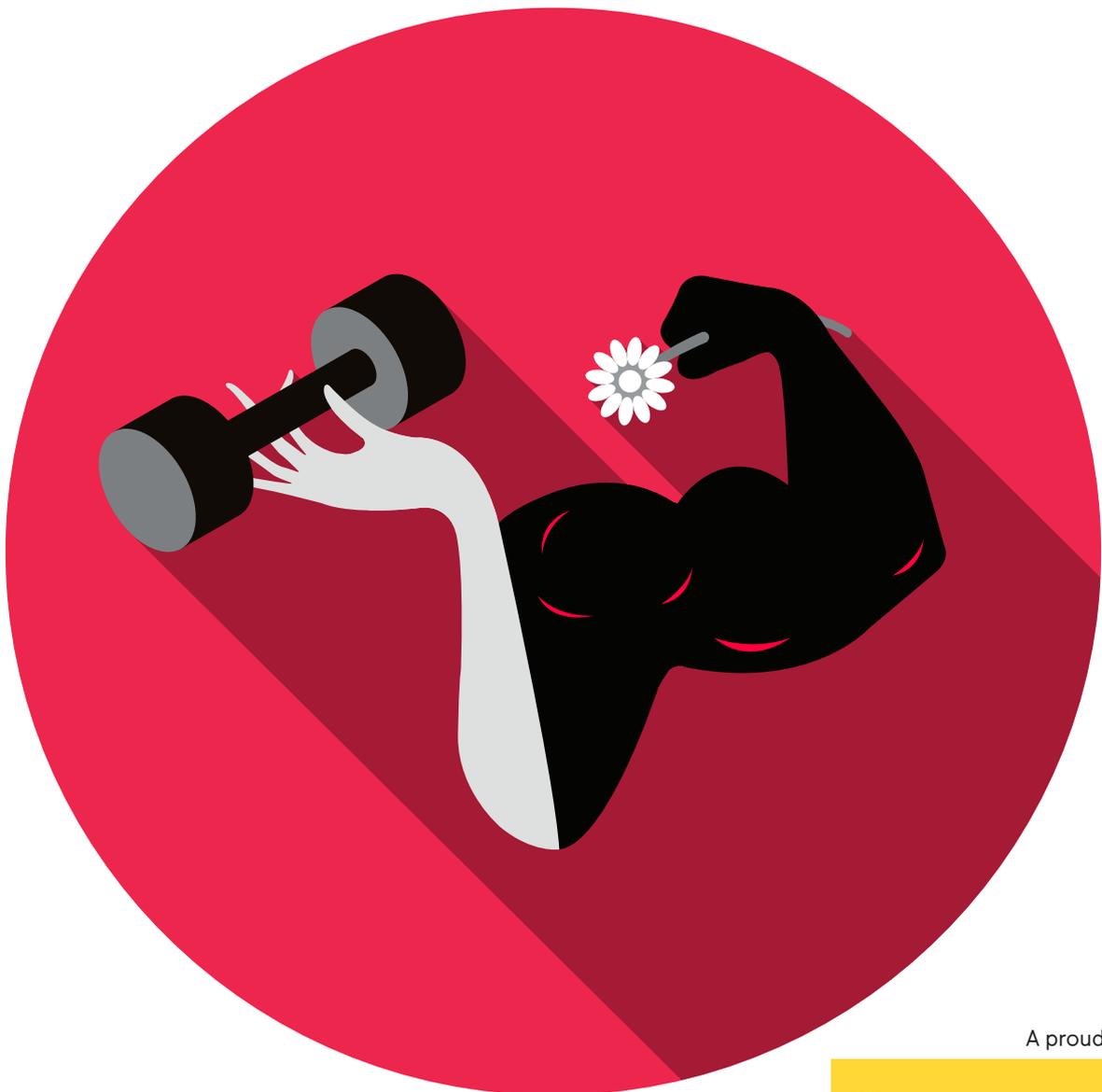


A guide to progressive gender portrayals in advertising

The case for unsterotyping ads



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#UNSTEREOTYPE
ALLIANCE



Contents

Introduction	3
Background: gender bias and representation in advertising	4
Why does this matter?	6
A social case for change	
Policy implications	8
A business case for change	10
An industry on the move	11
How to unsterotype ads	12
Lessons from some leading brands	14
Contagious case studies	16



“#LikeAGirl”, Always (Procter & Gamble), 2014

Sources: ¹ ANA, Alibaba, AT&T, Cannes Lions, Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, Diageo, Facebook, Google, IPA, Interpublic Group, J&J, Mars, Mattel, P&G, Publicis, The Female Quotient, Twitter, Unilever, WFA, WPP; ² Visit unstereotypealliance.org

Introduction

At the Cannes Lions Festival 2017, UN Women and a number of leading voices in the marketing and advertising industry including WFA,¹ founded the Unstereotype Alliance². The Alliance recognises that advertisers and creatives have the power to influence culture and society in a positive way through how people are portrayed in advertising and marketing. The initiative was born from the belief that we need a new, unprecedented agenda for the industry that breaks down outdated and harmful stereotypes about men and women and helps to create a world with unlimited possibilities. As part of WFA's commitment to the Alliance we have developed this short guide which we hope will build awareness for the movement among our corporate members around the world, our national advertiser associations in 60 countries on six continents and the tens of thousands of brands represented by them at local level.

"I wholeheartedly welcome WFA's efforts to help spread the message of the Unstereotype Alliance. We've started to see real progress but it doesn't yet go far enough or wide enough. Our job won't be done as long as ads still diminish or limit the role of women and men in society. I hope that this WFA guide can share knowledge and insights across global brand owners, and critically, to their 60 national advertiser associations so that they can see why this is no longer just a social imperative but a business one. This is exactly the kind of collective, cross-sector collaboration that is needed and which I hope leads to sustained transformation across our industry." -

Keith Weed, Chief Marketing and Communications Officer, Unilever

"We know that harmful stereotypes of both women and men have a deep impact on how we see and treat each other. Intentionally changing those images has huge potential to positively transform our culture and bring us closer to true, inclusive equality. UN Women applauds the work of WFA to bring this to life, redefining how the industry shows who people are, not just what they are. This change will help us to collectively realize the promise of the Sustainable Development Goals – to leave no one behind." -

Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women

This guide aims to illustrate how the advertising industry needs to move with the times in terms of gender portrayal in advertising. And it is not just "a nice to do". There are compelling social and policy-based reasons why the marketing industry needs to evolve. Critically, there is also a very compelling business case for why industry must act.

