

STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

An assessment of progress in diversity, equity and inclusion across the global advertising industry.



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#UNSTEREOTYPE
ALLIANCE





Acknowledgments

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Definition of terms

This report refers to women and under-represented groups/individuals throughout.

Under-represented groups/individuals refers to groups/individuals that, currently and throughout history, have experienced various forms of inequality and discrimination. These groups/individuals tend to be under-represented in adverts and media in general. Groups mentioned in the report under this classification include, but are not limited to, people of colour, individuals part of the LGBTIQ+ community, individuals living with disabilities, and others.

Diversity is defined as “psychological, physical, and social differences that occur among any and all individuals; including but not limited to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, mental or physical ability, and learning styles. A diverse group, community, or organisation is one in which a variety of social and cultural characteristics exist.”¹

Equity is defined as “the guarantee of fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. The principle of equity acknowledges that there are historically underserved and underrepresented populations and that fairness regarding these unbalanced conditions is needed to assist equality in the provision of effective opportunities to all groups.”²

Inclusion is defined as “the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.”³

Executive Summary

Stereotypes permeate our everyday lives and, when left unchallenged, lead to deeply rooted societal inequalities. The advertising industry is a global ecosystem that influences how people see themselves and each other. Advertisers have a responsibility to produce unstereotyped content that portrays all individuals as authentic, multi-dimensional, progressive, and empowered. This is the focus of the Unstereotype Alliance, a global action platform convened by UN Women to eradicate harmful stereotypes from advertising and media content and leverage the industry as a force for good.

In June 2020, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women and Chair of the Unstereotype Alliance, and Stephan Loerke, CEO of

the World Federation of Advertisers (WFA), issued a clear and urgent call to the global advertising industry to hold itself to account for transparent and measurable change in the fight against racism and inequality.⁴

Pre-existing inequalities in the industry have been exacerbated amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and global calls for social justice have led agencies and brands to evaluate the levels of diversity and inclusion within workplaces, as well as diversity and progressive portrayals of women and under-represented individuals/groups within the content they produce. A year on, this report explores the progress made to date and identifies the gaps and opportunities to drive transformative change in the advertising industry.

Fostering workplace equality

Despite the strong business case for embedding diversity and inclusion within companies,⁵ findings indicate a lack of diversity across the advertising industry. In terms of racial and ethnic representation, across the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) members, individuals with ethnicities other than White make up only 26% of general membership, 12% of CMO positions, and 27% of senior leadership positions.⁶ Findings from the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA) indicate that among member agencies in the UK, racial and ethnic diversity has increased at the C-Suite level, however representation remains low, with individuals from non-white backgrounds making up just 6.4% of positions in 2020.⁷

The representation of women across the industry remains low, exacerbated by COVID-19. Mexico's advertising industry highlights an overall lack of inclusiveness and a persistence of gender

stereotypes, where 34% of women surveyed in the workplace have reported feeling discriminated against by gender and age.⁸ According to a global LinkedIn study, nearly 60% of women surveyed working in marketing have either left or have contemplated leaving the industry amid the pandemic.⁹

Additionally, perceptions of workplace inclusivity demonstrate an urgent need for improvement. Kantar findings highlight that 70% of women surveyed across Asia believe their abilities are judged because of their gender, and 52% say they are missing out on opportunities in media and marketing.¹⁰

Mechanisms and frameworks are now being introduced to provide benchmarks and standards that can be employed globally. Many companies and agency networks including WPP, Publicis

Groupe, Havas, and IPG among others have pledged to take action to increase racial and ethnic diversity and inclusion in the workplace, and have since implemented tangible actions for change.¹¹ Other agencies and industry associations including the UK's Advertising Association, ISBA, IPA,¹² and WFA have committed to conducting research on existing diversity gaps and developing inclusion committees and focal points. Despite this positive

trajectory, there is a gap between pledges and action. In a review of industry action amongst UK CEOs conducted by Creative Equals, 78% of respondents stated that ethnicity pay gap data is not collected, and less than half have organised line manager training on inclusion.¹³ There is significant room to accelerate improvement and change must be led from the top.

Key findings and recommendations

The inclusion of under-represented groups in senior leadership roles across the global advertising industry still needs significant improvement. Pledges and commitments must be transformed into action, with clear accountability metrics.

- Measurement—including the collection of disaggregated data—is needed to identify gaps in the representation of under-represented groups along the corporate and creative supply chain and in leadership positions.
- Continuous tracking and assessment of efforts across the global advertising industry must be maintained to provide empirical evidence of what is most impactful and where attention is needed.
- Strategies for diversity and inclusion within recruitment, retention, and promotion must be adopted and companies must set ambitious diversity quotas and targets with mechanisms for monitoring and publicising the information to ensure accountability.
- Pay parity initiatives should be established and Employee Resource Groups (ERG) and line manager training should be introduced to develop an inclusive culture across a diverse workforce.

Achieving unsteretyped advertising

In addition to diversity and inclusion in the workplace, companies featuring unsteretyped adverts stand to benefit from increased consumer purchasing intent.¹⁴ Nevertheless, representation of under-represented individuals in adverts is persistently low. The 2020 Unstereotype Metric Report, produced by Unstereotype Alliance member Kantar, indicates that only 22% of adverts tested featured a mixture of individuals with different ethnic origins and skin colours.¹⁵ Further, only 5% of adverts featured individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community.¹⁶

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, in many cases the progressive portrayals in advertising regressed. Findings from the Unstereotype Metric Report highlight that from March 2020 onward, women are less likely to have speaking roles, less likely to be shown as working, and more likely to be cast in traditional gender roles.¹⁷

Discriminatory adverts proliferated and have not gone unnoticed by consumers, subsequently garnering much criticism. In a consumer study conducted by Ipsos, only 18% of respondents across Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, the UK, and the US stated that in the past year, advertising is presenting more people from a wide range of backgrounds, and 13% feel that in the past year, advertising is presenting a more realistic portrayal of people.¹⁸

Efforts to achieve unsteretyped advertising across the industry include analyses of the creative production process. Discrimination in casting practices is widespread; findings from a 2020 WE ARE Pi study published by WARC indicates that 91% of respondents believe racial profiling is an issue in ad casting, 70% have witnessed individuals being excluded from the casting process because they are Black, and 52% were silenced or ignored when taking action against racist decision-making.¹⁹ In response to this, numerous pledges were formed in 2020 to improve diversity and inclusion in casting and on creative production teams.

