

Research in Context

When is advertising going to embrace diversity, gender and race equality, and start reflecting the real world?

YouGov Survey

‘Across 17 markets, more than two-fifths of global consumers (44%) feel that they are not fully represented by the people they see in adverts.’

In the UK the figure is 50%.

(The data is based on the interviews of adults aged 18 and over in 17 markets with sample sizes varying between 509 and 2012 for each market. All interviews were conducted online in June 2021.)

John Lewis, *Let Life Happen* by adam&eveDDB



Breaking news

This ad got banned yesterday (27.10.21).

The creative execution was criticised for sexualising the child, but the reason it has been banned is as follows:

John Lewis statement 27.10.21

“This advert has been withdrawn because the Financial Conduct Authority considers the content to be potentially misleading and could cause customers to be confused about John Lewis' new home contents insurance offering.

“We would like to clarify that accidental damage cover is available as an add-on to John Lewis's new home contents insurance product and only covers accidental (not deliberate) damage.

"We have decided to contact every customer who purchased our new home contents insurance from 11th October to 31st October to confirm they understood these points and are happy with their purchase."

Before yesterday ...

This TV commercial has received 337 complaints to date, citing reasons such as 'pushing an agenda', 'sexism' and for encouraging 'terrible' behaviour.

In 2015 John Lewis produced the Tiny Dancer ad for their insurance products featuring a young girl following many of the same destructive behaviours. It did not receive any complaints and was not banned.

This reveals a significant cultural question that is worth thinking about. Contrary to what we believe, does the challenge of presenting diverse representation sit with the audience, as apposed to the advertising industry? Is this a cultural problem and not just an advertising problem?

Does advertising influence popular culture, or does it hold up a mirror to our society?

Advertising has a flawed history. It is true that the advertising industry has not always provided a positive portrayal of diversity. Racism, sexism, ageism, homophobia, insensitivity towards mental health, stereotypes, discrimination can all be identified throughout the history of advertising.

However, advertising is often analysed in isolation, without a broader consideration of context, i.e. the times within which it was made and where it is made.

Its' content may be more indicative of a disjointed society, disjointed political views and a disjointed retelling of history. Thankfully times have changed, and so has most advertising – but not all as we shall see ...

SO THE HARDER A WIFE WORKS, THE CUTER SHE LOOKS!

GOSH, HONEY, YOU SEEM TO THRIVE ON COOKING, CLEANING AND DUSTING- AND I'M ALL TUCKERED OUT BY CLOSING TIME. WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

VITAMINS, DARLING! I ALWAYS GET MY VITAMINS

Kellogg's PEP
PEP FOR VITAMINS

Vitamins for pep! PEP for vitamins

boredpanda.com

4 out of 5 men want Oxfords ... in these new Van Heusen styles

Van Heusen
the world's smartest shirts

From 10 shirts, colors and stripes. Only \$4.50. Available from 100 Van Heusen stores nationwide. The new Van Heusen Oxford Shirts. \$14.95. Phillips-Van Heusen Corp., 200 E. 10th St., New York, N.Y. 10003. Van Heusen Shirts are made in the U.S.A. and are available in 100 Van Heusen stores nationwide. For more information, call 1-800-333-3333.

