

**KANTAR**

**ASCI** The Advertising Standards Council of India

**#UNSTEREOTYPE**  
ALLIANCE

# Mainstreaming diversity & inclusiveness in Indian advertising





## Background:

Kantar, as the world leader in helping brands develop impactful advertising, has consciously worked towards influencing positive cultural change through the 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, raise awareness of gender-progressive advertising and eradicate harmful stereotypes in advertising content.

Kantar includes a Gender Unstereotype Metric in advertising as an integral part of its Link™ communication pretesting solution. In addition to that, Kantar maintains an inventory of executional elements that capture the depiction of genders in the ads that helps in building a larger understanding of how the content relates to 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.

The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI), the self-regulatory body of Indian advertising, and Unstereotype Alliance briefed Kantar to consolidate learnings on the state of D & I in Indian advertising and present the same at the D&I Edge Summit held on 7th Dec 2023 at JIO World Convention Centre.

To this end, Kantar pulled together learning from Link™ ad evaluation database, and in addition, Kantar reviewed over 261 new ads that went on air in Oct 2023 (across 13 languages) to build a D&I snapshot of the ads that consumers typically get to see in India.

This document details the salient findings from this learning initiative.

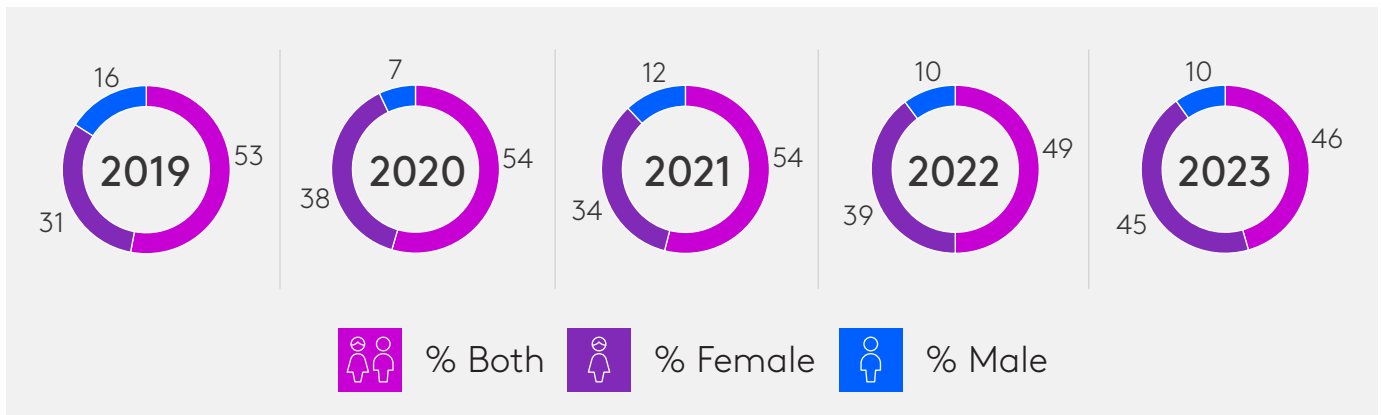


# Observations on Diversity and Inclusiveness from the ads evaluated by Kantar through its Link™ evaluation framework

Across the spectrum of dimensions of D & I, Indian advertising has done well to ensure Presence for females. Unlike the global trend of women having

a solo presence in only a fourth of the ads tested by Kantar, in India we see much higher 45% of ads featuring only women in their narrative.

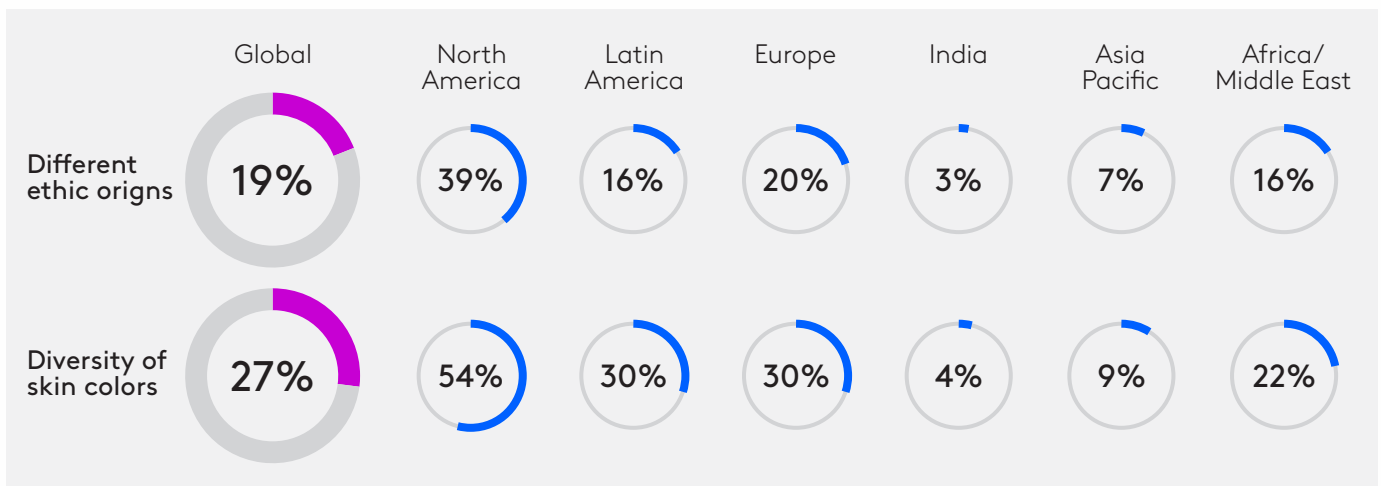
## Representation of Gender in ads - India



