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When will advertising embrace diversity, gender, and race equality and start reflecting the real world?

Graphic design within advertisements helps build the world around us by extending societal/cultural norms and standards, it can be the difference between becoming progressive and embrative or close-minded, stereotypical, and prejudiced. "The portrayal of women in advertising is a prolific research topic and extant studies have emphasized the negative attitudes of female consumers toward stereotypic depictions of women in advertising in general." (Grau and Zotos, 2016).

Gender and racial inequality in advertising is an ongoing pandemic that affects people psychologically, including depression, anxiety, and other serious, sometimes debilitating conditions, including post-traumatic stress disorder and substance use disorders (American Psychological Association, 2020). Commercial advertising contributes to inequality and suggests subtle biases. There are television commercials from the 1990s that can still be seen today that tend to portray white men as powerful, white women as sex objects, African American men as aggressive, and African American women as inconsistent (Browne, 1998). Ads that promote equality and diversity

will improve people's self-worth, acceptance, and outlook on life overall, helping to put an end to discrimination.

A study from NPR (a broadcasting, and media production business) asked respondents if racism would eventually die out with the passing of long-time bigots. More than 80% said the next generation would not push out racism. "The further we get away from the idea that one skin colour or race is better than the other, the better. Past generations had these ideas, and they were spread to the next generation and the next" (Donella, 2017).).

Because there is no variation in modelling or makeup, clothing advertisements allude to psychological problems like anorexia and body dysmorphia. When asked about their physical traits in themselves and idealised models, participants in a study on men's fashion appeared to express body anxiety and negative perceptions of advertisements. They also rejected muscle as a symbol of masculinity and desired to see more diverse models in fashion advertising. (Barry, 2014). Dove, a cosmetics brand, published a Facebook advertisement in 2017 to promote body lotion before acknowledging they "missed the mark." The advertisement featured a black woman taking off her top to reveal a white woman beneath, ostensibly after applying Dove body lotion. The white woman then takes off her top and transforms into a woman from the Middle East. (Slawson, 2021)



(Dove, 2017)

To reflect the diverse community more accurately, racial diversity in simulation product ads needs to be changed. Manikins within catalogues/brochures were examined, a total of 2035 body parts and 395 full-sized manikins, 94% were White and 6% were Black, a disproportionate representation of the population. Increased self-esteem and more inclusive learning settings would result from changing the representation of diversity in the media. (Foronda, Baptiste, Ockimey, 2017)

In recent events within the coronavirus, more informative designs fall short of the mark; the government withdraws a "sexist" stay-at-home advertisement that stereotypes women; the image showed women home-schooling children and performing household duties, while the only man featured was unwinding on a sofa. Three sequences featured women cleaning, ironing, and instructing young children, perpetuating the stereotype that women are solely in charge of tidying up the mess while the male unwinds. (BBC News. 2021).



(BBC News. 2021)

Women are more likely than men to lose their employment or be left to care for children, and less than four in ten women in the UK believe the government is focusing on the problems that matter most to them, according to research by the Fawcett Society, a charity advocating for equal rights. (Fawcett Society, 2021).

Burger King introduced the "Be your way" campaign in 2014, which was a play on the 40-year-old phrase "Have it your way" and the Proud Whopper. The campaign was created in support of the LGBTQ community. Since 1957, customers had been consuming the same flame-grilled Whopper. What made it unique from the others, then? On its rainbow-colored wrapper, it included a special message for BK customers: "We are all the same inside."



(Burger King, 2014)

During Sunday's pride march, customers questioned how this Whopper differed from a standard burger, and cashiers simply said, "I don't know." When they bit into the rainbow-colored wrapper and tasted the burger, the secret was revealed: absolutely nothing is new about it. We Are All the Same Inside is a second sentence that is added to the wrapper's interior to further underline the concept. (Steinmetz, 2014).

