

Welcome to the new era of progressive marketing

By [Leigh Andrews](#), issued by [Kantar](#)

12 Mar 2020

This week, in celebration of International Women's Day, Kantar hosted engaging afternoon presentations at its Cape Town and Johannesburg offices where Jane Bloomfield, chief growth officer from the UK, talked through findings from Kantar's #WhatWomenWant global study.



Setting the context for the event, Bloomfield said that 2018 marked the centenary of the 1918 Suffrage, when some women were granted the vote in the UK. The year was also essentially the beginning of a new era, as brands began to see women as consumers in their own right.

Yet in the [past 100 years](#), while much has been done to support female empowerment, marketing and advertising has actually contributed to the diminishing view of women by society.

To highlight this, Kantar created the #WhatWomenWant programme, bringing together a century of outstanding creative work and milestones in marketing to women, showcasing standout examples of brands that have focused on issues that matter to women, giving them a voice, power and confidence.



What women want?

Kantar South Africa 3 Dec 2018



The campaign has since evolved into a longer initiative looking into the issue of the way women and other under-represented groups are reflected in supposedly modern marketing.

Because according to Kantar's #WhatWomenWant findings, the creative industry as a whole needs to work to address gender inequality.

This despite an increased focus on the issue by movements like #MeToo, #AmINext and #MakeItSafe, coupled with awareness of the fact that celebrating #IWD2020 means more than just 'flowers and chocolates'.

Businesses all need to do better in this regard.



#WomensMonth: Keep the pink cupcakes. Give us real change...

Donna Rachelson 30 Aug 2019



Bloomfield took a deeper look into what it takes to deliver the progressive marketing needed, while covering the way both marketers and consumers view gender portrayal in ads.

She also spoke of the effect on advertising effectiveness in getting it right or wrong.

Brands, wake up: We're in the women's century

That's why it's the brands that realise the 21st century is the 'women's century' will truly thrive. Women's economic empowerment and entrepreneurial growth is expected to shine as the driver of the world's economy.



Source: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ruchikaatulshyan/2015/01/30/racially-diverse-companies-outperform-industry-norms-by-30/#603fb8b31132>

Bloomfield said it's not even a matter of 'if', but rather a matter of 'to what heights', as \$12tn could be added to the global GDP by 2025, simply by working to advance women's equality.



#FairnessFirst: Transforming your business to win in the age of experience

Leigh Andrews 11 Nov 2019



The social dialogue on inclusion, diversity and equality (IDE) has certainly taken a central spot on the agenda for businesses and in social dialogue in recent years, with the benefits of incorporating these initiatives at work being widely recognised and increasingly adopted. Many data sources prove that IDE is both a social and financial imperative.

But Bloomfield says that some of the most persuasive evidence supporting a 'cultural correction' of global gender drift comes from Kantar's [BrandZ](#) report, which shows that gender-balanced brands are more valuable than brands that skew male or female, as the skewed brands underperform.

First ever South African BrandZ ranking reveals growth potential for local brands





Kantar 31 Oct 2018



In fact, compared to gender-neutral brands, male-skewed brands are valued on average \$9bn less! This suggests that too many brands maintain a historic gender skew and are losing market share to brands with wider gender appeal that are liked by both men and women.

And yet, a plethora of brands are still not acknowledging women's priorities or communicating with them in an empowering way, which is in turn negatively affecting brand values.

In fact, in failing to correctly reflect, represent and champion women in their marketing and advertising efforts, they're putting their customer relationships at risk as the customer isn't just an imaginary persona but a real person with hopes, dreams and experiences to tap into.



#SheSays - we want to hear what you say!

Kantar 11 Mar 2020



Bloomfield shared that Home Depot [got this right](#) by working hard to rebalance the brand and make their offering more accessible to females.

Back in 2014, they realised that their brand power was significantly stronger among men than women, but the brand has seen strong and steady growth in overall brand value since then, rising from \$9bn in 2010 to \$52.2bn in 2019.

Progressive marketing framework: Organisation, manifestation, evaluation

Bloomfield says that client learnings from overperformers and research into getting this right involves creating a progressive marketing framework and clarifying the conditions required to set up the organisation for success.

