

Tech company video ads still dominated by white males

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Consumer tech companies that are serious about attracting more women and people from minority groups into their workforce might want to revisit the video advertisements featured on their websites. Although these ads do not explicitly discourage women and girls, or people of color, from pursuing the fields of computer science, they do little to present technologies as accessible to those who do not fit the dominant white male ideal. This is according to Subriena Persaud of George Mason University in the US, lead author of a study in Springer's journal *Gender Issues* that analyzed how gender, race and age are portrayed in the videos of nine major consumer technology companies.

Six videos advertising products and services (54 videos in total) were obtained from the websites of well-known [tech companies](#). Persaud and her research associates team noted the gender and race of each character featured, and looked at the videos as a whole to see how the characters fit into the story lines and how gender roles are portrayed.

Women, the elderly, racial/ethnic minorities, and even children (who are otherwise commonly used in advertising) were all found to be under-represented in the portrayals. According to the researchers, the emotionality and passivity of [women](#) in most of the advertisements analyzed perpetuates the idea that women are not in control of the creation and usage of [technology](#).

"Instead, technology itself is portrayed in masculinist terms—powerful, fast, strong, active—thereby reinforcing this association," explains

Persaud, who says that males are shown to be more in control, enfolded others, taking and using products in the presence of others, and also being the provider of these products and services. "This is interesting in light of the fact that the devices advertised are inherently fragile and breakable, which could logically be deemed more appropriate to the culturally perceived delicateness and gentleness of feminine hands. However, the fragility of the technology has been converted into requiring not a delicate touch, but a competent, skillful hand."

This leaves the impression that marketers aim their technology products and services at adult, white men and that these images serve to reinforce the association between masculinity and technology. Persons of color, women, girls, and boys do appear in these advertisements but their presence is less obvious and central than middle-aged or young-adult white men.

"These images reinforce hegemonic ideals and reinforce the association between technology and masculinity, as well as whiteness and youth," says Persaud.

The researchers conclude that the [video](#) advertisements analyzed do not question stereotypes that contribute to the gap that exists in the field of computer science, where just 18 percent of computer and information sciences undergraduate degree recipients in 2010 in the US were women. The situation for women of color is worse. Among those earning computer science bachelor's degrees in 2007, just 4% were African American women, 8% were Hispanic/Latina and 0.8% were American Indian/Alaska Native.

More information: Persaud, S., Anthony, A., and Grauerholz, L. (2017). Gendered Representations and Portrayals in Technology Advertisements: Exploring Variations by Age, Race and Ethnicity, *Gender Issues*, [DOI: 10.1007/s12147-017-9191-z](https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-017-9191-z)

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