

INSIGHT REPORT

The power of the Invisible Women:

How default-male design and ideas are limiting business growth, and what we can do about it.

Evidence-based insights to help businesses grow, from experts at The Others & Me. Written by best-selling author, researcher and award-winning strategist Lori Meakin; co-authored by Flora Henry.

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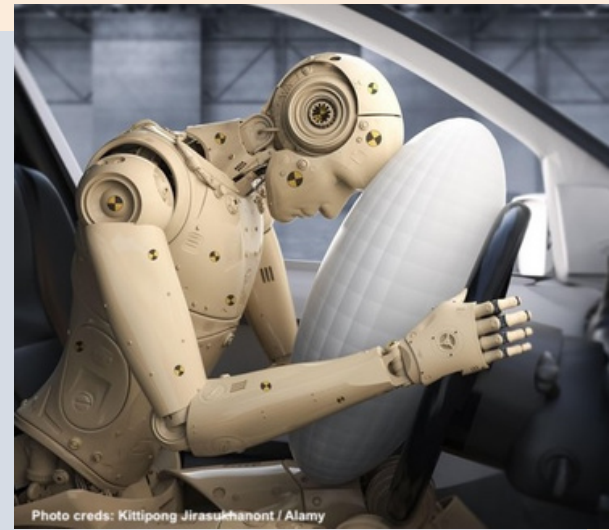
PRELUDE

01

Women are **47%** more likely to be seriously injured and **17%** more likely to die in an identical car crash, because cars simply aren't designed around a woman's body in the driving seat.

So... If businesses can miss an issue this big, what else are we missing?

***Here** you can listen to Caroline Criado Perez explore this issue in detail, including why most 'female' crash test dummies aren't the answer. And sign the campaign for transparency in crash tests.*



A COMBATIVE CONTEXT

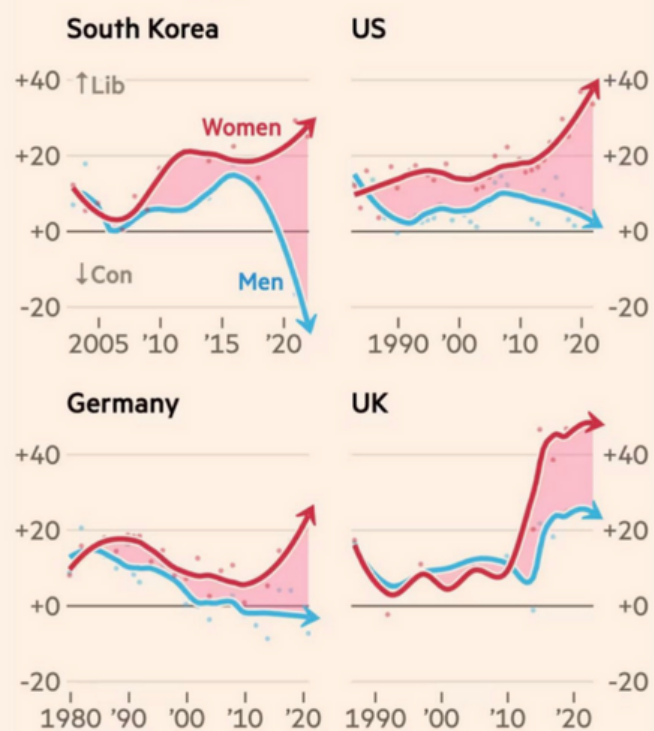
02

When it comes to the gender agenda, there's a powerful **'us vs them'** mindset.

A stark divide between the ideologies of men and women has been growing in the UK, US and all around the world. As Stanford's Alice Evans recently told the FT, "today's under 30s are undergoing a great gender divergence" between "increasingly progressive" young women and "surprisingly conservative" young men, to the point where "Gen Z is two generations, not one."

Sources: Daniel Cox, Survey Centre on American Life; Gallup Poll Social Series; FT analysis of General Social Surveys of Korea, Germany & US, and the British Election Study. US data is respondent's stated ideology. Other countries show support for liberal and conservative parties.

Political ideology of 18-29s
(% liberal minus % conservative), by sex



All figures are adjusted for time trend in the overall population
FT graphic: John Burn-Murdoch / @burnmurdoch
© FT

Social and traditional media tend to behave as if we need to pick a side: Men vs women? Cisgender vs trans people? Who's gaining at whose expense? Whose side are you on? And algorithms and editors love it best when those debates feel angry and personal.

As volunteer-led ERGs vie for attention and funding, businesses wonder what should we prioritise: Race or gender? People or the planet? LGBTQIA+ or 'traditional' gender inclusion? Or something else entirely? Which is more of a worry?

