

## 2 Reviewing the Debates on the Influence of Advertising – Considering the Role of Production, Content & Reception

In chapter one, I show the historical connections between the advertising industry and agendas of social change and argue for an expansive definition of advertising. In the following, I outline relevant debates in academia regarding the role of media in change processes as well as the influence of advertising and its linkages to social change. I divide this chapter into two main parts. First, I consider theories of change established in different disciplinary fields. Theories of change can be defined as “the conceptual model for achieving a collective vision” (Stachowiak 2013 [2009], p. 2). I thereby connect the empirical core of this project with existing theorisation on the role of media in change processes and social change in particular and deal with the question of the role of advertising in social change within a greater field of media and change while acknowledging the importance of regionally specific research. The specifics of studies focussing on media cultures in India connect the history of research regarding advertising with the diverse fields and debates they contain, including Development Studies and feminist Media Studies. The second part details publications concerned with advertising and change. Here I highlight the overwhelming body of research analysing the content of commercial advertising with discussions regarding its relevance for social change in particular alongside the reception of social campaigns. This research generally is marked by a marginal presence of advertising producers’ perspectives. Many studies allocate extraordinary responsibilities regarding ethical media production to producers of advertising, but their perspectives are rarely present in these studies.

With advertising and change processes central to my research question, the sources included came from various disciplinary branches. Through my literature review, I identify trends in how advertising from the social sector and commercial advertising are studied and considered differently regarding their role in change processes and social change. Where social campaigns are considered for the direct influential aspect of each advertisement, commercial advertising is largely understood in its capacity to create and reproduce patterns of imageries beyond the incentive to promote products and brands. While

chapter one points towards immense intertwining throughout the advertising business, the studies reviewed distance themselves from centring on these circumstances.

## **2.1 Embedding Advertising Research in India in an Interdisciplinary Field of Theories**

In the following part, I outline theoretical discussions regarding the dynamic between media cultures and change processes and present trends in the studies of advertising in India. The role of media in societies – including content, institutions, and technologies – is a thoroughly discussed field with a particular interest in the theorisation of change processes. Different disciplines thus contribute with a variety of meaningful insights into extant ‘discourses of change’ while empirical studies of advertising in India are embedded in this interdisciplinary field of theories of change. Here, I thus connect the inquiry into advertising in India with processes of medialisation, globalisation, and social change and establish the pertinence of this project through extant themes in a greater field of research.

### **Centring Regional Contextualisations within Insights from Theories regarding Media and Change**

This interdisciplinary field of studies contains theorisations of change processes in relation to media culture. The importance associated with media cultures in regard to societies’ structures is, for example, captured by the theorisation of medialisation processes. Founded in Media and Communication Studies, medialisation processes represent the interplay between media and change. The debates align themselves with ideas regarding the influential power of media. They are infused with a theorisation of this power through an understanding of global media structures as a fundamental component in communication and social structures. They suggest that individual, organisational, institutional, and systemic change is strongly tied to changes in communication and media cultures (Meyen 2009, pp. 9–17). Medialisation as described in the anthology “Social Dynamics 2.0: Researching Change in Times of Media Convergence. Case Studies from the Middle East and Asia” edited by N.-C. Schneider and B. Gräf (2011) takes “specific historical prerequisites and the local socio-cultural, political and economic underlying circumstances” into

account (p. 18).<sup>60</sup> Change processes are hence not exclusively connected to media's influence through technical innovation and densification of media. Instead, the importance of media culture is found in the interplay between media and its users and audiences by highlighting consideration for the appropriation of media technologies. In other words, "it depends largely on the conceptions with which people adopt media technologies, on the media practices they develop, and on how they integrate these in their everyday life" (Schneider & Gräf 2011, p. 19). Medialisation hence contains dynamics of establishing networks and institutions, the content and interpretation of meaning within medialised communication, advances made in media technologies, and the appropriation and practices of media use. This theorisation of media provides the importance of media cultures, including its producers, consumers, and production sites in relation to societies' structures and contexts. Accordingly, debates concerning advertising and change are entangled with key events, stakeholders, and movements of social change processes, as described in chapter one. For instance, as medialised communication became increasingly significant as part of the nation-building project initiated in the early years of post-independence India, diverse arenas and individuals involved were embedded in beliefs of media's usefulness and influential power. Intersections of the belief in providing scientific information and later edutainment as the basis for development and as a solution for inequalities, and the importance given to liberalisation strategies linking economic growth with theories of development, played an important role in debates regarding advertising and change processes. The history of India's advertising business thus lays out significant preconditions, developments, and discourses fundamental to understanding the role of advertising and its producers in this specific context. The historical and socio-political events and circumstances have thus led to the current stage of medialised communication that seeks to influence audiences and represent medialisation processes in this context.

The conviction of media cultures' power proposed by media practitioners, academics, and other stakeholders alike is widely integrated into efforts towards social change in the fields of development practice and Development

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<sup>60</sup> The theorisation of medialisation alongside mediatisation processes represents ongoing debates regarding the role of media in society. Though sometimes used almost synonymously, the ideas found in mediatisation theories deal with "the processes of an increasing spreading of technical communication media in different social and cultural spheres" (Hepp 2009, p. 141). However, medialisation provides an all-encompassing understanding of media's role in social change processes.

Studies.<sup>61</sup> Theories of change concerning the role of media in these fields combine the fundamental question of how to direct change processes with the utilisation of media culture. With the intent to determine how to get from one point to another, this theorisation addresses “linkages among the strategies, outcomes, and goals that support a broader mission or vision” (Stachowiak 2013 [2009], p. 2). Development communication takes up a central role within social initiatives, engaging medialised communication within the development agenda. R. D. Colle defines development communication as “the planned and systematic use of communication through interpersonal channels, and audio-visual and mass media” (Colle 2008 [2003], p. 126). In the publication “Communicating Social Change. Structure, Culture, and Agency”, M. J. Dutta (2011) distinguishes between four principles or “entry points” that reflect projects of development communication and ultimately produce four approaches to directing social change processes: individual-level approaches, structural approaches, top-down approaches, and participatory approaches. Individual-level approaches are based on the belief that individual change brings societal change through changes in knowledge, attitude and practices (KAP) (Dutta 2011, pp. 32–34). Structural approaches acknowledge underlying inequalities and focus on transforming structures through redistributive justice (Dutta 2011, pp. 34–37). Top-down approaches consider development a universal evolution from uneducated to educated, while participatory approaches draw on workshop formats and dialogue as key to development work for creating structural change (Dutta 2011, pp. 37–38).<sup>62</sup> These trends are described in the publication “Communication for Social Change Anthology”, edited by Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte (2006). Therein, Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte differentiate between individual behavioural change brought on through information and knowledge and social change in terms of shifting structural inequalities. Alongside this distinction, these approaches illustrate the various connections within development discourses. According to Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, the two main threads in development communication, as mentioned above, are inspired by

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<sup>61</sup> As described by R. B. Potter, development contains development theories that aim to explain how development has occurred and how it should occur, development strategies which constitute the practical path to development, and development ideologies representing different agendas concerning social, economic, cultural, ethical, moral, and religious influences (Potter 2002, pp. 61–62).

<sup>62</sup> The participatory approach was spearheaded by P. Freire (1970 [1968]) as a critical reaction to paternalistic tendencies in development communication and articulated in the publication “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, first in Portuguese and later translated and published in English.

modernisation theories and dependency theories, respectively.<sup>63</sup> Thereby, they are connected to the foreign policies of the USA, as mentioned in chapter one, as well as the critical stances towards power relations within development initiatives (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006, p. xvi). In a detailed account of development communication titled “Threads of Development Communication” (2008 [2003]) with insights from the Food and Agriculture Organization in 1989, Colle highlights how participation became an essential part of the critique towards modernisation theory through dependency theory. As part of J. Servaes’ anthology “Communication for Development and Social Change”, Colle identifies “conscious and active participation [...] at every stage of the development process” as a fundamental aspect of development communication (Colle 2008 [2003], p. 126). Further, Colle argues that the inclusion of social marketing into development communication greatly influenced communication practices within development initiatives, further increasing the importance of research in order to adjust to “beneficiaries’” needs (Colle 2008 [2003], pp. 134–135). Similarly, Waisbord – in mapping the “Family Tree of Theories, Methodologies and Strategies in Development Communication” (2001) – points out that social marketing did not come out of the classic development discourses of diffusion of innovation<sup>64</sup> connected to modernisation theory, or participatory theories (p. 6). Nevertheless, Waisbord argues that its “focus on behaviour change, understanding of communication as persuasion (‘transmission of information’), and top-down approach to instrument change suggested an affinity with modernisation and diffusion of innovation theories. Similar to diffusion theory, it conceptually subscribed to a sequential model of behaviour change in which individuals cognitively move from acquisition of knowledge to adjustment of attitudes toward behaviour change” (Waisbord 2001, p. 6). Social change within this perspective is understood with its premise in individuals’ behavioural practices as the foundation for changing systemic patterns of society. In contrast, Colle notes that social marketing is distinctly different from its origins in commercial marketing (Colle 2008 [2003], pp. 134–135). However, the connection to

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<sup>63</sup> Dependency theory evolved from struggles against colonial and dictatorial powers in previously colonised countries of Africa, Latin America, and Asia (Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006, p. xvi). As a critical stance towards modernisation theory, dependency theory pointed out the power relations that fostered and reproduced dependency between previous colonisers and colonised through hegemonic patterns of “global economic relations” (Curran & Park 2000, p. 5).

<sup>64</sup> This theory was established by development communication practitioner E. Rogers in the early 1960s and connected to modernisation theory with its premise of spreading new ideas and information in order to influence behavioural practices (Morris 2003, p. 226; see also Gumucio-Dagron & Tufte 2006, pp. 110–125).

the marketing techniques in applied economics on which social marketing is based is a given. Some even argue that by adopting marketing strategies into development communications, the “gap between the corporate sector and public welfare” has been bridged (Hastings & Saren 2003, p. 307). The discourses in development communication regarding theories of change thus contain crucial reflections of the theoretical foundation for and evolution of development initiatives as well as elements of theorising approaches to directing change processes through medialised communication. While Development Studies draw heavily from development practices, other academic disciplines such as Sociology, Political Sciences, Media and Communication Studies, and Cultural Studies are equally influential in these debates (Stachowiak 2013 [2009], p. 26). This interdisciplinarity is apparent in discussions about problematic aspects of directing change processes within the arena of development agendas. The critical stances towards modernisation theory and development industries mirror the critique of the importance given to media technologies in mediatisation theories forming normative ideas regarding modernisation and development (Schneider & Gräf 2011, p. 20). Schneider and Gräf stress approaches moving beyond determining a single direction of global media development. Consequently, it is essential to consider how media development and processes of change can lead to contrasting tendencies (Schneider & Gräf 2011, pp. 19–20). This point of view proposes diverse and divergent possibilities of change processes over linear models of change that contain limited perspectives of what is of value (Huesca 2006, p. 570). These theories about media and change contribute counterpoints within ‘discourses of change’.

Schools of marketing thought and advertising as a sub-area are based on the conviction that media institutions, technologies, and content are tools to influence audiences. Marketing is the common denominator that entails strategies to influence audiences successfully. Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in India, as detailed in chapter one, and the ‘West’, social campaigning and commercial advertising were developed into professions and studies (see Shaw & Jones 2005). The significance of these fields is found through the interest in identifying what could effectively direct audiences to change behaviour. Thereby advertising constitutes a prominent part of ‘discourses of change’. However, studies of media have moved away from thinking about media solely as an instrument. Instead, the focus is directed at the media’s role as part of dynamics in societies and “sites where construction, negotiation, and reconstruction of cultural meaning takes place in an ongoing process of maintenance and change of cultural structures, relationships, meaning, and value” (Horsfield 2008, p. 113). In the context of discussing socialisation processes in Social Sciences and debates in Cultural Studies, the works by structuralist and post-structuralist sociologists and anthropologists contributed with revolutionising theorisations of

advertising, in particular, e.g. the study by J. Williamson (1978) titled “Decoding Advertisements (Ideas in Progress). Ideology and Meaning in Advertising” but also within Critical Media Studies in general (see Sundaram 2013, p. 11). With inspiration from these discourses, authors gave increasing focus to particularly commercial advertising as a cultural text. Since S. Hall’s work “Encoding and Decoding in the Television Discourse” was published in 1973, a comprehensive theory of communication developed which deals extensively with the question of reception and hence the effect of medialised messages.<sup>65</sup> Central therein is “the fundamental instability of language [that entails that] meaning can never be permanently fixed” (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 6). The reaction of individuals depends on their personal context within the local and the global. Meaning becomes dependent on the realities of each person, and medialised messages can therefore have multiple meanings. This leads possible responses to be multiple and diverse, and thus to the potential for the effects and impact of messages, images and imageries to differ significantly. These complexities of reception hence represent a debate that challenges the assumption of being able to predict how media content will affect its audiences. In connection with beliefs about media’s influential power and its continuous use in development communication and commercial marketing, these theorisations reflect debates regarding the success of advertising campaigns. The perspectives concerned with the role of media in society with regard to processes of social change thus entail correlating and contrasting ideas. Discourses regarding change processes are interwoven and illustrate the fluidity of discursive knowledge that is a central part of the framework comprised through ‘discourses of change’.

