

GENDER BIAS & INCLUSION IN ADVERTISING IN INDIA

Geena Davis Institute  on Gender in Media
If she can see it, she can be it.™

USC Viterbi
School of Engineering

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for every child

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

UNICEF would like to thank the India Chapter of International Advertising Association (IAA) in their support for research on gender representation in advertisements in India based on evidence and real-time validation. The IAA's support in listing, sourcing and translating the advertisements included in the study has been invaluable.

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The Geena Davis Institute research is also unique in its use of automated visual and text analysis tools for media representation. The Geena Davis Inclusion Quotient (GD-IQ) computes automated screen time for gender and race and speaking time for gender. The Spellcheck for Bias tool produces automated data on character prominence and traits from scripts. Both tools are based on inventions and software developed at the USC Viterbi School of Engineering.

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FOREWORD

Every child deserves to reach her or his full potential but gender inequalities in their lives as well as of those who care for them hinder this reality. While gender inequality impacts on both genders, statistically, it is girls that are the most disadvantaged.

We know that gender socialization begins at birth and intensifies during childhood and adolescence. Children observe and learn social and gender cues from parents, family, schools and the society, including the advertising and marketing that they see around themselves.

The impact of negative gender norms and emphasis on stereotypes influences children's self-perception. To bring about gender equality we need to identify what influences perceptions and behaviours in order to instil and advance positive change, as needed in those spaces.

In today's world, advertising and marketing plays a powerful role in the process of gender socialization. It also has an immense potential to promote women's and girls' empowerment. We need to better identify and understand the advertising and marketing likely to influence children and adolescents if we are going to challenge gender biases and promote equality.

At UNICEF, we work for the rights of every child, every day, across the world. In India, equity and gender equality remains at the core of our country programme as we strengthen our focus, advocacy and engagement on increasing the value of the girl child.

We are delighted to work with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media to measure the level and type of gender stereotyping found in Indian advertisements on television and YouTube. The study analyses a sample of frequently viewed advertisements in India during 2019 and offers an assessment of advertising media in reinforcing and challenging harmful gender roles that shape the lives of girls and women in the country.

We hope that the findings of this report will help in enhancing advocacy efforts towards gender equality and more gender-sensitive advertising, working together with Indian advertising community as well as other stakeholders across South Asia. This study is an important step towards understanding how we might better communicate positive gender norms in marketing and communication materials that will help promote gender equality, for the benefit of all children.

Dr. Yasmin Ali Haque
UNICEF Representative in India

George Laryea-Adjei
UNICEF Regional Director for South Asia



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Advertising and marketing play a powerful role in the process of gender socialization and women and girls' empowerment. This research project was conducted by UNICEF Regional Office for South Asia, UNICEF Programme Division in New York, and UNICEF India with the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media. The study measures the level and type of gender stereotyping found in Indian advertisements on TV and YouTube, through analysis of the 1,000 most viewed advertisements in 2019. The purpose of this study is to assess the role of advertising media in reinforcing and challenging harmful gender roles that shape the lives of girls and women in the country in order to drive more gender sensitive advertising.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADDRESSING STEREOTYPES

UNICEF works to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5, for gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls. Promoting positive gender roles in marketing and advertising is critical for achieving this goal.

Children learn from family, schools and the society around them. They are exposed to a barrage of media messages daily; some directed at them and others seen by them, even if they are not the target. Gender stereotypes differ across time and cultures and to understand more about the key issues to tackle in India to promote equality, an understanding of the kinds of advertising likely to be seen by children and adolescents in the country is needed.

The process of gender socialization means expected gender roles are learned from birth and intensified throughout childhood and adolescence with messages received from society, including from the marketing and advertising they see around them. Negative gender norms and stereotypes influence children's self-perception and contribute to shaping different pathways for their future. Addressing negative gender socialization is critical to achieving gender equality.

Societies around the world are becoming more and more sensitive to how gender roles are portrayed and the world of advertising is a powerful agent for change. Achieving gender equality is about breaking down negative gender stereotypes and realizing equal rights for women and girls - and gender positive advertising is a confirmation of these rights. Positive gender norms in marketing and advertising exposes children and adolescents to a concept of gender parity and encourages a way of thinking that includes the perspectives of all, leading to better outcomes for everyone.



UNICEF'S WORK ON GENDER EQUALITY IN INDIA

UNICEF in India contributes to national efforts to enable all children, especially the most disadvantaged and excluded, to have their rights progressively fulfilled and to develop their full potential in an inclusive and protected society. Equity, including gender equality, is at the core of the Country Programme. Gender based programming, with a focus on increasing the value of the girl child one of the key strategies of UNICEF's strategic plan 2018-2022.¹

Gender equality in India has made gains as a result of legislative and policy measures, social-protection schemes for girls and adolescents and gender sensitive budgets over past years. India has attained gender parity in primary enrolment and boosted female literacy from 54 per cent (2001) to 66 per cent (2011).² Gender-based discrimination and normalization of violence continues to be a challenge. India ranks 108th out of 153 countries in the global gender inequality index in 2020, an increase since 2015 when it was ranked 130th out of 155 countries. India is among one of the few countries where under-5 mortality rates among girls is higher than boys. Many women face overlapping social, emotional, physical, economic, cultural and caste related deprivations. Adolescent girls face vulnerabilities, including poor nutritional status, increased burden of care, early marriage and early pregnancy, and issues related to reproductive health and empowerment while 56 per cent are anemic.³

One of UNICEF India's overall priorities, in line with UNICEF's regional vision, is to address system-wide bottle-necks that impede children's rights by strengthening gender-informed and gender-responsive programming in all areas. Priority results and strategies include:

- promotion of gender and an equity focus on the health of the girl child and marginalized communities to reduce child and maternal mortality;
- reduction of undernutrition of children and adolescent girls; safe and sustainable water, sanitation and hygiene services including menstrual hygiene management to mitigate the impacts of natural disasters and climate change;
- preventing and responding to child marriage and gender-based violence in emergencies;
- ensuring all boys and girls learn including engagement with partners and influencers and decision makers to scale up access for adolescent girls.

WAY FORWARD: APPLYING THE RESEARCH FINDINGS TO ADDRESS GENDER STEREOTYPING

This study systematically analyzes gender representations in ads in India and will serve as a benchmark for making advertising more gender sensitive in the country, as well as providing an evidence-based approach for highlighting key areas for action.

Globally, research increasingly finds that consumers are rejecting stereotypes in advertising and respond better to balanced, representative and positive portrayals of gender roles. With a deeper understanding of how gender is represented in Indian advertising, UNICEF can contribute to enabling the marketing and advertising industry to both deconstruct harmful gender stereotypes and promote empowering gender norms and attitudes by highlighting areas for action and advocating for evidence-based change for positive gender portrayals in advertising.

With a clearer understanding of the way gender is portrayed in advertising across India, UNICEF can use the results to influence how it can communicate around its own programme priorities to advance gender equality. This research gives insights and concrete measurements on how the advertising and marketing environment portrays women and girls, which helps to enable design of effective interventions and strengthen gender-informed and responsive programming.

The results of this research project have important implications for UNICEF's work in India across a number of programme priorities. Below are highlighted some of the key findings in terms of how they are linked to UNICEF's work in addressing gender stereotyping in India and promoting gender equitable practices.

ADDRESSING HARMFUL GENDER STEREOTYPES AND NORMS TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY AND DIVERSITY

While the research finds women are well represented in the most viewed Indian advertisements during 2019, with equal screen presence and in fact more speaking time than men, they are still stereotyped in potentially harmful ways, with women more likely to be portrayed as young and attractive in terms of traditional beauty norms and/or caretakers and parents, mainly seen in private, rather than public spaces. Female characters in ads are more likely to be shown in revealing clothing, depicted as partially nude or sexually objectified compared with male characters. Almost all the detergent and food commercials depicted a woman caretaking for her family who speaks directly to women viewers about caring for their families. This means that female characters are plentiful in Indian advertising, but mostly in ways that uphold traditional gender roles for women. Girls are less likely to be shown in adverts as boys, meaning young girls are less likely to see themselves as present, and important, in society.

There was little representation of child marriage, or violence found in ads included in the study. Given this is a key issue in Indian society and considering COVID -19's disproportionately negative impact on women in terms of loss of employment and increases in domestic violence, there may be an opportunity for advertisers to address these issues through advertising campaigns and narratives.

- It is clear the presence of women and girls in advertising is not enough to drive gender equality: gender equitable portrayals and actively promoting gender equitable practices are needed to inspire girls and boys of their possibilities, unrestrained by gender stereotypes.

ENSURING GIRLS STAY IN SCHOOL AND HAVE AN EFFECTIVE TRANSITION TO GAINING SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT



According to the findings, women are less likely to be shown in public spaces, in paid employment, as leaders or making decisions about their futures. These representations bolster traditional gender norms that girls and women belong in the domestic sphere as parents and caretakers, and boys and men get to dream about and plan their futures and reinforce sexist notions that women are less intelligent and humorous than men.

- Increased representation of women working, making decisions and as successful leaders can inspire girls to stay in school and help demonstrate different templates of women working both inside and outside their homes.

