

# Being relevant

Over the last 12 months, there has been a spate of global ads and brand campaigns that purport to promote positive female empowerment, like Pantene's Not Sorry, CoverGirl's Girls Can, Always' #Like a Girl, and Under Armour's I Will What I Want, but marketing to women doesn't have to be overtly about gender or women's issues, **Maha Obeid** reveals.

**Brands need** to be wary of jumping on the "empowerment bandwagon", according to Debbie Spence, strategy director at strategic brand and design practice Designworks.

Spence said Always' #LikeAGirl campaign, which focused on puberty education, showed the positive impact brands can have in society, but when other brands try to emulate it without having a cause "it's the empty empowerment bandwagon". Her colleague and practice creative director, Clinton Duncan, believes the ad went beyond empowering young girls.

"It wasn't about telling women that they can feel empowered, it was actually about calling attention to our own blinkered stereotypes. That's more useful than telling women they can feel empowered. They were empowered from when they took their first breath," he says.

On the other end of the spectrum, Veet's Don't Risk Dudeness campaign came under fire for ridiculing both men and women. Elizabeth Wilmott, partner and creative director at Melbourne-based agency Girl, said the campaign was a good example of the need for the health and beauty category to go beyond "femvertising".

"For female-positive advertising to move forward and create a real shift in the way marketers and society think about women, brands dabbling in femvertising need to build up their credibility and insights into the lives of women and girls, and truly embrace the power of creating a strong connection with a female customer base," Wilmott says.

While she believes Australia is "dragging the chain" compared to overseas trends, Linda



Covergirl's 'Girls Can'



Libra's 'I Am Fearless' features Megan Washington



Millers' Seeing Me Project

McGregor, a pioneer in marketing to women and the founder of All About Eve, believes ANZ has taken a positive step with its Smart Girls film directed by Jane Campion, to raise awareness about finance for women, and its #Letsmakeitequal movement.

She says the key to the success of campaigns like ANZ Women is going beyond "Wave 1", which is understanding triggers and hot topics for women. She also advocates having "a consistent long-term message".

"What we don't think we're seeing as much of as we would like is those brands not just talking about a subject, but actually being relevant to that subject and ultimately getting people to take action. So I think you'll get a lot of women, that if you showed them that, they'd go 'Oh that's fantastic, I love it, it makes me feel warm and fuzzy about ANZ', but will it make them change their super options, will it make them switch to ANZ bank?" McGregor questions.

## Staid stereotypes

Fashion retailer Millers didn't have to look too far to question attitudes about its product. The company tapped into its three million-strong member database to conduct research about how women aged 40+ across Australia and New Zealand felt about their representation in the popular media.

Of the 4P298 women surveyed in July 2015 for the 40+ Woman Study, 76% said it is important that women their age are appropriately represented in popular media and 74% said women their own age are currently under-represented. The top words used to describe their portrayal were 'old', 'elderly', 'unimportant', 'frumpy', 'invisible', 'unfashionable' and 'dowdy'.

The findings prompted Millers to launch the Seeing Me Project on 7 September, a pledge to use customers in advertising, combined with a digital community hub for 40+ women. Jane McNally, Millers brand director, said the research revealed a disconnect between the portrayal of 40+ women in the media

## Category focus - money and motors

**According to** Venus Communications' research arm, Venus Lab, 75% of women conduct equal or more car research than their partner. Venus director Bec Brideson says automotive ads aren't necessarily masculine and she has seen a marked improvement since starting at the agency in 2004.

"It was rare to see a woman behind a wheel, normally they would be the passenger so at least automotives have understood that you do have to reflect who your audience truly is," she says. "But there is definitely room for improvement

there as well because the benefits and features of automotive that men would enjoy compared to women are completely different."

Banks are another culprit. Most major banks have specialists whose focus is on marketing to women, but most of the efforts tend to go into setting up specialised communities targeting women - CommBank's Women In Focus scheme or Westpac's Ruby Connection are examples - but it rarely emerges in a mainstream advertising approach. This anecdote, from one anonymous advertiser, shows how afraid the banks are to

make it mainstream. Despite knowing that up to 75% of decisions on home loans are made by women, while briefing creative agencies to target that demo, *AdNews* hears that someone at the banks at the last minute "always shits themselves" that the ad that's been created doesn't target the other 25% - men. It results in the ad being reformulated to be agnostic and to appeal to men and women.

"It fails straight away because as soon as you lose that single focus, you dilute the message," he reveals tellingly. ●



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and how they felt about themselves, when 85% are feeling younger than their years and 88% rated “feeling healthy” as very important.

“I think there is this underlying - I suppose this tension - between the fact they’re feeling great and healthier and younger and yet the portrayal of this age group in the media hasn’t moved on. So what we wanted to do with the Seeing Me campaign was actually say ‘do you know what, we do have very beautiful women in this age group - they’ve all got a fantastic story to tell.’”

While offending some with its play on words with “sheet”, Venus Communications’ This is The Good Sheet campaign for Handee Ultra was a winner when it came to challenging the conventions of advertising to women.

