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The business case for positive gender portrayals in advertising is real, say ASCI and Kantar

Mumbai, April 20, 2022: Advertising in India is mainstream, all-pervasive and has a role in shaping our shared consciousness. And now, there is proof that progressive portrayals of gender in advertising benefit not only society but brands too.

The Advertising Standards Council of India, and Kantar, world's leading data, insights, and consulting firms, have collaborated to release a white paper that puts together data and insights making the business case for mainstreaming positive gender depictions.

GenderNext, a study undertaken by the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and Futurebrands, looked at 600 ads across different categories and spoke to consumers across 10 cities. The study revealed that real women considered themselves more progressive than depictions in mainstream advertising. Hence, it is not surprising that Kantar, a leader in ad testing in India, found that progressive portrayals of women result in advertising that is more effective. Indian advertisements that depicted progressive gender roles had a positive impact of as much as 32% in short-term product sales and improved a brand's equity by a whopping 51%. These results and insights prove that progressive depictions of women can drive engagement with brands in a major way.

Kantar's study, using the Unstereotype Metric (UM), in association with the Unstereotype Alliance, measures the response of consumers towards brand advertising on aspects pertaining to gender depictions. The study shows that brands can unlock higher marketing ROI through the use of progressive portrayals. In fact, within emerging markets, positive gender roles have an even higher impact for India.

The GenderNext study found that a majority of mainstream advertising continues to use harmful and non-aspirational portrayals of women. The study proposes the 'SEA' framework and the 3S screener for marketing and advertising professionals to understand the nuances of gender portrayal and an inventory checklist for the

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review of scripts or films. This helps not only to identify implicit and regressive stereotypes but offers a model to help brands create advertising that is more compelling and powerful. It is expected that the use of such frameworks will provide advertisers with a way to improve their marketing ROIs.

Preeti Reddy, Chairwoman, South Asia, Insights Division, Kantar, said:

“Mainstreaming positive gender portrayals is an exciting opportunity for creating engaging and impactful advertising. While taking a firm stand against inequality is commendable, there is space to tell vibrant brand stories between the extreme ends of objectifying and deifying women. Without being preachy, subtle subversions on slice-of-life moments, gender roles and responses have the potential to make the viewing experience rewarding for consumers as well as to plant the seed of a fresh mental gender map. Positive gender portrayal is not just about occasional tributes but also about a more conscious integration of progressive portrayal of genders in advertising. Such advertising holds the potential to deliver higher marketing ROI and to help create a more inclusive world.”

Manisha Kapoor, CEO & Secretary General, ASCI, said: *“Advertisers can no longer afford to ignore the issue of progressive depictions of women. Women, particularly the younger generation, reject the implicit and explicit stereotyping that creeps into advertising. Women see progressive advertising as their ally in their journeys to more fulfilling lives. It is amply clear that it makes good business sense for brands to portray positive gender roles, adding real value to business and society.”*

About The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI)

Established in 1985, the Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) is committed to the cause of self-regulation in advertising and protecting consumer interest. Over the past few decades, ASCI has established a robust mechanism for handling complaints against objectionable advertising content and this has gained recognition from the industry as well as the government. ASCI is a part of The Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act's Advertising Code. ASCI's code is also mentioned in the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, and

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appended in advertising guidelines of All India Radio, Drug Controller Authority of India, Press Council of India's norms of journalistic conduct, among others. The ASCI code is constantly updated to keep pace with the needs of consumers and society, as well as changes in the advertising and media environment.

Besides complaint handling, ASCI also works on initiatives to educate and advise the advertising ecosystem so that advertising may be more responsible, thereby protecting both consumer interests and brand reputation.

The ASCI's [GenderNext](#) report intended to help brands shape gender narrative in a positive way, maps gender depictions through an inclusive process involving advertisers, agencies, commentators, gender experts, policymakers and consumers

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



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- Community Engagement – Using our global influence and operate as advocates of inclusion, to give back to communities