

# Missing the Modern Man In Ads?: How to Evolve Male & Female Interactions to Drive Creative Impact



# Meet The Experts



Yatisha Forde, Senior Director,  
Insights & Thought Leadership

**SEEHER ANA**



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President

**ABX** Advertising  
Benchmark Index

# Agenda

## 25 mins

- Intro to ABX and SeeHer
- The ABX Score and GEM®
- Why Ads Fall Short With Reflecting and Resonating With Women
- How To Evolve Male Depictions & Interactions to Align With Consumer Expectations

## 5 mins

- Inspiration: Best In Class Portrayals of Female and Male Characters

## 15 mins

- Workshop Activity: Advertising Evaluation

## 5 mins - Conclusion and Q&A

# The ABX Solution

Powered by a global syndicated database of newly launched in-market ads tested (500,000+) for their effectiveness — coupled with robust consumer and audience insights — we deliver the start-to-finish custom insights creative teams need to dramatically increase advertising impact and to make real-time informed decisions every step of the way.

# Measuring Multimedia Audiences 25+ Years

## Consultants to Industry Giants

Some of the largest advertising insights firms in the world turned to our founders for guidance, including Kantar, GfK Ipsos, and Nielsen.

## Largest Breadth of Channels

Unlike most who look at just TV and Digital, we look at all media types, including radio, podcasts, outdoor, cinema, FSI, magazines, in-store, product integration, movie trailers, and more.

## Research Partners to Most Trusted Industry Organizations

- RAB
- Association of National Advertisers (ANA)
- Out of Home Advertising Association of America (OAAA)
- Insights Association
- ESOMAR



THE DATA:

# ABX Index™

**Radio** Product Placement/Integration  
**Social TV** Outdoor  
Out of Home **Digital** Podcasts  
Cinema Online In Store  
Print Video **FSI**  
Direct Mail  
**Gaming** Audio

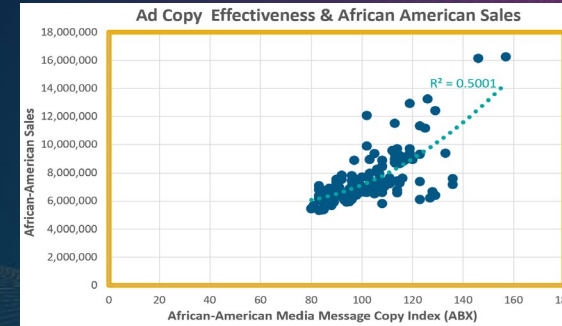
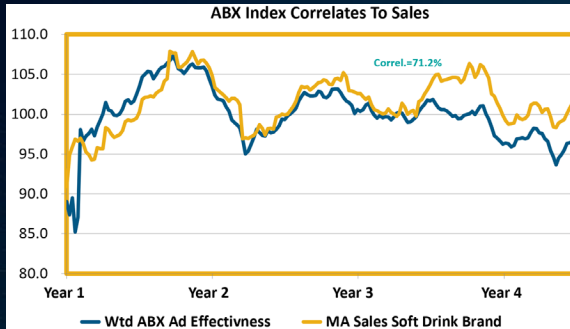
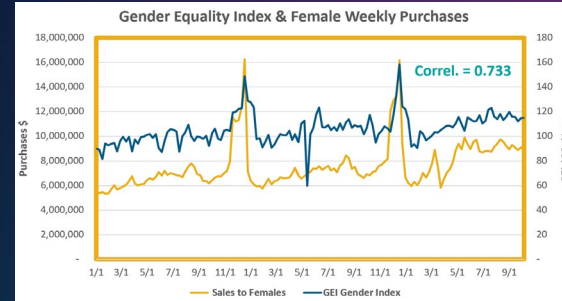
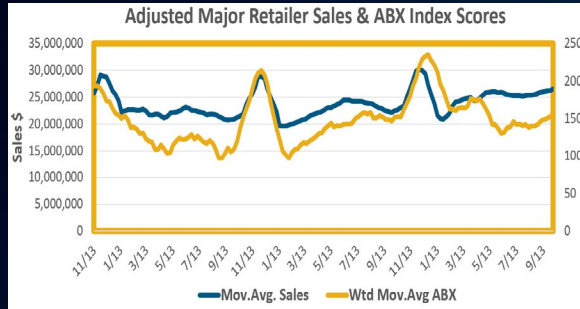
*We exhaustively test every single type of advertising creative across the globe using the identical methodology to create benchmarks so we can accurately and continually assess what drives ad success.*