"We applaud the efforts of the WFA in helping to move forward the important goals of the Unstereotype Alliance. Taking on stereotypes in advertising is both an important and challenging effort that requires participation from many sectors including agencies, clients and trade groups. In order to make real change that will ultimately influence cultural norms and society's views, we need to commit resources and expertise to this key initiative. Like us, the WFA understands that the elimination of stereotypes in advertising is essential to successful and meaningful advertising and marketing."

- Michael Roth, Chairman and CEO, Interpublic

This is only the beginning of a global movement. But some industry leaders have already made great progress in terms of addressing gender portrayals in their own marketing communications.

They have also comprehensively researched and developed a strong understanding of how 'unstereotyping' – the use of messages that don't confine either gender to a traditional or limited role but instead show them as progressive and modern, authentic and multidimensional – can have both a positive impact on both society and on the company bottom line. It is our ambition as WFA to help gather insights and share best practices across the broader marketing industry.

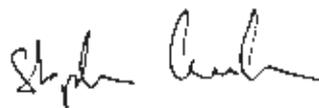
"Our industry needs to be brave enough to depict society in a realistic way rather than reinforce potentially harmful stereotypes. We're witnessing a broader movement; it's time for the marketing industry to play its part in promoting and reflecting diversity and equality in all its different facets and guises and at a global level."

- David Wheldon, CMO RBS and WFA President

Of course, addressing gender stereotypes is only the first step. Going forward, it is our ambition to address other dimensions of identity too. Gender stereotypes do not exist in a vacuum but are rather often intertwined with others around race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, class and education.

We welcome any comments you may have and will endeavour to incorporate your feedback into our next edition. In the meantime, I sincerely hope this inspires you to challenge yourselves and the status quo for the benefit of society, our industry and our businesses at large.

Yours sincerely,



Stephan Loerke
WFA CEO

Background: gender bias and representation in

The issue of gender equality has never been more in the spotlight in so many countries around the world. Initiatives such as #metoo, #timesup and #balancetonporc are symptomatic of a movement towards greater gender equality.

According to the World Bank³, over the past two years 87 legal changes towards gender equality have been made in 65 countries worldwide. In January 2018, Iceland became the first country in the world to make companies prove they are not paying women less than men for the same work. The UK, Denmark and Finland are taking similar measures. In March 2016, the US launched a “U.S. Global Strategy to Empower Adolescent Girls.” Today, there is an impending Equality Act⁴.

Real change is in the air. But is this a reflection of what’s going on in the advertising industry?

The ad industry has in the past been afflicted by age-old stereotypes perpetuated by series such as *Mad Men*, where male dominance is rife and women assume the role of subordinates in the workplace – an image reinforced by many of the ads that came out of Madison Avenue in the 1960s.

Today many of us witness – with no small degree of incredulity – compilations of misogynist ads from the 1940s, 50s and 60s⁵.

But are we conscious that many of the ads our industry produces today still communicate and reinforce, often in more subtle ways, those very same messages?

On the whole, the advertising industry has struggled to portray both women and men proportionally and realistically. We are still seeing women and men depicted in outdated, unacceptable ways, even if gender stereotypes are now often presented in a more subtle manner.

It is very clearly time to shed any anachronistic perceptions and for the industry to take a leading role to ensure that advertising has a positive rather than negative impact in terms of representing and promoting gender equality in society.

Research⁶ by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and J. Walter Thompson presented at the 2017 Cannes Lions found that 85% of women say film and advertising need to catch up with the real world.

The study, which is based on analysis of more than 2,000 English-language films from the Cannes Lions Archive from 2006 to 2016, with a focus on winning and shortlisted entries, also found no evidence of change between 2006 and 2017.

There are twice as many male actors in ads as female actors

- 25% of ads feature men only, while only 5% of ads feature women only;
- 18% of ads feature only male voices, while less than 3% of ads feature only female voices

Source: Gender Bias in Advertising. Research, Trends and New Visual Language



Women's March on 20 January, 2018 in San Francisco, California

Further analysis demonstrated that women were still clearly second best in more subtle but important ways. In the field of humour, for example, men were almost twice as likely to be funny as women; women were more likely to be objectified with one in 10 female actors shown in sexually revealing clothing – six times the number of male actors – and when it comes to intelligence, men are 62% more likely to be shown as smart (e.g. portrayal of inherently intelligent characters, such as a doctor).

Other measures on age, location and work followed a similar pattern, underlining the ongoing pervasiveness of gender inequality in advertising.

Similar issues have also been highlighted by Unilever, with 40% of women not relating at all to the women they see in ads, according to a year-long audit of the advertising industry in 2015.

Women don't identify with what they see in ads

- 30% felt that advertising shows women as perceived by men;
- Just 3% of women were portrayed as aspirational or in leadership positions;
- Only 0.03% of women were portrayed as funny; and
- Only 1% of women were portrayed as heroes or problem solvers

Source: Unilever CMI research studies



While women are clearly the most impacted group when it comes to gender bias, it affects men too. Many men are also often uncomfortable with the way they are portrayed. A study by fashion brand Jacamo⁷ found that 52% of UK men don't feel represented in ads.

Research by Unilever found that men were often limited to basic characteristics based on a stereotype of tough, rugged men who were highly heterosexual, homophobic and often aggressive.

Attitudes towards objectification, sexualisation and body image in advertising in the UK

ATTRACTIVENESS

Adults felt that adverts promoted a problematic message to society when they ridiculed those not considered to be stereotypically attractive. This was often conflated with a perceived lack of diversity in the types of people shown in adverts. Teen girls noted that whilst they were aware that images may be photo-shopped, the way that females looked in adverts could make people feel negatively about their own looks.

THE SEARCH FOR THE PERFECT BODY

UK adults felt that adverts often portrayed a perfect body or way to look. The more 'perfect' the body shown in an advert, the more participants felt that the advert could pressurise people to feel negatively about themselves, and want to change their own appearance.

OBJECTIFICATION AND SEXUALISATION

Adults generally felt more negatively towards adverts that were considered to objectify or sexualise. They also felt this approach was 'old-fashioned'. Whilst teen boys expressed some discomfort in discussing adverts showing men wearing few clothes in sexualised poses, teen girls were more overtly critical towards adverts that used nudity, feeling that this could create unrealistic expectations for how women behave and encourage young women to imitate this behaviour.

Source: UK Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) Depictions, Perceptions and Harm. A report on gender stereotypes in advertising, 2017

The truth is that gender bias still makes it to the screen, billboard and banner ad. The research underpins the need for initiatives such as the Unstereotype Alliance to transform the ads we still see in commercial breaks, in the street or while browsing the web.