Source: Kantar Link Database (2019-23)

However, in contrast to most other market, India is a distance away in terms of celebrating the

inherent diversity in its ethnicity and skin colour.



Source: Kantar Link Database (2019-23)



In terms of representation of wider spread of age-groups, India gets closer to the global pattern.

40 or over	Global	India
% Female	25	16
% Male	33	27

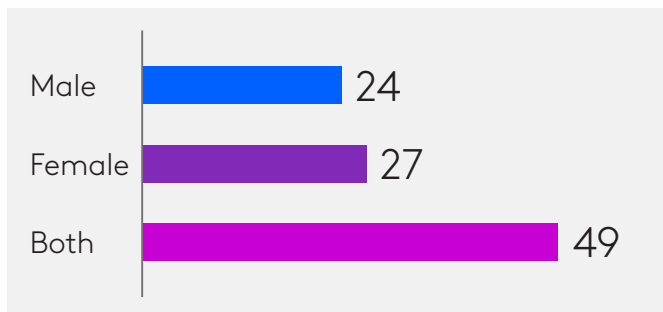
Age Groups representation, Source: Kantar Link Database (2019-23)

However, representation of LGBTQ+ and people with disability remains a challenge across the countries.

### Observations from the diversity and inclusiveness profile of the NEW television ads that went on air in October 2023.

Kantar team reviewed over 261 new ads that went on air in Oct 2023 (across 13 languages) to build a D&I snapshot of the ads that consumers typically get to see in India.

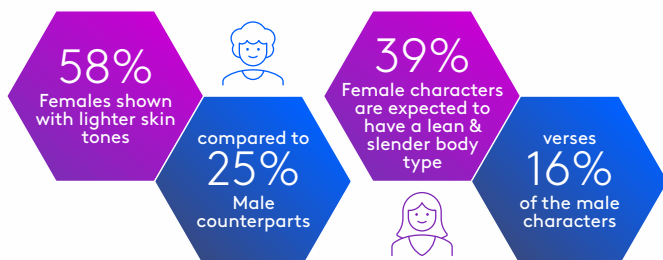
In line with the profile of ads tested by Kantar, Presence of females is high with more than three-quarters of ads featuring them.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India

However, the diversity in portrayal is seen to be weak among the ads that go on air.

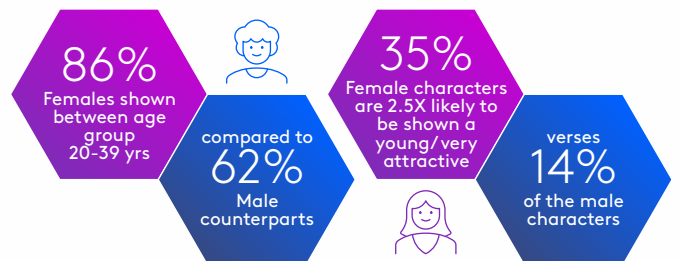
Within the depiction of men and women, women characters are more stereotyped and shown as fair and lean versus men.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India.

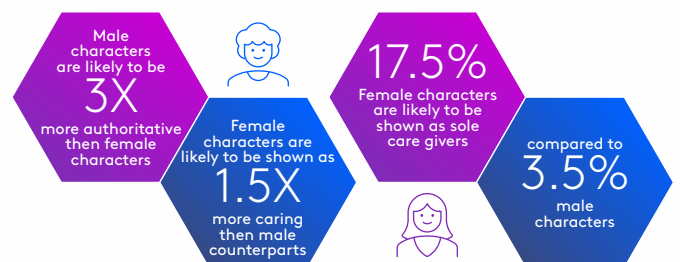


Women are also shown as younger & confirming to more stereotypical definitions of beauty.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India