GENDER & NUTRITION

In the world of advertising in India, one of the drivers of female presence is depictions of female characters selling domestic products. Female characters are plentiful in Indian advertising, but mostly in ways that uphold traditional gender roles for women: men and boys are much less likely to be shown shopping, cooking or being involved with household decisions. Women are firmly placed as the primary - and best - caregiver, while men and boys are not expected to be responsible for choices made around nutrition.

To drive gender equity in the home and in purchasing decisions, men and boys could be shown as sharing household tasks, including cooking, cleaning and caring for others. Involving men in the purchase and preparation of meals shows all that everyone should participate in nutrition choices.

In terms of healthy bodies, female characters are invariably thin but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising. This reinforces the idea that girls and women are supposed to take up less space physically and figuratively.

- Advertising can show women and girls across a variety of body shapes, in line with men, leading to a healthier outlook around body shape. By increasing the proportion of women and girls found in sporting settings, there is the opportunity to increase participation of girls in sports and promotion of healthy, strong bodies for girls and boys.

RAISING AWARENESS OF MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT AND WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE INITIATIVES

Women and girls are much more likely to be shown undertaking or being responsible for care work/ childcare or normative gender roles such as shopping as well as being responsible for hygiene decisions. For example, almost all the detergent and food commercials depicted a woman caretaking for her family who speaks to women about caring for their families.



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There is also a need for more advertisements promoting menstrual health and busting taboo around the issue: Almost 50 percent of adolescent girls in India did not know about menstruation until the first time they got their period and hardly one-third (36 per cent) of menstruating women use sanitary napkins.⁴ Among the 1,000 advertisements analyzed, none related to menstrual health.

- Advertising could increase representation of men in advertising speaking about cleaning products and other consumer goods to normalize hygiene decisions in the household being taken by all genders, as well as normalizing menstrual health.

COLOURISM

The research highlights some problematic issues in advertising around colourism in India, with advertising presenting characters with lighter skin as more physically attractive than characters with darker skin. The findings of the study show colorism is starkly reflected in Indian advertising in ways that reinforce discriminatory social arrangements.

Colourism is also gendered, affecting Indian women more than men. We also find that characters with light skin tones are presented as more physically attractive than characters with darker skin tones and more likely to be represented as middle and upper class.

- To contribute to a society that values diversity and inclusion, advertising could show a more diverse range of skin colours and tones, especially among women and girls shown in advertising to ensure children see representation across skin types and social class.

KEY FINDINGS

This section presents the major findings of this study. More detailed results can be found in the full report below.

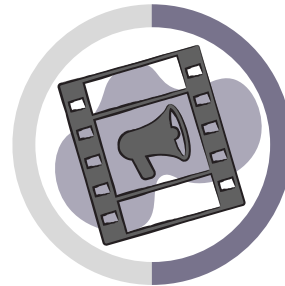
Throughout this report, metrics that measure existing societal standards of beauty such as “average looking” or “stunning” have been included. It is essential to clarify that neither UNICEF nor GDIGM endorse this classification of ‘traditional’ beauty. Our objective position on beauty is that there is no universal construct of beauty and we do not endorse any beauty standards. However, for the purpose of the study, it is important to include measurements according to existing societal standards of beauty to understand to what extent advertisements ‘think outside the box’ or adhere to existing standards.

Similarly, gender tropes and stereotypes based on perception have been developed and tested by GDI and are coded by expert coders in line with an agreed framework as part of content analysis methodology.



GENDER & PROMINENCE

- Female characters are just as likely to appear in ads as male characters (49.6% compared with 50.4%).
- We find that female characters dominate screen time (59.7%) and speaking time (56.3%) in Indian ads.
- Most of the ads we examined passed the See Jane Test (77.8%) that measures whether there is at least one prominent female character who is not depicted as a trope or stereotype.
- It is important to note that while girls and women have a strong presence in Indian advertising, they are mostly reinforcing traditional gender roles by selling domestic and beauty products to female consumers.



49.6%
APPEAR IN ADS



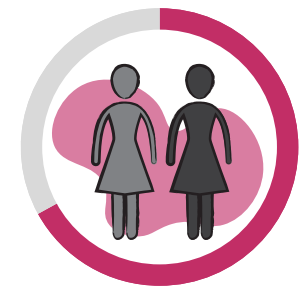
59.7%
SCREEN TIME

DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

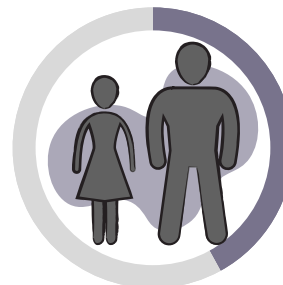
- There are more young boys (ages 1 - 12) than girls in ads (20.5% compared with 13.1%).
- Female characters are more likely to be depicted in their 20s than male characters (38.2% compared with 26.7%), and most older characters are male.
- About half of characters are shown as middle-class (51.3%), while few are lower-class (6.4%).
- Six-in-ten characters have light skin tones (59.6%), and few characters have dark skin tones (4.0%).
- A majority of characters with dark skin are presented as lower-class (56.5%) while two-thirds of characters with light skin are shown as upper-class (65.7%). Colorism is evident in Indian ads.
- Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) have light or medium-light skin tones—a far higher percentage than male characters (52.1%).
- Male characters are five times more likely to have a dark skin tone than female characters (6.5% compared with 1.3%).
- Female characters are four times as likely to have a small body type than male characters (41.8% compared with 9.4%).



56.3%
SPEAKING TIME



66.9%
LIGHT SKIN TONES



41.8%
SMALL BODY TYPE

SEXUALIZATION & STEREOTYPES⁵

- Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as 'stunning'/'very attractive' than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%). Female characters are twice as likely to be shown as 'better than average' looking than male characters (33.6% compared with 16.8%)
- Female characters depicted as upper-class are far more likely to be shown as 'stunning' or 'better than average looking' (62.6%) compared to characters who are middle-class (38.3%) or lower-class (6.9%).
- Female characters with light skin tones (49.8%) are more likely to be shown as 'stunning/better than average looking' than characters with medium skin tones (44.3%) or dark skin tones (40.6%).
- Female characters are six times more likely to be shown in sexually revealing clothing than male characters (11.2% compared with 1.7%).⁶
- Female characters are four times more likely to be depicted as partially nude than male characters (7.6% compared with 1.6%).⁷
- Female characters face five times more sexual objectification than male characters (4.7% compared with 0.9%).⁸
- Female and male characters are about equally likely to be reduced to a gender trope or stereotype (2.9% and 2.0%).
- The most common gender tropes/stereotypes for female characters are "The Subservient Wife" and "The Pushy Aunt", and for men, the "Domineering/Controlling Male" and a man who does not help with domestic activities.

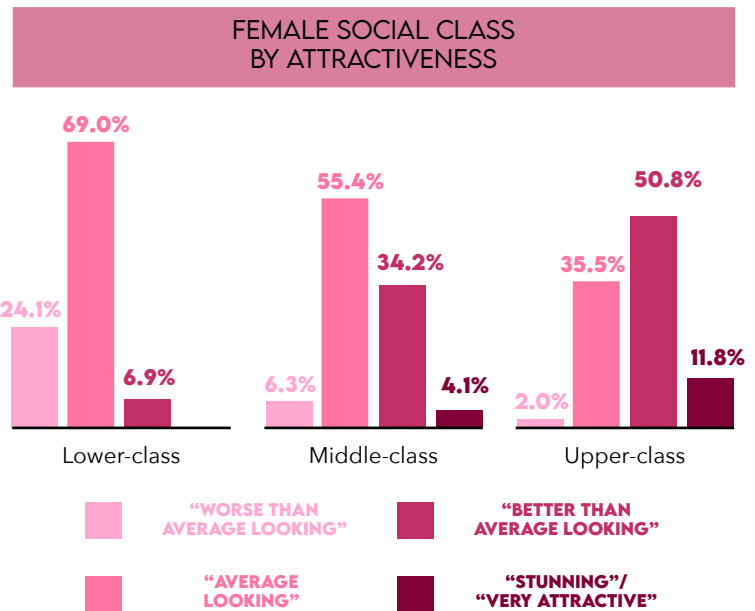
The most common gender tropes/ stereotypes for female characters are "The Subservient Wife" and "The Pushy Aunt", and for men, the "Domineering/Controlling Male" and a man who does not help with domestic activities.

WORK AND LEADERSHIP

- Male characters are twice as likely to be shown with a paid occupation⁹ than female characters (25.2% compared with 11.6%).
- Male characters are more likely to be shown actually working than female characters (16.4% compared with 9.3%).
- Male characters are significantly more likely to be shown as leaders than female characters (26.3% compared with 19.3%).

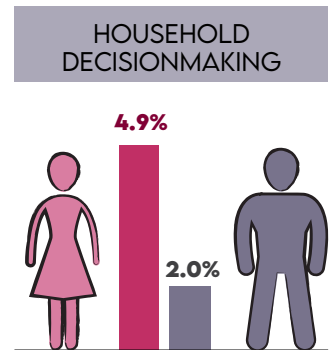
PERSONAL TRAITS

- Male characters are more likely to be shown as smart than female characters (32.2% compared to 26.2%).
- Male characters are nearly twice as likely to be shown as funny than female characters (19.1% compared to 11.9%).



