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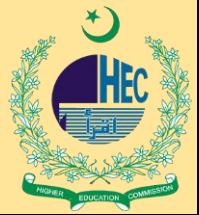
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**Queering Motherhood: Transgender Identity and Alternative Kinship in the Vicks Ad  
Featuring Shreegauri Sawant**

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**ABSTRACT**

*This study explores how the Vicks advertisement 2017 called Touch of Care disrupts conventional notions of gender, motherhood, and kinship especially via its depiction of the figure of Shreegauri Sawant, a transgender activist and care giver. In conducting the study, the author will: (1) perform the analysis of how the appearance subverts traditional gender norms and biologically determined motherhood, (2) discuss transgender motherhood as caregiving, and (3) legitimize chosen family as a new mode of kinship. This study employs qualitative textual and critical discourse analysis to analyze the story, verbal and visual messages that are in the ad. Referring to the Queer Theory, especially the Judith Butler concept of gender performativity and David Eng interpretations of queer kinship, the article views the advertisement as a subversive action on heteronormative media culture. The outstanding contribution of the present study is that it determines the manner in which the advertisement queers motherhood giving importance to emotional care rather than biological determinism, which is what makes transgender motherhood identity valid. Also, it discusses how the advertisement spreads the idea about chosen family as a valid kinship system that conflicts with the social unease about queer families and promotes transgender parenthood on a wider scale.*

**Keywords:** *Transgender Motherhood, Queer Kinship, Gender Performativity, Media Representation, Indian Advertising.*

### **Introduction**

Even in modern South Asia, concepts of gender, family and motherhood are formulated along the lines of strict heteronormative systems. Cisgender women and biological reproduction are the traditional representations of the concept of motherhood without much space in it to be addressed inclusively or alternatively to the concept of family and care relationships. Nonetheless, the media discourse has proven to question the norms with the help of strong representations of queer and transgender citizens taking over the roles that they were not entitled due to social constructs. An example of such story contains an Indian Vicks commercial released in 2017, which tells the story of Shreegauri Sawant, a transgender activist and a mother of an adopted daughter, Gayatri. This advertisement re-considers the concept of motherhood as motherly care instead of an activity related to reproduction and advances a more universal image of the family. The representation of Shreegauri challenges traditional norms of gender and creates a new space to investigate the correlation between queer and trans coexistence with familial, kinship and parenthood structures. The ad can be considered as a unique example in Indian mainstream media in relation to transgender subjectivity since in it, transgender identity is not an indicator of marginality or deviance but a matter of love, defense, and motherhood.

Although queer theory and transgender studies have become an international trend, it is quite evident that the same is lacking locally on studies aimed at using Indian media to represent transgender motherhood. Existing literature on the topic of Indian transgender communities focuses more on the issues of exclusion, stigma and activism less on the daily functions like parenting, care giving and family-making. In the same way the queer kinship and chosen families have been discussed in a rather Western-centric way leaving the experiences and voices of the Global South behind. The Vicks advertisement, despite its wide social reach and emotional impact, remains under-analyzed from a critical theoretical perspective. There is a lack of academic engagement with how this ad queers' traditional representations of family and brings transgender motherhood into the public imagination. This study seeks to fill this gap by using queer theory to analyze the intersections of gender identity, media representation, and alternative kinship within a South Asian cultural context.

These are research's objectives:

- (1) To analyze how the Vicks advertisement challenges traditional gender roles and conventional notions of motherhood.
- (2) To examine the representation of transgender motherhood through the caregiving role of Shreegauri Sawant.
- (3) To analyze the way the ad advocates the selected family as a valid type of kinship that is more important than biological kin.

These are the research questions:

- (1) So how does advertisement dispute the engrained gender roles and conventional ideas of motherhood?
- (2) What does transgender motherhood mean in terms of caretaking aspect of Shreegaury Sawant in the commercial?
- (3) How does the advertisement justify chosen family over the genetic one?

This project is conceptualized through the theory of Queer, a critical approach that disputes essential sex/gendered identity, binary gender categorization and heteronormative presumptions. The study will rely on the views of theorists like Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, and David Eng focusing on how gender and identity can be resisted, socially constructed, and even performed. Judith Butler gender performativity is especially helpful in the investigation of the motherly status of Shreegaury, which shatters the definitions of a woman and a nice gripping the national ideologies of motherhood. This analysis also revolves around the concept of queer kinship that was developed by researchers including David Eng and Judith Halberstam. It enables the study to conceptualize family not as the institution that is shaped through biological certainties but a mode of social relationship that should be marked by care, selectivity, and solidarity, particularly among those with the identities marginalized within the social mainstream. Using these frameworks, this paper views the ad as an act of resistance that not only queers gender identity, but also queers families.

Such a study adds value to the existing literature on queer and transgender studies, especially in the Indian society. As the study conducted the Vicks advertisement throughout the framework of queer theory, the research not only sheds light on the hidden stories of transgender motherhood but also opens up the boundaries of standard family images. The study can be useful to media scholars, gender theorists and social activists who are keen with respect to the way by which the pattern of popular discourse may strengthen or corrupt popular ideology. Moreover, it also focuses on the significance of media representation in the progressive society and the message of social awareness. On a wider level, the presented study highlights the possibility of visual storytelling in redefining the collective discourse on gender, care, and identity in South Asian societies living in post-colonialism.