Tangible efforts to improve diversity within advertising content have been made in the formation of tools and guidelines. The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) launched an open-source tool for advertisers that provides 12 key areas where unconscious bias can occur within the marketing and creative development process to be used as a litmus test.²⁰ Ipsos has developed a Cultural Fluency Framework as both a pre and post-test to evaluate content diversity and inclusion.²¹ The ANA collaborated with Getty Images to release an Inclusive Visual Storytelling for Women guide encouraging advertisers to consider gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, body type, ability, age, and religion in storytelling efforts.²²

Greater rigor throughout the entire creative process is needed. Formalizing metrics, benchmarks and processes are critical to counter the regression seen in 2020, particularly in digital executions. The placement of advertising needs equal attention. While there has been an upturn in spending towards media for under-represented communities in 2020, this comes from a very low base.²³ Brands and agencies alike must pursue improvements with urgent intent and commitment.



Key findings and recommendations

Advertising continues to under-represent minority groups and perpetuate ingrained stereotypes and traditional gender norms. Incremental change needs to be accelerated throughout the creative process and in the output.

- Progressive portrayals in advertising must extend beyond gender alone.
- Benchmarking, continuous tracking and reporting is critical to hold all parties involved in the creative development accountable.
- Companies must ensure casting and creative teams are diverse and foster partnerships with diversity organisations to seek guidance and feedback on the depictions of under-represented individuals.
- Adopt frameworks, guidelines, and tools as checkpoints to monitor diversity and progressive portrayals throughout the creative process including strategies for seeking goods and services from diverse suppliers.

Empowering public action against stereotypes

Consumers are seeking out brands that align with their values and are factoring these considerations into their purchasing behaviours. According to a global Salesforce study, 71% of respondents indicated that they pay more attention to a company's values in 2020 than in 2019, and 75% state that a vendor's ethics increasingly factor into their purchasing decisions.²⁴

Brands have recognised the importance of standing in solidarity with social justice movements and meeting consumer values. In the wake of the murders of George Floyd²⁵ and Breonna Taylor²⁶ in the US, many brands have expressed statements of

support and solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, as well as other social justice movements.

While consumers are demanding brand solidarity with social justice movements, they are less trusting of brands.²⁷ In fact, 34% of consumers surveyed across the US believed that brands were using the Black Lives Matter movement for publicity.²⁸ Coupled with pledges of support, consumers are calling on brands to commit to tangible actions for change to support under-represented communities as well as implement efforts for diversity and inclusion within companies themselves.

Key findings and recommendations

Consumers are increasingly holding companies accountable for their stance on diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination. They demand tangible action and transparency and may boycott brands that do not meet their expectations.

- When standing in solidarity with social justice movements, move beyond pledges and adopt concrete actions for change including donations, awareness raising and transparent reporting of all initiatives.
- Remove harmful branding in a timely manner, acknowledge mistakes and shortfalls at a senior level, and document the actions taken.



Morsa Images/DigitalVision via Getty Images

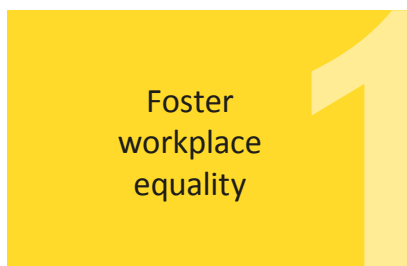
Introduction

Stereotypes are embedded in our everyday lives, influencing individual and societal attitudes and norms. Often perpetuated by media and advertising, they cause deeply rooted inequalities in society and hold people back from reaching their full potential. In a recent study across Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, the UK and the US, 30% of consumers agreed that advertising has the power to shape the way people perceive one another.²⁹

2020 shone a stark and revealing light on the stereotypes evident in the advertising industry. Pre-existing biases were exposed, and persistent inequalities were exacerbated in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in the US led to long-overdue global conversations and a surge of action on racial injustice, the lack of diversity in leadership and decision-making, and stereotypical depictions in media and advertising. Pledges, statements, and the formation of diversity and inclusion initiatives grew across the industry.

In June 2020, Dr. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director of UN Women and Chair of the Unstereotype Alliance, and Stephan Loerke, CEO of the World Federation of Advertisers, issued a clear and urgent call to the global advertising industry to hold itself to account for transparent and measurable change in the fight against racism and inequality.³⁰

A year on, this report explores the progress made to date and identifies the gaps and opportunities to drive transformative change in the advertising industry. The report presents a snapshot of the current status of diversity and progressive portrayals of women and under-represented individuals/groups across the global advertising industry and, where possible, across Unstereotype Alliance national chapters. The information included is a non-exhaustive review, with many sources gathered from Unstereotype Alliance members and allies. To inform the nature of Alliance activities in the year ahead and beyond, this report analyses industry efforts and progress through the lens of the Unstereotype Alliance's three strategic pillars:





Adam Hester/Getty Images

The Unstereotype Alliance

In 2017 the Unstereotype Alliance was founded in the belief that advertisers and agencies have a unique ability and responsibility to challenge harmful stereotypes, and to foster diversity through the content they produce with progressive portrayals of all people. Convened by UN Women, the Unstereotype Alliance unites advertising industry leaders, decision-makers, and creatives to eradicate harmful stereotypes from all advertising and media content to help create a more equal world. The Unstereotype Alliance collectively acts to empower people in all their diversity (including gender, race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality) by using advertising as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world. As of May 2021, the Alliance has 184 members and allies and nine national chapters in Brazil, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, South Africa, Turkey, the UAE, and the UK.

The business case

Producing inclusive content free from stereotypes and bias is not only socially responsible, it presents clear commercial benefits for companies and brands. Findings from a 2021 study conducted on Ipsos' Global Advisor Platform across Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, the UK, and the US state that 31% of respondents feel more positive towards companies that include

representation from a wide range of backgrounds in adverts.³¹ According to Liljedal et al (2020) in an article published by WARC, the use of nonstereotyped occupational gender portrayals in advertising reflects brand effort, shaping consumers' positive perceptions of the product itself.³² Unstereotyped advertising further leads to a 28% increase in purchase intent.³³ 2020 findings from the

Unstereotype Metric, developed by Kantar in partnership with the Unstereotype Alliance, indicate that the more progressive the advert, the higher prospect it has for driving sales.³⁴ Conversely, adverts featuring stereotyped images and messaging can lower consumer purchasing intent. In a comparative 2021 analysis of consumers across Argentina, the purchasing interest for those who viewed adverts without any bias was 55% compared to the 33% purchasing interest expressed by those who viewed sexist ads.³⁵