Why does this matter?

The failure of the advertising industry to always reflect society matters for multiple reasons and has important consequences.

As many companies and industry initiatives are now showing, getting it right can lead to a competitive business advantage.

Research by major FMCG companies has found that as many as three in four women consider themselves the primary shopper in their household and that two thirds of consumer spending is controlled by women. Advertising that undermines or offends its core demographic not only defies good sense but can also prove counterproductive.

Furthermore, getting it wrong can result in consumer backlash and reputation loss that can be hard to overcome.



01

A social case for change

“Stereotypes reflect deep-rooted ideas of femininity and masculinity. Negative, diminished conceptions of women and girls are one of the greatest barriers for gender equality and we need to tackle and change those images wherever they appear. Advertising is a particularly powerful driver to change perceptions and impact social norms.” - Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women and Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations

In 2017, Science Magazine published a study⁸ looking at the age at which girls begin to think that they are less intellectually brilliant than boys. The researchers looked at 400 children from a variety of backgrounds and concluded that this perception starts to take root at the age of six.

The US study told two stories to children between the ages of five and seven. One, they explained, was about a “really, really smart” person; the other, a “really, really nice” one. Afterwards, the children were asked which story was about a girl, and which was about a boy. At five, the boys were sure the “really, really smart” character was a boy, and the girls were certain it must be a girl. By six, however, the girls had changed their minds. Over time, they became about 20% less likely to say that the person could be female.

The Unstereotype Alliance Manifesto states that “stereotypes are everywhere, we can’t escape them. It’s that unconscious bias we place on things before we even know it, that is why they can be harmful.” It’s that unconscious bias that lies at the root of the problem and which is so important to try and address.

A father and son are driving in a car and get into an accident. The father dies and the son is rushed into hospital. The surgeon sees the boy and says “I cannot operate, this is my son. Who’s the surgeon?”

A significant percentage of respondents do not think that the surgeon might be the boy’s mother on account of unconscious gender bias

The potential damage caused by gender stereotyping not just by the advertising industry but by media as a whole and society at large has long been recognised.

An Eurobarometer poll⁹ (November 2017) suggests that women were more likely than men to think there is a problem with the way women are presented in the media and advertising (59% vs 48%), and to feel that this problem needs to be addressed (45% vs 33%). More than four in 10 men think there is no problem, compared to one third of women (44% vs 33%).

Such findings are backed up by multiple other studies. Research for Dove highlights the pervasive impact that media portrayal can have on women. The Dove Global Beauty and Confidence Report 2016¹⁰ found that when women don't feel good about the way they look, nine out of 10 women and eight out of 10 girls will opt out of important life activities such as engaging with friends and loved ones.

The same report found that eight in 10 women and girls feel under pressure to never make mistakes or show weakness, while seven out of 10 women and girls believe media and advertising set an unrealistic standard of beauty most women can't achieve.

Additionally, seven in 10 women and girls wish the media did a better job of portraying women of diverse physical attractiveness.

Evidence is also emerging about how perceptions of modern masculinity are changing.

Canadian yoga apparel brand Lululemon surveyed more than 2,000 Americans to discover their attitudes towards masculinity. The results showed 24% of respondents had changed their view of masculinity over the past five years, 44% said society was now more open and accepting with regards masculinity, and 35% said being mentally strong is one of the biggest pressures facing men today¹¹.

Unilever's Man Box study¹², which looked at men in the US, UK and Mexico found that social pressure was influencing their ability to talk about their issues, their self-image and their behaviour.

Between 2015 and 2016, around a third of complaints considered by the UK's Advertising Standards Authority about the depiction of gender concerned problematic depictions of men¹³.

As these examples show, gender identity is changing, however advertising has probably not changed enough.

Reported social pressure to fit into the man box
Percentage of respondents who agree or strongly agree that "Society as a whole tells me that..."

	US	UK	Mexico
Pillar 1: Self-Sufficiency			
A man who talks a lot about his worries, fears, and problems shouldn't really get respect	57%	50%	38%
Men should figure out their personal problems on their own without asking others for help	66%	55%	49%
Pillar 2: Acting Tough			
A guy who doesn't fight back when others push him around is weak	68%	60%	55%
Guys should act strong even if they feel scared or nervous inside	75%	64%	59%
Pillar 3: Physical Attractiveness			
It is very hard for a man to be successful if he does not look good	64%	58%	56%
Women don't go for guys who fuss too much about their clothes, hair and skin	54%	46%	43%
A guy who spends a lot of time on his looks isn't very manly	55%	51%	49%
Pillar 4: Rigid Masculine Gender Roles			
It is not good for a boy to be taught how to cook, sew, clean the house, and take care of younger children	52%	46%	40%
A husband shouldn't have to do household chores	46%	45%	41%
Men should really be the ones to bring money home to provide for their families, not women	64%	56%	53%
Pillar 5: Heterosexuality and Homophobia			
A gay guy is not a "real man"	55%	49%	48%
Straight guys being friends with gay guys is totally fine and normal (positive statement)	58%	66%	56%
Pillar 6: Hypersexuality			
A "real man" should have as many sexual partners as he can	60%	51%	42%
A "real man" would never say no to sex	63%	55%	53%
Pillar 7: Aggression and Control			
Men should use violence to get respect, if necessary	51%	40%	36%
A man should always have the final say about decisions in his relationship or marriage	55%	46%	44%
If a guy has a girlfriend or wife, he deserves to know where she is all the time	56%	46%	44%

Sourced by WFA from The Man Box: A Study on Being a Young Man in the US, UK, and Mexico, March 2017

Why does this matter?

02

Policy implications

While a growing number of countries have legislated for equal pay, equal opportunity and against discrimination, harmful stereotypes across the media landscape, not just in advertising, make it harder to smash the cultural ceiling that is often placed on women.

Gender portrayal of women and men in advertising is something that has not been regulated until relatively recently. Many countries do have non-discriminatory provisions in place but the number of countries with more detailed guidance and rules remains relatively limited¹⁴.

The International Chamber of Commerce Code on Advertising and Marketing Communication Practice¹⁵, which, globally, forms the basis of local ad standards, stipulates that “marketing communications should respect human dignity and should not incite or condone any form of discrimination, including that based upon race, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation”.

Advertising standards bodies and industry self-regulatory organisations (SROs) are taking increasing action to ensure advertising respects healthy and progressive gender portrayal.

