INCLUSION = INCOME

岩BUSINESS CASE FOR INCLUSIVE ADVERTISING











Acknowledgements

This report was prepared in September 2024 by the Unstereotype Alliance Secretariat at UN Women with Saïd Business School, University of Oxford, a global ally of the Unstereotype Alliance.

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Special thanks to:

Bayer Consumer Health: Rossella Marinoni, Leticia Boccomino Marselha, Vidya Sagar, Phillip Schuster

Diageo: Jane Bambar, Grainne Wafer

Kantar: Ed Gemmell, Sarah Morrell, Jane Ostler *Geena Davis Institute:* Madeline Di Nonno

Nielsen: Selen Gueney

Mars Inc: Dale Green, Michele Oliver
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About the Unstereotype Alliance

The Unstereotype Alliance seeks to eradicate harmful stereotypes from advertising and media to help create a more equal world. Convened by UN Women, the Alliance collectively acts to empower people in all their diversity (including gender, race, class, age, ability, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation and more) by using advertising as a force for good to drive positive change all over the world. Launched at the Cannes Lions Festival of Creativity in 2017, the global membership of the Unstereotype Alliance currently stands at 240 companies, with 12 national chapters across five continents that tackle culturally-nuanced stereotypes at a local level (http://www.unstereotypealliance.org).



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Foreword



Sima Bahous
United Nations Under-Secretary-General and
Executive Director of UN Women

After decades of progress, it increasingly seems that today women and girls around the world are under siege. Wars and conflicts, climate change, widening inequalities, pushback on their human rights and freedoms including bodily autonomy and more create a sense of regression.

This comes at a time when we need equality most. With the world woefully off-track to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals there is no better solution than gender equality. The gender equality dividend makes societies stronger and more prosperous, safer, better governed, and more peaceful.

Yet a backlash against gender equality is on the rise. This includes a growing pushback across the world against efforts for diversity and inclusion. Some of this comes from fear, some from prejudice. Those who have held the reins of power for so long understandably fear the dismantling of structures that benefit them. But it also comes from ignorance, a lack of appreciation and understanding that a gender-equal world is better for us all.

We meet inequality with inclusion. By building communities where all people are treated with respect, and all have their equal rights respected. Where they are empowered to live lives with dignity. To achieve their potential unconstrained by the prejudices of others and the stereotypes that surround us all.

Inclusive advertising is the right thing to do for society. However, this report shows that it is also the right thing for the bottom line. The evidence is irrefutable. I urge you all to use these findings, to leverage your influence, and to act.

As we approach the thirtieth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, our actions must match the urgent need to achieve equality and to do so now. Advertisers have the power to show what an equal world looks like, to inspire, persuade and influence. It is a power that must not be wasted.

Executive summary

There has been a growing perception that diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, including inclusive advertising practices, could be detrimental to business — culturally, socially, and financially. These claims have become more mainstream and suggest that there are adverse consequences for brands that adopt an inclusive approach. Such assertions tend to lack empirical backing or scientific evidence. However, there is also little evidence to show that inclusive advertising is in fact better for business, until now.

Against this backdrop, the Unstereotype Alliance embarked on a landmark study to prove whether inclusive advertising practices convert to an uplift in sales for brands and businesses. While we were expecting the results of this study to demonstrate a direct link between inclusive advertising and commercial performance, what we found far exceeded expectations irrespective of countries and product categories.

This report presents findings from a large first-of-its-kind global scientific study, featuring analysis of the impacts of inclusive advertising on several commercial performance and brand equity metrics for 392 brands over a four-year period from 2020 to 2023. The brands in the study cover 58 countries in all regions of the world and represent a wide variety of product categories such as confectionary, snacks, personal care, beauty, pet care, pet food, alcohol, consumer healthcare, and household products.

The study finds compelling evidence in support of the business imperative of inclusive advertising. Brands with more inclusive advertising practices sell more (3.46% higher shorter-term sales and 16.26% higher longer-term sales), are considered and trialed more (33% higher strong consideration, 62% higher likelihood of being a consumer's first choice, and 8% higher incidence of being trialed), enjoy higher customer loyalty (23% lower chance of being abandoned after trial and 15% higher loyalty), are valued greater by consumers (54% higher pricing power), and have higher brand equity (8.3% more meaningful, 12.1% more different, and 9.4% higher salience). These commercial benefits of more inclusive advertising practices are found regardless of product category or geographic market.

This study irrefutably demonstrates that inclusion equals income. Inclusive advertising, in fact, helps brands to grow and commercially prosper.

The launch of this report comes at a critical moment ahead of deadlines for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals in 2030, the Beijing Platform for Action in 2025 and UN Women's Strategic Plan 2022-2025. The reduction of diversity equity and inclusion initiatives, transparent reporting, and inclusive advertising content has real-life consequences — particularly for underrepresented communities. Based on these findings, companies are urged to embrace inclusive advertising, not as a "nice-to-have", but as vital to healthy and responsible business operations, resulting in increased financial success as well as contributing to positive societal progress.

Introduction

As the world becomes more interconnected, diverse, and socially conscious, brands and their agencies are recognising the need to reflect these values in their advertising and marketing communications. As such, 'inclusive advertising', defined by the Unstereotype Alliance as content which authentically and positively portrays a full range of people, including traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved communities, and is devoid of stereotypes, has garnered much attention across the global advertising industry over the last several years. The growth and impact of the Unstereotype Alliance since its launch in 2017 is testament to this. Now a collective of 240+ member companies worldwide and 12 national chapters across five continents, inclusive advertising is firmly on the agenda for some of the world's biggest and most influential advertisers. In 2020, the murder of George Floyd further moved the advertising industry to action. Organisations confronted the racial inequity that existed within their workplaces, which was reflected in the marketing communications they produced, and an outpouring of diversity, equity and inclusion commitments were launched.

