

# TOOLKIT TO PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY IN MARKETING & ADVERTISING



In support of

**WOMEN'S  
EMPOWERMENT  
PRINCIPLES**

Established by UN Women and the  
UN Global Compact Office







# FOREWORD

The Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) are UN Women's and the private sector's primary vehicle for the realization of the 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development. Through the WEPs framework, UN Women works with and supports businesses in transforming their internal practices as well as the wider business ecosystem, to promote gender equality.

UN Women Arab States in partnership with Governments, International Financial Institutions, regional media outlets and UN partners has set out an ambitious goal to surge women's employment throughout region by 2030. Working closely with the private sector is a primary part of achieving that objective, being a critical engine for job creation and meritocratic recruitment processes.

Women's Empowerment Principle 5 in specific, lies at the intersection of our private sector work and our work on social norms, and seeks to empower women by transforming supply chains and marketing practices. Through WEPs 5, we work with WEPs signatories in the region to optimize advertising as a powerful driver to change perceptions and impact social norms – portraying women and men in modern, authentic and multidimensional roles.

To that end, UN Women Regional Office for Arab States developed a comprehensive advisory package that includes this toolkit. And with

accompanying training materials, checklists, and a repository of best practices as well as consultation services, this support package guide companies towards harnessing their power and responsibility to tackle centuries-long gender stereotypes and persistent gender bias. By adopting the practices endorsed in the toolkit and being aware of the most critical pitfalls to avoid, companies can then embark on a journey towards gender-responsive marketing in their respective sectors and industries.

These practical materials are all developed in close collaboration with the private sector through consultations, and in direct response to the needs of marketing, advertising, social media, public relations and communications teams of our committed WEP signatories across no less than 17 countries. By creating strategic partnerships and providing advisory support to around 600 WEPs signatories across the region, UN Women and partners are leaping towards transforming the economy of the Arab World.

It is a palpable example of how the private sector plays a key role in advancing gender equality, not only in each individual company, but through that strengthening the economies of nations overall. Essentially, leading to accelerated development throughout the Arab States Region as a whole.

Susanne Mikhael Eldhagen  
Regional Director of UN Women in the Arab States

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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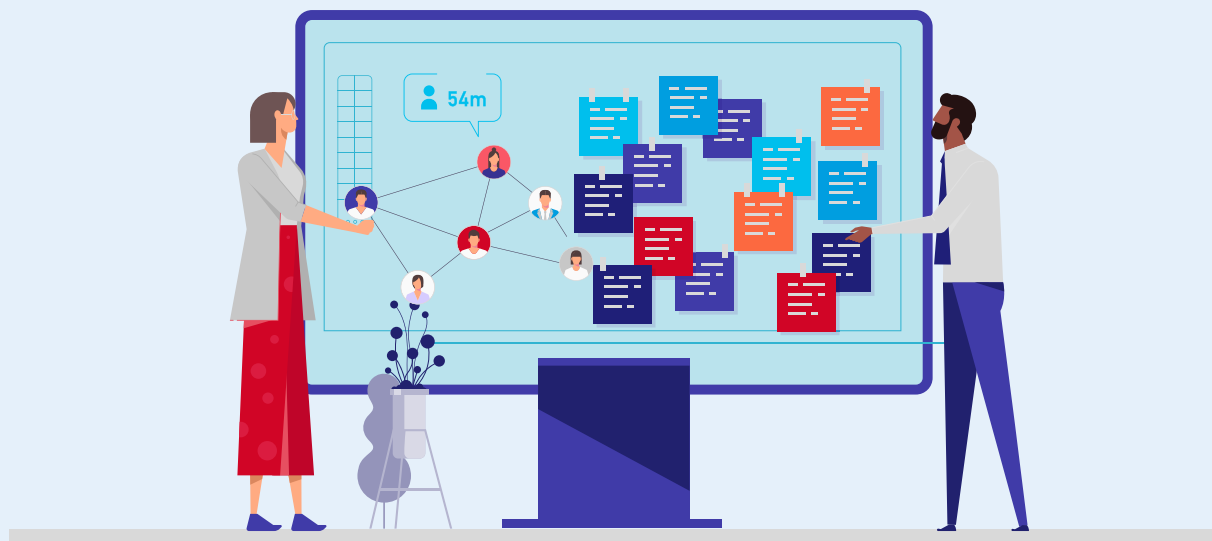
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# 1. INTRODUCTION



Private sector companies and marketers have the power and responsibility to tackle centuries-long gender stereotypes and persistent cultural norms and usher in an era of marketing that better represents today's consumers. Marketers, advertisers and storytellers can not only shape how women are portrayed in ads and the media, but they can also influence corporate and popular culture to empower women and ultimately deliver stronger business outcomes. Indeed, according to 'What Women Want' research by Kantar, brands promoting gender-balanced marketing are worth approximately USD 1 trillion more than those that do not.<sup>1</sup>

Women represent half of the world's population and often are the decision-makers across a wide range of product categories. Encouragingly, there is a growing trend to integrate a gender lens in marketing and advertising, as the advertising standards authorities themselves are erecting codes to use advertising as a force for good in advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, challenging unconscious biases

and harmful stereotypes. This toolkit showcases a number of gender-balanced campaigns from across the Arab States that may serve as a point of reference or inspiration.

Yet, many private sector companies, large or small, are lagging behind as the 2019 Analysis of Gender Stereotyping in Gulf-focused Advertising<sup>2</sup> shows. According to the study, 'Television advertising in the Gulf continues to perpetuate traditional gender stereotypes and does not portray realistically the increasingly progressive role of women in the region, who remain the queens of the home.' Similar trends seem to persist on social media.

In this light, this toolkit is designed to raise awareness about how gender equality can be mainstreamed across the marketing and advertising function, in line with society trends that would lead to more favourable business outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/equality/brands-are-failing-to-connect-with-women-meaningfully>

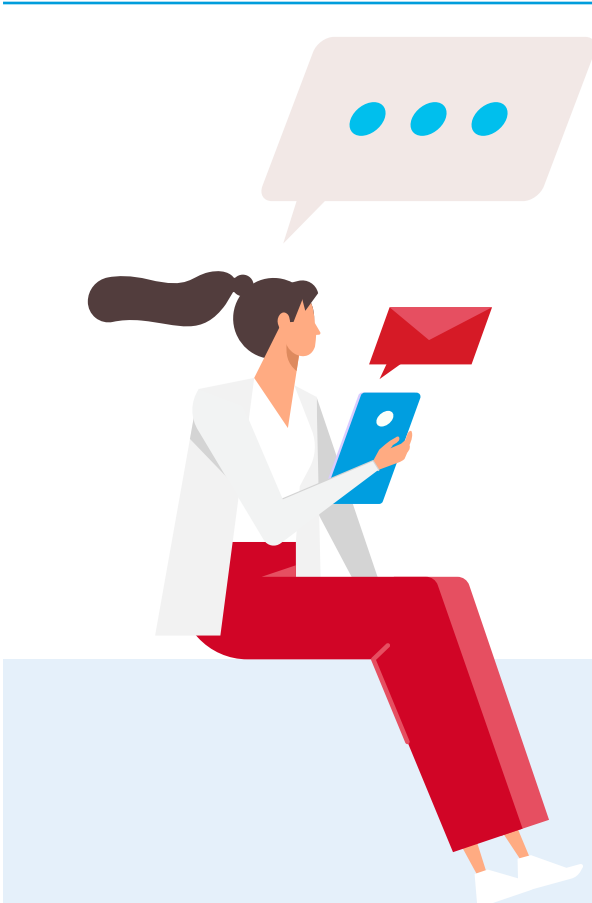
<sup>2</sup> [Analysis of Gender Stereotyping in Gulf-focused Advertising by Sheikh Zayed University in the UAE, 2019. https://new.abg-me.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Gender-Stereotyping-in-Ads-in-the-Gulf-ABG-Report-March-2019-1-1.pdf](https://new.abg-me.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Gender-Stereotyping-in-Ads-in-the-Gulf-ABG-Report-March-2019-1-1.pdf)

## 1.1. The Role of Marketing in Gender Equality

The marketing and advertising function can be a great contributor to gender equality in the corporate world – both as employers and as content creators. More concretely, it can promote equality in the following areas:

- A.** Embed equality in the business and marketing strategy
- B.** Identify and promote equality as a core value
- C.** Develop products and services that address the needs, requirements and preferences of all individuals and genders
- D.** Ensure a brand identity and product positioning in line with the principles of equality, diversity, equality and inclusion
- E.** Create content and ads that portray women and girls fairly, accurately, respectfully and realistically, free of gender bias and/or stereotypes
- F.** Promote and make products and services available across different touchpoints, facilitating access for all genders and sub-categories of gender
- G.** Ensure a gender lens in the internal review and quality control processes
- H.** Recruit, train and develop women, including in leadership positions such as creative directors or CMOs
- I.** Promote team diversity and cross-gender collaboration
- J.** Establish success metrics that award gender equality, including on compensation and rewards systems
- K.** Create and apply for creativity awards e.g. Cannes Lions International Festival Of Creativity
- L.** Identify and work with partners and third party vendors and suppliers committed to gender equality
- M.** Provide mandatory internal gender equality trainings
- N.** Subscribe to industry-wide commitments, guidelines, pledges or alliances that aim to accelerate gender equality.





**Case Study**

In 2022, a number of brands – Dove, Boots and PureGym vowed to stop digitally altering the images of influencers and designs on social media, following The Body Image Bill (previously Digitally Altered Body Image Bill), which will be presented to the UK Parliament.

Pete Markey, CMO Boots said: “It is our duty to promote body self-confidence and to show sensible and favorable body images.” He acknowledged that influencers are “especially essential in engaging more youthful audiences in a favorable and accountable method.”

Marks and Spencer, Next and Unilever have likewise openly stated their support, although they have yet to formally sign the pledge.

