BEYOND GENDER:

The Invisible Stereotypes

UN WOMEN

#UNSTEREOTYPE ALLIANCE

“Intersectionality means inclusion.”

- Poornima Sukumar

"Intersectionality means the way in which different dimensions of identity (race, gender, class, sexuality) position people differently in society and very often determine what type of discrimination/oppression they will experience in what we can call a matrix of domination."

- Professor Amanda Gouws

The conversation around gender has moved on. It is time to stop looking at gender bias in isolation, because this overlooks the highly complex and interconnected nature of social stereotypes. The concept of intersectionality alters the way we think about people, helping us to understand all the different dimensions of their identity, taking into account not only gender, but other vital factors such as race, class, language, education, appearance and sexuality.

The intersectional conversation allows us to view humans in the round, giving us a deeper understanding of the variety of privileges and/or forms of discrimination that they experience simultaneously at any moment in time. It reveals the multifaceted nature of people and the society they live in. This is important because, in the words of feminist writer and civil rights activist, Audre Lorde: "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives."

The UN Unstereotype Alliance has commissioned this research to discover more about the intersectional nature of stereotypes in three key nations: South Africa, Brazil and India. The findings, which are the result of speaking to 1,000 women and 1,000 men in each country, show that while there are cultural nuances, there is a commonality of experience: women and men are suffering discrimination due to myriad factors, of which gender is just one.

"We can't talk about the problems of all women as if women were a single group – instead, black women face different challenges than white women, lesbian women, or disabled women. And they in turn face different challenges than do straight women or women without disabilities. We have to think about people's whole, lived experiences at the intersection of many countervailing and complex forces", explains Professor Amy Erica Smith, leading expert in the intersection of gender and academia. She specialises in Latin America, in particular Brazil.

"Intersectionality blows up the myth of the average man."

- Dr. Deepa Narayan

There is an important role for advertising and media to play in this new intersectional conversation. It can reflect the stereotypes or it can reflect the complexity of individuals and their culture and communities. It can't make efforts to challenge, rather than reinforce, the stereotypes that can leave people feeling excluded, unrepresented, and invisible

STEREOTYPES IN SOUTH AFRICA

South Africa has a difficult history with discrimination based on race and, while the Apartheid system collapsed almost a quarter of a century ago, the country is still not free from a complex web of prejudices. The research found that eight out of 10 women (78%) in South Africa still feel unrepresented in society and this is particularly acute amongst women without children.

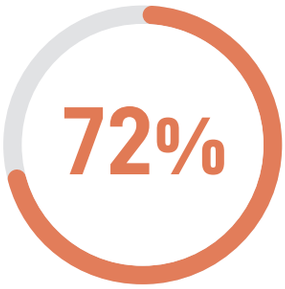
8 out 10 women in South Africa don't feel represented in society

This immediately illustrates the more complex nature of stereotypes, as it not just gender that prevents women from feeling fairly represented, it is also due to traditional expectations around motherhood. Women also feel constrained by the role society expects of them.
A third of women (31%) feel that society believes their place is in the home, while eight out 10 (80%) feel that single women are underrepresented and almost four in 10 (39%) believe that society expects them not to return to work after having a baby. While South African politics may have moved on, the evidence suggests that the media has been slow to catch up, as while half of white women feel they are fairly represented in the media (47%), only 19% of black women agree, falling to just 18% for younger women aged 18-34

"In South Africa the experiences of white women are often used as the norm, when it clearly does not pertain to black African women. Often in advertisements what is viewed as valuable and whose lives matter is those of white women",

explains Professor Amanda Gouws, an expert in South African politics and gender politics.

Black women are also trapped by perceptions around how they should behave as two thirds (66%) said that society expects them to be feminine, dutiful and obedient, with this figure rising to 72% for married black women.



72% OF MARRIED BLACK WOMEN BELIEVE SOCIETY EXPECTS THEM TO BE FEMININE, DUTIFUL AND OBEDIENT. COMPARED WITH JUST 58% OF SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN OVERALL.

Ideals of feminine beauty in advertising are also lagging behind the reality, with 68% of women believing that they are still portrayed as sexual objects, and over half (58%) saying that larger women are not represented. Again this disproportionately impacts black women with almost three quarters (68%) saying they believe women are portrayed as sexual objects and 62% believing larger figures are not represented.

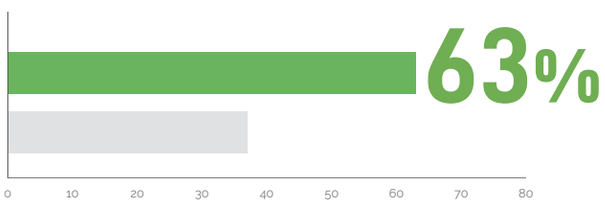
The statistics paint a picture of a society where women are still burdened by multiple, interconnected stereotypes. They still feel the pressure to conform to traditional norms of marriage and motherhood, while remaining dutiful to men, sexually attractive and slim, yet most feel this doesn't reflect who they really are.