Eliminating stereotypes in advertising and increasing the presence and progressive portrayals of under-represented groups also help brands

appeal to these consumers. For example, Black consumers are 69% more likely to purchase from a brand that positively reflects their race/ethnicity, and 68% of consumers who are part of the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to purchase from a brand that features a variety of sexual orientations in its advertisements.³⁶

Evidence provides a strong business case for producing unsterotyped advertising that features individuals from under-represented groups as authentic, empowered, and multi-dimensional. New research to be undertaken in 2021 by the Unstereotype Alliance, Oxford University Saïd Business School and WARC will quantify this further.



andres/E+ via Getty Images

1

Fostering workplace equality



Fostering diversity, equity and inclusion in the workplace benefits employees and has positive effects on business performance.³⁷ Diversity enhances productivity, sparks creativity and leads to better decision-making.³⁸ It also drives brand value and reputation, and leads to increased profitability.³⁹ Despite a compelling business case, the state of diversity, equity, and inclusion within the global advertising industry is varied, and disparities persist for women and under-represented groups. The representation and inclusion of women at all levels of companies and agencies differs between countries. As of June 2020, the overall membership of the Association of National Advertisers (ANA) was mostly female (67%).⁴⁰ Further, among US-based marketing departments of 40 ANA board and other member companies, 56% of senior level positions are occupied by women.⁴¹

Findings from the UK differ —the 2020 IPA Census measuring diversity across member agencies noted that the number of women in C-Suite roles decreased from 34% in 2019 to 32.4% in 2020.⁴²

Macro level findings across G7 countries, as well as India, Kenya, and Nigeria highlight that the media industry scores high compared to other industries on the Reykjavik Index, indicating that men and women are viewed as equally suitable for leadership roles compared to other industries.⁴³ Despite this, evidence indicates that many companies within the global advertising industry continue to fall short of creating inclusive workplace cultures that value the talents and perspectives of women. Findings from Kantar's 2020 Diversity Study across Asia highlights that 70% of women surveyed believe their abilities are judged because of their gender,

and 52% say they are missing out on opportunities in media and marketing.⁴⁴ Global consultancy Creative Equals states that in the UK, women respondents are 24% less likely than men to agree with the statement “work is fairly allocated within the department.”⁴⁵ Data on workplace culture in Mexico’s advertising industry highlights an overall lack of inclusiveness and a persistence of gender stereotypes. 34% of surveyed women in the workplace reported feeling discriminated against by gender and age, and 48% of men in medium and low rankings expressed that they do not feel comfortable or safe showing emotion at work.⁴⁶ Gender silos in the workplace persist, where 4/10 male respondents in leadership roles indicated feeling uncomfortable being led by a woman.⁴⁷

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively impacted women’s career progression within the advertising industry. According to a global LinkedIn study, nearly 60% of women surveyed working in marketing have either left or have contemplated leaving the industry amid the pandemic.⁴⁸ 42% of women surveyed within the marketing industry stated that COVID-19 has resulted in career setbacks or pauses.⁴⁹

The representation and inclusion of people of colour in workforces continues to lag, particularly for women of colour. Statistics from the 2020 US Bureau of Labour Statistics highlight that Asian individuals make up 6% of those employed in advertising, public relations, or other related fields, while Black or African American and Hispanic or Latin American made up 6.6% and 7.9% respectively.⁵⁰ According to the ANA, individuals with ethnicities other than White make up only 26% of general membership, 12% of CMO positions, and 27% of senior leadership positions.⁵¹ Findings from IPA indicate that in the UK, racial and ethnic diversity has increased at the C-Suite level (individuals from non-white backgrounds make up 6.4% of positions in 2020 compared to 4.7% in 2019),⁵² however representation remains low. Data from Creative Equals finds that, among those surveyed, 0.7% of creative departments in the UK are staffed by Black women and none are of Islamic faith.⁵³ Women of colour are not only under-represented in creative departments, but they also experience more barriers to employment and career progression; only 21% of Black women compared to the 42% of all other

staff believe they are paid fairly, and 38% of Black women feel valued in their role compared to the 62% of all other staff.⁵⁴

“Who makes the work, shapes the work’: we don’t even begin to have equitable representation at the ‘creative table’ let alone intersectional female representation.”



Ali Hanan, Creative Equals

COVID-19 threatens to stall efforts for diversity. Given layoffs throughout the industry and the reality that many junior and mid-level roles are occupied by individuals from minority backgrounds, job losses have the potential to impact the already low levels of diversity.⁵⁵

2020 was witness to a surge of pledges to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion within corporate structures. Findings show that in several cases, initial actions have been taken and initiatives are ongoing.



Jakob Helbig/Culture via Getty Images

Pledges across agency networks

According to an analysis by *The Drum*, Chief Executive of **Dentsu**'s American operation Jacki Kelley committed to working with employees to develop plans for building an equitable workplace free from discrimination, racism, or bias.⁵⁶ Since then, Dentsu introduced resources for each of its regions of operation and, where possible, has undertaken efforts to improve "people data" to identify inequalities within the company.⁵⁷

Havas developed a Commit to Change 7-pillar plan to support Black, Indigenous, and People of colour (BIPOC) employees.⁵⁸ Havas has since launched the Emerge program to support the career development of BIPOC individuals and promote representation in management roles.⁵⁹

IPG has long been committed to diversity and inclusion in the workforce.⁶⁰ In 2019, the representation of Black or African American, Asian, and Hispanic or Latino individuals at IPG across senior management and executive level manager positions, first/mid-level manager positions, and professional positions was broadly in line with U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission sectoral data.⁶¹ To enhance efforts for diversity and inclusion, IPG has recently committed to cultivate more inclusive leadership by providing additional support for all managers and human resources personnel.⁶² IPG further committed to scale its existing Business Resource Groups focused on diversity and inclusion globally, and plans to invest in technology to support the operation of these groups.⁶³

According to an analysis by *The Drum*, **Publicis Groupe** pledged a 7-point plan to promote an inclusive workplace.⁶⁴ It has since implemented a Diversity Progress Council and launched the inaugural meeting with industry experts.⁶⁵ Publicis Groupe further published the Embrace Change plan to promote diversity across its UK agencies and expanded talent pipeline initiatives.⁶⁶

WPP developed a Call for Change letter featuring a 12-point plan and a pledge of \$30 million dollars over the next three years to programs both within WPP and externally, as well as enhancing transparency and accountability by releasing racial diversity data, among others.⁶⁷ Since this pledge, WPP has publicly released workforce diversity data and has implemented a Global Inclusion Council to advise on goals.⁶⁸

