

# A Literature Review on Emerging Role Portrayal of Indian Women in Advertisements

## 1. Soulina Banerjee

Research Scholar, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

Email: [soulinabanerjee.25@gmail.com](mailto:soulinabanerjee.25@gmail.com)

## 2. Dr. Sitangshu Khatua

Dean & Professor, Xavier Business School, St. Xavier's University, Kolkata

Email: [sitangshu.khatua@sxuk.edu.in](mailto:sitangshu.khatua@sxuk.edu.in)

### Abstract

Advertising, a vital marketing tool for sales and brand enhancement, sometimes emphasizes traditional gender roles like homemakers and objects of desire in order to draw audiences, which goes against the expectations of contemporary equality. This study examines how Indian women are portrayed in television and online advertisements, following changes from objectifying, stereotypical representations that are prevalent in both domestic and international media to progressive "femvertising" in the face of socioeconomic shifts. In order to determine the increasing role of women throughout diverse research conducted in India or elsewhere, the study will examine earlier research that has previously been done in those countries.

**Keywords:** *Gender role, Femvertising*

### INTRODUCTION

Advertising has grown to be one of the most popular marketing strategies in recent decades. Companies use it to accomplish a number of objectives, including increasing sales and enhancing brand awareness. In an effort to establish a bond between the viewer and the characters in the advertisements, advertising campaigns frequently seek to advocate particular lifestyles. Advertisements frequently exploit women to draw in viewers. Concerns about uniformity and stereotyping have also been raised by the objectification of the female body and the use of women in marketing, leading to a great deal of research. The portrayal of women in accordance with conventional role expectations, however, nonetheless clashes with enduring gender inequality. Conventional role distributions have been abandoned as gender roles have been redefined and women's demands for equal treatment in social and political spheres have become more vocal. As a result, new roles have emerged across contemporary society.

Historically, women have been the most prominent characters in product and service commercials. As a result, advertisements and other media sources now greatly influence how society views women. Because of how they are portrayed in the media, they are frequently seen as both consumers and objects. Female characters are usually portrayed as traditional role models, such as mothers, wives, and homemakers, in advertising aimed at particular populations. Advertising images that emphasize traditional gender roles and behaviors are referred to as "gender advertisements." These images frequently reinforce conventional standards and consolidate gender distinctions. However, the repercussions of this kind of advertising are becoming more widely acknowledged, which has sparked conversations about the need for more inclusive and progressive representations that dispel gender stereotypes and promote equality in marketing. Changing the way gender

is portrayed in advertising can help create a more inclusive and varied cultural narrative. Additionally, the understanding of advertising has been revitalized and the shift from classic to more modern role distributions has been signaled by the changing social context and viewpoints.