As mentioned, Media Studies in India found their way into academia between the 1960s and the 1980s through the connection to the nation-building project strategies of development communication and interests in determining their effectiveness. With the importance of reception studies, establishing market research in India was a significant element in connecting empirical studies and an emerging field in academia. While drawing heavily on ideology theories, e.g. structuralism, Marxism, and critical theory, the circumstances of Media studies in India reflect a discipline based on a specific field of empirical reception studies (Sundaram 2013, pp. 3–7). In light of change processes in rela-

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<sup>65</sup> In the reworked essay “Encoding/Decoding” from 1980, Hall criticises mass communication research for its positivist stance regarding fixed meanings within medialised communication (Procter 2004, p. 59). According to Hall, medialised content has been produced with a specific meaning in mind – encoded – and is by the recipients interpreted – decoded – at the point of reception (Jørgensen & Phillips 2002, p. 16; Procter 2004, p. 59).

tion to media cultures in India, a range of studies deal with the interplay between media and social change. Within the tradition of determining the effect and impact of media content, reception studies in the form of ethnographic accounts cater to these concerns. For example, the works by P. Mankekar (1993; 1999) centre audiences' experiences of television and Indian serials, linking the medialised messages at hand with the construction of identity regarding gender and national belonging.<sup>66</sup> Similarly, S. Munshi (2010) gives a detailed account of extant TV serials and their production from 2000–2008. R. Parameswaran (2001) studied the role of romance novels in the lives of young middle- and upper-class 'women' in postcolonial urban India, and S. D. Derne (2008) interviewed "non-élite urban Indian men" and discusses the role of economic and cultural globalisation in social change processes in India in connection with Hollywood films and cable TV (Derne 2008, pp. 11–19, 34). These studies align with this field's common trend, identifying and describing the connections between media cultures and change processes. They provide examples for discussions of sociological models of social change, i.e. theorising historical developments according to societies' social structures and thereby establishing interpretations, understanding, and models of change processes (Sztompka 1994). These trends are equally prominent in the field of advertising and social change. Munshi, for example, discusses the relevance of commercial advertising of household appliances in relation to empowerment and argues that buying a washing machine without the husband's approval can be seen as a step towards independence (Munshi 1998, p. 580). This scenario exemplifies marketing strategies as part of processes of social change that relate to the approaches of development communication. With reference to medialisation processes, media contribute with cultural references and social meaning. Media cultures thus provide insights into the fluid interactions of the cultural and social systems, institutions and individuals of media production, and audiences. The academic debates on the role of media and its content in relation to change processes are hence present across disciplinary foci.

Specific historical and contextual particularities of certain regions, as contained in the studies mentioned above, deal with accounts of empirical studies as well as the role of, for example, cultural globalisation in this particular region. As pointed out by Sundaram, processes of medialisation follow the specifics of their contexts, e.g. the role of cassette culture and media piracy as low-cost alternatives to regulated media production or the spread of mobile phones

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<sup>66</sup> The audiences were described as 'men' and 'women' struggling for upwardly-mobility and "middle-classness". They were observed and interviewed for their perceptions of, and reaction to, messages contained in edutainment serials (Mankekar 1999, pp. 139–140).



as an element in media accessibility and digitalisation (Sundaram 2013, pp. 6–10; see also Ghosh 2013, p. 2). Similarly, the circumstances of newspaper production and circulation in India in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century exemplify multidirectional and regionally specific developments in connection with the advertising industry in particular (Jeffrey 2000, pp. 60–74) and illustrate contextual particularities of change processes that are different from other regions (Schneider 2005, pp. 116–117; Sundaram 2013, p. 11). In the context of the advertising business in India, the interplay between this field and global medialisation processes stands as an appropriation of present discourses that shows regional specifics due to its historical and cultural setup. The region-specific empirical studies of reception based in Social Sciences point to the interconnectedness of existing theorisations of change processes and provide a particular contextual setting. Just as the role of globalisation processes has been debated thoroughly throughout the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, theories of global media cultures contain discussions about their universal relevance and applicability in contrast to region-specific empirical studies. With the increasing density of media technologies, transnational networks, and growing access and appropriation of media cultures, the idea of a homogenised “global village” was countered with realisations of multidirectional media flows (see Curran & Park 2000, pp. 9–11; Hepp 2009, p. 4). Insights into specific regional contexts thus challenge the persistent reproduction of underlying hegemonic patterns and theorisations of a global media culture that assume homogenising circumstances (Curran & Park 2000, p. 6; Sundaram 2013, p. 9). The globalisation of cultural representations with trans-local characteristics, as visible in India, exemplifies how advertising agencies and social organisations are part of global networks. Studies of media cultures in regionally specific contexts thus reflect ‘discourses of change’ signified by its setting as well as its connection to diverse patterns of global media cultures. In order to interpret trends in the academic discussions of advertising in India, I revisit the history of research regarding the advertising business. In the following, I summarise the groundwork of this field and thus contextualise the academic trends that follow.

### Old and New Themes in the Field of Advertising and Social Change

As outlined above, the field of advertising and change in India is embedded in the discourses, theorisations, and empirical studies of the role of media cultures. Further, the understanding of the advertising business within this project is signified by the historical and contextual circumstances of these media cultures and the immense intertwining of the social sector and commercial marketing. It is therefore relevant to include the history of research regarding both

commercial and social advertising in the review of the academic debates of advertising in India and consider these debates in relation to greater processes at hand. Authors discussing advertising and social change in India have considered a range of events and circumstances as particularly noteworthy in a society's change processes and, as such, distinguish these particularities in relation to the advertising business as change catalysts. Among them, Chaudhuri (2014), for example, sets studies of commercial advertising in the context of globalisation. Like many others, Chaudhuri discusses the implications of major events and developments as significant components in catalysing change processes in India while connecting these circumstances with the current understanding of gender. Hereto belong changes in governmental development policies, the Women's Movement in India, and increasing importance given to self-representation and image construction (pp. 145–146). In comparison, Rajagopal (2011a) sets out to understand the formation of the new 'middle class' in India during the Emergency and the relationship between state politics of coercion and the role of medialised communication in the form of social marketing.

As part of the intersections of these contextual events and circumstances, advertising and social change processes, social structures, and identities have been at the core of the discussions present. Social identities framed by gender, caste, class, nationality, or religion have often been related in these discussions to themes of 'modernity', 'middle classness', or 'social mobility' (see, for example, Rajagopal 1998; Rajagopal 1999; Mankekar 1999; Chaudhuri 2001; Schneider 2006; Haynes 2010; Cayla & Eckhardt 2012). Rajagopal, for example, points towards the new 'middle-class' becoming central in the nation-building project and its creation as a 'modern' nation. It is also an essential conceptualisation of the target group within the evolving consumerist culture. The discussion on the role of commercial advertising thus included intersections of this financially-abled group, ideas of 'modernity', and 'discourses of change' (Rajagopal 2011a, p. 1045). As Chaudhuri states, referring to the incorporation of commonalities or feelings of belonging: "social identity [functions] as elements in [commercial] advertising in order to speak to the audiences" (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 147). At the same time, Rajagopal points out the exclusion of "the poor and marginalised" regarding representation, as advertising agencies increasingly catered to an urban, well-to-do, elite, English-speaking audience (Rajagopal 2011b). With the importance of considering social identities as depicted in commercial advertising, scholars argue that the imageries in advertising play the role of "delegitimising space in public discourse for the majority of Indian men and women" (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 374).

Within these discussions on class, national identities, and medialised communication beyond advertising, intersections with gender are prominent. With stereotypical gender imageries so prominent in commercial advertising, female

personas' representation became a focal point among feminist activists and academics alike. Similarly, Chaudhuri's take on the visibility and representation of 'women' in print media singles out the 1990s as an era of an increase in visibility of themes of feminism and so-called "women's issues" as well as the rise of the corporate 'woman' as a new icon in media with a connection to liberalisation strategies (Chaudhuri 2000, pp. 264–266). Inclusion of 'women's' liberation and freedom, as seen in the Hero Honda Pleasure campaign or by utilising, for example, International Women's Day, are thus set in the intersection of social change, economic growth, and development agendas.

The importance of current discourses but also single events is exemplified in the context of the Nirbhaya case of December 2012.<sup>67</sup> With this incident of sexualised violence and the intense public debates and protests in the aftermath of this episode, discourses of sexism and gender-based violence gained traction. The Nirbhaya case marked a critical occurrence in the debates around gender and equality and a turning point regarding discourses of gender and social change. While media representation and, in particular, news coverage was criticised for its sensationalism and its reproduction of sexist patterns (Banerjee 2018), debates concerning gender-based violence and sexualised violence became central in mainstream news media. Discussions increasingly included previously excluded groups, and a variety of arenas provided fertile ground for public debates of, for example, the #metoo movement that followed. Representatives of NGOs and other social organisations were increasingly considered for their expertise on sexualised violence as exemplified by the Verma committee, and included in order to serve as a stand-in for how to direct change processes regarding gender. Accordingly, the themes and debates in the field before us became increasingly diverse. Contemporary commercial advertising content has increasingly discussed with possibilities of challenging gender norms. Ideas on "women's empowerment and emancipation are now marketing tools, and feminism a commodity to be sold" (Seker 2017) and thus increasingly visible in commercial advertising. This is encapsulated in the concept of 'femvertising'. The opposition to and support for these types of marketing strategies are exemplified through the debate following an advertisement from 2015 initiated by the magazine Vogue India. The two-and-a-half-minute-long audio-visual adver-

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<sup>67</sup> This particular case, in international media mostly referred to as the Delhi gang-rape case, occurred in Delhi on December 16<sup>th</sup> 2012. The 23-year-old J. S. Pandey, initially given the name Nirbhaya (translation from Hindi: the fearless one), was assaulted, raped, tortured, and died of the injuries inflicted. The case sparked great debate and demonstrations for action and led to the conviction of six perpetrators, four of whom were hanged in March 2020.

tisement was produced through the “social awareness initiative” #VogueEmpower and addressed topics pertinent to feminist discourses, from body image, gender norms, sexuality, and reproductive rights, as well as love, romance and relationships.<sup>68</sup> Critical stances, in line with criticism of ‘corporate feminism’<sup>69</sup> in general, pointed out the flawed and potentially harmful aspects of this type of strategy, mentioning classist attitudes as well as a simplification and trivialisation of feminist activism and movements catering to a financially-able group (Gabler 2015). Alongside discussions of gender-based marketing as introduced in the introduction (Sekhar, Dash, & Singh 2012), some consider the inclusion of feminism into advertising merely as a marketing trick (Khan 2016) tapping into a market of ‘women’ as consumers (Davidson 2015), others – while not uncritical – praise the possibilities of inspiring self-esteem in ‘girls’ and ‘women’ (Bahadur 2014). Recently, the debates on the power of commercial advertising have found footing in international development organisations and their collaborations with the private sector, particularly the advertising industry. In these connections, commercial advertisements are considered tools for challenging sexist stereotypes and promoting worldwide equality, as seen in the Unstereotype Alliance (Neff 2017; Peck 2017). The discourse of the significance of commercial advertising regarding gender thus entails more diverse perspectives in line with the diversity of representation.

While studies on the role of commercial advertising in India have most commonly been embedded in processes of change regionally specific to India, such as how advertisements depict the presence of globalisation or their connections to development agendas and the liberalisation strategies, representation of ‘women’ has long been central in feminist Media Studies and other Social Sciences. The harmful effects of stereotypical gender representation in popular media and commercial advertising still play a major role in discussions of media and change, including notes of frustration with how commercial advertising and other media outlets are part of sexist continuity (Banerjee 2018). The understanding of medialisational processes, including technological

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<sup>68</sup> The video titled “My Choice” was produced as a collaboration between director H. Adajania and Indian movie celebrity D. Padukone. The text was written by Indian screenwriter K. Khambatta and voiced by D. Padukone. The short film ends with the statement “Vogue Empower. It starts with you”, reflecting the self-proclaimed aim of the advertisement, to “encourage people to think, talk and act in ways big or small on issues pertaining to women’s empowerment” given on Vogue’s YouTube channel alongside the video (Vogue India 2015).

<sup>69</sup> Critics of ‘corporate feminism’ point to how the focus on individual freedom and empowerment in the corporate world for some might prove successful but might undermine collective social actions (Bruenig 2015).

advances and the increasing spread of and accessibility to social media, illustrates the importance given to medialised communication and reveals the pluralism of media cultures' use in change processes. However, commercial advertising still takes up a significant role in these discussions, even though debates regarding the role of media in societies include comics, video games, short films etc. Similarly, the interest in reception is, to date, a dominant debate on social advertising, for example, assessing the importance of social marketing in HIV/AIDS prevention campaigns (Awasthi & Awasthi, 2019). Relentlessly being a widely used strategy worldwide, social advertising is produced with the intent to create awareness on a plethora of issues, including drug use and domestic and sexualised violence. Despite critical perspectives on a strategy based mainly on top-down and individual behavioural approaches, the production of social campaigns has not lessened. Instead, social campaigns show increasing diversity in connection with technological advances and the spread of social media and are also included in advertising festivals, winning prizes for ingenuity and creativity. These trends hint at the connections extant between advertising and medialisation processes, social change initiatives and debates, and the advertising industry.

