

# #GenderGains

Beyond being woke, positive gender portrayal ladders onto effective advertising



## About the Advertising Standards Council of India & GenderNext

Established in 1985, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising and protecting consumer interest. ASCI has always been a conscience keeper of the advertising industry. ASCI aims to be more inclusive, and future-facing with the aim to enrich the advertising ecosystem and help balance creativity with responsibility.

One recent initiative was the launch of the **GenderNext study**, that looked at the depiction of women in advertising and aims to support advertisers create more responsible and aspirational ads. GenderNext aims to call out the unintentional messaging that has become intrinsic to advertising and offers ways of imagining the target audiences in more progressive ways through the SEA framework. The 3S screener lists out the stereotypical representations that can help avoid these creeping into scripting, casting as well as in production areas like costumes and styling.

The study shows that the change required is subtle, but demands deeper attention to stubborn tropes and patterns that have made advertising their home. It allows advertisers and advertising to catch up with women's own imaginations. The "Emerging Indian woman" has long since emerged, and advertising needs to account for this.

## About Kantar

Kantar is the world's leading evidence-based insights and consulting company. We have a complete, unique and rounded understanding of how people think, feel and act; globally and locally in over 90 markets. By combining the deep expertise of our people, our data resources and benchmarks, our innovative analytics and technology, we help our clients **understand people** and **inspire growth**.

At Kantar, we aim to create an inclusive workplace where everyone can grow and flourish, as well as helping our clients understand the diverse nature of their own customers. Diversity drives innovation and creativity, enabling us to better serve the needs of our clients. Inclusion creates a culture of belonging, where everyone is empowered to succeed.

We strive to drive Kantar's performance and profitability by focusing on the four strategic pillars of our I&D strategy:

- Inclusive Workplace - Building an inclusive culture where everyone can flourish
- Diverse Talent - Reflecting the diversity of our clients and communities
- Brand, Clients & Suppliers - Nurturing partnerships that inspire clients and enhance supplier diversity
- Community Engagement - Using our global influence and operate as advocates of inclusion, to give back to communities

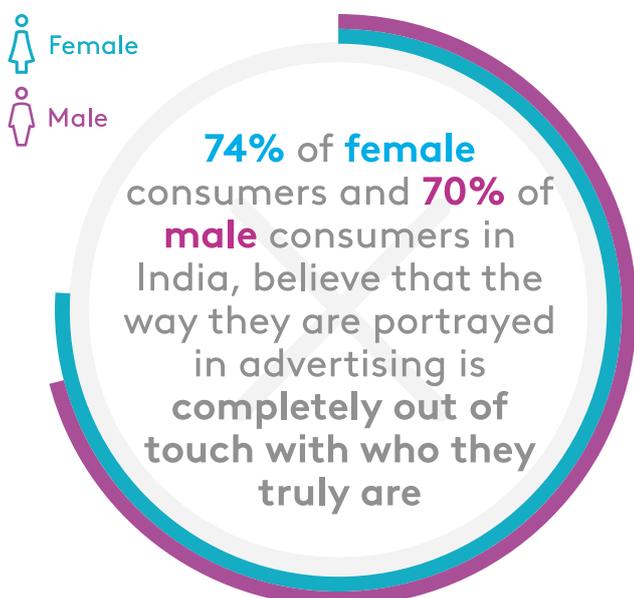
Most marketers would agree that showcasing *slice of life* is an established tool available in their arsenal towards effective advertising. However, advertising in its new avatar, not only needs to reflect the moments of truths around us, but can also be an important instrument of **change**, influencing values and beliefs in our society.

A proven opportunity in this space, as found by Kantar and The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), lies in mainstreaming positive gender portrayals. This can lead to an uplift both in the equity of women as well as the brands standing.

Advertising enjoys a unique place within the media landscape. With its sharp targeting, experiential nature, and by design frequency-led repetitive format - the role of advertising in embedding values and changing cultural codes cannot be denied or diluted.

Presentation of women in media and advertising, therefore, is a force that should be harnessed to break down harmful stereotypes. It is also why it is so important that gender stereotyping in media and advertising be monitored, challenged, and reinvented.

Indian consumers think that marketers are still 'getting it wrong'.



Source: Online survey done in 2019 N=1200, 6 metros, Male & Female, SEC A1 & A2, 16-49 Years

Consumers believe that unconscious gender bias still runs rife in Indian advertisements.