Meanwhile, in this continually-tough economic climate, many business leaders are quietly questioning the value of DE&I activity anyway, pushing 'softer measures' like inclusion further down their worry list and focusing their energies on their growth targets and bottom line instead.

But when it comes to business growth and driving competitive advantage, this either/or, **zero-sum game thinking is a big mistake. Huge.**



Elon Musk @elonmusk · 1d ...

DEI must DIE.

The point was to end discrimination, not replace it with different discrimination.

16K 53K 243K 31M



Elon Musk @elonmusk · 15h ...

"Diversity, Equity and Inclusion" are propaganda words for racism, sexism and other -isms.

This is just as morally wrong as any other racism and sexism. Changing the target class doesn't make it right!

1.6K 6.6K 34K 1.8M



Because putting the right kind of gender-inclusive and intersectional thinking at the heart of a business is a win/win.

The right kind of inclusive thinking makes workplaces more creative, innovative and productive for **men and women, and the LGBTQIA+ community, and people of colour.** It helps internal culture and how well you serve your consumers, audiences or users. So it's better for business growth and profitability, directly as well as indirectly.

The trouble is, too much DE&I work - however well-intentioned - rarely bridges the divide between what a company does internally (people, leadership & culture) and what it delivers externally, in terms of consumer understanding, marketing content and product/service development. Worse still, many DEI initiatives can actually deepen damaging divisions within people and culture:



There'll be more on that in our next Report, but in the meantime, you can find out more [here](#).

THERE IS ANOTHER WAY

03

It *is* possible to create a win/win in all these areas... but to do so, we need to really understand the many false oppositions that we've all been fed for many years.

Only if we liberate our thinking, get past the myths and misinformation, and develop an **'and, not or'** mindset can we start to unlock the major business opportunities that are currently overlooked.

SHOW ME THE MONEY

04

Gender inequality's social and cultural impact on half the population's lives is still mostly thought of as "DE&I" activity, and so tends to sit in People and Culture divisions, rarely feeding directly into work for consumers, users and audiences. Gender inclusion also tends to be seen as a moral imperative and employer brand requirement rather than something that can actively and directly grow the bottom line.

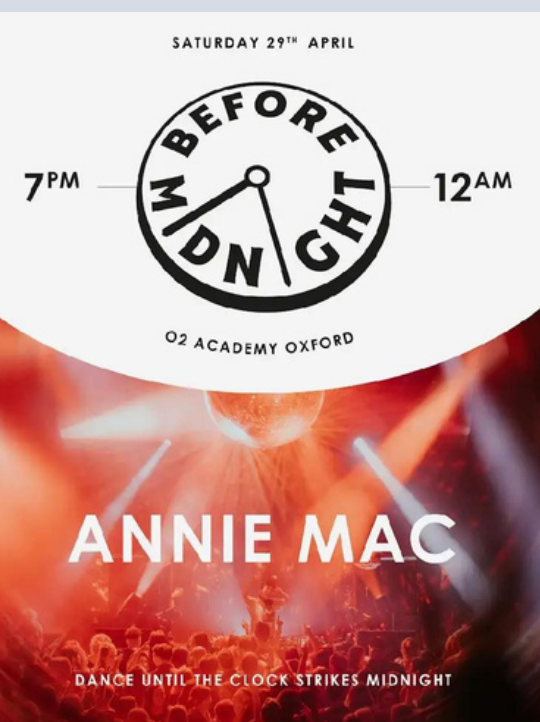
That's another false opposition, and not just because getting things wrong for consumers carries huge reputational risk. The reality is that our brands and businesses are missing out on valuable growth because we fail to explore beyond all kinds of dominant and deep-rooted assumptions around gender.

“We can't afford to be focusing on saving the world right now; we need to focus on profit and growth.”

They're missing out on opportunities to create differentiated content that really resonates, by not really understanding and appreciating the tastes, values and interests enjoyed by the half of the population that controls 80% of consumer spending: women.

And they're missing out on opportunities to develop products and services that solve real problems for huge groups of people, who can drive brand growth and competitive advantage in our continually-difficult economic climate.

Opportunities like creating a club night for those who can't go out til 5am and still parent properly the next day. A club night, incidentally, that's also hugely popular with many people who don't have kids.



