

Diversity and Inclusion in the Advertising Industry: An Empirical Study

HARISH KUMAR,

Department of School of Management Studies, Graphic Era Hill University,
Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India 248002

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Abstract

The advertising industry is a dynamic and fast-paced field that requires creativity, innovation, and diverse perspectives. However, the industry has long struggled with issues of diversity and inclusion, with reports indicating that women and people of colour are underrepresented in leadership positions and face various forms of discrimination and bias. To address these challenges, this research and review sought to examine the current state of diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry, as well as identify best practices and strategies for promoting greater equity and inclusivity. The findings of the following literature review suggests that while progress has been made in some areas, there is still significant work to be done to promote diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry. Key challenges identified included a lack of representation and visibility for underrepresented groups, a lack of diversity and inclusion training and education, and persistent biases and stereotypes in the industry. Overall, this research underscores the importance of prioritizing diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry and provides actionable insights and strategies for promoting greater equity and inclusivity in this dynamic and important field.

Keywords: *Diversity in Workplace, Advertising Industry, Underrepresented Groups, Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion, Inclusive Hiring, Recruitment Practices.*

Introduction

The advertising industry is a vital and constantly evolving field that relies on creativity, innovation, and diverse perspectives to succeed. However, despite efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace, the industry has struggled to create an environment that is equitable and inclusive for all employees. Women and people of color are underrepresented in leadership positions and face various forms of discrimination and bias, which can limit their opportunities for growth and advancement.

The importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry cannot be overstated. Not only does it support individual employees' growth and development, but it also allows organizations to tap into a broader range of perspectives and insights, which can lead to more innovative and effective campaigns. Furthermore, creating an inclusive workplace culture can attract and retain top talent from a diverse range of backgrounds, which can ultimately benefit the organization's bottom line. Despite the clear benefits of promoting diversity and inclusion, the advertising industry has struggled to make meaningful progress in this area. Women and people of color remain underrepresented in leadership positions, and unconscious biases and stereotypes can limit opportunities for growth and

advancement. Additionally, employees from underrepresented groups may not feel fully included or supported in the workplace, which can lead to a lack of engagement and productivity.

To address these challenges, the following literature review notes the current state of diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry, as well as identify best practices and strategies for promoting greater equity and inclusivity. Ultimately, these findings can help organizations in the advertising industry take concrete steps to promote diversity and inclusion in the workplace. By implementing best practices and strategies that are tailored to their specific needs and challenges, organizations can create more equitable and inclusive teams and foster a workplace culture that supports all employees' growth and development. The study's insights can also inform broader industry efforts to promote diversity and inclusion, ultimately contributing to a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive advertising industry.

Literature Review

Sweeney (2013) begins her study with the premise that personalised adverts implying arrest records do not vary by race. This was accomplished by meticulously generating the scientifically best instance of the pattern—one with names that were demonstrated to be racially identifiable and pseudo-randomly chosen. In summary, this research illustrates that technology may promote biased results, but it can also be used to prevent unintended prejudice. Plane et al., (2017)

Plane et al. (2017), investigates users' perceptions of discrimination in online targeted advertising. The study uses a mixed-methods approach that includes a survey and semi-structured interviews. The results suggest that users perceive discrimination in online targeted advertising, particularly with regard to gender and age. The study highlights the importance of considering user perceptions of discrimination in the design of online advertising systems.

Woodhams et al. (2009) examine gender discrimination in recruitment advertisements in China. The study uses a content analysis approach and examines job advertisements posted in newspapers and on the internet. The results show that gender discrimination is prevalent in Chinese recruitment advertisements, with women being disadvantaged in terms of job requirements, salary, and job status. The study suggests that gender discrimination in recruitment advertisements may contribute to the persistence of gender inequality in China. Anand (2013), investigates gender stereotyping in recruitment advertisements in India. The study uses a content analysis approach and examines job advertisements posted in newspapers and on job portals. The results indicate that gender stereotyping is prevalent in Indian recruitment advertisements, with women being portrayed as homemakers and men being portrayed as breadwinners. The study highlights the need for organizations to adopt gender-neutral recruitment practices and to challenge gender stereotypes in job advertisements.

