

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

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Context Page

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In 2021 a study made by NewsCred showed that “91% of marketers agreed that there was still room for growth in showcasing diversity in their marketing materials.” (Miller, 2021) This implies that brands and marketing agencies know they need to add more diversity into their campaigns whether that is people of colour or people who are part of the LGBTQ+ community yet they are not doing so. From this, we gather an understanding that the marketing agencies know where they are going wrong, but they are still not doing anything about it despite them not doing anything about it. Another statement added by NewsCred said “82.6% of those working in the industry are white” (Miller, 2021) This highlights that there isn’t much thought going into whom the marketers cast when creating their adverts so there isn’t much room for someone to step up and give creative thoughts when it comes to putting a person of colour in the advert. Throughout this essay, I will be looking at how the advertising industry embraces diversity, gender, and race equality to see if this is done fairly and if it has changed throughout history. The first topic I will be discussing is how were women being portrayed in advertising throughout history. During this topic, I will explore how women are seen in ads and how they are positioned in ways to make them look more appealing and see what language is used by doing this it will give me an insight into how they were portrayed. I have decided to talk about this topic as it is not talked about enough and it is morally wrong what ad agencies did to portray women back in the early 70s to the mid-90s. The second topic I will be discussing is how the transgender community is shown in advertisements from the early 90s to now in 2022. From this, I can have a clear judgment of how they are shown and what connotations are made of them from these advertisements. Moreover, I will look at videos of the past and present and also print work to see how transgender

advertisements have evolved if that be positive or negative. The next topic I will be discussing is how people with disabilities are shown in advertisements by looking at this topic in depth I can see how much advertising agencies put in the effort to include people with disabilities and make advertisements surrounding people with disabilities I will do this by watching adverts and looking at statistics to support my question and find more information on the topic. The final topic I will be exploring is different ethnicities in advertising I wanted to look at this as I think ethnicity is brushed over in advertising and I don't think enough of it is talked about. I want to have a look at good and bad examples at different points in history to see whether it has changed or gotten worse leading up to the present. I decided to look at this topic before the 2000s because I have an understanding of what it's like now and I would like to see what was said in the past. I would like to look at posters maybe war ones as I find they will give me more of an insight into what was shown compared to videos.

How were women being portrayed in advertising throughout history?

Reflecting on the history of advertising brings up information that is not the most positive. Women were made out to look like sex symbols for the male gaze “women are more often portrayed as young and concerned with physical attractiveness than their male counterparts” (ARTZ, N., MUNGER, J. and PURDY, W., 1999.) This highlights that women were seen as objects and nothing more than to grab the attention of men. By doing this the companies gained more and saw it as a money-making deal. The more they showed women half-dressed the more attention their ad was getting.



This magazine advert was placed in Playboy Magazine in 1974 the image of a woman naked laying on the floor next to a pair of “Weyenberg’s Massagic Shoes” gazing at them like they are the best thing she has seen. This image implies that “women will be so captivated that they will stay where they belong—on the floor, or more accurately, at men’s feet.” This shows at the time of this being made they knew what they were doing, and men had all of the power when creating adverts. Another

point I would like to address in this image is the typography used in the advert as it is bold and is placed at the top of the page right in the centre. This suggests that the phrase “keep her where she belongs” is said by men and the wording is placed on top of the woman because the men have authority over them and always have control over them. Another advert I found was the 1975 Bizarre Love’s Baby Soft TV commercial (Bizarre, 2011) it shows a young pretty woman with soft makeup and a little white dress licking a lolly pop seductively at the camera while a man narrates it. The video itself is very weird and is in some ways hard to watch as this woman is licking a lolly pop sexually and looking straight at the camera. The man says in this video “so innocent it might be the sexiest fragrance around” implying that the younger the women look the better they are and especially if they smell like a baby too as the perfume is supposed to smell like baby powder. All of this shows that women were just huge sex symbols for men to gaze at and feel more superior.