The outline above thus illustrates how the research regarding the role of advertising in processes of social change reflects a greater variety and contrasting perspectives. Nevertheless, the discussions of core themes show the continuation of major trends. Commercial advertising and gender in the form of female representation are central in discussions of the role of media in socialisation processes. Studies of social marketing follow research in marketing in that they seek to capture the effect of specific campaigns through reception studies. In the following, I delve into these trends in more detail.

### **2.2 Layers and Variations of Academic Debates on the Role of Advertising in Change Processes**

As illustrated, the sources laying out the relevant academic discussions are derived from Social Sciences, including Media and Communication Studies, Social and Cultural Anthropology and Sociology, Development Studies, Area and Cultural Studies, as well as Marketing and Media Management. This range of disciplines considers various perspectives and methodological approaches and thus highlights different aspects of the central questions. Each study might deal with the production, dissemination, and effect of advertising campaigns or centre one of these aspects. However, the diverse insights included provide a comprehensive foundation for further analysis. For this project, I hence chose sources centring the academic debates on advertising and social change with a

regional focus on India. I considered them in their capacity to give particular focus to the production sites and the individuals involved.

I sorted the literature according to various points of departure: 1) discussing the production of commercial campaigns; 2) discussing social advertisements, the effects sought, and the strategies to achieve this; 3) researching the utilisation of media producers and their institutions in social change projects; 4) identifying changes in the advertising industry, its visuals and imageries; and 5) discussing the influence of advertising on discourses. Sources include academic journal publications in Anthropology, Media and Communication, and Marketing, anthologies, elaborate ethnographic research, and publications within educational institutions or think tanks (Indian Institute of Management, International Marketing Trends Conference, Sarai, a program within the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies). Many of these studies are based on content analysis. Some include insights from the individuals on the production site through interviews or aim to centre these perspectives in ethnographic studies. Attempts to determine the effects and impact of advertising and discussion thereon are found in reception studies, while case studies contain the possibilities of addressing the production site, the reception, as well as the content. The literature included is a blend of thorough empirical research, historical contextualisation, and thematic discussions. Across the studies reviewed, media culture is not only seen as a direct part of everyday life but also as influential regarding cultural, social, and other societal structures. Theoretical and empirical studies essentially hold that various media channels, technologies, and their content play a prominent role in the socialisation processes of most individuals.

The multiplicity of arenas debating the dynamics of advertising and social change illustrates the complexity of this field. My review of the studies reveals trends of differentiation that embody a division between commercial and social advertising. While some studies draw upon existing interconnectivity between these two strands of advertising, the complex intertwining is simplified. The role of advertising producers is, apart from a few exceptions, marginal and discussed in the context of having certain responsibilities in creating medialised communication. Previous research concerning the role of advertising in change processes either prioritises discussing its effect and impact through reception studies or focuses on content, as in media content analyses in connection with change processes in society, e.g. economic liberalisation strategies or manifestations of globalisation. Through the division between intentional and unintentional directions of change processes, I centre the interplay between advertising and social change and apparent interconnectivity. Additionally, I highlight the marginal role of advertising producers in this review. In the next section, I detail these tendencies and trends accordingly.

### 2.2.1 Information Dissemination and Effectiveness: Intentional Directions of Change Processes

Advertising as medialised communication with the intent to influence audiences sets the premise for the importance given to the reception of advertisements. This type of communication is created to direct choices of a specific brand, product, service, ideology, idea, or behavioural pattern according to a specific agenda. A great deal of literature is hence concerned with the effectiveness of advertising campaigns. Development Studies and professionals in marketing and media management, in particular, centre the interest on the effects as an inherent part of their work. Social initiatives utilising advertising are thus aligned with interests in commercial marketing in that they centre the direct success of campaigns in relation to their intent and their specific message. Within the discussions of the effectiveness of advertising, the understanding of marketing and debates regarding participatory strategies become a central element. At the same time, the contextual circumstances illustrate the continuous stance regarding the power of medialised communication and, thus, information dissemination. In the following parts, I detail how studies focus on the intentional direction of change processes.

#### Marketing as Foundation for Effective Knowledge-Sharing

As mentioned, publications on advertising and social change in Development Studies have a strong link to practices of development. Therefore, the production and effect of social marketing are central to these debates. The intense focus on the effectiveness of campaigns had direct implications for the academic debates that followed. More recently, this interest is connected to the reform efforts and discourses in the field of development, centring the agenda of Results Based Management that was introduced in the late 1990s.<sup>70</sup> Accordingly, a line of studies focuses on the strategies used in social marketing, i.e. the implementation, outreach, and evaluations are central. Further, the re-organising of the campaigns is considered in order to bring forth more effective social

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<sup>70</sup> RBM was a fundamental part of a UN reform agenda to achieve coherence across the different institutions of the UN. This agenda was reaffirmed through the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000, the Paris Declaration of Aid Effectiveness published in 2001, the Accra Agenda for Action from 2008, and again in 2011, the Busan Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation. Throughout, the focus on development results and aid effectiveness played a central role (Bester 2016).

marketing campaigns (see, for example, Jain 1973; Meekers & Rahaim 2005; Sharma & Sharma 2007; Sadh & Agnihotri 2010; Sharma 2014; Das 2016). These studies primarily draw on quantitative research and rely on statistics to determine campaign success. They are particularly concerned with the potential of isolated campaigns, the effect of chosen campaigns regarding the change processes they set out to catalyse, and the direct influence each campaign has had. Studies on social marketing thus focus on the individual behavioural change that is considered central to societies' development in this approach. As such, the focus on effectiveness is reminiscent of studies on commercial marketing by management professionals that similarly look to identify the effect of particular commercial campaigns or attitudes towards commercial advertising in order to identify the consumer and create appropriate marketing strategies (see, for example, Khan & Khan 2002; Mishra 2009; Singh & Vij 2008). Therein, commercial advertising is seen as a source of information on available products, ideas, and services fused with an objective to promote certain brands (Khan & Khan 2002, p. 17; Gupta 2005, p. 22; Das 2007). In these studies, marketing is the foundation that enables this promotion and, in connection to social advertising, is a powerful tool to be used in influencing audiences to change their knowledge, attitudes, and practices.

The assumed power of media content and networks, as displayed in the context of development initiatives, aligns itself with the ideas from the field of marketing, i.e. that marketing enables media content to be particularly influential. The fundamental aim of marketing is to make "the public aware about the existence, the price, and the benefits of specific products" (Waisbord 2001, p. 6). As such, marketing strategies are based on the belief that information and knowledge are fundamental in change processes. Thereby, the foundation of commercial and social advertising is similar, although marketing strategies deployed in social advertising were developed within the field of commercial advertising. This commonality is illustrated in the article "Reviewing the Concept of Advertising from the Print Media Perspectives", mirroring the aforementioned definition of advertising given by the AMA. A. T. Jibril (2017) here refers to advertising as "subdivided into commercial and non-commercial types of advertisements" (Jibril 2017, p. 2). Commercial advertising promotes products or services, and non-commercial advertising includes social advertising alongside announcements for social, cultural, political or religious events. However, the intent to influence audiences through marketing strategies unites these types of medialised communication (Jibril 2017, p. 2). As mentioned before, Colle questions the parallels between commercial and social marketing. While acknowledging the role of marketing in pointing out the importance of prior research and focus on beneficiaries' needs, Colle persists that marketing approaches in developmental initiatives are distinct from its origin



of commercial marketing (Colle 2008 [2003], pp. 134–135). However, the ways in which the principles of marketing are translated into social marketing (“4 As” or additional “4 Ps”) illustrate the close bond. Moreover, the circumstances of the Indian context and its immense intertwining between social change initiatives and the advertising industry present more commonalities than differentiation to create medialised messages to influence audiences. For example, the growing use of social marketing during the Emergency in the form of propaganda and increasing incorporation of consumerist cultures into the development agenda of the Indian State, as described in chapter one, show strong interlinkages between the field of social marketing and commercial advertising. These circumstances eventually saw both commercial and social advertisements promoting ideologies of national identities alongside their objectives (Schneider 2006, pp. 823–824). The particularities of the advertising business in India thus highlight similarities between marketing strategies utilised in the private sector and the social sector, as the appearance and messages of different types of advertising became difficult to tell apart. Marketing strategies do, therefore, not only provide the groundwork for advertising with a commercial intent as well as advertising with a non-commercial intent. Its presence in advertising with contrasting objectives but with indistinguishable output and the continuous intersections of development and consumerism are indicators of the commonalities.

### Complex Realities of Participation and Criticising Social Marketing

In contrast to the idea of information provision as valuable stands the conviction of participation in social change campaigns as essential. As introduced earlier, critical voices continuously point out the approach of social marketing and advertising as problematic. The critique draws on stances from dependency theory and centres parallel to modernisation theory upholding principles of universalism with ‘western’-centric values. Dutta, for example, criticises modernisation theory for its perception of modernisation processes to be “based on universal values attached to economic growth, growth in mass media, growth in capitalist opportunities, and technological progress” (Dutta 2011, p. 36). The focus on beneficiary needs highlighted by Colle is described by Shanker (2009) as limited due to its top-down approach and “lack of social marketing research skills” (Shanker 2009, p. 11). Similarly, in a discussion on “The Illusion of Participation in Delhi’s Social Welfare Advertisements”, O. Kutty (2004) distinguishes between different discourses of participation. The paternalistic and undemocratic practices by campaign producers, and development planning in general, disseminating ‘modernity’, i.e. “taking values, world-view, habits, and institutions

labelled ‘modern’ to the people and places they had not yet reached” do not allow for a bottom-up approach which includes participation (Kutty 2004, p. 352). Additionally, Kutty describes how the rhetoric of participation was part of the agenda of modernisation in the 1950s and 1960s. Therein, the cooperation between development practitioners and the beneficiaries could inspire socio-democratic values and a scientific mind following Nehru’s vision. Kutty argues that development initiatives in the 2000s are inherently different from these initiatives. Participation is included in solution-oriented approaches, which are “not about building something new but about repairing what already exists” (Kutty 2004, p. 352). This sentiment is exemplified through the governmental social marketing campaign visible throughout Delhi, fittingly titled *Bhagidari* (translated from Hindi: participation). These medialised messages promote dialogue between citizens, NGOs, trade associations, and Delhi’s many municipal agencies. However, the intent is not to build new infrastructure but to force municipalities to fix broken streetlights or potholes. According to Kutty, the participation of citizens has thus become a rhetorical device to legitimise a simplification of urban development to contain mainly urban repairs (Kutty 2004, pp. 352–353). Thereby, social advertising does not address long-lasting social change but centres on allocating responsibility regarding upkeep. This critical stance is comparable with the argument put forth in the extensive ethnographic study on the production and launch of the *Kama Sutra* condom brand in the fall of 1991 by Mazzarella (2003a). Mazzarella discusses connections between globalisation and the advertising industry in contemporary India and argues that the advertising producers’ main concern does not lie with actual effect and sales but with satisfying the client approaching the agencies for their skills in marketing and design (Mazzarella 2003a, p. 187). According to these perspectives, advertising producers generally care little about the effectiveness of campaigns and have little concern for how messages influence audiences.

When examining campaigns and posters produced in the context of the Women’s Movement in India, ideas of participation and questions of representation are an inherent part of the presentation and discussions. Two publications stand out as a look into campaigns created by activists and NGO employees: “The History of Doing. An Illustrated Account of Movements for Women’s Rights and Feminism in India, 1800–1990” by R. Kumar (1993) and “Our Pictures, Our Words. A Visual Journey through the Women’s Movement” by L. Murthy and R. Dasgupta (2011). The former is an account of the early Women’s Movement in India, presenting a chronological walk-through of activist engagements and initiatives with examples of photographs and posters created. Photographs capture protests and posters that promote agendas and demands for ‘women’s’ rights. These pictures represent activists’ involvement in producing a prominent advertising type in this context (Kumar 1993, p. 1). These

advertising producers overlap with the beneficiaries, i.e. the activists engage in efforts for social change to challenge systemic patterns that they themselves are affected by. The collection of posters brought forth by Murthy and Dasgupta centres the campaigns produced. With posters as a vital feature for mobilisation, the publishing house Zubaan initiated the Poster Women project<sup>71</sup> in order to collect campaign posters related to feminist activism from across India (Murthy & Dasgupta 2011, p. 9). According to Murthy and Dasgupta, these advertisements moved away from messages demanding actions towards educational and informative content in line with the growing movement after the 1970s. While the producers of these campaigns are inherently part of the movement and thereby create messages relevant to themselves, questions of representation, such as distinctions of class and urbanity, are discussed (Murthy & Dasgupta 2011, pp. 18–19).

