New trend report: Gender Bias in Advertising

by JWT Intelligence - Thursday, June 29, 2017


In 2017, discussions around gender and media have reached a fever pitch. We’ve seen movements for gender equality in Hollywood, in Silicon Valley—and even on Madison Avenue. Agencies are creating marquee campaigns to support women and girls, often termed “femvertising.” But is the advertising industry as a whole making strides toward improving representation of women overall?

We’re finally able to answer these questions with the same rigorous, data-driven approach that informs so many other areas of the advertising industry today in our latest report, Gender Bias In Advertising: Research, Trends and New Visual Language.

The report is informed by new joint research from the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media at Mount Saint Mary’s University and J. Walter Thompson New York. The research, which was funded by Google.org and developed at the University of Southern California’s Viterbi School of Engineering, analyzed more than 2,000 English-language films from the Cannes Lions archive to put numbers to the challenge of female representation in advertising, and get a sense of whether the situation is changing.
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This Girl Can

Photography by Klaus Vedfelt. Courtesy Getty Images
“Technology advances in data sciences and machine learning give us new ways of shining light on media content, at scale and with an unprecedented level of detail and accuracy,” says Shri Narayanan, Niki & C. L. Max Nikias Chair in Engineering, University of Southern California. “It can give us novel insights not just by eliminating the mystery about potential unconscious biases in content, but in offering objective tools to shape content.”

The findings? In short, there when it comes to women’s screen time and speaking time in commercials, there has been no statistically significant change over the past 10 years.

“What this research shows is that our industry has ‘tent-pole moments’—amazing actions or campaigns when we all rally around women,” says Brent Choi, chief creative officer of J. Walter Thompson New York, “but when it comes to creating our ‘regular’ ads for our ‘regular’ clients, we forget about them.”

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8-RY6fWVrQ0

The research also found that:

– Men get about four times as much screen time as women and speak about seven times more than women.

– There are twice as many male characters in ads as female characters.

– 25% of ads feature men only, while only 5% of ads feature women only.

– 18% of ads feature only male voices, while less than 3% of ads featuring female voices only.

For more research, expert commentary on gender in advertising, and examples of how a women-first approach to visual language is influencing Hollywood, print media, and products, download Gender Bias in Advertising: Research, Trends and New Visual Language.

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