In response to the murder of George Floyd, over 500 advertising and media leaders across the UK signed the **#SayHisName** letter, pledging diversity, equity, and inclusion within their organisations.⁶⁹ In an analysis conducted by Creative Equals, as of September 2020 61% of signatory respondents reported seeing a change in workplace culture.⁷⁰ Over a third have incorporated diversity and inclusivity requirements into leadership KPIs.⁷¹

Additionally, two thirds have adopted efforts to educate employees on privilege and just over half have adopted strategies to encourage allyship among white employees.⁷² While many signatories report seeing positive changes, 78% of respondents stated that ethnicity pay gap data is not collected, and less than half have organised line manager training on inclusion.⁷³

In addition to pledges, some positive steps have been taken to improve diversity across the industry through the formation of task forces designed to oversee the mandate of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. In April 2020, the UK's Advertising Association, ISBA and the IPA developed the Inclusion Group and the accompanying **All In** campaign.⁷⁴ The campaign features a confidential industry

census recorded and analysed by Kantar, and aggregated findings will be used to inform an action plan.⁷⁵ This will be extended globally by WFA's Diversity and Inclusion Taskforce with the support of Kantar to develop an industry baseline. The initiative will determine workforce composition across the industry and employees' perception of diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Companies have undertaken efforts to adopt diversity leadership targets and develop designated committees and diversity focal points to ensure accountability across initiatives. For example:

- IPG Mediabrands hired a global Chief Culture Officer to oversee the media agency's network and efforts for diversity, equity and inclusion.⁷⁶
- Instagram developed an equity and inclusion team to examine how Black, Hispanic, and other minority users across the US are impacted by the sites' algorithms.⁷⁷
- Mondelez International appointed a Global Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer and set targets to double the representation of Black individuals in US management by 2024 by increasing the presence of underrepresented candidates on interview slates and investing in career progression and mentorship opportunities, among others.⁷⁸

Despite efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion in the workplace, action and accountability are far from complete. A study from the **Black Representation in Advertising (BRiM)** group formed from the industry's leading agencies including PepsiCo, Shell, TUI and Unilever finds that as of April 2021, 42% of surveyed marketing professionals haven't made any decisions in the past year to increase the representation of Black individuals.⁷⁹ As a result,

BRiM, supported by the Advertising Association (AA), has launched a free framework providing marketing organisations with commitments, templates, and tools needed to ensure their pledges come to fruition.⁸⁰ Findings from Kantar's 2020 Diversity Study in Asia reported only 2 in 5 respondents state their company has a designated diversity and inclusion leader, and only 14% state that their business has completed a pay parity review.⁸¹

Recommendations

- While strides have been made, measurement - including the collection of disaggregated data - is urgently needed to identify gaps in the representation of under-represented groups along the corporate pipeline and in leadership positions.
- Clear policies outlining a company's commitment to diversity and inclusion, as well as eliminating discrimination and bias are key for setting the workplace tone and expectations for all employees. Companies should develop strategies for the recruitment, retention, and promotion of under-represented individuals, and set ambitious diversity quotas and targets with mechanisms for monitoring and publicising the information to ensure accountability.
- Providing career progression opportunities and mentorship, networking, and sponsorship are critical for supporting under-represented individuals progress along the corporate ladder. Companies can further engage externally with students and creatives from under-represented groups in their communities to provide internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
- All efforts toward increasing workplace diversity must be coupled with efforts for inclusion. Senior leaders and middle managers must be cognisant of equal opportunities and treatment among all staff and ensure equal pay for equal work. The establishment of Employee Resource Groups (ERG) and line manager training is recommended to develop an inclusive culture across a diverse workforce.
- Continuous tracking and assessment of efforts must be maintained to provide empirical evidence of what is most impactful and where attention is needed.



2

Achieving unsteretyped advertising



Representation and progressive portrayals

According to the Unstereotype Metric Report from 2020, only 22% of adverts studied featured a mixture of individuals with different ethnic origins and skin colours, and 5% featured individuals from the LGBTIQ+ community.⁸² When older characters are featured in advertising, men are cast almost twice as often as women and 30% of ads include a man who appears 40 or older while just 19% show a woman who appears 40 or older.⁸³ Similarly, UK figures from Creative Equals highlight that in 2020, only 1% of communications had any kind of disability representation, 1.5% featured LGBTQIA+ people, 0.2% featured representation of faith and only 2% of ads featured older women.⁸⁴ In the Latin America region, figures reflect even less representation —

the 2020 TODXS report highlights that people living with disabilities made up only 0.8% of individuals in advertisements studied across Brazil.⁸⁵

Issues also persist in the industry's ability to present women in all their diversity. In Brazil, female representation in 2020 was heavily skewed toward an idealized standard of beauty — this being white, thin, with curves, 'straight', with brown hair — with 63% of female lead roles on TV and Facebook ads featuring women with these attributes.⁸⁶ Of women in leading roles on TV, Black women made up 22%, while women of various other ethnicities made up 4%.⁸⁷

In addition to a lack of representation, gaps exist in the progressive portrayal of all individuals. According to a 2019 study conducted by UNICEF and the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, in India, male characters are twice as likely to be shown with a paid job, while women are three times more likely to be shown as care takers of others.⁸⁸ Similarly, in 2019 women in the UAE were featured in 78% and 60% of ads for home appliances and food respectively.⁸⁹ By contrast, they appeared in only 12% of ads in occupational environments.⁹⁰ According to a 2019 Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (ITF) study, 47% of ads studied in Mexico exhibited some form of gender stereotype.⁹¹ The most prevalent stereotypes of women in adverts include depicting women as mothers (39%), and as housewives (27%).⁹² Conversely, men are depicted as professional (33%) yet clumsy (22%).⁹³

Pre-existing stereotypes have only worsened amid the COVID-19 pandemic, as advertising has increasingly depicted women carrying out domestic work, reinforcing traditional norms for masculine and feminine roles in society. Findings from the Unstereotype Metric Report highlight that from March 2020 onward, women are less likely to speak, less likely to be shown as working, and more likely to be cast in traditional gender roles.⁹⁴ In Turkey, the 2020 Effie Awards Gender Equality Scorecard found that while the representation of women in banking, finance and telecommunications ads has increased, the rate of women shown doing household chores is three times more than men.⁹⁵ The rate of men's representation doing household chores has doubled since 2019, yet still remains at only 4%.⁹⁶

Regressive portrayals of women and the use of gender stereotypes in adverts has not gone unnoticed by consumers. In Australia, Ultra Tune Australia and Yum Restaurants International produced the top three most complained-about adverts of 2020, receiving criticism related to discrimination and vilification, exploitation and degrading messaging, and sexuality and nudity, among others.⁹⁹ LG faced criticism for the company's sexist advert that aired on LG Poland's Tik Tok channel featuring a man using