*All media types are tested in the same survey enabling comparisons across platforms.*



*The same methodology & norms are used for pre-tests and in-market ad evaluations.*

# ABX Index™ correlates to sales again and again across all variables.



**HIGHLY PRESENTED**

**RESPECTFUL**

**APPROPRIATE**

**ROLE MODELS**

**ABX** Advertising  
Benchmark Index

**SEEHER ANA**

Pioneering Partners

**GEM®**

**The Global Gold Standard  
For Measuring the  
Effectiveness Of  
Portrayals In Advertising**



## How People Are Portrayed In Ads Matter to Consumers and Should Matter To Brands

67%

79%

% consumers - very important  
for holding their **ATTENTION**  
when watching ads

Characters

+

Storyline

=

**PORTRAYAL**

63%

73%

% consumers - very important in  
ads to drive **CONSIDERATION**  
for a product or service



## Consumer Opinion Is Mixed – What do they mean, exactly?

They (male and female characters) should interact in the way they are traditionally meant to interact, and neither should be disrespected or portrayed in a negative way. Men should be masculine; women should be feminine.

I think they need to leave men to being men and women to being women.

Break traditional gender roles.



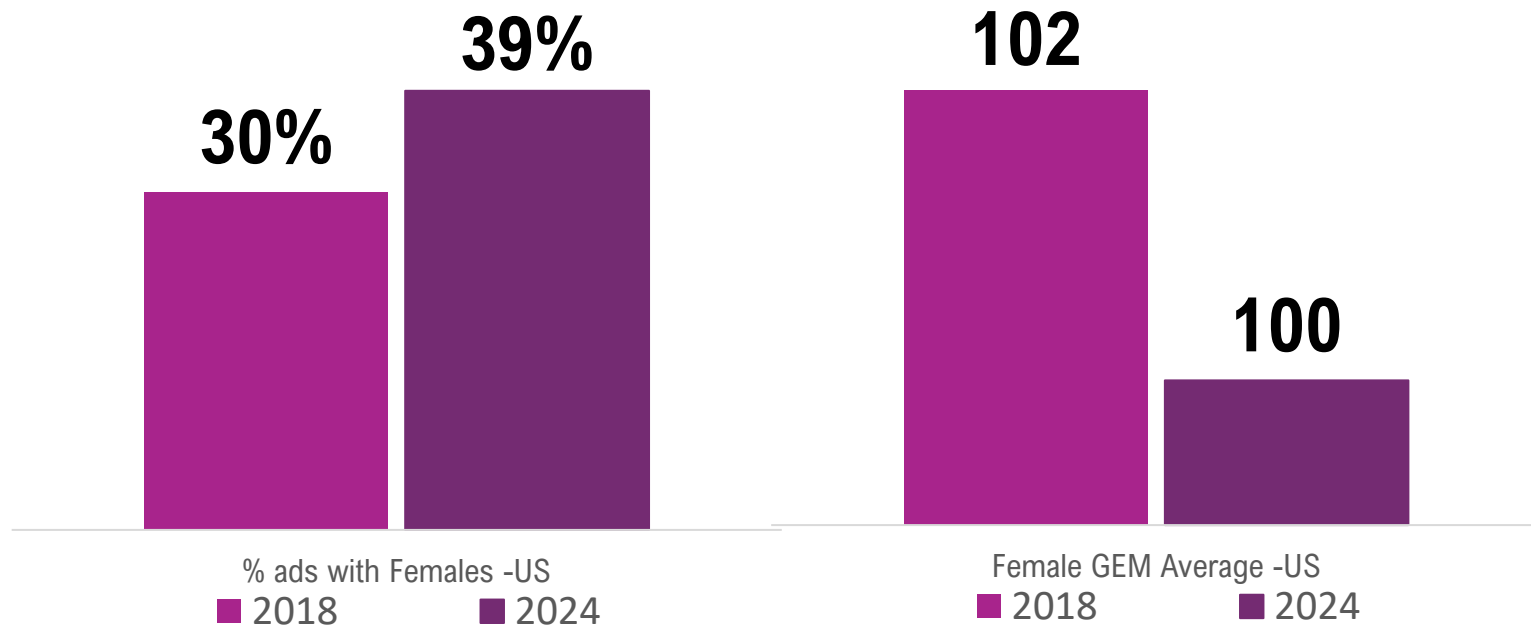
# Learning Goals:

- Understand the **current trends and consumer expectations** of female and male portrayals in advertising
- Analyze the various **ways male characters are depicted** and how they **influence perceptions on the male and female characters**
- Understand the **potential impact** of these interactions **on brand growth**
- Apply critical thinking **prompts and learnings**
- Create **portrayal frameworks** for replicating best practices

# Driving Ineffectiveness: Where Ads Fall Short With Reflecting And Resonating With Women



## Female Character Representation In Ads Is Below Par, and GEM® Scores Are Not Showing Improvement In the U.S.



QUESTION?

Why do female  
portrayals fall short?



## Female Character Portrayals Are Backsliding

*% consumers – say they have seen more females portrayed as*

|                      | 2021 | 2023 | % Change |
|----------------------|------|------|----------|
| Leaders              | 48%  | 30%  | -18      |
| Caretakers           | 52%  | 70%  | +18      |
| Strong               | 62%  | 55%  | -7       |
| Dainty               | 38%  | 45%  | +7       |
| In a Leading Role    | 46%  | 38%  | -8       |
| In a Supporting Role | 54%  | 63%  | +9       |

Consumer Expectations  
For Authenticity In  
Advertising Are Increasing

Stop downplaying

Get real

Be more inclusive

offerings

Be respectful

ages

races

ethnicities

identities

Stop assuming

What women can be

Real bodies

Real Women

Only 16% of women believe  
they are accurately portrayed  
(vs. 25% in 2021)



# What's Working: Female Portrayal Framework

## REPRESENTATION

**Women approved**  
authentic and  
relatable representation

**Body positivity**  
**Intersectional** identities  
**Cultural and linguistic**  
**diversity**  
**Accents**

## EQUITY

**Appropriate**  
**Respectful**  
**Integral** to story  
**Counter stereotypical**  
roles  
Gender **role reversal**  
**Equitable interactions**  
**Male allies**/supporters

## PORTRAYAL

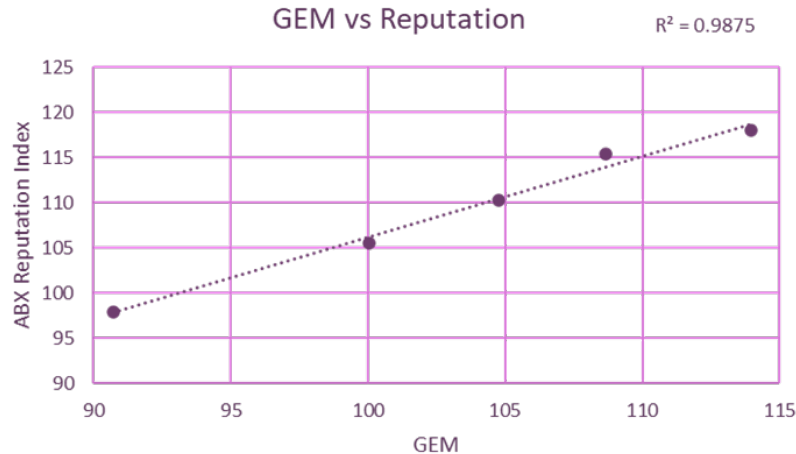
**Positive**  
**Real life** scenarios  
**Role Models**  
Pursuing **Passions**  
Exercising **Agency**  
Achieving **Goals**  
**Self realization** journey  
**Multi dimensional** roles