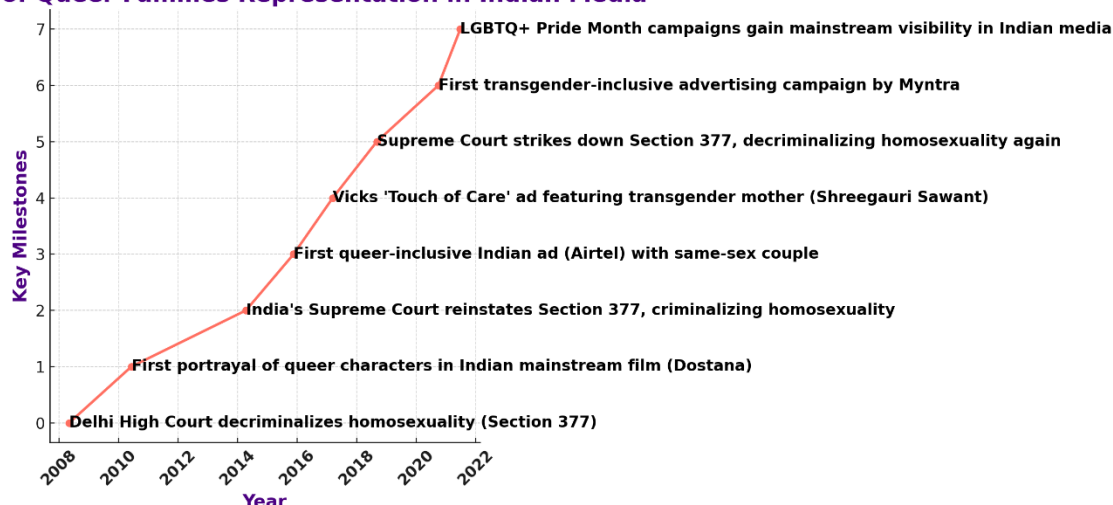
### **Literature Review**

#### **Representations of Transgender Identity in Media**

Media has greatly shaped the ways transgender individuals have been viewed and portrayed, propagating the narrow and stereotypical images. Throughout the world, the transgender characters were portrayed as tricky, tragic, or comic and helped to cause social stigmatization (Capuzza & Spencer, 2017). According to Satti, et. Al, (2025), the Indian media reflects these trends, with hijras, India has the most visible transgender community, who are unemployed and as a result, they tend to be either placed in the margins as mystics, beggars, or as comic relief (Reddy, 2005; Ghosh, 2018). Such representations harm the representations of the diversity and complexity of Trans life and strengthen social exclusion. But this is changing lately with initiatives on digital and advertising media. Banerjee (2020) talks about those advertisements, which present some counter-narratives and humanize transgender people like

the 2017 Vicks campaign with Shreegaury Sawant appearing as a caregiver and a family member.

#### Timeline of Queer Families Representation in Indian Media



*The Timeline of Representation of Queer Families in Indian Media pinpoints milestones, in which the Timeline covers the historical span of queer representation in the Indian media by locating the 2017 Vicks ad. It highlights landmark periods of legal and cultural transformation that made a difference in the visibility of queer.*

However, the academic background on transgender representation in Indian advertising is limited and most of the research works are done on either legal recognition or socially driven activism, not on intimate activities such as parenting (Rabi, Ullah, Ibrar, & Akbar, 2024). This study attempts to fill that gap by examining how the advertisement by Vicks picks up subversive media discourses concerning the ideas of domination and recontextualises the transgender identity within the language of love, caring and the culture of motherhood.

#### The Social Construction of Motherhood

The concept of motherhood tends to be processed in a biological, heteronormative manner as women are believed to perform the role of an ultimate caregiver who can be called the natural one. The belief that motherhood is merely a biological process plays out in a social and ideological direction since many feminists' scholars like Rich (1976) and O Reilly (2010) argue that patriarchy and other cultural expectations shape motherhood as much as it is a functioning biological process. The kinships surrounding motherhood, especially in South Asia, are directly co-joined to womanhood, purity, as well as reproductive abilities (Gupta, 2012). This kind of structure locks out non-biological mothers and continuing the belief that only cisgender women are capable of being legit caregivers (Nawaz, Khan, & Rabi, 2024). Post-structuralist theorists oppose this by undoing the essentialist representation of motherhood and prioritize the performative and relational nature of that concept (Butler, 1990). Such criticisms create space into an enlargement of definitions of mothering to include different genders (Rabi, Ullah, & Rabi, 2024). Nevertheless, such inclusivity is not pronounced in Indian

media. The commercial of Vicks, with Shreegaury Sawant, breaks this cycle by showing a woman of a Tran as a caring mother, therefore, subverting the artistic determinism of motherhood and creating a potential to narrate this kinship structure differently.

