

Press Release

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ASCI-FUTUREBRANDS UNVEIL THE GENDERNEXT REPORT ON DEPICTION OF WOMEN IN ADVERTISING



- GenderNext report maps gender depictions through an inclusive process involving advertisers, agencies, commentators, gender experts, policymakers and consumers
- Study finds that advertising needs to catch up with women, proposes the SEA Framework to give clear direction to marketers to help them navigate the complexities of gender depiction

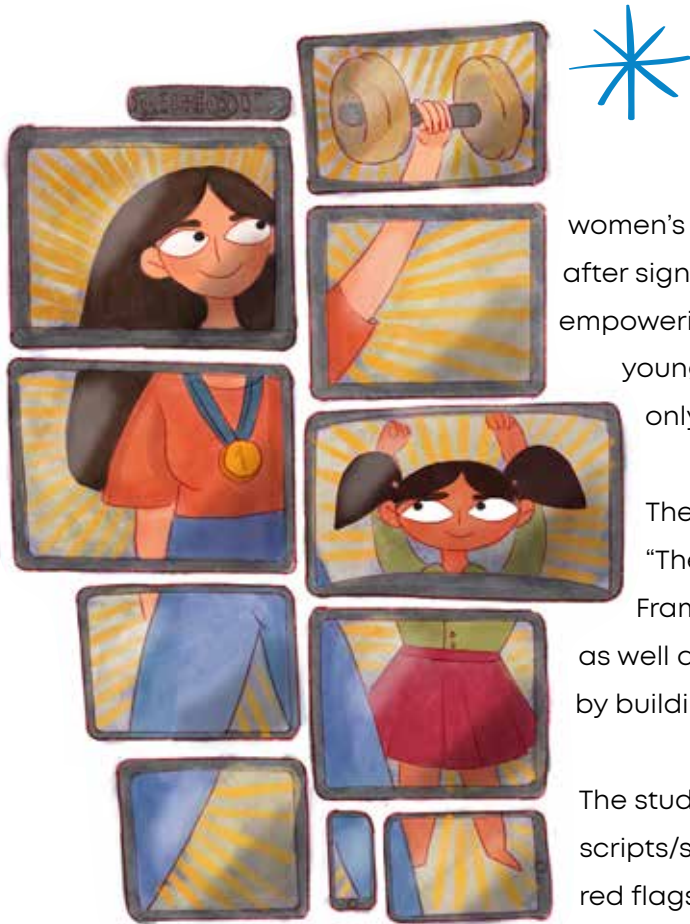
MUMBAI, 20th October, 2021: To help brands and advertising agencies shape gender narratives in a positive way, The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and Futurebrands, have unveiled the GenderNext study – a comprehensive actionable insight study on the representation of women in advertising.

GenderNext covers patterns of portrayals across multiple categories, such as personal care, fashion, beauty, home and hearth, gadgets and wheels, money and education. The study also touches upon how advertising portrays women versus how they see themselves and want to be seen.

According to Lipika Kumaran, the lead author of GenderNext, the study reveals that while there are some positive moves, mainstream advertising still heavily borrows from an inventory of overused, and sometimes harmful stereotypical tropes. A detailed study of over six hundred advertisements revealed several problematic tropes- such as sensualising the act of eating by women, showing women as spenders in financial advertising, women running around the house while others lounge around, male gaze acceptance in beauty ads, showing women as lower down in tech-hierarchy in gadget ads, male celebrities challenging and instructing women among many others.

Women interviewed across different life stages and town classes pointed out that it is not them but others in their sphere who lag behind them, and they are the ones in need of empowerment. They feel that advertising can be their ally in this journey. The study found that for young unmarried women, common stereotypes used in advertising such as women joyfully undertaking the drudgery of work was not aspirational at all. Typical





women's day ads that show women emerge victorious after significant struggle were not considered particularly empowering. Women are tired of ads showing young women being bestowed with freedoms only after putting up a fight.

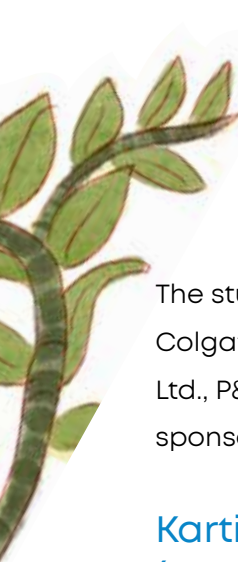
The study proposes a category agnostic framework "The SEA (Self-esteemed - Empowered - Allied) Framework" that aims to guide stakeholders in imagining as well as evaluating portrayals of women in their advertising by building empathy and aiding evaluation.