**Source:** The Drum - Boots, Dove and Barry M pledge to end influencer editing, May 2022. <https://www.thedrum.com/news/2022/05/10/boots-dove-and-barry-m-pledge-end-influencer-editing>

## 1.2. Terms and Definitions

Below are some simple definitions of concepts discussed widely in this toolkit:

### A. Gender Equality in Marketing, Communications and Advertising

It requires the successful, conscious and consistent application of the 3Ps – Perspective, Presence and Personality. (1) Perspective gives equal consideration of the needs, perspectives and priorities of all genders. (2) Presence gives them an equal voice, including by embracing all sub categories of gender seniors, expecting mothers, unemployed, migrants, people with disabilities, people of different faiths etc. and (3) Personality which requires the portrayal of all genders equally, fairly and respectfully.

### B. Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is the process of integrating a gender equality perspective in the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the company’s strategy, policies, programs and plans in order to achieve gender equality across the board. Although marketers, storytellers and advertisers have a major role to play in accelerating gender equality, it should not be a requirement limited only to the marketing function, but it should be promoted across the organization with support from the leadership team.





Gender mainstreaming means assessing the implications that any planned action at any level of the organization may have on all individuals,

regardless of gender, and taking appropriate and timely action to reverse any negative effect.

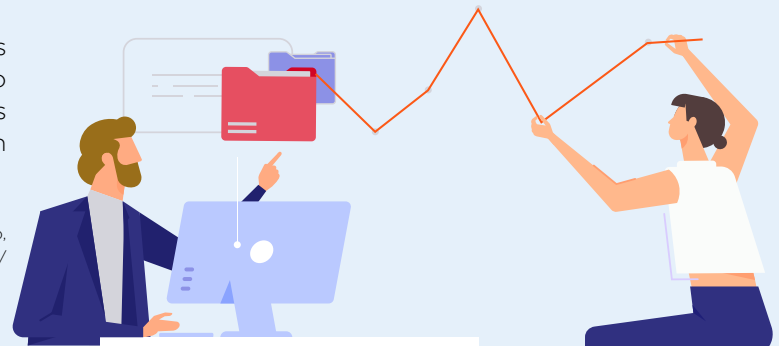
### Example

An interesting example of gender mainstreaming is the 'Women in the Industrial Field' campaign by the Emirati ADNOC Group, whose 2030 strategy, focused on people, aims to achieve gender balance across the group. While women currently represent 5% of the total workforce in the oil and gas sector in the Middle East, they represent 12% of ADNOC's employees. Emirati women represent 71% of ADNOC's national employee population.

Today, the ADNOC Group has three female CEO's, more than 17 board positions, and a growing number of women in critical technical positions on its operational sites.

The campaign showcases challenges that women had to overcome to achieve success – inspiring others to remain determined.

**Source:** Adnoc official X account @ADNOCGroup, March 2020. <https://twitter.com/AdnocGroup/status/1236275173466218497?s=20>



## C. Gender Stereotyping

Gender stereotyping is often a simplistic and inaccurate generalization of individuals belonging to one gender based on pre-existing beliefs, ideas and/or prejudice. Such portrayals are problematic as they create inaccurate and harmful social expectations of what roles are appropriate for women and how women should behave in society. Stereotyping is against the principles of equality, equity and inclusion and may reinforce perceptions of gender superiority. Gender stereotypes may be conveyed not only through explicit content, but also through imagery, language and symbols that reinforce rather than tackle gender-based bias or discrimination.

## D. Gender Washing

Gender washing happens when companies claim to be more gender-balanced than they actually are. The phenomenon may come in different varieties and may include selective disclosure, which happens when companies highlight certain improvements say women in leadership positions, while omitting other inconvenient information such as gender pay gap or inadequate parental leave. Other forms of gender washing may include dubious labelling, empty gender policies, voluntary codes of conduct that are rarely followed upon or reported on and others. Much like green washing, gender washing may undermine the company's credibility and consumer trust as brands come across as disingenuous and/or unaware of women's distinct needs and preferences.

## Example

The fallacy of ‘Shrink it and Pink it’ a strategy used in marketing for women in which an existing product (especially one for men) is simply made smaller and pink.

In 2009, **Company A** launched a new website and marketing campaign following the launch of a new lightweight laptop computer targeted at women. The campaign introduced tech as a fashion statement, featuring colorful computers and software that allowed women to track workouts, cooking recipes and calories count, a move which was seen insulting to women whose computer use is not limited to home activities or health. The campaign attracted widespread criticism, forcing the company to apologize and make significant changes to it, focusing more on tech-savviness and less on ‘pink’

### 1.3. The Business Case for Gender Equality in Marketing

There is a strong business imperative for championing equality in marketing, advertising, and media.

According to Kantar’s ‘What Women Want?’ research, brands promoting gender-balanced marketing are worth nearly USD 1 trillion more than those which do not.

The study also found that brands are failing to correctly reflect, represent and champion women. In fact, two thirds of women would skip ads if they felt that they were negatively stereotyping women, and 85% said film and advertising does a poor job of depicting real world women.

This is particularly worrying because:

- Women represent the world’s greatest emerging markets at 3,9 billion.
- Women’s global incomes were estimated at a staggering \$18 trillion in 2018, according EY.
- Women drive 70-80% of all consumer purchasing.
- Women have a multiplier effect, often buying on behalf of other people, family members, friends and other community members.

Deloitte’s research also shows that ads and campaigns with stronger gender equality scores perform better than those that promote gender stereotypes.’ Indeed, the study showed that

forward-thinking advertising that portrays gender positively was 12% more effective and delivered a better brand impact.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, according to a first-of-its-kind public opinion survey on gender equality, conducted in 17 countries, which represent half of the world’s population, including Tunisia, the global public expects political and business leaders to make meaningful progress towards gender equality with 20% of respondents saying that they would boycott or support a company based on its views on gender equality. The survey was led by [Women Deliver](#) and [Focus 2030](#),<sup>4</sup>

Finally, inclusive and diverse views and perspectives help brands embrace the shift from aspirational marketing to an authentic marketing era, which better resonates with consumers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



## 1.4. Toolkit Purpose and Use

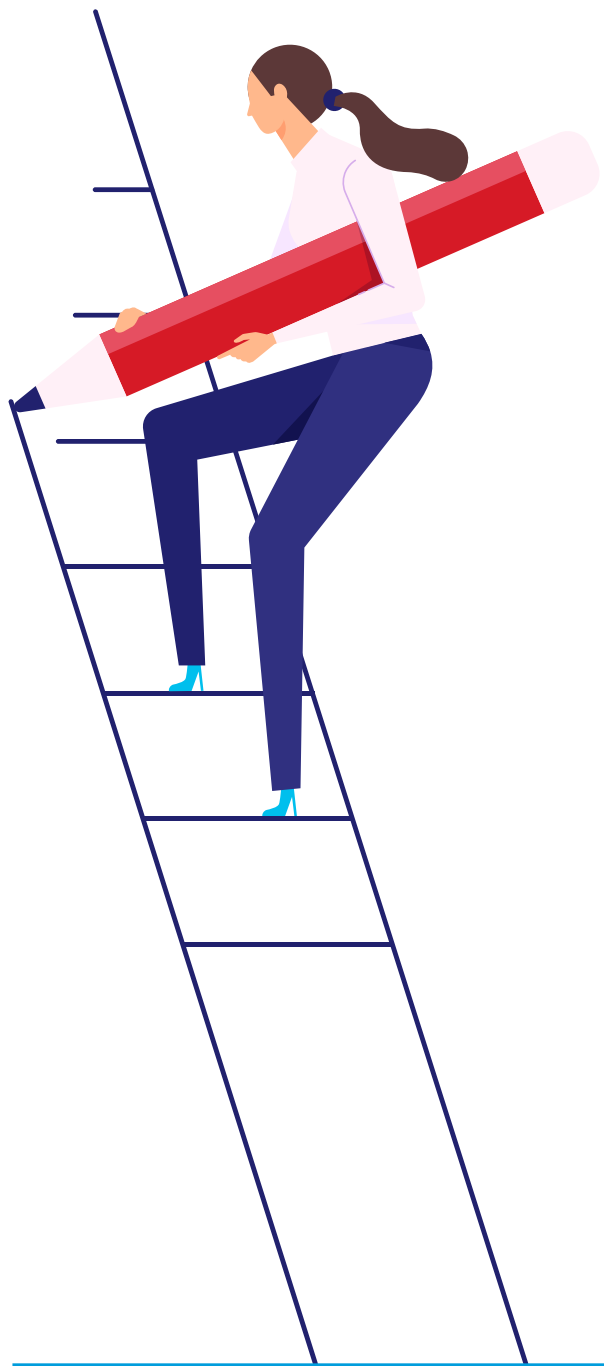
This manual is aimed at in-house marketing, communications, and public relations professionals of private sector companies and is designed to promote gender equality in all external and internal communications.

It provides practical guidance, self-assessment tools, detailed checklists and best practices to companies of all sizes and industries on how to design, roll out and measure the impact of their marketing and advertising campaigns and initiatives with a gender lens.

The toolkit aims to:

- Raise awareness about the role of marketing and advertising in accelerating gender equality
- Help build understanding and internal capabilities on how to effectively embed gender equality in creative processes and across the marketing and advertising function
- Serve as a point of reference for day-to-day guidance on how to employ a gender lens to specific activities from large scale public events to one-on-one media interviews and from above the line advertising to influencer marketing.
- Trigger conversations and stimulate gender mainstreaming at all levels of the organization, underpinned by the business strategy and corporate values.

The toolkit aims to serve as a comprehensive, standalone document that provides the reader with relevant knowledge, insights and concrete steps to achieve gender equality in marketing and advertising, without transforming the readers into gender experts.



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3 Why Equality Is a Marketing Imperative <https://deloitte.wsj.com/articles/why-equality-is-a-marketing-imperative-1497412942>

4 Citizens Call for a Gender-Equal World: A Roadmap for Action <https://womendeliver.org/publication-data-base/citizens-call-for-a-gender-equal-world/>

## 2. GENDER EQUALITY IN ADVERTISING AND MARKETING COMMUNICATION

The global advertising industry reached \$710 billion in 2021 and is expected to hit \$1 trillion by 2025.<sup>5</sup> For the industry to flourish and bring the much expected return on investment to the brands, advertisers and marketers are starting to tell stories that resonate with the consumers of today, by embracing a gender responsive approach to their communications.