The three broad areas for this are: the organisation itself, in setting the right conditions for success in their vision, strategy and culture; the manifestation of this, in showing up right, whether in brand and product or communication and customer service; and in evaluation and measuring activity accurately to take action.

Of these areas, we need to start with communication, as that's the framework that receives the most scrutiny and triggers action elsewhere. So, ask whether the communication has been designed with equality thinking in mind, be clear on who you are targeting and check whether it's even possible to have such conversations in your organisation.

Bloomfield brought this home with insight from Kantar's [AdReaction Getting Gender Right](#) report, which offered a view into the marketer's view of the world.



Advertising industry complacency is letting brands and women down

Kantar 29 Jan 2019



Sadly, the industry actually thinks it is getting it right in creating gender-balanced content and avoiding stereotypes through characterisation. Male and female marketers alike are confident they're creating ads that appeal to women and include positive and attainable female role models.

While female marketers were less convinced that they were doing a good job with male role models, the results are still positive.

And yet, this rosy view isn't reflected in consumer opinion. When consumers were asked for their thoughts, 76% of female consumers and 71% of male consumers said they believe the way they are portrayed in advertising is completely out of touch, and stereotypes aimed at men are just as unhelpful as stereotypes aimed at women.

The female consumer disconnect

While it's true that most ads don't feature the blatant stereotypes seen in advertising in the 1960s and 1970s, just 19% of women are shown as aspirational, and only 6% shown as authoritative today.

In addition, almost 40% of consumers don't agree that women are treated respectfully, and only just over half think that women are portrayed as positive role models, which is nowhere near the 90% figure seen among marketers.

This is entirely consistent with other work done in this space and the findings paint a serious picture, with 85% of women saying: "Advertising needs to catch up with the real world when depicting women." A white British gen X-er added: "I have never identified with any woman in an advert for anything! Showing normal, everyday people using products would, for me, make me more likely to buy a product." A Scottish Millennial with no children concluded: "To see ourselves represented as a spectrum of views and personalities... Is that too much to ask?"



#FairnessFirst: Get gender right in advertising by sidestepping stereotypes

Leigh Andrews 18 Mar 2019



Bloomfield added that an analysis of Cannes Lions award-winning ads from the past decade revealed troubling statistics, further validated by [research from JWT/ Geena Davis Institute](#).

Analysis of Cannes award-winning ads from the past decade revealed troubling statistics



Men speak 7x
more than women



Men get about 4x as much
screen time as women



Men are 62% more likely
to be shown as smart

Female Male

Source: JWT Geena Davis Institute, *Unpacking gender bias in advertising Analysis of 2,000 Cannes Lions films from 2006 to 2016*

In 'Unpacking gender bias in advertising', an analysis of 2,000 Cannes Lions films from 2006 to 2016, researchers found:

- Men speak seven times the amount women do in ads
- Men get four times more screen time than women
- Men are 62% more likely to be shown as 'smart'

Bloomfield said this data prompts disturbing questions about the nature of average, everyday advertising, considering that these striking gender inequities are based on scrutiny of the ‘best-of-the-best’ in advertising. Regardless, marketers can’t escape the fact that the gendered consumer experience falls short of expectations and that perhaps there are good reasons for this.



Is your idea award-worthy?