During the wartime (1942) women were seen in a more positive light as they were helping out and empowering other women to help out and do their part while the men were out in battle. Howard Miller did a number for posters to help inspire women to

join in and work to help the men. His most famous one is the 'We Can Do It' poster of a woman in uniform with her fist clenched. The one I want to talk about is the 'she's a WOW woman ordnance worker' as I have never seen this one before and it highlights all of the jobs these women did during the war and I thought it was a very powerful piece of work and puts women in such a powerful place on so many levels.



How are the transgender community shown in advertisements?

One amazing thing that has happened in the advertising industry for transgender people and people who identify as nonbinary or as a different gender was Virgin Atlantic's new ad campaign. When it comes to sexuality and how you want to identify yourself Virgin Atlantic has pulled out all of the stops to help their cabin crew feel the most comfortable when on board. In September 2022 Virgin Atlantic rebranded itself and in its newest ad campaign (Virgin Atlantic 2022) it shows its flight crew wearing the uniform they feel most comfortable in which makes their staff feel more comfortable when working and having a more positive work environment on board.



As shown above, the men and women are seen wearing either brown suits or red blazers and skirts. This uniform change has also been applied to the pilots and ground crew they also show in the advert the pronoun badges they are given which state what they identify as which makes it easier for the passengers on board. This will help the company in so many ways such as bringing more people to work for them and making the passengers feel welcome on every flight they take with Virgin. On the other hand, back in 1997, the agency Fallon McElligott partnered up with Holiday Inn to make a TV advert for the Superbowl (XXXI) (McElligott, 1997) which is a big deal as you have to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars to buy an ad when the Superbowl is on as

most Americans will be watching so it the best time to put your advert out there and get consumers to look at what you have to offer. The advert shows a tall blond woman wearing a leopard dress and black heels looking very posh walking towards this man and there is a man narrating over the top saying “new nose 6,000 dollars, lips 3,000 dollars” and so on and you come to find out that this woman is transgender and at the end of the video the narrator says “imagine what holiday inns would look like when we spend a billion” this shows viewers that Holiday Inns look amazing because they have spent so much money on it. From seeing this my impressions were that the Holiday Inn was saying being transgender is just about the cosmetics that make you look better whereas it’s so much more than that in some aspects transitioning can be tough on some people going through it so for an advertising company to okay this and work alongside Holiday Inn and thinks this is okay is shocking. They also didn’t even cast a transgender women in this advert so they missed the mark and could have done this advert a lot better and given an actual transgender women a chance which would have made more people in the trans community a lot of hope as they weren't thought of in the 90s.

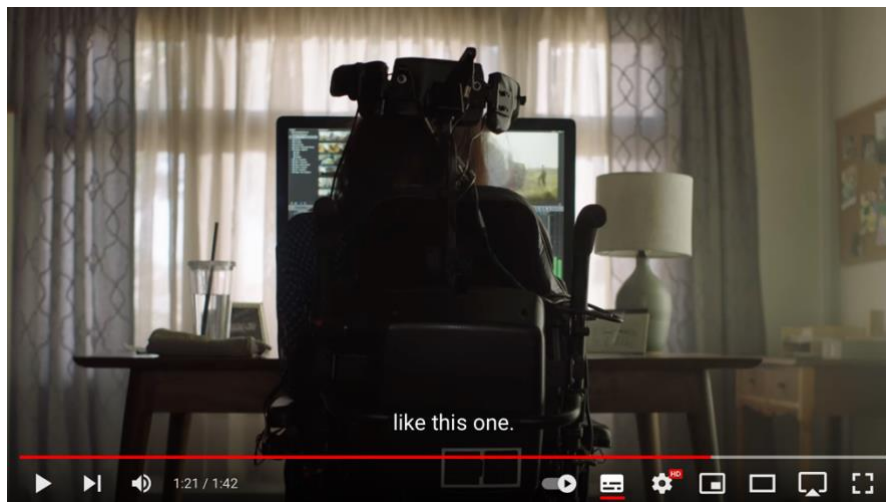


How are the people with disabilities shown in advertisements?