DISCRIMINATION IN INDIA

There are strong parallels between the situation in India and that in South Africa, as there is still an emphasis on traditional roles for women and the same disconnect between how women feel and how they are represented in society. What is particularly worrying is that this is something that appears to be most keenly felt by the younger generation. While half of all women (53%) do not believe they are fairly represented this rises to to 55% amongst younger women aged 18-34.

Traditional expectations around marriage and gender roles do not appear to be shifting either. Almost two thirds (62%) of younger, unmarried women feel underrepresented, while half (51%) of younger married women feel under pressure to stay at home, as opposed to 44% of women as a whole.

Indian women may feel the expectation to stay at home, but this realm is still under male control and 63% say that women are still taught to accept a man's domination.



63% OF INDIAN WOMEN AGREE THAT THEY ARE STILL TAUGHT TO ACCEPT MALE DOMINATION

Indian men agree with this perception and over half (59%) say that men and boys are taught to be dominant and controlling at work, and almost as many (56%) say this extends to the home.

WHEN IT COMES TO FEMALE BEAUTY 45% OF INDIAN WOMEN STILL BELIEVE SOCIETY PREFERS FOR LIGHTER SKIN

This helps to reveal interconnected stereotypes impacting on women's lives in India, with race, language, education and culture all playing their part.

"Girls and women in India have negative value except to serve patriarchy, to serve men and to maintain the power of men. They are not meant to exist and therefore are trained to minimise their existence.

Girls are meant to stay at home and look after husband, children and in-laws",

explains Dr. Deepa Narayan an independent international poverty, gender and development advisor.

When it comes to sexuality and beauty, the reality of Indian women's lives is equally underrepresented. Almost half (48%) report that women are not meant to take pleasure in sexual activities, rising to over half in ten (54%) mothers. And when it comes to beauty, 45% of women still believe society prefers for lighter rather than darker skin tones. More than half (58%) of women report that they believe society expects them to look like Bollywood actresses.

"In India, people have made an "ideal women" based on their skin tone and body type. This has majorly affected young teenagers' self-confidence, self-esteem, self-worth and has generated so much self-doubt. It leaves room for the men to abuse, tease, betray because of the body type, skin type which, in turn leads to being strictly gender binary in approach",

explains Poornima Sukumar, an activist and founder of the Aravani Art Project, which supports transgender inclusion.

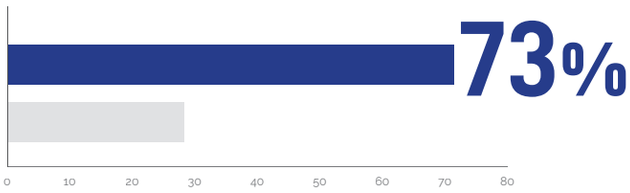
India is home to over 1.2 billion people, yet as a society there is still pressure for all of these people to conform to a traditional, narrow norm. This leaves women feeling disempowered and excluded. The media also plays a big part in this as almost three-quarters of women (73%) said they did not feel fairly represented in the media.
There is a clear role for advertising and media to play in breaking down these stereotypes and reflecting the billions of diverse individuals who make up the population of India.

"We should be portraying new possibilities of strong women and strong men."
- Dr. Deepa Narayan.

GENDER BIAS AND BEYOND IN BRAZIL

At 79% Brazil has the highest percentage of women who feel they're not fairly represented in society. This figure is even higher for single women, where 85% feel unrepresented. But unlike India and South Africa, this is felt most keenly in the workplace.

73% OF BRAZILIAN WOMEN DON'T FEEL FAIRLY REPRESENTED IN SENIOR LEADERSHIP POSITIONS



Career is a big part of self-esteem for Brazilian women as the majority don't feel fairly represented in senior leadership positions. Overall 73% of women agreed with this statement, rising higher still to 80% for black women and 82% for single black women.

"In Brazil women's representation in politics is very low, and women are underrepresented in many other professions, as well. Stereotypes regarding women's roles hurt women by leading them to avoid careers in politics and certain professions, and by leading others to discriminate against them," explains Amy Erica Smith.

Women may aspire to career success, but society is still putting them under pressure to live up to more traditional stereotypes too. Half of women (51%) agree that they are told to be dutiful and obedient, and this is particularly true for single black women as two thirds (63%) agreed with this statement. Over half of women (56%) also feel that they are perceived to be uncaring if they return to work after having children and again this is most keenly felt amongst young, black women, where 65% agree.

