



IPSOS VIEWS

ADVERTISING FOR BETTER REPRESENTATION

Creativity for all

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A business case for diversity, equity, and inclusion

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) have become a powerful tool through which innovative companies are changing their way to Brand Success. Picture this: an inclusive company, a melting pot of unique cultures, experiences, and perspectives, stands not merely a chance, but a 1.7 times greater chance of being innovative¹. Not just that, it also achieves a staggering 2.3 times more cash flow per employee¹. And it does not stop there. Teams that mix it up with diverse members make better decisions – 87% better to be exact². And if that was not enough, businesses with diverse management see their revenue shoot up by 19%³.

This is not just an impossible fantasy; it is the transformative power of DEI. And this is not just for company's end financial value; advertisers and brands also have an opportunity to gain real value from embracing DEI in their advertising. Advertisers need to step up and extend

their corporate policy message to the outside world. It is excellent that they embrace DEI policies internally but now is the time to express their message externally to the world, if they want to represent the people they want to appeal to.

Brands have an opportunity to gain real value from embracing DEI in their advertising – not just for purpose led and equity campaigns, but also for product and social creatives. To help advertisers get to better representation in advertising, and do right for business and society, in this paper, we dive into new findings of Ipsos' DEI metric, drawing on the learnings derived from Ipsos' creative evaluation solution, CreativeSpark. We outline the principles that marketers can adopt to increase DEI effectiveness and Brand Success, while exploring the perceived inclusivity and business returns, through a range of cases.

The representation gap in advertising

Advertising can play a role in connecting the audience with the people shown on screen. Stories can bring light to the real-life challenges people face based on their skin tone, religion, age, gender, ability and/or sexual orientation. However, there is a gap between representation on screen and the real-world population. While ethnic representation in US advertising is improving, disparities remain for age, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ individuals. For instance, there's a 12% difference in representation for people with disabilities and a 6% difference for LGBTQ+ individuals compared to the US population. This demonstrates a real opening for brands to cast more diverse characters in their advertisements.

Representation does not have to be an exact image of oneself, as there are so many ways one could identify. When we think about identity, there are so many dimensions, and all these things can come together to create the intersectionality of people, as we do not exist as just one identity, but many. Understanding this allows brands to have an opportunity to connect with more viewers and enable them to see themselves on screen. Brands can play a role in helping society see people for who they are by broadening the public's perception of these dimensions and normalizing them. From the Ipsos Equalities Index 2024 survey, we found that across 29 countries, 26% of people felt the media should be primarily responsible for taking actions to reduce inequalities; this was second behind the government at 67%⁴.

Source:
*N=4066 ad in Ipsos US Database

Sources for Population
<https://www.statista.com/topics/10961/lgbtq-in-the-us/#topicOverview> (LGBTQ+)

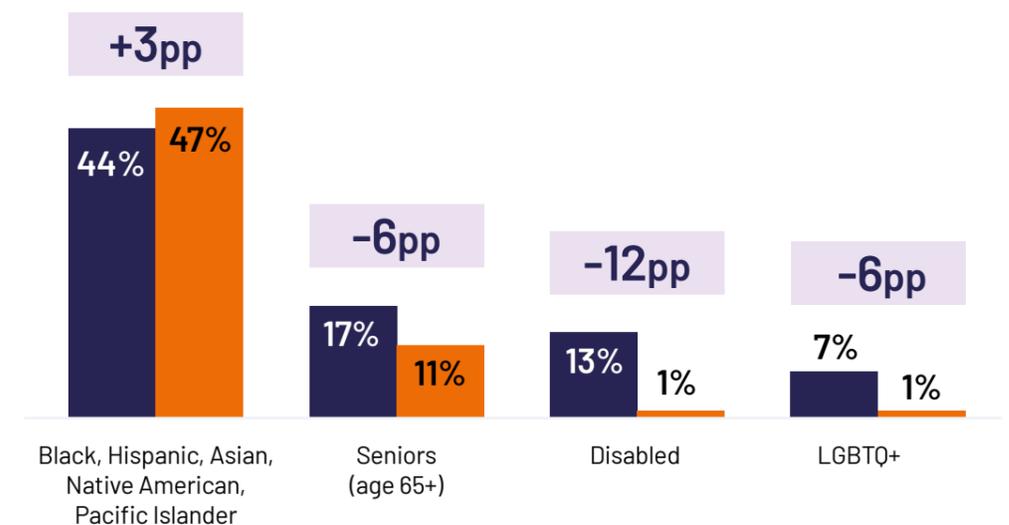
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225222> (Black, Hispanic, Asian, Native American, Pacific Islander)