Advertisements created in the context of this Women's Movement include campaign-specific posters and ad hoc placards used in protests. They can thus be viewed as participatory bottom-up approaches and top-down approaches simultaneously. The discussions regarding representation and the complexities of participation allow for consideration of the diverse realities of the producers of social advertising. I thus emphasise the importance of considering an understanding of the producers' realities, existing power relations, and present discourses.

### Directing the Discourse: Using Advertising to Influence Indian Identities

A range of studies on advertising acknowledge campaigns for having successfully shaped discourses on Indian identities, the Indian family, class distinction, and gendered structures. In the article on "The Emergency as Prehistory of the New Indian Middle Class", Rajagopal (2011a) describes in detail the increasing use of medialised communication, a mixture of state-communicated propaganda as mentioned in chapter one and the growing presence of nationwide broadcasting through the nation-building project alongside governmental publicity. Rajagopal points to these circumstances as a key part of shaping public opinion and forming Indian identity and the 'new Indian middle-class' (Rajagopal 2011a, p. 1015). The slogans initiated by the aforementioned governmental institution DAVP ranged from incitement to hard work ("iron will and hard

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<sup>71</sup> The collection was published as an online archive, a printed publication titled "Poster Women: A Visual History of the Women's Movement in India" (Zubaan 2006), and chosen advertisements were reprinted as postcards.

work shall sustain us”) to nationalist notions (“be Indian, buy Indian”) (Rajagopal 2011a, pp. 1022–1025). Rajagopal argues that in this time period, the role of social marketing increased and was given “a level of political importance it has not previously had” (Rajagopal 2011a, p. 1015). The importance given to medialised messages produced to influence audiences is intrinsic to these strategies. The significance of commercial advertising rose with the nation-building project in that consumerism became a substantial tool and symbol for modernity, nationalism, and growth. This led to a decrease in development-oriented messages within TV serials on Doordarshan in the 1980s and 1990s. The connections between commercial marketing and social change initiatives through the advertising industry’s involvement in the governmental development agenda and the significance of consumerism in modernisation processes show untiring confidence in information dissemination and the intentional direction of change processes. Commercial advertising actively being utilised for a social agenda was not dissimilar to the use of social advertising and reminiscent of the social campaigning produced as illustrated in the account of the national state of emergency in place from 1975–1977. The discourses regarding advertising and social change embedded in the intentional utilisation of marketing for directing change processes illustrate the unswerving conviction of being able to influence the self-perceptions of audiences. As such, advertising producers expect the use of single campaigns and their objectives of specific messages to be effective and successful.

### 2.2.2 Reproducing and Normalising Social Patterns: Unintentional Directions of Change Processes

Among Social Sciences, including some publications in Media and Communication Studies, the concern with the effect of advertising is predominately concerned with social structures. While studies deal with ‘modernity’ or ‘secularism’ as depicted in commercial advertising (see Jain 2017 or Schneider 2019), many cases explore the portrayal of gender. A particularly extensive collection of studies are thus situated in the field of gender and media, particularly in the context of commercial advertising and its content. Feminist media scholars and activists, in particular, expose patterns of sexism found in the pictures, image-ries, and messages of these medialised messages. Among these studies, the criticism of the representation of female-coded bodies and characters in commercial advertisements is particularly prominent. Central is the concern for “the manner and ways in which mass media produce forms of knowledge about femininity” (Munshi 1998, p. 575). The criticism contains the notion of these representation strategies as the reproduction of sexism and, as such, an

obstruction to changing systemic patterns of gender norms.<sup>72</sup> Thereby the content of advertisements is at the centre of these debates in opposition to discussions of the reception of advertising. In the following, I present discussions regarding media content of commercial advertising in relation to its significance in social change, illustrating unintentional directions of change processes. Thereto belong: the focus on female-coded representation, criticism towards commercial advertising as part of neo-liberal politics, and discussion regarding possible impact.

### Criticising Content and Female Representation between Social Change Processes and Neo-liberalism

Studies within the field of gender and media are mostly based on content analysis that often points out reproductions of power relations and intersections between hegemonic ideologies and elements. R. Parameswaran and K. Cardoza (2009), for example, discuss the intersections of race, class, caste, and mobility through a content analysis of the use of fairness in commercial advertising in postcolonial India in the form of print and television campaigns. The authors align themselves with the works of postcolonial feminist scholars in their critique of “the cultural politics of femininity in fairness cosmetics advertisements in India”, connecting consumerist cultures and the beauty industry with nationalist and patriarchal legacies (Parameswaran & Cardoza 2009, p. 220). Determining that the visuals, imageries, and messages of commercial advertising in particular, are without a doubt influential, feminists in India have since the 1970s argued that “the media used stereotypical projections of women” and continue to criticise this stereotypical approach (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 148). Chaudhuri describes how representations of female-coded figures are a narrow depiction of the role of ‘women’ and femininity with an immense disparity between lived realities and imageries present (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 376; Rao 2001, p. 45). This topic continues to be a much-debated issue, as seen through the study “Privileging the Privileged: Gender in Indian Advertising” by the mathematician turned activist S. Shaffter (2006), who analyses 2500 commercial advertisements from magazines and English language dailies, or as discussed in numerous articles in journals, blogs, magazines, and news-

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<sup>72</sup> The criticism may differ and contain a range of beliefs, e.g. finding the reproduction of sexist stereotypes as the housewife problematic, criticising sexualisation and objectification of female-coded bodies, or demonising female nudity and sexuality from a morality standpoint.

papers (see for example Patowary 2014, p. 85; Yakkaldevi 2014, p. 3). The article “Advertisements Reinforcing Gender Stereotypes”, for example, describes a travelling photo exhibition titled “Each Click Counts” on the theme of “Being A Girl”, stipulating that “advertisements are unconsciously reinforcing gender stereotypes” (Sourabha 2016). More recently, A. Sharma and M. Pathak-Shelat (2017) authored “The Cultivation and Reception Effects of Gendered Images. Proposing Ways to Move Beyond Gender Based Stereotypes for Boys and Girls” that was published among a collection of texts titled “Beyond the Stereotypes? Images of Boys and Girls, and their Consequences” (Lemish & Götz 2017). Despite criticism concerning the role and position of feminist media scholars themselves, highlighting intersections of class privilege and gender, the discussions regarding representation and gender continue to be highly pertinent and relevant in various arenas.<sup>73</sup> Further, the central position of content analysis in debates on commercial advertising and social change is persistent (see, for example, Saeed 2011; Nguyen 2014; Poonia, Chauhan, Sharma, & Das 2015).

At the heart of the criticisms of representation is understanding media content as part of greater socialisation processes where imageries and representation normalise certain truths. Authors discuss the role of commercial advertising regarding the understanding of gender and social structures as reflection, production as well as the reproduction of existing social norms (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 376; Haynes 2010, pp. 186–187). The harnessing of cultural and social stereotypes is thus considered beyond its objective to promote products, services, and brands. The significance of pictures, messages, and imageries is considered in regard to their relevance in existing discourses. Central in this line of thought is the repetition of patterns in media content that, in turn, reproduces systemic patterns and hence normalisation of ideas, imageries, and values. In other words, advertisements contribute to reproducing the understanding of relations and characteristics of individuals and communities through reoccurring narratives and imageries (Lünenborg & Maier 2013, pp. 25–26). Interestingly, within the debate on the power of commercial advertisements and their role in socialisation processes lies an idea of this type of medium being particularly problematic. Commercial advertising is seen as distinct from other media productions and as particularly dangerous or harmful

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<sup>73</sup> As Rao (2001) describes, “given that most of the women who articulate the inequalities of gender in media belong to urban, middle class and upper caste segments of society”, the question whether feminist media researchers – often having privileges of higher education and socio-economic background – are being “distanced and far removed from the reality of the majority of women in India” is raised (p. 45).

(Srikandath 1991). For example, a study funded by UNESCO from 1979 states that “sex-role stereotyping is nowhere as consistent and pervasive as in advertising, and criticism of male bias abounds” (Ceulemans & Fauconnier 1979, p. 49). Similarly, commercial advertising is singled out as a type of medialised communication to be exceptionally watchful for as its “reliance on women – particularly women’s bodies – as sales bait is in universal evidence” (Gallagher 1979, p. 14). Such publications were created in the wake of the first UN conference on ‘women’ in 1975, which led to the declaration of the “Women’s decade” and subsequent research efforts such as M. Gallagher (1979): “The Portrayal and Participation of Women in the Media” and M. Ceulemans and G. Fauconnier (1979): “Mass Media: The Image, Role and Social conditions of Women – a Collection and Analysis of Research Materials”. The discourse concerning the role of media in social change processes reflects the pertinacity of centring commercial advertising and the representation of female-coded characters. The interest and investment of international development organisations in this field illustrate the far-reaching engagement with this type of medium. The engagement by UNESCO in particular, is considered as a catalyst for the evolving feminist media scholarship (Rao 2001, p. 45). A quote by Gallagher points out the importance of these debates in connection with convictions of media as “potentially powerful agents of socialisation and social change – presenting models, conferring status, suggesting appropriate behaviours, encouraging stereotypes” (Byerly & Ross 2006, p. 17). The central concern with female representation within commercial advertising in particular, has thus not only been persistent over decades but is continuously thought of as an essential factor in greater socialisation processes.

The debates centring on the representation of ‘women’ in commercial advertising are embedded in perspectives critical towards neo-liberal politics. Intersections of gender politics and initiatives of social change, consumer-oriented cultures and economic growth provide convictions and objectives regarding these facets of change processes that stand divided. On the one hand, India’s state-led development agenda conflated initiatives of social change and challenging gender norms with the idea of neo-liberal economic reform and consumerist cultures as opportunities for change, as discussed in chapter one through the example of edutainment serials. On the other hand, the critical stance towards commercial advertising resonates with voices sceptical of neo-liberal economic politics and growth and the consumerist culture associated with these developments. While the idea of consumerism was utilised as a strategy in the nation-building project, which established that consumerist behaviour supported the growth of India as a modern nation, other voices gained momentum declaring consumerism in itself as wasteful (Manekar 1999, p. 75). This point of view is evident in a report by the Joshi Working

Group on Software published in 1982 to advise the government on expanding television programming and its role in India's social and economic development (Government of India, 1985, p. 7). Three primary concerns were addressed: 1) the over-centralisation of TV, 2) the dangers of consumerism, and 3) transnational flows threatening cultural purity. However, the recommendations for adjustments were never considered (Mankekar 1999, p. 65). Despite conflicting voices, modernisation strategies through consumerism stayed a stable component of the government's development agenda. Thereby, commercial advertising had become a prominent element in these efforts of the social change agenda while the critical voices towards consumerism and its campaigns found resonance among non-governmental initiatives and within the debates in Social Sciences.

M. Chaudhuri's (2014) account of the imagery of gender, particularly 'women', in commercial advertising connected to neo-liberal politics and the development of the advertising industry post-liberalisation discusses the current consumerist cultures including the production of commercial advertising and the presence of feminist debates therein. Chaudhuri describes how dynamics between activism in the form of India's Women's Movement, academia with the onset of institutionalised Women's Studies in the 1980s, and media visibility through news journalism and coverage of discriminatory gendered patterns, e.g. dowry and rape, have all contributed to increasing visibility of gender in the form of so-called 'women'-centric issues. In connection with the growing advertising industry, Chaudhuri argues that feminist ideas of self-realisation and autonomy have been incorporated into the neo-liberal politics of consumerism and the idea of the self as an enterprise, leading to an intermingling of feminist thoughts and the economic reforms from the 1990s (Chaudhuri 2014, pp. 145–152). Thereby, new stereotypes, such as the "women bosses", are depicted in commercial advertising, illustrating the fusion of feminism and economic growth. This stereotype is elsewhere described as "highly competent, employable and empowered, snatching jobs from their male counterparts and conducting corporate meetings and making decisions" (Dasgupta, Sinha, & Chakravarti 2012, p. 43). Chaudhuri argues that these imageries were a product of market research and active participation by the commercial advertising industry in reactions to feminist critique, and thus questions the idea of "free-floating images" evolving from unintentional flows of movements (Chaudhuri 2014, pp. 151–156). Chaudhuri continues to consider the potential democratising efforts by the network of market logic and media and communication research. While these institutions are central to disseminating global capitalism, they also facilitate spaces "for self-expression that has for too long been forbidden" (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 156). Accordingly, media and popular culture are described as access points to a



post-liberalised middle class for segments of society previously excluded from consumerist cultures. Chaudhuri sees medialisation processes and economic growth as a foundation for these new spaces as well as for potential mobility and thereby as important elements in processes of social change (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 156). Similarly, social change activist Sharada (2019) discusses the advertising industry in India as a potential component in the processes of social change in the article “Media and Advertising as Change Makers. Are We Being Unrealistic?”. Sharada points out tendencies to “commodify women as targets of consumption, as influencers of purchasing decisions, and as eye candy for the male target group” and argues that “the emerging demographic of educated, professional women with purchasing power are determining the way certain brands are positioning themselves” (Sharada 2019). These perspectives and debates regarding opportunities thus allow for considering the multiple layers of the role of medialised messages and meanings of commercial advertising. Therein lies an acknowledgement of the complex dynamics between profit-driven media and social change.