While progress has been made since 2020, and the Gender Unstereotype Metric testing tool developed with Kantar has noted good improvements against certain indicators,¹ the Unstereotype Alliance's State of the Industry report identified a deacceleration of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts across the global advertising industry between 2022 and 2023. In turn, this is reflected in the advertising content served to consumers the world over. Despite consecutive year-on-year improvements from 2019 to 2022, more traditional depictions in ad content, specifically stereotypical portrayals of gender roles, were identified in 2023 than years prior.² The Geena Davis Institute analysis of Cannes Lions Film and Film Craft shortlisted and winning work from 2006 to 2023 also highlighted under-representation of people from the LGBTIQ+ communities, people with disabilities, and a significant decrease in people with large body types in 2023.³

This is increasingly concerning because a recent progress report of the United Nations Sustainable Goals shows that the world is off track. SDG (Sustainable Development Goal) 5 for Gender Equality is fundamental to realising the 2030 Agenda, yet indicators have not been met. Similarly, SDG 10 for Reduced Inequalities shows inadequate progress. ⁴ This prevalence and persistence of discrimination is a threat to progress across the communities that advertisers serve.

One explanation for slowing inclusion efforts around the world is that inclusive advertising and brands that are otherwise 'purpose driven' have received negative attention. This sentiment has implied that brands adopting an inclusive approach to their marketing will suffer commercially. Consequently, this has raised questions in corporate boardrooms around the world about the commercial impacts of inclusive advertising practices. While inclusive advertising is widely reported as a consumer expectation, and beneficial for all communities, companies are wondering if this is also the right thing to do from a purely commercial perspective.⁵

Amidst this nervousness, it is reasonable for brands' corporate owners to ask questions such as: Can inclusive advertising practices drive commercial performance? When facing economic headwinds and evaluating growth strategies, is inclusion business-critical? Ultimately, the question of whether inclusive advertising has a positive or negative impact on a brand's value and commercial performance is an empirical one. A data-driven scientific study was required to provide hard evidence that would enable this question to be addressed.

The United Nations defines inclusion as the process of improving the terms of participation in society for people who are disadvantaged on the basis of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status, through enhanced opportunities, access to resources, voice and respect for rights.⁶

Inclusive advertising reflects this construct whereby content includes and represents all people including traditionally underrepresented and/or underserved communities and is devoid of stereotypes.

CHAPTER

Methodology and data

Prepared by:







Hypothesis and sample

Existing data shows a correlation between inclusive advertising and predicted return on investment as well as brand equity measures. The purpose of the study was to scientifically test if inclusive advertising has a positive impact on a brand's (a) commercial performance and (b) value. To do this a large dataset was compiled by the Saïd Business School at the University of Oxford and the Unstereotype Alliance with extensive support from its member organisations.

The study examined brands in the portfolios of Bayer Consumer Healthcare, Diageo, Mars Inc, Mondelēz International, and Unilever. A total of 392 brands across these companies were included in the study, with brands' data spanning 58 countries and four years from 2020 to 2023. Several broad product categories were represented, such as confectionary, snacks, personal care, beauty, pet care, pet food, alcohol, consumer healthcare, and household products.

HYPOTHESIS

Inclusive advertising has a positive impact on the commercial performance and value of brands.

KEY FEATURES OF THE STUDY

- 392 brands
- 58 countries
- 4 years (2020 to 2023)
- Multiple product categories



Measurement and data

To test the hypothesis, for each brand in each year (2020-2023) we required (a) quantitative measures of the extent to which their advertising in a given geographic market was inclusive, (b) sales and other commercial performance data, and (c) various metrics known to be drivers and/or indicators of brand equity. The specific measures used were as follows.

Inclusive advertising

To measure the extent to which a brand's advertising in a given year and market was inclusive, we primarily relied on the Unstereotype Alliance's Gender Unstereotype Metric (GUM), which was collected by Kantar through LINK Ad Testing (with the exception of the Mars Inc brands which used measures from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media).

GUM (see pullout box) has two versions, one for female characters, and one for male. The Female GUM measures on a five-point scale the extent to which a piece of advertising is perceived by in-market consumers to present a "positive image of the female character(s) that sets a good example for others." The male GUM asks the same question, but for male characters. GUM is measured at the campaign level at the time of the campaign and with respect to the geographic market in which the campaign ran. For the purposes of our statistical analysis we took, for each year and market, the average of campaign-level GUM scores for each brand in the sample to arrive at a single index of inclusive advertising for each brand at a particular point in time (year) and in a particular place (geographic market).



HOW IS THE GENDER UNSTEREOTYPE METRIC (GUM) AN INDICATOR OF INCLUSIVE ADVERTISING?

The Unstereotype Alliance partnered with international market research specialists Kantar to develop the Gender and Progressive Unstereotype Metrics. The Gender and Progressive Unstereotype Metrics data are gathered from consumers via a single measure question incorporated in Kantar's LINK ad pre-testing solution. For the purposes of this research, we leveraged the Gender Unstereotype Metric which has been in market for the last four years (versus one year for the Progressive Unstereotype Metric), commensurate with the historical dataset from brands used for this analysis.