Kuhn and Shen (2013) use a randomized controlled experiment to investigate whether job ads in China discriminate against women. The study finds evidence that employers are more likely to use male-preferential language in job ads and that female applicants are less likely to

apply for jobs with such language. The authors suggest that this may contribute to the gender wage gap in China. Bennett, Hill, and Daddario (2015) examines racial discrimination in shopping experiences for non-white consumers. The study uses a survey of over 623 consumers and finds that non-white consumers report experiencing more discrimination than white consumers in various shopping contexts. The authors argue that such discrimination can have negative economic and psychological consequences for non-white consumers. Appiah and Saewitz (2016) discuss the lack of diversity in the advertising industry. The article provides an overview of the current state of diversity in the industry and argues that more intentional action is needed to increase diversity among advertising professionals. The authors suggest that improving diversity in the industry can lead to more effective advertising campaigns and a better understanding of diverse consumer markets.

Bendick, Egan, and Lanier (2010) provide a business case for diversity and caution against the practice of matching employees to customers based on demographic characteristics. They argue that this approach can reinforce stereotypes and limit opportunities for both employees and customers. They also found that a poorly designed business rationale for diversification absurdly transformed into unfair hiring practises in both situations studied, beginning with stereotype based segregation in job assignments and expanding to subsequent inequity in other workplace consequences such as pay and promotions. The authors state that such practises unjustly impede job chances for women and people of colour and also fail to develop consumer connections and sales.

García-González and Pinero-Otera (2011) examine the representation of women in the advertising production sector in Galicia, Spain. The primary goal was to investigate the position of women in the Galician marketing business, as well as female engagement in ad production. This research, conducted from a production standpoint, also compares the condition of women in Galician advertising companies to the overall state of women working in the nationwide advertising business. They find that women are underrepresented in decision-making positions and that gender stereotypes are prevalent in the sector. Prieler, Kohlbacher, Hagiwara, and Arima (2008) investigate the representation of older people in Japanese television advertising. They find that older people are underrepresented and often portrayed in stereotypical roles. Janssens (2016) explores sex-role stereotyping and sex discrimination regulation in advertising in Belgium. She finds that while regulations have been put in place to combat discrimination, they are not always effectively enforced, and stereotypes and discrimination continue to persist. Esteves and Resende (2013) discuss competitive targeted advertising with price discrimination. They examine the impact of advertising on consumers' price sensitivity and firms' pricing strategies, and explore the implications of targeted advertising on welfare and competition.

Objective of the Study

To investigate about diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry

Methodology

The present study is based on a survey conducted with a structured questionnaire. In the analysis, there were 207 participants who took part. To identify the results, statistical

techniques such as mean and t-test were employed. The research employed a convenience sampling method, where participants were selected based on their availability and accessibility.

Finding of the study

Table 1 provides information on the gender distribution of participants, where males account for 32.37%, females account for 33.33% and prefer not to say account for 34.30%. The table also presents data of the race/ethnicity of participants, where White/Caucasian make up 16.91%, Black/African American make up 18.84%, Asian/Pacific Islander make up 23.67%, Native American/Alaskan Native make up 15.94% and other make up 24.64%. The table also illustrates the religion or belief system of the participants, where Christianity account for 16.91%, Islam account for 18.84%, Judaism account for 23.67%, Hinduism account for 14.01%, Buddhism accounts for 15.94% and Others accounts for 10.63%. The table further indicates how many participants felt excluded or marginalized in the advertising industry, where 39.13% of them said yes, 28.05% said no, 32.37% preferred not to say.