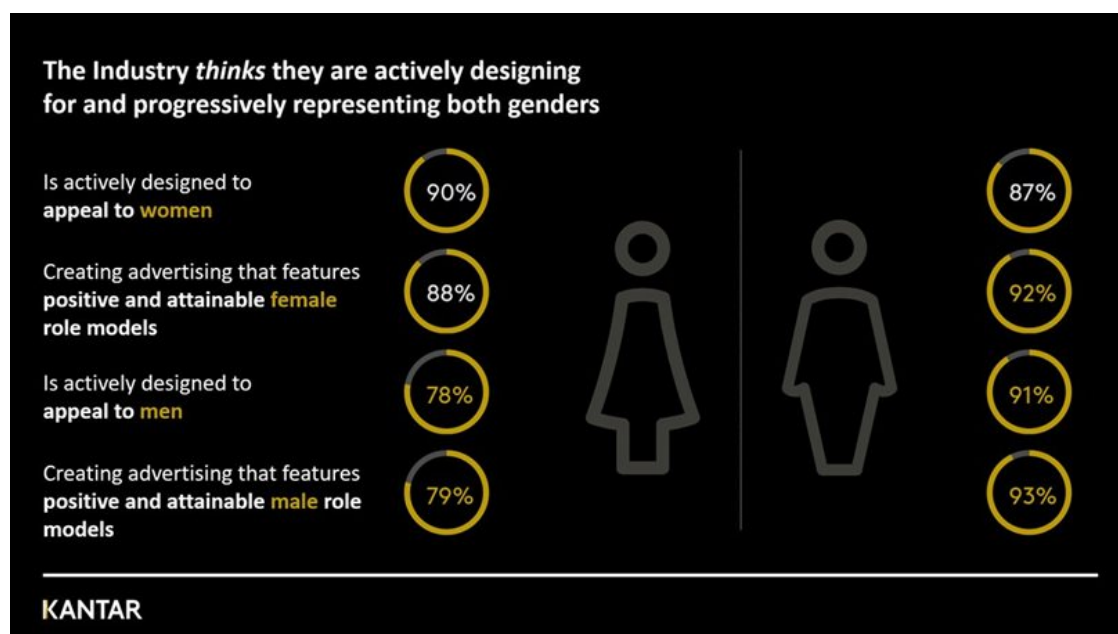
Dentsu 12 Feb 2019



And while Cannes Lions award-winning ads are certainly not necessarily representative of all ads, this is definitely worrying, as these were ads the industry felt fit to reward in this most public of ways.

It also serves as clear evidence of unconscious gender bias being rife within the industry, and the fact that marketers seem to be targeting according to stereotypes in some categories with more subtle biases emerging, beyond portrayal.

But who are marketers truly targeting?



Source: Kantar Getting Media Right 2018

Looking at this based on the make up of samples recruited for advertising pre-tests, Bloomfield confirms that the results of this are shocking. The average makeup of samples across the last decade has been 62% female, with more extreme skews in categories like laundry detergents, household cleaners and baby products, which is on average 98% female. Samples for vehicle ads and motor oil, on the other hand, are at 42% and 29% female respectively.

Bloomfield asks: “Can we still possibly think as an industry that women do the housework and men deal with the cars?”

Despite this, the non-stereotypical gender portrayals are the more motivating in terms of being seen as more persuasive, more believable, more unique and making the advertised brand more appealing.

In addition, sitting under the concept of female empowerment is a highly nuanced view of self-esteem, and looking at brands’ performance through the self-esteem lens gives new insights about how brands can engage with the wide-ranging female audience.



Six ways to remind yourself of your self-worth at work

Maiyo Febi 7 Feb 2020



That's why a key point of the #WhatWomenWant research findings for marketers to focus on is that true female empowerment relies on the idea of self-esteem, and that this is more pronounced in younger millennial women.

In addition, self-esteem is neither a simple nor singular concept, and looking across the five key contributors, Bloomfield details below, the level of contribution varies.

Originally a market researcher herself, Bloomfield's two decades in marketing and an active UK spokesperson role on not only #WhatWomenWant but also BrandZ, Progressive Marketing and the Institute for Real Growth, make her just the voice we need at the forefront of unpacking this issue.

Five aspects of self-esteem for marketers to consider

In doing so, she discussed five self-esteem contributors that brands need to promote to order to truly connect with female consumers. Looking at these factors across gender, they are:

- Sexual and body autonomy: 25%
- Freedom of expression: 25%
- Financial autonomy: at 20%
- Socially connected/networked, at 21%
- Accessibility/visibility (presence of role models): at 9%

That said, there's no single 'magic feel-good factor' – all elements are important.