WHEN HE OVERREACTS TO ANY SITUATION

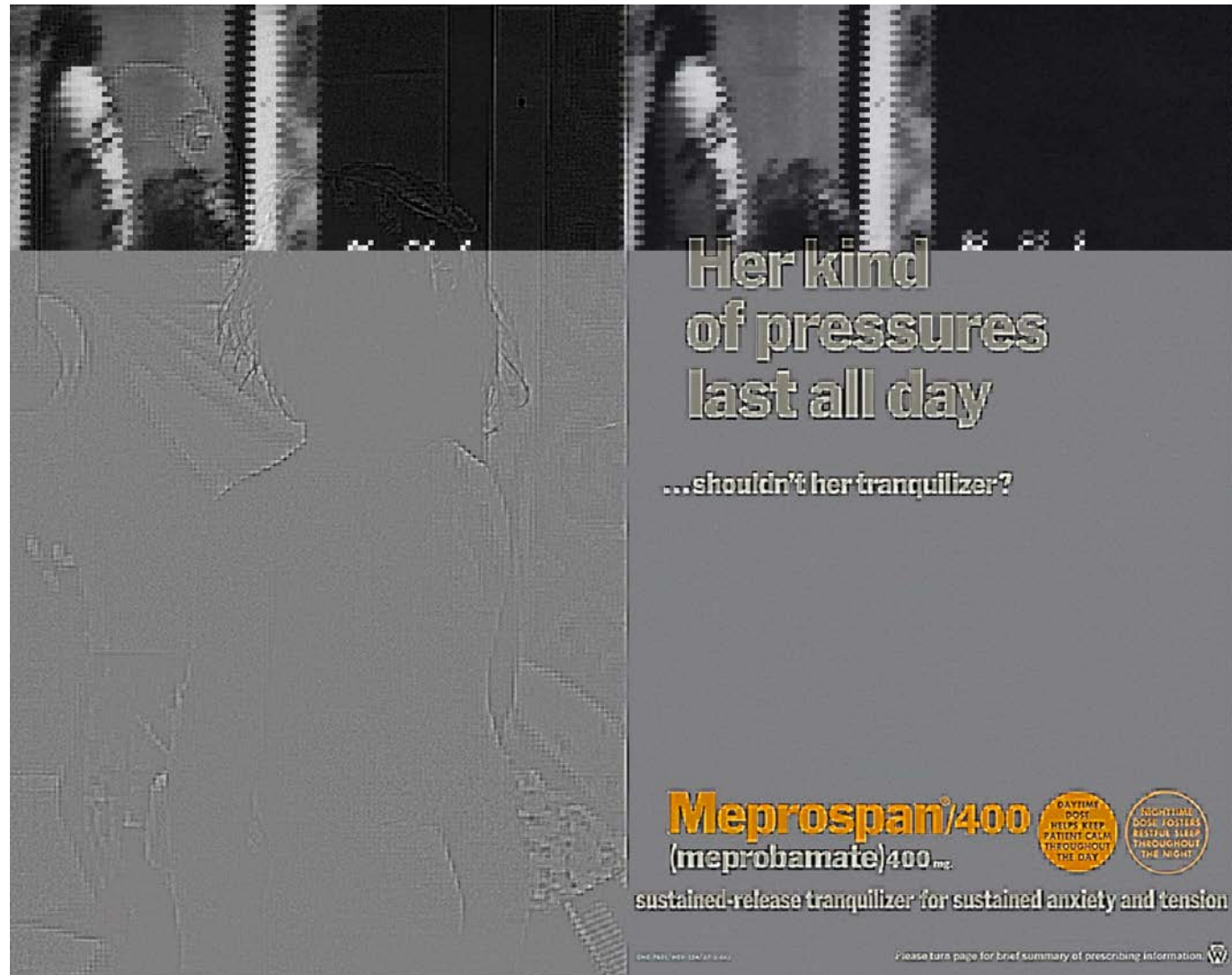
The overreaction of patients to everyday occurrences is often a threat to their well-being. Mebaral reduces restlessness and irritability, and patients become less easily upset. It has the advantages of "... extremely low incidence of toxicity ..." and a familiar sedative effect. Mebaral does not produce sedative daze. Many physicians prefer the sedative effects of Mebaral to those of phenobarbital.

For daytime sedation—½ grain, ½ grain and occasionally 1½ grains three or four times daily.

MEBARAL®

SEDATION WITHOUT SEDATIVE DAZE

A stumble seems a plunge



Her kind
of pressures
last all day

...shouldn't her tranquilizer?

Meprospan/400
(meprobamate) 400 mg.