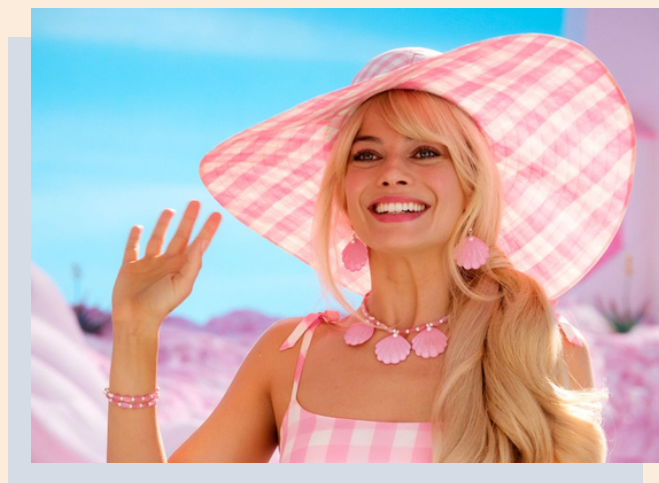
Annie Mac launched Before Midnight in 2022. The events continue to sell out

WOMEN ARE A POWERFUL CONSUMER FORCE

05

2023 was a year when it was harder than ever to ignore how all kinds of women and girls are showing up as a powerful economic force; a year where women, and girls in particular “took up space, proving that their stories were just as important as anyone else’s: worthy of the big screen, the arena stage and the front page.”

Barbie was the biggest film of the year, earning over \$1.4 billion worldwide, surpassing The Dark Knight, and becoming the highest-grossing global release in Warner's 100-year history, above 2011’s Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2. In a declining toy industry, Barbie sales rose 14% as Mattel broadened the doll’s fan base and beat expectations for 3rd quarter sales and



earnings, with execs telling investors that they expect the Barbie movie to be a catalyst to drive sales for years to come. Not bad for “a plastic doll with big boobies”, as Jo Koy so memorably put it.

It’s worth noting, too, that the movie didn’t only resonate with women and girls. As the president of domestic distribution at Warner Bros, put it, “we got a ton of guys.” The opening weekend audiences were 35% male, and even though that still means women outnumbered men 2 to 1, “for a film this pink, you would have expected the audience to be closer to 90% female.”

Biggest domestic weekend box office grosses

Each top movie’s share of weekend total, not adjusted for inflation



Source: NY Times / Box Office Mojo



Beyoncé’s Renaissance World Tour played to more than 2.7 million fans in stadiums around the world, grossing a massive \$579 million. According to the New York Times, the power of the Bey Hive boosted the economy by about \$4.5 billion - that’s similar to what the Olympics generated for Beijing.

Queen Bey herself made \$10.3 million per show, and broke Billboard’s record for the biggest one-month gross with \$127.6 million, while the film of her tour has generated close to \$40 million globally and counting.

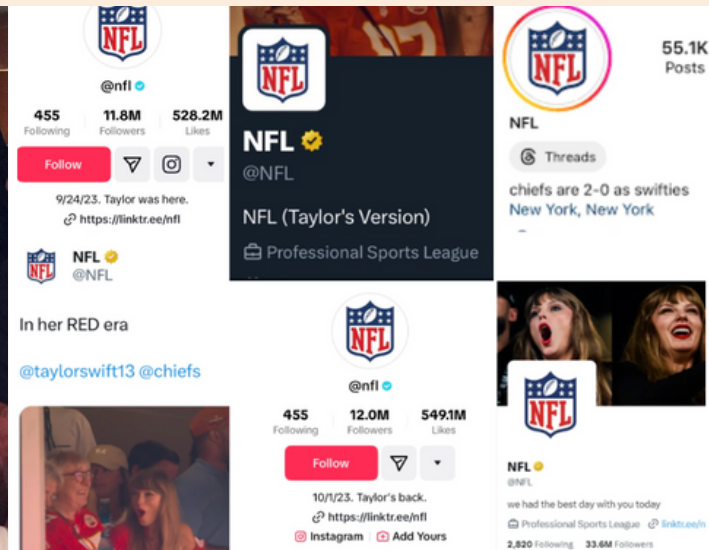
Meanwhile **Taylor Swift’s Eras tour** became the first in history to gross over \$1 billion and her impact on local economies was so great that world leaders were begging her to come to their country too, with Justin Trudeau even tweeting “It’s me, hi. I know places in Canada would love to have you.

So, don’t make it another cruel summer. We hope to see you soon.” Importantly too, these pop culture queens have actively challenged the popular media narrative that pits powerful women against each other, as they’ve shown up in support of each other in all kinds of ways.



Female stars also include within their fan base large numbers of men, which comes as a surprise to many. 53% of U.S. adults identify as fans of Swift with 16% calling themselves “avid” fans, almost half of whom are men - 48%, versus 52% women. This avid fan base also slightly over-indexes on Black, Asian and other races versus the overall US population, and comprises 21% Gen X-ers and 23% Baby Boomers.

The consumer power of Swifties reached way beyond music too. As NFL superstar Travis Kelce, one of the greatest tight ends of all time, shot to mega-fame as “Taylor Swift’s boyfriend”, sales of his jersey rose 400% after Swift showed up at her first Chiefs game. And the NFL quickly leaned into this economic magic dust, even changing their bio to “NFL: Taylor’s Version” despite Taylor’s support for Travis “pissing off a few dads, Brads, and Chads.”