GENDER ROLES

- A greater percentage of female characters are depicted as married than male characters (11.0% compared with 8.8%).
- Male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters (7.3% compared with 4.8%).
- Female characters are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).
- Female characters are three times more likely to be shown as a caretaker of others than male characters (18.3% compared with 5.2%).
- Female characters are three times more likely to be depicted as parents than male characters (18.7% compared with 5.9%).
- Of characters who are parents, mothers are three times more likely to be shown as an excellent parent than fathers (10.1% compared with 3.2%).
- A small number of male characters in Indian advertisements are featured as supporting gender equity (4.4%).



ACTIVITIES

Female characters are more likely to be shown doing the following activities than male characters:

- Shopping (4.1% compared with 2.3%).
- Cleaning (4.8% compared with 2.2%).
- Being involved in the purchase or preparation of meals (5.4% compared with 3.9%).

SETTINGS

Female characters are more likely to be shown in the following settings:

- A living room (18.8% compared with 15.7%).
- A bedroom (6.8% compared with 3.1%).

Male characters are more likely to be shown in the following settings:

- An office (7.1% compared to 4.7%).
- Outdoors (28.7% compared with 21.7%).
- A sporting event (8.1% compared to 3.3%).





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CONCLUSIONS

While it is heartening to see that women and girls have achieved or exceeded parity of representation in terms of presence and voice, deeper analysis shows that the quality of this representation is problematic and there is enormous room for improvement by the advertising community in India to address the issues of gender stereotyping in Indian marketing to help drive gender equality. The research also highlights issues particularly pertinent to address and includes some recommendation on interventions for advertisers and content creators including but not limited to:

- Increased representation of women and girls across age, social class, skin tone and other diversity indicators.
- Promotion of diverse templates of beauty and avoiding regressive beauty norms of women and girls being only fair and thin.
- More women and girls portrayed as leaders, especially in the public sphere.
- Positive gender norms around body and attitudes towards healthy eating.



BACKGROUND

We begin this report with a brief description of gender inequalities in India and previous research on the impact of advertising. Next, we present our methodology with a profile of characters in the dataset. Then we present our findings, ending with a brief conclusion and interventions for parents and content creators.

GENDER INEQUALITIES IN INDIA

The larger issue driving this research is the prevalence of regressive gender norms and gender inequality in India. Gender discrimination starts early and even determines if a girl will be born or not. Systematic anti-female biases are reflected in (but not limited to) the declining sex ratio at birth, which fell to 896 in 2015-17 from 900 in 2013-15 implying that the preference for boys and gender-biased sex selection has increased.¹⁰ Gender inequalities in child survival also continue to persist. The sex ratio of children under 6 years old has also declined from 945 in 1991 to 918 in 2013 – the lowest since Independence.¹¹ India is among the few countries in the world where girls have a higher Under five Mortality Rate (U5MR) than boys.¹² Once born, female babies and toddlers face significantly higher rates of neglect based on gender discrimination. A recent study finds that an estimated 239,000 girls under age five die each year in excess of boys' mortality in ways that are linked to their lesser social value as girls.¹³

Girls also face discrimination and inequity in inter-personal relationships and in families. Child marriage is a longstanding social issue that organizations like UNICEF have worked for decades to address. Such efforts have resulted in contributing to the rate of child marriage declining from 47% a decade ago to 27% today.¹⁴ Despite this progress, this means that nearly one-in-three young married women (ages 20 – 24) in India today were married when they were children.

Regressive gender norms are also reflected in the division of labor in the household. Only 46% of married girls aged 15-19 have a say in household decisions including their health.¹⁵ The average Indian woman spends 353 minutes a day on housework compared to only 52 minutes for the average man.¹⁶ The gender gap in domestic labor demonstrates that traditional gender roles in the household are still the norm.

Gender gaps are also prominent in workforce participation. Although women in India earn 53% of college degrees and nearly 70% of MPhil degrees, women account for only 19.9% of the

paid workforce.¹⁷ This stark gender gap in labor force participation is due to cultural ideas regarding women's work, the fact that women are paid far less than men for the same work (65% of men's pay on average),¹⁸ and a lack of flexible work policies to enable women to juggle work expectations in the home and workforce.¹⁹ Indian women are especially under-represented in the automotive (10%), pharmaceutical and healthcare (11%), and oil and gas (7%) industries.²⁰ It is worth noting that women's participation in the labor force has declined even more during the global Covid-19 pandemic because employers are hiring women at even lower rates than men.²¹

When it comes to leadership, in 2019, India elected an historic number of women to the lower house of parliament: 78 out of 542 total seats.²² However, women constitute 48% of the population in India but only 14% of parliament, so the gender gap remains massive. Women are also vastly underrepresented in corporate leadership positions. Only 3.7% of NSE-listed companies are led by women²³ and just 5.6% of Fortune India 500 companies have a woman in any executive role.²⁴

India is one of the most unsafe countries for sexual violence against women and girls. One-in-three women in India will face domestic or sexual violence during her lifetime, and rates of reported rape have nearly doubled in the last two decades.²⁵ The National Family Health Survey (NHFS-4) finds that 31% of women in India experience physical, sexual, or emotional violence from their spouse.²⁶ Over half (52%) of women and 42% of men agree that it's okay for a husband to beat his wife if she goes out without telling him/ neglects the house or children; argues with him; refuses to have sex with him; doesn't cook food properly; suspects her of being unfaithful; or shows disrespect to her in-laws. Rates of domestic violence have doubled in the past year in India due to during the Covid-19 pandemic where victims of violence have less options to leave the household due to lockdowns and quarantines.²⁷ Even girls are vulnerable to violence, 16 per cent adolescent girls have experienced physical violence since the age of 15 years.²⁸

Media depictions of gender roles, home life, and other aspects of life shape social norms in profound ways. Media is a double-edged sword

in that it reinforces sexist traditions but also has the power to shift societal values in positive ways with better gender representations.



PREVIOUS STUDIES

Advertising plays a major role in shaping consumer behavior and societal values. A 2019 study with students in India finds that ads in television (TV), newspapers, magazines, and online significantly shape consumer purchasing decisions and post-purchasing behavior.²⁹

When it comes to shaping values, public intellectuals in India have been increasingly critical of gendered and sexist advertising in recent years. Cultural critic Kannalmozhi Kabilan has spoken out about how ads reinforce traditional gender roles: "We see it everywhere, don't we? It's always a woman when it comes to kitchen appliances, cleaning products, detergents, energy drinks for children – like none of these are used by men."³⁰

Some advertisers in India are making a concerted effort to create more gender-balanced ads and even challenging traditional gender roles outright. For example, Havell's "Hawa Badlegi" ad in 2017 featured a couple sitting at a marriage registration office where the man takes his wife's last name. Ariel's recent "Share the Load" ad depicts a husband sharing laundry duties equally with his wife. These examples of Indian ads showing empowered women and men performing domestic labor are the exception. Other brands have addressed issues of colorism and in particular the use of skin whitening products and creams among women/girls.³¹ Our study is the first to statistically document gender gaps that persist in the quantity and quality of girls' and women's representations in ads in India.

Previous studies have documented gender gaps in advertising globally and in specific countries. The Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media teamed up with Cannes Lions to establish global benchmarks for representations in advertising. The GDI Cannes Lions study finds that male characters in ads outnumber female characters two-to-one, and have twice the screen time and speaking time as female characters.³² Previous studies of advertising in the US find that male characters make up 56% of total characters, and speak 1.5 times more than female characters.³³

When it comes to the quality of gender representation in advertising, the Cannes Lions global benchmark study finds that female characters are four times more likely to be wearing revealing clothing than male characters (10.8% compared with 2.2%), and twice as likely to be shown as nude.³⁴

Similarly, a recent study of US Super Bowl ads finds that female characters are nine times more likely to be shown in revealing clothing.³⁵ Beyond sexualization, women are depicted in other demeaning ways in advertising. Globally, male characters are twice as likely to be shown working as female characters and are depicted as leaders and authority figures more often.³⁶

In short, previous studies find that women are under-represented in advertising, and when they do show up, they are depicted in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes.

Women around the globe see gender bias in advertising. A recent global survey of women from J. Walter Thompson's Female Tribes Initiative finds that 85% of women think ads need to catch up to the "real world" when it comes to traditional gender roles, and two-thirds (65%) say they change the channel when they see an ad that depicts women in negative or stereotypical ways.³⁷ Inclusive advertising is also a smart investment. A recent study finds that ads featuring female-led and gender balanced content garners 30% more views than ads predominately featuring men.³⁸

For this study, we focus on ads aired on TV to get the best measure of reach. Broadcast media, such as TV and radio, are the most popular places for advertising in India because of their mass reach.³⁹ Despite the growth of online ads, advertisers in India still prefer TV ads. Of the

total advertising spend in India, 44.7% is TV.⁴⁰ Our study focuses on this popular form of media given its substantial reach in Indian society.