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/US/RHI225222> (elderly)

<https://www.census.gov/library/stories/2023/06/disability-rates-higher-in-rural-areas-than-urban-areas.html> (disability)

Figure 1: Gap between the real world and the advertising world

Key: ■ US Population ■ Primary Role in Ads*



How can brands ensure they get representation right? Or ensure they get a signal that something may be off prior to going to air? By using Ipsos' proprietary DEI metric in our CreativeSpark ad evaluation solution, brands gain a globally consistent way of measuring whether the depiction of people in the creative is positive, inclusive, and non-stereotypical. This enables brands to have a broader understanding of representation and cultural differences at country levels.

Ipsos DEI metric components and why they matter

- **Is inclusive:**
 - Brands need to know how inclusive the respondents perceive their advertisements to be, so they can fairly represent diversity.
- **Shows people in a positive way:**
 - Brands can understand whether the people in the ad were perceived in a positive manner or not. This is important, as we know ads can shape the way people see themselves and others, so a positive portrayal can help drive change in society.

- **Shows people in a stereotypical way:**
 - This measure is reported on the bottom of the scale, so brands can know whether the people in the ad were portrayed in a non-stereotypical way. It can provide insight to help ensure we are challenging stereotypes and promoting positive change.

How can this DEI metric help brands get representation right in their advertising?

We will look at the relationship between our sales-validated effects metrics in CreativeSpark and the DEI metric to understand how brands can get representation right and whether, in doing so, there are positive sales lift and equity-building outcomes.



How can brands ensure they get representation right? Or ensure they get a signal that something may be off prior to going to air?

DEI in advertising: Good for society, good for brands

Within the dynamic domain of advertising, it is becoming increasingly evident that DEI plays an integral role in creative success and long-term brand relationships. When analyzing our global DEI metric and effects metrics relationships, we see that ads which score high on the DEI metric also score 56% higher than low performers on the Creative Effect Index (CEI), our composite effect metric validated to end in-market sales lift outcomes. We also see a similar relationship with long-term brand relationship, as ads that are high on the

DEI metric score 50% higher on the Equity Effect Index (EEI) than ads that were low on DEI⁵. This underscores the influence that DEI has on the brand-consumer dynamic. **The portrayal of individuals in a positive, inclusive, and non-stereotypical manner in advertising holds the potential not only for short-term behavior change, but also for fostering resilient, long-term connections with consumers. Signaling what is good for society is also good for the brand.**

Figure 2: Ipsos KPIs by DEI Index Terciles

Key: ■ Bottom Third DEI ■ Top Third DEI



Source: Ipsos Global Ad Testing Meta Analysis n=3022 ads



Ads which present diversity in an inclusive manner tend to create a more empathetic experience

In the Ipsos publication “[Misfits: How creativity in advertising sparks brand growth](#)”, we identified three advertising experiences that link to more effective short and long-term advertising outcomes. “**Creative Experiences**” is about making ads that are unique, fun, and worth sharing, which has a relationship with Memory Encoding effects. “**Creative Ideas**” aims to teach the audience something new and this has the strongest relationship with longer-term brand equity. “**Empathy & Fitting In**” is about making ads that really connect with what the audience likes and needs so they can relate to the ad experience on a personal level. And this experience, connected to an entertaining Creative Experience, results in +20% sales lift effects potential vs. the average of the Ipsos database.

When examining the relationship between audience perceptions and the DEI metric, two elements stand out. Ads that score high on DEI score 21% higher on empathy and 18% higher on creative ideas than ads that were low on DEI. While ads that score high on DEI score 13% higher on creative experience than ads that score low on DEI. These findings suggest that advertising that presents diversity in an inclusive manner tends to create a more empathetic ad experience, which is often linked to a stronger sales impact.