Between Sept and Jan alone, the Swift effect added a massive \$330 million in brand value to the NFL, according to Apex Marketing Group analysis, and this year's Super Bowl achieved the biggest audience for a live event since the moon landing in 1969, with a recent poll finding that 41% of 18-34-year-old Americans who were watching Super Bowl 58 said Swift's presence influenced their decision or that of someone in their household to watch it.

And that's before we even get in to women's sport, from Coco Gauff's Grand Slam win at the US Open attracting more viewers than Novak Djokovic's final (at 3.4 versus 2.3 million viewers); to over 1.7 million tickets being sold for the FIFA Women's World Cup; to traffic on FIFA's digital platforms in the first 15 days surpassing the entirety of France 2019; to Mary Earp's goalkeeper shirt selling out in a day after more than 170,000 people signed a petition demanding that Nike rethink its decision that "female goalkeeper kits are not part of its commercial strategy."



But despite the hype around 2023 being the "year of the female economy", most companies are still overlooking the full force of this phenomenal consumer spending power. Far too often, women - particularly older women, as well as women of colour and the LGBTQIA+ community - are still overlooked or underestimated as creators and consumers.

WE'RE OVERLOOKING WOMEN'S CONSUMER POWER

06

We shouldn't need reminding that it's primarily women's choices that fuel the consumer economy, accounting for over \$31.8 trillion in worldwide spending in 2020. According to Catalyst, 89% of women across the world reported controlling or sharing daily shopping needs, compared to only 41% of men.

Moreover, even in categories we tend to think of as more masculine, women wield huge economic power and influence, making the decision or influencing the purchase of 92% of holidays, 65% of cars, 93% of food, 91% of new homes and 66% of PCs, as well as still driving the decisions in the more-expected categories like groceries and health care. Even when we look at the biggest purchase most people ever make, the home, we see that the top homebuyers after married couples are single women, who make up 18%. That's double the percentage for single men. And yet, a whopping 91% of women in a recent study said that advertisers 'don't understand them'.

Forbes

**Who Runs The World?
Women Control 85% Of
Purchases, 29% Of STEM
Roles**

THE EXPLAINER

2023: the year of women as economic powerhouses

Women's spending of disposable income has become a force

Trends and Insight

**Research Finds
Unprecedented
Female Spending
Power Drives Luxury
Transformation**

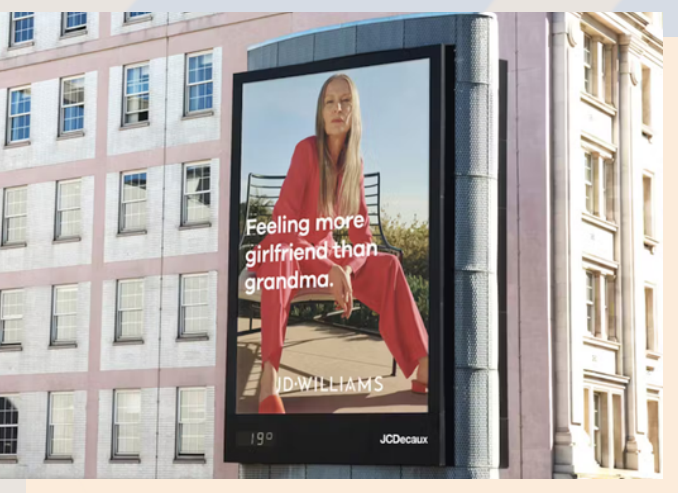
Business

Don't ignore 'Queenagers' - women over 40 now outspend millennials

WORLD
ECONOMIC
FORUM

FUTURE OF WORK

Unlocking the trillion-dollar female economy



JD Williams summer 2023 campaign challenging harmful stereotypes around women getting older.

The ageism that remains alive and kicking in marketing and advertising exacerbates this too, with the \$15 trillion spending power that sits with women aged 50-plus being particularly overlooked. These midlife+ women control 95% of all household purchasing decisions and represent 27% of all consumer spending.

Older women's loyalty and advocacy are powerful marketing tools to be harnessed, with 81% of Gen X women and 64% of Boomer women investing in brands that align with their personal values, and 80% of Boomer women being prepared not just to try a product that supports other women-owned business, but even giving it a second chance if it missed the mark the first time.

Yet Harvard Business Review found that only 5-10% of marketing budgets target 50+ consumers of any gender. And the Geena Davis Institute found that women over 50 featured in only 10% of adverts with women in them, even though they're one of the biggest, fastest-growing and most affluent demographic groups on earth.

And that goes for other consumers and audiences from marginalised groups too.