In Europe specifically, as early as 2008 the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), a network of 27 SROs and 14 industry bodies committed to effective advertising standards in Europe and beyond, highlighted that the industry must ensure that women and men are portrayed responsibly in advertising.

In a 2009 paper, EASA identified a number of sensitive matters in areas which appeared to have been the most problematic and therefore require attention. These include stereotypes of role (e.g. suggesting that household tasks are a ‘woman’s work’), nudity and sexual innuendo (blatant or gratuitous use of nudity in contexts where it has little or no relevance to the product advertised), exploitation as sex objects, denigration (when one sex is portrayed as generally inferior to the other), language and the use of specific features, such as humour.

A failure by industry to properly address the issues can lead to statutory regulations. Cities such as London have taken action to ban sexist advertising and are regulating outdoor much more closely. Paris recently took action¹⁶ after public outrage at Yves Saint Laurent ads that portrayed women in an apparently misogynist and humiliating way.

Other cities are also looking at similar steps, especially in Europe, following an initiative by the European Parliament calling for cities to sign a “charter of commitment against sexist advertising”¹⁷.

REGULATION		SELF-REGULATION		GUIDANCE	NO RULES
No gender discrimination in ads	Portrayal of gender in advertising	ICC code in full or as basis / or similar	Specific rules re. gender stereotypes	Gender stereotypes	
Belgium France Finland Greece Hungary Ireland UK	Norway Spain	Australia Bulgaria Finland France Greece Ireland Lithuania Luxembourg Portugal Romania Slovakia Slovenia Spain UK	Finland Ireland Germany India Italy Austria South Africa New Zealand	Belgium France Bulgaria Canada Sweden USA	Cyprus, The Czech Republic The Netherlands Turkey

Sourced by WFA from ASA's Depictions, Perceptions and Harm: A report on gender stereotypes in advertising, July 2017

The EU has published six reports¹⁸ in the last 10 years calling for action to combat sexist representations of people in media and advertising. The latest¹⁹, from March 2018, calls for action for more equal advertising, but also acknowledges that “advertising can be an effective tool in challenging stereotypes”.

In Australia, the advertising standards code of conduct was updated²⁰ in order to strengthen the rules on sexual appeal, prohibiting advertisements which could be seen to be exploitative or degrading.

In France, the advertising industry standards body (Autorité de Régulation Professionnelle de la Publicité – ARPP) developed a code to prevent any depiction or representation of men or women which do not respect “the dignity of the human person”.

But there is pressure to go further and a November 2017 report by the French broadcast watchdog (Conseil Supérieur de l’Audiovisuel – CSA), confirmed that too many stereotypes were still prevalent in ads. 82% of so-called experts in ads were males while women were still typically being sexualised²¹. This is why together with the CSA, the whole ad industry signed a charter in March by which they commit to take further actions to tackle stereotyped and sexist ads²².

Like many other self-regulatory organisations, the Swedes apply the general ICC rule against gender discrimination and include additional criteria about objectification and denigration. The local SRO organizes training for marketers on how to interpret the code twice a year and they claim to have witnessed a major evolution in how people are portrayed in ads. A lot of pressure remains however in a country which is extremely sensitive to gender stereotypes and where 50% of all complaints to the SRO are still about gender.

Political pressure is high – and increasingly so since regulators are starting to understand the economic gains that come from a society and an economy that is truly gender neutral are huge.

According to McKinsey²³, if women played identical roles to men in the labour force – employed at the same rate, for the same number of hours, in the same industry sectors – it would add up to US\$28 trillion, or 26%, to global GDP by 2025. This impact would be roughly equivalent to the size of the combined Chinese and US economies today!

However, regulating gender portrayal is tricky. Identifying a stereotype is a subjective exercise so developing detailed statutory rules can be hard to implement and enforce.

UK definitions of sexism

In the UK, the Committee for Advertising Practice (CAP) is currently trying to develop more specific rules and guidance about what needs to be done to avoid sexist ads. In the future, ads that deploy the following scenarios or similar might be found to be in breach of the codes:

- An ad which depicts family members creating a mess while a woman has sole responsibility for cleaning it up.
- An ad that suggests an activity is inappropriate for a girl because it is stereotypically associated with boys or vice versa.
- An ad that features a man trying and failing to undertake simple parental or household tasks.

Source: Advertising Standards Authority, Depictions, Perceptions and Harm. A report on gender stereotypes in advertising, 2017



Why does this matter?

03

A business case for change

Communication is the true outward expression of a company, its beliefs and its culture. Gender-neutral or gender-equal companies and brands are likely to benefit hugely from expressing progressive attitudes in their advertising.

Firstly, because when it comes to women, they make a huge number of purchase decisions, particularly when it comes to fast-moving consumer goods. According to Mars²⁴, not only are 70% of all brand purchasing decisions made by women but 75% of women identify themselves as the primary shopper for their household. Moreover, the World Economic Forum has identified²⁵ that 64% of all consumer spending is controlled by women.

Secondly, and more broadly, consumers are increasingly looking to companies to make a positive difference in society. Delivering a progressive, gender-neutral message is one clear way of meeting that demand.

At Unilever, they have seen a 25% more branded impact and engagement with their unстереotypical and progressive ads. This is not only a moral imperative, it's a business priority.

Research by the US-based ANA in the framework of their #SeeHer initiative found that brands that deliver progressive ads have been shown to be associated with a higher purchase intent of more than 25% for all consumers and 45% for women only²⁶.

Finally, the offshoot of getting it wrong can be detrimental to brand reputation. In an ultra-connected world where consumers voice their opinions on brands around the clock on social media, a poorly-thought through, 'tone deaf' campaign can have a negative long-term impact on a brand's reputation.

Brands under fire

- Controversial US retailer American Apparel has not only regularly broken advertising rules for using exploitative images of young women, but has also come under fire after asking its employees to wear t-shirts and button pins which read 'ask me to take it all off' during the store's Black Friday sales. In 2017, the brand announced that it is shutting down all US stores.
- Protein World's controversial "beach body ready" campaign - the weight-loss ads featuring a bikini-clad model sparked a huge backlash over alleged "body shaming" including a protest in London's Hyde Park and a petition on Change.org that attracted more than 70,000 signatures.
- An Yves Saint Laurent campaign came under fire during Paris Fashion Week for promoting "porno chic," with ads that show an underweight model in fishnet tights opening her legs for the camera.
- In the UK, Gap Kids sparked fury after an advert referred to boys as 'scholars' and girls as 'social butterflies'.
- Bic was forced to apologise and quickly remove its #HappyWomensDay ad on Facebook in South Africa in 2015, after the tagline 'act like a lady, think like a man' caused social media outcry over its sexist undertones.
- In Singapore, Burger King ran a suggestive ad for something called the Super Seven Incher. The copy: "Fill your desire for something long, juicy and flame-grilled" and the suggestive image received significant negative press.

