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IS IT THE END OF THE GENDER AGENDA?

MAY 2017

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Advertising in which **women** are accurately portrayed generates significantly more **awareness, recall**, and **purchase intent** than ads in which they are not. Women are responsible for **9 out of 10 purchases** in the household and they make the final decision in **80% of purchases**, which makes a persuasive argument for brands to value and understand them.

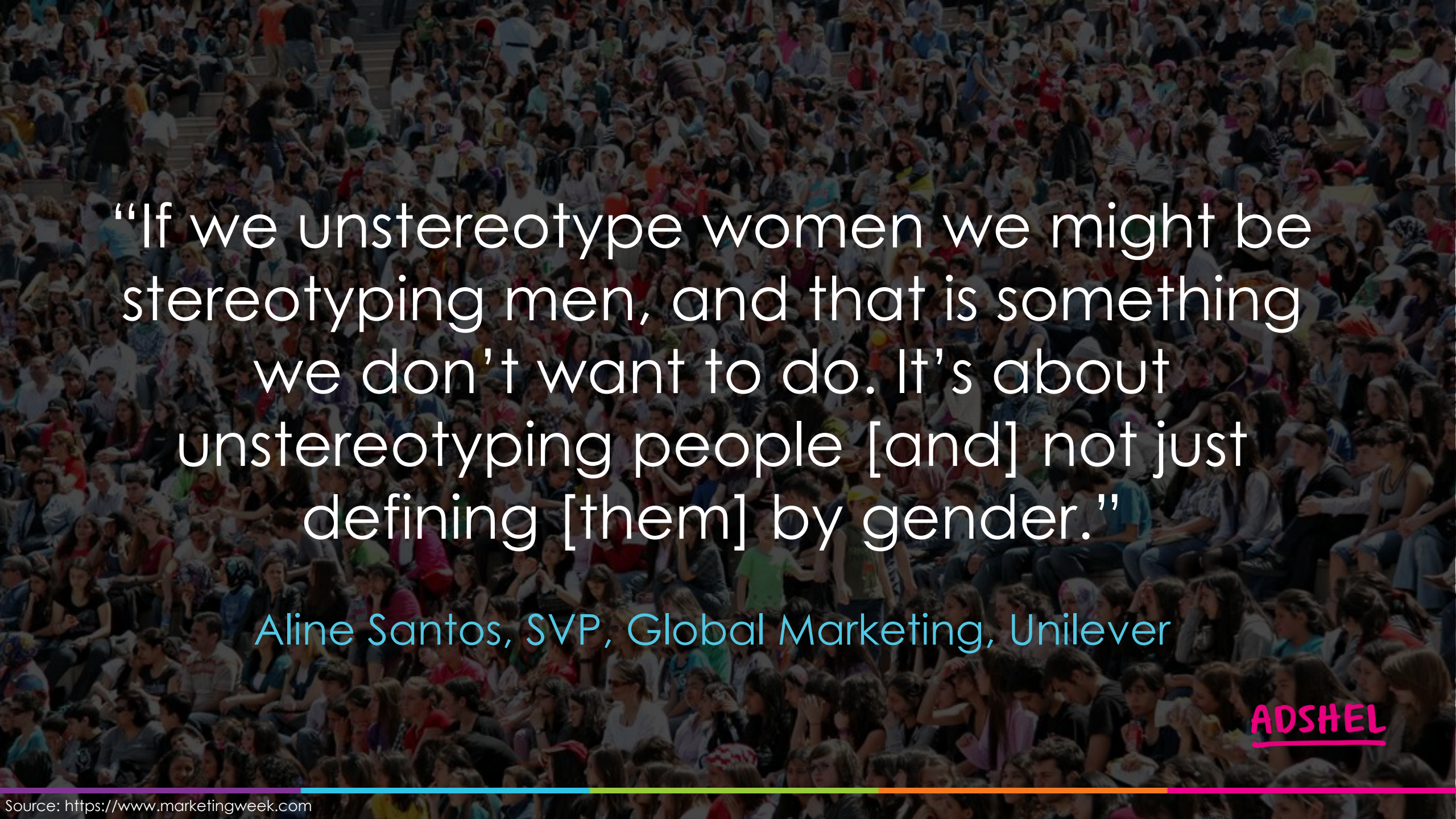
Across the globe, women's rights, opportunities and freedom of expression differ enormously. Many people are increasingly willing to **challenge** established gender stereotypes, **speak out** against oppression and **demand** products, services and campaigns that meet, can be tailored to, or reflect new aspirations and multi-faceted lifestyle needs.

Gender stereotyping is still prevalent in advertising and some pivotal moments in recent history have challenged the world's consciousness around gender treatment in advertising.

With this in mind ... is it still relevant to still segment by gender? Or is this the end of the gender agenda?

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“If we unstereotype women we might be stereotyping men, and that is something we don’t want to do. It’s about unstereotyping people [and] not just defining [them] by gender.”

Aline Santos, SVP, Global Marketing, Unilever

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WHY NOW?

NEW LEADERS

High profile women in positions of power are speaking out, encouraging girls and women to work together for the common good thus fostering a capacity for change.

SOCIAL AMPLIFICATION

Social media has amplified sexism and exponentially galvanised social action around international incidents, from the Malala Yousafzai shooting to the Boko Haram schoolgirl abduction. Gender issues can now go viral, swiftly and loudly.

REALISM, PLEASE

Tired of retouched images and idealised perceptions of beauty, women are increasingly seeking brands that offer a more realistic representation of femininity and modern life.

