

ESOMAR Research Effectiveness Award Entry

Advertising Benchmark Index (ABX), ANA and AFE

June 1, 2017

Background and Business Challenge

In 2016, the Association of National Advertisers (ANA), through its subcommittee, the Alliance for Family Entertainment (AFE) launched # SEEHER, an industry movement to increase accurate portrayal of women and girls in media.

After the White House identified unconscious gender bias as an issue impacting access to high quality jobs, # SEEHER co-founders Gail Tifford from Unilever and Shelley Zalis, CEO of TFQ (The Female Quotient), brought the concept to the ANA / AFE to generate scale through its membership.

Advertising and entertainment programming have been identified as a powerful solution to changing public perceptions about unconscious gender bias.

With a goal of increasing the accurate portrayal of women and girls in media (advertising and programming) 20% by 2020 – the 100th anniversary of women gaining the right to vote -- the ANA/AFE created data to benchmark progress – called GEM™ (Gender Equality Measure.)

ABX Advertising Benchmark Index, a syndicated research partner to ANA /AFE, worked with # SEEHER ops team to develop metrics, utilizing the ABX syndicated research program, to implement GEM scores across media and entertainment – creating the accountability for change.

The Research Solution

Prior to the # SEEHER effort, gender bias data consisted of audit data showing the percentage of women in entertainment roles, but little solid primary research on the extent or characterization of gender bias existed.

The initial task undertaken by ABX was to establish a research plan and methodology to determine a set of metrics with which to measure gender bias and establish a baseline survey to develop initial understanding of the extent of gender bias.

An online stratified random probability sample of 1,500 people, age 18+, projectable to the U.S. population was designed and selected. A survey was developed and undertaken to establish baseline metrics. The survey was administered across different days of the week and at various times of the day, to ensure that all segments of the population under study were proportionately represented.

The survey showed clear gender bias and showed which characteristics best demonstrated bias. Bias levels in TV, movies, and advertising were sufficiently similar that the analysis breakout of gender bias by entertainment type was deemed unnecessary for future research. However, future research will be done from time-to-time to monitor any potential changes, and to adjust the overall design should it be necessary. This survey will be repeated at annual intervals beginning in July 2017 – one year after the launch of the #SEEHER initiative.

A key to sustaining the #SEEHER effort is buy-in by the advertising and entertainment creation community. Members of ANA represent over 65% of the total advertising spending in the U.S. and almost one-third of global advertising spending. ANA and ABX determined that a specific set of metrics to measure gender bias in advertising needed to be developed along with a set of norms to guide performance and measure improvement.

ABX considered over 100 variables and 30 were quantitatively evaluated in an online survey utilizing a stratified random probability sampling design among the same population group as in the earlier research, to provide consistent results, and to reduce any bias that would be present if a different design were employed.

A set of 48 ads, ranging from Cannes Golden Lions or Effie Award winners to those exhibiting significant objectification of women, were chosen to represent a range of ads. These ads were evaluated by ABX for overall effectiveness using the identical methodology that ABX incorporates into its continuous syndicated research measurement program used to benchmark over 100,000 ads across all media types, with additional survey questions to gauge gender bias (the 30 variables.)

A subset of ads was also evaluated by a sample of teenagers which exhibited similar characteristics to the research with adults. Permission to survey teenagers was provided by the teen parent. This recruitment method is consistent with industry standards.

ABX results indicated that four of the thirty variables were shown to best correlate to the ranking of the test ads from best to worst and scores for those variables were developed into an ABX index which the ANA uses as its Gender Equality Measure or GEM™. The four key variables (referred to as the GEM™ Module) were shared with the U.S. advertising research community as an open source tool at the 2017 Advertising Research Foundation (ARF) Conference to gain widespread acceptance of the importance of gender equality in advertising.

ABX has evaluated over 20,000 ads since September 2016 using this set of variables, and these metrics are now available in a continuously measured ABX syndicated program that measures 1000's of ads every month across all media types among people 18 years of age and older.