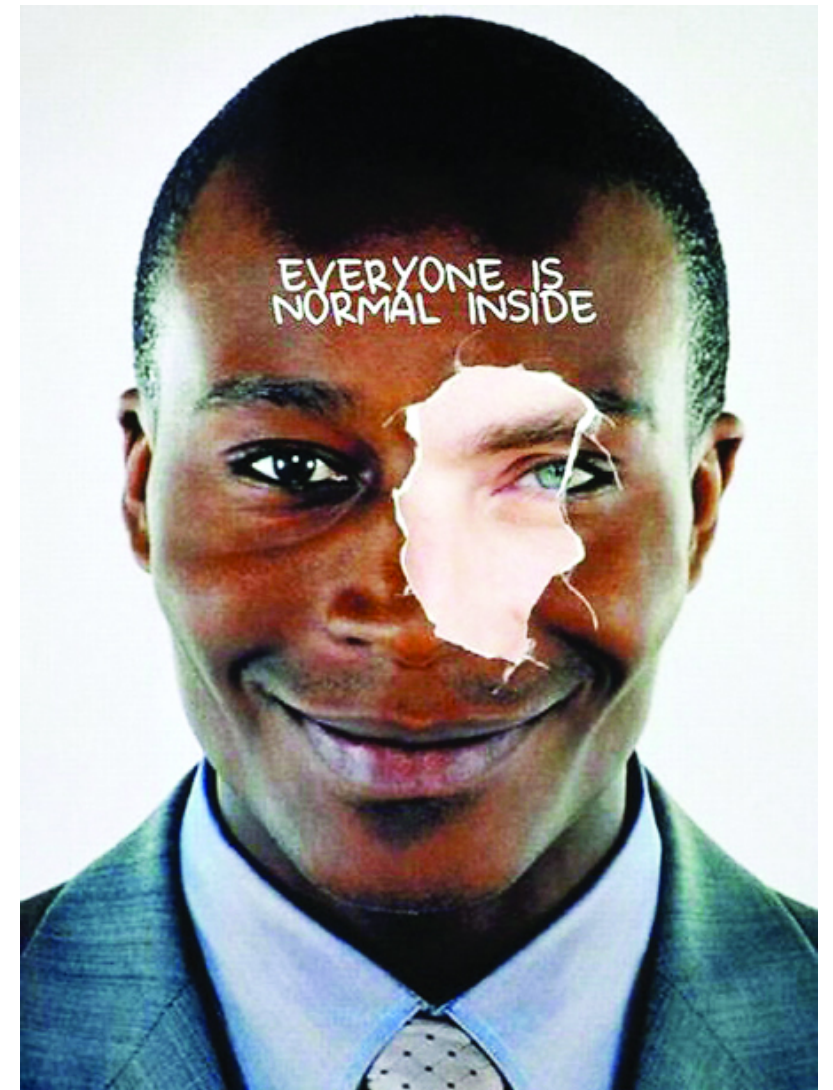
sustained-release tranquilizer for sustained anxiety and tension

ONE PILL, ONE DAY, AT 400 mg.

Please turn page for brief summary of prescribing information.

DAYTIME
DOSE: HELPS KEEP
PATIENT CALM
THROUGHOUT
THE DAY

NIGHTTIME
DOSE: FOSTERS
RESTFUL SLEEP
THROUGHOUT
THE NIGHT



Cyberfirst

Prejudice can also be found in the present day, sometimes from the most unlikely of sources.

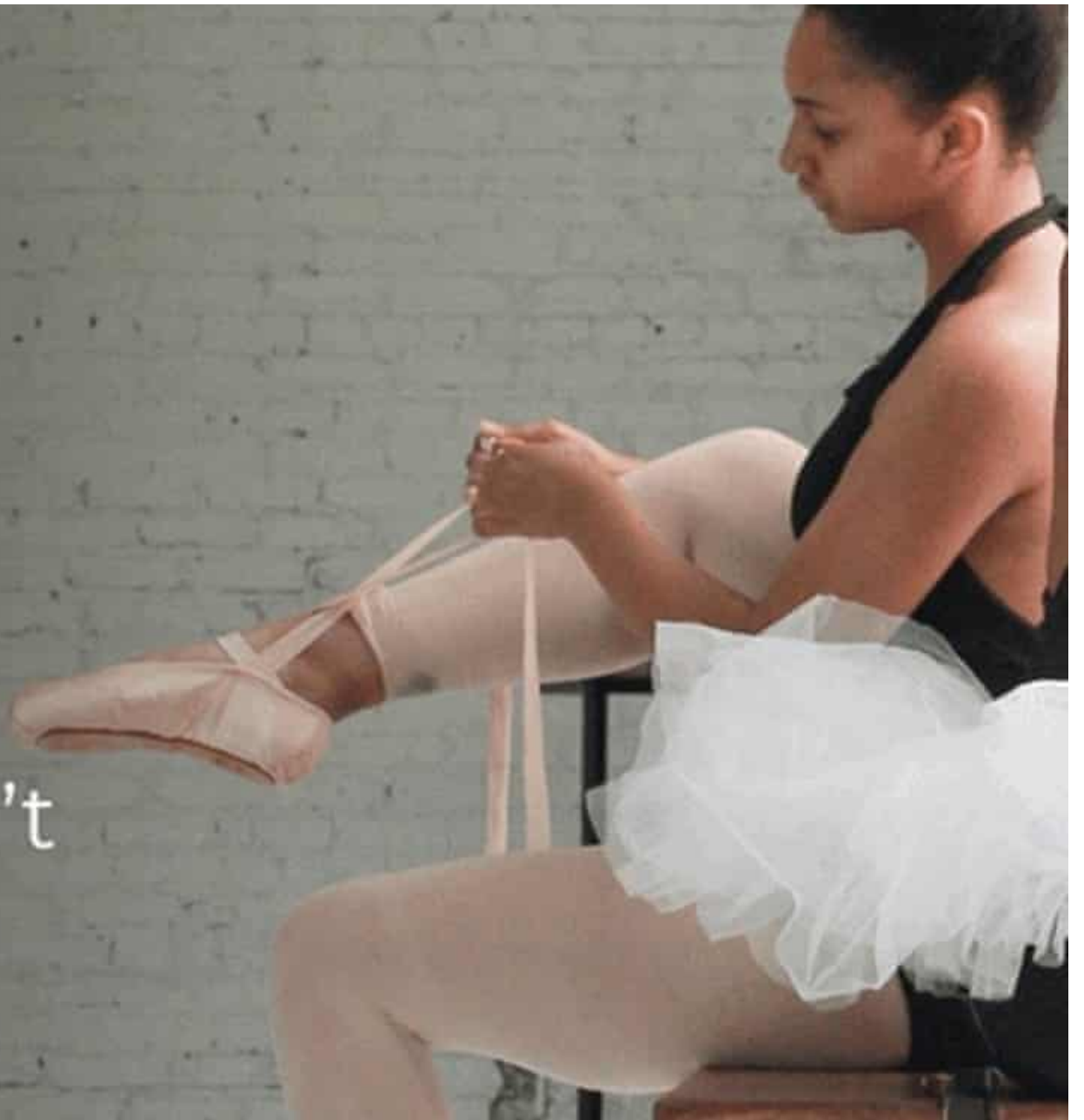
'CyberFirst is an initiative designed to identify and nurture a diverse range of talented young people into a cyber security career.