The Gender Unstereotype Metric does not limit our definition of inclusive advertising to gender alone. Whilst the GUM question is asked in the context of the male and/or female characters in an ad, consumers are asked whether those characters are being portrayed as a positive role model; they are not asked to comment specifically on the character's gender. In addition to the GUM question, Kantar captures 65 different characteristics of the talent in the ad including age, ethnicity, skin tone, body type, sexual orientation, and personality characteristics, as well as the activity the talent is engaged in. Commonalities are deduced across the 65 key characteristics to find key drivers of those ads that scored in the top 25% versus the bottom 25%. This means, the high scoring Gender Unstereotype Metric ads - particularly female - often have other intersectional characteristics featured including diversity of skin colour, ages 40+, large body sizes etc. As such, a brand's Gender Unstereotype Metric scores can be used as an indication of how 'inclusive' consumers perceive a brand's advertising to be.

"It is incredibly important to bring the whole organisation on the journey to drive greater creativity and more progressive content. We embedded tools like the Unstereotype Metric in our marketing framework and processes, we set new action standards, to stop ads airing that underperformed on the metric, and all of this was supported by a capability building programme for all of our marketeers with events, case studies and trainings helping to upskill and inspire our teams."

David Evendon-Challis

Executive Board Member and Chief Scientific Officer Head of R&D, Bayer Consumer Health



Commercial performance metrics

Several metrics for commercial performance were used in the study.

Sales data were provided by the participating companies for their brands either directly or with brands' permission via their measurement agencies (Kantar Worldpanel and Nielsen IQ). Sales data of this type were used to assess the longer-term sales impacts of inclusive advertising. Additionally, for some brands in the study we had campaign-level sales lift data that were used to assess immediate, shorter-term sales impacts of inclusive advertising.

In addition to using sales as the key commercial performance metric we also analysed other commercial performance metrics made available by Kantar BrandZ:⁸

- **Strong consideration:** This measures the extent to which consumers see a brand as either being their first choice in a category or, if not their first choice, would seriously consider it. This is an important commercial performance indicator to assess because effective inclusive advertising should not only increase a brand's likelihood of consideration but push it "towards the top of the queue" in the sense that it is strongly considered by consumers. 9
- **First choice:** This measure captures how many consumers would consider a brand to be their first choice in that category. This is commercially relevant since the more a brand is a first choice the higher its market share should be.¹⁰
- **Trial and Trial-then-abandon:** Trial measures the extent to which consumers are willing to actually try a brand with purchase. Trial-then-abandon captures the extent to which consumers do not stick with a brand after trial. For commercial performance trial is associated with customer acquisition and trial-then-abandon is associated with churn rate and (inversely) customer retention. Both are key elements of the lifetime value of customers.¹¹
- **Pricing power:** This is a measure of the extent to which consumers believe a brand is worth more than it costs. As a commercial performance indicator this is key because it is associated with consumer willingness to pay a price premium for a brand and consumers' perceptions of a brand's (economic) value to them.¹²
- **Loyalty:** This is a measure of the extent to which consumers say they are loyal to a brand, taking into account the likelihood of re-consideration and repurchase. This is a crucial aspect of brand financial stability and its ability to both maintain and protect market share while reducing costs associated with constant customer acquisition.¹³



Brand equity

Broadly speaking, brand equity is the value of a brand as a company's intangible asset. Brand equity or the value of a brand is driven by a number of brand metrics. We leveraged the Kantar BrandZ framework for determining the appropriate measures of brand equity to use for this study. In particular, key drivers of a brand's value in the BrandZ framework are the extent to which a brand is considered in consumers' minds as being meaningful, different, and salient (with meaningful and different being generally more impactful than salient).¹⁴

- Meaningful refers to the extent to which a brand, in consumers' minds, meets consumers' needs in a relevant way and creates emotional connections.¹⁵
- **Different** refers to how much a brand is perceived by consumers as offering something to meet their needs in a unique and novel way.¹⁶
- **Salient** refers to the extent to which a brand comes easily to consumers' minds in the relevant category at the time of consideration.¹⁷

Brands that are meaningful, different and salient, according to Kantar BrandZ, have greater demand power (i.e., are likely to capture more sales volume), pricing power (i.e., are likely to command a greater price premium), and future power (i.e., have more potential to grow in the future). ¹⁸ Kantar BrandZ provided metrics for each brand in our study, matched to geographic market and year, on these three important brand equity drivers. ¹⁹

| Construct | Metrics Used | Sources |
|------------------------------------|---|---|
| Inclusive Advertising | Gender Unstereotype Metric (GUM) Geena Davis Inclusion Quotient (GD-IQ) | Kantar GDI |
| Brand Commercial Performance | Sales | Brand-provided data (Bayer Consumer Healthcare, Diageo, Mars Inc, Mondelēz International, Unilever), Kantar Worldpanel, NielsenIQ |
| | Strong Consideration, First Choice, Trial, Trial-then-Abandon, Pricing Power, Loyalty | Kantar BrandZ |
| Brand Equity | Meaningful, Different, Salient | Kantar BrandZ |



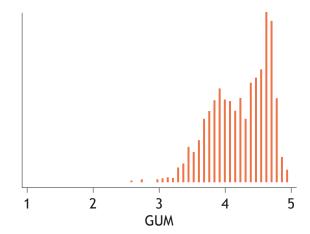
Statistical analysis

Data from all brands' measures on inclusive advertising, commercial performance, and brand equity were analysed using appropriate statistical techniques aimed at testing the hypothesis that inclusive advertising has a positive impact on a brand's (a) commercial performance and (b) value. The steps taken for this analysis were as follows.