Cameras were rolling on the day of the 2014 Pride Parade to capture reactions to the hamburger's introduction. Unsurprisingly, Burger King's pride promotion, the Proud Whopper, and its distinctive language sparked tremendous reactions, creating meaningful and empowering moments for both the company and its clients. The younger clients' response was enthusiastic, vehement, and emotional; their age range was 18 to 24. According to the author, Burger King restaurants have always been locations where customers can enjoy delectable food, let their guard down, and be themselves without worrying about being criticized.

Over all social media platforms, BK's film documenting the audience's reactions received 7 million views. Over 5.3 million people have watched the YouTube video as of this writing. The Burger King Mclamore Foundation, which awards scholarships to LGBT high school students, received money from the chain's sales.

Burger King reached out to their target audience of 18- to 24-year-olds while making a comment on an important social problem. 47 percent of consumers under the age of 24 who participated in the Google Consumer Survey say they are more likely to support a business after seeing an advertisement with an equality theme (compared to 30 percent of all age groups combined). (Snyder, 2015) And that is a notable example of valuing differences.



(Sainsbury, 2020)

The persona known as "The Racist" is made up. constantly evasive Nobody identifies as one. It does not seem to have a face on it. Oh my God, do we hear it, though. particularly in relation to social networking.

It rang out once more this week as the trending topics on Twitter pierced the hearts of Sainsbury's publicity staff for both good and terrible reasons.

The supermarket's choice to feature a black family reflects the variety of modern-day Britain. Being black and British have not suddenly started to be incompatible. Instead, many people's discomforts at having to face that reality is a symptom of a deeper problem that has been simmering for years: the notion that racism does not exist in the UK. a family of mixed races.

In a series of home movies, the clip depicts an all-black family getting ready to celebrate Christmas together. The daughter and her father also discuss how to make the best gravy during a phone call that they share. But the reality was quite different. After the commercial went viral, "all hell broke loose," according to comedian Funmbi Omotayo.

Some social media users claim that Sainsbury's should be boycotted because they are 'virtue signalling' and 'divisive' by not showing a mixed family. (Sainsbury, 2020)

"You could just rebrand as Blackbury's," "Where are all the Brits?" Among the responses were, "You've managed to completely alienate the few remaining White consumers you had," and others.

It would seem that a black family is unworthy of a Christmas advertisement. It raises the question of what precisely a black family is entitled to. (The Independent, 2021)

Others praised the grocery store for the advertisement and said they could identify with the family's Christmas customs.

“Personally, I adore this advertisement. It is low budget, just like all of our Christmases this year, and it is about FAMILY & FOOD, which is all I care about at Christmas. It feels SUPER British with all the garish decorations and the 90s/00s colour grading.” penned one.

Another said: “This is an ad for gravy mate. They did not hire white people, that is the only difference. If it were only white people, would you be thinking that POC could not buy Sainsbury’s gravy? no. Shows how alienated you feel when you do not see yourself. Imagine it was like that all the time.” (Sainsbury, 2020)

In the UK, it is now against the law to use gender stereotypes in advertising and is generally frowned upon / seen as illegal

The United Kingdom's Advertising Standards Authority issued the ban in December, giving it a six-month grace period before it went into effect. That proclamation followed the ASA's 64-page research on how gender stereotypes in advertisements affect the public and a few experts. “May contribute to unequal gender outcomes in public and private elements of people’s lives.” (ASA, 2018)

The study was prompted by a string of critically condemned advertisements in the United Kingdom, including those for a Protein World weight loss drink with the tagline “Are you beach body ready?” a baby formula commercial showing a boy becoming a mathematician and a girl becoming a ballet dancer. It also comes in response to a broader public concern about the negative effects of advertising, particularly on children, including the ASA's decision to penalize Gucci for employing "unhealthily thin" models in a 2016 ad campaign. (The Guardian. 2022.)



(The Guardian. 2022.)