The connections made between commercial media and social change range thus from the perspective of the potential of media staying largely unutilised (see, for example, Sardana 1984, p. 40; Fazal 2008; Bhavani & Vijayasree 2010, p. 65; Rao 2012, p. 34; Patowary 2014, p. 88), often accompanied by a generalised demonisation of media producers but also a critical stance towards governmental bodies in lacking social ideology and trusting the “free market” to be the solution to social inequalities (Quraishi 2006 pp. 259–261; Sinha 2006). Gumucio-Dagron and Tufte, in their description of social marketing and advertising, single out advertising agency employees as “producers lacking knowledge and sensitivity to local context, or deliberately considering incentives of multinational corporations” (Gumucio-Dargron & Tufte 2006, p. xviii). These perspectives are rooted in the conviction of the fundamental incompatibility of profit and social ideologies, where the focus on profit is argued to be pushed at the cost of ethical media production (see, for example, Hastings & Saren 2003, p. 314; Vilanilam 2005, p. 161; Muppidi 2012, p. 227; Seneviratne 2012, p. 73). This is exemplified in the debate following the aforementioned campaign initiated by Vogue. After the video spot was aired, the intentions, content, and implementation were widely debated among private individuals, activists, journalists, representatives of right-wing politics, and film celebrities. Despite important points regarding the freedom to choose a career, expression of gender, or mobility, one aspect of criticism pointed towards the advertising industry as a sector riddled with stereotypical definitions of beauty and femininity and therefore saw this advertisement as highly hypocritical. In the context of a commercial brand such as Vogue magazine, the possibility that medialised messages representing feminist discourses could be part of

social awareness was challenged.<sup>74</sup> Thereby, the Vogue film was widely dismissed as a potential catalyst for changing gendered patterns. The objective of debating gendered patterns is considered incompatible with being an advertisement connected to a profit-making agenda and using stereotypical imageries. The intersections of consumerism and sexist patterns stand in opposition to feminist movements and action in that the principles of marketing are linked to creating an aspiration that can only be satisfied by investing in specific products or brands. The inclusion of feminist messages is compartmentalised therein and proposes a commodification of feminism that can be viewed as a reaction to existing discourses regarding representation, as argued by Chaudhuri and is thus counterproductive to the feminist discourse. It caters to a target group engulfed in these debates, prompting relevant messages in relation to an understanding of ‘middle-class’ ‘modernity’ and discussions of gender relevant to a particular audience. Despite the long tradition and multi-layered involvement of the advertising industry in social endeavours, critical voices thus see commercial advertising as entirely profit driven. However, with the idea of media content reproducing patterns of systemic power relations through repetitive patterns as part of socialisation processes, as outlined above, diverse representation, or negotiating the understanding of representation, can be argued to hold opportunities to challenge existing norms and stereotypical imageries, as expressed by Munshi. While the commodification of feminism is argued to be profitable and harmful in the context of feminist movements and actions, the normalisation of these debates and the opportunity to distance oneself from specific perspectives can be viewed as an opportunity in and of itself. Chaudhuri, quoting Gutumurthy (2011), states that critical perspectives towards neo-liberal politics and consumerism do not exclude opportunities for social change in the form of egalitarian changes (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 156). Accordingly, discussions within Social Sciences, Development Studies, and other fields regarding the interpretations of advertisements and the role of commercial advertising in processes of social change enable critical standpoints and perspectives of opportunities existing side by side. However, the debate is collapsed with the overwhelming focus on content analyses and central concern for and a long tradition of criticising the representation of female-coded bodies and personas.

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<sup>74</sup> For a more detailed overview and discussion of the debate, see “Whose Choice? Plural Feminist Movements Packaged in and around Glamour” (Gabler 2015).

### Considering Reception Studies and the Potential of Content Patterns as Part of Change Processes

The debates concerned with the opportunities of commercial advertising that attribute this type of medium with assumed power are further layered. Besides the economic reform policies providing financial opportunities in particular, a range of authors specifically centres the potential of providing new ideas and challenging existing norms through advertising campaigns (see, for example, Munshi 1998; Rajagopal 1998, p. 17; Chaudhuri 2001, pp. 373, 375–376; Haynes 2010, p. 206). M. Curtin's (1999) analysis of the strategies, operations, and discourse of global culture industries in the satellite and cable media era concludes that corporate media conglomeration leads to the transnational circulation of multiple and alternative representations of feminine desire. With ever-expanding networks, Curtin points out that global media cultures and medialisation processes have benefited the range of feminine imagery available in popular culture despite existing patterns of power relations (Curtin 1999). Similarly, in the study above, S. Munshi (1998) discusses the idea of alternate possibilities to the ongoing reproduction of sexist imageries through content analysis of print and TV advertisements for household appliances in relation to empowerment from the 1990s. By analysing the various roles 'women' are given as homemakers in these imageries – wife/mother/daughter-in-law – Munshi discusses the construction of "the new Indian woman" and argues that the content of these advertisements might not only reproduce existing norms of femininity and gender relations but also provide a space for resistance and challenge to these structures. On the one hand, the imageries contained in the campaigns provide possibilities for challenging ideas of gender norms in that, for example, housework is being redesigned as scientific discourse, linking discourses of 'modernity' and household life and providing a foundation of household decision-making and skills requiring particular intelligence and awareness (Munshi 1998, pp. 583–585). On the other hand, these visuals and imageries continue to reproduce the fundamental hegemonic patriarchal systems, as they do not challenge the systemic setup of gendered and sexist social structures. As Munshi concludes: "The representation of women has been played around with, but not changed in a structural or substantial way" (Munshi 1998, p. 586). This provides the possibility of being situated in systemic patterns and simultaneously challenging these patterns by negotiation between traditional femininities and feminist discourses. Between discussions concerning transnational networks, and regionally specific struggles of change relating to advertising imageries, authors deal with the role of media through content mirroring current discourses. The question of reception, effect, and impact is extracted from these discussions.

As part of the question of the role of commercial advertising in social patterns, studies of reception play an essential part. While this aspect is primarily discussed in connection with social marketing campaigns and social advertising, a few studies regarding commercial advertising take up this task. Hereto belong the reception studies by Mankekar (1993, 1999) mentioned earlier that highlight the commercial sponsorship schemes as part of the TV experiences and point to the content of the commercial advertisements as part of a televised discourse designed to convey particular ideas about the nation (Mankekar 1993, p. 547). Similarly, K. Karan (2008) includes focus-group interviews with 'women' in an analysis of advertisements for fairness products. Karan discusses their perception of beauty and fair skin as part of greater discourses regarding beauty ideals and ideas of fairness as desirability. Despite these attempts at reception studies regarding commercial advertising, the question of reception often circles back to discussions based on content analysis.

Determining the effectiveness of campaigns is often theorised according to the media's potential power to influence. Assumptions exist that particular audiences are prone to accept the realities portrayed in media, such as children, younger people, or 'women' (Bhavani & Vijayasree 2010, pp. 47–48). This perspective contains a discussion of whether audiences are understood as passive receivers or self-responsible. However, many authors refer to the "far more complex working of how dominant ideas are constructed" (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 151) and thus align themselves with Hall's perspective of media reception. Theorisations of media reception, as Hall presents, provide debates regarding social change processes that consider each individual's context and reality. The heterogeneity of responses, meanings, and practices further provides elements of social change on an individual level. Individuals might feel or read media content, including its imageries, in each their own way. They might hold "a variety of psychological positions and understand images, dialogues and narratives in a range of different ways" (Banaji 2006, p. 385). This is "depending on events in the viewers' lives and by these relationships in which those viewers define themselves" and is shaped by contextual circumstances either of "common social and individual experiences" (Mankekar 1993, p. 553; Parameswaran, 2001, p. 85). As S. Ghosh (1999) describes in an article titled "The Troubled Existence of Sex and Sexuality: Feminists Engage with Censorship", "one person's erotica could well be another's porn" (pp. 237–246). Audiences are hence not only "positioned [...] by the text but also by a whole range of other discourses, with those of gender and nationalism being dominant in Indian TV" (Mankekar 1993, p. 557). While visual representations are intrinsically linked to "local culture" (Munshi 2001, p. 5), the "local culture" in question can exist on a micro level, and each individual might react differently, depending on their reality. Authors discussing the role of commercial advertising in society thus highlight

the importance of the context present. Authors hence identify opportunities for challenging systemic patterns through commercial advertising in congruity with the tension between ideas of the discursive power of repetitive circumstances and individual statements. The possibilities of content are understood in a dynamic between the debates on traditional femininity and aspects of feminist discourses. This interplay is threaded around consumerist discourses of campaigns, for example, promoting household products and 'women' as an essential consumer group with specific decision-making power. It acknowledges that greater discourses of gender contain both opportunities for resistance and empowerment alongside ongoing dynamics of power and stereotypical norms. The concept of empowerment that in development initiatives often figures as emancipatory objectives for 'women' should accordingly not be considered as a uniform solution. Empowerment – like emancipation – can differ significantly according to each individual's perception of what empowerment is for them (Gabler 2011). At the same time, these discussions point to repetitive patterns as the main driver of change processes beyond isolated advertisements as inspirational. In other words, while single campaigns serve as inspiration, the repetitiveness of commercial advertising fuels change processes. The patterns of visuals, messages, and imageries are thus central to the normalisation and systemic significance of advertising. As pointed out by Haynes (2010) in the article "Creating the Consumer? Advertising, Capitalism and the Middle Classes in Urban Western India, 1914–1940", "[commercial] advertising both shaped and was shaped by larger discourses of what it meant to be middle class during this time" (Haynes 2010, p. 187). The studies concerned with the potential of commercial advertisements in challenging social patterns thus confirm discussions of effect and impact with an understanding of medialised messages as part of greater socialisation processes. As such, they are aligned with critical perspectives of the depiction of female-coded bodies and characters but dissimilar to studies regarding social campaigns concerned with the reception of specific advertisements.

Dealing with the unintentional directions of change thus contains a tension between content as a way to normalise systemic patterns, whether through reproducing existing stereotypes or giving way to negotiating said imageries, and diverse reactions to certain medialised communication as discussed concerning reception studies. On the one hand, the role of advertising in processes of social change is linked to commercial advertisements as "impulses of deeper level social forces" (Rajagopal 1999a, p. 93). On the other, the traditions of Media Studies founded on the importance of reception studies revile possibilities of multiple interpretations. This aspect of the role of advertising as part of change processes parallels the discussions in Development Studies regarding individual behavioural change in relation to systemic change. These

## 2 Reviewing the Debates on the Influence of Advertising

parallels lead to a discussion on the question of to what extent individual reactions to commercial advertising are included as fundamental in processes of social change.

### 2.2.3 Discussions of Arenas' Inter-Connectivity: Commercial-Social Reciprocity, Intertwining, and Dynamics

I here continue to focus on how social initiatives, intentions, and ideas within social marketing campaigns are intertwined with the advertising industry, according to debates in academia. These debates propose contrasting viewpoints that include different aspects of connectivity. Collaborations and partnerships, for example, regularly establish relations among institutions. However, the intertwining is present in many other forms. Social content is often integrated into commercial campaigns, building on marketing as the common foundation of both forms of advertising. The interplay between social and commercial campaigns thus provides interesting facets regarding overlaps and reciprocity.

### Advertising Industry Professionals as Producers and Initiators of Social Advertising

Among studies on social marketing, collaborations with various forms of businesses reflect frequent connectivity. These collaborations are not only seen as contributing factors but, with the conviction that they are essential for successful campaigning, ultimately have a greater effect and are beneficial in directing change processes. The benefits in the production and effectiveness of these campaigns are seen in, for example, the input from employees of advertising agencies through expertise and work hours, in that they contribute designs and the execution of these without payment, as well as companies supporting outreach. Particularly examples regarding family planning and health programs point to the idea that such partnerships have great potential (see, for example, Meekers & Rahaim 2005; Pilkington 2007; Sadh & Agnihotri 2010). This is exemplified by the World Health Organisation (WHO) campaign for Oral Rehydration Salts (ORS) to improve the care of children with diarrhoea, initiated by ICICI Bank in 2000. The study is a detailed description of the strategies, the monitoring of effectiveness and reception of produced campaigns disseminated through a mix of channels,

including TV, print, radio, and out-of-home advertising (OOH)<sup>75</sup>. It is based on statistical data collected over the four years following the campaign's initiation. Alongside the collaboration of an international humanitarian organisation and a private sector money institute, the study by Sadh and Agnihotri (2012) describes the involvement of Delhi Transport Corporation, which supplied spaces for posters on buses free of charge, and Lifebuoy/Hindustan Lever Limited in charge of the design of the campaign. The overall campaign was implemented by McCann Healthcare India and the public-relations company Corporate Voice Weber Shandwick (Sadh & Agnihotri 2010, p. 42). This campaign exemplifies the intense and multifaceted connectivity present in advertising. From the initiation and production to the implementation and distribution, the campaign production illustrates a joint venture on various levels. As shown here, commercial-social reciprocity is a frequent occurrence. While the private sector is often sought for support and partnerships in social campaigns, it can also be a contributor and initiator alongside state institutions and international organisations.

