



Diversity of India missing in advertising - says ASCI-UA report

Missed opportunity as ads depicting diversity score better with consumers

Mumbai, April 16, 2024: In a country as diverse and multi-cultural as India, advertising that caters to this diverse population is surprising flat in its representation. There is low representation of various regional or ethnic groups, different body types, skin colours, and age-groups, and almost a negligible representation of the LGBTQI community, or of people with disabilities. Some of these representations are missing even in regional advertising. On a positive note, there is a positive trend in representation of women, although the quality of representation still has some catching up to do.

These findings are part of an updated report titled "Mainstreaming Diversity & Inclusiveness in Indian Advertising" by The Advertising Standards Council of India (ASCI) and the UN Women Convened Unstereotype Alliance (UA). Developed in partnership with Kantar, a global leader in brand research, this comprehensive study delves into the realm of diversity and inclusion (D&I) within Indian advertising, shedding light on evolving trends, challenges, and opportunities.

The study scrutinised over 261 ads in 13 languages, and mapped them on 8 dimensions of Age, Gender, Sexual orientation, Race/ethnicity, Physical appearance, Social class, Disabilities, and Religion. It noted that Indian ads are doing well on the gender dimension, but are weak on other aspects.

Report Highlights

Analysis of Indian ads by Kantar's Link™ Evaluation Framework indicates a steady increase in female representation, with 45% of commercials featuring women alone, surpassing the global average of 25%. Within the depiction of men and women, women characters are more stereotyped and shown as fair and lean versus men. Portrayal of women is also anchored to care-giving, and that of men to authority.

The report noted that less than 1% of the ads featured members of the LGBTQI community or people with disabilities. About 4% of the ads featured older people above 65 years of age.

In contrast to many other markets, India is a distance away in terms of celebrating the inherent diversity in its ethnicity and skin colour. Only 3% of Indian ads had representation from ethnic groups vs. the global average of 19%, and only 4% showed diversity of skin tone vs. the global average of 27%.

The study uses the Progressive Unstereotype Metric (PUM) to measure consumer responses to representation in advertising. PUM measures consumers response as to whether the way people are presented in the ad represents a modern and progressive view of society. Global studies have shown that positive PUM results in higher brand affinity and intent to purchase.

Manisha Kapoor, CEO and Secretary-General, ASCI, said, “Progressive advertising works better for society and for brands. Ads that are stuck in stereotypical depictions are missing a trick in connecting with India’s diverse consumer base. Collaborating with the Unstereotype Alliance and other partners, ASCI is committed to guiding and supporting the industry in achieving wider D&I representation.”

Susan Ferguson, Country Representative, UN Women India, said, “As conveners of the Unstereotype Alliance India National Chapter, we are dedicated to fostering inclusivity within the advertising landscape. Over the past two years, our alliance has brought together brands, organizations, and individuals committed to leveraging advertising and media to drive a cultural shift towards diversity and inclusion. We are proud of our collective efforts to dismantle stereotypes and champion a more inclusive advertising industry.”

Soumya Mohanty, MD & CCO- South Asia, Insights Division, Kantar, said, “We are proud to partner with ASCI and the Unstereotype Alliance in shedding light on the evolving landscape of diversity and inclusion in Indian advertising. Through our research and insights, we aim to drive a more inclusive and representative industry that resonates with diverse audiences.”

[READ THE FULL REPORT HERE.](#)

About 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, sexuality, language, education, etc.) to help create an equitable world.

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 to know more.

For media enquiries, reach out to Amanjit Singh- amanjit.singh@kantar.com

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 consumer interests. 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 recognised the self-regulatory mechanism as an effective pre-emptive step to statutory provisions in the sphere of advertising content regulation for television and radio in India. ASCI’s role has been acclaimed by various Government bodies including The Department of Consumer Affairs (DoCA), the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), the Ministry of AYUSH as well as the Ministry of Information

PRESS RELEASE



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 grievances against objectionable advertisements.

In August 2023, the ASCI Academy, a flagship program of ASCI, was launched to build the capacity of all stakeholders to create responsible and progressive advertising. ASCI Academy aims to raise standards of advertising content through training, education, outreach, and research on the preventive aspects of advertising self-regulation.

On the international front, in 2023, ASCI CEO and Secretary General, Ms. Manisha Kapoor, was re-elected as one of the four vice-presidents 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 "ASCI online" (2016), with, 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-moto monitoring through the 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. ASCI received the ICAS Global "Inspiration Award" in April 2023 for successfully promoting ASCI as a thought leader and developing impactful engagement with various stakeholders.

The Advertising Standards Council of India	Avian WE
Manisha Kapoor - CEO & SG, ASCI manisha@ascionline.in	Suman Das Sarma M: +91 98200 51946 sumans@avianwe.com
Hilda Macwan M: +91 966 5050 812 hilda@ascionline.in	Aniket Singh Chandel M: +91 9987572883 aniketc@avianwe.com