## Two Approaches To Portrayals of Women

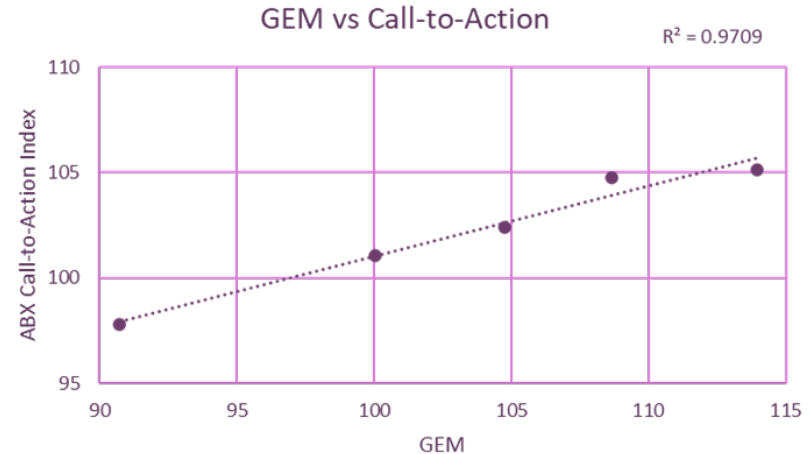


# Accurate Portrayals of Women In Ads Improve Brand Perceptions and Drive Actions

Each point increase in GEM® score =  
0.9 point increase in Brand Reputation



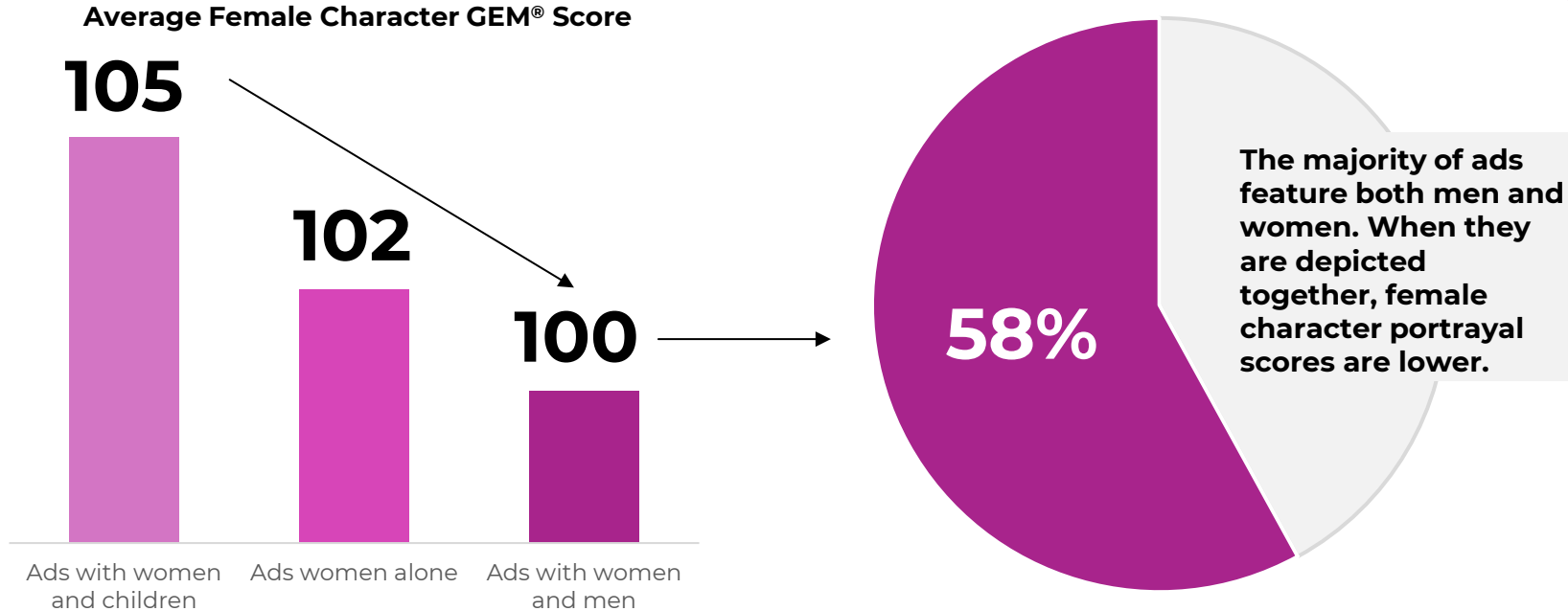
Each point increase in GEM® score =  
0.3 point increase in Call-to-Action