CyberFirst activities are intended to inspire and encourage students from all backgrounds to consider a career in cyber security and apply for a *CyberFirst* bursary.'

(ncsc.gov.uk/cyberfirst/overview)

Fatima's
next job
could be
in cyber.

(she just doesn't
know it yet)



The advert suggests that the job portrayed, lacks ambition and potential, by disregarding the value, skill, talent or the passion it takes for this young woman to reach the aspiring level of being a ballet dancer.

Charlotte Bence, from the Equity trade union, said: “Fatima doesn’t need to retrain – what Fatima needs is adequate state support as a freelance artist, support that so far she has been lacking. Freelance workers deserve better than patronising adverts telling them to go and work elsewhere.”

(Bakare, L. Government scraps ballet dancer reskilling ad criticised as 'crass'. *Guardian* 12 October, 2020)

Caitlin Moran, author of *More than a Woman* responded: 'I don't know if the government know they appear to have recently created a "Hopes & Dreams Crushing Department ...'

As we have seen, advertising has promoted shocking and erroneous gender stereotypes for many years. As a result in 2019, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) implemented much stricter rules on the portrayal of gender in commercials, with the aim to rid the industry of generalist and offensive depictions based on gender.

It still continued in some areas, however, this change meant it could be acted upon very quickly.

UK Government and gender stereotypes



Social Media Facebook ad by Topham Guerin in January 2021.

This social media ad portrayed female, stereotypical tropes. Ironing, home-schooling, childcare and cleaning were depicted as activities carried out by female representations, whilst the male lay recumbent on a sofa.

A spokesperson for the prime minister said: “We have provided information for the public throughout the pandemic. [The advert] does not reflect our view on women and we have removed it.”

(Watson, I. UK government pulls ‘sexist’ pandemic ad. *The Drum*. January 28, 2021)

Benetton

Social inclusion, gender representation, race politics and social justice are not solely subjects connected to the 21st century. During the 1980s and 1990s these issues were at the forefront of campaigns produced for Italian clothing brand *Benetton*.

Under the creative direction of photographer Oliviero Toscani, *Benetton* embraced the universal and immensely powerful productive agency of subversion. His work used challenging visual statements that dealt with significant issues including racism, religion, homophobia and human rights.

UNITED COLORS
OF BENETTON.