Featuring 6 'real women' in their 50s and 60s, a series of images including this one are available to use and download for free globally from the [Centre For Ageing Better's Age-Positive Image Library](#) and [Unsplash](#).



LGBTQIA+ spending power remains undervalued, and it's increasing, despite some major misinformation from the vocal "go woke, go broke" lobby. Edelman 2023 data, for instance, shows that "LGBTQ spending power outweighs the hate campaign risks" as "despite the backlash, companies still benefit from being pro-LGBTQ."



Lydia Amoah, founder and chief executive of culture change agency BACKLIGHT, which created and published the Black Pound Report.

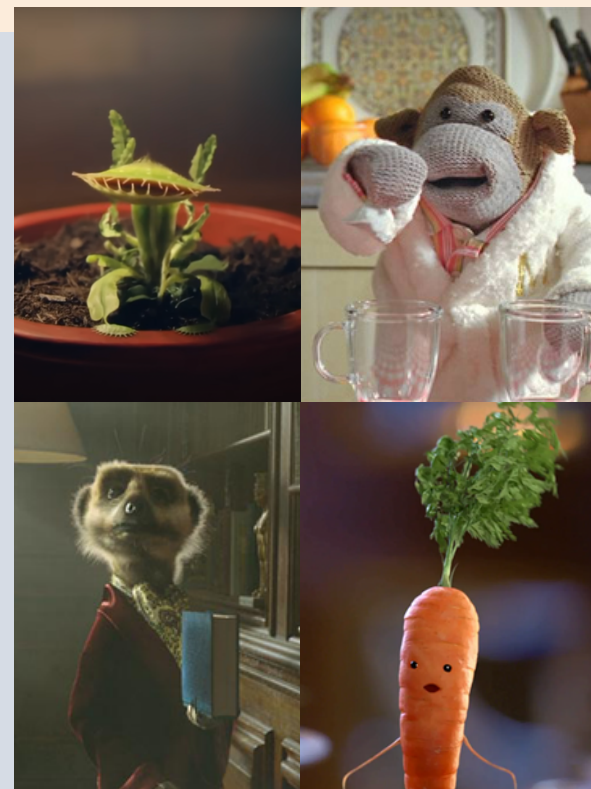
The Black Pound Report catalogues how the spending power of multi-ethnic consumers overall is underserved, and highlights how the intersection of race and gender bias means that women of colour are particularly marginalised. For instance, it tells us that consumers from multi-ethnic backgrounds spend 25% more on health and beauty products than any other consumer – £230m every month. But despite this, 40% of Black female shoppers find it hard to access the right cosmetics and skin care. No wonder 22% of all multi-ethnic consumers go to specialist shops for health and beauty products, with that figure increasing to 30% for Black women.

ADS AREN'T REPRESENTING WOMEN WELL

07

For starters, too often women are simply missing from ads. As we've seen, women make up the majority of consumer purchase decisions as well as being half the population, yet only 37% of the people who appear in adverts are women, and just 26% of ads feature women in a lead role. The vast majority of ads feature men as the primary decision-makers. Men speak seven times more than women in ads.

We even see this play out with non-human characters too! And, a mere 5% of ads feature only women on screen, whereas five times as many feature just men.



Even monkeys, meerkats, carrots and Venus flytraps are characterised as male.

Advertising isn't alone in this issue either. Right across the media, despite the proven success of content that features a better gender balance, new programming still tends to be majority-male characters. Even when there's a better gender balance in the leads, the supporting roles often display the 'Smurfette principle'. We still see male characters taking up the majority of the conversation, including in films that we think of as female-driven, like rom-coms and *Frozen*. And films based on real events where women played significant roles, like the much-lauded *Oppenheimer*, can end up not even passing the Bechdel test, where films have to feature at least two named women who talk to each other about something other than a man.



Lord of the Rings, where in over 13 hours of footage there is one 2 second scene where two women interact.

Interestingly, we mostly fail to notice this massive under-representation, because we've become so used to male voices dominating historically that when women do speak for just 30% of the time, or take up just 30% of the space, evidence shows that many of us, particularly men, tend to believe women are dominating. When women are present at 15-17%, it's perceived as about equal.

But it's not just under-representation that's the issue. Even when women are present, they're often misrepresented. The hugely insightful 'Brandsplaining' study found that "The majority of brands still speak to women from a male perspective, explaining to them what they are and telling them what they can be", and so fundamentally misrepresent women in all kinds of ways.

For instance, women in every age group put 'sense of humour' in their top three defining characteristics, but only 3% of the ads studied featured women being funny. Similarly, even though women in every age group put 'intelligence' in the top three characteristics that define them, only 4% of ads show women in leadership positions.