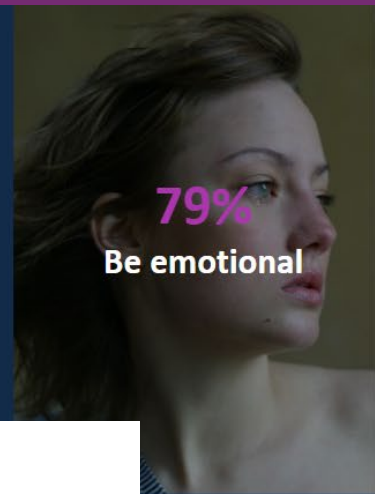
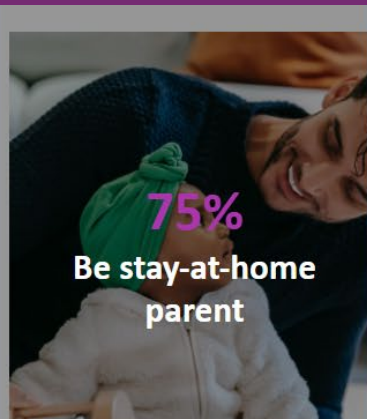
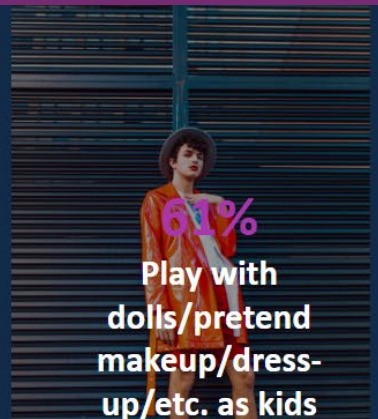
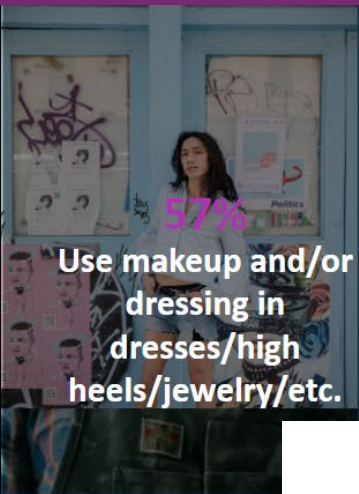
Is there a hidden  
reason why women's  
portrayals aren't more  
effective?



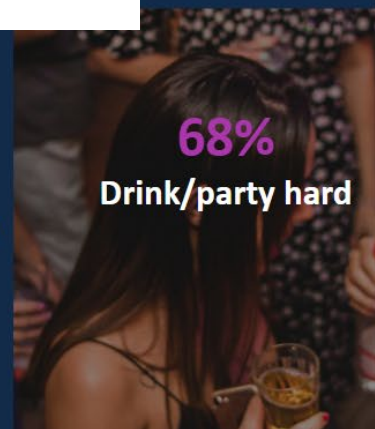
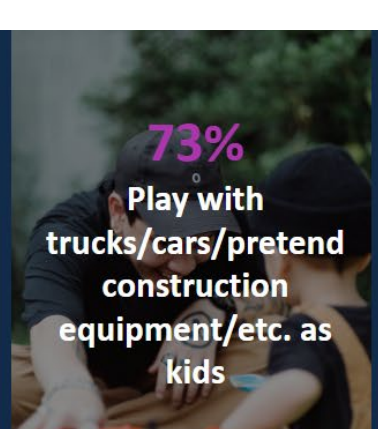
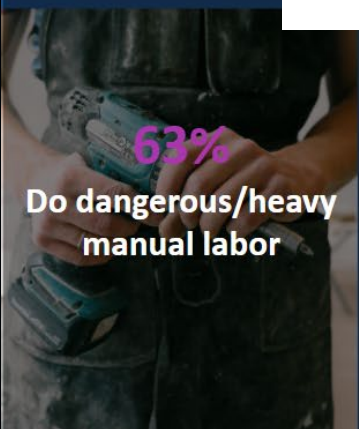
# Where Ads Fall Short: Modern Men Are Missing From Mixed Gender Ad Portrayals



# Gen Z Really Made Us Rethink Identity & Norms



It's ok for females and males to...