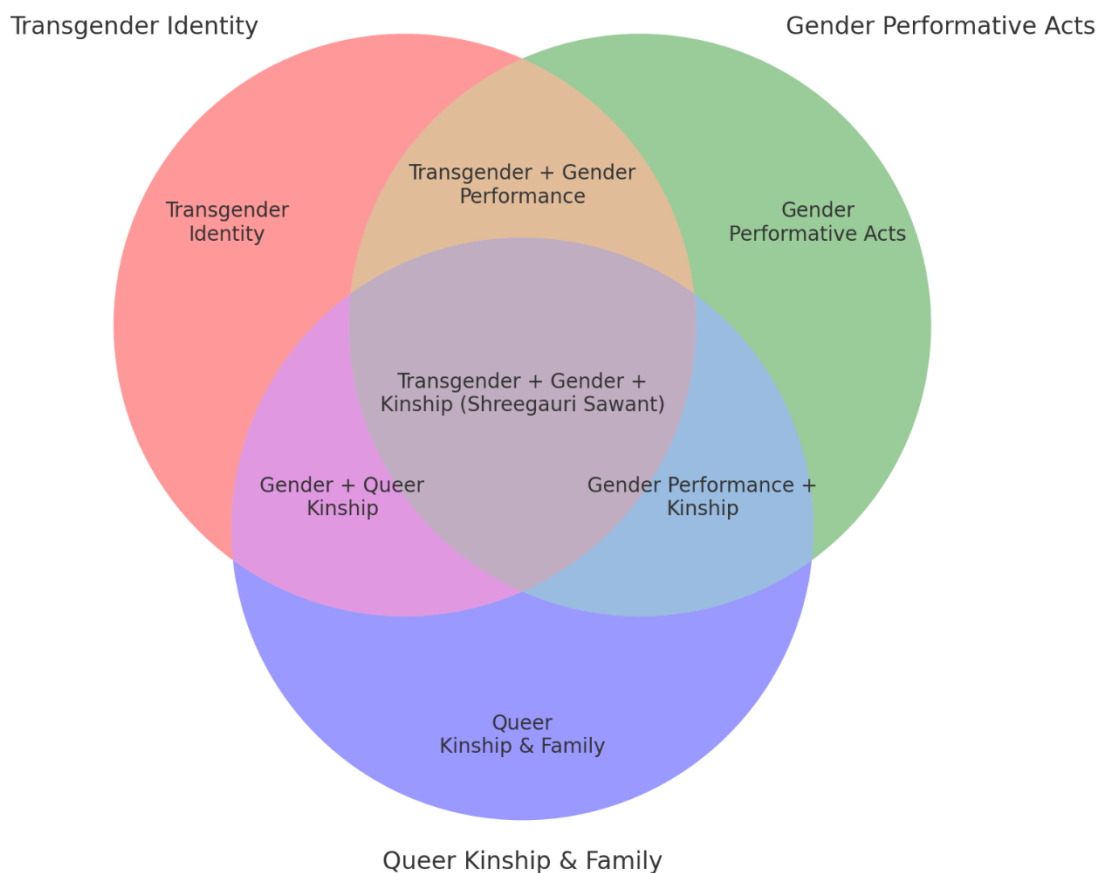
### **Queer Theory and the Deconstruction of Gender Roles**

Queer theory is relevant to the critical perception of gender and sexuality that are socially constructed, fluid, as well as performative. Judith Butler (1990) was the first to come up with the gender performativity idea which is based on the assumption that gender is not an instinctive identity but consists of repetitive activities influenced by social requirements (Rabi, Ahmad, Hussain, & Ullah, 2025). Eve Sedgwick (1990) also complicated the histories behind the binary oppositions of male and female and heterosexual versus homosexual and asserted that greater complexity was needed in identity mindsets. When transferred to the family structures, queer theory reveals the way the conventional roles of the mother, the father, or the child are bound by the binary logics (Ullah, Rabi, Khan, & Ahmad, 2025). In media, Shen, et. Al, (2025), such insights enable scholars to examine how non-conformity to gender as infractions of family scripts can be explored. Although the field of queer theory has had extensive usage in the western academia, we still find it relatively less everywhere in South Asian media studies. The advertisement by Vicks introduces an exceptionally valuable opportunity to apply queer theoretical perspectives to the analysis of the permeation of family and gender in Indian culture because the depiction of a trans woman, who is expected to appear as a motherly one, queers the gender roles.

### **Transgender Motherhood and Queer Kinship**

Queer kinship challenges the notion that families must be formed through biology, marriage, or heterosexual reproduction. Scholars like David Eng (2007) and Judith Halberstam (2005) argue for the recognition of “chosen families” where emotional bonds take precedence over blood ties. In this context, transgender motherhood is an especially powerful symbol of resistance against normative family models. Yet, research on transgender individuals as parents is still underdeveloped, particularly in the Global South. Hines (2006) notes that trans women who assume caregiving roles often face societal skepticism and legal barriers, with their legitimacy as mothers being questioned. Indian transgender Riaz, Q., Qureshi, H., & Zaib, K. (2025), narratives have rarely focused on caregiving or familial roles, with more attention given to marginalization and activism (Dutta, 2013). The Vicks ad intervenes in this narrative by positioning Shreegaury Sawant as a maternal authority, thereby queering the concept of kinship and affirming the validity of non-biological motherhood. This portrayal not only humanizes trans identity but also expands the social understanding of what it means to be a parent in contemporary South Asia.