According to founder and director Bec Brideson, opening the TVC on a son cooking dinner for his mum was something that resonated with women in the agency’s research groups. “They called it out as being a fresh approach to old stereotypes,” Brideson says.

### Femvertising fail

For Unicharm Australia, the dangers of drawing on stereotypes in the feminine care category saw an international backlash against its SOFY BeFresh campaign, created by J Walter Thompson Melbourne, which launched the brand to market in August.

It’s been criticised for “fat- and period-shaming” and Unicharm issued an apology after the ad was labelled fat-phobic for portraying a woman and the bigger alter ego that appears when she’s on her period. But Libra’s I Am Fearless campaign by Clemenger BBDO Melbourne, which launched in

July, struck a chord with women in their 20s. As part of the campaign, Megan Washington, Miranda Tapsell and Sammy Veall talk about facing their deepest fear. The campaign’s senior copywriter Hilary Badgar says the fact that the women featured are all very different contributed to the campaign’s success. “I think people have responded very positively to seeing the diversity in advertising. That’s something that was really important,” she says.

While the predominantly female team at Clems was coincidental, Designworks’ Duncan, warns against taking a gender segmented approach. Duncan believes the best person to market to women is “whoever’s got the best ideas, whoever’s best at their job”. Rather than having a “superficial” approach to putting together a female team to work on a brief, advertisers should be identifying the kind of role models women relate to.

Internationally, there is a thirst for strong female role models. US comedian Amy Schumer stood out as an advocate for independent women in her movie Trainwreck and was lauded by the *New York Post* as “a new voice”. According to US marketing to women expert Kat Gordon, Schumer’s appeal isn’t based on her age or marital status, it’s “because she speaks her mind and doesn’t cave to the pressures of society to be polite or skinny”. Gordon, who activated the gender diversity issue through The 3% Conference, says Schumer’s approach is refreshing.

“You can extrapolate that to the ‘busy mums’ and encourage brands to depict women who are rewriting the ‘rules’ of what motherhood looks like; fatherhood, too,” she says.

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# SPECIAL REPORT: MARKETING TO WOMEN

## Our media habits

Women are gravitating to media created by women, according to Pia Coyle, head of amplification and trade at Ikon Communications, part of the STW Group. "Women are empowered to personalise and curate the media they consume. There is definitely a trend toward embracing media that is created by women, for women," Coyle says. Websites like GrittyPretty.com, founded by Australian beauty editor Eleanor Pendleton in 2010, have appealed to both Australian women and lucrative advertisers, like Chanel. She told the recent CURVY Creative Women's Conference in Sydney, it offers "no fuss" beauty advice and uses technology, including animation, to "bring products to life" for women. The site's success led to the launch of the online, quarterly *Gritty Pretty* magazine in December 2014. The August 2015 issue, featuring the Lara Bingle exclusive, doubled its audience. But, Ikon's head of content and production, Natalie Musico, points out that while digital is on the rise and TV is in decline for some demos, over-45 women's habits haven't

changed significantly when it comes to TV viewing. This is echoed by Adam Cooney, head of strategy at Nunn Media, who says media consumption for women aged 18-29 and women 40-64 is "quite different". According to Roy Morgan' Single Source for April 2014-March 2015, the internet topped heavy media consumption for women 18-29, compared to TV taking the top spot for women 40-64.

There is no silver bullet, however, when it comes to reaching a female audience. Girl's campaign for endota spa launched on 13 September in print and radio, followed by a social campaign a fortnight later. Wilmott, explains "we didn't start off by asking what media should we use". Instead, the team worked around women's behaviour, such as listening to the radio at 3pm, reading a magazine in their down time and connecting with family on Facebook.

It fits Bauer's research which recently found that the new "peak" for women interacting with its content, whether it's in print or digital, is 9pm. This is a time frame that used to be dominated by TV viewing, but has been replaced by a "me time" moment, according to Bauer's sales director Tony

Kendall who will soon be taking on the CEO role at ARN. "It's the sweetspot, which is a wonderful story - the day is done, and she wants to have some 'me time'. From an advertiser's point of view, it's great in terms of her mindset. If you correlate that with the massive drop off in TV ratings from 9pm, it shows that the second screen is becoming the first screen and magazines can also be a kind of first screen. The second screen now is the television that's on in the background," Kendall says.

All About Eve's McGregor takes a more scientific approach. Her consultancy draws on neuroscience and anthropology. She points out that while both men and women are multi-tasking and using multi-screens, women have an advantage. "The insight that a lot of people miss is women's brains are actually created and built in order to multi-task better than men's brains are, so therefore if we're using multi-screens - so we're on our iPad, on our iPhone and at the same time watching TV - the female brain will actually deal with all those different inputs and retain information and get action points out of it much more than a male brain will," she says. ●

## SOCIAL STATS

Source: Sensis Social Media Report 2015

**55%**

of Australian women access a social network at least once a day.

**47%**

Social media is the first thing women do when they wake up and the last thing they do before bed.

**30%**

of women claim they are spending more time on social media than they were last year.

**281**

On average, women have 281 friends/followers/contacts (vs men, with an average of 316).

**23%**

of women claim to follow a brand or business on social media (vs only 15% of men).

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Undoing youth disadvantage for good

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