

Gender stereotypes



in advertising

PHOTO: SHUTTERSTOCK

Do some advertisements reinforce gender stereotypes, and if they do, why should it matter? **Joan Garrod** investigates

Ideas about gender and appropriate gender roles come from a variety of sources. What role do advertisements play in creating and reinforcing these? How important are they in the socialisation process?

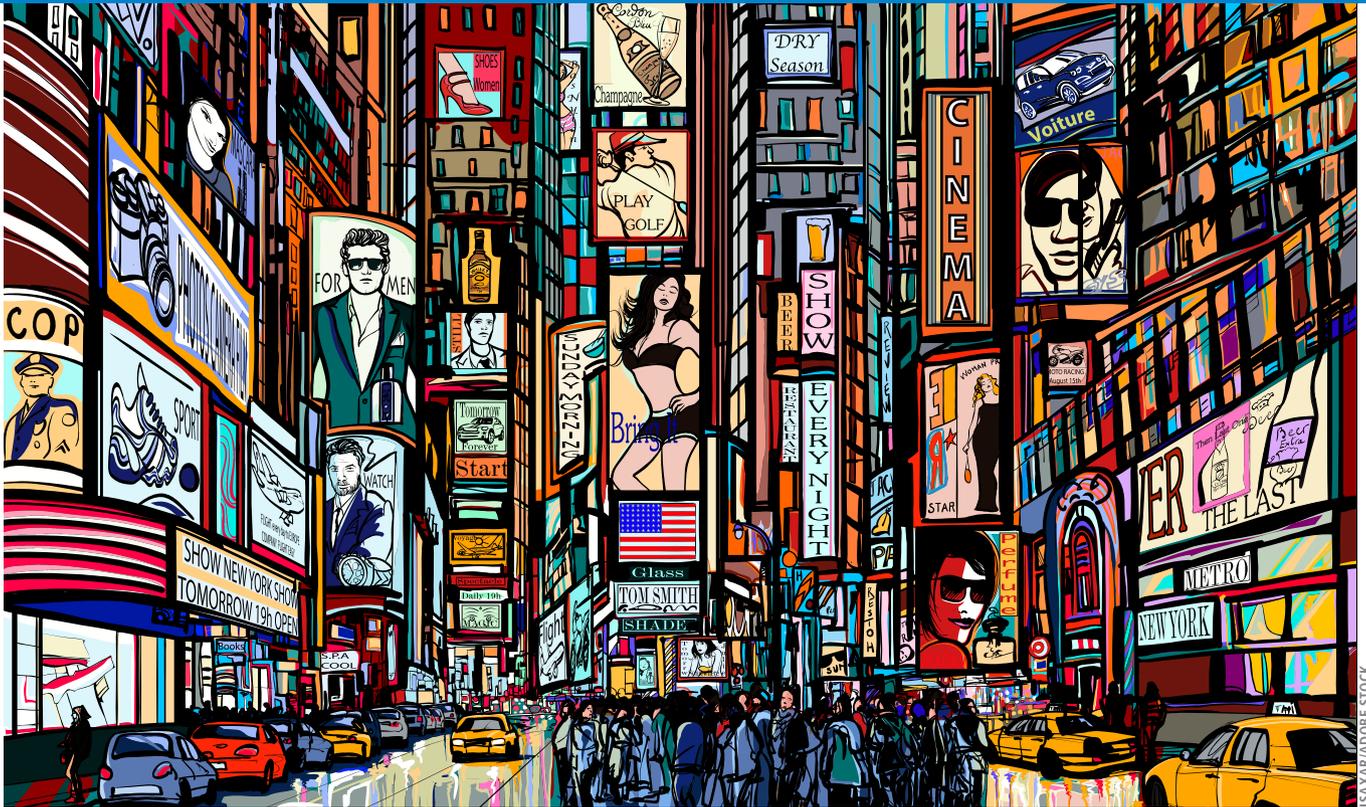
From June 2019, the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) introduced new rules that banned British companies from producing advertisements and promotions that showed men and women engaging in gender-stereotypical activities. The policy arose from fears that such depictions contributed to outmoded thinking and stereotyping, gender pay inequalities, and that they could cause psychological harm.

New advertising rules

The new rules were developed following a consultation process and these will apply to advertisements in newspapers, magazines, cinemas, leaflets and the internet. They will also apply to paid-for promotions by celebrities and influencers on social-media platforms.

The review found evidence suggesting that harmful stereotypes can restrict the choices, aspirations and opportunities open to people. Guy Parker, chief executive of the ASA, said:

Our evidence shows how harmful gender stereotypes in ads can contribute to inequality in society, with costs for all of us. Put simply, we found that some portrayals in ads can, over time, play a part in limiting people's potential. It's in the interests of women and men, our economy and society that advertisers steer clear of these outdated portrayals, and we're pleased with how the industry has already begun to respond.



Banned adverts

Members of the public will be able to report advertisements to the regulator if they consider that they have broken the new code. The Committee for Advertising Practice (CAP) will carry out a review after 12 months to see that the new rules are meeting their objective of preventing harmful gender stereotypes. While all major advertisers have signed up to the new

code of practice, one advertising legal expert said that it was 'concerning' to see the ASA take on the role of the 'morality police.'

Questions

- 1 Read the articles from *CAP News* and the *Guardian* included in the weblinks below. Pay attention to the type of advertisement that would, or would not, contravene the new rules.
- 2 Answer the following question: 'Identify and explain two ways in which gender-stereotypical advertisements might have harmful consequences for individuals and/or society.'
- 3 Think of how you might design a research project to examine the impact of gender-stereotypical advertisements. What issues and problems can you identify?

Weblinks

These were among the first advertisements to be banned under the new ASA rules. Would you agree that they show potentially damaging gendered stereotypes? Give reasons for your answer.

Philadelphia advert: www.tinyurl.com/y23qng4r

Volkswagen advert: www.tinyurl.com/y4aknffe

CAP News article on the ban on gender-stereotypical advertisements:

www.tinyurl.com/yxqjcht2

Guardian article on the same subject:

www.tinyurl.com/y2bae5ed

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