Portrayal of women remains closely anchored to care. In contrast, Men are shown in 3X more authoritative than females.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India

In line with profile of ads evaluated by Kantar, less than 1% ads portrayed overtly gay/lesbian characters or featured inclusion of portraying characters with disability. In addition, only less than 5% of the ads featured elderly characters.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India



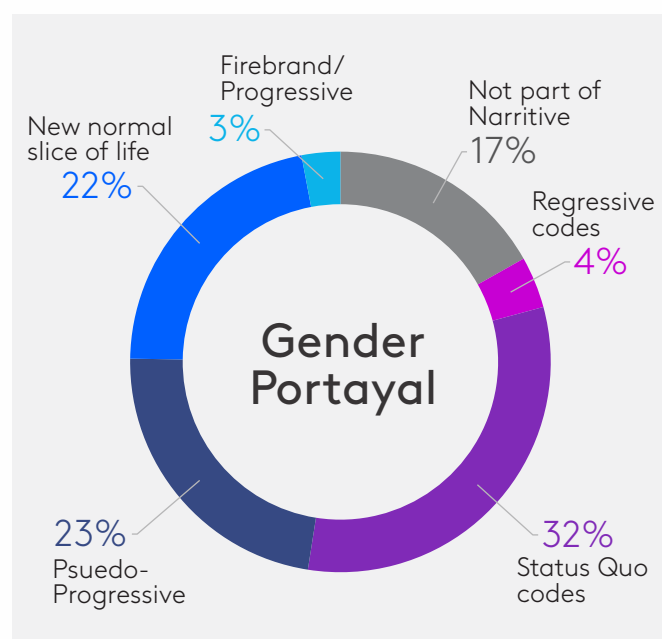
# Gender Narratives in Indian Advertising

From the perspective of diversity and inclusiveness, with gender being most basic dimension, seven broad patterns emerge -

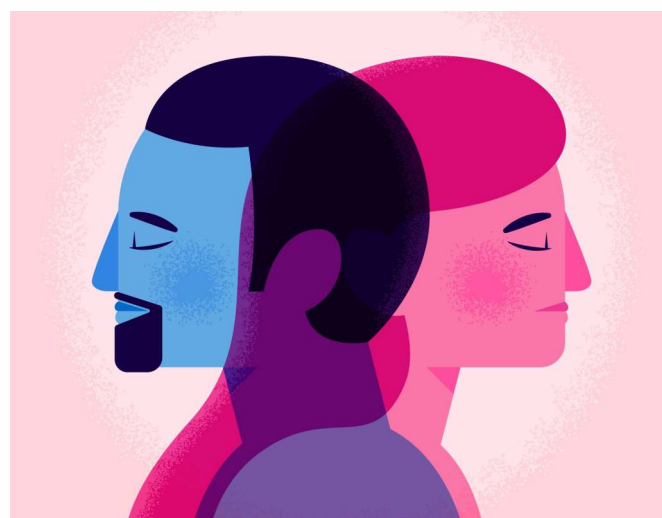
- 1. No representation of women:** They are not a part of the narrative; or in some cases, they are used as background props.
- 2. Regressive codes:** There is low representation of women in the ads with low control over their lives and the narrative. Such ads portray negative stereotypes around women- patronizing them, objectifying the body, and using them for the male gaze. Showcasing them as uninformed, helpless, and ignorant characters.
- 3. Status quo codes:** There is equal representation of women, however, they do not own the narrative. The story is from the point of view of the family or child, lacks perspective and agency. Not a regressive portrayal of women, but in traditional roles and characters. - Ex- associated with the kitchen, worrying about the child, taking care of the house.
- 4. Status quo codes but moving towards progress:** Narratives which have equal representation of women. They own the narrative and characterization is confident and contemporary. While her physical appearance and tonality cues progressiveness, stories do not have progressive outlook.
- 5. New normal Slice of Life:** Narratives celebrating the new normal slice of life. Exchange of traditional gender roles reflecting a more progressive theme. It brings in a fresh perspective. Most advertisements are from the woman's point of view, and they are shown to have control over their lives. They have strong and meaningful character portrayal.
- 6. Firebrand/Progressive codes:** Challenge regressive /conventional values and behaviors. They provoke conversations and encourage new behaviors.
- 7. Beyond gender codes:** Social change conversations around humanitarian issues which move beyond gender portrayal. They speak about inclusion, a larger social cause and challenging the regressive and stereotypical cultural and religious norms which still exist.

In the recent years, we are observing a rise in advertisements that normalize positive gender roles for men and women. We see men engaging in activities such as washing utensils, doing laundry, and in the kitchen – not just brewing Coffee for their spouses but rustling up meals for the family! Moving ahead from rising questions on sharing the load, brands have started to celebrate the progressive gender roles and portrayals. We see women advocating technology and financial products & services, automobiles and asserting their agency. And all these without fuss.