### Debates on Social Content in Commercial Advertising

The linkages between social campaigning and commercial campaigns are often reflected in the themes and messages in commercial advertising. While this type of connectivity found ground with the involvement of the advertising industry in the nation-building project and during the Emergency, as Rajagopal describes (Rajagopal 2011a), the fusion of promoting a product and brand with a socially relevant message is still a common strategy. For example, the Hero Honda Pleasure campaign still draws on discourses regarding gender dynamics (ETBrandEquity 2022). According to Chaudhuri, including feminist debates and perspectives in commercial advertising was a reaction to critical voices regarding representation coupled with insights gained through market research of female customers as an important consumer group (Chaudhuri 2014). Similarly, the slogans of the Amul butter brand illustrate the use of socially relevant messages founded in a cooperative initiative to direct social change: empower farmers.<sup>76</sup> The campaign connected to the brand saw its beginning in 1966–1967 and, until this day, regularly comments on popular,

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<sup>75</sup> Out-of-home advertising is a term used in commercial advertising and refers to hoardings, billboards, and posters in public spaces.

<sup>76</sup> The Amul brand represents a regional development project within a co-operate framework. A small cooperative started in 1946 to empower farmers by cancelling out middlemen developed into the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd.,

political, social and cultural happenings in India. Rajagopal describes this type of medialised communication as “genre-crossing” in that governmental messages during the Emergency were taken up by commercial advertising and reflected the state strategies (Rajagopal 2011a, p. 1034). The campaign is noted to echo existing political discourses and is described as a “part of the citizen-journalist discourse” (Collins Business 2012, p. 47). Even though the ability to be critical towards state policies has recently been questioned with an advertisement including a comment on the Indian government’s controversial and questionable removal of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir (Bhattacharya 2019), strategies like these thus display a persistent inclusion of social change debates as part of a commercial agenda and reflect commercial-social reciprocity.

Similarly, the connection between private companies and social issues is discussed as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), which signifies the “societal expectation of corporate behaviour beyond the interest of the firm” (Karan, Bansal, & Onyebadi 2012, p. 86). The shampoo brand Sunsilk, for example, introduced an online platform in 2007 titled “Gang of Girls”. Potential consumers were encouraged to join conversations on their daily lives and share advice on beauty and grooming but also regarding family life and career choices. According to O’Barr, the site supported young ‘women’ in finding their voices to express themselves, breaking down negative stereotypes by encouraging ambition (O’Barr 2008). In some cases, social initiatives and NGOs play an important role in commercial marketing strategies and promoting brands through extant collaborations. For instance, with an example in the Jaago Re campaign by TATA Tea, Karan, Bansal, and Onyebadi discuss the content of various campaigns produced during the 2009 Indian general election. The campaign combined product advertisements with a website to simplify the registration process for voting in collaboration with the NGO Janaagraha (Centre for Citizenship and Democracy). The authors see these advertisements as a way to create political awareness and motivate people to vote and argue for the success of these campaigns. They see significant benefits in addressing social issues through marketing and commercial advertising in particular. Accordingly, the businesses in question are described as having “recognised the importance of supporting democratic causes and the need to involve the youth by reaching and engaging them through the new media” (Karan, Bansal, & Onye-

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also described as “a symbol of protest against the British Raj” (Chakraborty & Mandal 2016; Collins Business 2012, p. 47).



badi 2012, pp. 89–97). As mentioned by Roni,<sup>77</sup> intersections between brands and socially conscious strategies are helpful: “How brands are engaging in your life, are they sponsoring like a sports academy, or are they sponsoring, I don’t know, are they supporting, are they helping, like Nike believes every man can be an athlete, so they have started programs, they sponsoring the Paralympics, like things like that. That is the way forward, I think, and what’s going to happen also” (Roni 2011). This trend is welcomed as “a good strategy for simultaneously promoting a brand and being a good corporate citizen” (Karan, Bansal, & Onyebadi 2012, p. 87), and reflects an optimistic stance regarding media cultures and the opportunities given through its institutions and technologies. In creating platforms for communication or empowerment initiatives, commercial campaigns continue to draw on aspects of campaigns in social marketing. As marketing strategies for social campaigning were derived from commercial marketing, the utilisation of this type of expertise has come to a full circle. Marketing strategies have been incorporated into initiatives of social change to be more successful in directing processes of change, while social marketing is thought of as helpful to commercial marketing concerning its role in social change (Hastings & Saren 2003, p. 315). In their paper on “The Critical Contribution of Social Marketing: Theory and Application”, G. Hastings and M. Saren (2003) even see social marketing as a way to “inform commercial marketers about how to do this [marketing] in an ethical way” (Hastings & Saren 2003, p. 311). However, the more recent discussion concerning feminist messages in commercial advertising contains more critical positions. As mentioned earlier, ‘corporate feminism’ and themes of empowerment have gained a presence in commercial campaigns and reflect the discourses building on the increasing visibility of feminist debates during the 1970s and 1990s and again gained traction after 2012. As previously described, these critical perspectives of commodifying feminist activism highlight ‘whitewashing’ issues, allowing companies to boost their image without, for example, including meaningful strategies to adjust corporate policies to address gender inequalities. Concerns for the commodification of feminism align with the critique of neo-liberal politics and values considered part and parcel of inequalities. Therein, the incompatibility of profit-driven media and social initiatives are the underlying elements that are perceived as harming feminist activism.

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<sup>77</sup> The name Roni refers to a group of the respondents with a specific commonality: leaving the private sector to engage in the social sector. Other groups are named Suhas, Navnet, and Karam. The choice to encompass multiple respondents under one caption and its function is explained in the second part of chapter three concerning the methodological approaches.

The potential of directing processes of change via social messages in commercial campaigns, actions as part of CSR initiatives, and social-commercial collaborations alongside social marketing campaigns highlight a range of perspectives. While commercial advertising professionals are referenced for their expertise in marketing, the perspectives above give particular credit to individuals in the social sector as representatives for ethical and knowledgeable ways to engage with targeted audiences and subjects of social change initiatives. This assumption of the ethical social sector activist or employee is seen in reports published by UNESCO in 1979, where Gallagher states that “it is perhaps reasonable to assume that educational mass media may be more balanced in their portrayal of women, that educators may be more alert to sexual stereotyping and may seek to avoid bias in the projection of sex roles” (Gallagher 1979, p. 16). This perspective continues to figure in debates about collaborations between the private and social sectors. Despite the contrasting viewpoints within this debate, authors generally tend to homogenise advertising producers concerning their possibilities and intentions, whether employees of advertising agencies or affiliated with social organisations.

### Ambiguous Dynamics between Social and Commercial Campaigning

Considering the context of medialisised communication further unpacks how the interplay between commercial campaigns and social campaigning might feed off each other. This is exemplified by Mazzarella’s study describing the launch of the Kama Sutra condom brand during the existing governmental condom awareness campaign and distribution project, the Nirodh condom campaign. This governmental nationwide contraceptive program, implemented in 1967, was the first use of social marketing in India and distributed condoms for free or very low cost (Mazzarella 2003a, p. 95). Mazzarella describes how the Kama Sutra condom brand entered the market with great success, despite the presence of the Nirodh condom campaign. The presence of the running Nirodh campaign is described as a precursor to the understanding of how not to market Kama Sutra condoms. Production and marketing of the Kama Sutra condom brand focussed on pleasure, self-realisation, and desire, creating a campaign that centred condoms around sex as fun instead of family planning, restraint, or control as was the main focus of the governmental development strategies of modernisation (Mazzarella 2003a, pp. 60–69). This juxtaposition of the governmental campaign intending to direct processes of social change with the advertising industry’s promotion of a product thus claims that commercial marketing and market research can achieve a more significant impact as it provides an alternative that engages with the audiences and enables them to make choices

on their own (Mazzarella 2003a, p. 85). The chairman and managing director of the Raymond Group, G. Singhania, even states that the Kama Sutra advertisements were daring and a “contribution to doing social good” (Mazzarella 2003a, p. 96). This quote highlights the producers’ idea of contributing to processes of social change and confidence in their advertisements’ importance and power. Similarly, a study on commercial advertisements for a contraceptive pill is, according to the author N. Sheoran (2011), deliberately made to remind audiences of the governmental family planning program through its logo and design. Sheoran argues that a dual project is in place: “education and consumerism while still drawing on the moral framework provided by the government” (Sheoran 2011, p. 91). In Sheoran’s study, a theme prominent in initiatives for social change is thus fused with objectives to encourage consumption. The campaign for contraceptives is consciously made reminiscent of the nation-building agenda, thus situating itself among the emancipation of ‘women’ through the utilisation of the nation’s larger modernisation project. This approach is thought to be beneficial due to its association with an existing social campaign, providing a factor of brand recognition as well as being connected with projects of social significance. In contrast, Chaudhuri describes how the presence of particular debates regarding gender equality in commercial advertisements led to tension. With the normalisation of celebrating “choice” as part of empowerment debates, i.e. highlighting how making choices for oneself in and of itself is desirable and through commercial campaigns made to appear natural, social organisations opposing this appear as a “violation of choice and a killjoy attack” (Chaudhuri 2000, p. 273). The dynamics of commercial and social campaigns existing side by side illustrate connections between information and persuasion as well as between individual consumption and structural change processes. The examples reflect diverse interplay as part of the extant intertwining. These linkages are hence pivotal in the discourses regarding the role of the advertising business in change processes.

### Participatory or Not? The Role of Market Research and Researchers

Like marketing, market research continues to play a vital role in commercial advertising and social campaigning alike. While in the early stages of the advertising industry, market research did not play a major part in the creative work, with its professionalisation, it is described as becoming a way to ensure greater connection to audiences (Rajagopal 1999b, p. 140; Rajagopal 2011b, p. 222). Accordingly, Chaudhuri describes agencies also specialising in market research and communication as a “new set of firms [...] which are interested in understanding the Indian market” (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 146). In opposition to

this stands the insights from Mazzarella, who sees market research as a way to present agencies as having particular knowledge and skills. Mazzarella argues that market research was framed as “marketing ‘science’” that ensures validity, expertise, and power. While often not used in decision-making prior to choosing strategies, the research reports instead provided the basis for rationalising choices in retrospect (Mazzarella 2003a, pp. 27–28). As part of development work, market research is considered key for more bottom-up approaches and necessary expertise, in line with the critique of social campaigns as a top-down approach and calls for more inclusive communication and participatory approaches. Market research is thus posed as the missing participatory approach in many of the strategies implemented by developmental organisations and as essential in the process to find out “about wants, needs, perceptions, attitudes, habits etc., to develop maximally effective marketing strategies” (Shanker 2009, p. 7). This expertise is seen as beneficial in creating medialised communication strategies with social objectives and as a solution to why developmental efforts have not shown the desired effects (Shanker 2009, p. 1).

In the context of producing gendered visuals and imageries as part of commercial advertising, Chaudhuri states that individuals engaging in market research are fully aware of the debates around gender through their work and incorporate this knowledge into the development of logic that stands at the foundation of campaigns. This perspective is evident in the already mentioned growing significance of the “female consumer” as a target group alongside expanding market research and feminist debates regarding the visibility of ‘women’ (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 148). In the study by S. Munshi (2001) on the “Beauty Industry and the Construction of the ‘Modern’ Indian Woman”, ‘women’ are correspondingly singled out as “the key decision maker in purchasing” (Munshi 2001, p. 81). Subsequently, market research provided information on existing societal changes that influenced the imageries created. Munshi discusses the role of ‘women’ in relation to commercial advertising and points towards market research in the course of liberalisation as the driving force behind the re-creation of their profile as the female consumer, which extends its imagery with an idea of “women [...] becoming more individualistic and paying greater attention to themselves” (Munshi 2001, p. 81). As Chaudhuri puts it: “Marketing agencies take cognisance of the impact of feminist ideas of ‘freedom’ and ‘autonomy’ on the new Indian women consumer and further reconstruct these ideas in alignment with neo-liberal ideas of self-realisation through achievement and pleasure” (Chaudhuri 2014, pp. 147–148). Based on this newfound focus, the producers of visual media in general, e.g. commercial advertising, film, and TV, increasingly targeted the aspiration of a growing ‘middle class’ by diversifying the female persona to include aspects of independence and ‘modernity’, intending to be able to cater to the financially-able female audiences

identifying with this profile (Munshi 2001, p. 81). The producers of commercial advertising hence found themselves in these circumstances and as part of discourses that entailed a new focus on 'women'. Market research provided insights into critical stances of visibility from feminist perspectives but interpreted and conflated these with traditional imageries of femininity into the persona of the 'new Indian women' to accommodate profit-driven agendas (Munshi 1998, pp. 573, 586).