**“ Advertising in my country reinforces rather than helps eradicate harmful gender-based stereotypes ”**

**64%**

Source: Online survey done in 2019, n=1003, All India 6 metros , Male & Female, 16 plus

Advertisements are seen to use oversimplified images, ideas and gender roles. To make them easier to follow, advertisements tend to use 'stereotypes', which may end up reinforcing and perpetuating harmful stereotypes, according to ASCI's report **GenderNext**, 'a journey towards more progressive depictions of women in advertising'



Source: GENDERNEXT, A study by The Advertising Standards Council of India & Futurebrands

## Measuring consumer perception of gender portrayal in advertising

Kantar, as the world leader in helping brands develop impactful advertising, has consciously worked towards influencing positive cultural change through non-biased portrayal of women and men in advertising. This includes a collaboration with the Unstereotype Alliance, an industry-led initiative convened by UN Women to accelerate adoption and raise awareness of gender progressive advertising. This has led to the development of the Unstereotype metric (UM) which Kantar now includes as a measure of gender portrayal in advertising as an integral part of its Link™ communication pretesting solution. Thus, setting a foundation for marketers to review the potential of their creative executions on this dimension to and monitor progress over time.

Unstereotype metric\* (UM), in the long term, provides learning and context for gender progressive advertisements. UM is now measured for 14,000+ ads across 70 countries, 3,300+ brands and 251 categories.

**UM\* Question Structure**

- This advertising presents a positive image of the female character/s that sets a good example for others
- This advertising presents a positive image of the male character/s that sets a good example for others
- How much do you agree with the following statements? Strongly agree - Strongly disagree (5 pt scale)

In addition to using a consumer response metric on gender portrayal, Kantar maintains an inventory of execution elements that capture the depiction of genders in the ads that helps in building a larger understanding of how the content relates to the consumer perception.

Mapping learnings from advertising evaluated on their potential to deliver marketing ROI (using validated Link™ metrics) with consumer perceptions of gender portrayal, married with actual content characteristics have been the basis for larger global reviews now acknowledged as setting the agenda for inclusive advertising amongst the marketing community.

Kantar is pleased to share the topline learnings from annual review of Indian advertising for 2021.

## Unstereotyping in advertisements is expected to unlock higher marketing ROI

Progressive ads are more effective and trigger positive engagement – they are in general seen to be more enjoyable, relevant, different and even pleasantly surprising.

Progressive gender portrayals, not only impact brand equity and perceptions but also impact the likelihood of immediate sales generated.

Kantar uses two composite metrics to predict the effectiveness of a creative in both the **short term** and the **long term**. The STSL is **validated in driving sales** and the Brand Power Score provides a **validated prediction of an ad’s potential to build equity in the longer-term**.

The predicted ROI impact of positive people portrayals is stronger in ‘Emerging’ markets.

	More positive Female UM		More positive Male UM	
	Emerging	Developed	Emerging	Developed
<b>Brand Equity (Power)</b>	+39	+33	+37	+35
Meaningful	+40	+36	+38	+38
Different	+37	+29	+35	+32
<b>Short Term Sales Likelihood</b>	+23	+13	+24	+13
<b>Impact</b>	+25	+16	+27	+19

*Difference in average percentile for ads in the top quartile and bottom quartile on Unstereotype Metric.*

Within emerging countries, positive gender roles in advertising **have even higher impact for India.**

	More positive Female UM			
	India	Brazil	Mexico	Turkey
<b>Brand Equity (Power)</b>	+51	+41	+47	+43
<b>Short Term Sales Likelihood</b>	+32	+28	+33	+28

	More positive Male UM			
	India	Brazil	Mexico	Turkey
<b>Brand Equity (Power)</b>	+52	+38	+51	+39
<b>Short Term Sales Likelihood</b>	+31	+30	+35	+23

*Difference in average percentile for ads in the top quartile and bottom quartile on Unstereotype Metric*

Within different categories, females in India are seen to have a more positive gender portrayal within food and beverage advertisements followed by personal care. These women targeted categories are far more evolved in portraying gender roles relative to household categories where we are still holding a lot of baggage. Additionally, if we look closely, men are perceived to have more positive portrayal compared to women.