# Consumers Want Mutually Respectful and Collaborative Portrayals of Men and Women

“

Advertisers should see men and women as partners/collaborators if both are in an ad. Men should not be seen 'mansplaining' and woman should not be dismissive of men's feeling and efforts.

”

# Activating Insights:

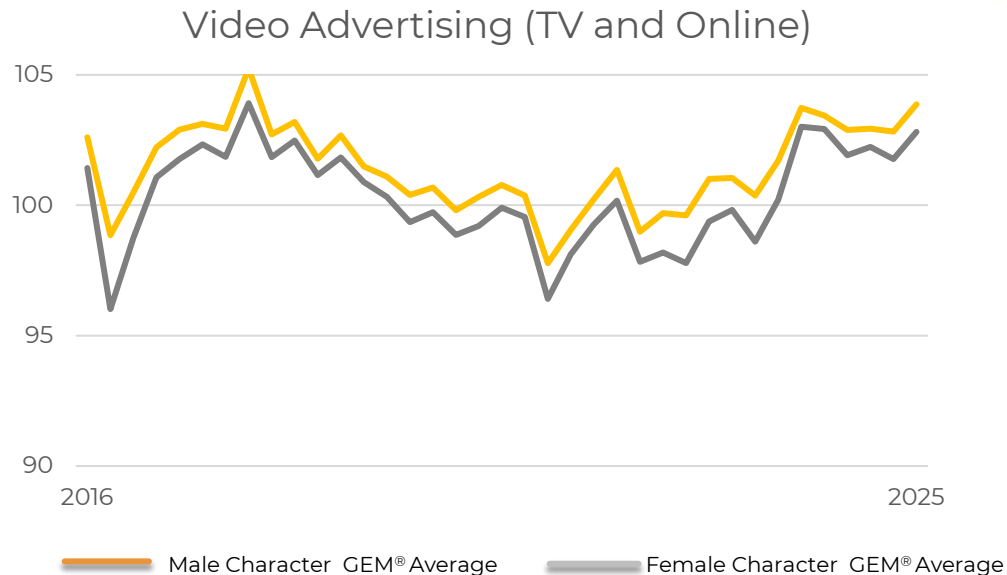
How To Evolve Male Depictions &  
Interactions to Align With Consumer  
Expectations



QUESTION?

How many of you think that male portrayals in ads could be improved?

# Existing High Societal Perceptions Typically Equate to Higher Portayal Scores For Male Characters vs. Female Characters



# ...But There Is Still Room To Improve Portrayals of Male Characters In Ads and Overall Effectiveness

|                                  | ABX Index | +/- | Male GEM® Index | +/- |
|----------------------------------|-----------|-----|-----------------|-----|
| Traditional Male + Modern Female | 98        |     | 106             |     |
| Modern Male                      | 107       | +9  | 111             | +5  |



# Consumers Want Marketers To Listen To Them For Cues On the Portrayals They Create For Men

“

Start basing it (portrayals) on what they ask their customers about. Real life. Not the stereotypes. The stereotypes are not relatable to me. They are not how real life works.

”

