Racial and Ethnic Stereotyping in Ads

A Call for Evidence and Literature Review

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Executive Summary

The ASA has a strong track record of taking action against ads that are likely to cause serious or widespread offence on the grounds of race and ethnicity. It also has a responsibility to prevent harm arising from advertising, particularly to those who share a protected characteristic.

The ASA has been reflecting on what more can be done to address factors that cause racial and ethnic minorities to experience disproportionately adverse outcomes in different aspects of their lives following the killing of George Floyd in 2020. As a proactive regulator, the ASA must ensure that we are aware of how societal values and prevailing standards are constantly evolving and what this means for our interpretation and application of the advertising rules.

The ASA therefore undertook a review of its past decisions in cases arising from complaints about depictions of race and ethnicity, which were received between January 2013 and June 2020. The review identified a number of important issues that consumers raised, such as the depiction and portrayal, or objectification and sexualisation, of racial and ethnic minorities in ads.

In order to explore these issues further, and as part of the ASA's wider project on racial and ethnic stereotyping in ads, we initiated a Call for Evidence to hear views from stakeholders and members of the public. We also conducted a literature review to identify the key themes and debates within the context of advertising in the UK. It is important to note that while exploring previously identified issues further was an initial guide for the Call for Evidence and Literature Review, we were also receptive to new ideas or issues identified where relevant to our work.

This report summarises the findings from the Call for Evidence, before turning to a review of existing academic literature, both of which explore issues relating to racial and ethnic stereotyping in advertising. While they are both discrete pieces of work and the findings can be read independently of each other, they are strengthened when read in conjunction with one another in this report, particularly due to the number of common themes found.

Key Findings

- Racial and ethnic minorities are frequently depicted in a consistent manner, which could also be seen to be stereotypical, lack nuance or be inaccurate. There are important differences in how racial and ethnic minorities are each individually or comparatively portrayed, and which could have the potential for different real-life outcomes.

- Issues relating to the depiction and portrayal of racial and ethnic minorities can often overlap and are not easily separated, particularly due to the nuance or complexity of the issue involved. There is the potential for these issues to be further conflated or reinforced when other issues, such as objectification and sexualisation, are examined in conjunction with one another. These issues further intersect with other issues relating to a consumer's identity or beliefs, such as their gender, religion, culture or class.

- Evidence from academic sources and consumer research suggests the use of stereotypes, either in relation to race and ethnicity or more generally, can influence people's attitudes towards themselves and others. The use of racial and ethnic stereotypes in advertising has the potential impact to cause serious or widespread offence to consumers, or harm to consumers or society more generally.

- The use of racial and ethnic stereotypes in advertising, even when being used to challenge or dispel negative connotations or ideas, or when presented in a humorous manner, could still have the potential to cause serious or widespread offence or harm to consumers.

- Objectification and sexualisation within advertising, and particularly when depicting those from a racial or ethnic background, could have the potential to cause harm to consumers.

- Diversity and inclusion of racial and ethnic minorities in ads is seen to be important, and in particular, ensuring that any representations are shown to be authentic. The evidence suggests this not only brings clear benefits to consumers, but there is also a commercial basis for advertisers to do so.

The Call for Evidence and the Literature Review identified a number of key themes and issues which are important to consumers and advertising more generally; when drawing these issues together, the report also seeks to offer conclusions where they may be considered to be helpful, as well as, where relevant, noting issues which may benefit from further exploration. These findings will contribute to the ASA's wider project on racial and ethnic stereotyping in ads.

In addition, CAP & BCAP have agreed to have regard to the findings from the Call for Evidence and the Literature Review in drawing up, in 2022, guidance for advertising practitioners to help prevent any inadvertent harm or offence arising from the portrayal of race or ethnicity in ads.

Call for Evidence

Aims

The primary aim of the Call for Evidence was to seek views from a variety of stakeholders to help us establish whether and, if so, to what extent racial and ethnic stereotypes, when featured in ads, may contribute to real world harms, for example, unequal outcomes for different racial and ethnic groups. The Call for Evidence additionally sought to explore how the issues of objectification and sexualisation relate to race or ethnicity in advertising, how particular cultures, or racial and ethnic groups with particular religious affiliations, are portrayed in advertising, and how the use of humour relates to race or ethnicity in advertising.

The Call for Evidence was open for six weeks, and recognising that evidence can take many forms, stakeholders were able to submit existing evidence, secondary analysis, bespoke research or examples, and both quantitative and qualitative evidence could be submitted. The Call for Evidence also welcomed the personal observations or views of members of the public and asked whether, and if so how, this type of advertising had affected them.

Overview

We received four submissions from organisations and three submissions from members of the public. We assessed all submissions we received and they fed into our overall understanding of the issues. Where submissions received were helpful to the overall debate or understanding of the issues, even when not focused on the UK, this report has included them where appropriate, or where the conclusions reached in the sources could be considered to also apply to UK society.

We also received two submissions from members of the public which related to a specific ad and which were logged as new complaints. Those two submissions are not included in this report but will contribute to the ASA's overall racial and ethnic stereotyping project as part of the casework strand.

Depiction, Portrayal and Representation of Racial and Ethnic Groups in Advertising

One stakeholder argued that it is not only about representation in ads, but it is also important "the way in which people of certain racial or ethnic backgrounds are portrayed".[1] Another stakeholder highlighted several advertising industry reports as part of their submission, including those by Channel 4 and Lloyds Banking Group. These reports included statistics in relation to the depiction, portrayal and representation of racial and ethnic minorities in ads, such as a third of Black people and a third of South Asian people believed their group had been represented in a tokenistic way, and over a quarter of each racial and ethnic group had seen a stereotypical portrayal of their group in TV ads.[2] Indeed, this was reflected in another report which stated "42% of Black respondents think advertisers don't do enough to recognise their culture and 29% feel that they're negatively stereotyped".[3]

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[1] The Guide Association (Girlguiding).

[2] Channel 4, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Mirror on the Industry: How Diverse and Inclusive is TV Advertising in 2019?", 2019, 31-32.

[3] Lloyds Banking Group, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Ethnicity in Advertising Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?", 2018, 4; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/lloyds_banking_group-ethnicity_in_advertising.pdf

This was also reflected in the view of one member of the public, who explained they were a woman of British Chinese descent, and who stated "as young Asian children growing up in the west and absorbing its culture, we watched the impotent Asian stooges with exaggerated accents, and hyper-sexualised Asian temptresses, wondering where we fitted in, and why our characters seemed to lack the nuance of their White leads".[4] Indeed, another report found that 59% of Asian respondents feel ads use racial stereotypes, or there is a lack of Black and Asian professionals, such as doctors, dentists or lawyers, in ads.[5]

A report referenced by one stakeholder found that since 2015, the percentage of people feeling inaccurately portrayed in advertising had reduced, but it highlighted that only 7% of lead roles are played by someone from a racial or ethnic minority background.[6] Another report noted that representation in ads had increased since their own previous study, but that there were disparities between White people and people with a racial or ethnic minority background in the roles in which they were depicted. The report highlighted that White people were more likely to be shown in employment or as being 'smart', compared with people from a minority racial or ethnic background. People from a minority racial or ethnic background were more likely to be depicted in a gym and were less likely to be shown in a restaurant or bar.[7]

One stakeholder referenced a report into how brand advertising shaped Dutch society, which took a historical approach when considering ads. While this was not in the context of advertising in the UK, the authors questioned, in addition to the accuracy of how Black people are portrayed in ads, the types of roles they are placed in. In the ads they studied, they noticed that Black people were often depicted in a service role such as an elevator operator, or were shown cleaning or carrying heavy objects. This was in contrast to how White people were depicted, who were often shown as merchants, consumers or as part of the wealthy middle class.[8] The roles in which racial and ethnic minorities are depicted in ads, and in a comparative manner to others, is an important issue, and we note the findings of this report are also reflected in previous sources which reference advertising in the UK.

The issues of depiction, portrayal and representation appear to overlap in the submissions received and are not easily separated. Indeed, one stakeholder highlighted that dark-skinned Black women are rarely represented in the media, and "not only is there a lack of Black people in the media but a lack of Black women. I'd go further to say, a lack of dark-skinned Black women".[9] They further argued that "when the media does show Black women, they, in some way, meet European beauty standards - lighter skin, looser curls, European facial features. When it's a dark-skinned Black woman, the portrayal is negative".[10]

We also received two submissions from members of the public who either stated they welcomed the "richness and diversity of Britain" or that they were a "strong supporter of racial

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[4] Member of the public (a).

[5] Credos, via The Advertising Association, 2014, "The Whole Picture: How Advertising Portrays a Diverse Britain", 13; https://adassoc.org.uk/credos/the-whole-picture-how-advertising-portrays-a-diverse-britain

[6] Lloyds Banking Group, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Ethnicity in Advertising Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?", 2018, 4; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/lloyds_banking_group-ethnicity_in_advertising.pdf

[7] Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Bias and Inclusion in Advertising: An Analysis of 2019 Cannes Lions Work", 2020, 3 & 8; https://seejane.org/wp-content/uploads/bias-and-inclusion-in-advertising-cannes-lions.pdf

[8] Inger Leermans & Jan Hein Furnée i.s.m Melvin Wevers, via Stichting Reclame Code, "Het Beeld van Nederland Hoe Merkreclames onze Samenleving Hebben Gevormd". Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[9] The Guide Association (Girlguiding).

[10] *Ibid.*

integration".[11] They both however expressed their concerns about diversity and inclusion in ads.

