



# Diversity in Advertising

**Diversity in advertising has never been more important but are brands doing enough to address diversity in their campaigns and is this getting through to consumers?**

We've surveyed diverse groups within the UK – including BAME, LGBTQ+, and Neurodivergent individuals – to understand how well represented they feel in advertising and what they expect from brands.

We saw a worrying decrease in people's sentiment towards representation in advertising overall, something that brands will need to think about deeply moving forward. However, there are areas of positivity that point to change, with radio ad representation improving due to TikTok integration, and TV and YouTube ads continued to lead in representation.

7%

of people feel less represented by the advertising they see quarter on quarter

## Insight 1

**People feel less represented in advertising this year.**

Representation levels are 7% lower than they were in Q2 last year. Almost every audience segment feels less represented by the advertising they see, with the most noticeable drops amongst People of Colour, LGBTQ+ and neurodivergent individuals. Given we are striving to be more inclusive as an industry, this is a worrying trend and there is yet work to be done.

The only audience that saw an increase in representation was the over 55s. This segment often feels the least represented in advertising, so this turnaround is positive news, but it doesn't make up for the gaps elsewhere. With a third of people still saying they'll actively avoid brands that don't emphasise DE&I it's clear from these numbers that the demand for representative advertising is very much still there. So why aren't brand adverts reflecting this?



## Implication 1

**DE&I is a long-term commitment.**

The increase in consumers avoiding brands that neglect DE&I highlights the persistent demand for diversity in advertising. Brands must consistently embrace diverse perspectives, ensuring that DE&I principles are deeply embedded in their communications. This involves moving beyond seasonal gestures or tactical campaigns to create campaigns that authentically reflect diverse communities.

Brands such as Voltarol are seeing strong long-term success by building their platforms over time. Voltarol started with a Gay Times partnership and has extended that over the last five years including Channel 4 and TCS London Marathon as platforms to elevate the message to an even wider audience.

57%

of younger audiences feel radio ads are more representative in Q2 compared to Q1 in 2024

## Insight 2

### Representation in radio ads surges

Representation in radio adverts has increased dramatically, from 32% in Q2 2023 to 49% now. This is primarily driven by younger audiences who have expressed a 57% increase in how representative they feel radio ads are now. This improvement is likely due to the integration of TikTok content and creators into traditional radio platforms. Sirius XM's TikTok Radio, for example, curates playlists from trending TikTok songs ensuring that the content remains relevant and engaging for young listeners.

At the same time, we're also seeing really smart uses of audio ads to engage with listeners such as Meta's 'Behind the Lock' WhatsApp campaign that worked with podcasters to create games that they played in bonus episodes. We've seen before that better, more engaging ads makes all audiences feel more represented so renewed focus on audio as a creative channel is likely driving radio's improvements in representation.



## Implication 2

### Leverage iconic tracks across social platforms

Brands have a unique opportunity to leverage iconic tracks across multiple platforms, creating a cohesive and engaging experience that resonate with audiences. Incorporating trending songs from platforms like TikTok into radio campaigns allows branded content to automatically feel more current and relevant. For larger campaigns, the fees to use these iconic tracks might be justified but for smaller campaigns looking to avoid hefty licencing fees, brands could look to use TikTok tracks that don't have copyright restrictions.

This strategy not only makes audiences feel more recognised but also bridges the gap between their personalised social feeds and broader broadcast media. Audio thus becomes a unifying broadcast medium, enhancing the sense of representation and connection for listeners across different platforms. By tapping into the viral nature of TikTok tracks and integrating them into radio, brands can create memorable and impactful audio campaigns that resonate deeply with diverse audiences.

# Insight 3

## The most representative channels are reaping the rewards

TV ads and YouTube ads have consistently been the most representative advertising channels at 57% and 56% respectively. And in Q2 2024, they're pulling ahead even further. Advertising on both channels has driven improved representation across every audience surveyed during the last year, with TV ads up 11% and YouTube ads up 17%. We're also seeing a 10% increase in representation amongst ads on SVOD platforms such as Disney+, Netflix and Amazon Prime Video as more customers move onto their ad-tiers.

YouTube has grown viewership on TV screens and has introduced 30-second un-skippable ads (i.e. 30-second TV spots), whilst Netflix and Amazon have moved large proportions of their viewers into their ad-tier this year.



# Implication 3

## The TV ad is back

The last decade has been defined by the fragmentation of TV into so many different channels and viewing formats. We still have many different channels, but the formats are starting to consolidate around traditional TV spots. This means that brands can once again focus on creating a single, truly impactful TV asset. We hope that this consolidation of formats allows brands to work on creating AV assets that tell impactful stories that speak to audiences.

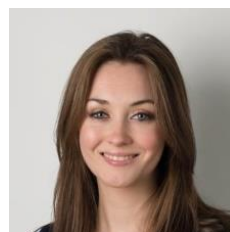
We know that representative creative drives better brand lift in 90% of ads and short and long-term sales two-thirds of the time, so this is an opportunity for brands to develop a single, representative and engaging TV ad that drives success across all TV screens.



**Emil Beilski**

CEO, Spark Foundry UK

[LinkedIn](#)



**Hannah Hetheron**

Managing Partner, Spark Foundry

[LinkedIn](#)