70% of all brand purchasing decisions are made by women

75% of women identify themselves as the primary shopper for their household

64% of all consumer spending is controlled by women

10

An industry on the move

The marketing industry is not standing still and a number of industry-wide initiatives are already under way.

A key element of the Unstereotype Alliance is that its members – which include leaders across business, technology and the creative industries – commit to developing progressive brand content in line with a set of principles that all participating organisations pledge to respect.



These principles include depicting people as empowered actors, refraining from objectifying people and portraying progressive and multi-dimensional, rather than vacuous, personalities.

The second element is that signatories pledge to create a workplace and business culture within the advertising industry where women are better represented and more involved in the creative process. Both objectives will be regularly monitored and progress will be reported on publicly.

In the US, the Association of National Advertisers-led #SeeHer has worked to demonstrate that gender representation is actively impacting ad effectiveness and business results.

Launched as an industry response to the White House's concerns about the under-representation of women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and medicine, the ambition is to see a 20% increase in the "accurate portrayal of all girls and women" in media by 2020²⁷.

The initiative builds on a potent, new, data-driven methodology, called the Gender Equality Measure (GEM), to identify and eliminate gender bias, which can be applied at all testing stages.

Taking a different approach and building on the global #MeToo and #TimesUp movements, the UK Advertising Association's #timeTo aims to take positive steps to stamp out sexual harassment in the industry²⁸. #timeTo will produce a best-practice Code of Behaviour for all companies to implement.

In parallel, many brands are realizing the business opportunity for companies that can demonstrate a real commitment to equality.

General Mills and HP²⁹ have both demanded greater diversity on their agency teams as a condition of winning business, with General Mills even going a step further³⁰ and stipulating that the competing agencies must be staffed with at least 50% women and 20% people of colour within their creative departments.

Cannes Lions and HP have launched a pilot mentoring programme aimed at building and strengthening diversity among creative talent in the advertising industry³¹. Called #MoreLikeMe, the initiative builds on HP's marketing diversity scorecard, which exists to support its roster of agencies to increase the number of women and people from ethnic minorities in creative and strategic roles.

This builds on previous initiatives at the Festival of Creativity, including the introduction of the Glass Lion: The Lion for Change, which has given an additional platform for those brands that get it right when addressing gender inequality or prejudice. The winner in 2017 was State Street Global Advisors Fearless Girl statue in New York.

A new category of campaigns has now emerged; on the female side these are referred to as 'brand feminism' or 'femvertising' – brands that sell empowerment to women – and on the male side the desire to develop campaigns that redefine modern masculinity as something in its own right rather than in opposition to female stereotypes.

A good example of this has been the new Axe/Lynx campaign Find Your Magic, which moves the brand away from decades of objectification. It urges men to ditch macho stereotypes and embrace a more enlightened version of masculinity instead. Axe has always been about attraction, and they haven't moved away from that. But they wanted to portray the genuine, relevant, modern world of attraction – the true magic that happens between two equals.

How to Unstereotype ads

There are a number of steps that marketers can take to improve the way they and their brands address the issue of gender. In order to get the advertisements right, these steps need to take into account both the creative but also the right processes that lead to better unsteretyped ads.

1 Encourage diversity in your teams

Stereotypes are often not just the product of lazy thinking but also cultural conditioning. By having diverse teams – both internally and externally – working on creative and brand issues stereotypes are more likely to be challenged during the development process and hopefully unconscious bias reduced. The end result should be a more powerful message based on a deep insight that resonates more effectively with the target audience.

HP's demand for a more diverse team to work on its account is an important step in the right direction. Ultimately the team that works on a brand should reflect the user and target base as they will be better positioned to spot opportunities and sensitivities.

ASK YOURSELF Does my internal team and partner team at my agencies reflect my target audience?

2 Track performance

Marketing is often about incremental gains and while everyone wants to see rapid progress across the board, consistent small steps from across the brand landscape will ensure we at least move in the right direction. #SeeHer's GEM approach or Geena Davis's research team both allow brands to use data to track gender approach as part of the pre-testing process. This allows brands to eliminate or improve elements that are likely to be damaging to their reputation before they are seen by the public.

ASK YOURSELF How am I able to track improvements in gender approach? Speak to your research partners to identify clear metrics that can be monitored. What is the representation of women versus men in our ads? Are we testing our ads with an equal number of men and women, etc.?

Brands getting it right



"Find Your Magic", Axe (Unilever), 2016



"6 Pack Band", Red Label (Hindustan Unilever), 2016



"Role Models", Barbie (Mattel), 2018

Sources: ³² The Guardian | Brewdog's pink 'beer for girls' criticised as marketing stunt, 6 Mar. 2018



Gaëlle Enganamouit for "Made of Black", Guinness Cameroon (Diageo), 2017



3 Find your purpose

The process by which brands can develop an authentic purpose, that's to say trying to uncover the underlying truth or thing that your brand stands for involves challenging many of the same issues and thoughts that can lead to damaging gender messages. Think Always #likeagirl, Dove's Campaign for Real Beauty or GoldieBlox's empowering girls to problem solving. By working through the strategic process to identify where your brand can make a real difference to its supply chain, consumers or workers, you will be able to identify the structural challenges that stop your brand embracing and celebrating diversity.

ASK YOURSELF What does my brand stand for that benefits both men and women?

4 Think long-term

We live in a cynical age and as Brewdog recently discovered with its 'pink beer for girls' in the UK³², simply launching a campaign that has its heart in the right place is not enough. Campaigners and consumers want to see real commitment that goes beyond a single message or a particular day. If you are clearly investing time and money in doing the right thing and can point to clear improvements you are more likely to avoid the hubris that can come with any mistakes. That's what will differentiate a progressive brand from a brand with a progressive one-off campaign.

ASK YOURSELF Where do we want to be in the next three years on gender diversity and proper representation and build an action plan for improvement.

5 Go beyond marketing

Ultimately taking action on gender requires company-wide change not just small tweaks to the process. Getting this right means establishing a culture that is gender aware both for people internally and for external messaging. It's no good having great marketing if your company is being castigated for failure to act on equal pay or poor professional development. And even if you're doing great on gender-sensitive marketing, your efforts will be undermined if you ignore the other aspects of diversity (e.g. race, national origin, religion, age, disability or sexual orientation). Increasingly these measures should run right through the whole value chain so you will also need to tackle suppliers too.