## Intersectionality of Identity in Vicks "Touch of Care" Advertisement



*The Intersectionality Diagram interprets the intersection of the transgender identity, gender performativity, and queer kinship in the representation of Shreegauri Sawant in the Vicks advertisement, Touch of Care, and how the diversion of such identity markers can inform the advertisement with transgender motherhood.*

### **Media as a Site of Resistance and Visibility for Queer Identities**

The media, namely advertising and digital media, are one of the most potent driving forces that give rise to the discussion of identity and social norms in society (Ijaz & Rabi, 2022). Although the media has contributed through marginalization of queer people, there is a possibility that media can be used to bring visibility and to generate a sympathetic connection. According to Sender (2012) the dominant ideologies can be taken down by the transfer of affect in ad narrative and social change can come about through mobilization. Other campaigns in recent years in India have tried to challenge the normative gender and family roles by highlighting the unrepresented communities (Rabi, Bibi, Mukhtiar, & Zahir, 2025). The agency of Vicks advertisement is one of the major instances when the platform of advertising itself turns into the site of resistance and a transgender woman is introduced as a caring, protecting mother. In

contrast to the more common approaches of struggle or an exoticism narrative, this advertisement instead employs the use of an emotional narrative to normalize the practice of trans motherhood. According to Banerjee (2020), such reframing will provoke the audiences to reevaluate long-standing beliefs of gender, family, and care. Nevertheless, campaigns of this sort are rather a *bon mot* than a rule, and thus their cultural and social implications should be analyzed in a critical manner.

### **Gaps in Literature**

Though, overall scholarship regarding queer studies and transgender representation is increasingly escalating globally, research in the South Asian context and especially with respect to motherhood around the theme of transgenderism remains scarce. According to Dutta (2013) and Misra (2011), the other characteristics research on Indian trans communities concentrates on either legal rights, social exclusion, or political activism; however, aspects of life such as parenting or care giving have received little to no attention. Also, queer kinship literature is largely Western and hence tends to lose sight of cultural specificity in India. The Vicks advertisement, despite its widespread emotional impact and progressive message, has received little scholarly attention, especially from a queer theoretical perspective (Javed Ashiq, Usman, Rabi, & Uzma, 2024). No comprehensive analysis currently exists that explores how the ad queer's traditional family structures or how it positions transgender identity within mainstream emotional narratives. This study aims to address these gaps by offering a critical reading of the Vicks ad through the lens of queer theory, emphasizing how transgender motherhood is represented, legitimized, and emotionally framed in contemporary Indian media.

### **Methodology**

This research employs a qualitative method with core of Critical discourse analysis (CDA). It investigates the portrayal of transgender motherhood and non-traditional family ties through a media product The Vicks "Touch of care" advertisement. The goal is to analyze pragmatics, challenge the dominant norms, and explore how global media constructs family roles, identity and gender.

This study is rooted in queer theory, specifically Judith butlers' concept of gender performativity, uses the concept of heteronormativity, intersectionality and chosen family, which frames gender as a series of socially regulated acts rather than a fixed state. This perspective enables a deeper reading of Shreegauri Sawant's maternal role as one that disrupts biologically deterministic ideas of motherhood. This theory enables researchers to challenge the dichotomous gender roles as well as the study of how advertisement undermines the traditional perceptions of motherhood and biology.

The chosen ad source to conduct the study is the ad taken off by Vicks during the campaign Vicks To The touch of care featuring Shree Gauri Sawant who is a parent and transgender activist in 2017. This ad was a well-selected one because it is uncommon, emotionally charged, and unusual depiction of transgender motherly figures in the mainstream Indian media. The ad is a commercial and cultural artifact, which works both as a brand message and a progressive

social comment. The abundance of its presence and emotional appeal qualifies it to be analyzed by queer theory, especially regarding how family, gender and identity are expressed through the media.

The study uses a combination of textual analysis and critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how the advertisement constructs and conveys meaning. Research analysis has focused on the constructed gender roles through performances, the portrayal of care, kinship, love beyond biological definition of family, emotional storytelling and viewer impact. In parallel, CDA, as conceptualized by Fairclough (1995), is employed to identify the ideological and cultural structures that the ad reflects or resists. This dual-method approach allows for an in-depth examination of how language and visuals work together to normalize trans motherhood, question cisnormativity assumptions, and reframe care as a human—not gendered—act. Through thematic coding themes were identified such as emotional work, chosen family, and resistance to dominant social norms shaping the analysis.

The research has solely used the media content, there were no interviews and surveys conducted, however even though people were not involved, the researchers were careful and respectful in the way they talk about marginalized groups. The research is committed to treating the subject matter with sensitivity and respect, avoiding the reinforcement of stereotypes or appropriation of transgender experiences. By centering Shreegauri Sawant's publicly shared narrative and approaching the ad through a critical but respectful lens, the study ensures ethical engagement. All sources are properly cited, and the analysis adheres to academic standards of integrity, accuracy, and inclusivity.

This study acknowledges several limitations. First, the analysis is based on a single advertisement, which restricts the scope and generalizability of findings across the broader media landscape. Second, the interpretation is subjective because it is based on researchers' own analysis, not measured facts. Third, the absence of audience reception data limits insight into how diverse viewers perceive or respond to the advertisement. Fourth, although the research engages ethically with Sawant's public representation, it does not include direct perspectives from her or the wider transgender community. Last, since the ad is set in India, its cultural background many do not align with global experience of trans people. Despite these constraints, the study contributes valuable insights into how mainstream media can challenge gender norms and affirm queer kinship structures.