Within our dataset, we also tagged ads when the following people were in a primary role, present or not present in the ad: male, females, members of the LGBTQ+ community, people with disabilities, elderly individuals, and racial or ethnic minorities (such as Black, Indigenous, or people of color). Applying

Figure 3: Creativity Can Help You Put the “Extra” in “Ordinary”

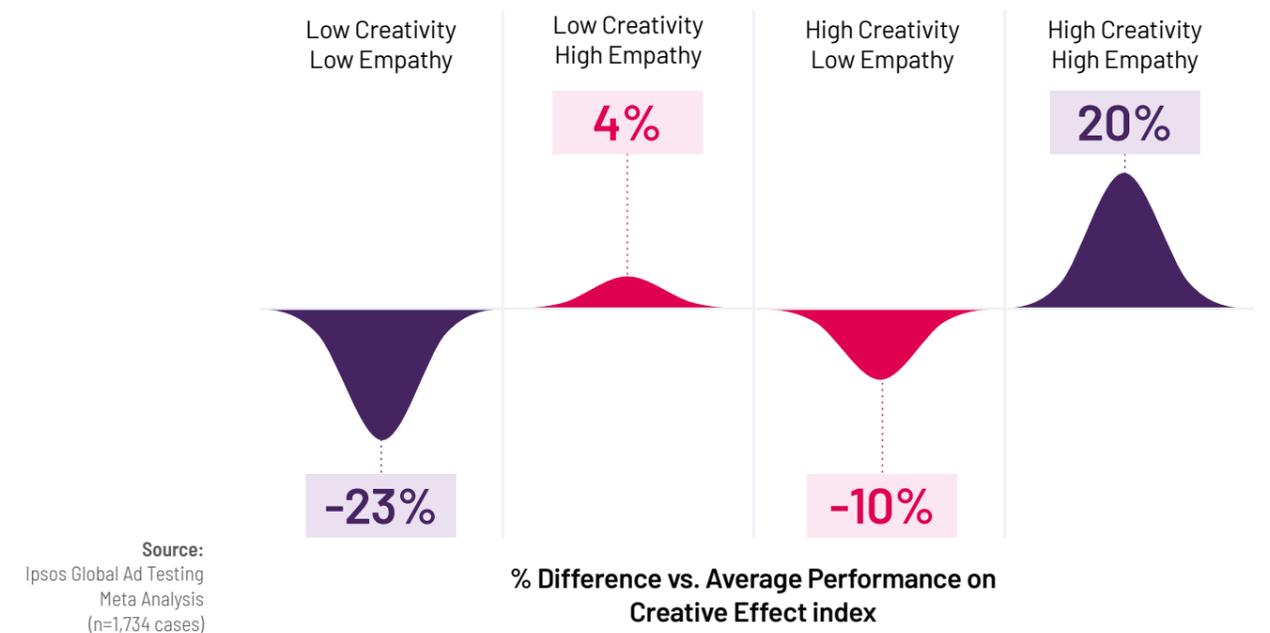


Figure 4: The Misfits Mindset