ASK YOURSELF How can I promote more positive, diverse portrayals of men and women internally and among suppliers?

Lessons from some leading brands



J&J: Getting the whole company inside

Sylvia Lin, Marketing Director, Global Beauty Franchise Organization

“Johnson & Johnson Consumer has been implementing GEM scores into our advertising testing over the last nine months and we’ve learned that the main drivers of positive gender portrayal are very similar to the positive drivers of any good creative content: relevance and authenticity. That said, context is everything. Gender stereotyping codes are very culturally-driven so as a Consumer company with brands sold in over 140 countries, we have to be extra vigilant about local executions of global marketing campaigns.

Our Global Strategic Insights and Analytics team is training all of our regional partners around the world on GEM scoring, and in 2018 we will start reporting out the results internally every quarter. The plan is to extend GEM training to our marketing counterparts and agency partners. It’s crucial to ensure that all colleagues are attuned to the issue of gender stereotypes, especially those who are funding, testing or creating communications.

We have also developed resources on combatting Unconscious Bias in the workplace with a renowned Harvard professor. You can’t fight stereotypes in advertising without addressing the reality that the same issue exists within other spheres, including our own offices - and raising employee awareness is an important first step. In addition to conducting in-person training sessions for our people managers since 2016, this year we also rolled out online Unconscious Bias modules for all our employees around the world.

These two initiatives fit alongside others that ladder up to the same greater goal: ensuring that our consumers and our employees feel heard when they speak up, and see their true, best selves represented in everything we do.”

“We are strongest as an industry when we come together, as the Unstereotype Alliance demonstrates. This great work by WFA is an invaluable resource for all of us: from the junior marketer who wants to support the cause but isn’t sure how to get started, to the C-suite leader who has already given the green light to empowering ad campaigns and is ready to push the envelope even further. We’re in the middle of a cultural moment when real change is possible – and these guidelines from the WFA offer a clear roadmap of the intentional, inclusive actions that need to be taken if we truly want to make gender stereotypes in advertising a thing of the past.”

- Alison Lewis, CMO, Johnson & Johnson Consumer



UNILEVER: Part of our purpose

Aline Santos, EVP Global Marketing and Head of Diversity and Inclusion

“Unstereotype is part of our business strategy, our vision and our purpose: it’s not an ad hoc project or a few campaigns, it’s rather a systemic approach deployed throughout the whole organization and integrated by all brands, marketing teams as well as agency partners.

It’s both the right thing to do and good for business so it has huge buy-in from teams worldwide. All this has led to major concrete positive change - we’ve measured an uptick of 24% in terms of progressive ads between 2016 and 2017.

Our plans to advance portrayals of gender in ads address three key areas; role, personality and appearance. Roles should more broadly represent aspirations and wider achievements beyond product-related responsibilities. Personalities depicted should shift to become more authentic and three-dimensional. Appearance should be presented as enjoyable and non-critical, creating a positive and creative interest in being whoever you want to be.

This is why 100% of our pre-tested ads are assessed through the prism of Unstereotype – the role, appearance and personality of people in our communications. We have seen 25% more branded impact and engagement with our progressive ads.

We are also not only approaching this from a pure gender perspective, but also the intersectionality of gender stereotypes with others stereotypes around race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and religion.

We are on a journey to create a major shift in portrayals of people across our 400+ brands in all markets where we operate. There is no one-size-fits all. We recognise the diversity of male and female identity by market based on social and cultural influences and for our brands to continue to be relevant, we need to portray this in our communications. Though the creative output itself may differ from market to market, our approach is designed to work on a global scale. Our brands and advertising always have to reflect the needs and cultural differences of local consumers, and this is no different. The framework we’ve set out for our brands stimulates progress and is flexible enough to reflect the lives of local consumers.”



DIAGEO: Much more than marketing

Grainne Wafer,
Global Brand Director,
Baileys

Addressing gender stereotypes in advertising is just one part of the Diageo business strategy which is based, among other things on addressing gender equality and diversity in our workplace and in society. Fifty percent of our board, 40% of our executive team and 40% of the senior marketing community are women. As advertisers, we have the power to normalise gender and diversity through who we choose to show in our work, and how we choose to produce them.

There is a strong belief that this is genuinely good for business. In practice, this leads to natural engagement by employees, including marketers. The advertising industry broadly needs more female representation and that's why Diageo supports the Free the Bid initiative guaranteeing

women directors an equal opportunity to bid on commercial jobs in the advertising world.

We need to make the unconscious bias conscious; raising awareness internally about the need to identify and avoid unconscious gender bias is crucial to making a substantive difference. It's not easy and not always consensual, but it's very important to take a step back, and have the debate to help us reflect and understand our own unconscious bias. After a thorough semiotic analysis of all our ads, a dedicated training programme has been put in place in order help the 1200 marketers in Diageo understand and address the issue of unconscious bias as we create work.

We also need to measure our progress and now include measures to pre-test for progressive gender portrayal in our consumer research for advertising development. Three campaigns have already been tracked in this way. This allows us to track over time how we are improving, but also enables us to look at the interconnectivity between progressive gender portrayal and the overall strength performance of the work which will be captured in an annual audit internally to inform further learning.”



Tabitha Wambui for “Made of Black”, Guinness Cameroon (Diageo), 2017

BRAND FEMINISM / We've broken down two ways in which brands are tackling feminism in their advertising: by empowering women and girls with positive messages and demonstrating gender inequality in society.

Empowering women and girls /

A range of brands are encouraging girls and women to develop a positive self-image through their communications. These brands encourage girls and women to take a pride in themselves and not let societal pressure stand in the way of personal progress. Examples include: Dove (Real Beauty), Under Armour (I Will What I Want), Sport England (This Girl Can), Verizon (Inspire Her Mind).

Kenzo / **My Mutant Brain**

Luxury brand creates a cinematic short film to promote its latest fragrance, sets new standard for beauty advertising

Fashion company Kenzo created an arresting campaign to promote its new fragrance Kenzo World. My Mutant Brain sees the Kenzo girl (played by model, actress and ballerina Margaret Qualley) escaping from a boring black-tie event and breaking into a crazy dance around the venue.

RESULTS / The campaign gained more than 10 million views, reaching a viral status.

