

The quick guide to

REPRESENTING REAL PEOPLE IN ADS

About this fact sheet

This fact sheet has been adapted from the full report *Representing Real People in Ads*, written by Kantar for Women's Health Victoria.

This report draws from Kantar's LINK Database, which encompasses over 2,500 advertisements tested across various industries and clients. Australian ads from 2017 to 2022 were selected from Kantar LINK's testing. Selected ads were culturally and commercially significant.

Out of this report comes some frameworks advertisers can use to measure existing campaigns for gender equality and effectiveness, as well as some case studies that help illustrate how these frameworks can be used practically.

The Next Steps section of this fact sheet focus on setting up workplaces to support employees to implement these frameworks into future campaigns.

Applying the 3P's For Achieving Progressive Portrayals in Ads

Developed by the Unstereotype Alliance and utilised by Kantar, the 3Ps framework offers a set of easily applicable guidelines for all marketing communications, with the aim of fostering progressive portrayals of every individual. At every stage of the communication development process, from defining the brand's target audience to crafting creative and media briefs, conducting research, casting actors, selecting the creative team, obtaining casting approval, pre- and post-communications testing, director treatment, pre- and post-production, and media selection, the 3Ps should be taken into careful consideration.



Tourism New Zealand - Best Kept Secret



Blackmores - Good Health Changes Everything



Centrum - Live Colourful

Presence

Presence involves portraying a diverse spectrum of human identities in advertising, capturing the intricate tapestry of our real-world culture and society.

Presence includes:

1. Featuring the inclusion of men and women equally – as well as people of different identities, e.g., trans men and women, and non-binary people
2. The portrayal of different races and ethnicities
3. People of different ages
4. People with accessibility issues and needs

Personality

Personality adds depth to the portrayal of gender, constituting a multifaceted concept that goes beyond mere presence. It encompasses a variety of factors:

1. The context and setting of their presence
2. The nature of casting – from costume to body type to what the character depicts in culture
3. The conversation between or around the characters
4. The archetype or stereotype that the persona symbolises or perpetuates



Google - Helping You Help Them Aussie Rules



Google x Baker Boy - Helping You Help Them



Westpac - Separation

Perspective

The last 'P' in progression is Perspective, rooted in practicality and integrity, reinforcing endeavors for genuine advancement rather than mere token gestures or surface-level portrayals. Perspective is comprehensive and pragmatic, encompassing character creation, subject matter, and the ethical stance of the ad creators.

Perspective is:

1. Whose stories and voices are being told?
2. How are they told? How are their perspectives amplified?
3. Are they the dominant narratives within a society?
4. Are diverse perspectives being represented behind-the-scenes as well – are women; women of colour; people from diverse backgrounds and orientations included in decision-making roles, are stories relevant and authentic to those experiencing them?



Youtube Kids



Cetaphil - Skin Loves You



Google - Helping You Help Them

Three Pathways to Progressive Portrayal

The journey towards accomplishing better representation is paved by three key steps for marketers when it comes to advertising. Kantar have enumerated them as 3 Pathways to Progressive Portrayal:

1. Progression through realism: Modibodi

Progression through realism is about being true to reality, solving for real problems, and not shying away from portraying humans as they truly are.



Modibodi - Lifechanging Apparel

In 2020, Modibodi launched their 'The New Way To Period' campaign, which pushed the boundaries of period product advertising due to the portrayal of menstrual blood (as opposed to the blue dye used in traditional advertising up until then), and the ad was subsequently banned. After much push-back, this decision was reversed. But the ad itself was revolutionary, and the brand has continued to break taboos around other topics like masturbation and incontinence.

Their latest ad campaign, 'Lifechanging Apparel', features women from a variety of backgrounds, body types, and identities – again, centring around the concept of real bodies and real experiences, speaking directly to the lives and sentiments of their target consumers.

When Modibodi first launched in the market, the brand was an aggressive challenger to 'traditional' feminine products on the market (i.e., pads and tampons). At that stage, only 4% of women in Australia were using 'non-traditional' period products¹. Over the past several years, the category was forced to keep up with the disruption of challenger brands like Modibodi, with 17% of consumers in 2021 reported having using non-traditional products², and key players like Libra and UBK launching their own line of reusable period underwear – and hitting the mainstream.

This translates to improvements in their long-term brand equity measures of Meaning, Difference and Salience – where the brand's Meaningfulness metrics (which measures how well the brand is perceived to meets consumers' needs, and a measurement of brand love/affinity) have jumped by 17 points in 2021³, and built greater difference for the brand in being unique and a trendsetter compared to the year prior.