UNICEF recognizes that marketing plays a powerful role in the process of gender socialization and girl's empowerment. As part of this effort, UNICEF India Country Office (ICO) is committed to working with key stakeholders to harness the power of business to use marketing and advertising companies to both deconstruct harmful gender stereotypes and promote empowering gender norms through its messages, representation, diversity and imagery. The International Advertising Association is a key partner in this effort.

Through this research, UNICEF advances the evidence base in India by creating a baseline for Indian advertisements. This project contributes UNICEF work on promoting positive gender norms and socialization in advertising and marketing through:

1. raising awareness about gender related stereotypes through external advocacy with the Indian advertising community;
2. building the research base and developing the business case by providing evidence focused research on assessing the level of gender related stereotypes present in current Indian advertising; and
3. contributing to the development of guidance, benchmarks and tools for addressing harmful gender stereotyping throughout the creative value chain in marketing and advertising.

The goal of this report is to bring about ongoing changes in the practices, behaviors, and norms of the ad/marketing industry in India by creating a baseline for comparisons moving forward and by sensitizing the advertising and marketing sector on the importance of modelling equitable gender norms.

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis is a research method ideal for systematically analyzing the content of communications, such as advertisements. Content analysis is used by social scientists to quantify and examine the presence of certain themes or concepts. We analyzed characters from 1,000 advertisements from 2019 that received the most reach in the country. Most ads in the dataset were TV ads (82%) and 18% were digital ads. The top grossing ads used in this analysis were compiled and translated by the Indian Advertising Association. All reported differences are statistically significant at the .05 level unless otherwise indicated. The unit of analysis for this study is character. Our final dataset includes 3,416 characters.

We used two types of content analysis for this report: automated coding (GD-IQ) and expert human coding.

AUTOMATED MACHINE CODING

For automated coding, we employed the Geena Davis Inclusion Quotient (GD-IQ), a ground-breaking software tool developed by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media at Mount Saint Mary's University to analyze audio and video media content. Funded by Google.org, the GD-IQ incorporates machine learning technology as well as the University of Southern California's audio-visual processing technologies and is the only software tool in existence with the ability to measure screen and speaking time using automation. This revolutionary tool was co-developed by the Institute and led by Dr. Shrikanth (Shri) Narayanan and his team of researchers at the University of Southern California's Signal Analysis and Interpretation Laboratory (SAIL), along with Dr. Caroline Heldman, Vice President of Research and Insights at the Institute.

EXPERT HUMAN CODING

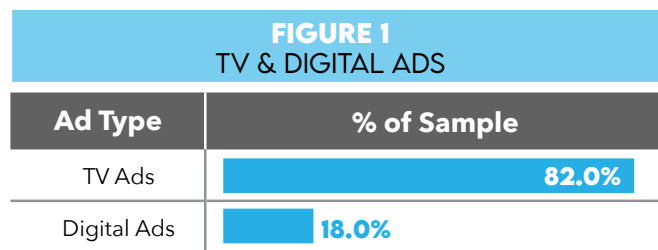
For expert human coders, twelve researchers systematically evaluated the characters in ads. Prior to initiating the work, the research team engaged in a total of 41 hours of training and codebook development. In collaboration with

UNICEF, new codes relevant for this study were added to the existing codebook. The team also performed a test to measure inter-rater reliability. Initial inter-rater reliability tests were performed on 10 ads to ensure that members of the research team reached agreement on evaluations. Inter-coder reliability was achieved in terms of both absolute agreement (.92) and interclass correlation coefficient (.81) measures.

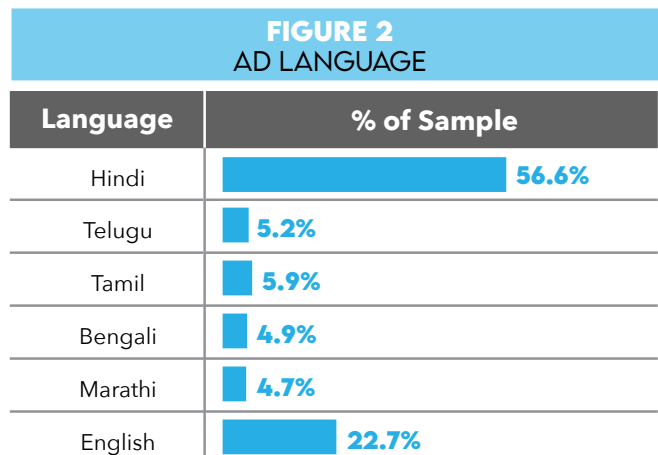
SAMPLE PROFILE

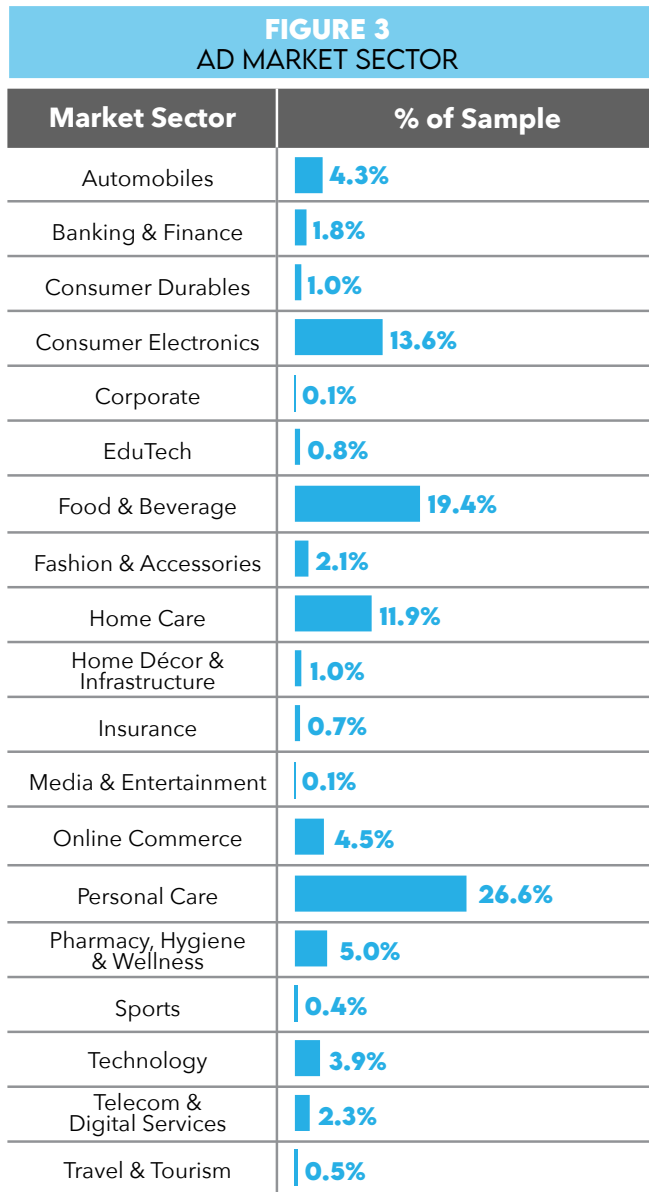
This sample profile provides general information about the types of ads we analyzed as well as the overall character representations in the ads.

Figure 1 shows the breakdown of TV versus digital ads in the sample. The vast majority of ads aired on TV (82%) while one-in-five are digital ads (18%).



As shown in Figure 2, more than half of the ads in this study are in Hindi (56.6%), while one-in-five are in English (22.7%). A small number of ads are in Telugu, Tamil, Bengali, and Marathi.





We analyzed ads from nineteen different market segments, as shown in Figure 3. One-in-four ads in the dataset are for personal care (26.6%), while one-in-four are for food and beverage (19.4%). One-in-ten ads (11.9%) are for home care. Differences in findings according to sector are highlighted in the analysis where they are significant.

Figure 4 presents the gender breakdown of the characters in our dataset.

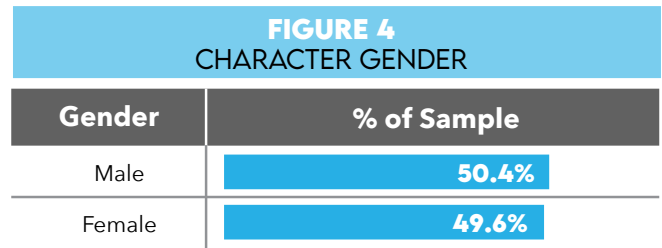
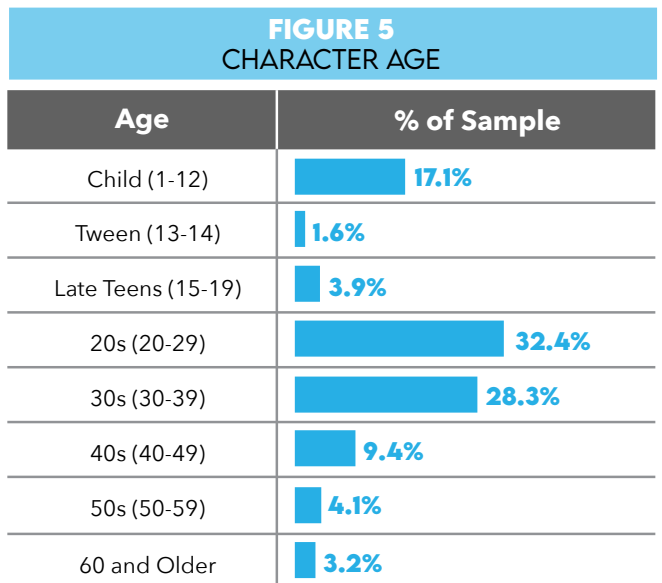


Figure 5 presents the age breakdown of characters in our dataset. Most characters in Indian ads are in their 20s (32.4%) and 30s (28.3%). Nearly one-in-five (17.1%) are child characters. Few characters are in their 50s or 60s.