One member of the public, who stated they were of Chinese/Malaysian heritage, believed that the depiction of different ethnicities in ads was not representative of the UK population. They stated that there was either a small number or no Chinese people featured in TV ads in the UK, and what they called the 'default' representation was to feature large numbers of Black people or Mixed-race families. They believed that depicting this type of family, and "because of their massive overuse, it has become, ironically, stereotypical and racist in its own way. In trying to avoid accusations of racism and offence, advertisers have simply gone to the other extreme and portray a racial mix that in no way represents the actual ethnic make-up of the UK".[12] The second member of the public believed there was a lack of diversity in print and television ads and that ads should reflect an accurate picture of society. They believed there was an over-representation of some ethnicities in ads, specifically Afro-Caribbean and Asian people compared to White people, and which was not in proportion to their respective population numbers within the UK.[13]

The Real-Life Impact of Stereotypes

One report, highlighted by a stakeholder, argued that "advertisements communicate a very limited repertoire of images and situations, present those stereotype[d] images as 'normal', as 'natural', as 'good', as the norm. Just the constant repetition of those stereotypical standard images and leaving [out] the alternative roles and situations […] makes it difficult for many consumers to imagine for themselves how they could organise their own lives differently".[14]

One stakeholder also stated "much like gender stereotypes, ethnic and racial stereotypes are normalised and can be seen in our everyday lives, from the words we hear to the images we consume. Often they can be subtle, but this does not mean that they are any less harmful than more overt forms of racism. These stereotypes can have a negative impact on people of colour and their mental wellbeing".[15] They further argued that stereotypes can have an influence on the attitudes of consumers, and the use of harmful stereotypes or depictions cause consumers to think or act differently towards others, noting that their own survey showed that 24% of girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 had experienced bullying because of their ethnicity or religion.[16]

The same stakeholder included a quote from an advocate, a member of the panel group of girls and young women aged between 14 and 25 who lead the direction for the stakeholder's advocacy and research, who stated that "racial and ethnic stereotypes can make those who are part of that race or ethnicity misrepresented, offended, or dehumanised".[17] This view was reflected in a report by another stakeholder which stated that "a specific commercial form of differentiation is what we call commodification: reducing people to products ('commodities'). In these kinds of advertisements people are stripped of their

[11] Member of the public (b) and Member of the public (c) respectively.

[12] Member of the public (c). Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[13] Member of the public (b). Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[14] Inger Leermans & Jan Hein Furnée i.s.m Melvin Wevers, via Stichting Reclame Code, "Het Beeld van Nederland Hoe Merkreclames onze Samenleving Hebben Gevormd". Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[15] The Guide Association (Girlguiding).

[16] *Ibid.*, 2019 Girls' Attitudes Survey.

[17] *Ibid.*

human characteristics - dehumanised and made into a saleable product [and these] kinds of advertisements also have an effect on dehumanising people of colour in the society".[18]

Objectification, Sexualisation and Women in Advertising

One member of the public argued that "all forms of misogyny are harmful to people of any gender, as they reduce the status of women and uphold rigid modes of masculinity. But fetishisation of Asians positions Asian people as a mere accessory, an exotic experience, stripped of human depth. The most confusing thing about the issue of racial fetishisation is that it is posed as a compliment".[19] They also stated they believed that media representation harms Asian women specifically but they did not elaborate on this.

One stakeholder stated that girls and young women want to see diverse body types in the media and in advertising, explaining that when the same 'type' of body is shown in ads, girls and young women feel pressure to change their own appearance.[20] They further argued that "showcasing the same body type or the same features marginalises the experiences of and disproportionately harms girls with protected equality characteristics, who may not meet these 'beauty standards' society sets".[21] A recent survey undertaken by the stakeholder suggested that girls and young women with a racial or ethnic background were less likely to participate in society, such as using social media or going to certain places, due to fear of criticism about their bodies.[22] A British Youth Council Delegate, who works with other delegates to campaign for change, stated that "my darker complexion and African features, full lips, broad nose and afro hair are all clear indicators that I am on the far end of meeting the European set beauty standards of this country. I have been deemed unattractive, manly and ugly".[23]

We did not receive any submissions regarding the issues of objectification and sexualisation of either men or non-binary people.

How are Particular Cultures Portrayed in Advertising?

One stakeholder highlighted a campaign by Telefonica UK Ltd and O2's ad for the Rugby World Cup in 2019, which we note features references to Japanese culture. It has been reported that O2 worked with experts from the School of Oriental and African Studies, and Eddie Jones, the England Rugby Team's coach, who is of Japanese American and Australian heritage, in the preparation of the ad to ensure that it didn't fall into stereotyping 'traps'.[24]

The stakeholder also referenced a previous ruling by the ASA Council for an ad by Collect My Debt Ltd. They noted that Travellers had previously been determined by a UK court to be an ethnic group under the Equality Act 2010, and suggested that an alternative message in the ad, such as "Trespasser and Squatter Evictions" rather than "Traveller and Squatter Evictions",

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[18] Inger Leermans & Jan Hein Furnée i.s.m Melvin Wevers, via Stichting Reclame Code, "Het Beeld van Nederland Hoe Merkreclames onze Samenleving Hebben Gevormd". Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[19] *Ibid.*

[20] The Guide Association (Girlguiding). Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*, 2020 Girls' Attitudes Survey.

[23] *Ibid.*

[24] The Drum, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, 2019; https://www.thedrum.com/news/2019/09/18/o2-calls-upon-england-fans-be-its-samurai-armour-ahead-rugby-world-cup. Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

might have been more appropriate and which would have avoided the reference to a specific ethnic group.[25]

One stakeholder included a report by Lloyds Banking Group as part of their submission. We note the reports states "[their] research shows that when Asian, Black and Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups are represented in advertising, they are portrayed with a strong British identity and integrated into British culture. There is a lack of diversity in cues such as the language and accents they use, the clothing they wear, the religion and rituals they practise as well as the food they eat".[26]

We did not receive any further submissions regarding how particular cultures are portrayed in advertising.

How are Racial and Ethnic Groups with Particular Religious Affiliations Portrayed in Advertising?

One stakeholder stated that "data from the Creative Equals found that only 0.2% of communications featured representation of minority faiths in the UK in 2020".[27] As previously stated, one stakeholder also referred to their own survey which showed that 24% of girls and young women aged between 7 and 21 had experienced bullying because of their ethnicity or religion.[28] Further, the report from Lloyds Banking Group, as referenced above, suggested there was a lack of diversity in the way in which religion was portrayed.[29]

We did not receive any further submissions which discussed the issues of how racial and ethnic groups with particular religious affiliations are portrayed in advertising.

How Does the Use of Humour or Accents Relate to Race or Ethnicity in Advertising?

One stakeholder highlighted an ad by Kabuto Foods Ltd where they argued "the brand name, the product and the pitch/tone of the fictitious language implied that the comedians were creating a stereotypical East Asian language sound, without attempting to emulate a particular language or dialect. Advertisements like this perpetuate a stereotype that East Asian accents are difficult to understand and for comedic value only".[30]

The stakeholder also referred to ads by Compare The Market Ltd, which often feature meerkats. They argue that the meerkats in the ads are each given Eastern European or Russian names, and their English dialogue carries stereotypical regional accents. The

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[25] The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[26] Lloyds Banking Group, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Reflecting Modern Britain? A Study into Inclusion and Diversity in Advertising", 20; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/modern-britain-5.12-single-pages.pdf

[27] Creative Equals, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, found in Unstereotype Alliance, "State of the Industry", 2021; https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/resources/research-and-tools/state-of-the-industry-report

[28] The Guide Association (Girlguiding), 2019 Girls' Attitudes Survey.

[29] Lloyds Banking Group, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Reflecting Modern Britain? A Study into Inclusion and Diversity in Advertising", 20; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/modern-britain-5.12-single-pages.pdf

[30] The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising. Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

stakeholder posed the question whether it is any less offensive for a non-human or animated character to be portrayed with racial stereotypes, as opposed to a live actor.[31]

The quote from the report by Lloyds Banking Group, as referenced above, could also be considered relevant here.[32]

We did not receive any further submissions regarding how the use of humour or accents are portrayed in advertising.

Diversity, Inclusion and Challenging Stereotypes in Advertising

One member of the public stated "readdressing media depictions and Hollywood stereotypes is going to play a key role in changing this harmful narrative that has been consumed for too long".[33] Indeed, another stakeholder referred to campaigns that had challenged stereotyping, for example, Vodafone Ltd's #ChangeTheFace campaign which sought to highlight individuals of different genders, races, ethnicities and ages who make up the advertising industry.[34] The stakeholder also noted stereotypes can be presented in a positive manner, and they referenced a campaign in 2018 by JustEat.co.uk Ltd. It showed East Asian staff working in a Chinese restaurant for example, and it was considered to be "reflective of modern, diverse Britain".[35] Indeed, one stakeholder suggested that it is important to see ads that are "actively challenging racial and ethnic stereotypes too [by] showcasing girls and women of colour in multiple and diverse roles so that they are not always represented in a stereotypical way".[36]

One stakeholder argued that there was a need for advertisers to have a diverse range of people working in advertising 'behind the scenes' as well, but recognising stereotypes, particularly those which could be seen to be harmful, should be the responsibility of everyone.[37] Another stakeholder suggested that "achieving unstereotyped advertising goes beyond representation on screen alone", and that inclusive casting and inclusion within creative teams will contribute "to the overall authenticity of the advert and the empowered portrayal of characters".[38] Indeed, in order to be fully inclusive and avoid stereotypes, one stakeholder believed that advertisers should also be aware of the impact of colourism, for example, as dark-skinned Black women are rarely represented in the media.[39]

This is reflected in a report by another stakeholder which stated that "understanding the details about people's lives, culture, background and religion are vital to creating an accurate and meaningful portrayal of any individual" and "talking about differences between cultures is vital to a better understanding, and ultimately it will create better advertisements that appeal more

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[31] *Ibid*. Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

[32] Lloyds Banking Group, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Ethnicity in Advertising Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?", 20; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/reflecting-modern-britain.html

[33] Member of the public (a).

[34] Unstereotype Alliance, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "State of the Industry", 2021, 19; https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/resources/research-and-tools/state-of-the-industry-report

[35] Channel 4, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "Mirror on the Industry: How Diverse and Inclusive is TV Advertising in 2019?", 2019; https://www.isba.org.uk/system/files/media/documents/2020-12/c4-study-mirror-on-the-industry.pdf

[36] The Guide Association (Girlguiding).