1. We constructed each brand's (in each geographic market and year) inclusive advertising index. We used GUM, which was available for 5,956 individual campaigns across all brands in our sample. The total testing audience for these campaigns was in excess of 880,000 individuals for both production (never released) and released films. Each tested campaign film had a GUM score ranging from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest) each for female and male portrayals. The average female GUM was 4.41 (standard deviation = 0.41) and the average male GUM was 4.27 (standard deviation = 0.44). Thus, positive gender portrayals were slightly better on average for females than for males in our data. We combined female and male GUM scores by taking the average of each gender score or if both genders were not present in a campaign taking the single-gender score.

We then averaged a brand's combined GUM scores across all of the tested campaigns for that brand in each country for each year. This generated an aggregate score for each brand's work in a given geographic market and year. The distribution of these values is given in figure 1 below, and a further breakdown across 3 categories is shown in figure 2. As noted previously, this was taken as a representative measure of inclusive advertising and is assumed to be representative of the strength of a brand's inclusive advertising practices in a given market in a given year.

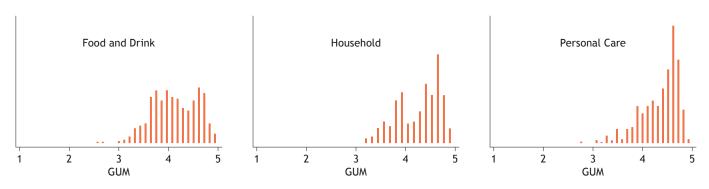
FIGURE 1
Histogram of average GUM score for each brand & country combination





Finally, we converted these scores into indices for analysis purposes by indicating if a brand's aggregate score on the 1-5 scale was greater than or equal to 4.0 ("high inclusive advertising index") or less than 4.0 ("low inclusive advertising index"). In this sample 65% of brand/country/year observations scored above 4.0, indicating that it is not necessarily difficult or rare to achieve high inclusive advertising. However, it is noteworthy that 35% of brands across markets in our sample include enough harmful stereotypes to fall short of this top quintile average, and some individual campaign films were observed to score very low with the lowest scores for single films being 1.67 on male GUM and 2.14 on female GUM.

FIGURE 2
Histogram of average GUM scores
for each brand & country combination across 3 categories



2. We estimated statistical models that compared, for each of the commercial performance and brand equity metrics described previously, "high inclusive advertising index" brands to "low inclusive advertising index" brands. Importantly, we took advantage of having data spanning four years to estimate time series models such that we could account for changes in a given year's commercial performance and brand equity outcomes as a function of a brand's previous year's inclusive advertising practices.

This separation in time allows us to more accurately and precisely identify how changes in brand's inclusive advertising practices precede and lead to different commercial performance and brand equity outcomes. Furthermore, these models account for any characteristics, behaviours and contributions made by each of our observable brands as they operate in a market, while also controlling for country-level characteristics and effects that could influence commercial performance or brand equity metrics.

Importantly, while we capture unique brand effects, these models also allow for each brand (and their associated commercial performance) to respond differently to changes in inclusive advertising strategy — allowing for a more nuanced examination of brand specific contexts and operating environments, while appropriately capturing the effect of brands that also exist across multiple markets (for the interested, the description points to the specification of a country/brand cross-classified hierarchical generalised linear model).



A strong business case for inclusive advertising



Inclusion = Income

The study found strong empirical evidence that brands that adopt more inclusive advertising practices, specifically those that include more positive gender portrayals, do indeed perform better commercially, confirming our hypothesis. In fact, the business case for inclusive advertising is stronger than anticipated.

The research found that inclusive advertising drives a significant positive impact on both shorterand longer-term sales performance:

- With respect to shorter-term sales outcomes, campaigns scoring higher on inclusive advertising metrics on average had 3.46% higher sales lift than lower-scoring campaigns.
- In the longer term (i.e., 1-2 years after a given year's advertising campaigns for a brand) the impact of brands having more inclusive advertising is even more impressive. Compared to brands with lower average scores on inclusive advertising, brands with higher average scores see 16.26% greater sales performance.

Furthermore, brands scoring higher on inclusive advertising also outperformed lower-scoring brands on Kantar BrandZ metrics, which is a comprehensive set of brand equity measures that help to explain or predict a brand's market reality. Brands with higher inclusive advertising scores had, compared to brands with lower inclusive advertising scores:

- **33%** higher strong consideration
- 62% higher likelihood of being a consumer's first choice
- 8% higher incidence of being trialed
- 23% lower chance of being abandoned after trial
- **54%** higher pricing power
- 15% higher loyalty



These business case findings have important positive implications for the lifetime value (LTV) of a brand's customer base, how competitive a brand will be in hotly-contested categories and markets, and a brand's financial strength.

Customer Lifetime Value (LTV) is the net present value of all of a customer's cashflows (normally from their purchases) flowing into a company, accounting for the financial risk associated with these future cashflows, the cost of acquiring the customer, and the likelihood of retaining the customer over time. A company's financial valuation (e.g., share price) tends to be higher when that company has more customers with higher LTV.²⁰

All the brand equity measures previously mentioned are associated with higher customer LTV²¹ because they relate to expected profits from purchases (pricing power), customer acquisition and purchasing (strong consideration, first choice, trial), and customer retention (trial-then-abandon, loyalty). Brands looking to maximise their customer LTV and increase the average revenue that a customer will generate throughout their lifespan as a customer should take note of these data points, which will ultimately lead to business success.

"At Diageo we believe that progressive marketing is marketing - and we also believe it's really important that those behind the camera and in front of the camera are fully represented so that, from script to screen, we are creating work that is truly inclusive."

Grainne Wafer

Global Director of Beer, Liqueur and Vodka and Progressive Marketing Lead, Diageo

The case of a brand's market competitiveness and the case for inclusive advertising practices is equally compelling. The findings suggest that a brand's market competitiveness is better when it has adopted more inclusive advertising practices. It is natural for customers to maintain various alternatives in a given product category, particularly when competition is high. Most often a brand will only be able to capture a small share of spend in a category.