Key: ■ Creative Experiences ■ Empathy & Fitting In ■ Creative Ideas

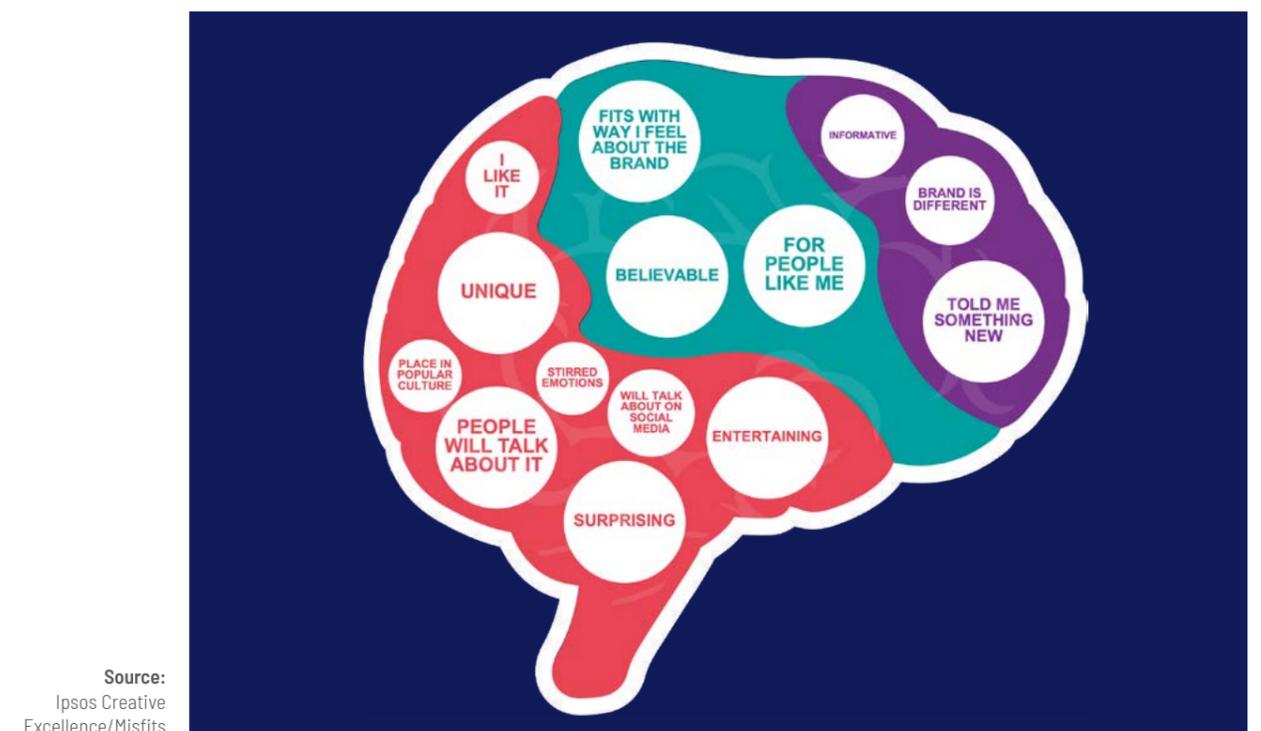
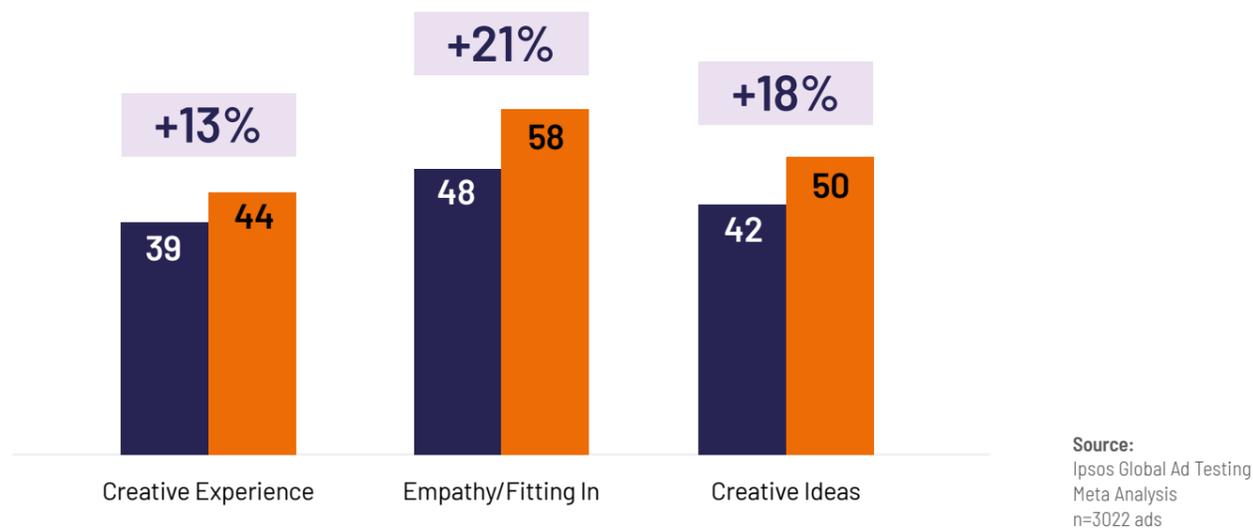


Figure 5: Misfit Creative Experiences

Key: ■ Bottom Third DEI ■ Top Third DEI



these meta-tags to the database, allows us to add more context to the metric to better understand the roles, scenarios, settings, and situations that are more likely to represent people in a positive, inclusive way.