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] Unstereotype Alliance, via The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising, "State of the Industry", 2021, 19; https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/resources/research-and-tools/state-of-the-industry-report

[39] The Guide Association (Girlguiding).

strongly to people".[40] One stakeholder further argues that "portrayal is not necessarily about a fair representation of the reality we live in. Advertisements don't have to depict *this* society, they can also help to visualise new worlds. Because commercials make people connect emotionally, they are powerful tools for building new futures: they motivate by moving".[41]

Proposals for the ASA from Stakeholders

One stakeholder, who stated they would be interested to find out how racial and ethnic minority groups in the UK approach stereotypes in advertising that they consider as negative in respect of their own racial or ethnic groups, or to racial and ethnic minorities generally, suggested it might be worthwhile for the ASA to explore whether racial and ethnic minorities are less engaged with the ASA's complaints process, and if this could have an impact on whether the ASA receives fewer complaints regarding racial and ethnic stereotyping in ads. They suggested whether the ASA needs to consider ways to improve the inclusion of consumers from a racial or ethnic background in the complaints process. They also asked whether the issues around racial and ethnic stereotyping in advertising will be considered with all racial and ethnic groups in mind, as they believed that the Advertising Rules and any decisions made should be applied consistently and in respect of all racial and ethnic groups, particularly those who may not be well represented as part of the national discourse.[42]

The same stakeholder also queried whether the ASA Council's previous decision to not uphold the complaint about Kabuto Foods Ltd continued to be appropriate today.[43]

Summary of Findings

We noted, from the submissions to the Call for Evidence, there was an awareness of the importance of how people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are portrayed in ads. Diversity in ads themselves, and in the industry more widely, was highlighted as a key element of ensuring accurate representation and a feeling of social inclusivity. We also noted that other issues, such as body image, intersected with issues relating to race and ethnicity, and which demonstrates the complexity and nuance of these issues more generally. There also appeared, from the submissions received, to be an absence of evidence for particular issues, such as how depictions of race or ethnicity, religion and culture, or how the use of humour, interplay in ads.

We further noted there was evidence which appeared to be consistent with what we had found as part of our previous review of racial and ethnic stereotyping in ads in 2020, such as some members of the public believing there should be a more proportionate basis, in relation to the population of the UK, for representation in ads.

We recognised that submissions from organisations and members of the public as part of the Call for Evidence could nevertheless be helpful to the Literature Review. Reports or links to evidence received as part of a submission have also been included and referenced in the Literature Review report where appropriate.

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[40] Credos, via The Advertising Association, 2014, "The Whole Picture: How Advertising Portrays a Diverse Britain", 15 & 17; https://adassoc.org.uk/credos/the-whole-picture-how-advertising-portrays-a-diverse-britain
[41] Inger Leermans & Jan Hein Furnée i.s.m Melvin Wevers, via Stichting Reclame Code, "Het Beeld van Nederland Hoe Merkreclames onze Samenleving Hebben Gevormd". Please see explanatory background notes for more information.
[42] The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising.
[43] *Ibid*. Please see explanatory background notes for more information.

Literature Review

Aims

The primary aim of the review was to identify the key themes and debates in existing literature in relation to racial and ethnic stereotypes and within the context of advertising in the UK. The review additionally sought to explore how the issues of objectification and sexualisation relate to race or ethnicity in advertising, how particular cultures, or racial and ethnic groups with particular religious affiliations, are portrayed in advertising, and how the use of humour relates to race or ethnicity in advertising.

Method

Our desk research, which took place between May and August 2021, consisted mainly of online searches using relevant keywords, such as race, racial, ethnic, ethnicity, stereotype and advertising. This included searching academic journal databases, such as JSTOR, for sources, as well as searching for organisations which have a focus on race, ethnicity or advertising. We also included research or studies which we were previously made aware of as part of the ASA's overall work on racial and ethnic stereotyping, as well as research brought to our attention through the Call for Evidence. Literature was selected according to its relevance to the review, rather than the conclusions it reached.

Overview

The review was able to identify themes and debates in the literature regarding racial and ethnic stereotypes but there does not appear to be a clear academic consensus about the definition of race or ethnicity, or whether stereotypes can be considered to be broadly positive or negative. Although literature exists which discusses the potential impact of stereotypes on society and individuals, this was often in relation to the media more generally, rather than specifically as a result of advertising. There appears to be a smaller amount of literature specifically focused on stereotypes within advertising in the UK, and much of the literature that we were able to review had a North American focus. Where this literature is helpful to the overall debate or understanding of the issues, even when not focused on the UK, the review has included it where appropriate, or where the conclusions reached by the authors could be considered to also apply to UK society. There does not appear to be much academic debate about how particular cultures, or racial and ethnic groups with particular religious affiliations, are portrayed in advertising, or how the use of humour relates to race or ethnicity in advertising. As well as recommendations for potential further research, the review has also drawn conclusions from the literature, such as the potential for racial or ethnic stereotypes in advertising to cause serious or widespread offence or harm to consumers.

Theoretical Frameworks

In the UK, as part of the Equality Act 2010, it is against the law to discriminate against someone based on protected characteristics such as age, sex, race or religion. Race refers to a group of people who are defined by their race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins.[44]

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[44] Equality and Human Rights Commission; https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/equality-act/protected-characteristics#race

This legal definition sits alongside the academic debates in the literature, and there does not appear to be a general agreement within the literature about how to define race or ethnicity. Some academics have argued that the concept of race is a social construct, rather than being defined by a person's genetics or geography.[45] Others have argued that ethnicity is "a category of self-designation and it cannot just be ascribed by others based on physical appearance or country of origin".[46] The review noted that the terms race and ethnicity were often used interchangeably or conflated in the literature, rather than being described or treated as separate concepts, and which have the potential to overlap for individuals.

In addition to the concepts of race and ethnicity, there is further academic debate about the idea of stereotypes. Scholars in a variety of different academic disciplines, including sociology and anthropology, have contributed to debates about what constitutes a stereotype, as well as their potential impact on people and society. In broader terms, the formation, activation and effects of general stereotypes are much debated.[47]

A stereotype has been described by Toland Frith and Mueller as "an expression of a mental schema that people use to organise information and to which meaning is attached" but a stereotype does not, by definition, carry negative or positive values.[48] They can be defined as a fixed general image or set of characteristics that many believe represent a particular type of person or group. These ideas can "consist of information related to the capability, appearance, attitudes, interests, traits, social status, occupation, and behaviours of social groups" which may or may not be accurate.[49]

It has been argued that stereotypes are instrumental in the creation of social identity, offering a convenient way to categorise the world and form bonds within specific groups.[50] As Eisend explains, stereotyping is "not necessarily a negative judgment since stereotypes lead to expectations that can provide a useful orientation in everyday life".[51] Similarly, Murji has highlighted arguments which suggest that, in the rich and complex tapestry of life, stereotypes offer economical ways for people to interact with others: "treating people as representative of categories saves us time and effort in not having to engage with the complexity of each individual".[52]

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[45] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 1-44.

[46] Tana Cristina Licsandrua and Charles Chi Cui, "Ethical marketing to the global millennial consumers: Challenges and opportunities", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 103 (2019): 261-274.

[47] See, for example: Diane M. Mackie, David L. Hamilton, Joshua Susskind and Francine Rosselli, "Social Psychological Foundations of Stereotype Formation". In C. Neil MacRae, Charles Stangor and Miles Hewstone (eds.). *Stereotypes and Stereotyping*. New York: Guilford Press (1996). pp. 48–49; Anouk Rogier and Vincent Yzerbyt, "Social attribution, correspondence bias, and the emergence of stereotypes", *Swiss Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (1999): 233–240; Sarah E. Zemore, Susan T. Fiske and Hyun-Jeong Kim, "Gender Stereotypes and the Dynamics of Social Interaction". In Thomas Eckes and Hanns Martin Trautner (eds.). *The Developmental Social Psychology of Gender*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates (2000): pp. 229–230; and Stacey Sinclair, Curtis D. Hardin, and Brian S. Lowery, "Self-Stereotyping in the Context of Multiple Social Identities", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (2006): 529–542.

[48] Katherine Toland Frith and Barbara Mueller, *Advertising and Societies: Global Issues*, New York: Peter Lang Publishing (2010): 110.

[49] Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, "Examining the intersection of race and gender in video game advertising", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2017): 223.

[50] Juraj Jonáš, "Theoretical and methodological aspects in anthropological research of stereotypes", *Prace Etnograficzne* Vol. 41, No. 2 (2013): 301.

[51] Martin Eisend, "A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* Vol. 38, No. 4 (2010): 420.

[52] Karim Murji, "Using racial stereotypes in anti-racist campaigns", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 29, No. 2 (2006): 264.

Other academics however have argued that stereotyping can lead to "oversimplified conceptions and misapplied knowledge evaluations, and thus to wrong evaluations" of people from different social groups.[53] Furthermore, it is important to recognise that stereotypes are specific ideological practices, often driven by people's pre-conceptions, prejudices or beliefs. As such, they are distinct from general (and perhaps more utilitarian) processes of categorisation, such as categorising objects as either man-made or natural.[54] The potency of stereotypes is also a result of the ways in which they highlight social difference to define or reinforce social hierarchies. Such representations, Murji contends, are influential "because they reflect wider social inequalities, indeed [stereotypical] representations can even be productive of, or serve to maintain, social divisions".[55]

As well as the academic debate about the definition of stereotypes, there are several theories which underpin these discussions. Many of these theories, often general in nature, originate from other academic disciplines, but can be applied to advertising in an exploration of its influence on society.