Additional research was designed and performed by ABX to measure gender bias in TV programming. An initial wave of online research, incorporating the same research and sampling design used in the earlier research phases, included over 20,000 consumer interviews and evaluated the gender characteristics of network TV shows in the U.S. An initial list of the top 200 rated shows, supplemented by an assortment of news, sports, and selected cable TV shows, were selected for evaluation. The same variables that were demonstrated to be enlightening for advertising, by the earlier ABX results, were also found to be defining for TV programming. A total of 259 TV shows have been evaluated for gender characteristics to date and will be repeated 2x annually.

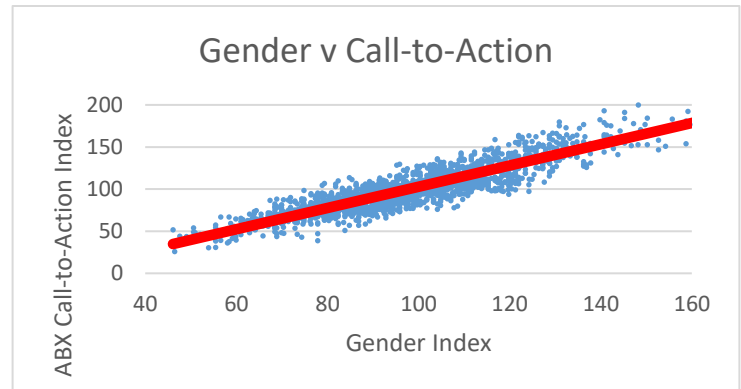
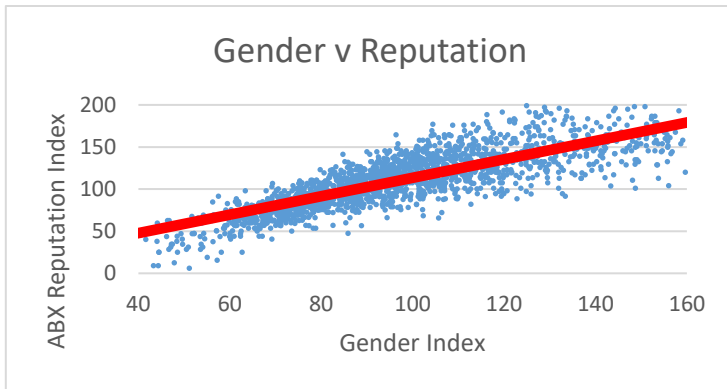
The team also offers a syndicated Brand Fit metric fully integrated with all other variables to assist advertisers in placing their ads in creative vehicles which fit for the brand's image and reputation. The Brand Fit methodology links programming to brands by leveraging the consumer's perceptions of which ads "fit" with a particular show. The methodology is relatively simple, but has been shown to produce identical results to more elaborate, time consuming, and expensive techniques. Through Brand Fit, ANA AFE has translated the #SEEHER mission into a brand-specific capability to drive media planning ROI.

Research Outcomes

The initial longitudinal ABX research findings showed significant gender bias. Among the general population 67% reported they were either unaware of gender bias or aware, but not bothered by it. 23% were aware and bothered and 10% were aware and angered by it (33% total).