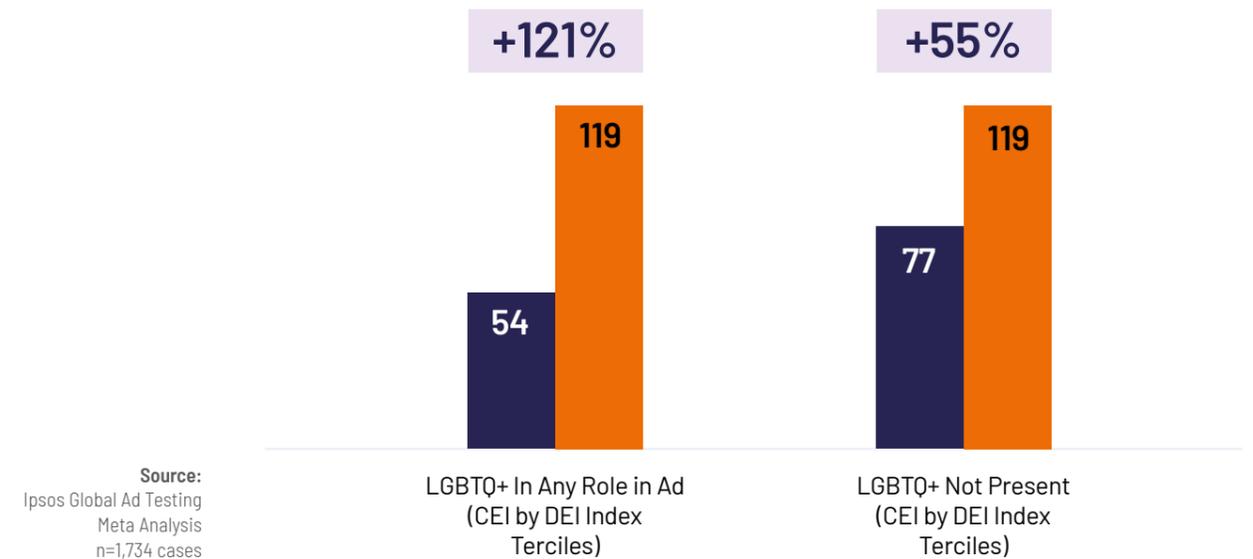
We classified ads based on whether individuals who identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community assumed any role in the ad vs. not present in the ad. We wanted to understand if the role an underrepresented group played in the ad would impact the DEI metric and/or the CEI score. Within our dataset, when a member of the LGBTQ+ community assumed any role in an ad, those ads scoring high on DEI scored 121% higher on CEI than those scoring low on DEI. In contrast, those that did not have any members from the LGBTQ+ community present in the ad only saw a +55% difference. This indicates that presenting any people in a positive, inclusive manner can impact sales positively. Further, when advertising portrays underrepresented groups in a positive,

inclusive, and non-stereotypical way, people may be more receptive to the ad, therefore having a stronger impact on sales outcomes.

It is important that representation is done right, as we noticed that ads scoring low on DEI also had low CEI scores, meaning the audience perceived the depiction of the people in the ad to be negative or stereotypical and having a lower impact on sales outcome. We can infer that while having diverse characters in advertising is crucial, brands cannot simply place them in an ad to check a box. To make the most impact on sales outcomes, these representations must be inclusive, positive, and devoid of stereotypes. Interestingly, we observed a similar trend with ads featuring elderly individuals, people with disabilities, and racial or ethnic minorities (such as Black, Indigenous, or people of color) in primary roles.

Figure 6: Impact of Positive Representation

Key: ■ Bottom Third DEI ■ Top Third DEI



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Brand Success

For advertising to be effective, it must get encoded and make a connection in the minds of consumers, so that it drives brand desire in the long run. Further, Ipsos has identified three pillars for brand success: shaping expectations, harnessing context, and acting with empathy.