Researchers in disciplines like psychology and marketing have studied how ads affect consumers' perceptions of their bodies. Ideas of femininity and masculinity are included in gender roles, which are taught behaviors influenced by social norms and expectations. These ideas are frequently reinforced by advertisements that portray men and women in accordance with conventional gender norms. Men are often portrayed as powerful and macho, while women are supposed to represent notions of femininity.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Advertisers are wondering about the role of women in media over the time period it states that it depicts women in modern and traditional roles which are less effective, thus advertisers need to reconsider their depiction for specific brands (*Louise A. Heslop, Joni Newman, Sharon Gauthier 1989*). The study examines tampon ads targeting teenagers, revealing a myth change in their depiction of women menstruation products for women. The ads debunk the initial myth, despite maintaining the need for specialty tampons (*D. H. Berg, and L. Block Coutts 1993*). The paper investigated teenagers' perceptions of depiction of women in television commercials and their effects on the adolescent population. With 90 teenagers, 45 girls and boys participated, interviews were conducted. Results showed commercials affected people of all genders over the time. (*Kotwal, A., et al, 2008*). The study highlights the importance of advertisers creating visual linkages between signs and symbols to inspire consumers. It highlights the role of appealing women and female role models in advertising, raising public awareness. However, the study also discusses the ethical implications of narrowly defined female role portrayals in advertisement (*Lin, C. L., & Yeh, J. T. 2009*). Lesbian-controlled media displays women more actively in terms of age, weight, and femininity/masculinity, but less in terms of racial representation, according to research from heterosexual women's magazines and a lesbian leisure magazine (*Margaret E. Gonsoulin 2010*). This study examines the objectification and sexualization of women in print advertising, its effects on societal attitudes, beliefs, and behavior, and the historical role of women in advertising. It also examines the slow transition to empowering women trends and suggests future advertising strategies. (*Nancy Pilar Perez, B.J. 2013*). This research shows how Canadian newspapers and magazines define and depict later-life sexuality in older adults. Between 2009 and 2011, 144 articles were collected, with 13% promoting idealized sexuality for senior citizens. The articles depicted sexual interests, and functioning as diminishing more frequently than sustaining for the long run. The study highlights the paradox and conflicts between these ideals of sexuality. (*Mineko Wada a, Laura Hurd Clarke, Julia Rozanova 2014*). The study examines how aged life is portrayed in advertising and articles from six popular male-oriented magazines in North America. The research suggests that to meet age and masculinity standards, people are forced to participate in commercial culture, with young superstars being seen as masculine and aged individuals in settled roles. (*Clarke H. C, Erica V. B, Liu. C 2014*). The paper involved 373 UK audiences found that 75% of them believe television alcohol commercials violate the "Advertising Standards Authority Code of Broadcast Advertising (BCAP Code)". The study found that all seven ads violated the BCAP Code regulations, with non-compliance rates ranging from 49 to 91%. Over half of the participants felt that the rules about alcohol being portrayed as boosting confidence or popular were broken, indicating that the current framework for regulating alcohol commercials on television is insufficient. (*John B. Nezelek, William Krohn, Dannon Wilson, Laura Maruskin 2014*). The study shows the negative portrayal of women in media advertisements, focusing on their use as sex objects and promoting products. The study highlights the harmful impact of biased gender roles on society and women, highlighting the need for societal prohibition of such portrayals. It further also concludes

that objectifying women in the media dehumanizes them and raises concerns about societal expectations. (*Tehseem, T., & Riaz, I. 2015*). Hyperbolic portrayal of women in media, focused on the impact of depiction of women on consumers. A sample of 100 17-20-year-olds was analyzed, finding that media has a dominant influence on consumer perceptions and stereotypical portrayals of women. (*Kumari, A., & Joshi, H. 2015*). Advertising influences beauty conceptions, with models with bare midriffs, fair complexion, and skimpy clothing playing significant roles in society. Thus the study investigates how young girls feel media pressure from thin, attractive models in Indian television commercials. 150 college women were surveyed, and most agreed that ads feature attractive, youthful models, which can impact their eating habits and self-esteem. The study concludes that advertising affects women's self-worth and encourages critical thinking. (*Madhusmita Das and Sangeeta Sharma 2016*). With an emphasis on the evolving roles in the home and workplace, this essay explores gender stereotypes in advertising during the previous 50 years. Men are now portrayed in more equal roles, interacting with their children, despite a cultural gap. The study suggests further research on gender representations in advertising, focusing on online platforms, focusing on the LGBT consumer, and highlighting the emphasis on empowered women in advertising. The term "femvertising" refers to the contemporary emphasis on gender equality. (*Stacy Landreth Grau & Yorgos C. Zotos 2016*). The study examines attitudes towards advertising and the factors influencing it. It finds that attitudes about sex and nudity indirectly predict AG. Consumers' AG is negatively correlated with their perception of gender stereotypes in advertising. However, AG is harmed by offensiveness for men but not for women. Younger and female consumers are harmed by gender-stereotypical thoughts, whereas older and male consumers are not. The findings suggest that industry self-regulation should be strengthened to prevent overly sexual advertisements and promote conventional gender norms. (*Bruce A. Huhmann & Yam B. Limbu 2016*). This research has emphasized upon food advertisements on Israeli television between 2008-2013, comparing the impact of public lobbying, education, and regulations on obesity. Almost 25% of ads featured food items, with candy and sugary beverages being the most popular. Food advertising focused on economic value and emotional appeal, particularly low-nutrient meals. The use of slim models in ads increased between 2012 and 2013, promoting the thin ideal. The study examines audience effects, global research, and health regulation initiatives. (*Keren Eyala and Tali Te'eni-Harari 2016*). Using 109 peer-reviewed research that were published between 1995 and 2015, the paper investigates the effects of "sexualization" in the media. It was discovered that exposure to such content increases tolerance for sexual assault against women, self-objectification, body resentment, and support for sexist ideas. Views of women's humanity, morality, and competence are less prevalent among both men and women who are exposed to this content. (*L. Monique Ward, 2016*). Gender portrayal and facial prominence in media, especially periodicals aimed at LGBT audiences, are the subject of a study. The survey found no general variations in face prominence between mainstream and LGBT magazines. Nonetheless, there were differences in the facial prominence of men and women among four periodicals. The study suggests face-ism may only be present in specific periodicals and suggests further research should focus on individual magazine titles. (*Nathan N. Cheek 2016*). This study examines gender roles in Belgian commercial television commercials. It analyzes 493 commercials from 2002-2010, focusing on character gender, gender roles, and sexual objectification. The study hypothesizes that old gender preconceptions will reflect disparities between men and women in advertising. Results show women are typically younger and in dependent roles. Gender stereotypes in advertising persist despite social and legal changes, suggesting that these disparities may diminish with regulatory changes. (*Yann Verhellen, Nathalie Dens and Patrick de Pelsmacker 2016*). The research looks at how young Chinese women's eating habits and body image are affected by Western and Asian mass media. Chinese and Asian media were found to have a significant influence on the results, with varying variation in the prediction model, with the exception of height difficulties. (*Chengcheng Jianga, Hong Chena, Todd Jacksona, b. 2016*). A study examining female empowerment messaging in marketing strategies, specifically focusing on Dove's "Real Beauty" campaign, found that traditional advertising negatively impacts perceived gender roles. Femvertising, on the