"Advertisements must not feature gender stereotypes that are likely to cause injury, or serious or widespread offense," the new directive, which provides numerous examples. Advertisements are not allowed to depict people "failing to achieve a task specifically because of their gender" a man's incapacity to change a baby's diaper; a woman's inability to park a car, for instance, imply that new mothers "should prioritise their beauty or home cleanliness over their emotional health" or show "stereotypical personality qualities" for children.

Additionally, this new legislation forbids advertisements that do not adhere to gender stereotypes and "associate physical features with success in the romantic or social domains."

It also does not prohibit the depiction of people undertaking stereotypical tasks (e.g., women shopping or men doing at-home construction projects). Advertisements may still be gender targeted.

The rule's clarification states that advertisements may still include "glamorous, attractive, successful, aspirational, or healthy individuals or lifestyles." (Vox, 2022)

Since then, a large number of feminists have advocated for substantive equality, a definition of equality that measures equality in terms of results and applies policy remedies that, depending on the situation, may require treating groups differently or equally. This later interpretation of equality served as the foundation for the 1984 Royal Commission on Equality in the Workplace, which had an impact on the creation of Canadian legislation measures to address job discrimination. The Employment Equity Act of 1986 was created as a result of this commission and required applicable businesses to gather and disclose data for target groups¹⁴ as well as analyse formal and informal policies and procedures with the aim of lowering systematic barriers. (StudyBoss. March 2019.)

The study described here is not the first of its sort; other research has examined how diversity in advertising affects consumer perception of a business. To determine whether consumer demand for more personalization and tailored advertisements was still as high as it was in 1994, Adobe, a well-known digital marketing business, performed research on more than 2,000 people worldwide. The organization examined how diversity is offered and targeted in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States across decades, genders, ethnicities, and sexual orientations to see if it connects with brand promotion and consumer involvement.

According to Adobe, most Americans (61%) value diversity in advertising, 38 percent are more likely to trust firms that feature greater diversity in their ads, and 34 percent have boycotted a brand because their identity was not represented in its advertising. Consider that over a third of LGBTQ+,

African American, and Millennial consumers said that seeing greater diversity in commercials affected their likelihood to purchase goods or services from a brand to put things into perspective. according to Adobe (Adobe, 2019). To put it another way, a company's readiness to include diversity into its marketing plans may have an impact on its revenue.

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Advertising has unquestionably altered over time. Our research has nonetheless made clear just how much work remains. Furthermore, it has greatly advanced our understanding of how to overcome the current dearth of diversity and inclusion in advertising.

Advertising and marketing have the power to affect both individual and group beliefs, ways of thinking, and behaviours. Diverse and inclusive marketing messages can significantly improve the lives of children and adolescents because children and their families are constantly exposed to advertising and media.

Stereotyping in marketing and advertising is still pervasive and can be harmful, harming children's self-esteem, aspirations, and health, especially mental health. It is based on gender, race, ethnicity, culture, disability, family structure, and many other characteristics of identity. Stereotypes that promote discrimination can also affect children by limiting their opportunities to live honourable lives, especially for excluded and disadvantaged kids.

Gender stereotypes can restrict girls' agency and reduce their chances for success in education and the workforce. Male participation in family life may be restricted, and their propensity for gender-based violence may increase.

Negative stereotypes based on race, ethnicity, or handicap, for example, are damaging to children and frequently coexist with other dangers. Prejudice based on race and ethnicity, for instance, has been linked to poverty, poorer levels of educational attainment and completion, and greater rates of school abandonment, which are particularly high among girls with disabilities. A key component of attaining equity and inclusion is encouraging positive portrayal through the marketing and advertising of children's products and content.

You may say that leadership and management are absolutely responsible for building inclusive cultures. Every leader and manager should actively promote diversity and inclusion, but organisations must also provide them with the resources to do so.

Promoting variety is the first step toward actual integration and acceptance, not just "tolerance."

We can learn to deal with differences in a way that prevents them from being a problem by increasing contact with individuals who are different from us and interacting with them. (O'Boyle, 2020)

These, perhaps, will be the initial steps towards reducing the false beliefs and prejudices that encourage discrimination.

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