The advertising industry is also recognizing its own role in promoting gender equality and positively influencing society. To this end, Cannes Lions the international festival of creativity and the largest gathering in the creative marketing community launched the Glass Lion: The Lion for Change in 2015. The award specifically recognizes work that challenges gender bias and shatters stereotypical images of men and women.

But how can advertising be more gender-balanced? Both above the line advertising (ATL), 'mass' advertising to large audiences via for example TV ads, radio or billboards and below the line advertising (BTL) which focuses on specific audiences, in the form of brand activations, direct mail, sponsorships and in-store advertising. This toolkit focuses mostly on ATL, but similar principles apply to all forms of communication.

### 2.1. Gender Equality in Advertising

Companies seeking to embrace gender diversity often ensure equal representation of all genders in their ads and campaigns. This means equal and fair portrayal of all individuals and in the full spectrum of diversity including people with disabilities, minorities, vulnerable groups, etc. A gender responsive campaign for instance guarantees the equal portrayal of individuals as having equal value, decision making power, while using inclusive and respectful language and avoiding exploitation of sexuality, promotion of violence or gender dominance.

<sup>5</sup> <https://magnaglobal.com/global-advertising-market-reaches-new-heights-and-exceeds-pre-covid-levels/>

Furthermore, brands today are required or expected to challenge outdated gender stereotypes or bias. This includes portraying idealized beauty standards or body shapes and scenarios featuring people who do not conform to a gender stereotype (e.g. portraying a man taking care of his little baby)

But for equality to be truly achieved, companies must encourage gender equality and diversity at home first. They are encouraged to promote team diversity including among partners and suppliers, embed gender equality in the creative processes from concept development and testing to roll out and performance measurement, subscribe to advertising standards on gender equality and finally, promote gender equality beyond the advertising function by mainstreaming it across the organization.

#### Case Study

Careem Saudi Arabia launched the She drives change campaign, to mark the International Women's Day (IWD). The campaign aimed to change the public's way of thinking, challenge gender stereotypes and create an equal opportunity for men and women. All this while working to achieve their goal of having 20,000 female captains by 2020. #shedriveschange #yallaletsgo #beACaptain. This campaign goes beyond the IWD's celebratory campaigns as it outlines the company's commitment to hiring more women in a male dominated industry.

**Source:** Careem Official Facebook Page @Careem - March 2018  
<https://www.facebook.com/careem/videos/1896104330407973/>

Many advertising standards authorities are setting up their own guidelines or codes to broadening the representation of women and men in non-traditional roles in media and advertising and challenge harmful gender-based stereotypes or bias.

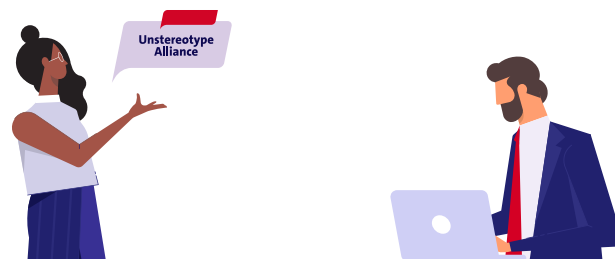
Below are the first ethical guidelines for gender portrayal in advertising and marketing communications in the UAE, launched by the Advertising Business Group in 2021.

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## The Advertising Business Group' Advertising Guidelines in the UAE

- Ads should avoid reinforcing those particular roles are only the responsibility of a specific gender.
- Avoid contrasting male and female stereotypical roles or characteristics to pronounce one better than the other.
- Avoid depicting a man or woman failing to achieve any daily task to a gender related limitation.
- Ads should avoid depicting a women's happiness or success in gender stereotypical roles as based purely on other's approval.
- Ads should avoid belittling any gender for showing emotional vulnerability or sensitivity.
- Ads should avoid belittling men for carrying out roles of tasks that are stereotypically seen associated with the female gender.
- Avoid ads which imply that: (i) conforming to an idealized gender-stereotypical appearance (e.g.body shape) is necessary for social or romantic success or emotional wellbeing or (ii) prioritizing appearance over all other qualities is necessary for acceptance from peers.
- Avoid ads-aimed at young mothers that suggest that looking attractive or keeping the house pristine is a priority (over other factors such as emotional well-being)
- Avoid reinforcing perception via contrast of what children can or cannot be/do, because of their gender.
- Ads should not explicitly depict children of a specific gender being excluded from or be dismissive of an activity.

Source: Advertising Business Group, June 2021  
<https://www.abg-me.com/abg-ethical-guidelines/>



### Did You Know?

UN Women convened the 'Unstereotype Alliance', an industry-led initiative that brings together advertising industry leaders, decision-makers and creatives to end harmful stereotypes in advertising. The alliance is driven by three core principles: (1) Depicting people as empowered actors, (2) Refraining from objectifying people and (3) Portraying progressive and multi dimensional personalities.

Since 2020, the 'Unstereotype Alliance' has also a national chapter in the UAE. Members include: Etihad Aviation Group, Facebook, Google, ITP Media Group, LinkedIn, Omnicom Media Group MENA, Snap Inc., Unilever, VFS Global and allies include: Advertising Business Group, Dubai Lynx and Zayed University.

Companies that wish to subscribe can apply [here](#).

## 2.2. Gender Balance in Traditional Media

Media has the power to shape our worldview. What and who we see or listen to on the radio, TV or newspapers matters. The in-house marketing, communication and PR teams can adopt a gender balanced approach when it comes to engaging with traditional media, which may come in many

forms and formats. Below we provide checklists and practical guidance on some of the possible media engagements.

### 2.2.1. Gender balance in media interviews

How does the marketing, communications and PR teams prepare a gender-equal response to media interviews or engagements? Below a step by step guidance on what to consider:

<b>Spokespeople Selection</b>	
1	Consider who in the company is best suited to give the interview on the specific topic, regardless of gender.
2	Assess whether the company's spokespeople are gender balanced, diverse and inclusive, providing a variety of voices, perspectives and opinions.
3	If you have diverse spokespeople, ensure they receive equal media training to facilitate equal opportunities for all of them to succeed. Providing gender equality training would also be important.
4	If you are putting forward a female spokesperson, ask yourself if it is a genuine decision or one aiming to gender-wash?
5	Consider breaking gender-stereotypes by putting forward spokespeople of all genders – e.g. A female spokesperson to share an expert opinion on financial or tech-related issues (rather than have women speaking on HR, family or social issues only)
<b>Messaging</b>	
6	Ensure a gender perspective when telling your story – e.g. Does your product or service provide solutions to consumers, including women?
7	If perspectives of all genders are presented, included those of vulnerable groups, ensure they are discussed fairly and in a non-stereotypical way.
8	Ensure a gender-balanced language, including appropriate pronouns, equal salutations and avoid derogatory language that trivializes women.
<b>Visuals &amp; Imagery</b>	
9	Strive for balanced representation of all genders in visuals or video materials.
<b>Recruitment, Training &amp; Career Progression</b>	
10	Assess whether your company employs a gender-balanced approach to the identification and recruitment of storytellers and spokespeople?
11	Assess whether it is a priority to mainstream gender in all media engagements?
12	Reflect on the number of women in leadership positions in your communications/PR/news teams

A similar approach is employed vis-à-vis article placements, opinion pieces, thought leadership pieces, press releases and the like. But considerations about gender equality are made even before the media interview is confirmed. Just

as the marketing, communication and PR teams assess whether the media opportunity is fit for purpose from a business perspective, they should also ask the right questions from a gender-equality perspective. Let us now look at the below scenario:

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**Scenario: Your spokesperson has been invited to give a media interview. What questions do you ask to ensure a gender perspective when assessing the opportunity?**

- Is the media outlet in question committed to gender equality or otherwise known for its equal, equitable and fair coverage of all genders?
- Is the interviewing journalist or program host gender balanced and respectful of all genders?
- Is the theme of the program inclusive of all genders?
- Will there be any topics that may compromise your company's reputation for instance by engaging on topics that may undermine women or other sub-categories of gender?
- Is the spokesperson given the space to discuss gender equality or any gender initiatives freely, without any limitations?

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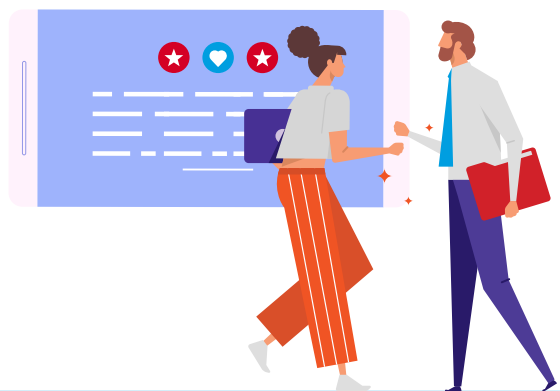
### 2.2.2. Gender Equality in Media Advertising and Partnerships

As companies identify the right media platforms for advertising from a business perspective, gender equality should also be taken into account. Questions to consider include:

1. Does the media outlet align with our corporate values of gender equality?
2. Does the program we are sponsoring advance or hinder gender equality?
3. Who are the other co-advertisers during our advertising slots? Where do they stand on gender equality? This would save you from reputational damage by association.
4. What is it that we are advertising? Does the product/service address the needs of all genders?
5. Is our message, slogan, tag line and call to action inclusive and respectful of all genders?
6. Is our language gender-sensitive? Are we being condescending to or objectifying women?
7. Have our creatives/visuals been reviewed from a gender perspective?

8. What would our female consumers think when seeing our ad? What about women rights organizations? Would they spot any red flags or faux pas?
9. Are there any women involved in the process - from the ad creation to the outlet selection and the visual execution?
10. How comfortable are we that our staff is sufficiently aware of gender equality and what that entails in practice? Have we provided gender equality training to the teams?

For what not to do in the actual ads, please refer to Part 3 of this toolkit.