## **Analysis and Discussion**

### **Reframing Motherhood Beyond Biology**

Among the main purposes of the study, it will be discussed how the advertisement of Vicks product called the Touch of Care forms an opposition to the traditional understanding of gender roles and expectations of being mothers, which are usually heavily based on biological essentialism. The image of motherhood in the South Asian cultures historically represents the continuation of the reproductive role of women, the one that is traditionally performed by cisgender individuals. But, the advertisement upends this norm, as it featuring a transgender



lady, Shreegauri Sawant, as a rightful and affectionate mother. Gayatri, is the narrator who recalls,

*"Then one day, mom came along. She lovingly took me in her arms and into her home."*

This break is a strong one with biological determinism. Although Gauri never gave birth, she developed motherly instincts by choosing to play out the roles of care, support and protection. This is a direct reflection of the gender performativity theory of Judith Butler (1990) according to which identity, including maternal identity, is not based on anatomy but formed as a result of the repetition of the actions. The stereotypical motherhood is also overturned with emotionally pregnant scenes of the domestic life:

*"She sat by my side the whole night... In the morning, she gave me a beautiful red dress and made lots of chips for me."*

These unofficial rituals of care and expression of love are such performative indicators of motherhood. They reveal that the ability to be a mother is not DNA at all, but rather, prolonged emotional work. By juxtaposing not only the acts of motherhood with Gauri as a gender other than that of the cisgender woman, but the advertisement also destabilizes the assumption that motherhood has to be associated with the cisgender woman. In addition, the ad also discreetly criticizes strict gender roles by depicting how Gauri has lived through rejection of patriarchal society.

*"She was only 18 when her father threw her out of the house."*

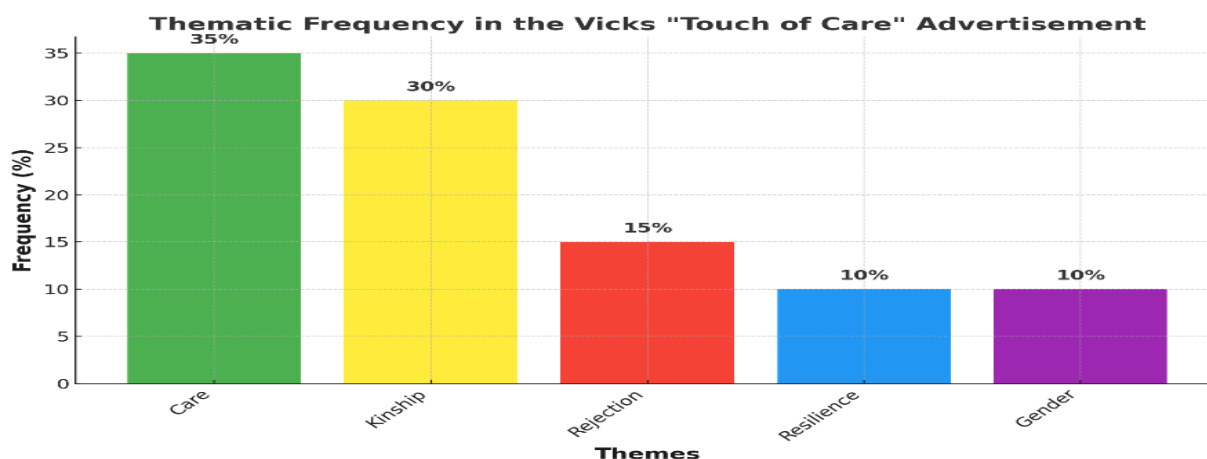
Instead of feeling disempowered through this dismissal, Gauri creates her self-concept of motherhood that is premised on strong spirit and nurturing. The same gender that can be regarded as a deviant in the mainstream is structured on what she is able to present as the strength in emotional attachment to parenting. This is because this both queers motherhood directly, presenting it as, instead of fixed and predetermined, fluid, self-chosen, and self-validating. The advertisement is crowned with the phrase:

*"Where there is care, there is family."*

It is an ideological and philosophical solution not simply reinforcing the normalcy of queer parenthood it is also a blow to heteronormative, reproductive unit of kinship, which has been the dominating ideology that has been shaping the cultural playbook of motherhood. Therefore, the advertisement does not just contravene a traditional gender role; it re-conceptualizes even the motherhood; it puts on its feet the motherhood ceasing it as an inevitability of biological destiny into a practice of social and emotional construction, which becomes powerful by choice, care, and persistence.

### **Queer Kinship and the Power of Chosen Family**

The advertisement by Vicks Touch of Care highlights a good story rebuilding the meaning of a family, as it is not the inherited affiliation already attached to the blood, but it is the product or the derivative of care, commitment, and emotional constitution. This is a direct answer to the research question of considering how selected family is prioritized on top of biological ones especially when biological acceptance is not always granted in situations of queer lives.



The Thematic Frequency Chart displays how the themes such as care (35%) and kinship (30%) prevail in the Vicks advertisement called a Touch of Care. It focuses on the fact that this advertisement as the one devoted to emotional relationships more than to biological ones promoting the concept of self-established family and breaking the usual definition of kinship.