UK Government's Stay Home Save Lives advert

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK government published this advertisement encouraging people to stay home.⁹⁷ The advert perpetuates gender stereotypes by featuring women and girls doing housework and taking care of children, while the only man featured in the ad is shown relaxing on the couch.⁹⁸



“‘Stereotypical’ UK Government ad withdrawn following widespread backlash,” Unstereotype Alliance, February 1, 2021. <https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/news-and--events/in-the-news/uk-government-ad-withdrawn-following-widespread-backlash>

LG's smartphone to take inappropriate photos of a woman without her consent.¹⁰⁰ In early 2021, South Africa's Advertising Regulatory Board banned a Windhoek Beer advertisement on the grounds that it perpetuated toxic masculinity by marketing the message that “real men drink real beer.”¹⁰¹ The ban has since been lifted, yet not without a warning related to a lack of gender representation.¹⁰²

Stereotypes are also prevalent in the portrayal of people of colour. In South Africa, Nikon released an influencer campaign which was widely criticized for “whitewashing” as it featured only one Black photographer among seven visual creatives.¹⁰³

Consumer perceptions of diversity in advertising remains low—only 18% of respondents across Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, the UK, and the US state that in the past year, advertising is presenting more people from a wide range of backgrounds, and 13% feel that in the past year advertising is presenting a more realistic portrayal of people.¹⁰⁴

COUNTRY	Total	Brazil	France	Germany	Italy	Japan	Mexico	Spain	UK	US
Base: All respondents	8504	1001	1000	998	1001	1001	501	1000	1001	1001
Weighted	8504	945	945	945	945	945	945	945	945	945
In the past year, advertising is presenting more people from a wide range of backgrounds	18%	11%	21%	18%	14%	16%	7%	19%	27%	31%
	1537	101	199	168	132	148	66	175	257	291
In the past year, advertising is presenting a more realistic portrayal of people	13%	10%	13%	10%	14%	9%	7%	18%	16%	20%
	1099	93	127	94	129	87	68	166	150	184

Ipsos survey for the Unstereotype Alliance

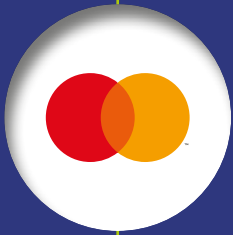
Consumers want more diversity in advertising, including empowered portrayals of under-represented individuals. According to the Ipsos Social Values Research of consumers across the US, 38% of consumers would like to see more people of colour depicted in positions of power, and 41% would like to see more women depicted as business leaders in adverts.¹⁰⁵ Between May and June of 2020, customer searches for “diverse” images on the Getty Images website increased by 200%, and searches for images of “unity” and “equality” rose by 500%.¹⁰⁶

Moreover, both women and men report they are tired of stereotypical gender portrayals and would like to see more content with men carrying out household work (56% women and 35% men), more depictions of women as business leaders (51% women and 30% men), and less sexualized representation of women (45% women and 23% men).¹⁰⁷ Many companies have taken action, to challenge bias and change mindsets.



Vodafone #ChangeTheFace

To challenge stereotypes that associate the technology industry with young, white, middle-class and mostly men, Vodafone launched the #ChangeTheFace campaign to highlight individuals of different genders, races, ethnicities, ages, etc. that make up the industry.¹⁰⁸ The campaign launched alongside a call to action encouraging other companies in the industry to commit to change.¹⁰⁹ The campaign has garnered over 300 pledges, including from Accenture, Amazon, Ericsson, Facebook, GSMA, IBM, Nissan, Nokia, Orange, and Verizon.¹¹⁰



Mastercard True Name

In July 2020, Mastercard announced its commitment to bring the True Name initiative to Europe, enabling people to reflect their preferred identity on their payment cards.¹¹¹ This initiative recognises that for many transgender and non-binary individuals, the name printed on their card may not reflect who they truly are.¹¹² The True Name initiative targets the discrimination and harassment that transgender and non-binary individuals experience when the name on their card does not match their presentation, and ultimately empowers individuals by allowing them to display their preferred name on their card.¹¹³



Procter & Gamble (P&G) Widen The Screen

The portrayal of Black individuals in ads is often siloed into two camps: stories of struggle and stories of triumph — rarely do we see the general life experiences of Black individuals on screen.¹¹⁴ P&G debuted the Widen the Screen short film aimed at broadening the way Black people are represented and portrayed in advertising and entertainment, showcasing Black experiences, joy, and lives in all facets.¹¹⁵



Safaricom Twende Tukiuke

To celebrate their 20th anniversary, Safaricom launched the Twende Tukiuke campaign, empowering Safaricom customers to embrace their own greatness.¹¹⁶ The advert features people from Kenya, and aims to dispel stereotypes by including female metal fabricators (a predominantly male profession), and male glass blowers (a non-typical job).¹¹⁷ Safaricom's goal is to highlight the vibrancy of Africa and its people.¹¹⁸



Degree

Recognising that the design of beauty and personal care products is often inaccessible for many individuals living with disabilities, Unilever launched Degree Inclusive, an adaptive deodorant designed for one-handed usage and including instructions in braille, among other features.¹¹⁹ To develop the product, Degree collaborated with support organizations, engineers, designers, occupational therapists and hosted consultations with consumers across the world living with disabilities.¹²⁰

Inclusive casting

Achieving unsteretyped advertising goes beyond representation alone. Ensuring that casting processes are free from bias and discrimination, and are inclusive of all people, contributes to the overall authenticity of the advert and the empowered portrayal of characters.

Discrimination in casting practices is widespread; findings from a 2020 WE ARE Pi study published by WARC indicates that 91% of respondents believe racial profiling is an issue in advert casting, and 52% were silenced or ignored when taking action

against racist decision-making.¹²¹ Representation and inclusion within creative teams remains limited – in an audit by Free the Work, 34 out of 60 US firms and 25 out of 45 companies in the UK have no Black directors listed on their rosters.¹²²

In 2020, numerous pledges were formed to improve diversity and inclusion in casting and on creative production teams. Findings on progress are limited and, moving forward, ensuring that companies disclose their progress in achieving goals is key for accountability.