These findings indicate that brands with a higher GUM score tend to be more likely to get into consumers' consideration sets (33% higher strong consideration) and to be chosen first among competing options (62% higher likelihood of being first choice). Moreover, brands with more inclusive advertising appear to be trialed more (8% higher incidence of trial) and are 'stickier' with their newly acquired customers (23% lower chance of abandonment after trial). These patterns identified in the data suggest that brands that adopt more inclusive advertising practices are better placed to compete in hotly-contested categories and markets.

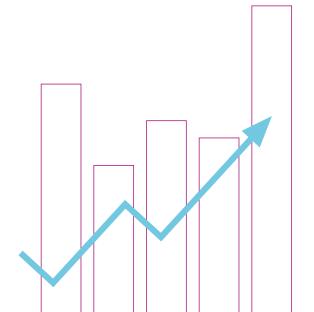
Finally, two of the findings offer compelling evidence suggesting that having more inclusive advertising can strengthen a brand financially. With a 54% greater pricing power, brands adopting more inclusive advertising practices can charge more for their products and services. This helps generate greater cash flows and, assuming costs do not increase, enjoy higher profit margins. Alternatively, if prices are kept lower (even though consumers would be willing to pay a premium) the value advantage perceived by customers will lead to greater sales volumes and share. Additionally, and importantly, higher loyalty means less risk for these cash flows because existing customers are less likely to take their spending elsewhere. Altogether, these findings on commercial performance are all highly desirable from a financial standpoint as they represent a strong indication that having more inclusive advertising practices are associated with greater likelihoods of sustained brand profitability and growth.

"Inclusive marketing has been central to the success of some of our biggest, powerful brands. When our advertising is unstereotyped, more progressive, provocative, and representative, it builds brand power and drives business results."

Esi Eggleston Bracey

Chief Growth and Marketing Officer, Unilever







Driving brand power by celebrating fatherhood

Bayer Consumer Health / Bepanthen

CASE STUDY

Brazil

Campaign overview: The "From Father to Father" campaign by Bepanthen® Baby seeks to highlight the importance of fathers' active participation in the development of their children. On the occasion of Father's Day in Brazil, the campaign depicts how fathers, now grandfathers, can reconnect with their sons, through their grandchildren.

Bepanthen actively dismantles stereotypes of fathers as distant authoritative figures by depicting families that show that fathers can – and should – be present, loving, affectionate caregivers and that daily routine moments that may seem simple, such as diaper change, are chances to form family bonds and strengthen emotional connections.



In the ad, we see families talking about how the lack of involvement and proximity between the previous generation of fathers and sons during childhood has strained their relationships. Now, as new grandfathers, the men get a new opportunity to step up and help their sons care for the basic needs of their grandbaby, giving new meaning to emotional bonds between different generations.

Business impact: Designed for upper funnel activation, the campaign has successfully contributed to strengthening brand power. The campaign has generated nearly 60M impressions with 16.3M complete views and people impact of 3.4M, supporting brand equity building and strengthening meaning with the target audience, especially focused on first time parents.



Challenging stereotypes through reimagined fairytales

CASE STUDY

Bayer Consumer Health / Dorival

Central America

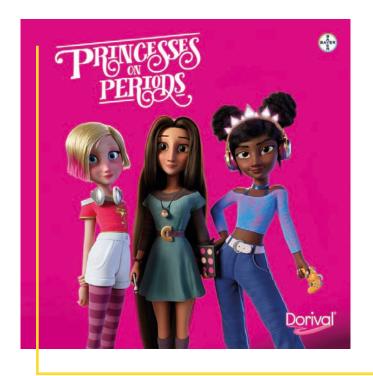
Campaign overview: Even though 1.8 billion people across the world menstruate, many of these girls, women, transgender and non-binary people are unable to deal with their periods in a dignified, healthy way. This vicious cycle begins early, as girls getting their periods for the first time often lack the necessary information and feel uncomfortable asking for it. Sadly, many don't even know what periods are before experiencing them.

To change this story, Bayer and Dorival created **Princesses on Periods**, a content platform that features classic fairytale princesses reimagined as modern young girls, unafraid to use their voices to tell other teenagers the full story of periods.

In these tales, Rapunzel, Sleeping Beauty and Cinderella aren't stuck in castles talking to animals; they're going to school, having fun with their friends, gaming on Twitch, sharing makeup tips and playlists... just living their best lives — and also, getting their periods.

The content platform uses search data and social listening to identify and respond to the most frequently asked questions regarding periods, with each princess providing credible advice on topics ranging from understanding the menstrual cycle, navigating PMS and solutions to pain.

Business impact: In only two weeks after its launch, the campaign generated over 18 million views, 100K interactions, lift of +146% Instagram followers and +880% Google Searches, becoming the most successful digital campaign ever created at Bayer in Central America.





Inclusive advertising and brand equity

Building positive brand equity is crucial for business success. More than a way to generate short-term sales, it is also a means to support long-term value creation. The study found strong empirical evidence that brands with more inclusive advertising do better with respect to brand equity. In particular, using Kantar's BrandZ 'meaningful-different-salient' framework, ²² we saw that brands' scores on meaningful, different and salient metrics were higher if they had more inclusive advertising practices.