Gayatri, the narrator, shares:

*"I have never seen my father. And my birth mother, she used to be sick all the time. I only remember that one day with her... some people took her away in an ambulance, and she never came back."*

This is a short but devastating emotional account of distance and loss in her birth relations, of an early alienation to a conventional familial existence. Stepping in this vacuum is Shreegauri Sawant, whose feelings towards Gayatri are not based on genetics but a certain constancy of care and love. It is separate to the queer theory of families we choose, proposed by Kath Weston (1991), in which the queer communities create families through similar values and support instead of blood relation. Gauri adopting Gayatri and bringing her up in love and routine is—

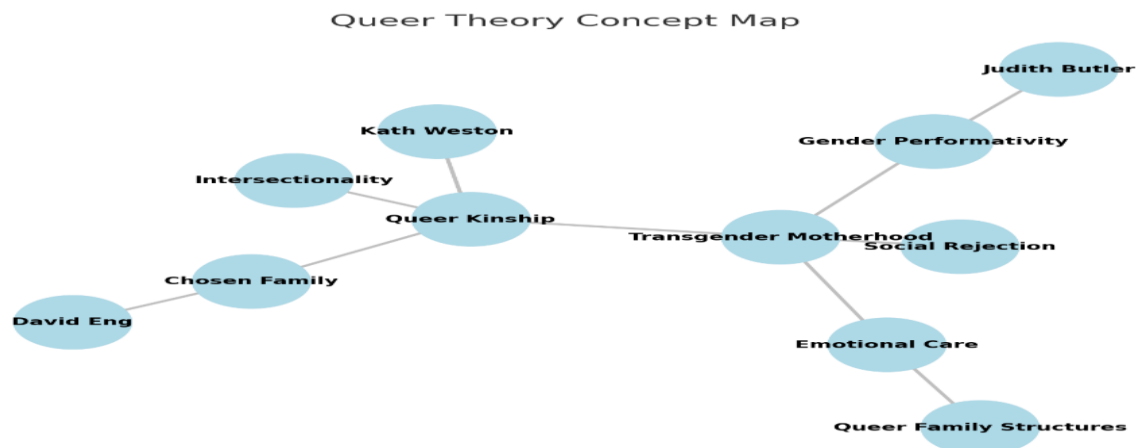
*"She lovingly took me in her arms and into her home."*

is a marker of the start of a queer kinship system whereby care is what forms a family.

In this ad, the part that Gauri plays is not performative as a desire to become recognized by this society and become visible, but it is highly relational and emotionally mutual. Gayatri recalls:

*"It's been ten years, and now she is more friend than mom."*

This line is a response to the growth of their connection out of the merely hierarchical parent-child relationship into the chosen intimate connection based on the mutual experience.



The Queer Theory Concept Map interconnects the following concepts and theories including gender performativity, queer kinship, and intersectionality with theorists including Judith Butler, Kath Weston, and David Eng. It ties these to the theme of transgender motherhood, chosen family, and emotional care shown in the Vicks advertisement called the touch of care, which provides a visual structure through which to examine how this advertisement relates to queer kinship.

The advertisement takes this relationship as genuine and legitimate and nullifies discourses that relegate non-biological parents and more specifically queer ones, as inferior or transitional parental figures. The phrase:

*"Where there is care, there is family."*

This is used as the tag line also as the theme resolution of the advertisement. It distills a queer ethic of care, legitimizing relationships not constructed according to the normative. Queer kinship, as David Eng (2010) insists, serves as a counterpoint to a heteronormative culture by envisioning a type of family relations that is inclusive, voluntary and emotionally authentic. The story of Gauri and Gayatri is a prime example of this potential in an Indian context, because family is sometimes such a strong symbol of what blood and tradition mean. Furthermore, the story is not only critical of biological essentialism, but also the laws and societal stigmas against transgender and queer people in attaining parental legitimacy. Whereas Gayatri considers Gauri as her real parent, the society as she puts it in words in her words,

*"My civics book says that everyone is entitled to basic rights. Then why is my mom denied them?"*

This moral truth has not here been quite caught up with. In this case, an underlying criticism of institutional refusal of legitimizing chosen families, the ones with transgender individuals in charge, is realized in the ad. With that, the advertisement is a discursive intervention where it normalizes chosen family, not only as a perceived emotional reality, but a practice of kinship that should be given space as a valid and politically timely object of desire.

### **Transgender Motherhood as Caregiving and Emotional Labor**

The little detail of a matter-of-course transgender motherhood in the Vicks Touch of Care advert is something which is neither exceptional or new, but much more valid and emotionally fulfilling form of caring and ensuring, caring and supporting, and meeting the familial needs. This section explores how Gauri Sawant's portrayal both affirms the maternal capacity of trans women and challenges narrow, biologically bound definitions of what it means to be a mother. Gayatri narrates:

*"She sat by my side the whole night... In the morning, she gave me a beautiful red dress and made lots of chips for me."*

This small yet profound moment captures the everyday, often invisible emotional labor that characterizes caregiving. Gauri is not performing motherhood to prove a point; she is living it—through late-night nurturing, cooking, and providing comfort. These acts are consistent with feminist definitions of mothering as a socially constructed and enacted role (Rich, 1976), emphasizing relational care over biology. Significantly, the advertisement does not sensationalize Gauri's transgender identity. Instead, it integrates her identity into her role as a mother—normalizing trans motherhood within the framework of love and commitment. This is in contrast to media tendencies to either erase or exoticize trans identities. Here, the focus remains on her capacity to care, which aligns with queer theoretical approaches that view gender roles—including motherhood—as performative rather than fixed or innate (Butler, 1990). Gayatri's reflection:

*"Now she is more friend than mom."*

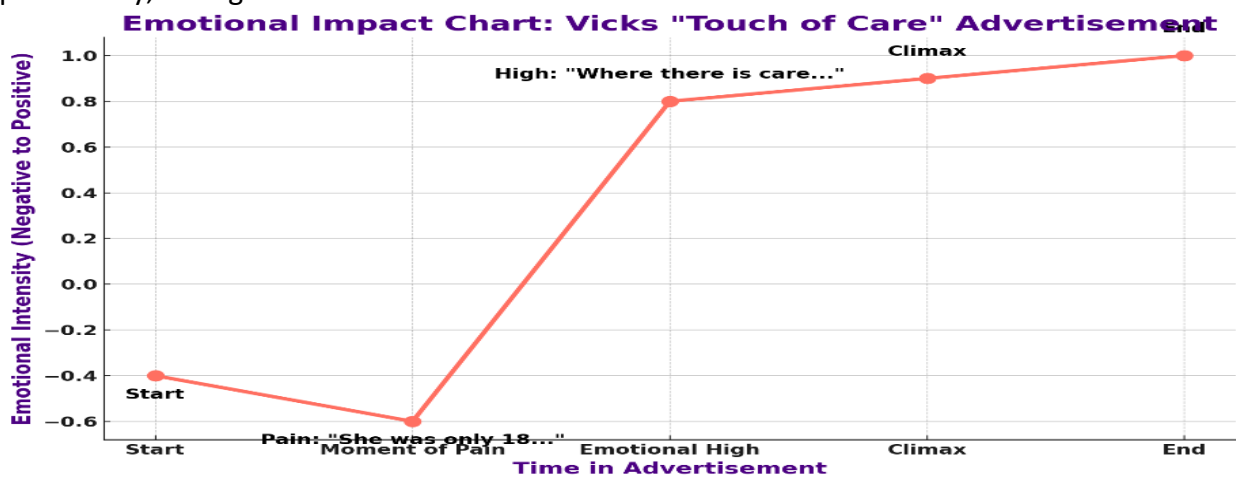
highlights the importance of the fact that their relationship is characterized by emotional intimacy and mutual caring instead of old hierarchies. By introducing this dynamic, the concept of who is considered a mother is expanded not only on the basic level of the premises that attribute the role of a mother to women but also on the level of assumption that a mother has to be a cisgender woman according to cisnormativity. According to Halberstam (2011), the forms of belonging can be breached by non-normative forms of identity and create new possibilities in the domain of family and space. Significantly, Gauri is presented with her trauma and resilience:

*"She was only 18 when her father threw her out of the house."*

This backstory gives the backstory a touch of emotions and shows why having Gauri Mother Gayatri is not only sympathetic but powerful in a political sense as trans women in India tend to face rejection by their family and this is strengthened by the backstory. She forms her own family structure that was refused her way, stability and love, despite framework marginalization. By talking about her fight and resilience, the advertisement confirms that transgender motherhood is not an ideal or something extraordinary, but it is real, a continuous process that needs attention and rights. This image actively works to make the maternal position rather queer, showing how caretaking may be represented by an individual that does not fit into cisnormative gender roles--and that love, but not gender, makes one a mother.

### Emotion as Narrative Strategy: Queer Family Structures and Audience Reception

The sentiment of the Vicks Touch of Care commercial is a keystone to its capacity to subvert prejudices and cause an empathetic reaction towards alternate family forms that do not match established norms. Instead of overt achievement or didactic content, the ad is based on evoking emotional responses to change the way of the viewers perceive queer kinship, particularly, transgender motherhood.



The Emotional Impact Chart is the representation of the emotional experience of the viewer of the Vicks Touch of Care advertisement that reveals the steppingstones of painful despair, heartwarming heart bond, and affirmation that evoke empathy and defy conventional perspectives of transgender motherhood.

The story is fully narrated by Gayatri, and the perspective of the story is the view of a child that is hugely invested in unconditional love and appreciation. At first it opens doors to the world of intimacy:

*"Mom is going to be disappointed with me. She thinks I am going to be a doctor."*

This initial line is the one that makes the audience dive into a common, global conflict: a child experiencing both affection and fear of parental expectations. The impact is staggering; it holds the viewer in a certain lure which is emotionally coaxing them towards a more profound and more intricate revelation.

As the story unfolds, the emotional layering deepens through vulnerable flashbacks:

*"I wasn't feeling well, so she sat by my side the whole night... In the morning, she gave me a beautiful red dress and made lots of chips for me."*

These scenes transcend culture to tell the story of trans motherhood not as a deviation or something odd, but something emotionally enriched and hugely human. This character's archetype will serve to subvert prevailing viewer biases by linking transgender care to a sense of intimacy, comfort, and belonging those qualities of the parent that are conventionally foundational to good parenthood in popular culture. Additionally, through the reflection of Gayatri, the ad contains an adverse message on the ideological basis:

*“My Civics book says that everyone is entitled to basic rights. Then why is my mom denied them?”*

Here, the emotional tone becomes overtly political. The child’s innocent question becomes an ethical provocation directed at the audience: if love and care define parenthood, why is legal and social recognition still denied to trans mothers? This moment effectively bridges personal emotion and public consciousness, asking the viewer to reconsider societal norms and legal frameworks surrounding family.