People with disabilities are not shown as much as they should in tv ads which might make disabled people not feel included in the brands they are seeing on the tv screen and also might make them feel that having a disability is a bad thing “Some people with disabilities may try to mask or minimize their disabilities for fear of social and professional exclusion” (Timke, 2019) this highlights on how advertisements whether that be print or filmed need to change and in some cases they have because people with fame behind them have spoken up such as blind musician and songwriter Stevie Wonder. He did a campaign with Sustainable Development and also with “Support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)” (Timke, 2019) in order to raise awareness for disabilities around the world. A video of one of his songs played showing videos of people with disabilities playing football and other activities showing they can do the same things as us too.

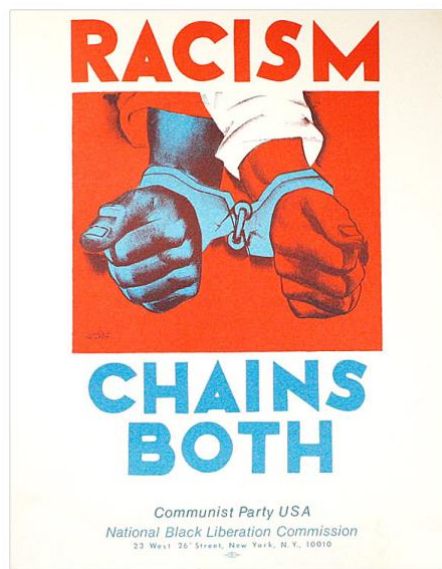


This video would have made a positive impact on people with disabilities especially when the video is coming from a famous person who is blind. It also shows that as we are progressing in the future of advertising people are speaking up and making a change. Moreover, I found another advert for Apple which came up when watching a video (Apple,2016) it showed how people could use their phones and apple watches to help them in their daily tasks such as opening the blinds, turning the lights on and controlling someone's hearing aid settings when out on a walk. And you find that the person narrating the advert is a woman in a wheelchair who is non-verbal and editing the video with a button on her headrest. It was a really uplifting video to watch and I bet it gave people who are disabled a boost whether they needed it or not.



Different ethnicities in advertising

When you think of negative adverts surrounding ethnicities you think of racial posters or adverts with hidden jokes, but I came across posters that black Americans made to try to stop racism and I came across Emory Douglas' poster for the Black Panther Party in 1967 to the early 80s. He wanted to spread the message that black people weren't more dangerous or aggressive than white people "For black people still struggling against severe oppression, Douglas's work metaphorically armed them to defend against daily injustices." He was very clever with his design as he used red white and blue to symbolise America and put handcuffs on two different people of two different ethnicities which relates back to his message that black people were just the same as white people even if they have committed the same crime.



On the other hand, you have posters that were just racist like this war poster created around the time of Pearl Harbour. This poster was created by the Americans they used the phrase "Jap Trap" implying that the rat would be the Japanese and they would get killed by the Americans if they stepped on their land. They also added black hair and narrow eyes which is your stereotypical Japanese person which is just racist in so many ways.



After looking at these two examples from around WW2 and the late 60s they have strong motives behind them both and they both want to be heard and seen by many for two completely different reasons one good and one bad they also talk about two different ethnicities.

Conclusion

After researching my topics in depth I have learned a lot about how advertising embraces diversity, gender, and race and how it reflects in the real world and what I found looking from the past and now in the present day did shock me such as the loves baby soft advert because they were sexualising a young woman and implying women are better when they are young which made me feel degraded and just an object for men when they were trying to sell something to women. I did think they would all be negative but throughout my research. I have learnt that yes adverts have done wrong, and some adverts were made with an intention such as the “keep her where she belongs” advert but there are some adverts I have seen that have surprised me such as the Apple - Sady advert because they pulled out all of the stops to show people with disabilities in action and their normal day to day lives. They also showed them in a very positive and uplifting way too and also the Virgin Atlantic advert showed young girls and boys that you can go to work feeling strong and confident being whomever you want to be and even showing people who are scared to come out or transition that it is okay and normal to be gay or trans etc and you can even find work out there that will accept you for you. So next time you see an advert whether that be a print or digital will you keep an eye out to see if it embraces diversity, gender, and race and does it reflects in the real world?

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