6 Statista

## 2.3. Gender Balance in Social and Digital Media

Digital advertising has become one of the most important forms of marketing worldwide. In the Middle East and North Africa, the digital ad spent reached \$4,4 billion and it is expected to nearly double to \$7,9 billion by 2024.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, according to a new market research by RedSeer Consulting, digital advertising now accounts for 70% of the total ad spent, as digital and video ads edge out ad spent in traditional media, such as TV, radio, newspapers or magazines.<sup>7</sup>

Social media accounts for a third - circa 32% - of the total digital media ad spend in MENA.<sup>8</sup> As such, it has emerged as a powerful platform to drive positive change in society - including by advancing gender equality and challenging discrimination and stereotypes. Also, in the new era, social media is often the window to your company and your values. Every company, regardless of sector, size or geography has the opportunity to embrace equality, equity and diversity, and in turn, shape cultures and societies for the better.

Below are a few guidelines on how companies can adopt gender equality in their social media communications.

### 2.3.1. Gender balanced visuals, models and cast

Portray diversity and inclusion through a balanced representation of all genders, cultural identities and all other sub-categories of gender.

Showcase representatives of all genders actively and equally participating in all aspects of public and private life, including in high powered careers, community initiatives etc.

Opt for images that challenge traditional and stereotypical roles and professions - e.g. portray women leaders in STEM.

Ensure all genders are portrayed equally, fairly and respectfully including through posture, expressions, attire.

When portraying women, use inclusive images and promote body positivity. Avoid altering images to create unrealistic expectations of beauty.

Avoid any images - implicit or explicit - that glorify violence, harassment or abuse of women or that sexually objectify them.





### Did You Know?

In the Czech Republic, NESEHNUTÍ, a non-profit organization launched the Sexist Piglet anti-prize, known as Sexistické prasátko in Czech, which shines the spotlight on the most sexist and offensive ads to women. The awards are granted via an online voting system and a jury selection. More information [here](#).

### 2.3.2. Gender balanced language

Language is constantly evolving to reflect today's new realities. The UN has put together a list of guidelines for gender-inclusive language,<sup>9</sup> namely:

1. Use of non-discriminatory language. This includes using the appropriate and equal form of address such as Mr., Ms. Dr. etc. for all genders and avoiding gender-based expressions that reinforce gender stereotypes such as she fights like a girl or cries like a girl.
2. Make gender visible when relevant for communication. This is a strategy to explicitly highlight that all genders are a part of this conversations by using he or she rather than he alone. -E.g. The new CEO will be responsible for setting out the new 5-year business strategy. He or she will work closely with the Board and the Executive Committee to get it approved. Or all employees, male and female, will be entitled to the company's new parental leave. The latter is used

only when popular beliefs or preconceptions may obscure the presence or action of either gender such as leave for fathers, as mothers are often seen as the only parent responsible for childcare.

3. Do not make gender visible when not relevant for communication. This means using gender-neutral words like humanity or humankind instead of mankind or staffing rather than manpower. The guidelines provide more insights on other ways to ensure a more inclusive language.



7 <https://www.consultancy-me.com/news/3532/mena-spending-on-social-media-advertising-is-on-the-up>

8 Idem

9 <https://www.un.org/en/gender-inclusive-language/guidelines.shtml>

## Case Study - Twitter

Arabic speaking women in the Middle East are addressed with male pronouns – every day. To be more inclusive of gender, Twitter launched #FeminineArabic, as they introduced a new language setting that enables the Arabic feminine form - the first social media platform to do so. Twitter now allows women to be addressed as **عَرْدِي** and men as **عَرْد**

#FeminineArabic was designed as an invitation to brands to communicate more inclusively with female audiences, which led to hundreds of brands embracing the movement, by partnering with Twitter to create their own feminine hashtag campaigns and others committed to adopting a gender-sensitive language.

The campaign from Twitter is powerful not only because it led to a positive ripple effect from other brands, but it legitimizes women's voices online and eventually offline, correcting decades-long language that has only catered to men.

You can read more about the campaign [here](#).

Source: VMLY&R COMMERCE Official X Account @VMLYRCOMMERCE, Feb 2022 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cratO2DPKdA>

### 2.3.3. Gender balance in influencer marketing

Influencer marketing is a \$10 billion global industry and growing 50% annually.<sup>10</sup> Influencer marketing is a form of paid online advertising whereby companies forge partnerships with social media influencers and content creators to promote their products, services and brands online. Influencers or opinion leaders are often viewed as a reliable source of information

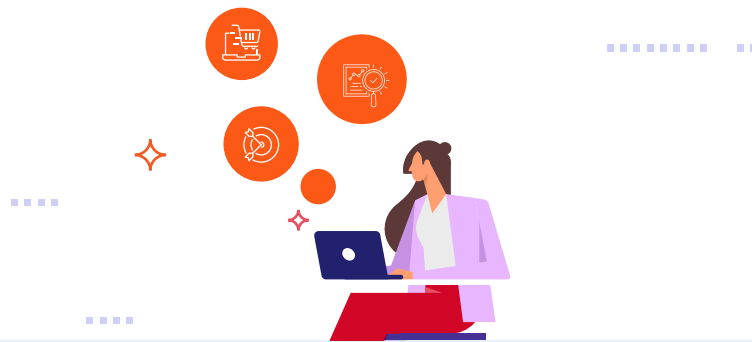
which can influence purchasing decisions, but also shape popular culture and have thus an important role to promote equality, equity and inclusion. In the last three years, global companies are also partnering with Arab influencers, particularly in the beauty, fashion, entertainment, travel, and tech industries.<sup>11</sup>

How can brands engage in gender balanced influencer marketing? Below a checklist:

Influencer Marketing Gender Equality Checklist
1. How diverse and inclusive are your influencers and brand ambassadors?
2. Where do they stand on issues of gender equality and women's empowerment?
3. Do they support other brands which may not subscribe to equality?
4. Do they promote principles of equality, equity and diversity explicitly or implicitly?
5. Do they use language that is inclusive and respectful of all individuals?
6. Do they promote unrealistic standards of beauty by editing their visuals or only showcasing stereotypical beauty standards?
7. Do they challenge gender stereotypes, gender-based discrimination or bias?
8. If you have a series of different influencers, does your company pay them equally and fairly, regardless of gender or other characteristics?
9. If you have diverse influencers, is it a genuine decision or one that helps establish the company's gender equality credentials?
10. Does your company hire influencers based on gender or to promote products or industries that are stereotypically associated with one particular gender (e.g. engage female influencers to promote home cleaning products)?
11. Does your company have a consistent approach to policy to ensure gender balance in influencer marketing?

<sup>10</sup> <https://menews247.com/social-media-and-influencer-marketing-to-change-marketing-expenditure-in-the-middle-east-says-report/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://menews247.com/social-media-and-influencer-marketing-to-change-marketing-expenditure-in-the-middle-east-says-report/>



### Case Study 1

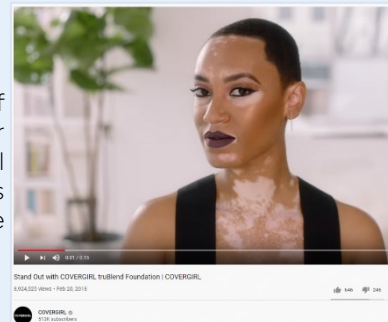
Sephora, the French beauty brand, launched a search for [#SephoraSquad](#), to embrace more diversity, welcoming all influencers, regardless of their followings, which resulted in 15,000 applications and 240,000 testimonials from audiences, vouching for the influencers they follow. Sephora picked influencers who represented a diverse range of ethnicities, ages, gender, nationality, and sexual orientation and who were authentic in their storytelling. Among the chosen brand ambassadors are Non-binary YouTuber Kevin Ninh; Kali Kushner, who communicates about acne positivity; and Aisha Mohamud, a hijab-wearing beauty influencer.



**Source:** Fast Company - Sephora Squad's newest influencers want to change the way we think about beauty, June 2022. <https://www.fastcompany.com/90760429/sephora-squads-newest-influencers-want-to-change-the-way-we-think-about-beauty>

### Case Study 2

In 2018, CoverGirl, the makeup brand, chose a number of influencers with physical conditions including with blind YouTuber Lucy Edwards, model Amy Deanna who became the first CoverGirl ambassador with vitiligo, conveying the message that everyone is beautiful and that there no beauty standards that brands or the advertising industry need to adhere to.



**Source:** Allure - CoverGirl Just Chose Its First Brand Ambassador With Vitiligo, Feb 2018. <https://www.allure.com/story/covergirl-amy-deanna-model-vitiligo>

### Case Study 3

Gap Middle East launched the 'Come As You Are' campaign, celebrating representation, inclusion and optimism. The campaign featured Jessica Smith, a Paralympian and an internationally recognized advocate for body positivity, diversity as well as disability awareness; Ascia, a Kuwaiti American, inspiring business woman and social media influencer; Helen Farmer, a radio show host and philanthropist and Ghalia Amin, Saudi Arabia's first curvy model who promotes body positivity. All four were hand-picked for embracing their true selves and inspirational stories who transcend age, family status, ethnicity, abilities and talent.

**Source:** Middle East Today, Gap Middle East Launches 'Come As You Are' Campaign, Featuring Four Of The Region's Most Inspiring Women, October 2021 <https://blog.middleeasttoday.net/gap-middle-east-launches-come-as-you-are-campaign-featuring-four-of-the-regions-most-inspiring-women/>

To view the video, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZ-OKleO62s>

## 2.4. Gender Balance in Events

Events can be large corporate affairs with thousands of participants and thus provide formidable opportunities to embed gender equality in the planning, implementation and evaluation of events, including summits, forums, roundtable discussions, conferences, luncheons, webinars, workshops, trainings, exhibitions and internal events such as town halls or ghabka get-togethers.

Below a few questions that may be helpful for the communications, PR, marketing and events management teams.

### 1. Ensure a gender lens in the event's theme and sub-themes

While for some events, the gender perspective may not be immediately clear, it is important to reflect how the event's theme is affecting all genders or being impacted by it. Also, analyse if the event could have a positive impact on gender equality, including awareness raising on any gender inequalities or gender-specific call to actions that may be necessary.