Among the studies on advertising and social change, the role of market research differs depending on the relevant debate and the field and discussion in which market research is embedded: the inclusion of participatory approaches in social marketing campaigns, for example, as a base for effective commercial marketing campaigns, as a self-serving instrument regarding the legitimacy of marketing as 'science', or tool in order to identify and define target audiences. The commonality and interconnectivity lie in the importance given to market research as part of advertising practices. As outlined by Chaudhuri, advertising producers are situated within societal changes and changing practices while simultaneously consciously utilising the existing frame of reference. The awareness of advertising producers is thus embedded in debates on commercial interests, developmental initiatives, and change processes alike and framed by research methods. These circumstances highlight the interwoven interplay between media production and discourses on social changes in society. This places advertising producers in distinct circumstances concerning insights into debates on marketing thought and strategies, but also processes of change and significant social and cultural environments. The following section, therefore, deals with the discussions regarding the role of advertising producers.

### 2.2.4 Producing Media Content: Producers' Responsibilities and Self-Awareness

The production sites and producers themselves are central in discussing advertising's role in influencing audiences. The sites of production within the advertising business in India and the producers involved provide diverse types of studies regarding the involvement of advertising in social change processes. However, debates on the role of advertising producers as part of these processes primarily focus on the views of others about producers. In contrast, the views media producers hold about themselves rarely play a central role.

Among the studies, including the voices of advertising producers, the producers of commercial advertising, in particular, are described as being in a position of extraordinary power. These advertising producers are singled out even

though the broader category of media producers is in charge of the output communicated to the audiences and become representatives of chosen visuals, messages, and imageries. R. Banerjee (2018) echoes this point of view in the article “Media and the Power of Responsible Representation”, asking the question “are Indian journalism and popular culture really taking any responsibility for the power they hold?” (Banerjee 2018). The belief of media cultures’ specific power leads to the common idea of media producers and employees of advertising agencies and journalists especially to be notably positioned to hold this power by, for example, “determining the way consumers would be satisfied” (Jibril 2017, p. 4). They are considered a group who choose what medialised communication looks like, that is, which ideas and types of representation are included and how the characters and environments are presented. This specialised skill set that comes with being at the centre of the production of media content and combined with the assumed power of commercial advertising in particular is, in turn, argued to make them duty-bound with a specific responsibility. In an extensive study on gender representation in commercial advertising in India, Schaffter (2006) connects this position with the role and opportunities of ‘women’ in claiming, “the basic and necessary prerequisite for women’s social empowerment is that they be treated with respect and dignity by society and more particularly by its avowed voices, the media, which not only reflect but also shape public attitudes” (Schaffter 2006, p. 13). Therein lies the idea of a few who are capable of directly affecting a considerable number of many. With the critical stances of representation of gender in particular, producers thus become responsible for the harmful medialised messages produced. They are expected to adhere to a specific agenda and knowledge of what visuals, messages, and imageries are not harmful and promote valuable and/or desirable matters. With this point of view, producers of commercial advertising are portrayed as homogeneous and in a unique position separate from society. However, as Mazzarella highlights, in thoroughly looking into the production of one particular advertising campaign, individuals of the advertising agency in question are noted to be occupied with clients’ wishes. Mazzarella describes how any debates and deliberations on advertising content “have far more to do with the politics of the relationship between an advertising agency and its clients than with the relationship between the client and its customers” (Mazzarella 2003a, p. 149). These dynamics hence draw on a greater field of power relations set in the economic developments in India and reflect circumstances that entail networks of power and the corresponding discourses. As Chaudhuri points out in connection with campaigns selling beauty products: “advertisements do not operate in isolation but in tandem with a surfeit of sponsored features, news, editorials, interviews of professionals such as doctors, beauty specialists, hairstylists, sports icons, CEOs, etc.” (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 150). Moreover, in connec-

tion with increasing market research and the insights these methods are said to bring, advertising producers are part of discourses featuring a range of specialised fields and are more precisely part of the “intended consequences of the myriad professional organisations of market, media and communication research” (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 156).

In debating the changing market and its influence on advertising strategies exemplified through commercial television advertisements, Rajagopal (1999a) includes insights gained from conversations with the advertisers. Rajagopal shares how some describe their role in change processes “as modernisers, uplifting oppressed women, and giving them the desires that they are too crushed and fearful themselves to try and fulfil” (Rajagopal 1999a, p. 89). While also described as “poets, artists, and others of a creative bent” (Rajagopal 1998, p. 19), producers of commercial advertising thus see themselves as individuals with the power to encourage change and with the tools to create strategies that influence audiences. This reflects the sentiment that the individuals creating advertising campaigns have not only been given responsibilities but have taken over responsibilities, as introduced in chapter one. Despite the consideration and debate on the responsibility of media producers, the insights of these individuals are rarely focal in these discussions. Apart from the study by Mazzarella, most studies include producers’ views and thoughts as complementary comments. This can be seen in the publication by J. Cayla and M. Elson (2012) on the “Indian Consumer Kaun Hai? The Class-Based Grammar of Indian Advertising”, where the authors focus centres the media producers’ image of Indian consumers.<sup>78</sup> However, content analysis takes up a far more extensive part of the study’s methodology, and media producers’ insights function as additional voices (Cayla & Elson 2012, p. 295). Similarly, Haynes article “Creating the Consumer? Advertising, Capitalism and the Middle Classes in Urban Western India, 1914–1940” includes a discussion on the ways commercial actors, i.e. manufacturers, merchants, and advertising agencies, sought to create markets for their products among the urban middle class. Here too, the framing of the target group and audiences is central and discussed through content analysis. The sentiment and awareness among producers of commercial advertising of having responsibilities in processes of social change are reminiscent of the messages contained in the nation-building project focussing on each citizen as duty

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<sup>78</sup> In the study “Asian Brands and the Shaping of a Transnational Imagined Community”, J. Cayla and G. M. Eckhardt (2008) aim to centre brand managers perspectives. While the authors “traveled to the offices of corporations, market research firms, brand consultancies, and advertising agencies developing regional branding strategies”, the debate again circles the brands and representational politics therein.

bound. Rajagopal argues that “the pedagogical project of making subjects into citizens is assumed not only by the state, but as well and increasingly, by the market, in an age of economic liberalisation” (Rajagopal 1998, pp. 28–29). With the contextualisation through the governmental development agenda and the absence of changes in India relevant to all, the advertising agencies too function as an educational and pedagogical institution. Alongside the growing culture of NGOs that emerged as a response to the government’s failure to provide the promised eradication of poverty prior to neo-liberal strategies, the advertising industry similarly had an important part in promoting the state-initiated agenda. Considering the state-led developmental project of nation-building, one has to ask whether, in the promotion of consumerism as progressive and modern and the enticement of individuals to consume in order to support the Indian nation, the role of the pedagogic institution was not only taken over by the market but was intentionally given to the market. The discourse of consumerism as an element in directing social change provided the groundwork for the marketplace and the players within to assume a position of responsibility.

In the light of the regional, historical, and contextual elements of the advertising business of India, media producers and creators of advertising, in particular, are part of diverse and complex networks of advertising. As argued by M. Chaudhuri (2014) with extensive experience studying predominately commercial advertising in India in the paper “Gender, Media and Popular Culture in a Global India”: “ad agencies function across the media industry, development, advertisements and management sectors” (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 146). Therefore, within the spectrum of media cultures, producers of advertising must be regarded beyond the scope of creating commercial campaigns. Further, the advertising industry continues to figure as self-aware and involved in processes of change. Matters of representation and imageries on gender are hence products of marketing agencies that incorporate the current feminist debates into their work (Chaudhuri 2014, pp. 146–147). Chaudhuri describes this as follows: “the media industry too is acutely self-consciousness of the change that it is amidst – its role in shaping public discourse, in advertising what sponsors seek to advertise and the competitive need to advertise and promote itself” (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 151). The producers of campaigns thus exist in an interplay between decision-making and current discourses and intentionally incorporate these into their strategies in accordance with clients’ and networks’ support. Moreover, they must be considered as part of systemic patterns and discourses in place. Therefore, production circumstances are not only dependent on institutional discourses of media regulations but also on discourses on gender dynamics and other social change changes while being influenced by producers’ realities, as well as their personal experiences of economic growth and extant changes processes in society. The tendency to single out advertising pro-



ducers as particularly influential and thus having particular responsibilities draws a divide between media producers and media audiences. This is illustrated when, for example, Rajagopal discusses the difficulties for media producers in creating messages “for addressing a new public still in formation in an environment where new challenges are mounting and the costs of error are high” (Rajagopal 1999a, p. 79) or argues that “advertisers seek to show individuals *in situ* as it were, crosshatched with prevailing caste, community and gender relations, to create a reality effect, and enable viewers to recognise themselves in the ad narratives” (Rajagopal 1998, p. 18). These discussions suggest an external position of advertising producers. While advertising producers have unique insights into the workings of media production, they cannot be considered apart from the processes of change and socialisation. In light of the discursive production of knowledge and the normalisation of ideas and perspectives, employees of advertising agencies and social organisations do not exist in a vacuum separate from their social and cultural context. As Munshi argues, reflecting on the potential of medialised messages to create spaces of resistance and simultaneously cater to dominant structures: “I wish to emphasise that advertising discourses aid to in no small measure in replicating the polemic of struggle, and that resistance can be read in many ways – both by audiences of media messages and by producers of the same” (Munshi 1998, p. 587). Munshi here points to a consideration for two categories, i.e. producers and consumers of media, while acknowledging that both groups exist within the same contextual circumstances of social and cultural knowledge and processes of change. Moreover, boundaries between media producer and media consumer are blurred as the current media culture increasingly allow for all individuals to be part of creating, producing, and reproducing this knowledge.

Ultimately, only a few studies include the perspectives of producers in the advertising business themselves and also tend to limit insights to homogenising descriptions or marginal comments. Content for the commercial sector, for example, commercial advertising, magazines, newspapers, and the entertainment business, takes up most space in the debates on the role of advertising in processes of social change. In studies regarding social marketing and advertising, producers are, for the most part, left undisclosed and only mentioned by proxy of their organisations or movement of social change. Social organisation representatives are usually defined in their capacity as experts with knowledge of social change rather than as media producers. Individuals in the advertising industry who engage in producing social campaigns are similarly only mentioned with regard to their company affiliation. Centring perspectives of advertising producers is thus largely absent from studies of advertising. In the following, I list the main trends and gaps identified through the review of relevant literature. Therein, I clarify my positions regarding these trends and gaps.

### 2.2.5 Trends and Gaps in Academic Debates: Influence of Advertising, Producers' Perspectives, and Gendered Issues

For the most part, the discussions on advertising and its relevance to social changes, as described above, indicate two main trends: studies concerned with intentional directions of change processes in opposition to studies dealing with unintentional directions of change processes. These are each largely tied to the social sector or the advertising industry, respectively. These trends, to some extent, reflect the contrasting objectives of commercial and social advertising: the aim of commercial advertising is to inform about available products and services, promote particular brands, and ensure profit for the private sector, while social advertising communicates available social schemes and projects, promote certain attitudes and behaviour, as well as specific ideas and ideologies. Due to this separation of sectors, the layers of overlaps, linkages, and intertwining are overlooked. Further, said studies rarely centre the perspectives of advertising producers, while it was apparent that a binary understanding of gender was dominant. In this section, I describe these trends and subsequently outline the understanding of advertising and focus established.

#### Differentiating the Influence of Advertising: Changing Individual Behavior vs. Systemic Patterns

As described, the literature review revealed that one aspect of discussing medialisated communication entailed a focus on isolated campaigns that, for example, provide information in the form of health concerns or ideas on reproduction rights. Each advertisement's potential to influence audiences is considered with a specific goal in mind. Studies regarding social marketing campaigns almost exclusively consist of reception studies to determine the effectiveness of their initiatives and the ultimate impact as intended. The objective of selling ideas of social change is thus similar to selling products as in commercial advertising, i.e. dependent on each message. The main concern therein is, therefore, the success of directing processes of change. In contrast, advertising is debated with regard to its effect and impact on social change beyond its objective to sell products or ideas. Social Sciences, in particular, consider the significance of medialisated content in processes of change and their impact on social patterns. While highlighting the importance of regionally specific and historical events and their connection to the advertising industry, these studies centre on media content analyses and the influential power of representation and normalisation. They draw on visuals, messages, and imageries contained in order to consider the reproduction and production of social patterns through

repetitive communication and as part of socialisation processes. The distinction between directing change processes intentionally in opposition to unintentional influence as part of socialisation processes sets up a differentiation between individual behavioural change and structural change of systemic patterns. Any systemic changes that are associated with social marketing are expected to evolve from each person's changes in knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. With the central concern about commercial advertising depending on normalising patterns through the discursive power, systemic change or continuity is expected due to the repetitiveness of advertising.