Casting diversity pledges

- Signed by hundreds of stakeholders including production companies across the US and London, UK, directors, talent agencies, producers, department heads, and talent agents, **the Change the Lens** pledge calls for a target of 15% or more Black people across various production roles.¹²³
- The **Stand For Sonic Diversity** pledge, launched by Pandora, SiriusXM, and Stitcher, includes setting a target of 50% representation of BIPOC talent on internal rosters, ensuring that Black voices represent a minimum of 15% of the total ad voiceover roster, increasing Black voice talent cast by 30% compared to 2020, refusing to support casting where Black roles are given to white voice actors, avoiding the default use of 'white voices' in voiceovers, and auditing practices regularly.¹²⁴
- Industry experts across Canada have formed **Hire Higher**, encouraging those in the advertising industry to pledge against using coded language like “ethnically ambiguous,” “exotic,” and “urban” in casting briefs unless ethnicity or race are required for the creative concept.¹²⁵
- The **Before You Shoot** pledge calls on industry leaders to commit to standing against anti-Black racism in casting, as well as increasing Black people’s presence in decision-making and developing safe spaces to discuss issues.¹²⁶

Sourcing diverse suppliers

According to findings from the ANA membership, while 75% of client-side marketers have a supplier diversity strategy, only 40% have a strategy for supplier diversity in marketing/advertising.¹²⁷ Barriers persist in driving progress and the top three most cited challenges experienced by respondents include: visibility to opportunities to recommend diverse suppliers, finding diverse suppliers, and explaining the value of diverse suppliers.¹²⁸

To address these challenges, the ANA has developed a curated list of certified diverse suppliers including women, people of colour, members of the LGBTQ+ community, and people living with disabilities.¹²⁹ Developed in July of 2020, the list is continuously updated and features over 200 suppliers.¹³⁰

Media spend and placements

Disparities exist in media spend and placements for under-represented groups. In 2019, multicultural media spending drew only 5.2% of overall U.S. media spending despite multiethnic consumers comprising approximately 40% of the total U.S. population.¹³¹

While there has been a noted upturn in spending towards media for under-represented communities, media spend overall remains low, and the advertising industry is not leading the movement towards fairer funding.¹³² Technological implications have been impeding progress, with the bias of advertising technology - particularly “brand safety” measures and “block lists” - found to negate efforts for diverse media spending.¹³³ Brand Advance identified

widespread bias across all major “brand safety” tools, in multiple markets and languages, across all under-represented communities and hundreds of advertising campaigns.¹³⁴ Publications created for the Islamic communities, LGBTQ communities and Black communities are being blocked due to stereotypes and bias.¹³⁵

Indicative conversations with publishers show promise with plans to curtail content distribution to aggregator apps.¹³⁶ Similarly, Brand Advance is producing guidance to counter brand safety limitations to enable funding of media for diverse communities.¹³⁷

Guidelines and tools

Guidelines for appropriate images and messaging, as well as tools to help agencies navigate the process of inclusive creative development, have been produced to enable diverse representation and progressive portrayals in advertising content.

In the UAE in 2020, the first set of advertising and marketing ethical guidelines were developed, stating that adverts should avoid depicting men and women in stereotypical roles or with characteristics to

suggest that one gender is better than the other.¹³⁸ This includes belittling men for carrying out roles or tasks that are stereotypically associated with women, and avoiding the notion of what children can or cannot be or do given their gender, among other guidelines.¹³⁹ In February 2021, the Australian Association of National Advertisers’ new Code of Ethics came into effect.¹⁴⁰ Key changes include a focus on progressive gender portrayals, including that advertisers should not use harmful gender

stereotypes, nor should they use sexual imagery in content that will appear in public (outdoors or shop front windows) or where it is not relevant to the product or service being advertised.¹⁴¹

Social media platforms have begun updating their policies to prohibit hate speech and xenophobia. In August 2020, Facebook updated its hate speech policies to ban content depicting Blackface and anti-Semitic content, among others.¹⁴² Similarly, in March 2020, Twitter revisited its policy on hate speech to prohibit language that dehumanises on the basis of age, disability, or disease.¹⁴³ In December 2020, the platform expanded this policy further to ban language that dehumanises individuals based on race, ethnicity, or national origin.¹⁴⁴

Recognising the weight of language in the industry and the potential for unconscious bias, the WFA has put a call to all members encouraging them to cease the use of ‘blacklist’ and ‘whitelist’ as terms to denote content that can either be excluded or included in adverts and campaigns.¹⁴⁵ Instead, the WFA is calling for the use of ‘inclusion and exclusion lists’ to change any negative narrative underlying current terminology.¹⁴⁶

Other companies and agencies have developed tools to monitor diversity and inclusion in advertising throughout the creative process. In May 2020, the ANA collaborated with Getty Images to release guidelines for marketers outlining practices for inclusive imagery in advertising amid the COVID-19 pandemic.¹⁴⁷ The Inclusive Visual Storytelling for Women guide encourages advertisers to consider gender, race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, body type, ability, age, and religion in storytelling efforts.¹⁴⁸

The Unstereotype Alliance updated its proprietary 3Ps framework in 2020 to further address the lack

of representation and discrimination of under-represented groups in advertising.¹⁴⁹ The refreshed toolkit includes new guidance and examples to strengthen intersectional representation across all media channels and ensures diversity and progressive portrayals of all people in communications.¹⁵⁰

In 2021, The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) launched the world’s first open-access tool for advertisers that provides 12 key areas where unconscious bias can occur within the entire marketing and creative development process.¹⁵¹ The tool can be used as a litmus test at each stage of the creative process.¹⁵²

To support brands to develop diverse and inclusive content, and to evaluate representation and progressive portrayals in current adverts, Ipsos launched a **Cultural Fluency Framework** that outlines strategic purposes and executional considerations for branding.¹⁵³

‘Strategic purposes’ considers:¹⁵⁴

- **Advocacy:** advertising is actively advocating for societal change
- **Insights:** advertising is inclusive and uses strategies driven by insight into under-represented communities.

‘Executional considerations’ encompasses:¹⁵⁵

- **Authenticity:** advertising authentically represents the cultures and contexts of under-represented individuals
- **Representation:** advertising includes the representation of under-represented communities.

Recommendations

- Efforts for representation and progressive portrayals must continue and extend beyond the analysis of gender alone – recognising that all stereotypes vary enormously when intersecting with gender.
- Collecting disaggregated data is useful to better understand where gaps in representation exist, and benchmarking and continuous tracking is critical to hold all parties involved in the creative development accountable.
- Every element of the creative process should be examined through the lens of diversity and inclusion—from the composition of the creative team and suppliers, to the language within casting briefs to the execution of the advert itself.
- Companies must ensure casting and creative teams are diverse, foster partnerships with diversity organisations to seek guidance and feedback on the depictions of under-represented individuals, and eliminate harmful language (including coded language)¹⁵⁶ from the casting process.
- Companies must implement a strategy for sourcing a percentage of goods and services from diverse suppliers. According to the ANA, standard baseline practice is to adopt the “rule of one”—including at least one diverse supplier per RFP.¹⁵⁷
- Adopting frameworks and using guidelines and tools as checkpoints along the creative development process are vital enablers of progress to ensure diversity and inclusion.