“The majority of brands still speak to women from a male perspective, explaining to them what they are and telling them what they can be”

Male characters get twice as much time on screen as women in top ads, with men outnumbering women in finance and home ads, even though women account for 85% of all consumer purchases including 91% of new homes and 89% of bank accounts. **And women are most likely to appear in health and beauty ads** even though 78% of women agreed ‘I’d rather be praised for my mind than my looks’. Importantly, really improving gender representation means representing men better too, but sadly, we’re

doing about as badly here as we are with our depictions of women. Unstereotype Alliance 2021 found that only 9% of male characters in ads were depicted in non-traditional roles (vs 8% for women), and only 21% of ads depicted men with diverse body types, down from 25% in 2020. That’s despite ads with unsterotypical representations of men being likely to see a **22% uplift in ROI, alongside the +20%** that we see for ads with unsterotypical representation of women.

BETTER REPRESENTATION DRIVES BETTER PERFORMANCE

08

There’s mounting evidence from multiple sources that ads that represent gender more positively and authentically perform better at driving both brand value and short term sales.

Ipsos tells us, in their rigorous ‘A Woman’s Worth’ study, that ads showing women in non-traditional roles are proven to boost sales and brand equity. Unstereotype Alliance, through their extensive work with Kantar, can prove that ads that represent “a positive image of their female characters that sets a good example to others” score significantly higher on a whole host of important brand measures including brand trust, uniqueness and affinity, as well as driving higher purchase intent, loyalty and maintaining a price premium. They’ll be revealing more detail on this at Cannes 2024.



IPSOS, A Woman's Worth, 2023

And System 1, DECA and ITV's 'Feeling Seen' work demonstrates that more positive representation of women and other marginalised groups drives both greater engagement and greater commercial effectiveness, creating a benefit for all audiences: "Groups who feel represented by the ads react with particular emotion and intensity: but this doesn't come at the expense of the rest of the audience." In fact "the best diverse ads are popular with everyone."



Unstereotype Alliance; ITV, System 1, DECA

ADS MUSTN'T BE PART OF THE PROBLEM

09

Six out of ten women believe advertising plays an important role in challenging stereotypes in society more broadly too, and women and girls are increasingly demanding that brands take that responsibility more seriously. They want the industry to recognise that the way women and girls are represented in ads and the media has an impact in the real world. In particular, they're keen to point out the effect that ads and the media have on the way boys and men see women, even more than on how women and girls see themselves.

Advertising plays an important role in challenging stereotypes

The need for advertisers to recognise this responsibility feels more acute than ever right now, to help counter the current rising wave of misogyny. Misogyny that sees young boys writing "MMAS" (make me a sandwich) on their homework to 'put women teachers in their place.' And that leaves many girls at school facing sexual harassment and abuse (including sexist name-calling, up-skirting,

unwanted touching in school corridors and rape jokes on the school bus) that's now so commonplace that they don't even see the point in reporting it. We must recognise too that this resurgence of a more aggressive masculinity has a negative impact on the mental health and wellbeing of many men and boys too, which activists like CALM work hard to address.

Clearly, advertising and brands can't single-handedly reduce the rise in misogyny. But with great power comes great responsibility, so being aware of the prevalence of the male gaze and the tendency to objectify and sexualise women, particularly in ads and content targeting men, is an issue that none of us should overlook.

Surely advertisers can do more than just play on the right side of the ASA rulings around gender stereotyping if we're to recognise our power and responsibility, and use it to help stem the rise in misogyny that's flooding social media, particularly for the youngest generations.



Female characters in ads are four times more likely to be shown in revealing clothing than men, and twice as likely to be visually or verbally objectified, with a quarter of all ads that feature women presenting them in a sexualised way. We could help to actively address the ridiculous standards that women are held to, as America Ferrera's character summarises in her famous Barbie monologue, to rapturous applause from millions of women.

“You're supposed to stay pretty for men, but not so pretty that you tempt them too much or that you threaten other women because you're supposed to be a part of the sisterhood... You have to never get old, never be rude, never show off, never be selfish, never fall down, never fail, never show fear, never get out of line. It's too hard!”

HOW TO GET CONTENT RIGHT

10

Getting gender representation right doesn't just mean making more content about difficult women's issues. Nor does it mean simply adding a diversity count to an ad's casting, which often ends up feeling tokenistic, and rarely achieves what it set out to.

Getting it right means really understanding what's happening beneath the surface in most creative departments and content divisions. Like the way **gender-superiority myths** around taste and interests tend to leave us with a tone, look and feel, humour and cultural reference that are default-male.

That happens not because of any ill-will, but simply because we all tend to believe that 'girly' stuff is just for girls where a more blokey approach works for everyone. That's why most parents are happy to have their girls play with boys' toys, but not so much the other way round. It's why relatively few men are likely to choose to consume all kinds of content made by/for women, even though evidence shows they like it just as much (if not more) when they do give it a go. And it's why we all tend to believe that the same things are better when we think they're done by a man.

