



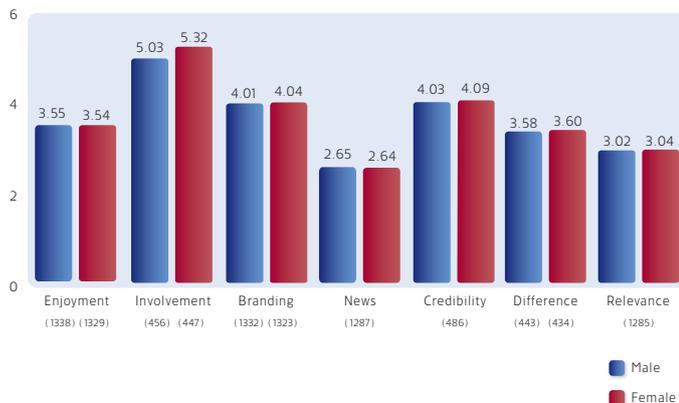
Do men and women respond differently to ads?

While at an overall level, men and women give similar ratings to ads, they respond differently to individual ads. Men are more likely to enjoy ads featuring humor, distinctive creative styles, and sexual imagery, while women are more likely to enjoy ads featuring children or a slice of life.

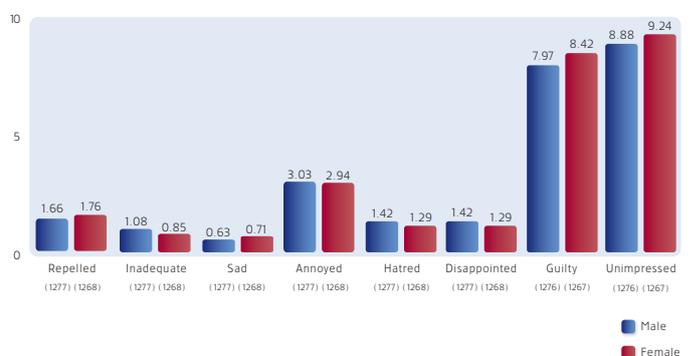
Overall, ratings are similar

At an overall level, we observe little difference in the way men and women respond to advertising. The following chart looks at key TV Link measures (enjoyment, active involvement, branding, news, credibility, difference, and relevance) for U.S. English ads for which the test sample consisted of both men and women; there is little difference in the scores given by men and women.

Men versus Women: No real differences



Comparison of male and female – negative emotions



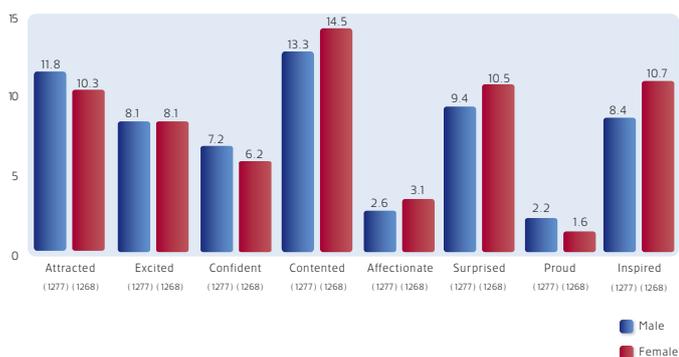
These findings are backed up by analysis from our tracking database, which finds no difference between the average Awareness Indexes for men and women. After advertising, increases in TV ad awareness and brand measures are similar among both groups.

Men and women enjoy different things

However, behind these averages, it is clear that there are real differences in the types of ads that are enjoyed by men and women.

Similarly, looking at emotional responses generated by advertising, the overall pattern between the sexes is similar.

Comparison of male and female – positive emotions



We took data from a set of 1200 U.S. ads that were tested among samples including both males and females and examined the ads that were in the top 10 percent for each group on enjoyment. This analysis showed that men are more likely to enjoy humorous ads – particularly those involving spoofs. (However, it is worth stressing that there are also many humorous ads that do perform well among women).