INSIGHT / Ads for fragrances tend to follow a tested but tired narrative: a woman (or man) wearing the perfume in an extremely glamorous situation. The luxury lifestyle is backed up by classical music and the ad finishes with a voice whispering the product's name softly. So much so that Saturday Night Live has a history of parodying them.

Kenzo's first perfume ad is the antidote to these stereotypes and shows that representing women as fearless, fun and brave resonates with its audience (and their wallets). 'When we think about perfume campaigns, we think about a pretty girl with a bottle,' the film's star – Qualley – said in a statement. 'This clip is exactly the opposite. It's very multifaceted and different; it takes the spectator by surprise.'



REI / The Level Playing Field

Outdoor retailer seeks to advance gender equality with series of long-term pledges

In 2017, US co-operative REI encouraged its members to make the great outdoors 'the world's largest level playing field' by committing to programmes championing gender equality. Initiatives ranged from creating new apparel to supporting non-profits that create opportunities for women outdoors.

The Force of Nature campaign put women at the centre of all of REI's storytelling efforts for the rest of the year. This included all marketing, social and media partnerships, and activity. It committed \$1m to support organisations that provide opportunities for women in the great outdoors and invested in companies that are creating world-class outdoor gear for women. Finally it launched more than 1,000 events to get women active.

RESULTS / According to REI, the campaign attracted more than 341 million media impressions, and 45 million social media impressions.



INSIGHT / There are two specific elements that make this initiative so compelling: long-termism and transparency. By investing time, money and resources into championing this cause, REI can gain momentum as the campaign matures, rather than have to find another cause to get behind. Coupled with this is the level of

transparency that REI displays throughout the campaign. The company proudly states that it has been championing women's rights for eight decades, that women hold 40% of all senior leadership roles in the company and one third of the board of directors are women. This reinforces the idea that the way REI is run backs up the messaging.

Barbie / Blonde Ambition

How Mattel set out to demonstrate the doll's relevance by embracing female empowerment and diversity



After 57 years and over 1 billion units sold, the world's most iconic doll was in dire need of a makeover. Mattel felt Barbie was losing her appeal among a new generation of parents and therefore decided it was time to move past the luxurious but vapid lifestyle the 11.5-inch doll had been living for years.

This is when Mattel decided to expand the Barbie Fashionistas line in 2015 and 2016, by making it easier for girls to find a doll that looked just like them and, crucially, made Barbie inclusive and relevant in a 21st-century, multicultural world. The 33 new models of the 2016 line came with 30 possible hair colours, 24 hair styles, 22 eye colours, 14 face sculpts and seven skin tones. But most striking of all, girls have the option

of playing with a Barbie with a little more meat on her. After years of being criticised for promoting an unhealthy body image, the doll finally has a fuller figure. Now, Barbie is available in a 'curvy', as well as a 'tall', 'petite' and 'original' body type.

Barbie is not only making its toys more inclusive, it is also becoming more inclusive in the targeting of its audience: after featuring a boy in an online video for a collectible Moschino Barbie in 2015, in 2017 it started reaching out to dads too.

INSIGHT / The combination of an empowering marketing message, backed by products bringing this message to life, has helped Barbie have much more resonance as a brand.

Demonstrating gender inequality in society /

A few brands have taken it upon themselves to point out some uncomfortable truths with a view to prompting behavioural change. Examples include UN Women (Autocomplete Truth), Always (Like A Girl), Pantene (Labels Against Women).

SK-II / Marriage market takeover

Cosmetics brand creates online film to empower and celebrate single women in China

Many women in China face enormous pressure to marry young. In fact, if they are not married by the age of 27, they are labelled 'leftover women' (Sheng Nu). In a bid to see their offspring coupled-off, many families advertise their single daughters and sons in outdoor marriage markets.

Skin care brand SK-II has decided to stand up for leftover women with a campaign called Marriage Market Takeover, which included an online film showing the

pressure that the single women face from their families. To help get this message across to their parents, it also orchestrated a take-over of the famous marriage market in Shanghai's People's Park. Instead of notices attracting potential suitors, the brand exhibited photographs of the single women accompanied with messages such as, 'Even if I'm alone, I will be happy, confident and have a good life,' and 'I want to take time to find the right person.' The film then depicts the parents' emotional reactions to these posters.

INSIGHT / Even though the subjects of the film are Chinese, they are dealing with pressures that women across the world can identify with, which is why this content has the potential to appeal beyond China's borders. In just one week the online video was viewed more than 1.7 million times on YouTube, even though the platform is unavailable in China. As a Japanese brand, available across the world, SK-II has a vested interest in creating content that makes it stand out globally.



Godiva / One for me, none for you

Confectionery brand calls for an end to the Japanese custom of giving ‘obligation chocolates’ to colleagues on Valentine’s Day



On Valentine’s Day in Japan women are expected to give gifts not only to their boyfriends or husbands, but also to their co-workers. The treats gifted to colleagues are called giri choco, which means ‘obligation chocolate’. The tradition is a way of saying thank you and maintaining good work relationships.

To address the issue, in 2018 Belgian chocolate brand Godiva ran a full-page print ad asking executives to excuse their female staff from buying giri choco. The copy states that chocolates should be bought for loved ones and gifted to express love and affection, not to maintain good office manners.

INSIGHT / For a chocolate brand to urge people not to buy chocolate, especially at a time when sales increase significantly, is a bold move. However, the Godiva ad is likely to be much more memorable than a standard Valentine’s Day campaign. A number of national and international media picked up the story.

Semcon / Re-search

Browser extension combats gender stereotypes in online search results

Semcon, a product development company, developed a browser extension to help prevent gender bias in image search results. Re-Search kicks in when a user performs an image search for certain professions, performing a parallel search for images that feature people of the sex less well represented in that profession and displaying the results in parallel windows.

RESULTS / The extension was downloaded 1,500 times and that 300 suggestions for new professions to be added had been submitted. In the first two weeks of the campaign, traffic to Semcon’s website increased 400%. The company also says that employee engagement reached an all-time high in the wake of the campaign.

INSIGHT / Semcon’s browser takes inspiration from the quote, attributed to children’s rights campaigner Marian Wright Edelman, that ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’. If image searches don’t show a diverse range of people performing jobs, then the imbalance within these professions is unlikely to change.

Semcon’s angle is that it needs more women in the male-dominated field of engineering because a more diverse workforce would improve its output. And by generating news stories about Re-Search, Semcon can push this message to any women in engineering looking for a job, and let them know that they would be valued at the company.



MODERN MASCULINITY / As ‘toxic masculinity’ is increasingly challenged and discussed in culture at large, the scrutiny that is more commonly being applied to women in ads is finally fixing its gaze on the depiction of men.