The study also proposes a 3S screener for scripts/storyboards, casting, styling to identify stereotype red flags. The screener looks at aspects of a) Subordination b) Service and c) Standardisation

Subhash Kamath, Chairman, ASCI said: "GenderNext acts as a guide for stakeholders – brand owners, marketers, advertising professionals – to aid the creation of more progressive depictions of women in advertising. The deep insights on women, and what they feel about advertising is a fantastic input into advertising creation, and we hope that brands and advertisers will be motivated by the findings to depict women in more progressive ways. We also intend to set up a task force to evaluate advertising guidelines on harmful stereotypes."


Santosh Desai, MD, Futurebrands Consulting said "As an influential form of popular culture, advertising has historically been a significant source for the propagation of gender stereotypes. While things are changing, what this study, initiated by ASCI and carried out by Futurebrands uncovers, is that gender continues to be represented in a skewed and discriminatory manner. Some obvious ways of stereotypes are less visible, but there are many other ways, both subtle and not-so-subtle, in which gender portrayals continue to be skewed. The GenderNext study has identified some common patterns of discrimination and has also created a framework that enables marketers to identify and eliminate such undesirable representations."

Manisha Kapoor, Secretary-General, ASCI added, "The report is only the first of the many initiatives ASCI will put together in this space. This is a continuing conversation."



The study was sponsored by Rio Pads, who were the Principal sponsor; Co-sponsors included Colgate Palmolive, Diageo India, Eureka Forbes Limited, Kellogg's, Mondelez India Foods Pvt. Ltd., P&G, Vivel; while Kotak Silk and Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. were on board as Associate sponsors.


Kartik Johari, VP of Marketing & Commerce, Nobel Hygiene Pvt Ltd (makers of Rio pads) said, "We are privileged to participate in this seminal study on our culture's perspective on femininity and womanhood. Advertising has the responsibility to take the lead on cultural conversations and to affect change. With this study, we hope to really create a guideline for lasting change which advertisers can use to authentically represent women across communication, and hopefully with it, start a national conversation around equality and humanity."



For this study, the primary research involved ad clinics with 160 respondents and 20 focus group discussions across 10 centres, in addition to tapping into Futurebrand's proprietary study Bharat Darshan. More than 300 people were spoken to via social media. All stakeholders such as national and regional advertisers, agency and creative heads, gender domain experts, policy makers and advocacy groups were consulted as part of the study enquiry.

About The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), established in 1985, is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising ensuring the protection of the interest of consumers. ASCI seeks to ensure that advertisements conform to its Code for Self-Regulation, which requires advertisements to be legal, decent, honest and truthful and not hazardous or harmful while observing fairness in competition. ASCI looks into complaints across ALL MEDIA such as Print, TV, Radio, hoardings, SMS, Emailers, Internet / website, product packaging, brochures, promotional material and point of sale material etc. In January 2017, the Supreme Court of India in its judgement affirmed and recognized the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for TV and Radio in India. ASCI's role has been acclaimed by various Government bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of AYUSH as well as the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB). MIB issued an advisory for a scroller providing ASCI's WhatsApp for Business number 77100 12345, to be carried by all TV broadcasters for consumers to register their grievance against objectionable advertisements. In 2021, ASCI signed an agreement with FSSAI





to track and report potentially misleading advertisements from the food & beverage sector. On the international front, in 2021, ASCI Secretary – General, Ms. Manisha Kapoor was elected as one of the four Vice-President’s on the Executive Committee of the International Council on Ad Self-Regulation (ICAS). Among several awards bestowed by the European Advertising Standards Alliance (EASA), ASCI bagged a Gold Global Best Practice Award for the Mobile App “ASCIonline” (2016), a special recognition for its “Guidelines for Celebrities in Advertising” at the first-ever ‘Global Awards for Effective Advertising Self-Regulation’ hosted by the ICAS (2019). In 2021, ASCI also won two ICAS awards, one for the ASCI scroll telecast across television in the ‘Best Awareness Raising Initiative’ and for its extensive digital suo-motu monitoring through NAMS initiative, in the ‘Special Category’. It also got a special mention in the ‘Best Sectoral Initiative’ category for its efforts and regulatory recognition of its Gaming Guidelines.



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