#### Example

While COVID-19 is impacting everyone, its effect on women and girls is multiplied by other societal challenges, highlighting multiple gender inequalities.

### 2. Ensure a gender lens on the event's agenda

Gender equality should be reflected in the agenda and objectives, either as part of the overall discussion or by having a dedicated gender focused section during the event.

#### Example

If the event is looking at the role of the private sector to promote a higher uptake of STEM programs among youth, the event may have a dedicated discussion on how to promote STEM degrees among young women, where the uptake may be lowest, also in view of the existing societal barriers

### 3. Ensure gender diversity on stage

Representation matters. Hence, it is important to strive for gender equity in the selection of speakers, moderators and panels. Also, speakers and partners can be selected among others based on their personal and institutional commitment to gender equality. Also, strive to have more women as chairs, trainers and facilitators to fight age-old stereotypes and promote women in leadership positions.

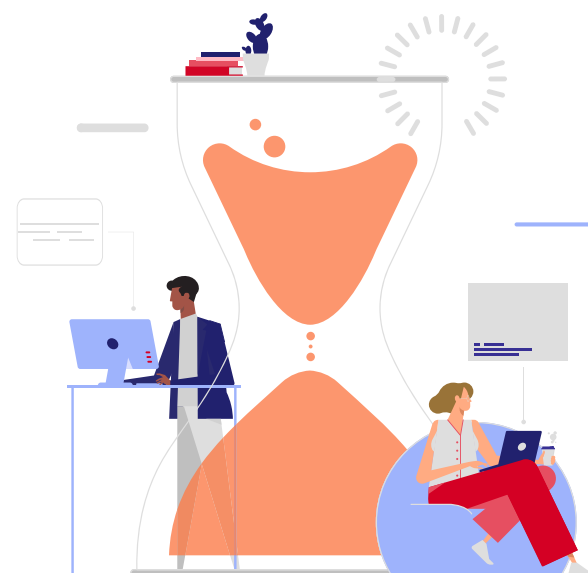
### 4. Strive for a gender-balanced audience

Events provide excellent platforms not only for knowledge sharing but also networking. Hence, reaching out to a gender balanced audience would enable that all genders are represented and benefit from the learnings of such a platform. It is also important to target women from across the corporate ladders, including women in leadership positions.

### 5. Add a gender lens in the event evaluation

Gender equality should be a part of the event monitoring and evaluation matrix and should be set at the planning/conceptualization phase. When assessing post-event feedback forms, it is also important to see if there are any significant gender differences and analyse what triggered those and how they can be addressed.

Below is a step-by-step checklist for gender balanced events management:





## Events Management Checklist

### Theme and sub-theme

- 1 Does this theme/topic/policy area affect everyone the same?
- 2 Are there any gender inequalities?
- 3 Is the theme of the event inclusive of all genders?
- 4 Has the event's theme and all the panels been reviewed with a gender lens?
- 5 If and how this event can contribute to advancing gender equality on the topic?
- 6 Are there any gender-specific strategies/best practices/call to actions to promote?
- 7 What kind of audience are you aiming to attract – is there a gender angle?
- 8 Would there be any barriers to attendance for women?

### Agenda

- 9 Is the gender perspective clear and visible in the event's agenda?
- 10 Are there any obvious gender-specific issues that merit a discussion?
- 11 Are you providing references, reading materials or handouts from gender-related resources or organizations?

### Speakers & Moderators

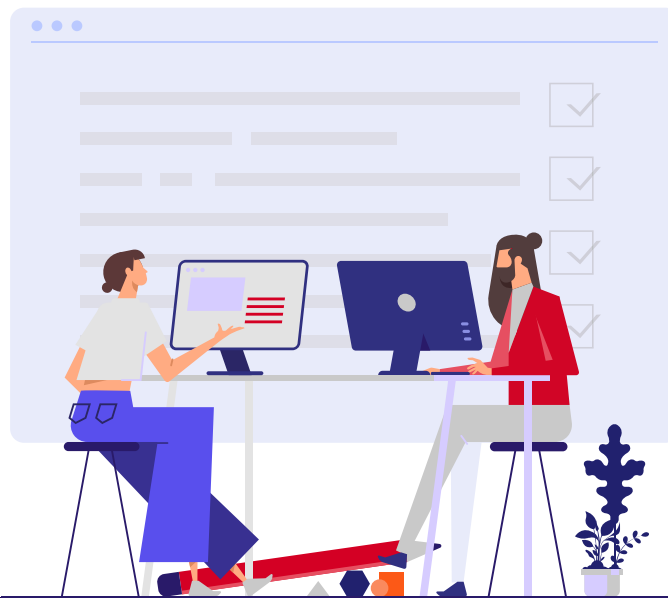
- 12 Are your panels gender-balanced? What is the gender ratio among panellists and moderators?
- 13 Are they diverse and inclusive, including individuals from different age groups, people with disabilities, urban/rural and other forms of social grouping such as ethnic and religious backgrounds?
- 14 Are the female speakers treated equally and given equal speaking slots/responsibility?
- 15 Did you provide the speakers and moderators guidance to avoid gender-specific stereotypes and use gender-neutral language?
- 16 Where do speakers stand on gender equality?
- 17 Do your event partners subscribe to Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) or commit to gender equality?

## Audience

- 18 Are you aiming for a gender balanced audience?
- 19 Are you targeting/inviting women in senior leadership positions?
- 20 How can you facilitate/remove barriers for female participation to the event?

## Event Evaluation

- 21 Did the event help increase awareness of different gender perspectives on the topic?/ Did it contribute to a more inclusive discussion of all viewpoints?
- 22 Were all stakeholders, including women and minority groups enabled to meaningfully and equally contribute to the discussion?
- 23 How gender diverse was the audience?
- 24 Are there any gender-based differences in the post event questionnaire/satisfaction surveys? If so, where are the gaps?
- 25 What would you change to ensure a more gender balanced event in the future?



Similar principles and guidelines apply to internal events, to ensure all employees, both male and female, (1) participate equally to company events (2) have equal exposure and/or opportunities to be in the spotlight and (3) benefit from the knowledge and or networking opportunities that

the gatherings provide. Internal events may include training programs, workshops, team dinners, Ramadan get-togethers, discussions, webinars as well as townhalls and board meetings.

## 2.5. Gender Equality in Corporate Social Responsibility

In the past decades, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved from being a mere legal compliance for companies to a powerful platform to effect positive change, particularly as consumers are increasingly looking for purpose driven brands.

Many have made advancing gender equality their core CSR focus and across the Arab States, a number of gender equality driven campaigns are launched every year to raise public awareness of the importance of gender equality, challenging stereotypes or inspiring young girls that everything is possible.



If companies are looking to embed gender equality into their CSR efforts, the below questions may serve as helpful conversation starters:

1. Is women's empowerment and gender equality a core part of your CSR strategy and overall business strategy?
2. If yes, what initiatives are you launching that are making real impact to advance equality, equity and diversity in your organization and/or your community?
3. Are your efforts sustainable over time as lasting change requires a longer-term commitment?
4. If gender equality is not a core value, do you believe advancing equality will help you better connect with your female consumers, partners, audiences and will ultimately help deliver better business outcomes?

### Case Study 1

In 2018, Al Hamra Real Estate Co., a Kuwaiti real estate company, launched a first-of-its-kind program named 'Sout Afkari', 'The Voice in Your Head', a series of value-driven edutainment episodes aimed at girls aged from 10-18, as part of its CSR commitment to girls' and women's empowerment. Al Hamra brought together prominent Kuwaiti women from all walks of life, female role models and social media influencers to spark healthy conversations on critical issues regarding young girls - beauty, identity, love, self-worth, talent, power, and career and encourage critical thinking on issues pertinent to the Kuwaiti youth and positively influence teen culture. The campaign ran over a number of months and was in partnership with Kuwait's largest private media group and the Grand Cinemas, which helped amplified the series among wider audiences.

**Source:** Kuwait Times, Why Girls'Empowerment matters? December 2018 <https://kuwaittimes.com/why-girls-empowerment-matters/>

### Case Study 2

Nike launched the Middle East's instalment of the inspiring film '[You can't stop us](#)' as part of the month-long campaign dedicated to encouraging women in the region to move their bodies and reach new goals as well as inspiring and motivating athletes across the region to participate in Nike's 30-day calendar of movement. More on the campaign [here](#).

**Source:** Nike official YouTube Account, Victory Swim | Nike, October 2022, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q-rhOvhcPE0>

## 3. PITFALLS TO AVOID

Whilst brands are increasingly shattering gender-based stereotypes and catering to a new era of consumers, companies big and small continue to struggle with gender equality in marketing and advertising, even at the risk of being ‘cancelled’.

Below are a number of pitfalls to avoid as organizations seek to accelerate gender equality and promote positive, equal and diverse marketing practices.

### 3.1. Gender Stereotypes

According to the ‘Gender Stereotyping in Ads in the Gulf’ study, conducted by the UAE’s Zayed University on behalf of the Advertising Business Group, gender stereotypes in advertising still prevail.

For instance, women still account for 83% of models for body products, while only 25% for cars. In ads, women appear in home and family settings 52% of the time and only very occasionally in an office or professional setting (12%). Men, on the other hand are portrayed in professional settings 54% of the time, nearly 5 times more frequently than women. Furthermore, when women are put forward, they are invited to share personal experiences rather than expert opinions.<sup>12</sup>

#### Case study 2 – Company C

Company C launched a campaign in 2019 that drew criticism for allegedly reinforcing gender inequality/stereotypes by marketing their latest car model as “exclusive to men.” Although gender-specific products are well accepted in society, marketing cars specific for men is discriminatory and the ad re-emphasizes gender stereotypes. In turn, Company C apologized for the ad, acknowledging it as a mistake.



#### Case study 1 – Company B

Company B published an ad in the 1950s, promoting a superior dish washer that would ‘get the housewife/mother/woman out of the kitchen sooner.’ The ad reinforces the portrayal of women in domesticated roles and of men being free from the responsibility to shoulder their fair share of housework.