United Colors of Benetton and Benetton are trademarks of Benetton Group SpA. Foto: Paolo C. Tassinari



Advertising as social commentary

Toscani's poster referenced the historical practice of 'wet nursing' that took place on slavery plantations in the early 20th century. Many female slaves were taken into the homes of their 'masters' to serve their 'mistresses', cook, clean and wash for them. One of their duties was also to breastfeed the plantation wives' babies.

It is true that Oliviero Toscani's creative work for Benetton was divisive. His campaigns polarised opinion. That was his aim.

On the surface some of the work seemed positive but deeper enquiry revealed ugly truths.

Many thought the Benetton campaigns were exploitative, including Naomi Klein, author of *No Logo*.

Copyrighted Material

NO **LOGO[®]**

PICADOR USA

NAOMI KLEIN

Copyrighted Material

Naomi Klein published *No Logo* in 2000 and it still bears significance today. Many brands have modified their businesses, propositions and practices, in the light of its' damning critique.

'This book is not another account of the power of the select group of corporate Goliaths that have gathered to form our de facto global government. Rather, it is an attempt to analyze and document the forces opposing corporate rule, and to lay out the particular set of cultural and economic conditions that made the emergence of that opposition inevitable.'

Naomi Klein (taken from the *Introduction*)

Shock of Reality and Unhate

Toscanni challenged mainstream opinion and promoted greater knowledge and understanding of social and cultural issues through his *Shock of Reality* and *Unhate* campaigns throughout the 1990s.

The '*United Colors of Benetton*' strapline quickly began to manifest itself into a metaphorical vehicle that highlighted the complexities of society and culture and the connected problems. Toscani used his position as Creative Director to explore social injustice.

“I tell a story with images relating to the moment of history I am in.”

Toscani used the subject matter to change the perception of Benetton of just being a brand. His aim was to elicit an ethical response to the subject matter. He wanted to deliver thought-provoking subject matter that would change the world into a more tolerant and better place.

He wanted to tackle prejudice and put gender politics on the agenda. His campaigns subverted all popular understanding of what a fashion brand was and worked tirelessly to promote what it could be by highlighting issues such as race and gender.



Benetton, 1991.

In 1991 Toscani used this composition to highlight and question the lack of diverse representation in the media, which often promotes racial and gender stereotypes. This image presented a same sex couple in an interracial family, at a time when advertising and popular media was mostly devoid of such depictions, the representation of which is still largely fetishized in the media.

In many ways, contemporary advertising has benefitted from Toscani's uncompromising creative work.

McCain's

Today, mainstream campaigns for products such as *McCain's Oven Chips*, for example, now challenge the same prejudices. The copy content and visual depictions in the following commercial celebrate diversity, difference and mark the end of advertising's traditional alliance with the nuclear family, to one more closely aligned with contemporary culture.

It seems that the work of Benetton has paved the way for much of the progressive mainstream commercial work we see today.

McCain TV Commercial: *We Are Family*, 2017



Nike

The Colin Kaepernick *Dream Crazy* commercial was aired in September 2018. It was created after Kaepernick was forced to leave his position as a *San Francisco 49ers* quarterback after he took to the knee during the national anthem before a game in 2016 as a protest to widespread police brutality and racial injustice across the United States.

Nike then decided to use him as the spokesperson for a new advertising campaign *Dream Crazy*.

With the advent of technology, advertising messages now have a far greater reach, and this is true of Nike's *Dream Crazy* campaign. His inclusion as brand ambassador raised the question of racial injustice globally, and challenged our reactions towards it.

Nike, Dream Crazy.



So this commercial, much like Benetton's, met with large scale criticism. This included online indignation and the ritual burning of *Nike* products, as Kaepernick was perceived to be disrespecting the American anthem and the *American Dream*.



Donald J. Trump ✓

@realDonaldTrump

Follow



What was Nike thinking?

3:56 AM - 7 Sep 2018

29,849 Retweets 151,567 Likes



54K

30K

152K

You may also like

This pushback on the Nike brand lasted until the death of George Floyd who died in police custody in Minneapolis, Minnesota in May 2020.

The spirit and content of this commercial then became globally apparent.

From this point on, taking to the knee, as a symbol for *Black Lives Matter*, became a universal display of multi-cultural solidarity. The inspiration for this commercials' content became embedded in popular culture by aligning itself with social attitudes. It was shared extensively on social media.

Attitudes to Disability

Forbes reported in July 2021 that research undertaken by Lloyds Bank 'found only 0.06% of adverts in the U.K. featured individuals with disabilities despite accounting for 20% of the nation's population.'