High-scoring brands on inclusive advertising indicators were found to be 8.3% more meaningful and 12.1% more different than lower-scoring brands on these metrics. Research in 2023 conducted by Kantar and the Saïd Business School, University of Oxford showed that these two pillars of brand equity — meaningful and different — are also strong and thus very important drivers of longer-term brand growth as well as brand performance on financial markets (i.e., stock returns). ²³ Overall, the findings from this study show that the adoption of more inclusive advertising practices within a brand will have a profound impact on a brand's ability to create and sustain a competitive advantage.

Further, we find that brands with high scores on inclusive advertising have a 9.4% higher salient metric in the BrandZ framework. In other words, more inclusive advertising also made brands in our sample more likely to be on consumers' minds or for consumers to be any more aware of those brands inside of a particular market. This is surprising given that brands in the study were already very well-known, high-awareness brands around the world, such as Dove, Claritin, Oreo, and M&Ms. Yet, despite the difficulty in shifting awareness for this class of brands, inclusive advertising practices do have a significant impact to provide these already-strong brands even greater in-market awareness compared to their local category averages.

"As experts in brand growth, we know that D&I can influence buying decisions and the data from this study clearly shows that inclusive advertising drives a significant sales uplift. The importance of being inclusive is only going to keep growing. Kantar insights show that globally, diversity, fairness, and inclusion are even more important to millennials and Gen Z than other groups. As these populations grow in size – and grow their buying power – diversity and inclusion will also carry more weight."

Sarah Morrell

Senior Client Lead, Creative, Kantar



Increase in female representation leads to stronger sales performance

CASE STUDY

Mars / All brands including: Ben's Original[®],
Cesar[®], Dolmio[®] Dove[®], Extra[®], Galaxy[®], Maltesers[®],
M&M's[®], Orbit[®], Pedigree[®], Sheba[®], Snickers[®], Twix[®] and Whiskas[®]

Global

Campaign overview: Mars believes that the world we want tomorrow starts with how we do business today, which is why the brand has embarked on a multi-year journey to refresh its advertising with a clearer focus on inclusion. A world where the marketing of their brands is as diverse as the world they're enjoyed in.

Throughout this journey, Mars has partnered with the Geena Davis Institute to audit the diversity of the characters in its advertising. It also measures the in-market performance of advertising content by comparing the purchases by individual households that viewed its advertising versus those that did not.

Business impact: Mars cross referenced 218 adverts from around the world where there was both Geena Davis Institute audit data and in-market sales data and found that the higher the percentage of women in the ad, the stronger the sales performance.

From Maltesers® destigmatizing maternal mental health with 'The Massive Overshare' campaign, which increased sales at the brand's best rate of sale for over 3 years, to helping a million women and their communities thrive by 2030 with Dove® /

| Sales lift (based on Mars internal data) | Number of ads | Average % women |
|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Poor/average | 58 | 39% |
| Good | 124 | 48% |
| Excellent | 36 | 58% |



Galaxy® — Mars has shown that not only can advertising be a powerful medium to challenge stereotypes and normalize the representation of diverse communities, but it also makes good business sense.



Marrying product and purpose to drive brand equity

Mondelez / Cadbury Dairy Milk

CASE STUDY

Southeast Asia

Campaign overview: Cadbury's campaign titled "Rasakan Lembutnya Kebaikan" (taste/feel the softness of goodness) seeks to reinforce the brand's ethos of generosity and encourages consumers to not judge a book by its cover.



The latest TVC titled "Cadbury Dairy Milk | Strangers On A Bus" features a mother and son travelling on the bus. It begins with a male passenger boarding the bus who appears to be intimidating and dangerous — the other passengers and even the bus driver himself are wary and fearful of him. Eventually, their impression of the male passenger changes when he manages to cheer up the young boy, who was sobbing, with Cadbury chocolate and magic tricks. Towards the end, Cadbury's tagline, "Goodness that melts your heart", appears along with the brand's chocolate product.

Business impact: As well as breaking down stereotypes related to appearance through inclusive advertising, the campaign contributed to a +1.1 increase in the 2023 Brand Power score (15.6) versus the previous year.

"At Mondelēz International, we've systematically embedded both process and KPIs to track the diversity of our marketing for several reasons. DE&I is central to our ability to deliver on our purpose of snacking made right. We cannot deliver the right snack to the right person at the right time without honouring the diversity of the communities we serve. Additionally, we see clear evidence of the positive business impact of diversity both in front of and behind the camera."

Jon Halverson

Global SVP Consumer Experience and Digital Commerce Mondelez International



Geographic and category variation

Natural questions arise about the variability in these outcomes around regions, countries, and various product categories. Overall, we did not find any evidence to suggest that geography or product category influence the findings. As such, the results in commercial performance and brand value reported above are expected to be consistent across countries and across product categories.

The statistical analysis took into account general and global brand effects as well as country effects. This is important, as markets will have different base rates of product trial for example, or brands will have different amounts of pre-existing brand equity and market power. Our statistical model shows that of the total effects found of inclusive advertising on all of the commercial performance and brand equity metrics considered, only about 20% of those effects are due to between-country variation. In other words, the market in which a brand advertises, in our analysis, accounts for approximately 20% of the effects observed. The remainder (i.e., approximately 80%) comes down to brand-specific factors: the brand itself and the in-market actions taken by the brand's marketers and agencies. In practical terms, for example, if we consider ability to increase product trial, 80% of ability to shift trial would come down to the brand and in-market actions and only 20% would be determined by the country in which it is operating and the specific tendencies of that market and its consumers.

A more nuanced question is: inside of these margins, are countries more or less responsive to changes in GUM? The answer is no; that is, we found no evidence to suggest that the values reported are significantly different across countries in our sample. Countries do exhibit different average commercial values (e.g. average price premium is higher in United States of America versus the United Kingdom), but the change in commercial value due to improvement in GUM is the same across countries (e.g., the changes in pricing power we observe in the United States of America and the United Kingdom are not statistically different from each other).