Just think how often the word "cool" is used to describe a good ad or show by many in the creative industries, and consider what counts as cool. We rarely hear "cute" being used in the same way, even though that's how women and girls often describe all kinds of things they love. (And no, "cute" doesn't just mean kittens and Disney characters.)



Creating content that's got a more female-coded humour, tone and approach can be used across all kinds of subject-matter, including areas that traditionally over-index with men, as *Ted Lasso* so brilliantly proves. And when we bear in mind the proven power of humour to drive ad effectiveness, and how it's been missing from adland for a while now, this is an area that we ought to be using much more.



Jason Sudeikis and Hannah Waddingham as Ted Lasso and Rebecca Welton.

Progress around gender equality has now left many feeling like “you can't say anything these days”, but teams just need to work to understand what some different kinds of humour might be, and to understand what's best to laugh at. Often, that's laughing with the underdog, across a whole spectrum of marginalised groups within and beyond women, and punching up, not down.

It's about doing it with a high degree of emotional intelligence, rather than a more detached, arched, quizzical tone that can easily feel like superiority or even disdain. And it's about using laughter to recognise and change the things that affect millions of consumers, that so far haven't really been aired.



Dan Levy and Emily Hampshire as David Rose and Stevie Budd in the famous 'I like the wine not the label' scene in award winning series Schitt's Creek.

IT'S DEEPER THAN JUST ADS

11

Our gender assumptions and blind spots aren't just affecting our content and comms. They're impacting our product and service design too.

Caroline Criado Perez literally wrote the book on how the world we live in is designed default-male: *Invisible Women: Exposing Data Bias in a World Built for Men*. It's full of data that most of us miss most of the time, from car design to town planning, products to experiences. But once you know what to look out for, you can see these kinds of gender-default issues all around us. This phenomenon impacts men

too, in key areas that are typically female-dominated. The important thing for marketers is that we've all witnessed brand teams dancing around on the head of a pin to find insights they can address and problems they can solve better than the competition... and yet we're running right past all kinds of overlooked and underserved consumer issues that are begging to be solved. Because every one of these consumer problems is an opportunity for brands to serve customers better, drive uptake and loyalty, and differentiate from the competition.



HOW WE CAN SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS

12

We're only just beginning, but we know, for instance, that **tech brands** could drive greater loyalty by developing maps that highlight well lit and busy routes, as well as the current options for walking, cycling, driving etc. Because that helps address a key safety issue that's top of mind for millions of women and LGBTQIA+ people, and that also affects more cis straight men than most of us realise too, particularly young men of colour.

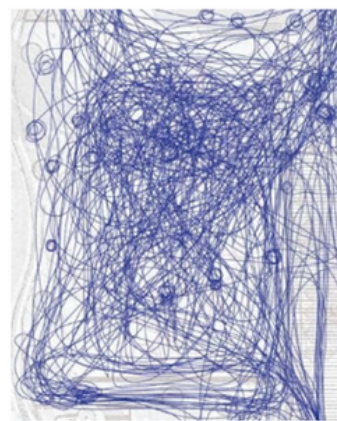
While we wait for **car companies** to finally seize the day and build car safety around women's bodies too, a motoring brand can win customer loyalty by developing accessories to help mitigate some of the fundamental risks in default-male car design.

And **built environments** can learn from some fascinating and insightful work on gendered use of playgrounds, and start designing spaces where feminine-coded activities aren't literally pushed to the margins while traditionally male-dominated activities and interests take centre-stage. That's especially valuable because evidence shows that redesigning space in this way makes it more enjoyable for boys and men too.

Sometimes, developing products beyond the gender blind-spots can be as simple as thinking about **clothes with pockets; or name badges and graduation gowns** that don't assume there's a lapel or tie to fix it to.



The playground



Boys' use of the space



Girls' use of the space

Credit: Honorata Grzesikowska Data collected on how girls and boys share playground space

Of course, we must also recognise that in markets which tend to be female-dominated, such as parenting, fashion, beauty, and physical and mental wellbeing, it's male consumers who are often marginalised and overlooked.

87% of men still wish they could spend more time with their children, even though more dads than ever are already leaning into active parenting. Yet parenting brands still behave as if the primary carer is a straight woman. And the pressure many men feel to 'man up' and suppress their emotions is having calamitous consequences, as the Campaign Against Living Miserably knows all too well.

More brands could help educate men around their emotional wellbeing, including addressing the increased pressures men are facing to look good too. Fashion and beauty brands could also do much more to welcome all kinds of men into this predominantly female-coded world, following the lead of influencers and celebs like Timothée Chalamet, who are increasingly embracing the fashion and beauty products that are traditionally targeted at women, from nail colour to 'guyliner' to skirts and bows.