In contrast, a visual artist and photographer from Lebanon launched a photo series named “In a Parallel Universe”, to challenge gender stereotypes, the artist recreates vintage sexist ads, reversing the gender roles, also for a ‘shock effect’.

<sup>12</sup> <https://new.abg-me.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Gender-Stereotyping-in-Ads-in-the-Gulf-ABG-Report-March-2019-1-1.pdf>



### 3.2. Gender Bias

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines unconscious gender bias as ‘unintentional and automatic mental associations based on gender, stemming from traditions, norms, values, culture and/or experience’. These biases enable a quick and likely inaccurate assessment of an individual based on gender, which may translate into biases in workplace, including in the marketing and advertising function and practices.



#### Case study - CPB

UK's CPB advertising agency launched the 'Imagine' campaign, challenging audiences to imagine a world where gender makes no difference. The campaign was launched to mark International Women's Day, promoted by a nationwide survey which found that nearly

40% of school children still think that mummies should look after babies and do all the housework while daddies should go to work. Aimed to break the bias and challenge unequal representation of gender, the campaign invites us all to think of a CEO, nurse or a corporate board member and then see whether we view them as males or females.

Source: CPB Official Website, March 2022 - <https://cpblondon.com/portfolio/international-womens-day-imagine/>

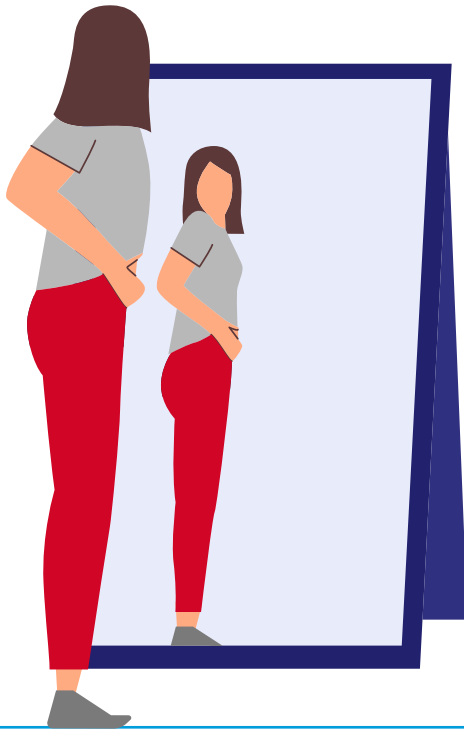
### 3.3. Objectification of Women and Girls

Women continue to be objectified and sexualized in ads. They are often portrayed with unrealistic beauty standards, programming the society to desire attractive women, while intensifying pressure on young girls to fit unrealistic beauty standards.

#### Case Study - Company D

Company D created an ad attempting to attract people to buy used cars. Instead of showcasing a photo of the cars, Company D decided to use sex appeal by using a picture of an attractive young woman with a slogan conveying the underlying message that if a man is okay being with a woman who has had multiple sexual partners, he should not mind buying a car which was driven by multiple owners. Do you think the creative team behind this ad is gender-balanced? And do you think Company D used a gender lens when approving the ad?





### 3.4. Body Shaming

The advertising world has put constant pressure on women and girls in regard to body and health, expecting them to reach unrealistic beauty standards. But with empowered female consumers, body shaming and guilt-inducing ads are no longer welcome. Instead of embracing body shaming and toxicity, brands are increasingly promoting body positivity and inclusivity.

#### Case Study - Company E

Company E was accused of body shaming and promoting sexism in the country, following a social media campaign launched in 2016 to attract more women to the gym.

Following their 'This is no shape for a girl' campaign, the company faced criticism for their body-shaming. The franchise issued an apology and terminated its contract with its ad agency.

## Did You Know?



Dove launched the #ShowUs project, in partnership with Getty Images and the Girlgaze network to shatter beauty stereotypes. Through this initiative, it built the world's largest image library created and curated by women to shatter beauty stereotypes, promote inclusivity and end body shaming. This collection of 10,000 images is available for all media and advertisers to use.

Source: Unilever official website, Project #ShowUs: Dove's disruptive new partnership to shatter stereotypes, May 2019

### 3.5. Glorification of Violence, Harassment or Abuse of Women

Despite society advancements, higher public awareness and government actions, ads promoting violence against women persist. Unfortunately, the ads do not only aim to sell products, but they also send the not-so-subtle message that violence, abuse or harassment against women are alive and thriving in our society.

#### Case Study 1 - Company F

Reinforcing gender stereotypes, firmly placing the wife in house-working duties and glorifying violence against women by clearly portraying a man spanking his wife for not doing 'her job' right by store-testing for fresher coffee, this offensive ad has no place in society. Aiming to boost sales and instill fear in women to buy fresher coffee for their husbands, this ad risks normalizing domestic violence.

### Case Study 2 – Company G

Company G, in collaboration with a well-known Egyptian singer, launched an ad in 2022 to promote a camera feature that the new model is equipped with. In the ad, the singer is seen taking a photo of a woman on the street without her consent, and later inviting her to drive along. Consequently, the ad sparked significant backlash for promoting sexual

harassment of women in a country where about 90% of women between the ages of 18 and 39 in 2019 said that they had been harassed, according to the Arab Barometer.<sup>13</sup> Due to society pressures, Company G was forced to issue an apology, reconfirm that it does not tolerate harassment in all of its forms and ultimately withdrew the ad from its social media platforms.

## 3.6. Gender-Based Belittling or Disrespect

### Case Study - Company H

The original ad of Company H created in the 50's was based on the idea that women were less intelligent and weaker than men. If a bottle could be open by women, then it must be easy and simple to use. The ad was aimed at women and housewives, while showing a woman who seems shocked and excited to find out that she was in fact able to open the bottle. Do you think the ad insults and belittles women?



## 3.7. Sexist Language

There is an unequal, oppositional use of adjectives in advertising. Men characters are often portrayed as strong, bold, active, powerful and with leadership skills, whereas female characters are made to look as weak, vulnerable, pretty or passive.

There is also a discriminatory non-verbal language. Marketing to women often revolves around pink, candy and pastel colors, flowers and pretty things, whereas ads aimed at men use dark, bold, sturdy colors promising strength, power and success.

Collectively, the use of verbal and visual language paints a harmful reality and diminishes the role and contribution of women in society.

### Did You Know?



In March 2021, Unilever sent a strong message by removing the word 'normal' from its beauty and personal care packaging and advertising - a language that perpetuates harmful beauty standards, putting unwelcome pressures on women and girls. Despite the small difference, this is an important milestone, addressing how female audiences are seen and spoken to.

Source: [Unilever official website](#), [Unilever says no to 'normal' with new positive beauty vision, March 2021](#)

### 3.8. Avoid Non-Inclusive Perspectives or Ideas

Non-inclusion is not only against advertising ethics, but it is also not wise, commercially. According to a 2020 study by Microsoft on the effects of inclusion in advertising on Gen Z, 70% of Gen Z consumers have greater trust in brands that embrace diversity in ads and find those more authentic. Importantly, half of them (49%) have stopped buying from a brand that did not represent their values.<sup>14</sup>



## Did You Know?



According to new joint research by the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media and J. Walter Thompson New York, which analyzed more than 2,000 English language commercials from the Cannes Lions archive from 2006 to 2016, focusing only on winning or shortlisted entries in five English-speaking countries across 33 categories from cosmetics to insurance to social causes, revealed that:<sup>15</sup>

(1) Across the ten-year period, women accounted for only about one third of all characters in commercials. 33.9% of characters were women in 2006 and only 36.9% in 2016.

(2) Women consistently receive less screen time in commercials than men. In 2016, 43.6% of commercials featured women on screen for only 20% of less of their duration whereas men get about four times as much screen time as women.

(3) Similarly, women get less speaking time. In 2006, 32.3% of commercials featured women speaking for 20% of less with the figure almost remaining unchanged till 2016. Men get about seven times more speaking time in dialogue than women.

(4) There is also a stark contrast in the content of speech. Men were 29% more likely to contain words associated with power and 28% more likely to contain words linked to achievement. The overall finding was that little has changed in the ten years that the researched focused on.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.arabbarometer.org/2020/03/egypts-sexual-harassment-problem-encouraging-reporting-as-a-possible-remedy-2/>

<sup>14</sup> [Microsoft Advertising - The Psychology of Inclusion and the Effects in Advertising, Gen Z \(azureedge.net\)](https://www.microsoft.com/en-us/industry/2020/03/01/microsoft-advertising-the-psychology-of-inclusion-and-the-effects-in-advertising-gen-z)

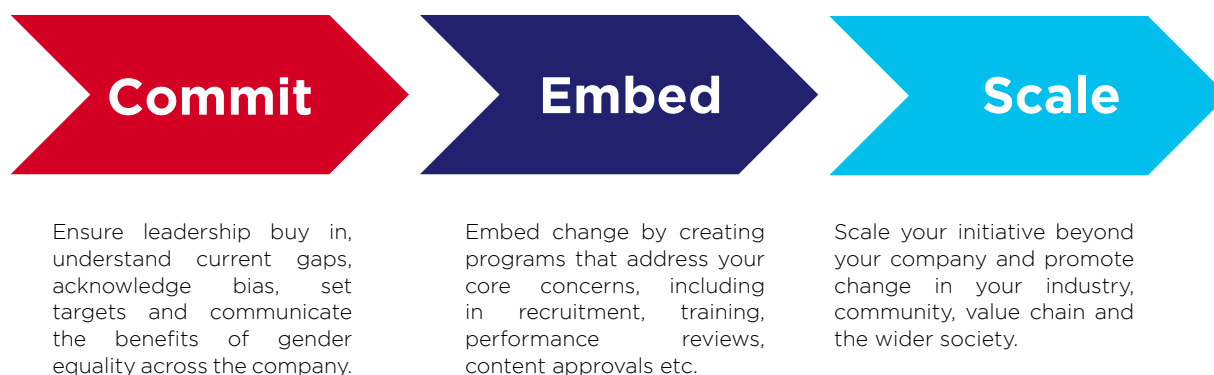
<sup>15</sup> <https://seejane.org/research-informs-empowers/gender-bias-advertising/>

## 4. ACCELERATING GENDER EQUALITY

Whereas part 1 and part 2 of this toolkit provide guidelines on how to advance gender equality in advertising and marketing communications, addressing specific challenges, this section aims to provide a strategic framework on how companies can accelerate gender equality in a more consistent and sustainable manner that often goes beyond marketing.