Few characters in Indian advertising had an identifiable caste or religion, but we were able to measure social class.⁴¹ Figure 6 presents the class breakdown. Most characters are middle-class (51.3%), while few are lower-class (6.4%).

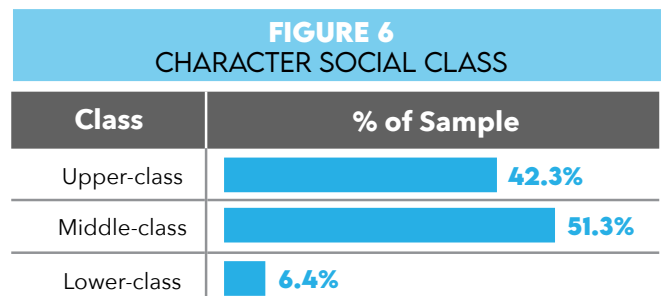


Figure 7 presents the skin tone breakdown of characters in our dataset. Six-in-ten (59.6%) characters in Indian ads have light or medium-light skin tones. Very few characters have dark skin tones (4%).

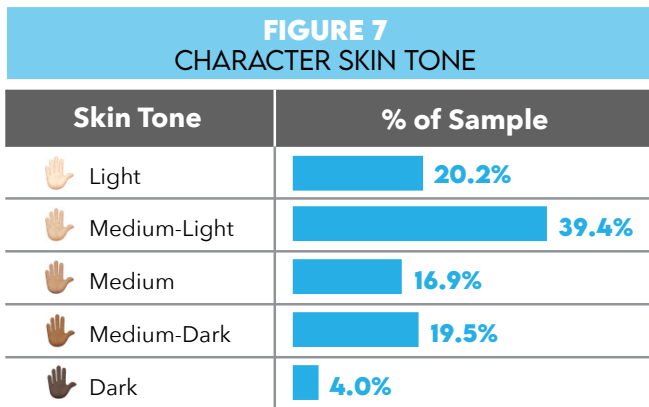


Figure 8 shows a clear link between social class and skin tone. A majority of characters with dark skin are presented as lower-class (56.5%) while two-thirds of characters with light skin are shown as upper-class (65.7%). This means that although race/racism are not concepts used in India, colorism is starkly reflected in Indian advertising in ways that reinforce discriminatory social arrangements.⁴²

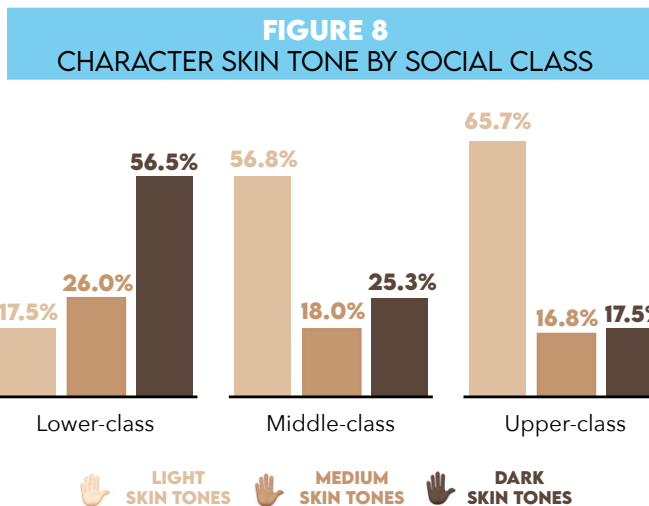


Figure 9 presents the breakdown of sexual orientation among characters in our dataset. Very few characters in the dataset are presented as LGBTQ+.

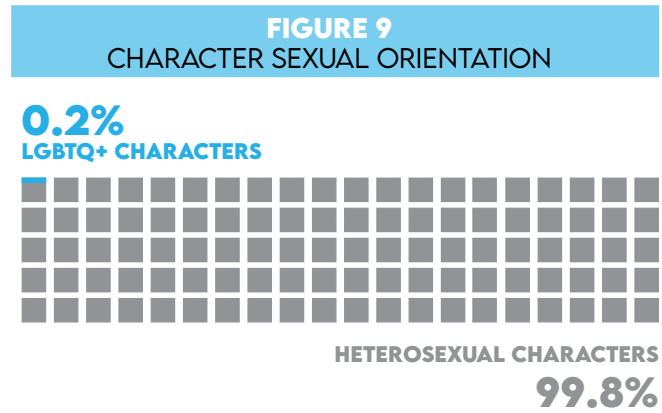
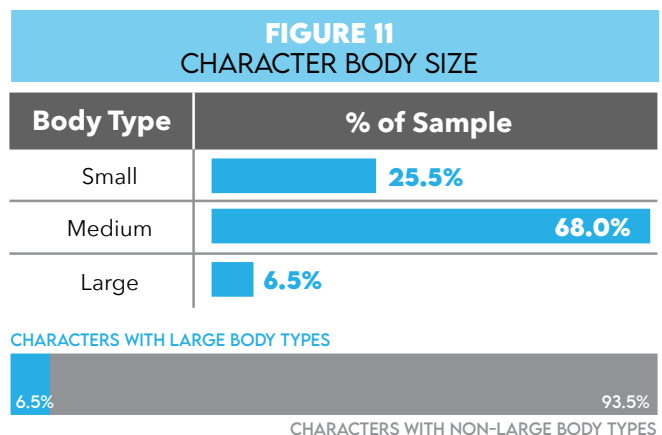


Figure 10 presents the breakdown of ability status among characters in the dataset. We measured for physical, communication, and cognitive disabilities. Almost no characters in the dataset are depicted as having a disability.



Figure 11 presents the breakdown of body type among characters in our dataset. Two thirds of characters in the dataset have a medium body type. About one-in-four have a small body type. Very few characters (6.5%) have a large body type.



FINDINGS

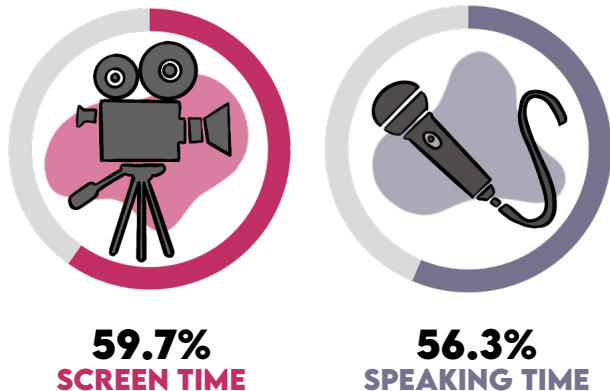
In this section, we present our major findings of gender and character prominence, sexualization and stereotypes, work and leadership, personal traits, gender roles, activities, and settings. We close this section with a comparison of Indian ads to the Cannes Lions baseline study.

GENDER PROMINENCE

Female characters are just as likely to appear in ads as male characters (49.6% compared with 50.4%). This finding of gender parity is remarkable.

We also measured character prominence by the amount of screen time and speaking time characters receive, using our automated GD-IQ technology. We find that female characters dominate screen time (59.7%) and speaking time (56.3%).

FIGURE 12
SCREEN & SPEAKING TIME BY GENDER



Female characters show up as often as male characters, and they appear on screen and speak at a higher rate than male characters. In short, this means that female characters have achieved parity and then some when it comes to quantity of representation.

The strong presence of women in Indian advertising is quite positive, but it is worth noting that one of the drivers is depictions of female characters selling domestic and beauty products (e.g., cleaning supplies, food, shampoo) to female consumers. For example,

almost all the detergent and food commercials depicted a woman caretaking for her family who speaks directly to women viewers about caring for their families. This means that female characters are plentiful in Indian advertising, but mostly in ways that uphold traditional gender roles for women.

DIVERSITY ANALYSIS

We now turn to an intersectional assessment of which girls and women are better represented in Indian advertising.⁴³ We examine gender representations by age, social class, skin tone, and body size here.

Figure 13 shows the gender breakdown by age.

- There are more boys than girls in ads (20.5% compared with 13.1%).
- Female characters are more likely to be depicted in their 20s than male characters (38.2% compared with 26.7%), and most older characters are male.