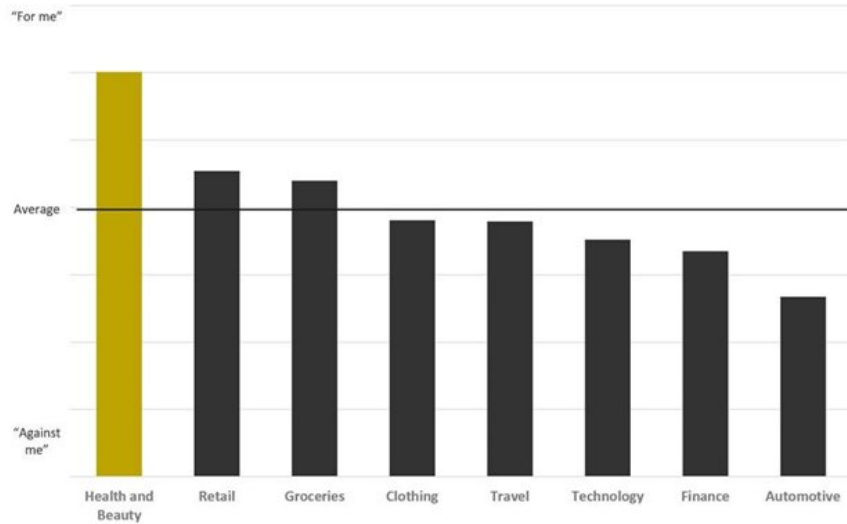


[click to enlarge](#)

Sexual and body autonomy is more important to women, who are more frequently objectified and face more societal pressure to conform to a stereotype.

Financial autonomy is slightly more important to men while the concept of accessibility and visibility was least important for both women and men, linking back to Bloomfield's point that self-esteem is intrinsic and self-defined.

Health and beauty category ranks top in consumer perception of delivering self esteem



In addition, there are interesting differences between brands when viewed through the self-esteem lens, with the ‘health and beauty’ category ranking top in consumer perception of delivering self-esteem.

Bloomfield also lifted spirits by sharing standout examples of brands that have consistently focused on these issues that matter to women, thereby giving females confidence, power and a voice through global examples we may have otherwise missed locally.

Swooshing ahead for female empowerment in sport

These include the specific category of women’s football, which has seen a rise in worthy advertising and mentioning the struggle for empowerment of late.

Another category that’s seen some female focus recently is that of beer and brown spirits. As it was initially seen as unacceptable for women to drink, this is traditionally a male-dominated category, as is that of sport sponsorship.

But the wording used in Budweiser’s ‘Lionesses/Heart of a King’ ad actually originated in a speech by Queen Elizabeth I, which proves that women have been talking about these issues for a long time.

Then there’s the ‘powering you’ ad for Special K cereal, which traditionally featured a woman in red, yet now aims to speak to women more aspirationally and authentically.

Bloomfield says this works as it's an everyday product, yet also has that 'Nike inspiration' aspect of featuring strong women overlaid with clear product messaging. It's by no means about simply "putting lots of women in the ad":

Sticking with Nike as an example, Bloomfield showed the brand's 2017 #BelieveInMore campaign, which aired in Russia, the Middle East and Turkey – all places where traditional acceptance of female athleticism is low.

Little girls are made of more than gossip and marmalade

This creative work made strides in gender equality by modifying the traditional children's rhyme 'What are little girls made of?', imbuing them with greater strength and power to show that girls are made of much more than gossip and marmalade.

It balances strength with aggression to deliver bold, inspiring gender portrayals, which requires brand confidence as well as cultural sensitivity, especially in transitional cultural environments.

Bloomfield said she likes that it puts the spotlight on young girls, which speaks to the point of younger women having lower self-esteem – the problem starts when they are very young, and it's a story we get fed our entire lives.

While Nike's typical role models may not seem realistic as they're athletes and the average female is not, they do produce work that adds to the conversation.

These examples also show that progressive marketing is about more than trying to invert stereotypes or get more women featured in spaces you don't expect to see them.

Breaking stereotypes, taking up space sensitively

Instead, it's about bringing a sense of hope and empowerment, and the realisation that it's time for women to be more fairly represented in the world around us. Not only that, but women need to be supported by men and not dismissed for trying to take up space.