other hand, improves brand perceptions, buy intentions, and emotional associations with brands, highlighting the need for further research on its efficacy (*Victoria E. Drake 2017*). Alcohol advertisement in top 40 UK songs on YouTube, targeting 11-18 year olds. Results show alcohol content induces sexual image and objectification of women, and some ads depict drunkenness without negative consequences. (*Jo Cranwell & John Britton & Manpreet Bains 2017*). According to the survey, women are frequently portrayed in ads as domesticated or sexualized, which is a bad trend. Nonetheless, domestic and control imagery are preferred by responders over sexualized ones. Traditional-minded women react more negatively to sexualized advertisements, indicating that marketers shouldn't concentrate only on these pictures. (*Vezych, I. S., et al, 2017*). This study examines how disabled women are traditionally portrayed in advertising and finds that disabled women largely utilize their personal experiences and beliefs to analyze ads. (*Ella Houston 2018*). Beauty ads are criticized by feminists for promoting exaggerated beauty standards and oppressing women. This study looks at how women are portrayed in social media and other non-traditional media. Even though social media has the potential to be a "great equalizer," the majority of photographs show women in disempowered categories, underscoring the need for reform. (*Shalaby, M., & Alkaff, S. N. 2019*). The study looks into how varied model body shapes affect consumer wellbeing and advertising efficacy. It was found that women are more likely to recognize average-sized models in ads than thin or plus-sized ones. The study also found that women's body mass index moderates the relationship between model size and purchasing intentions. The study examines how Italian men and women react to sexualized advertising and finds that while males are unaffected, women have reduced product attractiveness and buy inclinations. The results imply that "sex does not sell" because of psychological harm and practical ineffectiveness. (*Gramazio, S., et al, 2020*). The advertising sector faces a gender gap due to a lack of senior female advertisers, potentially reducing diversity. However, female creatives are actively using impressions management behaviors, despite being "faking" to fit in. The study recommends a realistic approach for future collaboration between firms, clients, and female creatives. (*Thompson-Whiteside, H., et al, 2020*). The study uses content analysis and framing theory to examine how women are presented in social media ads in underdeveloped countries. Analysis of a sample of 431 people revealed that women are frequently portrayed as "sex objects" in advertisements. Facebook advertisements contributed the most, with more images than videos. (*Nkem, F. U., et al, 2020*). The paper highlights the increasing popularity of "femvertising", a method of advertising that opposes stereotyping of women and promotes pro-woman themes. Factors contributing to its social acceptance include advocacy for improved depiction of women, brand enhancement, corporate feminism, increased knowledge of "gender stereotyping" and increased scrutiny by regulatory bodies. (*Varghese, N., & Kumar, N. 2020*). The research suggests that advertisements still use stereotypical gender roles for occupations, but non-stereotypical vocational roles can have positive impacts on respondents, regardless of gender, socially and for brands. The results also reveal brand efforts' perceptions of non-stereotypical occupational roles, potentially affecting social connections. (*Liljedal, K. T., et al, 2020*). A study in the Middle East found that UAE consumers are more likely to remember advertisements featuring female characters than those without women. The research suggests that portraying women in modern roles in advertising can enhance brand image, despite the cultural and custom-based aspects of UAE advertising. (*Khalil, A., & Dhanesh, G. S. 2020*). The research explores the impact of female role portrayal on Indian consumers' purchase intentions and contrasting perspectives on stereotyped representation. Using MANOVA statistical analysis, it found a significant difference in men's choices for a product, but women are not depicted in all product categories, raising questions. (*Sharma, S., & Bumb, A. 2021*). The study looks at how weight prejudice, self-esteem, and body image are affected by advertising promotions like Aerie Real and Dove Real Beauty. It analyzes 475 female participants under five conditions. The findings suggest that advertisements, while not always neutral, can significantly influence social norms, discourse, and attitudes, either intentionally or unintentionally. (*Selensky, J. C., & Carels, R. A. 2021*). The study analyzed Chinese college students' reactions to women-empowering advertising, focusing on gender attitudes and corporate social responsibility.