For example, illusionary theory suggests that "stereotypes can often be based on wrong assumptions of inter-group differences and relate the judgment of a group of people".[56] Social learning theory integrates behavioural and cognitive theories of learning, advancing the idea that new behaviours can be acquired by observing and imitating other people.[57] Similarly, cultivation theory examines the long-lasting effects that media, such as television, can have on people. It proposes that those who are regularly exposed to media are more likely to perceive the social realities of the world as they are presented in that media, influencing their behaviour or attitudes.[58]

More specifically, Mogaji has argued for the value of applying social learning theory and cultivation theory to the examination of stereotyping in advertising. Social learning theory, Mogaji suggests, "alerts us to the fact that the media offers many models, which might form the basis for the imitation of depicted behaviour".[59] Importantly for a medium as widespread as advertising, as Mark Reed et al. contend, social learning theory is characterised as "a change in understanding that goes beyond the individual to become situated within wider social units or communities of practice".[60]

Similarly, cultivation theory supports this widespread influence and asserts that media such as advertising have "long-term effects on people's thoughts and perceptions about their society and values" with portrayals in mass media "capable of influencing or shaping viewers' perceptions".[61] Repeated exposure to stereotypical portrayals can lead to viewers accepting

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[53] Martin Eisend, "A meta-analysis of gender roles in advertising", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* Vol. 38, No. 4 (2010): 418-440.

[54] Karim Murji, "Using racial stereotypes in anti-racist campaigns", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 29, No. 2 (2006): 264.

[55] *Ibid*., 265

[56] Tana Cristina Licsandrua and Charles Chi Cui, "Ethical marketing to the global millennial consumers: Challenges and opportunities", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 103 (2019): 261-274.

[57] Albert Bandura, "Social Learning Theory", General Learning Press (1971): 3.

[58] Robin L. Nabi and Karyn Riddle, "Personality Traits, Television Viewing, and the Cultivation Effect", *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2008): 327-348.

[59] Emmanuel Mogaji, "Reflecting a diversified country: a content analysis of newspaper advertisements in Great Britain", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 33 No. 6 (2015): 912.

[60] Mark S. Reed, Anna C. Evely, Georgina Cundill et al., "What is Social Learning?", *Ecology and Society*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (2010).

[61] Emmanuel Mogaji, "Reflecting a diversified country: a content analysis of newspaper advertisements in Great Britain", *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, Vol. 33 No. 6 (2015): 912.

the portrayals as being reflective of reality when this might not be the case.[62] The featuring of stereotypes, either positive or negative, could be influential, not only for those who might adopt the stereotypical thinking but also for members of the stereotyped group as the representation influences the way they perceive themselves.[63]

The theoretical frameworks which underpin the academic discussions about stereotypes serve to illustrate the complexity, nuance and significance of this issue. Considering such theories in the context of advertising more widely, it is reasonable to suggest that advertising can act as a prism through which individuals develop their attitudes about the world and people around them. Stereotypes in advertising are not therefore inert or circumscribed, but could have the potential to influence and alter how people view others in the real world. Furthermore, the depiction or portrayal of individuals with a racial or ethnic background in a problematic manner could have the potential to affect the behaviour of audiences.

Depiction and Portrayal of Racial and Ethnic Groups in Advertising

The literature highlights several stereotypes, such as Black men being seen to be criminals or being linked to gang culture, or being depicted in a sporting context and associated with physical power rather than with their families. Black women can be similarly stereotyped on account of their physicality or as being dominant. Asian people are often depicted as having a high level of technological skill and talent, academic excellence, being hard workers and self-sufficient. They are rarely featured in professions, such as medicine or law, but are rather shown to be industrious or are portrayed in a variety of martial arts contexts. In a North American context, research has shown how people such as Native Americans are often represented as a "noble savage".

The Real-Life Impact of Stereotypes

The literature appears to suggest there is a symbiotic relationship between the use of stereotypes, their impact upon society generally and the impact upon individuals themselves. Foster Davis argues that "media imagery is important since people of all backgrounds are exposed to similar messages and therefore may internalise and incorporate them into their own psyches. Moreover, the negative aspects of these media messages can be damaging in harmful ways".[64] Indeed, Unstereotype Alliance have argued that "stereotypes are embedded in our everyday lives, influencing individual and societal attitudes and norms. Often perpetuated by media and advertising, they cause deeply rooted inequalities in society and hold people back from reaching their full potential".[65]

Research suggests that the use of negative stereotypes are harmful to minorities.[66] Foster Davis argues that if marketers act in bad faith, stereotyped images can distort or damage the reputation of those represented groups and, as they have less access to decision making

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[62] Anna Rößner and Martin Eisend, "Advertising Effects of Religious Stereotypes: The Moderating Influence of Context News Valence". In: Verolien Cauberghe, Liselot Hudders and Martin Eisend (eds) *Advances in Advertising Research IX*. Springer Gabler: Wiesbaden (2018): 164.

[63] Guillaume D. Johnson and Sonya Grier, "Targeting without alienating: Multicultural advertising and the subtleties of targeted advertising", *International Journal of Advertising*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (2011): 252.

[64] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 1-44.

[65] Unstereotype Alliance, State of the Industry, 2021, 7; https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/resources/research-and-tools/state-of-the-industry-report

[66] Charles R. Taylor and Ju Yung Lee, "Not in 'Vogue': Portrayals of Asian Americans in Magazine Advertising", *Journal of Public Policy and Marketing*, Vol 13, No. 2 (1994): 239-245.

authority, they can be further subjugated by lack of participation.[67] This correlates with the views of Cohen-Eliya and Hammer who argue that "stereotypical messages in advertisements also lead to derogatory treatment of the speech of women and minorities, thereby effectively silencing their voices".[68]

Crucially, "when stereotypes are magnified in ads they can be harmful in that the repetition of a stereotype naturalises it and makes it appear 'normal".[69] Jonáš argues that there is significant scope for stereotypes to cause conflict, not least in their rigidity and tendency to be used to "other" certain groups who are different from those who hold the stereotypical views.[70] Åkestam also argues that "when consumers are repeatedly exposed to stereotyped portrayals, these stereotypes take up more room in consumers' minds, leading them to believe that such over simplified versions of reality are in fact true".[71] The literature suggests stereotypes can distort consumers' perceptions[72], can play a role in forming prejudices amongst those exposed to them, and negatively impact viewers' attitudes and behaviours towards minority groups.[73] This could lead to an increase in discrimination towards individuals.[74]

The literature further suggests that stereotypes can have an impact upon individuals themselves. Knoll et al. argue that "the main criticism against the use of stereotyped advertising portrayals is thus that they can lead to over-simplification, which can, in turn, limit the possibilities for self-realisation of individuals belonging to a group that is frequently stereotyped".[75] Foster Davis also argues that imagery used in ads can influence the attitudes of children or others who are developing their beliefs about those in society, where media has a role to play in advancing racism through imagery.[76] In a study where participants discussed ads which were designated as mono-ethnic embedded ads, and which used stereotypical portrayals and cultural appropriation, participants used words such as offensive and patronising to describe the impact of the ads.[77]

A report by Lloyds Banking Group suggested that the use of even subtle tropes can evoke strong associations with past trauma, related to discrimination and racism, for individuals. This can be prompted by the inclusion of certain words, phrases or images, and the resulting

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[67] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 1-44.

[68] Moshe Cohen-Eliya and Yoac Hammer, "Advertisements, Stereotypes, and Freedom of Expression", *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 35, No 2 (2004): 1-29.

[69] *Ibid*.

[70] Juraj Jonáš, "Theoretical and methodological aspects in anthropological research of stereotypes", *Prace Etnograficzne* Vol. 41, No. 2 (2013): 305.

[71] Nina Åkestam, "Understanding Advertising Stereotypes Social and Brand-Related Effects of Stereotyped versus Non-Stereotyped Portrayals in Advertising", Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D., in Business Administration, Stockholm School of Economics, 2017.

[72] Lloyds Banking Group, Championing Modern Britain, 2021; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/championing_modern_britain_lloyds_banking_group.pdf

[73] Serena Daalmans & Mariette Odink, "Stereotyped but Liked? A Content Analysis of the Presence and Stereotypical Portrayal of Minority Groups in Award-Winning Commercials", *Communication Research Reports*, Vol. 36, No. 3, (2019): 231-241.

[74] Moshe Cohen-Eliya and Yoac Hammer, "Advertisements, Stereotypes, and Freedom of Expression", *Journal of Social Philosophy*, Vol. 35, No 2 (2004): 1-29.

[75] Knoll et al. in Nina Åkestam, "Understanding Advertising Stereotypes Social and Brand-Related Effects of Stereotyped versus Non-Stereotyped Portrayals in Advertising", Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D., in Business Administration, Stockholm School of Economics, 2017.

[76] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 1-44.

[77] Tana Cristina Licsandrua and Charles Chi Cui, "Ethical marketing to the global millennial consumers: Challenges and opportunities", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 103 (2019): 261-274.

response can be complex, based on factors such as the psychology of individuals and the severity of their past experiences. They further argue that even if the intent behind the ad was not malicious, an implication in an ad, such as a link to crime or financial instability, could have an emotional and problematic impact upon Black people.[78]

The stereotype of Asian people being hard workers and self-sufficient can lead to them being seen in wider society as what has been described in the literature as a 'model minority', so called due to their 'proximity' to White people and their assimilation into 'White' society. The depiction of Asian people having a high level of technological skill and talent and academic excellence suggests to others that Asian people are workaholics, and that Asian people may expect the same standards of other people, which can be harmful in its own right. The "stereotype attributes a narrow characteristic to all members of a group, and thus oversimplifies a complex population".[79]

Furthermore, the literature suggests that this stereotype can also be harmful to people from different racial and ethnic groups. Paek and Shah argue that "the distinctive feature of this myth is not in its distance from reality but in its power to dominate or displace other social facts such as structural obstacles to African Americans, Latinos and economic mobility".[80] Although this source draws its conclusions from American society, it describes the impact of this stereotype upon others as it can often be used as a comparison in a negative way. For example, the stereotype implies that if people from other racial and ethnic groups worked harder, they too could succeed in the same manner, and this perpetuates the ideas behind why some other racial and ethnic groups are not seen to be 'successful' or by suggesting they are lazy. This could not only cause harm to individuals but could also create a hostile discourse.[81] In the context of North American advertising which might depict Native Americans in a particular manner, Merskin argues "if, during the transition of adolescence, Native [American] children internalise these representations that suggest Indians are lazy, alcoholic by nature, and violent, this misinformation can have a life-long impact on perceptions of self and others".[82]

The literature therefore suggests the use of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads not only could have a harmful impact upon society, but to different groups of people and to individuals themselves.