Out of 186 new ads released on TV in the month of October that featured women, nearly every other ad featured them in a progressive narrative where they were in control of the narrative, and/or part of stories that celebrated the new normal slice of life wherein roles within a home are gender agnostic.



Source: Review of all new ads that went on air on mainstream television in Oct'23 in India



# Business Case for Diversity and Inclusiveness in Advertising

Kantar uses two composite metrics to predict the effectiveness of a creative in both the short term and the long term. Short-term Sales Likelihood is the predicted probability that the ad will drive a short-term sales uplift and the Brand Power Score provides a validated prediction of an ad's potential to build equity in the longer-term.

In addition to evaluating the potential of ads on the above dimensions, Kantar measures the consumer perception on portrayal of gender and representation of society. Kantar's Unstereotype Metric, created in collaboration with Unstereotype Alliance also enables organizations to test their advertising content.

## The Gender Unstereotype Metric (GUM)

- 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?

## The Progressive Unstereotype Metric (PUM)

- The way people are presented in the ad represents a modern and progressive view of society.

How much do you agree with the following statements?

Strongly agree - Strongly disagree (5 pt scale)



## Unstereotyping in advertisements is predicted to unlock higher marketing ROI across the world and in India too!

Gender 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.

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

INDIA	Positive Female UM	Positive male UM
Brand Equity (Power)	+54	+59
Short Term Sales Likelihood	+32	+38

Source: Ads Tested by Kantar in 2022



## Massive results seen for inclusive advertising too at a global level.

There's more evidence from the Link database on how people are portrayed, rather than just their presence that makes a difference to how effective the creative is.

While presence is the first and the critical step in crafting advertisements that reflect and build a society that values all its constituents, we see that featuring them positive portrayals is likely to amplify their potential to build brands both in short and long term.



Source: Kantar Link Database, Global data

In the past, lack of inclusion may have come from fear of alienating audiences that aren't like the people represented in ads. But consumer response indicates that showing people who are different from the audience doesn't harm the ad and if done well, it helps you by improving the ad's ROI.

Hence this makes a strong business case for brands to pursue the strategy of mainstreaming positive gender portrayal & inclusiveness, ensuring clear and present reward for brands that seek to be at the forefront of embedding progressive portrayals.

However, it would be a misstep to treat gender progressiveness and inclusiveness as a new fad or a quick fix for more fundamental issues. It should be championed in an organic manner, true to the ethos of your brand. Approaching diversity and inclusiveness from the perspective of Brand Purpose, and crafting advertisements that pitch the purpose narrative holds significant potential when executed well. Having said that there are infinite creative possibilities for brands to do their bit in mainstreaming diversity and inclusiveness in their day-to-day business.



## The Unstereotype Alliance's 3Ps Framework provides guidance that can be easily applied to marketing communications in order to create progressive portrayals of all people.

### Presence

- Does the communication reflect the diversity of the people in our markets?
- Does the communication feature a range of people that are representative of the cultural and ethnic mix in your market?
- Think beyond gender to age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexual orientation, body size, religion, ability etc - Inclusive casting.
- Choosing central characters from underrepresented groups without the story centering around their identity could be a pathway for progression

### Perspective

- Make sure the 'point of view' is not implicitly male
- People need to not only see themselves but also their perspectives
- Need to facilitate Under-represented or misrepresented people not only see themselves, but their perspectives being represented in culture. It is vital that the way we perceive, observe, and interact with the such people be fundamentally re-imagined.
- Crafting stories that Illustrating the brand message with a story centered around characters' identity could be a pathway for progression.

### Personality

- Show people, especially women, owning their own behaviour and having control of their lives
- Use beauty as a way to show personality rather than as a way to suggest physical attraction
- Bring alive personalities that are complex and layered

## KANTAR

### About Kantar:

Kantar is the world's leading marketing data and analytics business and an indispensable brand partner to the world's top companies, including 96 of the world's 100 biggest advertisers. We combine the most meaningful attitudinal and behavioural data with deep expertise and technology platforms to track how people think and act. We help clients develop the marketing strategies that shape their future and deliver sustainable growth.

Visit [www.kantar.com](http://www.kantar.com) to know more.



### 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. 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.

Visit [www.ascionline.in](http://www.ascionline.in) to know more



### About the Unstereotype Alliance:

The Unstereotype Alliance is a thought and action platform working to remove harmful stereotypes in media and advertising content. Convened by UN Women - the United Nations entity for Gender Equality - the Unstereotype Alliance brings together partners and seeks to use the advertising industry as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world. The Alliance contributes to empowering people in all their diversity (race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, LGBTIQ+, language, education, etc.) to help create an equitable world.