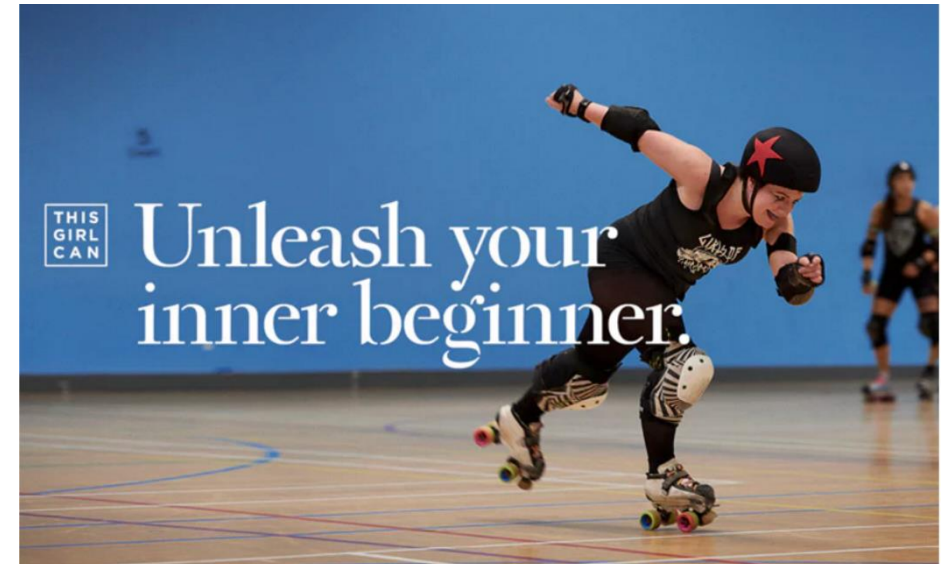
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CHALLENGING NORMS: WOMEN OF ALL SHAPES & SIZES

The unrealistic portrayal of women in advertising was challenged by the groundbreaking **Sport England's 'This Girl Can'** campaign featuring women of all shapes, sizes, ages and ethnicities. It might not appear revolutionary, but the campaign looked beyond the photo-shopped, unrealistic, unattainable female form usually featured in advertising, to feature raw, real and aspirational women. Sport England found the extraordinary in the ordinary which resonated with millions of women. This move to real imagery was a significant shift in omitting female stereotypes in advertising.



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CHALLENGING TRADITION: 'LEFTOVER WOMEN' UNITE

April 2016 saw Chinese luxury skincare brand SK-II launch a campaign challenging the term 'leftover women' (a derogatory term for unmarried Chinese women in their mid-20s). The campaign included a four-minute film featuring women who are independent, self-sufficient and proudly single. After the video notched up more than 11 million global views, SK-II continued the debate in three films featuring in-depth interviews with the stars of the original film and their parents. This advertising campaign not only challenged cultural norms but also the stereotypical representation of young, single females in China.



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CHALLENGING THE PAST: REINVENTING ADVERTISING

In March 2017, beer brand, Skol ran a campaign to address its history of sexist Skol posters which featured semi-clad women, subservient to its male audience. Recognising this type of advertising was no longer relevant and reinforced gender stereotypes, Skol commissioned six female artists known for their involvement in feminist issues, to reinvent the Skol posters for the modern society. This was a first for a beer brand and gained praise not only for its repositioning of women in its advertising but also its portrayal of men.



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CHALLENGING STEREOTYPES: #ILOOKLIKEANENGINEER

#ILookLikeAnEngineer campaign all started with Isis Wenger, an engineer at tech company OneLogin. After she was featured in an advertisement for OneLogin, people began questioning if she actually worked for the company. Wegner was shocked at the sexist and derogatory responses. She is an engineer, and was surprised that anyone could think that all engineers look the same. To redirect the conversation, she started the #ILookLikeAnEngineer campaign on Twitter. Within days, it had gone viral. Even today, it is still used to question stereotypes and reinforce the diversity of roles occupied by women and men.



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CHALLENGING BARRIERS: JOB PLATFORM AVOIDS BIAS

Interviewing.io, a US-developed platform for engineers to practice technical job interviews, announced a feature that disguises both the interviewer's and candidate's voices. Using Twilio's cloud communications technology and proprietary voice software, the service alters voices to sound androgynous, add synthetic elements or sound like animals to eliminate interview bias. Users can reveal their identities should they want the interview process to continue. The goal is to recruit without any gender bias over the longer term. As of Q2 2016, the voice-masking feature was in private beta.



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WHAT NEXT?

ANY COLOR BUT PINK

Advertising that challenges gender stereotypes and addresses issues that matter to female consumers will drive for valuable mutual engagement. (F)EMPOWERMENT to increasingly feature in every aspect of consumer strategy, from product to marketing to engagement.

FEARLESS MATURIALISM

Truly impactful campaigns will combine shock with realisation. Maturalism (mature materialism) will fearlessly break with tradition through daring and diverse campaigns in order to move with (and ahead of) societal culture.

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WHAT NEXT?

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP

Advertisers will have the opportunity to lift and lead thinking around marketing creative based on gender. Those who succeed will find a way to break stereotypes whilst positively shaping gender perceptions. Keep an eye out for the outcomes of Adshel's recent Roundtables discussing the gender agenda with business leaders.

CHALLENGES TO UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Brand damaging campaigns will fuel a push to question advertising strategy thus challenging ingrained and unconscious gender bias. There will be a need for bravery to identify incorrect gender assumptions in the ideation process before taking advertising to the masses.

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SO IS IT THE END OF THE GENDER AGENDA?

there are more
than 2 genders

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Thank you

For more information on
trends to watch in 2017,
contact us today

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