Results showed that advertising centered on women's empowerment can elicit views of CSR, boosting positive attitudes and purchase intentions. (*Teng, F., et al, 2021*). This paper examines the impact of gender imbalance and objectifying advertising slogans on women's body image. It examines Instagram ads featuring diverse body types and slogans, focusing on 202 female undergraduate students. The study concludes that advertisers' use of imperative pronouns further represents ideal masculinity. (*Al Falaq, J. S., & Puspita, D.(2021)*). The research looks upon the impact of gender stereotypes in advertising, suggesting that negative reactions to stereotypical female depictions should be implemented. The study found that stereotyped and non-stereotypical portrayals negatively affect the general audience and brands, with higher ad reactance negatively impacting participants and models. (*Åkestam, N., et al. 2021*). This study examines how nudity influences consumer behavior and focuses on male and female reactions to same- and opposite-gender nudity. According to the study, both male and female consumers responded favorably to semi-nude and fully clothed models (*Trivedi, R. H., & Teichert, T. 2021*). The evolution of women's depiction in Indian advertisements—a type of public communication intended to promote companies, occasions, goods, or services—is examined in this essay. Given that the stereotypical representation of women in advertisements has long been a major source of concern, it emphasizes the significance of advertisers in shaping cultural trends and appealing to consumer preferences. (*Vasanthan, R. & Jeyarania, J. 2022*). The study uses gender stereotypes in Malay beauty product advertisements on social media specifically Instagram. It reveals that these advertisements often contain stereotypical features for women, highlighting the pervasive influence of patriarchy and stereotyping as marketing tactics. The study attempts to shed light on how social media advertising is evolving in terms of ethics and linguistic suitability. (*Raslie, H., & Zaidi, A. N. M. 2022*). Indian society is evolving and women becoming more confident, decisive, and taking on leadership roles. Advertisements have shifted their portrayal of women from stereotypical housewives to confident, determined women with leadership qualities. This change emphasizes how crucial social, economic, and ideological elements are in determining how women are portrayed in modern advertising. (*A. Kumari, 2022*). This study looks at how gender stereotypes have affected how women have been portrayed in TV commercials from the 20th century. It contends that rather than changing women's ideals, these advertisements encourage consumption. The study demonstrates how consumerist ideas impact advertising communication, with stereotypes being reinforced by visual and auditory cues. (*J. Hu, 2023*). In contrast to conventional male-female roles, the study emphasizes the role of women in advertising, especially feminist advertising. Growing in popularity, feminist advertising departs from conventional gender norms. Commercial films from the 2022 Mixx Award competition, like "A Daughter Changes, the World Changes," emphasize the impact of gender equality and the notion that men dominate girls' education. (*Yaman, D., and Songur, A. 2024*).