FIGURE 13
CHARACTER GENDER BY AGE

Age	% Female	% Male	Gender Gap
Child (1-12)	13.1%	20.5%	+ 7.4%
Tween (13-14)	1.9%	1.4%	- 0.5%
Late Teens (15-19)	4.8%	2.9%	- 1.9%
20s (20-29)	38.2%	26.7%	- 11.5%
30s (30-39)	30.4%	26.5%	- 3.9%
40s (40-49)	6.5%	12.3%	+ 5.8%
50s (50-59)	2.3%	5.9%	+ 3.6%
60 and Older	2.7%	3.8%	+ 1.1%

We find no significant difference in social class representations by gender. Male and female characters are about equally likely to be depicted as lower-, middle-, and upper-class in Indian advertisements.

FIGURE 14 CHARACTER GENDER BY SOCIAL CLASS			
Class	% Female	% Male	Gender Gap
Upper-class	43.4%	41.0%	- 2.4%
Middle-class	51.2%	51.4%	- 0.2%
Lower-class	5.3%	7.6%	+ 2.3%

Figure 15 shows character gender by skin tone.

- Most characters in Indian advertising have lighter skin tones.
- Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) have light or medium-light skin tones– a higher percentage than male characters (52.1%).
- Male characters are five times more likely to have a dark skin tone than female characters (6.5% compared with 1.3%).

FIGURE 15 CHARACTER GENDER BY SKIN TONE			
Skin Tone	% Female	% Male	Gender Gap
👉 Light	24.1%	16.1%	- 8.0%
👉 Medium-Light	42.8%	36.0%	- 6.8%
👉 Medium	16.1%	17.8%	+ 1.7%
👉 Medium-Dark	7.7%	11.8%	+ 4.1%
👉 Dark	1.3%	6.5%	+ 5.2%

For the remainder of this report, we classify skin tone into light, medium, and dark tones for ease of comparison.

Figure 16 examines body size by gender.

- Female characters are four times as likely to have a small body type than male characters (41.8% compared with 9.4%).
- Many characters have a medium body type, but far more male characters are medium sized than female characters (82.6% compared with 53.6%).

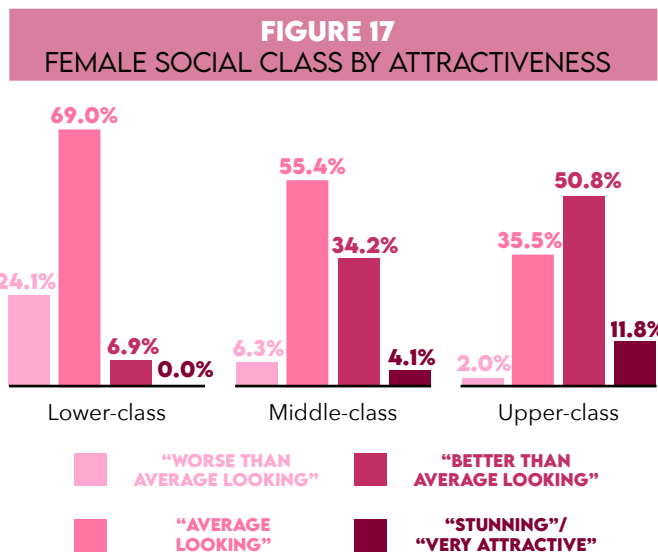
FIGURE 16 CHARACTER GENDER BY BODY SIZE			
Body Type	% Female	% Male	Gender Gap
Small	41.8%	9.4%	- 32.4%
Medium	53.2%	82.6%	+ 29.4%
Large	5.0%	8.0%	+ 3.0%

This means that female characters are invariably thin but male characters appear with a variety of body sizes in Indian advertising.

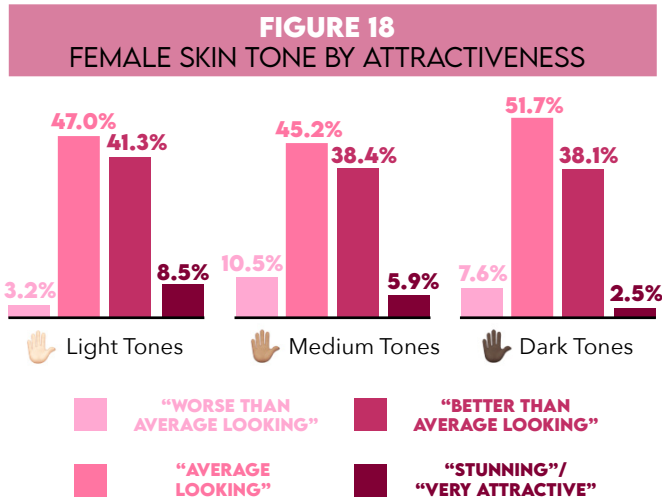
SEXUALIZATION & STEREOTYPES

We find significant differences in levels of attractiveness by character gender.

- Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as ‘stunning/very attractive’ than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%).⁴⁴
- Female characters are also nearly twice as likely to be ‘better than average looking’ than male characters (33.6% compared with 16.8%)
- Male characters are far more likely to be depicted as ‘average looking/worse than average looking’ than female characters (59.2% compared with 44.2%).



We find a similar link between female character skin tone and attractiveness, as defined by standard beauty norms. Half of characters with light skin tones (49.8%) are shown as 'stunning' or 'better than average' looking compared to 44.3% of characters with medium skin tones and 40.6% of characters with dark skin. The same connection is found with male characters, meaning that Indian advertising promotes colorism by presenting characters with lighter skin as more physically attractive than characters with darker skin.



We measure rates of sexualization with a look at revealing clothing, partial nudity, and objectification.

- Female characters are six times more likely to be shown in revealing clothing than male characters (11.2% compared with 1.7%).
- Female characters are four times more likely to be depicted as partially nude than male characters (7.6% compared with 1.6%).
- Sexual objectification is the process of treating someone like a sexual object, such as by focusing in on sexualized parts of someone's body. Visual objectification occurs when the camera focuses on specific body parts, pans up and then down the character's body, or when slow motion is used to accentuate the body in a sexual manner. Verbal objectification includes cat calling and making comments about a person's physical appearance. Female characters face five times more sexual objectification than male characters in ads (4.7% compared with 0.9%).
- We find no significant differences in revealing clothing, nudity, or objectification by skin tone.

We measured gender tropes (a characters who embodies stereotypes throughout an ad) and stereotypes (a moment when a character is reduced to a stereotype) in advertisements.

- Female and male characters are about equally likely to be shown as a gender trope or stereotype (2.9% and 2.0%).
- The most common gender tropes/ stereotypes for female characters are "The Subservient Wife" (21 characters) and "The Pushy Aunt" (13 characters).
- For male characters, the most common gender tropes/stereotypes are the "Domineering/Controlling Male" (19 characters) and a man who does not help with domestic activities (12 characters).
- We find no significant differences in trope and stereotype depictions by skin tone or class.

WORK & LEADERSHIP

We examined gender differences in work and leadership in advertising.

- Male characters are twice as likely to be shown as having a paid occupation than female characters (25.2% compared with 11.6%).
- When it comes to characters actually shown working, male characters outnumber female characters (16.4% compared with 9.3%).
- Male characters are significantly more likely to be depicted as a leader than female characters (26.3% compared with 19.3%).
- We find no significant differences in work and leadership by skin tone.

PERSONAL TRAITS

We measured gender differences in character intelligence and humor in Indian ads.

- For characters where intelligence is part of their character in the ad, male characters are more likely to be shown as smart than female characters (32.2% compared to 26.2%).
- Male characters are almost twice as likely to be shown as funny than female characters (19.1% compared to 11.9%).
- We find no significant differences in character traits by skin tone.

GENDER ROLES

- A greater percentage of female characters are depicted as married than male characters (11.0% compared with 8.8%).
- Less than 1% of female characters are shown as pregnant in Indian ads (0.4%).
- Male characters are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than female characters (7.3% compared with 4.8%).
- Female characters are twice as likely to be shown making household decisions than male characters (4.9% compared with 2.0%).
- Male and female characters are about equally likely to be pursuing education (4.6% compared with 5.3%).
- About equal percentages of male and female characters are shown as “helpless victims” (1.1% of females and 0.9% of males).
- Female characters are three times more likely to be shown as a caretaker of others than male characters (18.3% compared with 5.2%).
- Female characters are three times more likely to be depicted as parents than male characters (18.7% compared with 5.9%).
- Among characters who are parents, mothers are three times more likely to be shown as an excellent parent than fathers (10.1% compared with 3.2%).
- About equal numbers of male and female characters are shown engaging in restrictive eating (0.2% and 0.5%).
- About 1% of child characters have marriage as a goal, but this does not differ by gender (1.2% of female and 1.1% of male characters).
- A small number of male characters are featured as feminists (4.4%).

ACTIVITIES

We measured a variety of activities featured in ads. We find no gender differences in socializing, eating/drinking, driving, or exercising. We do find some differences in other activities that reflect rigid gender norms.

Female characters are more likely to be shown doing the following activities than male characters:

- Shopping (4.1% compared with 2.3%).
- Cleaning (4.8% compared with 2.2%).
- Being involved in the purchase or preparation of meals (5.4% compared with 3.9%).