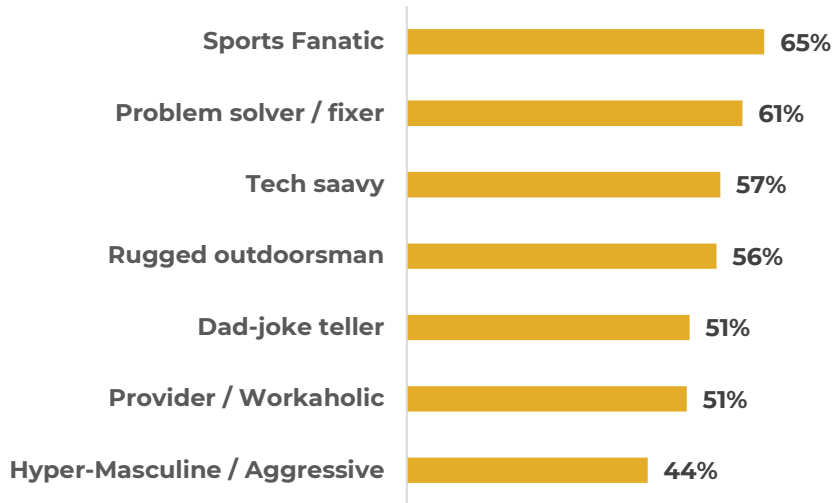
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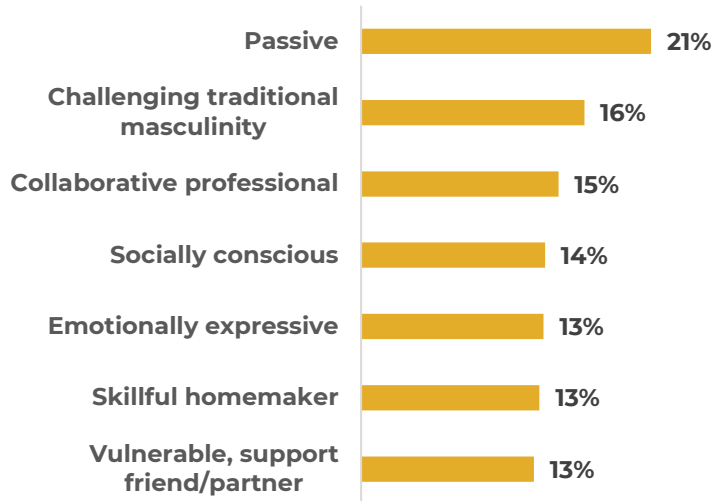
# What Do We Mean By Modern Men? Overdone vs. Uncommon Portrayals

## Men Are Portrayed Frequently In Ads As...



*% consumers – men are frequently portrayed*

## Men Are NOT Portrayed Frequently In Ads As...



*% consumers – men are portrayed “Too Much”*

Consumer Expectations  
For Modern Male  
Portrayals = Realism

**Make them real people**

**Less corny**

**Every people**

**Natural**

**Simple**



# Positive Interactions Between Male and Female Characters Elevate Consumer Perceptions of the Creative

| Positive Impact on Ad Perception  | % top 2 box |
|---|-------------|
| <i>Male character collaborates with a Woman character as an equal partner</i>                 | 65%         |
| Male character actively seeks and values the Woman character's perspective                    | 61%         |
| Male character shares his diverse interests in a conversation with a Woman character          | 58%         |
| Male character expresses his individuality and fluidity while engaging with a Woman character | 53%         |
| Male character plays a supporting or secondary role to a Woman character                      | 53%         |



# Portray Men as Respectful, Capable, Emotionally Intelligent, Well-Rounded Individuals



A man can be vulnerable and still strong, and there isn't much of that being shown in ads or even TV shows for that matter.

I think some of the things that can be done, include not stereotyping men as being foolish, dumb, or irrational while contrasting with them women who are rational and intelligent; not downplaying or ignoring the fact that many men like the arts rather than sports; and also, in general, stop using the interactions between men and women to merely make men look self-deprecating.

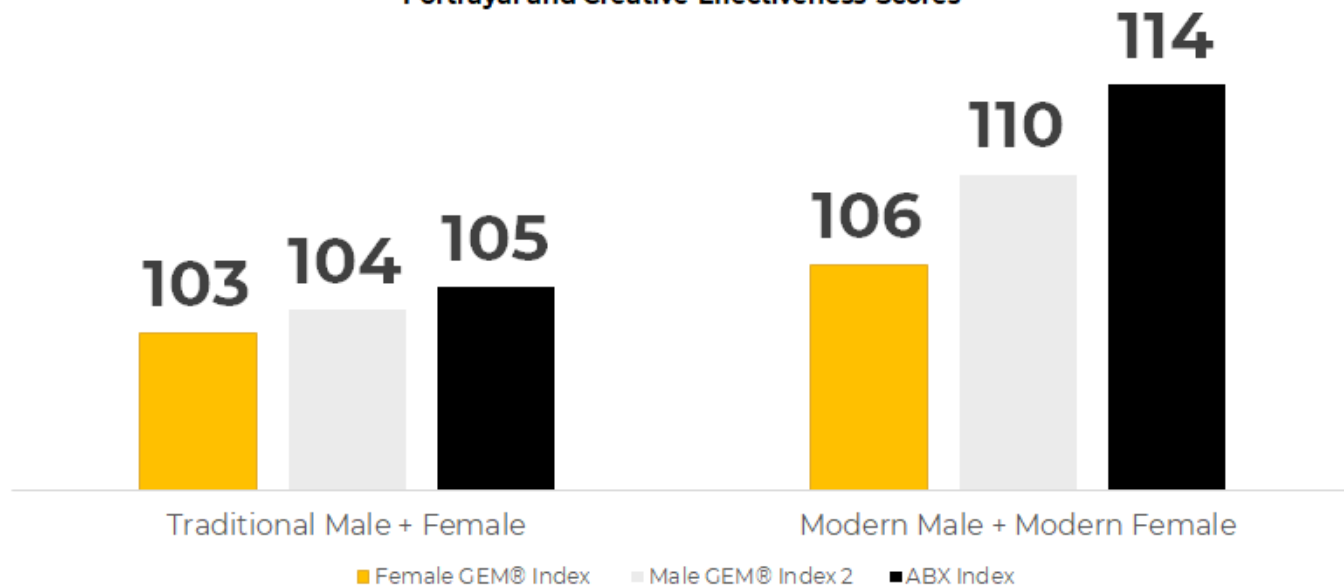
Sometimes advertisers think they have to make men appear goofy or inept in order to make women seem strong; it's not necessary. Both individuals can be strong characters without diminishing the role of the other.