But insights like these remain invisible to many brands. And those brands are missing out, because when these issues and opportunities are part of your lived experience, you really care about them, want to support brands that address them; and you actively avoid brands that contribute to the problems.

See a short vox pop video [here](#).



IMPRESSIVE GAINS FOR BRANDS THAT GET IT RIGHT 13

Brands that have used an understanding of overlooked gendered issues to achieve great success.



NIKE

The insight: Women's feet are a different shape to men's, and their body weight makes cleats behave differently too. Wearing boots that aren't designed for women's feet increases the risk of injury to sportswomen.

The business opportunity: Nike Phantom Luna sold out immediately on release in June 2023, received positive press coverage and helps Nike defend against indie brand Ida and Puma.

BUMBLE

The insight: Traditional power dynamics and worries about safety both online and in the real world means that dating for straight women can feel like a troubling place. They'd love to escape these old-fashioned power dynamics and have more equality in relationships from the start.

The business opportunity: Founded by Whitney Wolfe Herd, formerly of Tinder, this dating app where 'women are required to make the first move' now has a market cap of well over \$5 billion and a community of 100 million.





WAR PAINT

The insight: Men get tired, get spots, and worry about how they look too. And while no-one welcomes a rise in male body dysmorphia, some men could feel more confident if they too could camouflage what they perceive as flaws.

The business opportunity: The award-winning brand created a bidding war on Dragons' Den. Valued at over half a million then, it's now stocked in over 300 stores internationally. And with the men's grooming market now estimated at \$80bn, there's plenty of room for growth.

HELLO SUNSHINE

The insight: The majority of film and TV still centres men, but Hello Sunshine "puts women at the centre of every story" in order to "shine a light on where women are now, and help them chart a new path forward."

The business opportunity: The media company set up by Reese Witherspoon has had 15 wins across the Emmys, SAG and Golden Globes; has a community of 57 million members; and recently sold for \$900m.



ELLEVEST

The insight: When most financial service companies simply offered "a pinkwashed version of your dad's investment advisor", Ellevest began using "real, hard data about women's lived realities" because those insights "fundamentally change what women need in order to build their best financial futures."

The business opportunity: This US-based woman-first financial company now has \$1.5 billion in assets under management and a community of more than 3 million.



Most of these examples happen to be created by founders with a vested interest in the issue because of their own lived experience. But it doesn't have to be that way.

There's no reason why female-led design solutions should be created only by female-founded companies. All it takes is for brand and product teams to work harder at spotting problems, then understanding and seizing the many opportunities that go unnoticed by the majority of businesses and leaders.

Now, that's not always easy, and **just having people of the right gender in the room isn't enough**, unless everyone has the right expertise as well as lived experience, and has put in the active effort to overcome the default gender biases that are baked into all areas of life. Many women, for instance, remain unaware of most of these issues too.

Within teams, even when people from marginalised groups do have alternative viewpoints and ideas, they may not always feel the most empowered to speak up. For instance, only two-thirds of women (versus 80% of men) feel they can voice a dissenting opinion without fear of repercussion.

And whatever our lived experience and our confidence to speak up, **all of us are influenced by centuries of social conditioning** which makes us fall prey to gendered superiority myths and default male or female bias much more than we may like to acknowledge.

So it's clear that without **active effort and the right expertise**, at least half the population will continue to be unwittingly but chronically underserved in all kinds of areas. And companies will struggle to maintain or grow their share of a challenging market, missing huge opportunities to really resonate with these valuable but overlooked audiences.



“Only two-thirds of women feel they can voice a dissenting opinion without fear of repercussion, versus 80% of men.”

HOW WE CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS

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Lori Meakin and The Others & Me team can help you ‘find your Bumble’ before your competition does, by applying expert, innovative gender intelligence to your product and service design, brand strategy and/or consumer-facing content.

If you want to unlock new profit pools and generate sustainable competitive advantage, let’s work together. We partner with companies in all kinds of ways, from initial talks that kick-start thinking in this area, through to working sessions that include:

- A one-hour talk and discussion, introducing a broad audience within the company to these ideas and our unique approach.
- 2 x 90 minutes working sessions, with working time in between to carry out key activities that help put the learning into practice.
- a half day or a whole day workshop.
- An audit where we evaluate what you’re doing already, and identify areas of opportunity, including at least 3 quick wins that cost nothing to implement.
- Bespoke projects where we partner with agencies or internal teams on longer-term innovation projects.

We also offer training to help leaders better manage increasingly gender-diverse teams, to create a more effective, innovation-focused leadership and internal culture.

Get in touch: hello@theothersandme.com

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