These gender gaps in activities send the message that women are more responsible for household activities – meal preparation and cleaning – than men.

SETTINGS

We also coded for character setting—where characters appear in the ad. We find no gender differences when it comes to characters shown in a store, a car, the kitchen, a restaurant or bar, the gym, a bathroom, or a school/classroom.

Female characters are more likely to be shown in the following settings:

- A living room (18.8% compared with 15.7%).
- A bedroom (6.8% compared with 3.1%).

Male characters are more likely to be shown in the following settings:

- An office (7.1% compared to 4.7%).
- Outdoors (28.7% compared with 21.7%)
- A sporting event (8.1% compared to 3.3%).

These gender gaps in settings fit a clear pattern where female characters are more likely to be shown in the home and male characters are in public spaces outside the home. In other words, the settings where characters are shown reinforce traditional ideas about women being in the home and men being in the public sphere.

CONCLUSION

In this study, we examined gender representations in advertising in India. We discovered several positive findings—that girls and women are well-represented as characters (49.6%) and dominate screen time (59.7%) and speaking time (56.3%). However, we also find that when girls and women appear in ads, it is mostly to sell domestic and beauty products to female consumers. In this way, the presence of women in ads in India reinforces traditional gender roles. This is problematic because of the inter-generational transfer of norms to children, including a lack of empowering role models for men undertaking domestic work in the home and women working in the paid workforce.



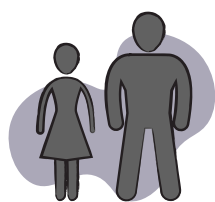
We find an age bias in gender representations. Boys are more likely to appear than girls (20.5% compared with 13.1%) and male characters are well-represented across age groups. Female characters are more likely to appear in their 20s than male characters (38.2% compared with 26.7%). These findings reinforce the notion that boys should take up more space than girls, and when women appear in ads, they are mostly young women.



We find prominent gender differences in skin tone. Two-thirds of female characters (66.9%) have light or medium-light skin tones— significantly more than male characters (52.1%). Male characters are five times more likely to have a dark skin tone than female characters (6.5% compared with 1.3%). This means that while male characters are shown across the skin tone spectrum, most female characters appear with light skin. This is problematic because female characters are more likely to be shown as attractive, so this advances the discriminatory notion that light skin tones are more attractive. It also sends the message that women have few options in terms of meeting standards of appearance while men have more freedom in terms of the way they look.



Diving more deeply into colorism in Indian advertising, we find that social class and skin color are linked. Most characters are middle-class (51.3%), while very few characters lower-class (6.4%). Social class and skin tone are linked in ads. A majority of characters with dark skin are presented as lower-class (56.5%) while two-thirds of characters with light skin are shown as upper-class (65.7%). We also find that characters with light skin tones are presented as more physically attractive than characters with darker skin tones. The skin tone bias here is stark and troubling. It furthers the false notion that upper-class people are inherently better.



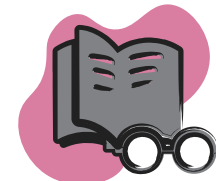
When it comes to body size, female characters are four times as likely to have a small body type than male characters (41.8% compared with 9.4%). Boys and men who appear in Indian ads have body types of all shapes and sizes, while girls and women are mostly thin. This reinforces the idea that girls and women are supposed to take up less space physically and figuratively. It also advances the idea that girls and women can only look a certain way while boys and men have more freedom to look lots of different ways and still be socially acceptable.



We find consistent gender differences in sexualization. Female characters are nine times more likely to be shown as 'stunning/very attractive' than male characters (5.9% compared with 0.6%). They are six times more likely to be shown in revealing clothing (11.2% compared with 1.7%); four times more likely to be depicted as partially nude (7.6% compared with 1.6%); and are five times more likely to be sexually objectified (4.7% compared with 0.9%) than male characters. Sexual objectification has serious consequences in the real world. The more girls and women internalize the idea that their primary value comes from being a sex object, the higher their rates of depression, body hatred and shame, eating disorders, and a host of other personal impacts. Advertisers promoting the message that women are sex objects need to be mindful of the negative impact that may contribute to their dehumanization and personal harm.



We also find sizeable gender gaps in work and leadership. Male characters are twice as likely to be shown as having an occupation (25.2% compared with 11.6%) and more likely to be shown working (16.4% compared with 9.3%) than female characters. Boys and men are also more likely to be shown as a leader than girls and women (26.3% compared with 19.3%). These stark and consistent differences bolster norms of men being breadwinners and leaders and women taking a back seat in public society. These findings also raise a new generation of children to believe that leadership is primarily a male domain, which makes them less supportive of women's leadership in the corporate sector and the ballot box.



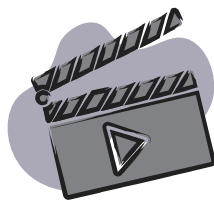
Indian ads also have gender gaps in personal traits. Boys and men are shown as smarter than girls and women (32.2% compared to 26.2%), and male characters are almost twice as likely to be shown as funny than female characters (19.1% compared to 11.9%). These representations reinforce sexist notions that women are less intelligent and humorous than men. Girls and boys get the message that women simply aren't as smart or funny as men.



We examined many different aspects of gender role representations in ads. Female characters are more likely to be shown as married (11.0% compared with 8.8%), parents (18.7% compared with 5.9%), excellent parents (10.1% compared with 3.2%), making household decisions (4.9% compared with 2.0%), and caretakers (18.3% compared with 5.2%) than male characters. Boys and men are more likely to be shown making decisions about their future than girls and women (7.3% compared with 4.8%). These representations bolster traditional gender norms that girls and women belong in the domestic sphere as parents and caretakers, and boys and men get to dream about and plan their futures. This is a problem because it shapes the imagination of children before they have a chance to truly explore who they want to be and what they want to do in life. We find further representations of rigid gender roles with activities portrayed in ads. Female characters are more likely to be shown shopping (4.1% compared with 2.3%), cleaning (4.8% compared with 2.2%) and involved in the purchase or preparation of meals (5.4% compared with 3.9%) than male characters. This is a stark reinforcement of the idea that women should be the primary caretakers of the household. Advertisers can bring about a profound shift in the real world simply by presenting men and women as co-caretakers of the household.



When it comes to settings, girls and women appear more often in domestic settings— the living room (18.8% compared with 15.7%) and the bedroom (6.8% compared with 3.1%). Boys and men appear more often in public spaces— an office (7.1% compared to 4.7%), outdoors (28.7% compared with 21.7%), and at a sporting event (8.1% compared to 3.3%). This pattern sends the message that domestic spaces are for women and public spaces are for men. Public space is not gender neutral in that urban planners have historically ignored the needs of women in these spaces, making them exclusive, inaccessible, and dangerous for women. Social norms also prevent women from entering public spaces, including threats of harassment and sexual violence for women who travel solo. Women in India cannot comfortably mingle in a crowd, hang out at a park, eat a meal, take a solitary stroll, breastfeed a baby, or do other activities in public spaces because of these unwritten rules. Advertisers in India are reinforcing these rules but could help bring about a change simply by showing it acceptable for women to be in public spaces.



We compared Indian ads to Cannes Lions global baseline numbers. Female characters are better represented in India (49.6% compared with 38.4%) and have twice the screen time (59.7% compared with 30.6%) and nearly twice the speaking time (56.3% compared with 33.5%) as the global baseline. Girls and women are sexualized at the same rates in Indian ads and the global baseline. With work and leadership, we have mixed findings. Indian women are less likely to have an occupation than the baseline, but more likely to be shown as leaders in ads.

In sum, the current content of advertisements in India have been observed to perform well on measurements around women's presence in advertising but in terms of quality of representation and avoidance of stereotyping, there remains much room for improvement. Given the impact that marketing has been proven to have on gender socialization and the power of gender socialization on self-actualization, UNICEF recommends the following interventions to be considered by business management and content creators. Our aim is an advertising landscape in India that promotes equity, as well as positive and empowering gender norms.



INTERVENTIONS

Based on our findings, we recommend the following actions for content creators that create advertising for Indian audiences.

ACTION STEPS FOR ADVERTISING GOVERNING BODIES

- Establish guidelines for advertising with benchmarks for equitable representation for girls and women and promoting positive gender norms, including around leadership and body attitudes.
- Establish skin color guidelines for advertising with benchmarks promoting quantity and quality of representation for characters with dark skin tones.
- Establish caste/class guidelines for advertising with benchmarks promoting quantity and quality of representation for people from marginalized castes and classes.
- Promote diverse templates of beauty rather than regressive beauty norms of women and girls being only fair, thin, etc.
- Advocate with advertisers to see value add in diversifying representation in gender, skin tone, and caste/class benchmarks to help promote brand equity and expand the consumer base.