The apparent differentiation is connected to the fields of studies primarily concerned with their respective type of advertising. The field of Development Studies and development communication centres on individual behavioural change reflecting principles of the idea of diffusion of innovation, while feminist Media Studies and other Social Sciences highlight the significance of commercial advertising in relation to social structures. Despite acknowledging commercial and social linkages, the advertising industry and the social sectors are thus continuously studied according to this differentiation. Due to the regionally specific historical context as outlined in chapter one and insights from conversations with advertising producers in Delhi and Mumbai, I find this differentiation unreflective of the current advertising business. The position of this interconnectivity between the social sector and the advertising industry needs to be given more relevance in the discussions of advertising and social change. Moreover, the trends of differentiation deflate a complex debate on the role of advertising in social change processes. The intertwining thus became a central theme of reflection, challenging the apparent differentiations. I argue that several factors point to the importance of the juxtaposition of social and commercial advertising. The interconnectivity includes the common foundation of marketing and its objective to influence audiences, the intertwining of the production, its sites and networks behind campaigns, as well as their content. While social marketing is inherently connected to the advertising industry through the use of marketing, the practical involvement of advertising agencies in social change initiatives pulls these field closer together. As detailed, examples of intertwining are common and stand in opposition to the trends of differentiation present in academic debates. The idea that the content of medialised communication is part of socialisation processes and, thus, normalising certain truths exists parallel to the conviction that media channels and content can be utilised in order to direct individual attitudes and behaviour through information dissemination. Accordingly, commercial advertising has of late been considered increasingly as part of messages directing social change with attention paid to representation in order to challenge the sexist stereotypes associated with commercial advertisements and normalise diverse perspectives of gender.

In contrast, the significance of social advertising as part of socialisation processes is rarely discussed. One exception is the article “Family Planning or Birth Control?” by M. Kishwar (1979), published in the journal *Manushi* as part of an organisation concerned with “women’s rights and democratic reforms” (*Manushi* no date). It deals with family planning films initiated by the Indian government and poses consideration for social advertising as part of socialisation processes. Kishwar points out that the campaign emphasises the importance of sons stresses ‘women’s’ self-sacrifice and passivity, and promotes family planning as a ‘women’s’ duty to her husband and family (Kishwar 1979). Kishwar thereby argues that the representation contained illustrates sexist and patriarchal patterns and, as such, can be placed with the vast number of studies on commercial advertising regarding the impact of contained visuals, messages, and imageries. However, the idea of the content of social advertising as part of the reproduction of social patterns and, thus, unintentional directions of change processes is almost non-existent in academic discussions of the influential power of advertising. Based on the trends apparent in these discussions, the focus on the interlinkages and commonalities is central. I hence highlight the definition of advertising as part of medialised communication with the specific intent to influence audiences and centre the inherent intertwining.

### Identifying Experiences of Change through Producers’ Perspectives

The relentless focus on content analyses and reception studies illustrates an immense gap regarding the detailed narration of producers’ perspectives and voices. The complexity of advertising entails a range of institutional affiliations and arenas, including advertising agencies and social organisations, but also governmental bodies and international development organisations and networks, as well as the interlinkages in between and academic debates. Therefore, producers’ insights, in particular, provide an opportunity for understanding this complex field beyond marginal comments in support of extant discussions. The focus is thus shifted towards a thorough empirical enquiry into the meaning and understanding of the role of advertising in processes of social change from the advertising producer’s point of view.

In order to encompass this field, I centre processes of change. This focus is relevant in all forms of advertising and enables the cumulation of diverse arenas. Despite the contrasting objectives, reception studies and content analyses both centre change processes and focus on identifying and describing social changes. With this, the change debated adjusts to the arena it exists within and is simultaneously a product of the extant contextual circumstances. As I have noted, change contains different aspects according to the arena or perspectives

it is connected to and should thus be thought of as pliable. An understanding of change then includes choosing one particular product or service, or a specific brand over another, obtaining knowledge that influences a person's attitude or leads to adopting certain behavioural patterns or dealing with processes of change regarding systemic patterns. This point of view enables discussions that encompass the complex network of advertising and the commonalities and intertwining of the social sector and the advertising industry in particular.

### Reflections on Gender in the Form of "Women's Issues" through a Conceptualisation Beyond the Binary

Building on the premise that gender functions as a fundamental element in social structures, gender is referred to as a major resource in commercial advertising (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 375) and a focal theme in development work and, thus, many social marketing campaigns. Thematic frames centring gender and media are thus a thoroughly debated field among Social Sciences at Indian institutions since introducing the academic institutionalisation of 'women's' studies in colleges and universities in the 1980s, as well as the established development sector and affiliated scholarship, and growing discipline of Media and Communication Studies (Chaudhuri 2014, p. 145; Banerjee 2009). The diverse disciplines involved create a complex foundation of intersections between the understanding of media, gender, and change and its dynamics. As detailed above, several authors highlight the importance of the representation of gendered visuals and imageries in commercial advertising, such as Chaudhuri (2001, 2006, 2014, 2017), who extensively discusses gendered representation as part of extant processes of change. Critical voices point towards objectification and reproduction of static gender roles as the main problems within these discussions on representation, commercial advertising in particular promoting sexist patterns. Similarly, politics of social change point to the problems and symptoms of sexism: rape and gender-based violence, 'eve-teasing',<sup>79</sup> as well as unequal opportunities and expectations. Since the mid-1970s, social initiatives have increasingly focussed on the economic contribution of 'women' followed by an understanding of gender as a social construct and a shift towards centring "gender" instead of "women". However, the focus on the role of 'women' in processes of social change continued to be central (Wilkins 1999).

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<sup>79</sup> 'Eve-teasing' is the term used in India and other countries in South Asia for sexualised harassment, such as comments and whistles in public spaces.

The importance given to ‘women’ and “women’s issues” in discussions on commercial and social campaigning is telling. While the importance of these debates cannot be overstated, gender is often automatically associated with ‘women’, centring “women’s issues”. This is reflected in ideas on gender marketing as well as ‘gender-mainstreaming’ as part of development initiatives. Though gender has been pulled into focus, the main topic is representation and participation of female-coded characters and ‘women’. Accordingly, the Network of Women in Media, India (NWMI), for example, who in 2019 organised a three-day gathering titled: “Making Gender Count: Towards Visibility, Equity and Safety”, called upon media organisations to “consciously and effectively promote the Constitutional value of gender equality in media workplaces and media content” (NWMI 2019), with the focus addressing inequalities experienced by ‘women’ in particular.

Among the studies discussing gender in advertising, the focus on male-coded characters and masculinities, as in Haynes’ study, is rare. The gendered binary positions male-coded and female-coded personas in opposition to each other (see, for example, Chatterji 2006). Haynes notes how the gendered expectations divide as follows: ‘men’ represent the material and political world, while ‘women’ stand for the spiritual world (Haynes 2010, p. 193). Chaudhuri describes the representation in advertisements from a perspective of ‘women’ gaining power, “an old attribute of men” while discussing power in relative terms, i.e. ‘men’ being in charge at work but not at home (Chaudhuri 2001, pp. 380–381) whereas ‘men’ are discussed to gain traditional female characteristics, i.e. as caring individuals (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 381; Favero 2002). In this development, while acknowledging the debate, Chaudhuri questions whether the emergence of “a more gender-sensitive image of male-hood spell the onset of a gender-equal era” (Chaudhuri 2001, p. 384). The debate on gender in advertising and other media outlets hence continues to focus on ‘women’ in particular: their visibility, their representation, and their opportunities, and occasionally also their role in production, for example, when it comes to journalism and representation in the news. The discussions almost exclusively draw upon a binary understanding of gender, thereby limiting their scope.

In rare cases, authors focus on alternative realities to the heteronormative construct. R. Vanita (2001), for example, discusses English language advertisements in Indian newspapers and magazines in the 1980s and 1990s and argues that the role of advertising in the representation and visibility of non-heterosexual couples and/or individuals is often to provide subtext representing homoeroticism as a seamless part of urban middle-class life (138). Therein lies the potential and possibility of redefining Indian manhood and womanhood as well as “blurring sexual as well as national and cultural boundaries” (Vanita 2001, p. 145). Vanita states that “advertising can get away with a much greater

degree of celebratory suggestiveness” (127) and that homoerotic themes and representation in literature and advertising – while sparking resistance and critique – have the potential of generating debate in general, thus adding to the visibility and publicity (130). However, the binary continues to be the foundation of gender dynamics when the representation of female-coded and male-coded personas. Stereotypical gendered markers and characteristics are left unchallenged, and no reference to other gender identities is made. Alternate gender identities such as trans, non-binary, or other gender non-confirming personas would enable a deeper discussion of stereotypical gender representation alongside the importance of addressing marginalisation and discriminatory practices experienced by individuals not fitting inside the binary understanding of gender.

As the academic discussions of the dynamics of advertising and gender adhere to a binary understanding of gender and often also a conflation of gender with ‘women’, the construct of these dynamics, power relations, expectations, and complexities inherent in constructions of gender dynamics is simplified. While considering alternate possibilities for understanding gender, this project includes gender as a representation of a particular aspect of social change while also reflecting a foundational component. Throughout the project, I deal with the discussions regarding the understanding of gender and include these reflections as part of the language used as outlined in the section on positionality. With the foundation in queer feminist perspectives, this standpoint continues to play a significant role in debates on gender.

### **2.3 Production Sites and Producers of Advertising as Departure in Discussing Processes of Social Change**

As explained, to accommodate the complexities and immense intertwining of the advertising business in India and focus on processes of change and social change in particular, I here centre experiences, perspectives, ideas, and understanding of the individuals involved in the production of advertising. As representatives of people engaging in producing media content and especially medialised communication to influence audiences, they contribute with valuable specifics regarding ideas and understanding of advertising as well as the role of advertising and producers themselves in production and change processes. The sites identified in order to engage with the producers of advertising include advertising agencies and social organisations. Advertising agencies as production sites is a given. However, international organisations, NGOs and other social organisations, governmental institutions and ministries, alongside other stakeholders in advertising such as private companies, all figure as

important arenas that contribute to the discursive knowledge on change processes through medialised communication. The production sites at hand represent intersections for various discourses derived from, e.g. debates on media channels and technology, on development and social change, concerning advertising regulations and company policies, as well as economic perspectives alongside social and cultural implications. While not all of these arenas regularly interact, centring the producers of advertising, i.e. employees of advertising agencies and representatives of social organisations, encompasses junctions of diverse perspectives and discursive intermingling.<sup>80</sup> This focus enables insights into apparent arenas and intersections. Moreover, this position enables in-depth enquiry into the presence of discursive knowledge regarding processes of change. Through the advertising producers' background, realities, and understanding of the role of advertising in processes of social change and their self-identified position concerning these processes, including conflicting realities, the complex field at hand is perceived from a previously unconsidered point of view. In the analysis of this project, I hence focus on processes of change through an empirical exploration and provide a discussion exclusively based on the input by advertising producers. The dynamics between gender, media, and change are encapsulated within this focal point. Before outlining the theoretical framework applied within this project, I introduce the main research question and sub-questions in detail.

### Introducing the Individual, the Institutional, and the Discursive Levels of the Central Question

The three key pillars central to this project are: 1) framing commercial and social advertising under a common understanding of medialised messages with the intent to influence audiences, 2) making the production sites and the individuals involved in the production processes focal, 3) and considering an understanding of gender as a construct of dynamics, power relations, expectations, and complexities beyond the category of 'women' and binary models. This led to the central question being phrased as follows:

*What are the ideas, perspectives, and debates regarding the interplay between advertising and change, strategies of communication in order to direct change pro-*

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<sup>80</sup> I detail the choice of respondents and the unavoidable exclusion of others in the next chapter.



*cesses, and gendered imagery and social change processes prominent among producers of social and commercial advertising?*

The following sub-questions reflect levels of change: individual and institutional realities, as well as the presence of discursive power as part of communicative strategies:<sup>81</sup>

- What connections exist between producers' realities and the production of advertising?
- What role do institutional networks and collaborations play in producing medialised messages?
- How are advertising strategies connected to change processes?

In order to encompass the diversity and complexities of the advertising business in India and the pillars mentioned above, these questions are set along a theoretical framework enabling a foundational understanding of advertising. I use the '*discourses of change*' framework as a lens to capture the focus on intertwining and diverse arenas and their complexities, centring the understanding of change processes from producers' perspectives. '*Politics of change*' provided a starting point and a concrete conversation of the strategies and approaches of advertising while being situated in greater discourses of change processes. Thereby, this project contributes to the debates on media and change with an in-depth discussion on production environments and processes of social change. In connection with the assumed power and pervasiveness of advertising, the production sites of advertising are framed as *spheres of knowledge production*, junctions where different perspectives are deliberated, and thus *platforms of discursive struggle*. This framework considers the diverse arenas present, the contextualisation of these intertwining arenas, as well as the debates regarding the role of advertising in change processes. The ideas and perceptions of advertising producers become representative of a diverse field of medialised communication created to influence audiences. In the following chapter, I detail these concepts and the qualitative methodology employed.

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<sup>81</sup> Succeeding the literature list, I provide a list of interviews undertaken, including the guide of questions used in the interview plan.