## ANALYSING THE LITERATURE

### Gender Role portrayal by Foreign Authors

Researches	Key Findings
<b>Heslop, Newman, &amp; Gauthier (1989)</b>	Advertisements show women in conventional and contemporary roles that become less effective over time, prompting brand-specific reevaluations in representation.
<b>Berg &amp; Block Coutts (1993)</b>	Despite changing portrayals, tampon advertisements aimed at teenagers dispel myths about menstruation while highlighting the necessity for specialized products.
<b>Kotwal et al. (2008)</b>	Teens of both sexes believe that how women are portrayed in TV ads has an impact on their opinions over time.
<b>Lin &amp; Yeh (2009)</b>	To effectively motivate consumers, advertisers must strike a balance between enticing female role models and ethical concerns over limited, stereotypical

	portrayals.
<b>Gonsoulin (2010)</b>	Compared to heterosexual magazines, lesbian-controlled media shows women more actively in terms of age, weight, and gender characteristics, but it trails behind in terms of racial representation.
<b>Perez (2013)</b>	Future tactics should give priority to progressive trends because print advertisements objectify and sexualize women, impeding the transition to empowerment.
<b>Wada, Clarke, &amp; Rozanova (2014)</b>	The Canadian media highlights contradictions in idealized depictions of older folks' sexuality by portraying it as fading rather than sustaining.
<b>Clarke, B, &amp; Liu (2014)</b>	Male-oriented periodicals use commercial culture to force adherence to youth-centric masculinity ideals by depicting older men in established roles.
<b>Nezlek, Krohn, Wilson, &amp; Maruskin (2014)</b>	In the UK, 75% of alcohol-related TV commercials are deemed to violate broadcast regulations, suggesting that representations that promote confidence are not regulated.
<b>Tehseem &amp; Riaz (2015)</b>	Women are dehumanized by the media's objectification of them as sex objects, which makes discriminatory gender roles illegal in society.
<b>Grau &amp; Zotos (2016)</b>	Ads throughout the past 50 years demonstrate a cultural lag in gender roles but advancements in equity, "femvertising," and online/LGBT depictions.
<b>Huhmann &amp; Limbu (2016)</b>	Advertising views are harmed by gender stereotypes and sexualization, particularly among younger females, necessitating greater self-control.
<b>Eyala &amp; Te'eni-Harari (2016)</b>	Israeli TV food ads promote thin ideals via slim models, prioritizing emotional appeal over health amid rising obesity concerns.
<b>Ward (2016)</b>	Sexualized media exposure fosters body dissatisfaction, self-objectification, and tolerance for violence, undermining views of women's competence.
<b>Cheek (2016)</b>	Male-female facial prominence varies by title in LGBT magazines, but overall face-ism is not different from mainstream.
<b>Verhellen, Dens, &amp; de Pelsmacker (2016)</b>	Despite social developments, gender stereotypes about younger, dependent women are perpetuated in Belgian TV advertisements, necessitating regulatory action.
<b>Jackson, Jiang, &amp; Chen (2016)</b>	With the exception of stature, Asian media has a greater impact on Chinese women's eating habits and body image than Western media.
<b>Drake (2017)</b>	Femvertising, such as Dove's "Real Beauty," improves purchase intent and gender role perceptions more than traditional advertising.
<b>Cranwell, Britton, &amp; Bains (2017)</b>	Alcohol advertisements for popular songs in the UK that target young people sexualize women and normalize intoxication without repercussions.
<b>Vezich et al. (2017)</b>	Women choose domestic advertisements over sexualized ones; unfavorable reactions to the latter are exacerbated by traditional values.
<b>Houston (2018)</b>	Gaps in inclusive representation are exposed by disabled women's personal interpretations of typical advertisements.
<b>Shalaby &amp; Alkaff (2019)</b>	Despite equalizer promise, social media advertisements that advocate for feminist-driven change promote perceptions of weak women.
<b>Gramazio et al.</b>	In terms of advertising efficacy, average-sized models do better than slim or