Consumers form expectations based on prior brand engagements and anticipate consistent experiences. Brands must understand their operational context to fulfill immediate needs. Finally, empathy is crucial. Brands must deeply understand their audience, ensuring consumers feel seen and positively reflected, especially underrepresented groups who seek understanding and shared experiences.



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DEI advertisements in action

ORANGE: When moral investment pays off!

Source: CreativeSpark Video Evaluation, N=150, General population telecom decision makers, France, April 10-12, 2024

Image: Scan the QR code to watch the full ad



Figure 7: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Measure



Orange, a French telecommunications company and an official partner of the French Football Federation (FFF) collaborated with Marcel advertising agency to make a statement. They invested in a bold creative piece to demonstrate their commitment to a larger cause: making the soccer industry more inclusive. The ad showcases spectacular soccer moments, featuring extremely talented and famous players such as Kylian Mbappé, before revealing that the actual individuals behind those magical moments are players from the French women's soccer team. The continuous excitement, cleverly built from the beginning, doesn't lose intensity when the revelation occurs at the end of the ad. The creative reveals how the twist was produced with deepfake technology, using Flame software to replace faces (and the rest of the body to become a woman) to create surprising effects. Beyond the overwhelmingly positive global reactions generated by the viral campaign, which achieved a DEI score of 143, the 2024 Cannes Lions award-winning campaign was grounded in the principles of the Ipsos Brand Success framework:

01 **Context:** speaking openly about the current state of women's soccer and its challenges compared to men's soccer.

02 **Shaping Expectations:** by clearly promoting Orange's support for a spectacular, yet often overlooked sport like women's soccer, Orange raises expectations for its future.

03 **Demonstrating Empathy:** with greater empathy for the players, audience and the sport, the ad makes us realize the "greatness" we are missing and encourages us to support and watch more women's soccer.

The advertising aligns with Orange's corporate values, as emphasized by **Quentin Delobelle, Communication Director of Orange France:**

"When we decided to support the French women's team during the 2023 World Cup, we realized how much women's soccer was still underestimated, even criticized. What was important for Orange was to make this moral investment to repair this injustice and, more broadly, to fight for gender equality, a subject that is close to our brand's heart."

The highly acclaimed campaign has won multiple prestigious awards, including 2 Grand Prix, 3 Gold, 2 Silver and 3 Bronze at Cannes Lions 2024.⁶

SEPHORA: Diversity leveraged thanks to a deeper empathy



Image:
Scan the QR code
to watch the full ad

In its [new worldwide brand campaign](#), Sephora successfully addresses diversity in a way that perfectly aligns with the brand's identity, driving success for the beauty retailer. The cleverly constructed campaign takes place in an environment familiar to everyone: the mirrors in public restrooms. By capturing diverse moments of its core consumers' lives experienced in this setting, we see a succession of different people applying make-up: a businesswoman, a drag queen, a woman removing her wig to reveal the absence of hair. By focusing on the expressions of their individual faces, we can all relate to a shared feeling, revealing a strong sense of community. The music, "A Real Hero," used as the main theme for the movie Drive, brilliantly leverages a deeper connection thanks to the "You and Me" lyrics. The black and white pattern of the floor also subtly reminds us of the brand's logo colors, supporting Sephora's strategic brand mission: beauty exists in everyone, and the brand offers beauty products that help everyone feel confident, regardless of their personal life challenges.

With this campaign, Sephora conveys a strong sense of belonging by revealing the full force and beauty of diversity through the struggles of everyone. This sensitive feat is magnificently revealed in this commercial, whose tagline concludes the spot: "We belong to something beautiful." Once again, the risk-taking and the subtle highlighting of the emotions felt in the images magnify our empathy for profound human feelings while promoting the product.

“The use of the mirror holds a dual meaning for us: we wanted to restore its positive role, far from preconceptions and how beauty is dictated. But it is also the metaphorical embodiment of Sephora stores: an inclusive and welcoming place for everyone.”
Emilie Grimaldi, Associate Director, BETC

ASPERCREME®: A drag queen as a very credible and fun ambassador



Image:
Scan the QR code
to watch the full ad



But to speak efficiently about diversity, do all campaigns need to be institutional? What about promoting diversity when advertising a product in a short digital ad?