Objectification and Sexualisation of Racial and Ethnic Groups in Advertising

Issues of objectification and sexualisation, which can often overlap, can be defined as viewing people as, or degrading them to the status of, an object and viewing someone or something in a sexualised manner. Although both issues have the capacity to impact all consumers, this review did not seek to identify how these issues relate to consumers more generally; rather, it sought to identify how these issues related to race or ethnicity specifically and in the context of advertising. The review was not able to find any literature which discussed objectification

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[78] Lloyds Banking Group, Championing Modern Britain, 2021; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/championing_modern_britain_lloyds_banking_group.pdf

[79] Hye-Jin Paek and Hermand Shah, "Racial Ideology, Model Minorities, and the 'Not-So Silent Partner': Stereotyping of Asian Americans in U.S. Magazine Advertising", *Howard Journal of Communication*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2003): 225-243.

[80] *Ibid*.

[81] *Ibid*.

[82] Debra Merskin, "Winnebagos, Cherokees, Apaches, and Dakotas: The Persistence of Stereotyping of American Indians in American Advertising Brands", *Howard Journal of Communications*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2001): 167.

and sexualisation outside of the binary constructs of gender and so the report has therefore focused on men and women only.

Scholars have argued that objectification theory, which was originally drawn from feminist theories, and the idea that sexualisation permeates consumers' lives, is due to the patriarchal nature of Western societies, in which advertising is one of the main arenas where this is played out. [83] Indeed, the authors found that when examining the portrayals of minority groups, the media frequently depict racial minorities and women in demeaning and unflattering ways.[84]

Representation and Portrayal of Women

The review found the representation of Asian women was dominated by images of being shown to be typically silent, subservient, and exotic, and which was in stark contrast to the depiction of men. [85] The presentation of Asian women in ads is, to some extent, contrasted with the depiction of Black women in ads. The literature suggests that, historically, Black women have either been portrayed as 'mammies'; seen to be obese, loyal, desexualised, maternal figures who cared for White families, or 'jezebels'; seen to be lewd, promiscuous, hypersexualised and seductive. Foster Davis argues that although these portrayals in ads have diminished in recent times, elements of these stereotypes still exist.[86] Indeed, in magazine ads, Black women are more likely to be shown wearing animal print which Foster Davis further argues reinforces the stereotype of erotic, sexually aggressive women.[87] While this is drawn largely from sources referring to American society, this could also be considered to cross apply to society within the UK. Indeed, research by the Greater London Authority concurs when stating that "sexualised imagery of Black women was not seen as evidence of positive representation of diversity, but as something contributing to racist stereotypes about Black women. This included sexualising larger Black women, which was viewed as a new form of racialising stereotyping of Black female bodies".[88] The literature also noted that women were not only less inclined to purchase the products being advertised, but they also expressed higher negative emotions relating to seeing sexualised ads.[89]

Representation and Portrayal of Men

Issues of objectification and sexualisation do not only affect women though. Barry and Phillips found that objectification of men has increased, particularly in ads for fashion, and due to their rise in popularity since the 1990s, this is now the predominant representation of men, where ads primarily feature a muscular, lean body, and which were seen to convey power and masculinity.

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[83] Sarah Gramazio, Mara Cadinu, Francesca Guizzo and Andrea Carnaghi, "Does Sex Really Sell? Paradoxical Effects of Sexualization in Advertising on Product Attractiveness and Purchase Intentions", *Sex Roles*, Vol. 84 (2021): 701–719.

[84] Hye-Jin Paek and Hermand Shah, "Racial Ideology, Model Minorities, and the 'Not-So Silent Partner': Stereotyping of Asian Americans in U.S. Magazine Advertising", *Howard Journal of Communication*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2003): 225-243.

[85] *Ibid*.

[86] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 1-44.

[87] *Ibid*.

[88] Greater London Authority, "The women we see: Experiences of Gender and Diversity in Advertising in London's Public Spaces", 2018, 31; https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2018_women_we_see.pdf

[89] Ben Barry and Barbara Phillips, "Destabilizing the gaze towards male fashion models: Expanding men's' gender and sexual identities", *Critical Studies in Men's Fashion*, Vol 3, No 1 (2016): 17-35.

The literature also suggests that men were seen to experience negative body image as a result of being exposed to idealised, muscular male models or images, and they may internalise any feelings such as self-consciousness.[90] In an empirical study to examine objectification and men further, the participants suggested "their diverse physical appearances did not allow them to measure up to the conventional standard of male attractiveness glorified in objectified fashion images".[91] As the ads represented narrow notions of gender and sexuality, some men felt they could not meet the expectations as portrayed in the ads, and felt excluded as they didn't see themselves in the ads, or possess the physical characteristics that are culturally considered to be sexually appealing and desirable. Barry also argued that this effect was amplified for those who had a particular/minority racial or ethnic background, along with others such as older men.[92] Although men did not express the same change in purchase intention as to how women viewed ads, participants did react negatively to the sexualisation of men in ads.[93] While this source is largely based on American society, the review has included it here as we consider these are important findings and could also be considered to cross apply to society within the UK.

Comparative Portrayals of Different Racial and Ethnic Groups

When comparing the presentation of Black women and White women in magazine ads, Thomas found that the overwhelming representation of women was as a sex object. Ads which featured Black women were nearly exclusively featured in magazines aimed at young Black men, but the same could not be said for those ads which featured White women as they were not subject to the same commodification.[94] White women were portrayed largely as 'elite' and "a standard of above other objects of sexual conquest" while Black women were generally portrayed as a "sum of [their] sex organs and irrelevant body parts".[95]

In a study into video game advertising in USA, Behm-Morawitz found that White women were shown in an idealised manner, being an object of desire, and to the exclusion of other women of other races and ethnicities. Although the authors acknowledged caution was needed when drawing conclusions due to the small sample size in the study, they noted there was an absence of women from other ethnicities, and if they were included, they appeared to be less sexualised and less attractive, which suggested that a particular ideal of beauty was being communicated in these ads.[96] In the same study, Behm-Morawitz also found that White men were depicted as the 'hero' while Black men were, in contrast, portrayed as 'deviants'.[97]

Although the literature discusses the topics of objectification and sexualisation, and the potential impact they may have, this was often in relation to men and women more generally, rather than specifically in relation to gender and race, ethnicity or stereotyping. The literature does however suggest that these issues, when portrayed in ads, could have an impact upon individuals, and may have a greater impact on consumers who have a racial or ethnic background.

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[90] *Ibid.*

[91] *Ibid.*

[92] *Ibid.*

[93] *Ibid*.

[94] Kevin D. Thomas, "Deconstructing Hegemonic Masculinity: Understanding Representations of Black and White Manhood in Print Advertising", *Advertising & Society Review*, Vol 14, No. 2 (2013).

[95] *Ibid.*

[96] Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz, "Examining the intersection of race and gender in video game advertising", *Journal of Marketing Communications*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2017): 220-239.

[97] *Ibid.*

<u>Intersectionality of Race, Ethnicity and other Characteristics</u>

Race and ethnicity do not, evidently, exist in a vacuum. As concepts, they interact with wider social and cultural structures. It is useful, therefore, to consider how intersectionality shapes the construction and perpetuation of racial and ethnic stereotypes. Intersectionality is a paradigm which considers how multiple social categories, such as class, gender, age or ethnicity, coalesce to shape people's lives.[98]

Intersectionality has its roots in Black feminist thought and was initially coined, as Corus et al. explain, "to articulate how race and gender interact to shape Black women's experiences".[99] Crucially for considering how people from diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds are portrayed in advertising, intersectionality places people at the "intersection of multiple social categories, leading to unique experiences of advantages and disadvantages".[100]

The Unstereotype Alliance argues that "without fully representative and inclusive portrayals of all people in their unique complexities, inequities not only in advertising but also in our communities will continue to exist".[101] They recently commissioned research with Cannes LIONS across four countries, including the UK, to examine the effects of intersectionality in advertising. Their research suggested that racial and ethnic minority groups felt "left behind by brands that they believe overly focus on populations that are not reflective of their own reality. These same groups, however, are the most responsive to brands that do take steps to reflect society through intersectionality, showing that such approaches will be rewarded with a greater sense of closeness and very low push-back".[102] The research also found that, in the UK, intersectionality in ads evoked overwhelmingly positive reactions with "uniformly positive shifts in brand closeness among minority or traditionally marginalised groups. Unsurprisingly, the largest shifts were seen in some of the populations that expressed the most discontent with the advertising status quo, including minority women and non-white men".[103] This research indicates there are potential benefits for both consumers and for brands if they adopt a nuanced, intersectional approach as part of their advertising. Indeed, as Hadi argues, the value of brands "adopting an intersectional lens is two-fold: it benefits advertisers (by leading underrepresented individuals to feel closer to the advertised brands), and it benefits society (by providing psychological benefits to traditionally-excluded audiences)".[104]

Although not in the context of advertising, The Runnymede Trust argue that race and class are often compartmentalised whereas the issues can diverge, overlap or be intertwined. They argue that "we must better analyse and understand how race and class interact – notably by interrogating the persistence and extent of intergenerational inequalities on the grounds of race and class, and examining how those inequalities are then unjustly supported by racist and classist attitudes and behaviours".[105] They also argue that "racism as a rejection of equal

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[98] Canan Corus, Bige Saatcioglu, Carol Kaufman-Scarborough, Christopher P. Blocker, Shikha Upadhyaya and Samuelson Appau, "Transforming Poverty-Related Policy with Intersectionality", *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing* Vol. 35, No. 2 (2016): 213.

[99] *Ibid*.

[100] *Ibid*.

[101] Unstereotype Alliance and Cannes LIONS, "Beyond Gender 2: The Impact of Intersectionality in Advertising", 2021, 2; https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/files/un%20women/unsta/resources/diversity%20and%20inclusion/beyond%20gender%202%20report.pdf?vs=5113

[102] *Ibid*., 24.