Women's behaviour is not the only aspect of their lives that is expected to conform to societal norms: their looks are judged too. Overall 39% of Brazilian women felt they were always expected to always look their best. As they grow older this figure rises and almost half (48%) of women over 35 felt this way, rising to over half (51%) if they are parents.

Body shape is a big issue in Brazil too, as 67% of women felt they were always shown to be curvy and are expected to show this off by wearing little clothing, rising to 71% for unmarried women and 75% for unmarried white women.

94% OF BLACK MOTHERS IN BRAZIL WOULD LIKE TO SEE WOMEN LIKE THEM BETTER REPRESENTED IN THE MEDIA

"When I think of Brazilian stereotypes the first thing that comes to mind is the objectification of women's bodies. Brazilian women are not just about Carnival, breasts or curves. We are intellectual, activists, entrepreneurs and empowered,"

declares Viviane Duarte, a journalist, marketing expert and founder of Girls Plan, which empowers young girls from Brazil's favelas.

As women say they want to see more inspiring professional role models at work, what they are receiving is messages about how they must conform as dutiful and beautiful homemakers. It should come as no surprise that eight out of 10 women (81%) said they would like to see people like them better represented in the media, rising to 92% for black women and a 94% for black mothers.

"For a long time, publicity has contributed to the invisibility of women, but the impact of campaigns will be more powerful and generate better results as soon as they stop making real people invisible. Consumers want to feel represented. If they don't brands begin to lose their good reputation and trust," says Viviane Duarte.

Of all the women surveyed, those in Brazil are the least satisfied with how they are portrayed in the media, particularly if they are not white. This reveals a gulf between their expectations and perceptions of what it means to be a woman in Brazil, and the expectations and representations of women in society and the media.

WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT

MORE THAN GENDER

Just as the conversation around gender has moved on, so has the advertising and media landscape. Where once it led culture, pushing boundaries and helping to form opinions, advertising and media now needs to adapt to stay one step ahead.

Social media has given voice to a kaleidoscope of different opinions, allowing even the most marginal groups in society an influential platform to express themselves. This has brought the complexity of both culture and individuals into sharp relief, but it has also laid down a challenge to global advertisers by revealing that one size can never fit all.

Advertisers and media have made progress in addressing gender bias and challenging societal norms, but the findings of this report show that there is a long way to go before women around the world feel that what they see on their screens, in magazines and newspapers and on billboards actually reflects and seeks to improve the complex reality of their lives.

It is not enough to think about how to appeal to the masses. It's time to develop a way to reach those people who don't tick all the boxes, whose experiences are under-represented or ignored by the media. If advertising fails to reflect the intersectional nature of human experience and to challenge stereotypes, there is a danger of reinforcing a damaging and restrictive idea of 'normality' that leaves millions of women feeling disenfranchised and excluded.

The women of South Africa, India and Brazil have made it clear that they don't feel they are accurately or authentically portrayed in the media or society. This is our call to action to shift the conversation beyond gender towards a genuine, nuanced, complicated and exciting discussion about the intersectional reality of modern life.

"Intersectionality means inclusion."
- Poornima Sukumar

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by specialist applied research company Edelman Intelligence. The study looked at a representative sample of women and men in Brazil, South Africa and India.

The purpose of this study was to explore and capture the views and attitudes of women and men across three markets to explore the impact of engrained stereotypes and behaviours, and to build up a picture of intersectionality. A key objective was to move beyond a one-dimensional view of men and women to the layered concept of intersectionality.

METHOD

An online survey in 3 markets
(Brazil, South Africa and India).

- Fieldwork dates: 1st June 2018 – 6th June 2018
- Survey length: 7 Minutes

SAMPLE

- 1000 men and 1000 women in each market.
- All men and women 18 years old+
- Representative of the online population in age, region, race, education, income

A DEFINITION OF INTERSECTIONALITY

A sociological theory describing multiple threats of discrimination when an individual's identity overlaps with minority classes & characteristics e.g. a white woman is penalized by her gender but has the advantage of race. A black woman is disadvantaged by her gender and her race. A Latina lesbian experiences discrimination because of her ethnicity, her gender and her sexual orientation.
We asked women and men the following characteristics to further define who they are and build an intersectional approach to how we see women and men.

1. **Religion**
2. **Ethnicity**
3. **Age**
4. **Relationships status**
5. **Parenthood**

WHO WE ARE

Edelman Intelligence is a global insight and analytics consultancy, and the strategic research arm of Edelman. We have 150+ experts, consultants and analysts from 11 EI offices across the Edelman network actively working in over 60 markets and collaborating with some of the largest and most admired companies in the world. We work side by side with our Edelman colleagues, supplementing their zeitgeist and cultural trends, as well as their expertise in creative, digital, planning, and influencer management with our expertise in quantitative, qualitative, and secondary research, media analysis, behavioural economics, social-listening, and digital and business analytics to solve the issues facing our clients.

NOTES

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