Sanofi's Aspercreme® creative cleverly captures our attention and convinces us about pain relief when wearing heels. The AsperQueen campaign features celebrity influencer Nicky Doll, who injects a positive and authentic portrayal of a drag queen, applying the spray-on product to remove the pain, helping to deliver a credible message effectively. By giving a primary role to a drag queen, the ad contributes to the visibility of the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, the ad was well received in the US, and received more than 30,000 YouTube views for its 'Werk It' creative. Since then, another ad was developed within the 'AsperQueen' campaign framework to promote a spray from the Aspercreme® range. This campaign garnered 30 million impressions

and is credited with a 70% increase of Aspercreme® Dry Spray sales on Amazon⁷.

Speaking about their multichannel, Award-winning campaign, **Bill Ulrick, Creative Excellence Lead, Sanofi CHC, North America** said:

“I think why AsperQueens worked so well is that its representation is authentic and was created with both the end consumer and product benefit at the heart of the campaign. The product insight of using Aspercreme® with high heels came from user generated content from social media. The creative idea of using Drag Queens was a great way to highlight the product benefits. What's a bigger torture test for high heel pain than a drag show?”

Conclusion

DEI plays a critical role in bridging the representation gap, fostering audience connection, and amplifying advertising impact. Committing to DEI within advertising goes beyond simply doing what is right for society; it is a strategic move that yields both immediate and long-term

benefits for brands. By displaying positive and inclusive representation in their advertising, brands can cultivate stronger connections with a wider audience, enhance brand perception, and drive sustainable growth.

A Key Driver of Advertising Impact: Positive Representation and Empathy

- 01 To maximize the effectiveness of advertising campaigns and positively influence sales outcomes, brands must prioritize not only diverse casting but also ensure that portrayals are inclusive, positive, and free from harmful stereotypes.
- 02 Advertising that presents diversity in an inclusive manner tends to create a more empathetic ad experience, which is often linked to a stronger sales impact.
- 03 Positive and inclusive representation of diverse characters in advertising is crucial for positively impacting brand perception and driving sales growth, and can be more impactful than not having them present.
- 04 Creativity is a key driver of advertising effectiveness, and this holds just as true when applying a DEI lens. Drawing on the main learnings from Ipsos' Misfits work, we know the power of creativity and empathy can significantly boost short-term sales performance. By finding the sweet spot between a brand's core values, creative expression, and a deep understanding of the target audience,

advertisers can create truly impactful and authentic experiences.

The Ipsos DEI metric offers a measure for brands to gauge the perceived inclusivity, positivity, and non-stereotypical depiction of people in their advertisements. It presents compelling evidence of the relation between high DEI scores and enhanced business outcomes, both in short-term sales and long-term brand relationships. DEI is not merely a social responsibility for brands but a strategic imperative that contributes to their growth and sustainability.



Committing to DEI within advertising goes *beyond* simply doing what is right for society; it is a strategic move that yields both immediate and long-term benefits for brands."

Endnotes

- 1 [Why Diversity and Inclusion Has Become a Business Priority](#), Josh Bersin
- 2 <https://www.etu.co/resources/dei-statistics>, PPM
- 3 [How Diverse Leadership Teams Boost Innovation](#) (bcg.com)
- 4 Ipsos Global Ad Testing, Meta Analysis n=3022 ads
- 5 Ipsos Equalities Index 2024, Base 21,759 online adults under the age of 75, interviewed 23 Feb - 8 Mar. 2024.)
- 6 <https://www.cbnews.fr/creation/image-cannes-lions-2024-marcel-remporte-grand-prix-film-85600>
- 7 <https://shortyawards.com/15th/asperqueens>

Further Reading

- Ipsos. [Women in Advertising](#)
- Ipsos. [Making Belonging Joyful: Inclusive representation in advertising to grow brands](#)
- Ipsos and SeeHer. [Strive for More](#)
- Ipsos. [Bridging the divide through positive portrayal in advertising](#)
- Ipsos. [The Vibrant Fringes: Spotting opportunities beyond the mainstream](#)
- Ipsos. [The Ipsos Equalities Index 2024](#)
- The Ceo Magazine: [Companies embracing diversity are reaping the benefits like never before](#)



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