This section borrows from the World Economic Forum's (WEF) 2021 [toolkit](#) on advancing gender parity, which is based on a three-point strategy namely (1) Commit (2) Embed and (3) Scale.

Below is a WEF's step-by-step pathway that may be helpful for companies seeking to advance parity in a meaningful way:



### 4.1. Commit

Examples of commitment initiatives may include:

- Subscribing to industry guidelines for equality in marketing and advertising.
- Joining the Unstereotype Alliance, a thought and action platform that seeks to eradicate harmful stereotypes in all media and advertising content.
- Identifying gaps, unconscious bias and otherwise gender unequal practices, initiatives, campaigns and messaging in your own organization/team.
- Committing to review and ban sexist language in all internal and external communications, both verbal and visual.
- Revisiting the internal review and approval processes to ensure all campaigns and advertising materials are reviewed by a diverse team with a gender lens.
- Setting specific targets and measurement

- progress, in quantifiable terms e.g. gender balance in the creative processes and/or marketing teams, including at senior levels.

- Explaining the business case for gender equality in marketing and advertising to secure buy in from the leadership team and colleagues across the board.

### 4.2. Embed

Potential initiatives may include:

- Advocating and implementing gender-balanced HR policies from job advertising to recruitment and from training and development to performance review and compensation packages.
- Ensuring diverse teams and women in senior marketing and advertising roles.
- Providing gender-biased and gender equality training to the marketing and advertising teams and potentially across the organization.

### 4.3. Scale

Examples of scaling initiatives may include:

- Hiring agencies and partners committed to gender equality.
- Incorporating a gender equality commitment in the procurement processes, sponsorship agreements, influencer marketing deals and similar.
- Mobilizing gender-balanced change-agents, spokespeople and advocates inside and outside the organization.
- Building partnerships and alliances with like-minded organizations, industry groups with the aim of advancing gender equality in marketing and advertising.
- Launching awareness-raising public campaigns to promote gender equality, including for instance to mark the International Women's Day.
- Supporting and/or funding research and studies that assess and measure the state and progress of gender equality in advertising and marketing.
- Supporting or advocating for government action to ensure gender equality in business, across functions is enshrined in law.
- Promoting positive female role models, spokespeople and experts to positively shape public opinion.
- Promoting industry's best practice to facilitate knowledge exchange.
- Hosting public events and public forums that are in line gender-equality in marketing and advertising guidelines to spark conversations on the topic.
- Publicizing your own commitments to gender equality including as a signatory of WEPEs, Unstereotype Alliance or signatory to other relevant pledges, commitments or similar.

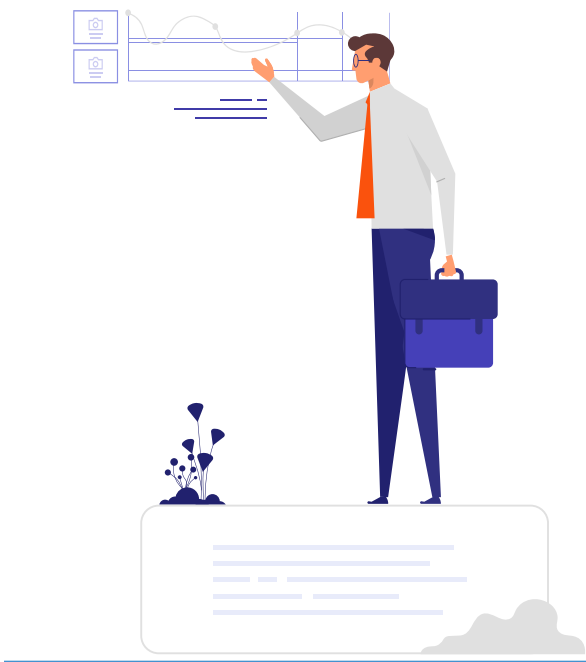


## 4.4. Check List for the of Advertising, Marketing and PR Agencies

Companies can accelerate gender equality through their multiplier factor, by encouraging or demanding equality commitments from their ad agencies and other marketing partners.

Below is a check-list for consideration when selecting your ad partners:

1. Does your agency partner subscribe to gender equality?
2. Does their work reflect their commitment to gender equality?
3. Is gender equality a core value they champion?
4. Is their staff gender-balanced? Are there women female leaders?
5. Is their staff gender-balanced?
6. How gender-balanced are their creative teams?
7. Does it adopt a gender lens when conceptualising, designing or implementing campaigns/creatives/events/research projects?
8. Does it provide gender-equality training to its staff?
9. Are they subscribed to platforms that aim to achieve gender equality WEPs, Unstereotype, industry standards etc.?
10. Have they received any awards for gender balanced campaigns?
11. Is a commitment to gender equality embedded in your tendering/procurement processes?



# 5. SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Below you will find a number of questions for self-reflection to take stock of where your company or your team stands on gender equality. In addition, it also aims to assess whether gender equality is mainstreamed across the organization and/or is considered a business priority and whether it is part of the reporting and monitoring processes.

## 5.1. Gender Equality in Marketing

### Gender equality as a business imperative

Does your company consider gender equality a business priority?

- If yes, how is your team mainstreaming gender across the marketing function?
- If not, do you think gender equality will help strengthen your brand & bottom line?

### Gender equality in product development

- Does your company consider the perspectives & needs of all genders in the product/service development?
- Does your team understand the gender dynamics in your product/service category?
- Does your company consider gender needs when developing new products/services?
- If not, how do you think your products/services could add value to all individuals?

### Is your brand positioning inclusive of all genders?

- If not, why not? Is your brand positioning reinforcing gender or challenging gender stereotypes?

### Is your brand identity gender-sensitive?

- Does your brand identity excludes, marginalizes, objectifies or otherwise alienates women?
- Are your visuals and language gender sensitive?

### Gender equality in promotion

Does your team integrate the voices and perspectives of all genders in your promotional activities?

- How gender-balanced is your marketing team? Are there women leaders?
- Do you adequately hire, train and retain female staff?
- How do you prepare your teams to better serve

the needs of/include perspectives of female consumers?

- How gender-balanced are your marketing materials?
- Does the review process include a gender perspective?
- Do you expect your partners/agencies to be gender-balanced?

### Gender equality in research and measurement processes

- Are your data and research processes free of unconscious gender bias?
- Do you have the right performance metrics that are inclusive of gender?
- Do you reward gender equality?
- Do you measure the percentage of your female consumers, employees and partners?
- Do you identify and work with third parties that are committed to gender equality?





## 5.2. Gender Equality in Advertising & Communications

### Gender equality as a business imperative

- If yes, how is your team mainstreaming gender across the advertising & communications function?
- If not, do you think gender equality will help strengthen your communication & bottom line?

### Equality in perspectives of all genders

- Does your advertising and comms function portray perspectives of women?
- Do you include minority views e.g. seniors, mothers, pregnant women, care-takers, people with disabilities, migrants?
- Is your creative department process embedded with a women's perspectives?
- How gender-balanced are your campaigns/comms materials?
- Do you have diverse spokespeople & news sources - including women & women organizations?
- Do you have a gender-balanced approach to influencer engagement & brand ambassadors?

### Equality in presence of all genders

- How gender-balanced is your advertising/comms team?

- Are there women leaders? Do you adequately hire, train and retain female staff?
- How many females are there in your creative teams?
- Do you expect your advertising/communications partners/agencies to be gender-balanced?

### Equality in personality of all genders

- Does your team portray all genders equally, fairly and respectfully in all advertising products?
- Do you challenge stereotypes and gender biases? Do you portray women equally, fairly and respectfully?
- Do you include diverse and inclusive visuals of people from all backgrounds, ethnicities, religions, etc.?
- Do you use gender-sensitive language?

### Equality in events and activations

- Do you employ a gender lens when organizing events or brand activations?

### Equality in measurement and reporting

- Have you won any awards or otherwise been recognized for gender-balanced creative work?
- How many of your campaigns are gender-balanced?
- How do female audiences rate your commercials?



## 6. BEST PRACTICES FROM AROUND THE REGION

This is a selection of private sector campaigns celebrating gender equality to potentially serve as a source of reference and inspiration. They represent geographic and sectorial diversity from the banking, stock exchange, telecommunications, automotive, airline, real estate, electronics, retail and feminine hygiene industries and brands from Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Bahrain and Lebanon. Many have been launched to mark International Women’s Day or national women’s days.

### 6.1. Top Campaigns

#### 1. Nike – Believe in More campaign

What will they say about you? Maybe they’ll say you showed them what was possible, tackling stereotypes in sports. [#Believeinmore](#) [#JustDolt](#) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F-UO9vMS7AI>

#### 2. Porsche #Drive DefinesHer

Porsche Middle East and Africa led the inspirational #DriveDefinesHer campaign, which aims to support, highlight and celebrate the determination of female leaders across the Gulf region. It sought to shine the spotlight on female leaders and businesswomen in the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait by sharing their inspirational stories, encouraging other women to pursue careers in male-dominated professions. ‘Staying in our comfort zones limits our potential. Female empowerment begins from within.’ - Adwa Al Dakheel, Entrepreneur, Saudi Arabia.

Individual contributions [here](#) and [here](#). More on the campaign [here](#).



## 6.2. Other Campaigns

### 3. Canon Middle East - Women Who Empower program

Canon Middle East launched Women Who Empower, a new program which invited women across creative industries in the Middle East, Central and North Africa, and Turkey regions to showcase their projects, while also highlighting what challenges they face in growing their initiatives.