But breaking stereotypes needs to be done with sensitivity and awareness of the cultural environment, acknowledging that some people may find progress difficult, with different markets on different journeys in this regard.

Navigating gender marketing with brand self-awareness for the brand, the audience and the socio-cultural environment is key. What might be a subtle message in one market, can be a bold statement in another.

As an example, she showed the #SheDrives work for Nissan Saudi Arabia:

As a female living in the UK, Bloomfield says, "I can't imagine being 44 years old and not having ever driven myself where it's the norm to get your licence at age 17, never mind never having seen any females drive before. That would be quite terrifying, but it's something exciting for the region, to be celebrated."

So, this ad is an enormous step forward for the market and proves that it's important to understand what the female empowerment movement means in specific markets, in order to best exhibit socio-cultural sensitivity.

A word (or two) on binary referencing of gender

Bloomfield also briefly acknowledged that referencing gender in a binary way is still the traditional view, and that not all brands will want to directly tackle gender as a spectrum, or even have permission to do so, while others will use this as a point of differentiation.

Both L'Oréal and Magnum have featured transgender women and both campaigns performed somewhat better among women than men:

Bloomfield says women may well be a little more tolerant of progressive gender portrayals, and that brands that tackle gender spectrum issues will need to do so in a responsible way rather than as an exploitative means of creating engagement and discussion.

That's a reminder that truly progressive marketing is created by the right conditions, within and without.



#FairnessFirst: #SayYesToLove with *Cosmo SA*'s Laverne Cox cover exclusive!

Leigh Andrews 5 Feb 2018



Linked to this, Bloomfield spoke further on organisational vision and strategy. In this regard, retailer Asos felt that the beauty industry was out of touch with how consumers use the category and what they want from it, as the name itself of 'beauty' is quite exclusive.

Rise of the agendered consumer

Asos therefore identified that 'self-expression' sits at the core of consumers' engagement, as cosmetics are becoming a space for everyone, and a medium for self-expression. They then used this insight to revisit its category and its purpose, redefining the benefits it offered and how it expressed them to consumers.

And so, their ‘beauty’ offer was renamed as ‘face and body’ – an agendered name for an agendered category, coupled with the ‘Go Play’ campaign featuring diverse role models, which saw search volumes soar and category sales went up by 135%, year-on-year.

The reasoning behind this success is simple: If you don’t feel beautiful, why would you find a category called ‘beauty’ attainable? Simply rebalancing how it expressed gender let the brand effectively steal a march on competitors.

A lesson from the world’s leading company for gender equality

The next example was of organisational culture’s role in progressing marketing and featured the Diageo leadership team, which became increasingly aware of the issue of unconscious bias and the ways in which brands like their own can help perpetuate stereotypes.

The brand, therefore, reorganised its business by sending all staff on unconscious bias training, as they realised that change had to come from within, in order to create a team of marketers that are more sensitive to their own biases.



#FairnessFirst: Test your unconscious bias for a more diverse and inclusive work culture, today!

Leigh Andrews 23 Sep 2019



Their progressive gender framework and programme for awareness has since been rolled out to 1,200 marketers and agency partners, with pay-back in business terms, as the brand has been recognised [by Equileap](#) as the world’s leading company for gender equality.

On the fact that ‘progressive marketing is working’, Bloomfield also showed an example of how Bailey’s moved from under-representing females and only showing them as being ‘giggly at Christmas’ to more progressive campaigns that led to a 48% increase in ROI.

“I’m a (new) Barbie girl, in a (new) Barbie world...”

Next, on how brands manifest, Bloomfield said the first step for many is in helping to redress the balance.

Mattel did just this by focusing on the ‘dream gap’: Starting at age five, many girls are conditioned by society to stop believing their gender can do or be anything. By age 13, many have self-confidence issues.

So, Mattel's Barbie brand began working closely on this issue and announced the 'dream gap project' as an ongoing global initiative, aimed at giving girls the resources and support they need to continue believing they can be anything.