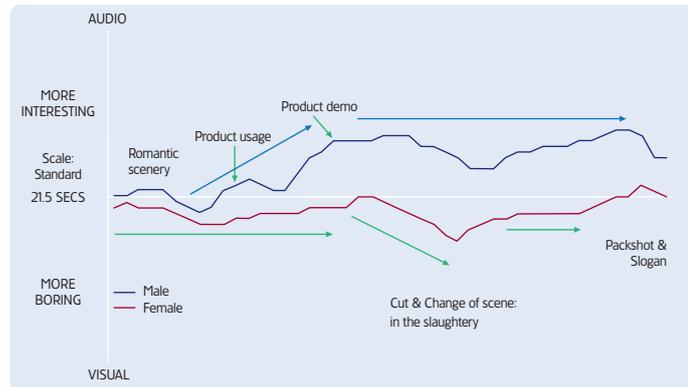
HUMOR	Male	Female
Funny	47	28
Light hearted	36	38
No Humor	17	34

Spoof/Parody in ad	12	2
Base (ads)	(114)	(135)



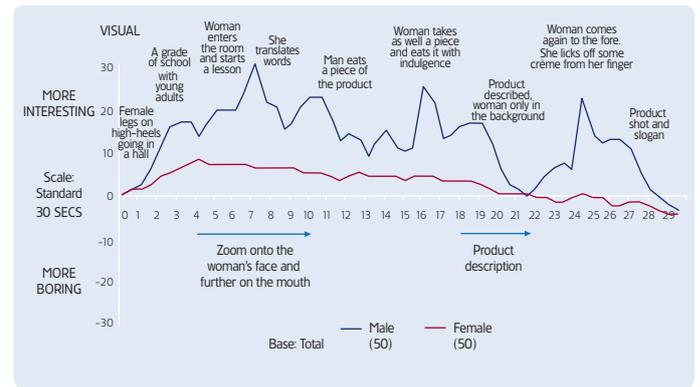
A Spanish ad that features a humorous scene in a slaughterhouse provides an example of humor that appeals more to men than women. Men better appreciated the intended black humor; it kept their attention. However, the somewhat violent nature of the ad put off the female target, who did not enjoy the ad.

The ad fails to engage women



Other ads may actually alienate women. For example, one German ad for a chocolate brand targeted at young adults featured a teacher behaving in an erotic, flirtatious manner in front of her young adult class. Responses to the ad differed substantially by gender. Men enjoyed the woman's behavior, while women increasingly lost interest as the ad progressed.

German Chocolate ad



While men enjoy a distinctive creative style, women on the whole are more likely to enjoy ads featuring a slice of life, or children. There was no significant difference in messaging style between the most enjoyed ads for each group.

	Male	Female
Distinctive creative style	36	22
Slice of life	32	47
Children	9	36
Emotional	41	50
Rational	16	14
Both	37	33
Base (ads)	(114)	(135)

Response to sexual imagery

Ads that feature sexual imagery can also elicit distinctly different responses from the two sexes. Some ads are enjoyed by both sexes, but for different reasons. For example, a deodorant ad featured a girl preparing for a date while her boyfriend is coming up in the lift. It was an entertaining ad that performed well overall, but men and women found different parts interesting. Women followed the main elements of the story, while men showed peaks of interest only when the woman appeared in her underwear.

More than twice as many men as women said they would enjoy watching the ad (52 percent versus 24 percent). Over half of the men liked the woman in the ad while only 14 percent of women did. Almost a quarter of the women disliked the ad for being sexist or erotic. Given that women were an equal target for the brand, this represented a major problem.

So while at an overall level there may be no differences in responses to advertising between the sexes, there are clearly differences in response to individual ads.

Knowledge Points are drawn from the Millward Brown Knowledge Bank, consisting of our databases of 132,000 brand reports and 70,000 ads, as well as 1,400 case studies, 900 conference papers and magazine articles, and 350 learnings documents.

Share this Knowledge Point: [f](#) [t](#) [d](#) [g](#)