In the USA, Los Angeles creative director James Embry explains the agency conundrum he has become familiar with:

"Time and time again, when I make pitches involving disability representation to clients, I get a similar type of response, ... It goes something along the lines of, 'Yes that's really cool. We totally support that. But we don't think this is the project for it.'"

(Alexiou, G. Advertising Industry Must Overcome Its Anxiety Around Disability Representation. *The Forbes*. July 26, 2021)

4Creative for the Tokyo Paralympics



These graphic posters were posted across the UK and put a twist on the social etiquette children learn from a young age – that it's rude to stare.

Indeed the Paralympians wanted you to stare, by watching the games on Channel 4.

‘We spotted an opportunity to present Paralympians in a way they hadn’t been shown before – by pointing a camera at the realities of their lives and, as with any elite athlete, the sacrifices they make in pursuit of greatness, ...’

Lynsey Atkin, 4Creative’s executive creative director, on capturing the blood, sweat, sacrifices and dedication it takes to become an Olympian.

The following is the promotional film they aired.

(Channel 4: It's Rude Not to Stare by 4Creative. *The Drum*. August, 2021)

**TO BE A PARALYMPIAN
THERE'S GOT TO BE SOMETHING
WRONG WITH YOU**

Dove

Amongst their many campaigns which started in 2006 with *Evolution* (the photoshopped transformation of a model on a billboard) and continued with campaigns such as *Real Beauty Sketches*; *Reverse Selfie* is part of the Dove Self-Esteem project which they started in 2004.

It examines attitudes to wellbeing and mental health, and promotes positive change.

The 2021 *Reverse Selfie* campaign is a bid to combat social media's negative effect on self esteem amongst young females. Their research indicated that by the age of 13, 80% of girls distort the way they look online. Since its' implementation it has supported 70 million young people, with an end goal to educate 250 million people by 2030.

Reverse Selfie,
Dove
2021



It is obviously a campaign that has been created to gain attention and even shock, but it is also presented with some optimism.

Jo Bacon, global lead at WPP:

“It’s really important for *Dove* to actually give people the support and the help they need, ...”

The campaign is part of a global strategy to offer free information that will empower young people, teachers and parents to go online to understand how to fight back on social pressures. The brand provides guides that are free to download.

However, and with the best intentions, Dove have not always got it right. The following video post that appeared on *Facebook* and showed a black woman appearing to turn white after using its body lotion.

Their intention was to show the products' universal applicatiuon for different skin types. It failed.

Historian, Gamilaraay Yuwaalaraay, and filmmaker and performance artist Frances Peters-Little, demanded apologies from the Unilever brand. They identified the historical references with soap adverts showing soap turning black people into white people. Many observations were shared that reference the longstanding trope of black babies and women scrubbed white.



Pears Soap

1884

The original Pears' soap advert based on the fable Washing the Blackamoor white, published in the Graphic for Christmas 1884.



The ethical and commercial benefits of inclusion

‘A recent survey found that global consumers were not only four to six times more likely to buy from a brand that they believe has a ‘strong and clear purpose’, but are also more likely to champion it and recommend it to friends and family.’

(Beardsworth, J. Can brands authentically overcome tokenism and rainbow-washing? *The Drum*. September 17, 2021)

Woke Capitalism and Tokenism

However, authenticity of brand purpose is paramount.

‘... if a brand ‘does Pride’ but has not put in place any internal policies to support trans employees in the workplace, or portrays a south Asian family in an ad, yet all the creatives and production team are white, that support is inherently tokenistic. Because while appearing good, the efforts in no way provide real support to those groups.’

(Beardsworth, J. Can brands authentically overcome tokenism and rainbow-washing? *The Drum*. September 17, 2021)

To conclude.

In the last 10 years advertising has often done much to address unfair and unequal representation in advertising. It's next challenge is to address this imbalance within the industry.

According to the Advertising Association nearly 90% of the advertising industry is white.

(adassoc.org.uk/credos/the-whole-picture-how-advertising-portrays-a-diverse-Britain)

Moreover:

‘In UK advertising, women make up more than half of junior agency roles, but this drops to 30% for women in leadership positions, according to data from the Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA).

When it comes to those from BAME backgrounds, the numbers are even smaller, accounting for only 13% of agency staff, the IPA recently found. There is also an overall male bias in creative and tech roles.’

(Shearman, S. Women in advertising: 'Diversity will make our industry more creative'. *Guardian*, 8 March, 2016)

There is still much to be done.

Any questions?