I think portraying a man as a reasonable caring person and at the same time letting them keep their masculinity is a much-needed message.



# Pairing Modern Male and Female Characters Improves Both Characters' Scores and Overall Creative Effectiveness

Portrayal and Creative Effectiveness Scores



Traditional Male + Female

Modern Male + Modern Female

Female GEM® Index Male GEM® Index 2 ABX Index

# Inspiration:

Best In Class Portrayals Of  
Female and Male Characters  
In Advertising



A young girl with dark hair, wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, is hugging a man from behind. The man has dark hair and is wearing a dark jacket. The scene is dimly lit, with a warm, soft light source in the background, creating a tender and intimate atmosphere. The girl's face is partially visible as she looks down, and her arms are wrapped around the man's neck and shoulders.

G

Dream Job

Google Pixel  
SB Commercial



# Workshop Activity: Advertising Portrayal Evaluation

You Will Need Your Cell Phone Or Computer

Join Live Poll

Follow instructions on the next slide to join live polling on slido.com.

Ad Review

We will watch three ads. Consider what you have learned about portrayals.

Optimize

We will ask your opinions and get your feedback through a live poll.



**Join at [slido.com](https://slido.com)  
#3726352**



Prices are based on rating plans that vary by state. Coverage options are selected by the customer.  
Availability, amount of discounts and savings, and eligibility vary by state.  
State Farm • Bloomington, IL





**What words come to mind when you think of how the men were portrayed in this ad?**

A man and a woman are sleeping in a bed. The man, in the foreground, is wearing a blue t-shirt and has his mouth open as if snoring. The woman, in the background, is wearing a white t-shirt and is also sleeping. The scene is dimly lit with a blue tint.

sleep  number.

Sleep Better Together™

WITH SLEEP NUMBER®



**How highly do you think  
of the way the woman  
was presented in the  
ad?**

Lenovo  
YOGA

Yoga Book 9i





**How would you describe the interaction between the male and female character in this ad?**

# Conclusion



## There Is A Desire For Nuanced Portrayals of Men In Different Contexts

“

Advertisers should realize that the interactions between men and women are very different given different products, brands or services and take that in mind before producing advertisements.

”

# Conclusion:

## Modern Male Portrayal Framework

### REPRESENTATION

**Men approved**  
**Realistic** representation  
**Intersectional** identities

### EQUITY

**Mutual respect**  
**Collaborates** with  
women  
**Seeks women's**  
**perspectives**  
**Supporting**  
Balanced/**Well-Rounded**  
**Secondary** character

### PORTRAYAL

**Traditional** (sports fan,  
problem solver, techy,  
etc.), but not  
objectionable roles  
**Challenging norms**  
**High EQ**  
**Domestically skilled**  
**Socially Conscious**

For more information contact ABX at  
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For more information contact SeeHer at  
[seeherinfo@ana.net](mailto:seeherinfo@ana.net)

