Abstract

Regardless of the changing times, women working in Pakistan have always had to strive a little more than men to gain an authoritative place for themselves in the professional world. A field that demands perhaps even more commitment from women (particularly because it is their own drive that allows them to look beyond disapproval and the norms of our culture) is media; a career option that, to this day, remains a taboo for a large portion of Pakistani women. While there are many branches of media, I chose to narrow down my focus to the world of advertising agencies, to the women who have recently joined them, as well as those who have come to know them as familiar territory.

This dissertation questions the mindset that has come to think of advertising as ‘a man’s field’ and why it is disliked for the families of some women to enter the profession. A possible explanation was the work environment, the late timings and the erratic schedules of agencies which have come to create a misimpression in the minds of a culture where women must only work in a female-majority, regulated environment. I became interested in the support that advertising agencies provide to women and the reasons for the loose structure given to these policies. More so, I was curious to whether women were aware of their rights at the workplace, such as the exact number of paid months for maternity leave, transport facilities provided in a city with unstable security, the option of specific work timings or even how to deal with cases of harassment, mild or extreme.

My primary research was conducted through interviews and I supported these by literature from journals of psychology as well as web and book articles. Holding interest in knowing
whether women at all stages of their careers in advertising ever feel the need for a regimented women’s policy or whether it is only those working mothers who have this requirement, I questioned the lack of awareness that all women had with regards to formal support as per my belief of individuals being partly responsible for the denial of their own rights.

With this dissertation, I hope to find out about whether advertising, in the words of one of my interviewees, is really a ‘man’s field’ or whether it provides an encouraging, approachable environment catering to the requirements of today’s professional women who decide to balance work with family. En route to my conclusion, I would like to hear about the experiences regarding the need for formal benefits some women have had in Pakistani ad agencies, and if in their opinions, there really even is a need for change regarding these policies.