The results have been staggering, as some 60 million Barbie dolls are sold each year, which gives the brand unparalleled reach and access.

By introducing young girls to stories from all walks of life, Barbie is helping help them to see more opportunities for themselves and showing them they have choices, encouraging them to play out their dreams.

For example, their new 'Inspiring Women' range is drawing attention to underrepresented careers, with models including footballer Sara Gama, mathematician and physicist Katherine Johnson and even local singer and entrepreneur Lira.



Lira honoured as first African Barbie role model

7 Aug 2019



This purpose has paid off, with Barbie giving Mattel six consecutive quarters of growth, and they saw the best sales results in five years in 2018 – clearly a winning strategy, then.

Breaking society's silence

Looking at the other end of the age scale, Holland & Barret launched 'Me.No.Pause', a campaign aiming to break the taboo around the subject of menopause in 2019.

They did so by focusing on the loss of femininity, identity and self that older women struggle with during this transition. The campaign gives women the confidence to talk about their own experiences and feel empowered to seek advice and help in store.



The reasoning is simple: Asking for help is crucial in learning about the changes girls go through during puberty, when we usually have a female role model we can speak to. But for menopause, society goes silent. In addition to the sales boost, the campaign had 100% positive sentiment on social media and sent Holland & Barrett's positive brand buzz through the roof.



#Loeries2019: Our responsibility of better representation in advertising, media

Leigh Andrews 23 Aug 2019



Finally, on the topic of measurement and evaluation, Bloomfield said that a key element for brands to consider is not just their own practices, but also how the businesses they're partnering with can have a knock-on effect.

In this regard, Diageo demands the same level of gender awareness and equality from its agencies and partners as it does from itself, and has asked for support on key initiatives like the Unstereotype Alliance and Free the Bid, which promotes equal opportunities for female directors in the industry.

Diageo CMO Syl Saller said: "The money we spend helps shape society's views of what's normal, acceptable and aspirational. As marketers, let's put our money to good use! We can grow our brands and be powerful catalysts for change at the same time."

What women really want from brands

Bloomfield concluded by encouraging marketers to really think about how women experience their category. What women really want brands to consider is the following:

- Do we feature in your touchpoints?
- Is our complexity represented?
- Are you looking at us through a skewed lens?
- Does your brand build our self-esteem?

With customer care lines, there's often a script that's followed when handling queries. But do you have a different script for men and women? Should you?

Bloomfield says to challenge yourself and sense-check the creative work you're creating.

How to reflect all people more accurately in advertising

Bloomfield says to also consider the following points:

- Does your brand build self-esteem?
- Is the brand story historical and still relevant today?
- Explore your brand narrative – is it one-dimensional?
- Do you create opportunities to open up/modify the conversation?
- Challenge your brand to consider who it excludes – why does it do so?
- Evaluate your brand communications. Are they alienating?

Use your honest answers to develop products and services to cater to your consumers more effectively and make strengths from weaknesses.

To get this right, Bloomfield says it's important to understand the language your consumers use, and use it. Also assess whether your brand touchpoints are safe spaces. Work to offer consumers a community in which to experience the best of your brand, whatever their gender.



Are we moving into an age of gender-fluid purchasing?

Eben Esterhuizen 7 Aug 2019



Challenge your brand to consider who it excludes rather than who it includes in targeting, and keep in mind that it is possible to appeal to both genders, even when tackling gender progressiveness.

Washing away gender stereotypes

As an example of this, Bloomfield showed 'Share the Load', a powerful ad by Ariel, which could have made for uncomfortable viewing among men, as it highlights the message that in 95% of Indian households, only women do the laundry.

Instead, levels of enjoyment and distinctiveness scores were just as high among men as they were among women:

Bloomfield ended her presentation with a reminder that in the last decade, global brands have been at the forefront of marketing to women, but local brands haven't really stepped up to understand who African women are and what they really want.

Follow our tweets on www.twitter.com/Kantar_AME and the [#whatwomenwant](#) and [#Afrofeminism](#) hashtags for all the latest updates!

ABOUT LEIGH ANDREWS

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