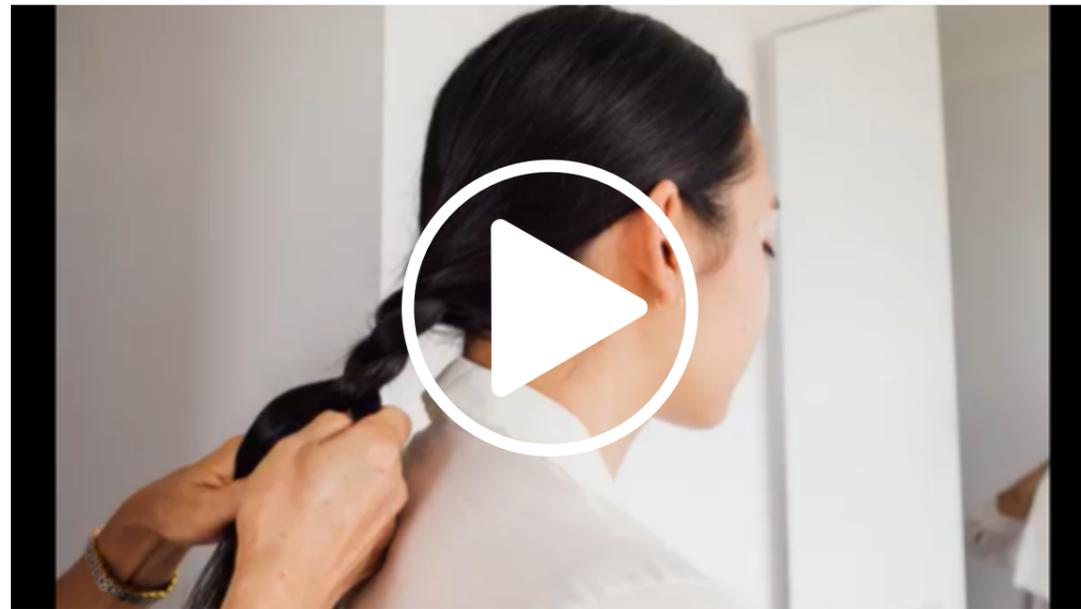
Their 2020 campaign may have been seen as bold and contentious at the time, but it's clearly paid off in the long run, rebounding the brand to positive growth in brand power over the years.

A take away from Modibodi is that even though bodily representation impedes enjoyment in Australia, when contextualised meaningfully to reflect human truths in a real and honest way within the category, it can be appealing and effective.

^{1, 21, 22} Kantar Brand Health Tracking Data, 2021.

2. Progression through cultural integrity: Airbnb

Progression through cultural integrity is about being truthful, genuine, and authentic to the subtle realities, nuances, and complexities of cultural differences – depicting and sharing their stories as they are, as opposed to trying to mould them to fit a certain societal expectation or ideal.



Airbnb - Sweet Child O'Mine

In 2021, Airbnb reported its strongest ever fourth quarter results – which Airbnb's CFO attributes to their commitment and dedication to brand building, and delivering impactful, considered creative efforts¹. In markets like the US and France, the campaign delivered a significant increase in traffic of +20%, well ahead of non-campaign countries².

In France, the brand's Power score jumped +44 points in 2 years, and almost doubled in the US in the same time frame³. Plus, Airbnb as a brand positions itself strongly by building and achieving Difference in both its unique product offering, and in their brand and marketing comms.

Airbnb demonstrates that this purpose-driven strategy not only delivers short-term marketing impact, but ultimately contributes to on-going brand love and trust among consumers, paving the way for continued success.

Airbnb Global Revenue (\$M)

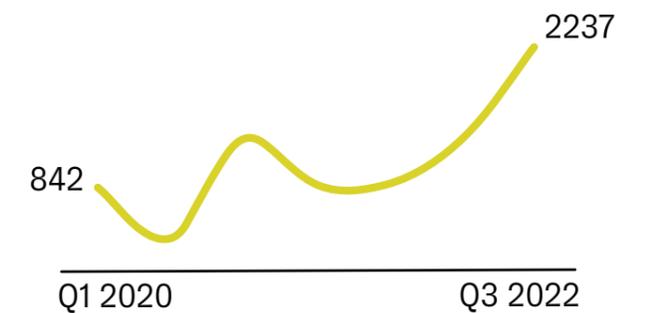


Figure 3.2.1. Airbnb's Global Revenue (2021)

1, 27 Kyriakidi, M, 'Modern marketing dilemmas - Where does performance marketing meet brand building?', Kantar, 2022, <https://www.kantar.com/inspiration/brands/modern-marketing-dilemmas-where-does-performance-marketing-meet-brand-building>.

3. Progression through real people: Suncorp

Progression through real people is about showing true events, true heroes and integrating them into the larger discourse of the brand and the community. It makes for great storytelling and celebrates the enduring spirit of the Aussie.