India	Food and Drink	Personal Care	Household
Average percentile, Female UM, 2021	60	53	41
Average percentile, Male UM, 2021	61	56	44

This impact is not only true for women, **progressive male role models also impact**

**business outcomes** across categories.

India All Regions	Female			Male		
	Food and Drink	Household	Personal Care	Food and Drink	Household	Personal Care
Power	50+	50+	56+	57+	59+	62+
Meaningful Percentile	49+	45+	56+	60+	59+	53+
Different Percentile	50+	52+	52+	68+	59+	49+
Salient Percentile	30+	24+	36+	17+	22+	59+
Short Term Sales Likelihood	25+	29+	39+	22+	25+	49+
Impact Percentile	30+	23+	36+	19+	22+	59+

*Difference in average percentile for ads in the top quartile and bottom quartile on Unstereotype Metric.*

Source: Kantar Link Database, India

The GenderNext study found that younger women see current stereotypical portrayals of the ideal woman, wife and mother in advertisements as extremely burdensome and uninspiring. They believe they and the women around them have much more agency in their own lives than those depicted in advertisements. Brands that wish to address this constituency now or in the future, should be careful to not alienate this important consumer group through stereotypical depictions.

### What leads to a positive portrayal of genders in advertisements?

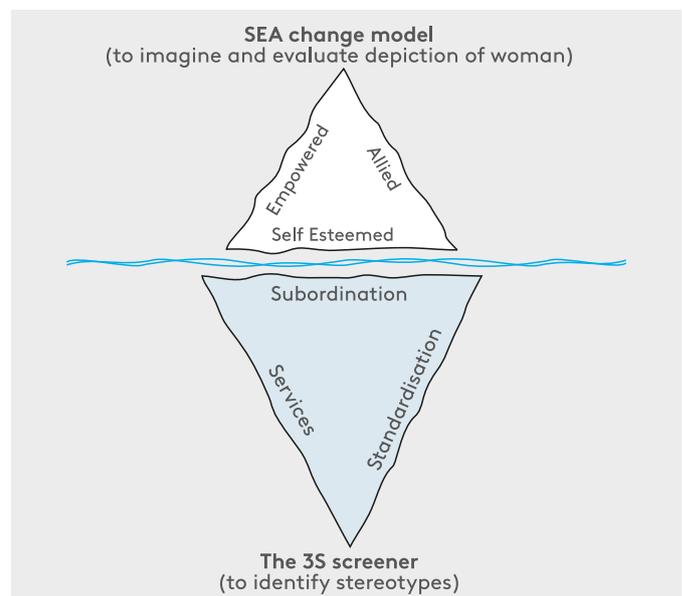
- **Presence** is perhaps the most straightforward and is easily measurable. Unfortunately, only presence of a gender is not enough. **Confident characterizations** is equally important.
- Consumers need to not only see reflections of themselves but also different **perspectives**. Making sure that the point of view is not “implicitly” male-specific is important.
- Positive character portrayals also come when beauty is used to show **personality** rather than just a way to suggest physical attraction.
- Depicting women as **“Self esteemed”** where her decisions and actions are fuelled by confidence rather than anxiety
- **Empowered** women who hold influence in the situation they are depicted in, rather than seek inordinate approval and validation from others
- Where others around her (family, colleagues etc) are shown as **Allies** in her journey rather than normalising or reinforcing hurdles she needs to overcome

Many of the drivers of positive gender portrayal also drive engagement with the advertisements – a key viewer reward that strengthens the efficiency of the ads.

### More initiatives for positive gender portrayals in Indian advertising

ASCI has developed a charter to further the journey towards creating more progressive depictions of women in advertising. ASCI, in collaboration with Futurebrands, has created a framework for marketing and advertising professionals to understand the nuances of gender portrayal and an inventory checklist for review of scripts or films. The SEA (Self -esteemed, Empowered, Allied) framework guides stakeholders by building empathy for the portrayed woman’s reality, her view of a situation and her place and power in it - and very importantly, distribute the responsibility for empowered moments beyond the woman alone.

The 3S (Service, Subordination, Standardization) screener provides a detailed checklist that can help advertisers avoid harmful gender stereotypes in advertisements



## So, as marketers, what should be our roadmap?

- Imbibe and socialize importance of positive gender portrayal in advertising and its impact on business and brands.
- Leverage ASCI's 3S screener and the SEA change self-evaluation model while developing and evaluating creative work
- Pre-test ads not just for marketing ROI in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in brand building, but also check for positive gender portrayal perceptions from a consumers' perspective, and monitor progress.

**In summary,** Kantar meta data from Link™ pre-testing and Unstereotype metric builds a business case for brands to pursue the strategy of mainstreaming positive gender portrayal. There is a clear and present reward for brands that seek to be at the forefront of embedding progressive gender roles and responses into the culture and initiating conversations around them. ASCI's SEA framework and S3 screener, are designed to help navigate the course of the brands that seek to do this.



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