[103] *Ibid*., 22.

[104] *Ibid*., 24.

[105] The Runnymede Trust, "Minority Report: Race and Class in post-Brexit Britain", 2017, 3; https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/publications/pdfs/Race%20and%20Class%20Post-Brexit%20Perspectives%20report%20v5.pdf

moral worth is one particular way in which economic inequalities were first justified and are now perpetuated, but only among ethnic minorities".[106] They further discuss how society in the UK is changing, with class interacting with nationalist and racist sentiments, but that this has an effect on ethnic minorities and immigrants who experience a "double exclusion".[107]

It is useful to note however that the literature also refers to race and class. It has been argued that White people use occupational status or social class cues when evaluating people, but for people from a racial or ethnic minority background, they generally use race, ethnicity or culture to evaluate people.[108] In the context of TV ads in the USA, a study found that Black viewers associated with the Black characters whether they were lower or upper-class, while White people related to the upper-class characters whether they were Black or White. Thomas further argues that "middle-class White manhood is tied to a broad range of commodities, which enables middle-class White men to use more of the marketplace to assemble and to express their masculinity. Conversely, middle-class Black masculinity is aligned with a narrow scope of goods and services, which greatly restricts how middle-class Black men can employ the symbolic value of marketplace products to (re)construct and display their masculinity. This imbalance affords middle-class White manhood a greater level of autonomy than middle-class Black manhood".[109]

Although the concept of intersectionality was not frequently mentioned in the literature we surveyed, we consider the different qualities or aspects of an individual or group, such as their race, ethnicity, gender or class, can intersect in different ways, which could not only play an important role in their identity but how they may experience real life events or interpret advertising more generally. There could also be the potential to cause harm, and which could be compounded, if the portrayal of a particular group is done in a stereotypical manner. Although further academic examination of these interlinking factors could therefore be useful to the understanding of these issues, research undertaken by other organisations, such as Unstereotype Alliance, highlights the positive benefits that inclusive portrayals or representations can bring to both consumers and advertisers.

Depiction of Religion in Advertising

The literature indicates that advertisements may be slightly distorted and heavily-mediated reflections of society's values, attitudes or characteristics.[110] Advertising, scholars have argued, represents only some of those values or characteristics and, in the context of religion, certain religious beliefs and symbols might therefore be under-represented or shown inaccurately in ads.[111] It follows, then, that the inclusion in ads of religious symbols or depictions of those who follow a particular faith could be either unrepresentative or limited to outdated or inaccurate stereotypes. Religion is a discrete concept from race or ethnicity, but they can overlap; religious belief and practices may be an integral part of someone's racial or

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[106] *Ibid.*, 24.

[107] *Ibid.*, 18.

[108] Osei Appiah & Yung-I Liu, "Reaching the Model Minority: Ethnic Differences in Responding to Culturally Embedded Targeted- and Non-Targeted Advertisements", J*ournal of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, Vol 31, No. 1 (2009): 27-41.

[109] Kevin D. Thomas, "Endlessly Creating Myself: Examining Marketplace Inclusion Through the Lived Experience of Black and White Male Millenials", *Journal of Public Policy & Marketing,* Vol. 32, Special Issue (2013): 95-105.

[110] David Fairfield and Madeline Johnson, "The Presence of Religious Symbols and Values in Advertising". In Jerome D. Williams, Wei-Na Lee and Curtis P. Haugtvedt (eds) *Diversity in Advertising: Broadening the Scope of Research Directions*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates: New Jersey (2004): 402-403.

[111] *Ibid.*, 403.

ethnic identity and, therefore, a representation of that belief in advertising might also be affected by issues of race or ethnicity.

Rößner and Eisend highlight how in Western media generally, religions such as Islam are frequently negatively stereotyped which "discourages marketers [from including] Muslim [people] in advertising since they do not want to alienate the non-Islamic majority".[112] General depictions in Western media could therefore influence advertising, where stereotypical views could lead to a lack of representation in advertising more generally.

Academics have noted that, with global geopolitical changes, advertisers are increasingly featuring racial or ethnic minorities and religious minorities to endorse their products, resulting in links between religious association and ethnicity.[113] The exact nature and effects of the relationship between religion and race or ethnicity are nuanced, and the research which does exist in this area sometimes produces ambiguous results.[114]

Further academic examination of the interplay between religion, race, ethnicity and stereotyping in advertising could therefore be useful to the overall understanding of these issues, particularly if that interplay could have an enhanced impact on individuals or if there could be the potential for any stereotypical portrayal to cause harm or offence.

The Use of Humour in Advertising

Humour is a common tool used in advertising to create positive associations in the minds of consumers with a product or service. Research has suggested that humour can reduce negative reactions which consumers may have about an ad's content, leading them to focus, instead, on the comedic (and positive) elements.[115] As Rößner et al. explain, this can temper potentially problematic advertising and frequently leads consumers to adopt a less critical mind set when they encounter potentially offensive content.[116]

The general principle of humour as a way to mitigate or enhance the potentially damaging effects of stereotypes is certainly pertinent when considering such portrayals in ads. Rößner et al. contend that the likelihood of 'humorous' stereotypical representations being considered offensive relies on, in part, whether they are applied to traditional or non-traditional stereotypes and whether the reaction comes from a minority group (usually the subject of the stereotype) or a majority group.[117] Ellithorpe et al. further explain how "minority groups find self-deprecating humour that is caused by traditional portrayals as enjoyable, because it leads to recognition of ethnic in-group membership and increases distinctiveness, leading to

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[112] Anna Rößner and Martin Eisend, "Advertising Effects of Religious Stereotypes: The Moderating Influence of Context News Valence". In: Verolien Cauberghe, Liselot Hudders and Martin Eisend (eds) *Advances in Advertising Research IX*. Springer Gabler: Wiesbaden (2018): 163-175.

[113] Academic research in this area has shown that the effects of using ethnic minority endorsers in advertising on majority consumer responses are ambiguous, see: Anna Rößner, Yaniv Gvili and Martin Eisend. "Explaining Consumer Responses to Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Advertising: The Case of Israel and Germany", *Journal of Advertising,* 2021.

[114] *Ibid*.

[115] Calvin P. Duncan, and James E. Nelson, "Effects of humor in a radio advertising experiment", *Journal of Advertising* Vol. 14, No. 2 (2014): 33 – 64.

[116] Anna Rößner, Maren Kämmerer and Martin Eisend, "Effects of ethnic advertising on consumers of minority and majority groups: the moderating effect of humor", *International Journal of Advertising* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2017): 194.

[117] *Ibid.*

acceptance and amusement".[118] The use of humour "helps the minority group to both favour their ethnic in-group awareness and to distinguish themselves from the majority out-group [and humour] leads to positive reactions of members of the ethnic minority group".[119] The use of humour in depictions of race or ethnicity in advertising, Rößner et al. conclude, has a "moderating effect that can both strengthen positive effects and reduce negative stereotyping effects" and, whilst this benefits both minority and majority groups, the effect is strongest for minority groups.[120]

That is not to say however that the use of humour renders any racial or ethnic stereotype featured in an ad inoffensive or unproblematic. Dore draws attention to theories which suggest that humour is based on hierarchies of 'winners' and 'losers', with the latter often relating to minority groups: those who identify with such a group "are likely to get offended by the humour that targets them [and] even people who do not directly associate themselves with the targeted group may still get offended and vice versa".[121] Context, tone and factors such as whether that humour challenges particular tropes or long-held stereotypes all play a part.

Dore highlights several examples of when humour in ads has either failed to mitigate offence caused by the use of racial or ethnic stereotyping or has caused offence. An ad by H&M, which featured a Black child wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the slogan "coolest monkey in the jungle" on it, was interpreted by some to refer to the common and playful expression 'cheeky monkey'. The ad however received much criticism that it was an indirect disparaging reference to Black people with the "supposed hyper-determined humour" triggering oppositions "such as 'White/Black people' or even 'any other type of people/Black people', and consequently 'civilisation/jungle' and 'human/non-human'".[122]

Similarly, a 2018 ad for the fashion house Dolce and Gabbana was criticised for mocking Chinese culture. The ad, which appeared in China, featured an Asian woman attempting to eat food stereotypically associated with Italian culture with chopsticks, whilst traditional Chinese music played in the background. The woman only managed to catch small bites of food, and laughed at her apparent ineptitude whilst subtitles and a voice-over explained that Italian and Chinese eating habits were very different, but that Chinese people could still grasp bits of Italian food and culture.[123] Many Chinese people felt insulted by the ads, Dore notes, "claiming that they were racist and based on the White West's orientalist perception of Chinese culture since they featured a hyper-sexualised Chinese woman against a background of exotic, kitschy imagery".[124] Such an ad demonstrates how the humorous effects intended by advertisers may not be shared by the wider audience or, perhaps more importantly, by those groups which are the subject of racial or ethnic stereotypes.

It is important to note that, even when used in a humorous manner with the intention of challenging and dispelling negative stereotypes or racist ideas, stereotypes could still have the potential to cause offence or contribute to racial or ethnic discrimination. For example, the Commission for Racial Equality intended to use humour in conjunction with racial stereotypes

[118] Morgan Ellithorpe, Sarah Esralew and Robert Holbert, "Putting the 'self' in self-deprecation: When deprecating humor about minorities is acceptable", *Humor: International Journal of Humor Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (2014): 401-422.

[119] *Ibid*.

[120] Anna Rößner, Maren Kämmerer and Martin Eisend, "Effects of ethnic advertising on consumers of minority and majority groups: the moderating effect of humor", *International Journal of Advertising* Vol. 36, No. 1 (2017): 200.

[121] Margherita Dore, "Intertextuality and failed taboo humour in advertising", *European Journal of Humour Research*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2020): 103.

[122] *Ibid*., 106.

[123] *Ibid*., 107.