The theme encourages women to choose to challenge gender bias and inequality and celebrate women's achievements as well. #ChooseToChallenge, #WomenWhoEmpower. Individual woman's contributions A CSR campaign with a call for participation to the public.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zOuGUVulKHs> More on the campaign [here](#).

### 4. Vodafone Egypt collaboration with Mohamed Salah, alongside his daughter Mecca, for International Women's Day – Yes, you can

The inspirational ad raises awareness about the importance of communication with the younger generation, especially young girls, as an integral part to instil fundamental morals and values in our future generation of women. Mohamed Salah gives us a prime example on how fathers should create a dialogue with their daughters, instilling a sense of confidence and self-assurance in them from at a very young age. The inclusion of men particularly celebrities to promote gender equality is also important to convey the message that women's empowerment is not an women's issue and men too have a crucial role to play.

<https://whatwomenwant-mag.com/vodafone-empowering-women-through-%d9%85%d9%86%d8%b5%d8%a9-%d9%81%d9%83%d8%b1%d8%aa%d9%83/>

### 5. Alghanim Diversity Campaign

Interesting campaign that touches upon specific issues such as maternity leave and return to work. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gOUxeaP-qic>

### 6. Zain Group #ChooseToChallenge

To those who have chosen to challenge, to those who have risen from hardships, and to those

who continue to inspire us everyday. Happy International Women's Day to all of the incredible women at Zain, in our lives, and in the world! #ChooseToChallenge (March 2021) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OWfJzRMO2FM>

### 7. Bahrain Bourse – Ring the Bell for Gender Equality

Bahrain Bourse (BHB) virtually rang the bell for gender equality for the third consecutive year in parallel with the celebration of International Women's Day on Monday, 8th March 2021 to demonstrate best practices in the implementation of gender equality across listed companies and other market participants. Many private companies joined Bahrain Bourse including GFH Financial Group, Zain Bahrain, Tamkeen, HSBC, Bahrain National Holding, Ahli United Bank and others. This informative campaign provides interesting insights as to why companies support gender equality and some of the challenges women face in the workplace.

<https://www.youtube.com/hashtag/genderequalitybh>

### 8. Asiacell (Iraq)

The 'You' campaign (Anti - you feminine in Arabic). Because you are Power of life, because you are the power to challenge, and power of achievement...as part of Asiacell Women's Empowerment program. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8PHODQx70VQ> (Add more info)

## 6.3. Other Mentions

### 9. Adidas Middle East| #BEYONDTHE SURFACE

The campaign was launched as Adidas unveiled its new collection of swimwear, designed to be inclusive of women of all ages, ethnicities, abilities, faith, languages or body types. According to a YouGov poll, nearly 90% of women in the Middle East and 32% of women globally do not feel comfortable swimming in public. #BeyondtheSurface aimed to tackle body shaming by building confidence in water and featured a well-known inclusivity activist. Through this innovative campaign, Adidas started a conversation online and offline, inspiring women to overcome their mental barriers and

embrace swimming, which ultimately made the product launch all the more relevant.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPCJLGhMJl>

#### **10. Kotex Arabia | Period or not, #SheCan**

#She Can encourages women to follow their dreams regardless of society barriers. It shares journeys of inspirational women who have broken down barriers in creative industries and beyond – in fashion, sports and music. Women from across the Arab world share their stories on the difficulties they faced, the scepticism they received and the determination they showed to get where they are today, inspiring other women that everything is possible. Indirectly, the campaign also tackles period stigma, which due to shame and/or lack of information often holds women back. The campaign includes a series of powerful stories, which is testament to the brand's commitment to gender equality and women's progress. Videos [here](#).

#### **11. Spinneys | #TheBreadExam #Khabazte**

Spinneys together with the Lebanese Breast Cancer Foundation and the American University of Beirut Medical Center, launched #TheBreadExam, a creative campaign in the context of the October Breast Cancer Awareness Month. The campaign teaches women to perform self-checks disguised as a dough kneading tutorial and detect early signs of breast cancer, tackling cultural taboos without mentioning or showing breasts in line with the cultural norms of the region and in a way that is culturally accessible in the Middle East. #TheBreadExam sends a subtle but powerful message that women's empowerment starts with self-care, while also raising awareness about breast cancer, in a society which often prevents women from talking about their bodies.

The creative CRS public health campaign featured Um Ali, a prominent chef and gynaecologist. Following the success of the #TheBreadExam campaign in Lebanon, prominent food influencers from Turkey, the UK and Germany partnered with local NGOs and developed their own versions of the campaign to mark World Cancer Day.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D3q5nUbWQRQ>

#### **12. MINI Middle East | Circle Around**

Breast cancer is the most common type of

cancer globally according to the World Health Organization and studies indicate that the incidence in the Arab world is fast increasing. To mark breast cancer awareness month, MINI Middle East turned test drives into reminders to check for 'unusual bumps' in the breasts with cards featuring words 'circle around' in MINI cars, which drove around different roundabouts in Dubai for two weeks. The smart campaign with a witty visual pun took their CSR creativity to the next level. Women going for test drives were reminded about the importance of early detection – who drove alongside Dina Aman, a fashion stylist and cancer survivor, who shared her experience on how she beat cancer. Mini showrooms also provided literature about breast cancer to build greater awareness.

<https://www.serviceplan.ae/en/our-work/The-Roundabout-Check.html>

#### **13. Nestlé | “Because You Are a Girl”**

“Nestlé Egypt” launched “Because You Are a Girl” campaign, aiming at achieving gender equality by encouraging girls to pursue their dreams by showcasing successful Egyptian female role models who have challenged stereotypes and overcome challenges. The campaign name was carefully chosen as ‘Because you are a girl’ is a phrase often used to highlight limitations for girls. It therefore aims to challenge mindsets and demonstrate that everyone can achieve their full potential. The campaign was developed by “Nestlé Egypt” in cooperation with the American Chamber of Commerce and “Out of Z Box” company, under the auspices of the National Council for Women and in conjunction with the International Day of the Girl.

<https://www.nestle-mena.com/en/media/pressreleases/allpressreleases/nestle-egypt-launches-because-you-are-girl-campaign>

#### **14. Volkswagen | 100 Simple Joy**

Saudi women won their right to drive in 2019. Following the historical change, brands including automotive companies- showed their support to women, who became their prospective clients overnight. While everyone was talking about the impact of such a move on women's freedom, Volkswagen launched their 100 Simple Joys campaign to highlight the simple joys of the driving experience at a time, while also showing their support to the newly acquired rights. The

campaign consisted of 8 films each focusing on a different positive aspects of driving, subtly promoting driving to women.

[https://www.hugorochette.com/VOLKSWAGEN\\_100-Simple-Joys-of-Driving-integrated](https://www.hugorochette.com/VOLKSWAGEN_100-Simple-Joys-of-Driving-integrated)

<https://www.ogilvy.com/ae/work/100-simple-joys>

## 7. RESOURCES

### UN WOMEN

Covid-19: Promoting positive gender roles in marketing and advertising

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/Library/Publications/2020/COVID-19-Promoting-positive-gender-roles-in-marketing-and-advertising-en.pdf>

### The Unstereotype Alliance

A thought and action platform that seeks to eradicate harmful stereotypes in all media and advertising content.

<https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en>

### Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

A non-profit research organization that researches gender representation in media and advocates for equal representation of women.

<https://seejane.org/>

### The World Economic Forum

Accelerating Gender Parity: A Toolkit

[https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_Accelerating%20Gender%20Parity.pdf](https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Accelerating%20Gender%20Parity.pdf)

### The European Parliament

Sexism in advertising

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2018/614730/EPRS\\_ATA\(2018\)614730\\_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/ATAG/2018/614730/EPRS_ATA(2018)614730_EN.pdf)

### Advertising Business Group

Unveiled the country's first-ever Ethical Guidelines for Gender Portrayal in Advertising and Marketing Communication.

<https://www.abg-me.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/ETHICAL-GUIDELINES.pdf>

### Kantar

WhatWomenWant? Research

<https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/equality/brands-are-failing-to-connect-with-women-meaningfully>

### Zayed University

Analysis of Gender Stereotyping in Gulf-focused Advertising

<https://new.abg-me.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Gender-Stereotyping-in-Ads-in-the-Gulf-ABG-Report-March-2019-1-1.pdf>

### Forbes

Why Gender Equality Matters In Business Success

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesnonprofitcouncil/2020/03/27/why-gender-equality-matters-in-business-success/?sh=4d1baf4669c4>

### UK Parliament

Digitally Altered Body Images Bill

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cbill/bills/58-02/0227/210227.pdf>

### Unilever

Nine ways we're making Unilever a more gender-balanced business

<https://www.unilever.com/news/news-search/2020/nine-ways-we-are-making-unilever-a-more-gender-balanced-business/>

### Dove

Real Beauty campaigns - a worldwide platform campaigns aiming to build self confidence in women and young children.

<https://www.dove.com/us/en/stories/campaigns.html>

### The Mars Company

Three-point strategy to improve gender equality in marketing

<https://www.mars.com/news-and-stories/articles/full-potential-from-gender-equality-platform-to-global-call-to-action>

### De Beers Group

Supporting Gender Equality Through Marketing

Challenging gender stereotypes through our marketing campaigns

<https://www.debeersgroup.com/sustainability-and-ethics/accelerating-equal-opportunity/gender-equality-through-our-marketing>

### CNN

The world's biggest advertiser wants women to produce half of its ads

<https://money.cnn.com/2018/06/18/news/companies/procter-and-gamble-advertising-queen-latifah-katie-couric/index.html>

**The Medium**

25 Outrageously Sexist Vintage Ads, You Won't Believe Existed

Advertisements from an era that sold disgrace

<https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/25-outrageously-sexist-vintage-ads-you-wont-believe-existed-d9e6e234a625>

**Global Citizen**

Reversed Ad Gender Roles Reveal How Sexist Advertising Can Be

A visual artist flipped the gender roles in these chauvinist magazine ads.

<https://www.globalcitizen.org/es/content/artist-sexist-advertising-dv-violence-ads/>

**The BBC**

Nestlé withdraws 'degrading' wife-hunt ad campaign in Morocco

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-43912017>