Suncorp - The Suncorp Spirit

Progression through real people is about showing true events, true heroes and integrating them into the larger discourse of the brand and the community. It makes for great storytelling and celebrates the enduring spirit of the Aussie.

Suncorp is a brand that has traditionally been attributed to values such as liveliness, energy, and joy - essentially 'sunny' Suncorp. In recent years, the brand sought to reposition itself more towards nurturance, thoughtfulness, and warmth, as an embodiment of the brand's 100-year heritage of being there for customers in moments that matter the most. 'The Suncorp Spirit' campaign platform utilises stories of real people and real customers, and the start of Suncorp leaning back into the heritage of the brand and its emotional connection to consumers.

Through the story of Barbara and other Suncorp team members, the campaign embodied Suncorp's commitment to being there for customers, especially when they needed it most. It brought to life the brand's dedication and commitment, told in a genuine and moving way, which later contributed a positive uplift to brand health in Q2 of 2020². More importantly, this style of advertising had greater positive impact on the brand's long-term brand positioning, compared to the previous style of 'Sunny' ads that favoured short-term cut-through and impact ³.

Staying true to the brand platform, Suncorp also released 'The Drive' – a heart-warming story following a young girl's aspirations to play netball - shared by her family. The story was inspired by real-life netball player Lara Dunkley, whose parents travelled over 2000km a week driving her to and from training and games⁴. Again, the campaign leans on the moving stories of real people and enriches Suncorp's values and positioning further. The ad drove significant campaign uplift across spontaneous awareness and brand consideration (to a significantly higher degree compared to AU/NZ media impact norms)⁵.

1 Wilkinson, Z, 'Suncorp reveals brand platform 'That's the Suncorp Spirit'', 2020, <https://mumbrella.com.au/suncorp-reveals-brand-platform-thats-the-suncorp-spirit-620501>.

2 Kantar Brand Health Tracking Data, 2021.

3 Kantar Brand Health Tracking Data, 2021.

4 B&T Magazine, 'Suncorp releases new netball campaign, The Drive, via Leo Burnett', 2021, <https://www.bandt.com.au/suncorp-releases-new-netball-campaign-the-drive-via-leo-burnett/>

5 Kantar Brand Health Tracking Data, 2021.

Next steps

INVOLVE

Inclusive cultures breed inclusive practices

Ensure diversity around the table during ideation and creation

Encourage free thinking and challenging the status quo

IDENTIFY

Pick the segments you wish to represent in the campaign

Keep the casting as inclusive as possible

INFUSE

Inclusive storytelling and scripts lead to progressive and powerful representation

INTERGRATE

Make the characters own the story and not just be part of the fixtures on the set

INCLUDE

Create inclusive ripples

Keep expanding the ambit of representation to the fringes



Involve

Is a 2-stage process that starts before the shoot and then continues till the deployment of the content.

Before the shoot:

- Gather insights into the views of the audience and society as a whole
- Understand the target market – what resonates with them? What does inclusion mean to them?
- Understand the people being represented for authentic portrayal

After the shoot:

- Confirm that you've achieved the inclusion that you intended
- Check that you've achieved progressive presence
- Double check for inadvertent stereotypes

And always, ensure you have a diverse team and/or that you solicit diverse views.



Identify

People don't have to look like someone or share all their experiences to engage with them. The key is empathy - powerful stories, told well, resonate whoever plays the main character.

Using under-represented groups won't hold your advertising back – doing it well adds to the power. Diversity represents a much broader canvas than just issue-based campaigns.



Infuse & Intergrate

Australian advertising is characterised by the use of human stories to elevate and integrate the product proposition into a singular narrative. In a nutshell, they feature the human insight at the heart of the execution, as opposed to the product. This gives advertisers in Australia a unique opportunity to create stories that not just sell the brand idea but at the same time have the potential to integrate diverse perspectives.



Include

Create inclusive ripples consistently. This is a never-ending job and hence there is a need to keep expanding the ambit of representation to the fringes.

The important thing to acknowledge is that there are steps in the right direction. While there is still space to grow, we mustn't take our foot off the pedal. Little by little, over consistent and ongoing dedication and commitment, we must continue the drive towards more progressive advertising within Australia.

This quick guide has been adapted from the report *'Representing Representing Real People in Ads: How to develop progressive, genuine and authentic advertising with a strong commercial impact'*

Read the full report

KANTAR | shEqual

Kantar and shEqual acknowledges the traditional custodians of the lands and waters across Victoria and pays our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise that sovereignty was never ceded and that we are beneficiaries of stolen land and dispossession, which began over 200 years ago and continues today.



Women's Health Victoria acknowledges the support of the Victorian Government