[124] *Ibid*.

to provoke wider debates about racism and encourage self-reflection on the part of the public. Three separate ads were used, including one which featured a close-up of a Black man's face, along with a large tag line which asked "Scared?" and a smaller 'punch line' underneath which read "You should be. He's a dentist". The ad attempted to prompt the public into questioning their own pre-conceptions in a humorous, rather than confrontational, way, but as Murji explains, "the use of humour can be double edged and confuse audiences".[125] When humour, on which the repudiation of stereotypes depends, fails to be immediately effective, there is a danger that the repetition of stereotypes to draw attention to their artificiality can also re-inscribe them.[126]

The literature therefore suggests that the use of humour in ads can be complex and nuanced, particularly in relation to race and ethnicity, which can produce both positive and negative outcomes.

The Use of Accents in Advertising

The use of stereotypical accents, sometimes for comedic effect, can be a source of tension in the portrayal of different racial or ethnic groups. One study suggested that, in Britain, accent bias is prevalent. For example, research found that British people tended to "downgrade non-standard working-class accents and selected ethnic minority accents, and upgrade accents historically perceived as more prestigious".[127] This arguably leads to a reinforcement of stereotypes which assert that people from different racial or ethnic minorities who speak with an accent are different from White or 'Western' people, and how the use of stereotypes could reinforce longstanding hierarchies or social structures.

The featuring of accents from diverse ethnic or racial groups might, however, offer benefits to both audiences and advertisers. In a study which examined the use of four ethnic-specific accents in radio ads in the USA, Ivanič et al. argue that the use of an accent with which people of a similar cultural, ethnic or racial background can identify makes them feel more connected to the product being sold.[128] Their research was predicated on the assumption that, for example, Asian people listening to an Asian-accented spokesperson would react more favourably compared with ethnically-incongruent spokespersons, such as a Hispanic-accented spokesperson.[129] They suggest that "listening to an advertisement by an accented spokesperson would evoke a desire for group belongingness (i.e. social identity)", evoking group stereotypes which make "salient one's group membership" and allowing people from those ethnic or racial backgrounds to feel more connected to, and positive about, the product or service being advertised.[130]

Another study showed that an "inability to identify with a spokesperson due to differences in speech styles can evoke negative social stereotypes of both the spokesperson and their ethnic group".[131] Ivanič et al. caution that advertisers should be aware of the potential for "stereotype

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[125] Karim Murji, "Using racial stereotypes in anti-racist campaigns", *Ethnic and Racial Studies* Vol. 29, No. 2 (2006): 264.

[126] *Ibid.*, 277.

[127] Erez Levon, Devyani Sharma, Dominic Watt and Christina Perry, "Accent Bias in Britain: Attitudes to Accents in Britain and Implications for Fair Access" 2020; https://accentbiasbritain.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Accent-Bias-Britain-Report-2020.pdf

[128] Aarti S. Ivanič, Kenneth Bates and T. Somasundaram, "The Role of the Accent in Radio Advertisements to Ethnic Audiences: Does Emphasizing Ethnic Stereotypes Affect Spokesperson Credibility and Purchase Intention?", *Journal of Advertising Research*, Vol. 54, No. 4 (2014): 408.

[129] *Ibid.*

[130] *Ibid*.

[131] *Ibid*.

reactance if the product is stereotypical of the listeners' ethnicity. In other words, advertisers should be careful to avoid over-emphasising the stereotype (e.g. Hispanic people eat Mexican food), as it may result in potential backlash, such as reduced purchase intention, from some consumers, especially those who identify highly with the spokesperson".[132]

The effectiveness or otherwise of the use of ethnically-diverse accents is likely to depend on the context of an advertising campaign. There appears to be a relative lack of literature on the use of stereotyped accents, or the impact of their use in ads, and this could be a valuable avenue for future research.

Diversity, Inclusion, Representation and their Positive Effects

The literature highlighted the positive effects of increased racial and ethnic representation in advertising as well as non-stereotyped ads. Indeed, scholars have argued that ads are not only a way to promote products or services, but inclusive ads are seen to foster social integration.[133] When executed in a sensitive and accurate manner, an increase in representation is "important since people of all backgrounds are exposed to similar messages and therefore may internalise and incorporate them into their own psyches".[134]

How people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds are portrayed in advertising is not only about avoiding the use of negative stereotypes or increased representation, but as Lloyds Banking Group argues, ads should focus on showing positive role models, such as a Black female business leader, which can help to challenge negative tropes and defy long-standing stereotypes.[135] Credos further argues that "more thoughtful and informed portrayals will improve representation, and help brands succeed with different audiences", leading to positives developments for consumers, advertisers and society more widely.[136] Non-stereotyped representations, such as those showing a person in a way which does not adhere to the wider stereotype, can "prime consumers to think about other people, thereby positively impacting social connectedness and empathy, as well as the ad and brand.[137] Indeed, Daalmans and Odink highlighted the opinion of a well-known brand's CEO who believed that "progressive, non-stereotypical ads are 25% more effective than stereotyped ads […] these progressive ads are more liked and more engaging that stereotypical ads".[138]

With growing cultural diversity comes a need, on the part of advertisers, to understand "details about people's lives, culture, background and religion" which can be used to create accurate and meaningful portrayals of people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds in better ads

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[132] *Ibid*., 417.

[133] Tana Cristina Licsandrua and Charles Chi Cui, "Ethical marketing to the global millennial consumers: Challenges and opportunities", *Journal of Business Research*, Vol. 103 (2019): 261-274.

[134] *Ibid*.

[135] Lloyds Banking Group, "Championing Modern Britain", 2021; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/championing_modern_britain_lloyds_banking_group.pdf

[136] Credos, "The Whole Picture: How Advertising Portrays a Diverse Britain", 2014; https://adassoc.org.uk/credos/the-whole-picture-how-advertising-portrays-a-diverse-britain/

[137] Nina Åkestam, "Understanding Advertising Stereotypes Social and Brand-Related Effects of Stereotyped versus Non-Stereotyped Portrayals in Advertising", Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D., in Business Administration, Stockholm School of Economics, 2017.

[138] Serena Daalmans and Mariette Odink, "Stereotyped but Liked? A Content Analysis of the Presence and Stereotypical Portrayal of Minority Groups in Award-Winning Commercials", *Communication Research Reports*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (2019): 231-241.

which appeal more strongly to people.[139] The Muslim Council of Britain have argued that the Muslim community have created new drivers for growth, particularly through their faith requirements, such as halal food. Although not specifically in the context of advertising, they warn however that there is balance to be met, where consumers are recognised but any engagement should be genuine, credible and which avoids stereotypical assumptions about Muslim consumers, rather than any communications being insensitive or 'clunky'.[140]

Indeed, many organisations in the advertising industry, including advertisers[141], media companies[142] and other organisations[143], have undertaken or commissioned their own research to shine a spotlight on diversity and inclusion in advertising generally. The research suggests that there are not only positive benefits to consumers and advertisers when increasing diversity and inclusion in ads, but there is also a commercial basis for doing so. The Unstereotype Alliance argues that "consumers are seeking out brands that align with their values and are factoring these considerations into their purchasing behaviours" and there are clear commercial benefits for those companies who produce unstereotyped, inclusive content, but which also features "individuals from under-represented groups as authentic, empowered, and multi-dimensional".[144]

Lloyds Banking Group found that "69% of people said they would feel more favourable about a brand if it was more representative of modern Britain"[145] while an Adobe report found that 26% of UK consumers said that they are more likely to trust a brand that shows more diversity in ads".[146] Channel 4 found that representing different groups dramatically increases positivity around the brand[147], which was also reflected in ITV's own research, explaining that "effective advertising drives brand growth, and there's a diversity dividend available for brands who make all their consumers feel seen".[148]

These statistics and conclusions reached by the advertising industry itself are reflected in the literature sources as well. For advertisers themselves, a focus on increased inclusion and diversity in their marketing might not only support positive representation but also help them to engage with the changing economic position of racial or ethnic minorities in British society,

[139] Credos, "The Whole Picture: How Advertising Portrays a Diverse Britain", 2014; https://adassoc.org.uk/credos/the-whole-picture-how-advertising-portrays-a-diverse-britain/
[140] The Muslim Council of Britain, "Celebrating the Muslim Contribution to the UK economy", 2013; https://mcb.org.uk/report/muslimpound/
[141] Organisations such as Lloyds Banking Group.
[142] ITV, "Feeling Seen: How diverse advertising unites us", 2021; https://www.itvmedia.co.uk/itv-backing-business/feeling-seen-how-diverse-advertising-unites-us; Channel 4, "Mirror on the Industry", 2019; https://www.isba.org.uk/knowledge/channel-4-study-mirror-industry
[143] Organisations such as Unstereotype Alliance.
[144] Unstereotype Alliance, State of the Industry, 2021, 9; https://www.unstereotypealliance.org/en/resources/research-and-tools/state-of-the-industry-report
[145] Lloyds Banking Group, "Ethnicity in Advertising: Reflecting Modern Britain in 2018?", 5; https://www.lloydsbankinggroup.com/assets/pdfs/who-we-are/responsible-business/inclusion-and-diversity/lloyds_banking_group-ethnicity_in_advertising.pdf
[146] Adobe, found in Bonnie Chiu, "Addressing The Ad Industry's Sticky Problem With Race"; https://www.forbes.com/sites/bonniechiu/2019/07/16/addressing-the-ad-industrys-sticky-problem-with-race/?sh=6728b8c528d0
[147] Channel 4 Study, Mirror on the Industry, 2019; https://www.isba.org.uk/knowledge/channel-4-study-mirror-industry
[148] ITV, "Feeling Seen: How diverse advertising unites us", 2021, 71; https://www.itvmedia.co.uk/itv-backing-business/feeling-seen-how-diverse-advertising-unites-us

such as portraying them in positions of affluence and aspiration in travel marketing.[149] Indeed, being seen as a valued consumer by brands not only has an impact on individuals, but it could also have far reaching positive effects for the brand itself. There are opportunities for advertisers to acknowledge that consumers' wants and needs are different, and there is an opportunity to understand those differences which could translate into commercial success for the brand.