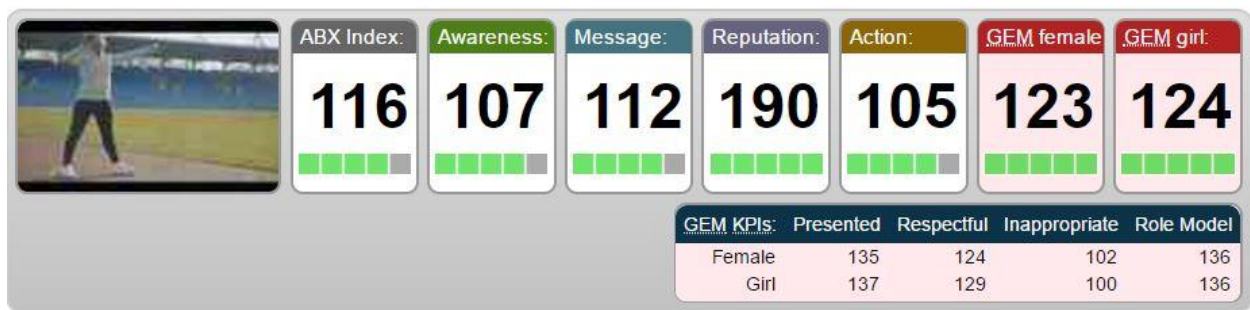
Among female Millennials, the top target audience for many advertisers, 41% were aware and bothered or angry about it (28% and 13% respectively). However, analysis of detailed responses showed that 100% of respondents exhibited gender bias by their response to the gender questions.

Detailed analysis of gender data for advertising, shows an important correlation between positive gender scores and positive brand reputation and higher call-to-action intent. Ads with a more positive portrayal of women (and men) show higher scores for key metrics that have been correlated with higher sales. This is critical in sustaining the campaign since improving gender portrayals is not just the right thing to do, it is also a more profitable thing to do.



Gender scores for programming have resulted in 63% of TV shows being rated positively for gender portrayals. Programmers can utilize this rating in promoting their shows to advertisers.

Gender scores for individual ads, such as the example below, highlight the gender scores and the associated KPIs for advertising effectiveness and enable advertisers to understand gender portrayals and work towards improving them. Note in the example below, the strong female gender scores (23% above norm) and the high Reputation score indexing at 190.



Project Outcomes

The data has become the currency by which advertisers direct their spending to gender positive shows and inform their creative teams to improve the gender portrayals in their ads and their effectiveness.

The # SEEHER campaign was officially announced in June 2016 with implementation beginning in September 2016. In the brief time since the program launch, many prominent advertisers have committed to the #SEEHER program including global giants such as:

Procter & Gamble
Unilever

AT&T
Nestle

Walmart
Johnson & Johnson

The ANA's membership includes more than 1,000 companies with 15,000 brands that collectively spend or support more than \$250 billion in marketing and advertising annually. The potential to move this spending from programming with poor gender portrayals to programming with positive gender portrayals has not been lost on the programming community and all major U.S. TV networks have signed on to participate in the # SEEHER program.

Our research has been highlighted in front of thousands of industry leaders/members. Stephen Quinn, AFE chairman, and Shelley Zalis, a # SEEHER co-founder, presented research results at the ANA's Master of Marketing 2016 event. As part of the program, implementation modules to enable researchers to integrate gender measures into their copy testing programs were shared at the Advertising Research Foundation's Spring, 2017 meeting encouraging the inclusion of gender equality as a dimension to business performance.

The success of this program to-date in the U.S. has led to discussions with the United Nations and efforts to extend the program internationally. Testing has already been completed outside the United States. The same sampling and research designs will be employed for consistency and avoidance of bias, and will produce a normative database wherein scores and metrics can be evaluated in each country, as well as across countries in all parts of the world. We expect this program to be a long-term longitudinal measurement and a means of monitoring positive change in society throughout the world.

Conclusions

The use of research data to inform and sustain a social movement, as has been done with the GEM™ scores for the # SEEHER program, has widespread applicability to other campaigns. Specifically:

- The importance of establishing a longitudinal analysis to benchmark current consumer attitudes and demonstrate not only the social need, but the business benefit of addressing the issue
- The importance of developing a well-defined set of metrics that everyone agrees to as the scorecard for establishing need and measuring progress against long-term objectives
- Translating the data into goals and action steps that are fully scalable and able to be implemented without disrupting the client's day-to-day business through the development of "tool kits"
- Using data to establish regular and continuous stakeholder communication to sustain commitment