3

Empowering public action against stereotypes



Consumer attitudes and trends

Societal inequalities have been further exposed amid the COVID-19 pandemic and the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor. People around the world are demanding change toward sustainable and equitable societies rather than returning to ways of life before COVID-19.¹⁵⁸ Now more than ever consumers are evaluating their personal values, taking stock of brands with similar values, and factoring these considerations into their purchasing behaviours. According to a global Salesforce study, 71% of respondents indicated that they pay more attention to a company's values in 2020 than in 2019, and 75% state that a vendor's ethics increasingly factor into their purchasing decisions.¹⁵⁹ In Argentina, for example, 4/10 consumers make purchases based

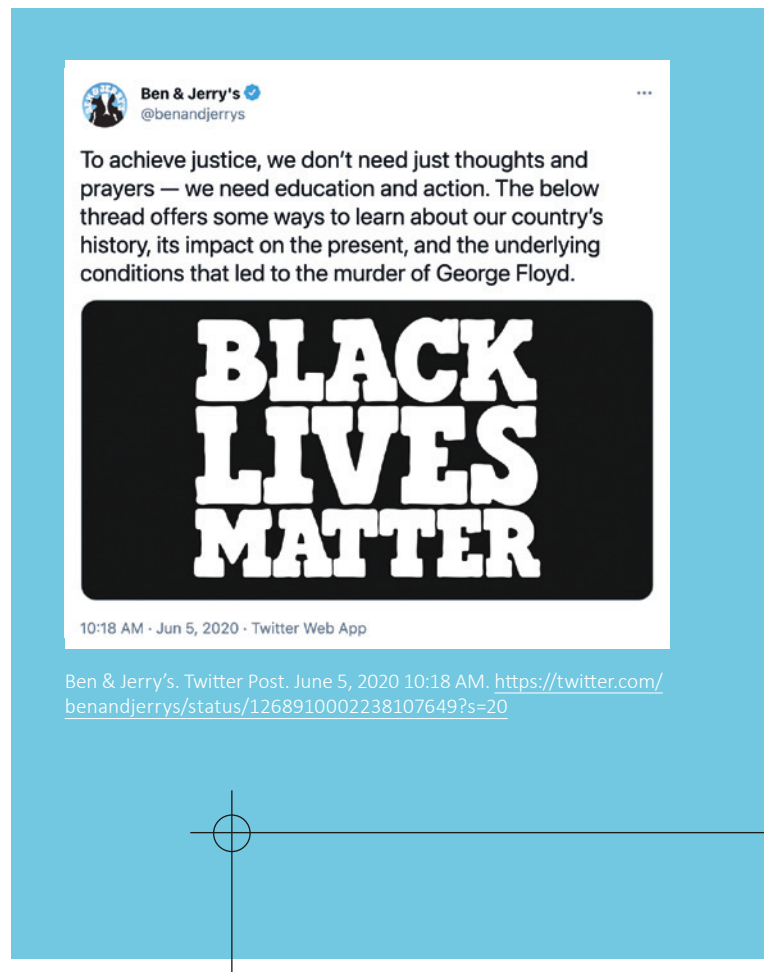
on values (37% aged 20 or under, 44% between 21-30, 43% between 31-40, and 44% over the age of 40).¹⁶⁰

Consumers are increasingly holding brands to account for publicly disclosing their stance on sustainability, diversity, inclusion, and anti-discrimination. According to Ipsos' Social Values Research, 95% of consumers expect brands to take a stance on equality issues.¹⁶¹ Socially conscious and impact-driven consumers that value a brand's authentic commitment to social good exist across generations. Globally, 86% of Gen Z, 87% of Millennial, 83% of Gen X, and 80% of Baby Boomer respondents believe that brands are somewhat or completely responsible for advocating for human and civil rights.¹⁶²

While firm statements on equality issues can lead to consumer loyalty, regressive advertising that perpetuates stereotypes may result in a brand boycott, or ‘cancel culture’.¹⁶³ Globally, 62% of consumers surveyed in a Salesforce study claim to have stopped buying from companies whose values didn’t align with their own.¹⁶⁴ In the US, findings published by WARC state that 50% of consumers surveyed have engaged in a brand boycott and stopped buying particular goods/services in protest of a business.¹⁶⁵

Consumer demands for brand solidarity with social justice movements has resulted in a surge of statements and adverts in support for the Black Lives Matter movement,¹⁶⁶ the Stop Asian Hate movement,¹⁶⁷ and others.

In addition to solidarity statements, companies have taken action by removing and/or replacing harmful pre-existing branding or brand positioning. Mars re-named Uncle Ben’s products as Ben’s Original, PepsiCo announced the re-brand of Aunt Jemima products and parent companies for Mrs. Butterworth pancake syrup and cream of wheat pledged to revisit racially stereotyped packaging.¹⁶⁸ Nestlé has pledged to rebrand its Australian based Red Skins and Chico sweets due to their racially insensitive names.¹⁶⁹



Ben & Jerry's. Twitter Post. June 5, 2020 10:18 AM. <https://twitter.com/benandjerrys/status/1268910002238107649?s=20>



While consumers are calling for brands to publicly disclose their values and stances on social issues, they are less trusting.¹⁷⁰ As such, the outpouring of company messaging in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and other social justice efforts was met with both praise and criticism. As of October 2020, 34% of consumers surveyed across the US believed that brands were using the Black Lives Matter movement for publicity.¹⁷¹ Consumers are increasingly vocal in condemning performative allyship, band-aid solutions for tackling discrimination, and poorly implemented initiatives for inclusivity. For example, US supermarket chain Trader Joe’s self-proclaimed “lighthearted attempt at inclusiveness” by expanding product labels to include “ethnic” names has been met with criticism by consumers, who called out the initiative for perpetuating stereotypes.¹⁷² In a time where consumers and business buyers around the world are placing higher value on brand trustworthiness than in years prior,¹⁷³ the authenticity of a brand’s statements and commitments is crucial.