Finally, the same conclusions are drawn with respect to product category. In our sample we have brands covering a wide variety of categories (e.g., confectionary, snacks, personal care, beauty, pet food, pet care, alcohol, consumer healthcare, and household products). Despite this, we did not find a significant difference between any of the included product categories with respect to how brands in different categories respond to improvements to GUM scores.

3 CHAPTER

Winning through inclusive advertising: actions for brands



The findings from this study unequivocally show that there is a strong, positive business case for the adoption of inclusive advertising practices for brands. More inclusive advertising has been shown to outperform in commercial performance and brand value on multiple fronts, evidenced by empirical impacts on a variety of metrics for hundreds of brands in many countries over multiple years. The findings support the hypothesis and demonstrate that inclusion equals income. In fact, it may be the case that not adopting inclusive advertising and not reflecting a wider spectrum of human diversity in advertising will lead to poorer commercial performance and less valuable brands over time.

Corporate companies and business leaders have a duty to their owners and other stakeholders to protect and grow the value of the assets in their businesses. Brands are vitally important intangible corporate assets that must be carefully nurtured and protected so that they increase in value and deliver benefits to their companies over time. The study's findings clearly show that one way to do this is to invest in, encourage, and strongly endorse corporate efforts to adopt more inclusive advertising practices. This is not a "nice to have" or even a risky proposition. Rather, the scientific evidence reported here clearly shows that brands are more valuable over time and perform better commercially in the shorter- and longer-term when they are advertised in ways that are more inclusive and portray diverse human characteristics in positive ways. Inclusive advertising must be considered a vital element of overall corporate strategy and a central component of brand strategy and associated communications strategies.

Very importantly, it is relatively easy for brands to adopt more inclusive advertising practices within a "business as usual" corporate mandate. The advertising campaigns included in this study's sample make a very compelling business case that this is easily achievable. First, 5,956 "regular" advertising campaigns were studied, and not large-scale "statement" campaigns used for major brand (re) positioning efforts. The campaigns examined were also generally not trying to make social statements about gender equality or other aspects of diversity and inclusion. These were, instead, normal types of product-driven campaigns that brands regularly run, without the intent to make a "big moment" beyond typical marketing KPIs. Quite simply, brand campaigns that scored higher on GUM and therefore indicated more inclusive advertising practices actively avoided character portrayals that perpetuated gender stereotypes, and instead represented gender in positive lifestyle and consumption roles. For example, historical stereotypical female representation might reduce the character to a simple object of interest, instead of an independent-minded consumer with agency over her life and choices. Similarly, male tropes such as the "incompetent father" who is likely to harm himself or others if attempting a household chore were simply avoided by the brands that achieved better GUM scores.

Our findings therefore suggest that the steps brands need to take regarding inclusive advertising practices need not be overly complicated. Brands can simply avoid perpetuating stereotypes and authentically represent communities in all their rich diversity.



The common thread amongst Unstereotype Alliance members is a systematic approach and bold steps to strengthen inclusion across their advertising communications and the teams that produce it. Drawing on best practices from members, these five areas of action for brands have been identified:

- 1. Strengthen leadership accountability and capabilities: The key to success is to ensure there is consensus amongst leadership teams. Inclusive advertising requires a shift in mindset and approach, so it is important that senior leaders and executive teams are aligned around both the moral and the business case for change. Without this consensus there is danger of tokenism. Many brands leading in this space are investing in training programmes to develop inclusive leaders who are aware of their own biases and preferences and actively seek out different views and perspectives to inform better decision-making. Ultimately, they value inclusion not just as a compliance requirement or a 'nice-to-have', but as a strategic business asset.
- 2. Make inclusion commitments measurable: Transparency and accountability go hand in hand and disclosure drives action. Commitments to DE&I and inclusive advertising should be detailed publicly and include measurable targets and timescales. To stay focused on these commitments, it is critical to monitor progress regularly. Brands leading in this space are using methodologies such as the Gender Unstereotype Metric and Progressive Unstereotype Metric as a key driver for change.
- 3. Ensure representation of diverse talent: Not only do companies leading in this space articulate a bespoke, business-driven case for change and set themselves representation targets, they also prioritise advancing various forms of diverse talent specifically into leadership appointments, and creative and production teams. This entails making hiring, appointments, and succession planning fair; rethinking roles in terms of capabilities required; reaching beyond traditional recruiting channels and qualifications to access diverse talent; and holding agency teams and external partners to account.
- 4. Prioritise audience insights and cultural understanding: A deep understanding of a brand's audiences and the tensions and dynamics they face in society is a competitive advantage. The Unstereotype Alliance invests in research to understand the stereotypes impacting underserved communities to help members shape culturally appropriate communications and messaging.
- 5. Act now but with a long-term view: The journey to becoming an inclusive advertiser does not happen overnight. Creating systemic change is a long-term project requiring long-term commitments and resources.



Challenging gender stereotypes in China

CASE STUDY

Unilever / LUX
China

Campaign overview: Over the last five years, the LUX beauty brand has been tackling sexist labels through its new inclusive brand positioning. Research shows that women in China are faced with various unwritten rules about their looks and behaviour, and when they do not comply with these rules they are labelled with derogatory terms. LUX, however, believes that beauty is unconditional, and women should be free to express their femininity unapologetically.





The brand's 'Smash the Labels' campaign marked a step change in its previous marketing strategy, moving from talking solely about product benefits to a more inclusive and inspiring approach. The new, progressive strategy focused on breaking harmful gender stereotypes, making women feel unstoppable and reminding them that their beauty is theirs to own.