According to Ahmed (2004), emotion is not apolitical—its “sticks” to bodies, identities, and narratives, shaping public feeling and social response. In this ad, emotion is not a side effect; it is central to the political work of normalizing queer family life. Through pathos, the ad queers the viewer’s assumptions, shifting the terrain from unfamiliarity or discomfort to empathy and acceptance.

The final line—

*“Where there is care, there is family.”*

Encapsulates the ad’s central message. This tagline taps into a universal human ideal (care), thereby re-conceptualizing family in terms of emotional, not of kin-based, relationships, and (in effect) challenging the homophile model of kinship in terms of relational closeness, not biological definition or heteronormativity. Overall, the emotional story in the advertisement is not a storytelling instrument only, it is a tactical intervention. It elicits interpretation from the viewers, to reflect, and finally redesign the framework of their knowledge on who can become a parent, what are families and how love and caring defy the gender binary.

By undertaking a critical assessment of the Vicks ad (a Touch of Care), the chapter has been able to show how media can act as a strong location to recreate gender roles, motherhood, and family. The advertisement is thought-provoking since it uses the lived experience of a transgender mother to subvert biologically entrenched parenting norms as a way of reaffirming care as the definitive relationship to kin. Using queer theory thinking, the discussion has demonstrated how the use of emotional narration not only achieves the normalization of transgender as a person but also invites wider community acceptance of chosen families. The advertisement also uses motherhood as a cultural text, which transgresses the expected limits as it recontextualizes motherhood as a role that every person who nurtures, protects, and loves can perform- irrespective of the gender identity. These conclusions form the basis of wider discussions to applications on inclusiveness, media representation and the politics of recognition in the Indian society today.

## **Conclusion**

This paper examined the ways in which the 2017 advertisement by Vicks, Touch of Care, depicting Shreegauri Sawant, breaks the traditional representations of gender, maternity, and kinship in the mainstream Indian media. Under the queer theoretical approach, an examination was able to find that the ad subverts the biological deterministic and heteronormative definitions of care giving and kinship. Focusing on the account of a transwoman belonging to the adoptive family, the ad re-contextualizes motherhood as an active process of care and

responsibility, emotional labor (than a biological act). This re-definition does not only undermine the normative interpretation of motherhood but also empowers the transgender personalities in familial circles breaking the conventional stereotyped roles of transgender people as they are portrayed in Indian media.

One of the aspects of the study is the use of a chosen family in the ad and the similarity of the relations between Shreegauri Sawant and Gayatri is shown as emotionally true and more valuable than biological connections. This affirms even more on queer kinship builds, making the emotional connection and mutual healing more significant as the staple of family as opposed to blood or heterosexual marriage. The image of a trans woman in the advertisement in a maternal role of dignity and empowerment (driven by the character traits as resilience, compassion, and agency) goes against some of the prevailing media histrionics in the side lines of marginalization and misrepresentation of transgender people. In this way, it helps to change the attitudes of society to family structures outside the standard one and to create more understanding of different relationships among people.

The current study can greatly contribute to the studies of the spheres of media, gender, and queer cultural studies by explaining the concept of how mainstream advertising can be used as the sphere of ideological analysis and social revolution. It also builds upon academic discourse through an academic discourse to the popular culture and displays the power of the visual and emotional narrating to transform the opinion of populace. The study is also a part of the ever-increasing literature on transgender representation in the Indian media because it discussed the much-felt gap in positive representations of transgendered people, especially the theme of motherhood. By analyzing this emotionally stirring advertisement, the study breaks some of the conservative gender rules and disrupts the normal understanding of kinship bonding, the creativity of the media that can inspire inclusiveness, compassion, and social transformation.

### **Recommendations**

One of the issues that this work explains is the significance of extending media representation of the family to have non-traditional kinship forms and gender identities. Media industries, especially which of South Asia, should now be able to transcribe stereotypes to portray transgender and queer people in more diversified and respectful forms of characters. The presence of the Vicks advertisement of the Touch of Care is such a strong statement of how the traditional concept of motherhood and taking care can be redefined with the help of visual narration. The new media messages must be based on common themes of love, responsibility and the calling of the heart going beyond gender and family rules. Having transgender creators and consultants make contributions to the creation of the content will also contribute to authenticity and safe representation and create a more inclusive media field in the future.

Besides media image, it is crucial to take another look at legal institutions of adoption, the rights of parents, and families. The policy changes need to make transgender and queer people equally involved in adopting children, getting the legal parental rights, and receiving social welfare benefits. Traditional definitions of family have limited the legal protection of non-blood-related parenting relationships. The acknowledgment of non-blood-related parenting

relationships, hence the need to safeguard the bond between the families. These reforms would legitimize the legitimacy of the various models of family and give a legal basis to the numerous models of how families are being created nowadays.

Future studies must widen the purview of this study and review a larger section of other kinds of media e.g., television and electronic materials and films to determine how same gender identities and alternative kinship type can be represented cross-culturally. The comparison between different regions of the Global South may conduct useful knowledge regarding the connection between tradition, media, and identity. Further, the introduction of audience reception research, namely surveys, interviews or focus group, would give empirical information as to how these representations have affected the attitude of the masses and lead to some social change. Furthermore, the usage of intersectional approaches in analysis through which transgender motherhood is discussed in intersections between caste, class, religion, rural-urban gap would enrich the comprehension of representation and reception in the Indian context, as they would become more socially based.

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