Interpublic Group. Twitter Post. June 1, 2020 5:52 PM. https://twitter.com/InterpublicIPG/status/1267574654899798026?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1267574654899798026%7Ctwgr%5E%7Ctwcon%5Es1_c10&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.prweek.com%2Farticle%2F1685013%2Fshared-pain-shared-responsibility-agencies-promise-part-solution

Consumers are quick to spot superficiality in statements and are instead demanding tangible actions for change. GlobalWebindex 2020 data published by WARC states that 84% of consumers believe that brands should undertake any of the following actions to support the Black Lives Matter movement:¹⁷⁴

- Support local and national community initiatives
- Show support on social media
- Ensure diversity in their leadership and management teams
- Make charitable donations
- Ask for employee feedback
- Ensure supplier diversity
- Review hiring practices
- Ask for customer feedback.

Beyond statements of support

Extending beyond statements of support and advertising content, companies are demonstrating solidarity with social justice movements through financial donations and other efforts to express their commitment to social justice:

- **Facebook** pledged \$200 million dollars to the Black community broken down along the following lines: \$100 million will go toward an annual spend on Black-owned suppliers, \$25 million toward Black content creators, and \$75 million toward cash grants and ad credits for Black-owned businesses and those that serve the Black community.¹⁷⁵ Further, Facebook has committed to a 30% increase in the representation of people of colour in the company's leadership over the next five years.¹⁷⁶
- **Unilever's Ben and Jerry's** launched the **Who We Are Project** alongside Vox Media.¹⁷⁷ The project is a six-episode podcast looking at the history of racial injustice in the US to educate consumers and encourage audiences to dismantle systemic racism.¹⁷⁸
- **IPG Mediabrands** and **MAGNA** introduced **Equity Upfront**, an annual week-long event designed to highlight Black-owned entities across all media and raise the visibility of Black-owned and targeted media companies.¹⁷⁹ IPG Mediabrands hopes to expand Equity Upfront to also support Latinx, Asian and LGBTQIA+ individuals.¹⁸⁰
- **P&G** showed support for the LGBTQ+ community by donating \$5 million to those most impacted by COVID-19 through the **Can't Cancel Pride** event.¹⁸¹
- Amid the calls for solidarity with the **Stop Asian Hate** movement in 2021, Verizon pledged \$15 million towards efforts to eliminate anti-Asian hate crimes, with \$5 million earmarked for specific advocacy groups supporting Asian American and Pacific Islander groups.¹⁸²

Consumers are also holding companies accountable for diversity within company structures. Globally, 88% of Gen Z, 89% of Millennials, 88% of Gen X, and 86% of Baby Boomers state that brands are either somewhat or completely responsible for hiring workforces that reflect their communities.¹⁸³ Consumers want confirmation that companies are not only supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion outwardly, but are also addressing issues in-house. The Pull Up or Shut Up campaign challenged companies supporting the Black Lives Matter movement to publicly disclose the level of diversity among staff.¹⁸⁴ Within the first 72 hours of campaign launch, major brands like Glossier, L’Oreal, and Ulta Beauty publicly shared their employee diversity

figures and pledged to improve diversity in-house.¹⁸⁵ Other companies followed suit, including Sephora, Unilever, P&G Beauty, and Revlon.¹⁸⁶

The lack of progress in diverse advertising is recognised by consumers. In an Ipsos study, only 18% of respondents across Brazil, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Spain, the UK, and the US state that in the past year, advertising is presenting more people from a wide range of backgrounds.¹⁸⁷ It is evident that consumers hold brands accountable for the company values they espouse and expect authenticity and a commitment to undertaking action for change.

Recommendations

- When taking action to support social justice movements, companies should adopt the following framework:
 - take action
 - ensure transparency
 - engage in honest reporting on initiatives.
- Company statements expressing solidarity with social justice movements should be coupled with actionable initiatives for change including investing in opportunities for under-represented individuals, and increasing diversity and inclusion within adverts and within companies themselves.
- Companies must be clear on the actions they plan to take toward supporting social justice movements and share these actions publicly with all relevant stakeholders. Progress reporting can be embedded within a company’s annual reporting, and publishing updates and outcomes both internally and publicly is key for ensuring transparency in efforts and providing evidence that companies are following through with commitments.
- Company C-Suite teams, in addition to CMOs, must take responsibility for ensuring that harmful branding is removed in a timely manner, and that this action is documented within a company’s reporting structure.

Conclusion

Over the past year, diversity in the workforce has been a key focus across the global advertising industry. Many companies have implemented to improve diversity, equity, and inclusion within company structures, including development of workplace pledges, data collection, and the formation of diversity committees and focal points, among others. Similarly, industry collaborations and pledges have been developed with some tangible outputs such as research, frameworks, and tools.

While these efforts are a positive step, diverse representation across the industry remains disproportionately low and there is a disconnect between pledges and action.

Fostering workplace equality and improving the representation of under-represented groups in the industry is vital. Mechanisms for measuring the diversity and inclusion within workplaces are critical for benchmarking, monitoring progress and identifying opportunities for improvement. Advertisers must double down on efforts, set and publish benchmarks and measure diversity in all its manifestations, particularly how it intersects with gender. Initiatives to measure diversity at a global industry level must support company-led work to accelerate the pace of change. Fostering a truly inclusive workplace culture where all individuals are respected and valued has not yet been achieved. Long-lasting change requires nurturing inclusive cultures that enhance employees' sense of belonging and ensuring that diverse individuals have a voice at the decision-making table.

The need to produce advertising free from stereotypes remains critical. Indicators for progressive portrayals have barely shifted and 2020 saw a regression in

already slow progress. Over the past year, a proliferation of content with entrenched harmful stereotypes surfaced. As consumers spend more time in digital environments, and futurists say there are no signs of this trend reversing,¹⁸⁸ the same rigour and checkpoints for bias, discrimination and stereotypes must be applied to any creative execution across all channels.

Companies have taken efforts to ensure inclusion in casting practices, diverse supplier strategies, diversify media spends, and adopt guidelines and tools to inform the creative process, but urgent acceleration in the implementation of each of these areas is needed.

There has been a groundswell of public action and mobilisation from consumers in 2020. They are increasingly holding companies and brands accountable for standing in solidarity with social justice movements and backing up statements with concrete actions for change. This is a time for the industry to act on the movement by answering consumer demands and standing firm in their values, producing progressive content, and coupling commitment with action.

Moving forward, it will be imperative for companies within the industry to adopt strategies to ensure that individuals from under-represented groups are recruited, retained, and promoted within companies themselves, and that company leadership adopts diversity benchmarks and accompanying systems for monitoring and reporting. It will also be crucial for companies to develop and formalise checks and balances that monitor the creative development process to ensure adverts are free from stereotypes, and adopt measures relating to casting, supplier diversity, media spending, and regulations. Brands will ultimately garner the trust and support of consumers when they ensure all content is free from stereotypes, increase diversity and inclusion in house, and where possible, support local communities.

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