Celebrating more diverse masculine identities /

Brands are taking down such male stereotypes by celebrating more diverse masculine identities and championing behaviours that traditionally lie outside the ‘man box’.

Lululemon / Modern menswear

Canadian yoga apparel brand reaches out to men with stereotype-busting ad campaign

Lululemon’s first campaign for a male audience told stories of men who defy gender stereotypes. It comprised five online films about men that don’t conform to traditional male stereotypes: John Joseph, lead singer of the Cro-Mags and a vegan chef; Ibn Ali Miller, who has used his internet fame to spread messages of non-violence; Ojay Morgan, a hip-hop artist who is influenced by LGBT African American ball culture; Mark Healey, a surfer and advocate

for the environment; and Orlando Cruz, the first openly gay professional boxer.

The films were ‘about celebrating the growing community of men living life as their true selves and representing their own definitions of masculinity and strength.’ They did not promote specific products but the campaign coincides with Lululemon releasing an expanded range of its ABC (anti ball-crushing) trousers.

INSIGHT / Changes in attitudes to masculinity are compelling advertisers to rethink how they portray men, just as feminism is transforming gender dynamics in marketing. Lululemon is a natural fit for a campaign dissembling traditional gender roles, since men who cling rigidly to historical gender roles may be reluctant to buy clothes from a brand known for making women’s yoga wear.



Championing behaviors that traditionally lie outside the ‘man box’ /

As well as supporting the idea that men can choose their own identities, brands are also championing behaviours that are not traditionally ‘masculine’. These range from behaviours that go against ‘lad culture’, such as showing emotions, to those that involve talking on traditional women’s roles in the home. Examples include Topman, Sleek, Hims, Dove, Pantene, Ariel.

Ariel / Dads #sharetheload

How a detergent brand increased sales in India by 76% by encouraging progressive gender roles



In 2016, Ariel launched an emotional online film in India challenging the fact that women do more housework. Dads #ShareTheLoad followed on from the P&G laundry detergent brand’s 2015 #ShareTheLoad campaign, which flagged up that despite most Indian women now working, they still bear the brunt of household chores, including laundry.

In the 2016 film, we see a mother racing

around her home answering calls, dressing her children and tidying up while her husband sits on the sofa. Her father is watching her and appears to notice the inequality of the situation for the first time. He writes his daughter a letter of apology, saying, ‘I never helped your mum either and what you saw you learnt... Sorry on behalf of every dad who set the wrong example.’ He then vows to start helping

his own wife with the chores.

INSIGHT / The detergent category is full of brands pledging that they will get your whites brighter than the next leading brand. Ariel has shunned those old category norms and opened up a conversational platform around gender equality in the home. This potentially gives it much more to talk about on an ongoing basis.

Axe / Scent of a man

How Axe reinvented itself in order to appeal to the modern man

The so-called Axe Effect marketing strategy, devised by agency BBH in the mid-90s, propelled the Unilever personal care brand to become the number one men's fragrance in the world but by 2009 growth and equity were falling.

A key insight was that advances in female empowerment had significantly altered the 'mating game'. 'It used to be about conquest,' said Rik Strubel, global VP for Axe. 'Now it's about connection. We understood that something was out of

touch that we needed to address.'

Recognising that its messaging was out of step with how real men were feeling, Axe radically overhauled its communications and Find Your Magic was born. The message was no longer 'it's in the can' but rather 'it's in you'.

Axe introduced its new positioning as a 60-second film in January 2016 and then followed up by airing a 30-second version in the most testosterone-infused context

imaginable: the 2016 Super Bowl. Amid commercials for beer and razors, Axe unleashed a rallying cry for guys to find their own personal unique selling proposition.

RESULTS / According to the brand, the campaign has improved sales, moved purchase consideration by 25% and increased overall positive sentiment from around 15% to 41%. The film has been viewed more than 39 million times online and the campaign has garnered more than 4 billion media impressions.



BRANDS ‘RISING FROM THE ASHES’ /

Many brands have been on the receiving end of public criticism and have had to reinvent their advertising from top to bottom in order to stay relevant.

Moving away from a “sex sells” mindset /

Some brands have been able to reinvent themselves in an authentic way and move away from the sexist advertising that they formerly embraced.

Skol / Reposter

Brazilian beer brand Skol enlisted six female artists to rework its old sexist ads and create new marketing assets for the brand, showcasing women as strong and independent

The project encourages the public to alert the brand if they see one of its old adverts. Once they do, the company swaps them for the new ones. People can find more information about the artists on the campaign’s dedicated hub and even submit their own artwork and illustrations.

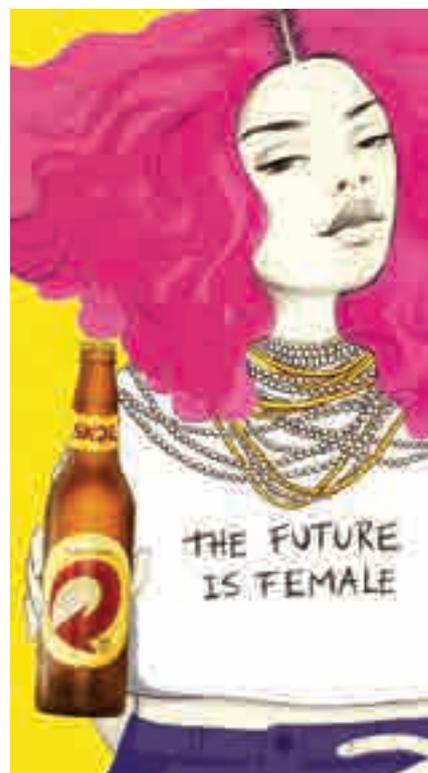
RESULTS / The agency reports that, so far, the campaign has resulted in 92% ROI. The campaign video has amassed 3.9 million views and generated 86% positive comments.

INSIGHT / While aligning your brand with feminism is a ‘safe’ purpose to adopt – it’s not an issue that people would argue against – if this change in messaging doesn’t appear to be

authentic, consumers will see this just as an easy marketing tactic.

So rather than change all of its marketing messages from sexist to feminist overnight and risk appearing disingenuous, the brand admits its sexist past in a sincere way. This positions it as a company that has realised its past mistakes and truly wants to change for the better.

Having female artists at the heart of the project shows Skol as a brand that gives freedom to the consumer group it has objectified in the past. What’s more, by also getting customers involved to help clear its sexist past by reporting offensive ads, Skol is empowering the public to implement its new positioning.



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