, we accept H1 and reject H0. This implies that the data is not normally distributed and hence can be subjected to a chi-square test. Hence, the Hero Ad is open to a chi – square analysis.

**5. Findings**

Based on the above data, the following finds are drawn:

1. Gender marketing is a concept that is widely familiar, there is no ambiguity around it or pertaining to its use. While this concept has found commonplace in the minds of individuals, respondents were neutral about its ethicality in the modern world. This suggest that individuals are more sensitive to gendered messages around them.
2. Gender messages are objectively seen, respondents did not consider their own gender or age while evaluating a product via its advertisement. Messages are a whole and not necessarily related to the individual. This can be attributed to sensitivity of messages by the current generation, who are well educated and abreast of current gender issues.
3. Purchasing decision is driven by brand loyalty, value provided by the 2-wheeler and other technical factors. There is very little influence of a model/actor/actress on the purchase of such products as seen from the pie-chart provided.
4. There is no significant association of a person's gender and age in the answering of each of the questions placed in front of them, this means that a respondent's gender and age played a minor role on how they answered questions.

5. Pop-culture ads (ads involving mainstream models/actors/actresses/themes etc.) have a higher chance of audience recognition and response as compared to ads with less popular icons and models. This is evident in the TVS wherein the influence of a popular celebrity (Anushka Sharma) spiked responses of model influence towards purchasing decision.
6. Bike word of mouth (WOM) is much more influential than ads placed in front of a potential customer. During surveys, people displayed positive purchasing behaviour towards brand they already associate positively with in terms of drive quality, price, mileage etc. Post that point ads made very little effect on how they behaved with other brands suggesting that significant investment decisions such as bikes often involved heavy use of word of mouth.
7. Bolder bike styles were more preferred due to reasons pertaining to functionality and long lasting of the product. 36% of respondents felt that a bolder bike style would motivate them to purchase the product more.
8. Solid, sombre and consistent background colours were most effective on respondents. The HERO MOTOCORP ad (Ad 1) followed a dark colour scheme with very little variations that was easy on the eye and was more liked compared to the TVS ad that employed vibrant hues from light pink to light blue.
9. In totality there is little association between a person's gender, age and how they respond to gender-based marketing efforts of companies. While evaluating purchase of a 2-wheeler, the model/actor/actress affinity, purchase likelihood and other attributes evaluated while deciding, depended less on the respondents' gender and age, signifying the importance of a strong marketing campaign that caters to everyone in an ethical manner.

### 5.2 Suggestions

1. Gender messages are sensitively seen. Marketers need to fit ads into perceptions of what is ethical and what is not. Caution is to be employed when using ads portraying various genders to ensure that roles aren't associated or connoted to a gender. Essentially, since a very weak association has been found between gender/age of a person on how they evaluate an ad, ad agencies will find it better to make ads that cater to everyone instead of only one specific target group.
2. Ads can provide an age wise experience. Taglines like "college waligaadi" and others resembling youth, adulthood or any other stage of life along with a clear mention of the age group tends to attract positive association by a certain age group it is being targeted to.
3. Ads should focus more on attributes like brand loyalty, value for money and ride quality. These attributes stick to consumer minds more and create a lasting impact along with positive word of mouth.
4. Model/actor/actresses have very little success in persuading customers over print ads. In the case that they must be used, pop culture icons have found to be more successful in attracting attention.
5. Ads that employ consistent colour schemes tend to be more favoured by customers.
6. Bike styles must be adjusted according to target audience. Males preferred a bolder bike style as compared to female respondents.

### 5.3 Conclusion

From the study conducted on the use of gender marketing in the 2 – wheeler gearless segment in Bangalore, it is evident that gender and age play a minimal role in how a customer or a potential customer perceives a print advertisement. While most of the respondents felt that the concept of gender marketing is extremely valid in the modern age, they are neutral on its ethicality. They respond overall, in an unbiased manner to gender specific messages given to them, this means that the respondent usually does not factor in his age or gender while watching ads developed by 2 – wheeler scooter companies. Instead, with our ever-expanding world and mindsets, the new customers are looking for equality in all the messages they get.

Marketers have a huge opportunity to fine tune ads, cut costs and develop impactful ads in this sense. Not every message works well with the modern customer and hence a mix and match of a good colour scheme, model/actor/actress and ad message that promotes ethical components of society can play a powerful role in purchasing decisions.

To conclude this paper, it is no exaggeration in saying that the concept of gender marketing is still valid in the modern day and will not die out anytime soon, while the concept may have survived, the only thing that has evolved are the messages placed under it.

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