Summary of Findings

The Literature Review has sought to highlight some of the key debates in the academic study of racial and ethnic stereotyping in advertising. It has examined several theories related to the use of stereotypes in ads and their potential impact, as well considering the issues of objectification, sexualisation, religion and humour. Although the review is not a comprehensive survey of all the available literature, and while some sources have a North American focus rather than a UK specific focus, it does indicate there are several issues, such as the interplay between religion and race, or the use of humour, which would benefit from further academic study. Other issues, such as the potential impact of the objectification and sexualisation of racial and ethnic minorities, would also benefit from further academic research.

It is clear however that as part of the media landscape, advertising plays an important role in how people see themselves and others. It is not, as Davis notes, "merely a tool of commerce but is a potent social influencer which conveys and supports societal norms and values and disseminates them in conspicuous manners".[150] Stereotypes are often used in the construction of these representations, as shorthand for the communication of values and beliefs in a medium which generally holds an individual's attention for only the briefest of periods. Just as in society more widely, the use of stereotypes in advertising can have both positive and negative effects, to individuals, within and between different groups of people. Due to the potential for stereotypes in ads to have a negative effect, the literature also suggests there is the potential to cause harm to individuals and society, the impact of which may be amplified for consumers with a racial or ethnic background.

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[149] Dawn Burton and Mary Klemm, "Whiteness, ethnic minorities and advertising in travel brochures", *The Service Industries Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 5 (2011): 679-693.

[150] Judy Foster Davis, "Selling Whiteness? – A critical review of the literature on marketing and racism", *Journal of Marketing Management*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2017): 9.

Conclusions from the Call for Evidence and the Literature Review

The Call for Evidence and the Literature Review both sought to further explore issues relating to racial and ethnic minorities, such as their depiction or portrayal, in advertising. In drawing together evidence from stakeholders, consumers and academic research, the report was able to consider in greater depth themes previously identified, as well as highlighting a number of new, important and relevant issues as part of this work.

The report found that issues relating to race and ethnicity are not only wide-ranging and understandably important to consumers, but are nuanced, complex, often interlinked with one another and are not easily separated. The report found that the use of stereotypes is pervasive in advertising and in society more generally, but they may not be inherently harmful in themselves. However, the report also found that stereotypes can often be based on inaccurate assumptions or perceptions, and in particular, we found that racial and ethnic minorities are frequently depicted in a consistent manner which may not be authentic or representative.

Evidence in the report suggests that there is the potential for the use of stereotypes in advertising to cause serious or widespread offence, or harm, to consumers and society more generally. It suggests that racial and ethnic stereotypes, particularly when based on inaccurate or otherwise problematic depictions, can contribute to how people see themselves and others, with the potential to distort perceptions or influence attitudes, or lead to discrimination. It also suggests that the use of racial and ethnic stereotypes can limit people's possibilities, participation in society, or from reaching their full potential. The use of subtle stereotypes or unintended tropes in ads, even when done with the intention to challenge stereotypes or in a 'humorous' manner, can also have the potential to evoke strong associations with past trauma related to discrimination or racism. The potential for racial and ethnic stereotypes to cause harm could also be compounded when considering the intersectionality of consumers, such as their gender or religion, and the way in which they interact or how much importance is placed on different aspects of a consumer's identity, or when considered in conjunction with other issues such as objectification and sexualisation.

The report also found those within the advertising industry have independently undertaken their own research regarding race, ethnicity and stereotypes in advertising, many with a particular focus on diversity and inclusion, and which has resulted in positive steps being taken towards more representative advertising. The ability to foster social integration or positively influence perceptions of people as a result of advertising is powerful, and indeed, there are clear potential benefits to consumers and advertisers when making their advertising more diverse, inclusive or representative of consumers and society. This is also evident when done in an authentic manner, where the depiction of a racial or ethnic minority group, rather as a 'default' portrayal which lacks nuance or complexity, is seen to be accurate. Evidence in the report therefore suggests that advertising can not only be a force for good but has a significant role to play in terms of moving towards a more equal society for everyone.

Call for Evidence - Submissions Received from Organisations

Advertising Association

Stichting Reclame Code

The Guide Association (Girlguiding)

The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising

Call for Evidence - Submissions Received from Members of the Public

Member of the public (a)

Member of the public (b)

Member of the public (c)

Call for Evidence - Explanatory Background Notes

We were previously aware of, as part of the ASA's review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads in 2020, the advertisers that one stakeholder mentioned in their submission. We consider it is likely the advertisers mentioned by the stakeholder refer to the below cases. These cases have either been formally investigated or referred to the ASA Council with the recommendation that there should be no further investigation after Council decision (NAICD). We have included these cases here for context and background information, as well as referencing other cases or information where it may be helpful.

1. Telephonica UK Ltd t/a O2.

We previously received two complaints about a TV ad and which were presented to Council as an NAICD (case ref. G19-1038006).

The complainants objected that ads were offensive and racist as they stereotyped and culturally appropriated Japanese culture, and depicted English people as superior. Council noted that the Rugby World Cup took place in Japan this year [in 2019], and considered that the references to Japanese culture would be interpreted as a reference to the tournament. Whilst Council acknowledged the ad employed stereotypical aspects of Japanese culture, they considered that the ad did not mock or otherwise denigrate the cultural elements they used. Council also considered the White-painted armour to be a reference to the kit worn by the English Rugby Team, rather than a comment on race. Council therefore considered that the ad was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence.

This ad was included in the ASA's review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads in 2020.

2. Collect My Debt Ltd

We previously received one complaint about this ad which was formally investigated but not upheld (case ref. A18-460580).

The complainant, who believed that the ad targeted the Traveller community, challenged whether the ad was offensive. The ASA noted that the ad was titled "Traveller and Squatter Evictions" and featured an image of caravans. The web page explained the laws on trespasser eviction with an emphasis on the eviction of Travellers from private land. The bottom of the page also featured three customer testimonials which discussed their experiences of using Collect My Debt for the eviction of Travellers. We understood that the complainant was concerned that the ad encouraged an anti-Traveller rhetoric by targeting the Traveller community. However, we noted that the ad did not use negative or discriminatory language or tone in its description of the eviction service or its reference to Travellers. The ad focused on the eviction of trespassers from land and we considered that, in that context, consumers would generally appreciate that the advertiser would need to reference the eviction of Travellers as an example of the service they provided. Whilst we acknowledged that the some may find the ad distasteful, we concluded that the ad was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence.

This ad was included in the ASA's review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads in 2020.

3. Kabuto Foods Ltd

We previously received one complaint about this ad and which was formally investigated but not upheld (case ref. G13-1010841).

Four complainants challenged whether the ad was offensive, because it mocked other cultures and races. One complainant also challenged whether the ad encouraged harmful discriminatory behaviour or treatment. The ASA noted the scene in the ad was presented as an improvisational comedy sketch and considered the presentation of the actors made clear that the language used and the 'translations' were fictitious. We considered that the humour was derived from the fictitious translation, rather than from mocking the culture and race of others. Whilst we acknowledged that some viewers may find the ad distasteful, we did not consider it was likely to cause serious or widespread offence, or encourage harmful and discriminatory behaviour or treatment.

This ad was included in the ASA's review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads in 2020.

4. Compare The Market Ltd

We believe the stakeholder has raised this advertiser as an example, rather than specifically referring to this case, but we consider this is helpful information to include nonetheless.

We previously received one complaint about Compare The Market's advertising which was presented as an NAICD, discussed by the ASA Council and which was not upheld (case ref. A20-1077910). The case was presented to the ASA Council because we wished to gauge Council's view on where the boundaries of the ASA's work on racial and ethnic stereotyping in ads in relation to nationalities, including nationalities where White people are depicted, would sit.

The complainant, who objected to the use of the meerkat characters which they believed portrayed a ridiculing depiction of Russian people, challenged whether the ad was offensive, derogatory and racist. Council noted that the meerkat puppet had been characterised as historically being from Russia and therefore spoke with a Russian accent throughout the advertiser's long-running campaign. Council considered that there was no suggestion within the content of the ad that was likely to be interpreted as mocking or denigratory of Russian characteristics or culture. While Council acknowledged that some viewers might find the use of a Russian character in this way to be in poor taste, they concluded that the ad was unlikely to cause serious or widespread offence.

This ad will be included in the ASA's 2021 annual review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads.

5. We received one submission from Stichting Reclame Code, the advertising self-regulatory organisation in The Netherlands. They did not provide their own submission, but rather forwarded on a report by Bond van Adverteerders (Association of Advertisers), who Stichting Reclame Code explained are one of their major participants. Along with researchers from the Free University Amsterdam and Radboud University Nijmegen, Bond van Adverteerders conducted a study into the influence of advertising on the perception of people in relation to inclusion and racism. This document was forwarded to us in Dutch and which was translated initially using Google Translate. It was latterly also translated by a Dutch speaker internally and who was able to provide more context to the phraseology and historical events referenced in the report. While the document relates to the issues of inclusion and racism Dutch society, this report was included as the insights from it could be considered to be relevant to UK society.

6. Concerns raised by members of the public that they considered the representation, or numbers, of racial and ethnic minorities shown in ads to be unrepresentative of the UK's population and detrimental towards other racial groups in the Call for Evidence was also a

concern that was raised in the ASA review of racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads which was undertaken in 2020. Complaints about these issues were closed as no additional investigation (NAI), where the Executive had determined that no further action should be taken as the ad did not break the Advertising Rules on that basis the complainant had suggested. While levels of representation in ads are not regulated under the Codes, we previously considered that this may be useful intelligence for the advertising industry.

7. As a pro-active regulator, the ASA will undertake projects in order to further understand a sector or particular issue that may bear importance on how we regulate. The ASA also has a number of colleagues who, as part of their work, are specialists in a particular area of the Advertising Codes. As part of the Call for Evidence, we received submissions which not only discussed issues relating to racial and ethnic stereotypes in ads, but highlighted other concerns, such as those relating to body image. These concerns were forwarded onto the relevant internal specialists for their information and the inclusion in any related projects. You may wish to find out more about our Call for Evidence on Body Image here.

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