(2020)	plus-sized models; sexualization lowers women's buy intent without helping men.
<b>Thompson-Whiteside et al. (2020)</b>	In order to close the gender gap in advertising, female creatives "fake" impressions, requiring practical firm-client diversity tactics.
<b>Nkem et al. (2020)</b>	Facebook dominates visual stereotypes, and social media advertisements in underdeveloped countries portray women as sex objects.
<b>Liljedal et al. (2020)</b>	Advertisements featuring non-stereotypical job roles have favorable societal and brand effects on all genders.
<b>Selensky &amp; Carels (2021)</b>	Real-body advertisements, such as those from Ariel and Dove, unintentionally affect standards on self-esteem and weight bias.
<b>Teng et al. (2021)</b>	Chinese students' opinions and purchase intentions are positively impacted by women-empowering advertisements that signal CSR.
<b>Åkestam et al. (2021)</b>	Ad reactance is triggered by stereotypical female representations, which negatively impact audience and brand perceptions globally.
<b>Raslie &amp; Zaidi (2022)</b>	Malay beauty advertising on Instagram demands ethical change by perpetuating patriarchal prejudices about women.
<b>Hu (2023)</b>	TV commercials from the 20th century oppose changes in women's ideals by maintaining gender stereotypes to encourage consumption.
<b>Songur &amp; Yaman (2024)</b>	In modern campaigns, feminist advertisements like "A Daughter Changes" promote gender equality by questioning conventional roles.

### **Gender Role portrayal by Indian Authors**

<b>Researches</b>	<b>Key Findings</b>
<b>Kumari &amp; Joshi (2015)</b>	Stereotypical consumer perceptions of women among 17–20-year-olds are largely shaped by hyperbolic media portrayals.
<b>Das &amp; Sharma (2016)</b>	Indian TV commercials featuring slender, attractive models put pressure on young women's eating habits and self-esteem, necessitating essential consumer knowledge.
<b>Varghese &amp; Kumar (2020)</b>	Regulatory scrutiny of gender depictions, brand development, and anti-stereotyping activism all contribute to the growth of femvertising.
<b>Khalil &amp; Dhanesh (2020)</b>	Despite cultural limitations, UAE advertisements featuring contemporary female roles improve memory and company image.
<b>Sharma &amp; Bumb (2021)</b>	Indian men's buying intentions are greatly influenced by stereotyped depictions of women, although this influence varies depending on the product category.
<b>Al Falaq &amp; Puspita (2021)</b>	Through ideal masculinity, objectifying Instagram statements with imperative pronouns worsen women's body image problems.
<b>Trivedi &amp; Teichert (2021)</b>	While full nudity differs by consumer sex, semi-nude models receive favorable reactions from all genders.
<b>Jeyarani &amp; Vasanthan (2022)</b>	Indian advertisements change how women are portrayed from stereotypes, reflecting societal changes that marketers need to take advantage of.
<b>Kumari (2022)</b>	Due to socioeconomic and ideological shifts, Indian advertisements transform women from housewives into self-assured leaders.

## CONCLUSION

Foreign Research shows that traditional, stereotypical portrayals of women—often objectified, sexualized, or domestic—are gradually giving way to progressive "femvertising" that emphasizes diversity, equity, and empowerment (e.g., online/LGBT images). Cultural gaps in gender norms, legal infractions in industries like alcohol, thin-ideal marketing in food advertisements, and detrimental effects on body image, self-esteem, and purchasing intent, especially among young people, are examples of persistent problems. While sexualization causes reactance, non-stereotypical roles improve brand perceptions across genders; gaps remain in intersectional (such as race and disability) and longitudinal research.

Indian Research reveals how media-driven stereotypes, which present women as sex objects or skinny ideals and put pressure on eating habits, shape young people's opinions, self-esteem, and purchasing intentions. Though product-category differences and digital objectification persist, emerging patterns demonstrate the transition from housewives to self-assured leaders, driven by societal shifts, femvertising, and regulatory activism.

There are gender biases in ads everywhere in the world, and they are not restricted to any particular area. Nonetheless, good advances in the representation of genders in advertisements are being driven by growing awareness and changing social standards in India and other nations. There is little difference in the actors' ages, yet women are given more screen time and appear in television commercials than men. Additionally, women are depicted more frequently in work settings and in professional occupations.

Gender prejudices are present in advertisements worldwide and are not specific to any one region. However, increasing awareness and shifting societal norms in India and other countries are driving positive developments in female representation in ads. Women are given more screen time and appear in television advertising than men, despite the performers' ages being relatively similar. Women are also portrayed more often in professional vocations and work environments. Thus the future research will focus upon how their will be an evolution in women role depiction in advertisements and specific to digital and traditional media.

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A large, light blue watermark of a lightbulb is centered on the page. Inside the lightbulb's glass part, the letters 'IJRTI' are written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The base of the lightbulb is a grey, semi-circular shape.

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