

Why diversity and inclusion is paramount on both sides of the camera

Maddyness spoke to Jacqueline Bourke, Getty Images & iStock Head of EMEA Creative Insights. Getty has had a team for 25 years focusing on learning the insights and trends of brands and advertisers.

Getty are a team keen to push for diversity and inclusion, which is highlighted in their most recent Inclusion Scholarships, Disability Collection Disrupt Ageing and also saw Getty partner with Dove on the powered by women project entitled #ShowUs, which had women both in front of and behind the lens. All of these projects highlight that diversity is an important topic that we should all be talking about and integrating into both our business practice and indeed life view.

Demand for diversity in the visual sense is growing rapidly and rightly so. It is becoming not only imperative but the 'norm' to represent people of all races, ages and abilities in advertising campaigns. Consumers are noticing brands who embrace this change and so now diversity is directly linked with both brand image/identity and revenue.

The growth of brands is directly linked to the current more inclusive approach that has been highlighted by both the pandemic experience and Black Lives Matter. People are recognising that bias and discrimination is something we should all be talking about. We should all be working towards an inclusive world and what better way to do this than to use images that showcase the real

world as it is, blemishes and all!

**Global customer search data: 'diversity' (up 133%), 'culture' (up 115%), 'real people' (up 115%) and 'inclusion' (up 126%). From May to June alone customer searches on the Getty Images site for diverse images increased by 200% and searches for images around unity and equality increased by 500%.*

What the research shows

The shared human experience that COVID-19 has brought about globally has really allowed people space and time to really think about things in life and assess what is important. There is greater empathy from consumers that has made them more aware and proactively responsible. Diversity and inclusion have always been a buzzword that brands have been keen to employ, even if it is just in name format. Getty has research that shows that brands that have fully adopted this standpoint and wholeheartedly embodied it in their visual branding are indeed financially reaping the rewards.

Although finance should not be the main reason brands adopt a more inclusive narrative, it is still gratifying to see that they are indeed doing so. Customers and consumers are leading conversations about what they want to see reflected back to them. They want to see themselves, their family, friends etc in the narrative visually.

Nearly 80% of people globally have said it isn't enough to have people of various ethnicities, backgrounds, and appearances in advertising but that they expect companies to do a better job at capturing people's true lifestyles and cultures.

Six in ten people prefer to buy brands that are founded by or represent people like themselves. These results hold steady across generations and gender, with only modest differences across global

regions.

With information like this it is clear that brands need to take action and potentially even pivot from their original marketing or PR strategy. “Realness” is what the consumer is looking for and those that already fit the mould will no doubt be ahead of the curve.

The smartphone has made everyone a photographer!

Tech has been democratized with the smartphone and camera feature, everyone can be represented via their own lens. With so many people living life in a virtual setting, Instagram, for example, has let people explore and play with who they are in a visual way. How an individual wants to portray themselves and artistically curate their page, says a lot about who they are as a person. As well as choosing who they follow and curating their feed with pages of people they value and ideals they want to embody; visually people are now more aware.

Changing the nature of the debate is what Getty and iStock want to do so with that being said Jacqui has some top tips for how to use imagery that is inclusive for startups and big business alike.

What to do when sourcing your brand's visual assets

As a new startup you are not weighed down by legacy – so use this to your advantage and keep it real. Pick an image that evokes an emotion that is genuine and make sure to avoid tokenism.

Remember to think about body shape sensitivity – be aware not to portray “perfection” in an image, rather pick something normative. Something that speaks to your consumers and who they might be now rather than a ‘perfect’ image that does not exist.

Age representation – This is especially relevant for the 50+ market place who are often not accurately represented, for example, they might be a

grandparent, they might be single and fabulous, a founder, a career person, but what they are not is over the hill!. Make sure your person is multi-dimensional and find images with meaning. Also relevant to Gen Z who are typecast as too young and inexperienced – they are not, so do not dumb down when speaking to them.

Gender: Stay away from visual stereotypes – Make sure you feature women for example in STEM. Do not always feature mothers as caregivers, fathers can be too and can have a nurturing side. Do not go with the obvious.

The Getty Images Inclusive Visual Search Guide looks at the 7 commitments: Gender, race, sex, body type, age, religion, ability – Make sure you are also aware of these points of reference in your searches. Especially as consumers pointedly said they would identify with a group of people in an image portraying these collectively.

The monetary value for brands is apparent through Deloitte’s study which showcases the top diversity and inclusive advertisements saw a 69% stock growth in 2020. There is monetary value in not only showing diversity and inclusion but in bringing it into your company culture and values, so you don’t just appear to be diverse, you are in fact diverse. If companies can see a higher rate of return then really it is a no brainer to do the right thing.

However, it is my personal hope that the conversations that have come to the forefront of our global attention this year are continued for years to come. It is important to recognise people as a whole, to celebrate our differences and to acknowledge that equality for all is and will always be imperative to the human world. I believe Gandhi said it best:

“Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilisation.” – Mahatma Gandhi

Read also

Diversity and exclusion in the startup ecosystem

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