Business impact: Moving from a product-focused approach to a more inclusive, bold marketing strategy has been key to the business' increase in brand power and category growth since its introduction. The 'Smash the Labels' positioning has strengthened brand power and increased market penetration in China over the last five years. It has also contributed to a consistent increase in market share within the category over the last three years.



Powering brands and women's football

Unilever / Rexona *Global*

CASE STUDY



Campaign overview: Rexona believes that movement has the power to transform lives, but they know not everyone has the confidence to move however they want. Using the FIFA Women's World Cup as a cultural catalyst, Rexona launched the 'Breaking Limits: Girls Can' series in 22 markets with the ambition of helping more girls play football. To advance the cause, Rexona introduced a free digital training series aimed at upskilling coaches, community leaders, and mentors on how to give girls and women the confidence and opportunity to play football and sport and ensure real, on-the-ground impact.

The brand also leveraged the voices of seven global football stars to launch a multichannel ambassador-led campaign demonstrating to the world that the women's game is #JustWarmingUp and inspiring more girls to get involved.

Business impact: Rexona's progressive brand messaging and inclusive approach drove sales and competitive growth in top markets as well as positively impacting brand power in four out of five of Unilever's top markets. The campaign generated over 2.3 billion earned media impressions, 1 billion views on TikTok and 5.5 million engagements. Moreover, Rexona was ranked the top recalled brand in Australia and Latin America during the Women's World Cup.





Conclusion

This study makes clear to business leaders and marketers that the adoption of more inclusive advertising practices will not be to the commercial detriment of the brands that they own, manage, and support. On the contrary, inclusive advertising pays off for brands in multiple commercially, financially, competitively, and strategically relevant ways. More inclusive advertising is not difficult to do in practice, yet it can deliver significant benefits to brands — let alone to society at large.

A particularly important takeaway from our findings is that the adoption of more inclusive advertising practices appears to attract customers to brands and keeps them there. The converse of this, of course, is that not adopting inclusive advertising practices will make brands less attractive and less sticky to consumers. According to our findings, brands scoring higher on GUM have a higher incidence of consideration and choice, with a positive engine of higher incidence of trial accompanied by greater post-trial retention. This translates into a significant opportunity for these kinds of brands to generate outsized competitive advantages for themselves. From a business perspective, this means that brands with more inclusive advertising should enjoy greater growth particularly if key competitors in their category have not embraced inclusive advertising openly and successfully. This means that companies deciding to take no action to improve their inclusive advertising metrics (e.g., GUM scores) will not only forego additional value creation but also likely suffer continuous attrition of their business to their more inclusive competitors.

The consequence of this is a dynamic that creates a system of incentives for all competitors in a market to improve their inclusive advertising practices, or risk ongoing brand decline, while the rest of the market moves on. Therefore, inclusive advertising not only is a relatively low-cost strategy for higher performance, it also becomes a dominant competitive strategy for brands. This cascading strategy effect, we believe, will drive a virtuous cycle of higher inclusivity accompanied by better market performance for high-GUM brands, and an existential threat for low-GUM brands that continue to rely on harmful stereotypical representation.



ADVICE TO BRANDS

- **1.** Embrace inclusive advertising practices because they deliver both business performance and societal progress.
- 2. Inclusive advertising does not have to be expensive, difficult, or controversial; simple improvements to regular advertising campaigns can be enough to make a difference.
- **3.** If a brand does not adopt more inclusive advertising practices, customers will switch to competitors that do; inclusive advertising is therefore a strategic customer retention imperative.

Commercial benefits from inclusive advertising will be achieved regardless of product category or geographic region; it is unlikely that brands outside the product categories tested in this study will be different.

"At Mars, we use data to confront reality. We made a public commitment to hold ourselves to account and we have been incredibly persistent in delivering against our objective. As a result, we have gone from just a third of the characters in our ads being women to 58% in the latest data. The impact of this work has been amazing - engaging for our employees, helping us to attract talent, and it is underpinning our reputation as a business externally."

Michele (Mitch) Oliver

Global VP of Brands & Purpose, Mars Inc



Raising the game for women's rugby

CASE STUDY

Diageo and Guinness

Great Britain

Campaign overview: Guinness will 'Never Settle' until everyone feels as though they can belong in rugby. Since 2019, Guinness has been championing inclusivity and women's rugby as the largest underrepresented group in the sport through its 'Never Settle' programme.

In 2021, when just 4% of media coverage in the UK and Ireland was dedicated to women's sport, Guinness used its partnerships with Meta and Wikipedia to give the Women's Six Nations players

blue ticks and their own Wikipedia pages to support media coverage. That year, 33% of rugby coverage was dedicated to the women's game.

In 2022, the brand partnered with The Sun newspaper to shift the media landscape and celebrate women's rugby as it had never been celebrated before. Over 40 online articles and a five-page print special about the Women's Six Nations were produced, reaching an incredible 5.3 million adults, and hitting 1.1 million video views.



Business impact: Since 2022, viewership of the Women's Six Nations has increased by 26% and in 2024, Guinness has seen improved brand equity scores +5.5 percentage points based on an increase in the belief that Guinness is making rugby more inclusive. The brand's unwavering commitment to Never Settle has also contributed to Guinness gaining share in both the on-trade and off-trade in Great Britain²⁴ and Guinness becoming the number one beer to enjoy while watching sport on TV." ²⁵



Endnotes

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Convened by:



UN Women is the United Nations entity dedicated to gender equality and the empowerment of women. A global champion for women and girls, UN Women was established to accelerate progress on meeting their needs worldwide.