Table 1 Participant's Details

Variable	No. of respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	67	32.37%
Female	69	33.33%
Prefer not to say	71	34.30%
Total	207	100%
Race/ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	35	16.91%
Black/African American	39	18.84%
Asian/Pacific Islander	49	23.67%
Native American/Alaskan Native	33	15.94%
Other (please specify)	51	24.64%
Total	207	100%
Religion or belief system		
Christianity	35	16.91%

Islam	39	18.84%
Judaism	49	23.67%
Hinduism	29	14.01%
Buddhism	33	15.94%
Other (please specify)	22	10.63%
Total	207	100%
Have you ever felt excluded or marginalized in the advertising industry		
Yes	81	39.13%
No	59	28.50%
Prefer not to say	67	32.37%
Total	207	100%

Table 1 Diversity and Inclusion in the Advertising Industry

Serial No.	Statement of Survey	Mean Value	t-Value	Sig.
1.	The inclusion of people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups in advertising can help to create a more accepting and tolerant society.	4.23	9.396	0.000
2.	Inclusive advertising can help break down societal barriers and promote a sense of community among diverse groups of people.	4.09	7.142	0.000
3.	The advertising industry should prioritize diversity in hiring practices to create opportunities for underrepresented groups to succeed.	4.22	8.500	0.000
4.	The advertising industry must be conscious of cultural appropriation, offensive stereotypes, and offensive language.	4.02	5.243	0.000
5.	Companies need to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion from the top-down.	4.33	8.783	0.000
6.	Diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry are essential for creating campaigns that resonate with a broader audience.	4.45	11.337	0.000

7.	The importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry may be overstated.	3.71	2.604	0.005
8.	Inclusive marketing campaigns are more likely to be well-received by the public.	4.25	10.286	0.000
9.	The advertising industry may be a powerful force for change and helping to promote equality by promoting diversity and inclusion.	3.93	5.612	0.000
10.	Diverse representation in advertising campaigns helps to promote social and cultural awareness.	4.37	11.427	0.000

Table1 displays the Mean values for statement for studying “diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry”, looking at the mean scores, the highest mean score is gained by the statement “Diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry are essential for creating campaigns that resonate with a broader audience”, the mean score of 4.45,” next statement is “Diverse representation in advertising campaigns helps to promote social and cultural awareness” has the mean score of 4.37. Top-down approach is also found to be responsible for diversity and inclusion as shown in statement “Companies need to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion from the top-down” having the mean value of 4.33. Another advantage of diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry is, “Inclusive marketing campaigns are more likely to be well-received by the public” for which the mean score is 4.25, statement “The inclusion of people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and other marginalized groups in advertising can help to create a more accepting and tolerant society” shows the mean value of 4.23, mean value of 4.22 is scored by statement “The advertising industry should prioritize diversity in hiring practices to create opportunities for underrepresented groups to succeed”. “Inclusive advertising can help break down societal barriers and promote a sense of community among diverse groups of people” mean score is 4.09. The statement “The advertising industry must be conscious of cultural appropriation, offensive stereotypes, and offensive language” shows the mean value of 4.02. The last two statements are in lowest range, “The advertising industry can be a powerful force for change and helping to promote equality by promoting diversity and inclusion” mean value of 3.93, statement “The importance of promoting diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry may be overstated” has the mean value of 3.71. T-value of every statement in context of the diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry, because t-value statements are found to be significance & positive value also less than 0.05.

Conclusion

Promoting diversity and inclusion in the advertising industry is crucial for creating a more equitable and just society. By ensuring that diverse voices are heard and represented in advertising campaigns, we can help to break down stereotypes, challenge biases, and foster greater understanding and acceptance of people from different backgrounds. Studies like the ones mentioned above have shown that diversity and inclusion in the workplace can lead to increased innovation, productivity, and profitability, as well as better employee engagement

and retention. Therefore, it is essential for companies in the advertising industry to prioritize diversity and inclusion efforts to not only do the right thing but also improve their bottom line.

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