ACTION STEPS FOR CONTENT CREATORS

- Continue to write and cast girls and women equally as boys and men in advertising.
- Write and cast more girls in ads (ages 1 - 12).
- Write and cast girls and women of all ages (not just young women).
- Write and cast more female characters ages 50+.
- Cast characters across the skin tone spectrum, but especially female characters.
- Cast characters across the body size spectrum, but especially female characters.
- Write and cast female characters with diverse appearances (e.g., skin tone, body size, etc.).
- Avoid sexual objectification of girls and women in ads.
- Write more female characters in occupations and show them working.
- Write more female characters in formal and informal positions of leadership.
- Write more female characters as funny and intelligent.
- Write more female characters in public roles (e.g., working or hiking) and more male characters in domestic activities (e.g., cooking or cleaning).
- Show women and girl characters making decisions or in leadership positions.
- Write more female characters in public spaces (e.g., in the workplace or at sporting events) and more male characters in private spaces (e.g., in a living room or a kitchen).
- Show characters promoting positive or equitable gender practices and norms.

APPENDIX A

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

GENDER EMPOWERMENT

The process of becoming stronger and more confident in one's gender, especially in controlling one's life and claiming one's rights.

GENDER REPRESENTATION

The ways in which media serves to produce, shape, and change societal norms and beliefs of perceived differences between genders.

GENDER ROLES

Define how a person is expected to speak, act, groom, dress, and conduct oneself based upon the person's assigned or presumed sex.

GENDER SOCIALIZATION

The process by which individuals learn how to behave socially in a manner conforming with their assigned or presumed sex.

GENDER STEREOTYPES

A preconception or generalized view regarding characteristics or attributes or habits that ought to be possessed by a particular sex.

GENDER TROPES

A universally recognizable image of gender representation imbued with several layers of contextual meaning, used as shorthand to convey a new visual metaphor. Ex: Trophy Wife, Busy Career Woman, Workaholic Father.

SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION/SEXUALIZATION

The act of treating a person solely as an object of sexual desire, rather than as a person for whom their sexual attractiveness is but a small part of larger, whole personhood.

SOCIAL CLASS

A group in society that shares the same socioeconomic status. For this study, we measured whether characters were presented as poor/working class, middle class, or upper class. This measurement is based on their clothing and attire, their location (e.g., on a yacht), and the cost of their possessions (e.g., shown driving an inexpensive car).

APPENDIX B

AUTOMATED MACHINE LEARNING

The GD-IQ was funded by Google.org. Using machine learning technology and the University of Southern California's audio-visual processing technologies, this tool was co-developed by the Institute and led by Dr. Shrikanth (Shri) Narayanan and his team of researchers at the University of Southern California's Signal Analysis and Interpretation Laboratory (SAIL), with additional analysis from Dr. Caroline Heldman.

To date, most research investigations of media representations have been done manually. The GD-IQ revolutionizes this approach by using automated analysis, which is not only more precise, but makes it possible for researchers to quickly analyze massive amounts of data, which allows findings to be reported in real time. Additionally, the GD-IQ allows for more accurate analysis, and because the tool is automated, comparisons across data sets and researchers are possible, as is reproducibility. Automated analysis of media content gets around the limitations of human coding. Beyond the significant advantage of being able to efficiently analyze more in less time, the GD-IQ can also calculate content detail with a level of accuracy that eludes human coders. This is especially true for factors such as screen and speaking time, where near exact precision is possible. Algorithms are a set of rules of calculations that are used in problem-solving. For this report, we employed two automated algorithms that measure screen and speaking time of characters by their gender. Here is an overview of the procedures we used for each algorithm.

SCREEN TIME ANALYSIS

We compute the screen time of female characters by calculating the ratio of female faces to the total number of faces in the ad's visuals. The screen time is calculated using online face detection and tracking with tools provided by Google's machine learning technology. In the interest of precision and time, we estimate screen time by computing statistics over face-tracks (boxes tracking the general outline of each face) instead of individual faces. The face-tracks returned by technology include different attributes of the face with the corresponding time of occurrence in the video. Among the attributes returned for each of the detected faces, we use two parameters - the confidence of the detected face and the system's posterior probability for gender prediction. A threshold of 0.25 was empirically chosen for determining confident face detection.

Due to multiple characters appearing on screen simultaneously, the face-tracks can be overlapping. A gender label is then assigned to each track using the average gender posterior associated with the confident faces in the track. If the average gender posterior probability of the track is greater than 0.5, the track is classified as a "female track," otherwise, it is a "male track." The number of frames with confident face detections in each track is summed up across all tracks to get the total number of faces. The number of female tracks is aggregated to get the total number of faces predicted as female. Finally, the screen time is computed as the ratio between the number of female face detections to the total number of face detections across the length of the movie. Supplementary analysis shows that screen time estimated at frame-level (individual faces) instead of using face-tracks was not significantly different and was comparable. Furthermore, computing the average of gender posterior over tracks has an added benefit of "smoothing out" some of the local gender prediction errors. Face-tracking incorporates temporal contiguity information to reduce transient errors in gender prediction that may occur with analyzing individual faces independently.

SPEAKING TIME ANALYSIS

Using movie audio, we compute the speaking time of male and female characters to obtain an objective indicator of gender representation. The algorithm for performing this analysis involves automatic voice activity detection, audio segmentation, and gender classification.

Voice Activity Detection: Movie audio typically contains many non-speech regions, including sound effects, background music, and silence. The first step is to eliminate non-speech regions from the audio using voice activity detection (VAD) and retain only speech segments. We used a recurrent neural network based VAD algorithm implemented in the open-source toolkit OpenSMILE to isolate speech segments.

Segmentation: We then break speech segments into smaller sections to ensure each segment includes speech from only one speaker. This is performed using an algorithm based on Bayes Information Criterion (BIC), available in the KALDI toolkit. Thirteen-dimensional Mel Frequency Cepstral Coefficient (MFCC) features are used for the automatic speaker segmentation. This step essentially decomposes continuous speech segments obtained in the VAD step into smaller segments to make sure no segment contains speech from two different speakers.

Gender Classification: The speech segment is then classified into two categories based on whether it was likely spoken by a male or female character. This is accomplished with acoustic feature extraction and feature normalization.

Acoustic Feature Extraction: We use 13-dimensional MFCC features for gender classification because they can be reliably extracted from movie audio, unlike pitch or other high-level features where extraction is made unreliable by the diverse and noisy nature of movie audio.

Feature Normalization: Feature normalization is deemed necessary to address the issue of variability of speech across different movies and speakers, and to reduce the effect of noise present in the audio channel. Cepstral Mean Normalization (CMN) is a standard technique popular in Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) and other speech technology applications. Using this method, the cepstral coefficients are linearly transformed to have the same segmental statistics (zero mean).

Classification of the speaker as either male or female is based on gender-specific Gaussian mixture models (GMMs) of the acoustic features. These models are trained on a gender-annotated subset of general speech databases used for developing speech technologies using frame-level features for each gender. The GMM we use in this system has 100 mixture components and is optimized by tuning the parameters in a held-out evaluation set. For a new input segment whose gender label is to be predicted, the likelihoods of the segment belonging to a male or female class are computed based on this pre-trained model. The class with higher likelihood is assigned to the segment as the estimated gender prediction. The total speaking time by gender is then computed by adding together the durations for each utterance classified as Male/Female. This gives us the male and female speaking time in a movie.

ENDNOTES

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2. India Census Data 2011 <<https://censusindia.gov.in/2011-common/censusdata2011.html>>, accessed on February 17, 2021
3. 2018-2022 India Country Programme Document, *ibid*
4. National Family Health Survey-4 2015-16 (NFHS-4) <<http://rchiips.org/nfhs/NFHS-4Reports/India.pdf>> assessed on February 17, 2021
5. We coded character attractiveness using a five-point scale: 1) ugly/repulsive; 2) worse than average looking; 3) average looking; 4) better than average looking; 5) 'stunning/very attractive'. An average looking person is someone whose looks are unremarkable - they don't have any features that stand out as attractive or not. A worse than average person is someone with some unattractive features, such as a soft chin or a long nose. A better than average person is someone with some attractive features, such as full lips or long eyelashes. The poles (ugly and 'stunning') should be easy to identify because virtually all of the features are unattractive or attractive, respectively. These are subjective coding measures, but ones for which there is high interrater reliability, meaning that even though they are subjective, there is a common understanding of where people are in social hierarchies of attractiveness. It is essential to clarify that neither UNICEF nor GDI endorse this classification of 'traditional' beauty. However, for the purpose of the study, we developed a metric that measures existing societal standards of beauty so we can see to what extent do adverts 'think outside the box' or adhere to existing standards. Our objective position on beauty is that there is no universal construct of beauty and we do not endorse any beauty standards.
6. For content analysis coding, sexually revealing clothing refers to apparel that draws attention to the curves or angles between the mid chest and upper thigh regions of the body.
7. For content analysis coding, some nudity refers to exposing skin in cleavage, midriff, or upper thigh/lower buttocks area.
8. For content analysis coding, sexual objectification is the act of treating a person as an instrument of sexual pleasure. Objectification more broadly means treating a person as a commodity or an object without regard to their personality or dignity. Panning refers to rotating a camera on its vertical or horizontal axis. In this instance, it refers to moving from one part of a body to another. Slow motion can be used to accentuate various aspects of the images on a screen.
9. Occupation is a measure of paid labor or volunteer labour in a professional workplace setting
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