

DOES THE SWISS COMMERCIAL INDUSTRY HAVE A GENDER PROBLEM?

A Study initiated by SWAN
Swiss Women's Audiovisual Network

November 2020





WHO DOES ADVERTISING?

Advertising is all around us: Besides classic commercials on television, we consume advertising daily and often subconsciously through various channels: e-panels at railway stations, sponsored content on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and as advertisements in newspapers, magazines etc. Needless to say: Commercials affect the public in various ways. It is therefore worthwhile taking a closer look at who is behind the camera of commissioned films (=commercials, corporate films and PSA's (1)). This study will show that women are extremely underrepresented in creative positions of commercial productions.

Why is that an issue?

The images we see in commercials present a picture of the society we live in. If this picture is predominantly moulded by the point of view of male creators, sexism and biased stereotypes are likely to be perpetuated, as are misrepresentations of marginalised groups. The underrepresentation of women in creative positions in commercials has both a social and an economic impact: stereotypical/sexist representations of society affect the Swiss population as a whole, while the discrimination affects directly the careers and finances of women in the audiovisual industry.

Consequences on a public level

The latest studies show that 50% of film and design graduates are female. But in these professional fields, the percentage of women drops significantly. There is therefore a deperdition of trained women who do not get the opportunity to work in their field of studies. In an industry characterized with freelance and short term hires, based on constant project submissions and pitches, women lack opportunities, as well as the career density of their male colleagues. If we educate and train people, but do not afford them the opportunity to work, we are waisting trained talent.

Consequences for women on an individual level

When hired to film a commercial, directors can secure a financial basis that enables them to develop long-term feature film projects, whose development is usually long and not well funded. They can profit financially, since commissioned work is usually better paid than feature films and televisions work and more revenues can be gained in a shorter time period (2).

(1) PSA is an abbreviation for Public Service Announcement.

(2) While feature films have weekly work wages, commissioned work is paid in daily wages. While a first assistant director has a weekly wage of 2220 CHF (=444 CHF/day) in a feature film, the daily wage in commissioned films is 665 CHF/day). See: ssfv.ch



WHO DOES ADVERTISING?

Furthermore, directors, cinematographers and editors can gain important professional experience in working with large crews, big budgets and high-tech jobs through directing commercials. They also get to build up a portfolio and a decent career density. All this leads to better chances in getting further engagements. An underrepresentation of women in the commercial field suggests a triple disadvantage: financially, professionally and in regards to career density. They lose access to the industry early on and thus lack experience when compared to their male counterparts, which again results in not getting hired, thus not being able to ever catch up and gain a foothold in the industry.

This study was initiated by SWAN Swiss Women's Audiovisual Network and aims to examine available figures in advertising. The study serves as a first step, as it is intended to generate attention and awareness for the blatant underrepresentation of women as directors, camerawomen, editors and producers in commissioned films.

While the film industry already uses various measures to achieve gender equality, such as the gender measures taken by the Federal Office for Culture since 2016 or the 5050 Pledge (3) signed by major Film Festivals, the gender imbalance in the advertising industry has not yet addressed this glaring issue.

Avoiding stereotypes, fighting biases and sexist representation, as well as portraying an accurate representation of society are desirable. Not only because it makes sense for a society, but also because it is beneficial for businesses and institutions. A study by the Swiss Federal Statistical Office shows that in 2017, 51% of purchasing decisions in families were made by women. An equal representation of women behind the camera would therefore allow to adequately address this target group. Which would generate more profit for businesses. What business would not want that?

*Azra Djurdjevic,
Producer and SWAN Executive Committee Member*

(3) The 5050 Pledge was initiated by the French collective of the same name and is being continued in Switzerland by SWAN.



PROCEDURE

Since commissioned films, more precisely corporate films and commercials, are financed by companies that are not obliged to transparency, it is simply not possible to produce a quantitative study of all advertising films produced in Switzerland. The study accordingly restricts itself to available data and thus focuses primarily on the visibility of women. This can be analysed in more detail using 2 subjects:

(1) Director rosters of the largest Swiss production companies

The study examined the ratio of men to women in the director roster of the 11 largest Swiss production companies. Directors rosters are lists of directors that are represented by the respective production company. If a woman is in a directing duo, this was counted as 0.5 points.

(2) EDI Award - Nominations

The annual awards ceremony honours the best commissioned films in Switzerland in various categories. The competition is under the patronage of the Federal Department of Internal Affairs and organised by the SWISSFILM ASSOCIATION. The study refers to the nominations of the years 2015 - 2020. The nominations for the positions directing, cinematography, editing and producing were collected. Since a position can sometimes involve several people, one point was awarded per person.

RESULTS

The results of the study show that women are extremely underrepresented as directors, directors of photography, editors and producers in the commercial world. They are both underrepresented in the director's rosters by production companies, which is then reflected in the numbers of the nominations of the EDI Awards.



RESULTS: FEMALE DIRECTORS IN PRODUCTION COMPANIES

QUESTION

How visible are female directors in the Swiss advertising industry? Data was collected from the 11 largest Swiss German (4) production companies in the field of commissioned films (as of September 2020). Since the gender ratio and visibility are to be investigated, the number of men and women at each production company was compared. This is independent of whether they are also represented at other production companies. A woman may therefore appear twice in the statistics.

RESULTS

Production Company	Total	Male	Female	Other	F in %
Filmgerberei (5)	11	5	6	0	55%
Who's McQueen	14	11	3	0	21%
Plan B	10	8	2	0	20%
Markenfilm	27	23.5	3.5	0	13%
Shining Film	20	18	2	0	10%
Pumpkin Film	30	27	3	0	10%
Rosas'n'co	20	18.5	1.5	0	8%
Stories	22	20.5	1.5	0	7%
Dynamic Frame	7	7	0	0	0%
Rocket Film	26	26	0	0	0%
Hillton	6	6	0	0	0%
	193	171.5	21.5	0	11%

Women make up an average of 11% of the rosters:



Hardly any production company has a higher share of women than 20%, more than half of the production companies have a share of only 10% women or even less. This results in an average of 11.5% women.

(4) Only Swiss German Production companies were considered as the advertising industry is still very much focused in Zurich.

(5) DISCLAIMER: The author of this study works at Filmgerberei. This study, however, was conducted independently and is in no connection with the company. The study was peer reviewed by someone not associated with Filmgerberei.



RESULTS: SWISS FEMALE DIRECTORS IN PRODUCTION COMPANIES

QUESTION How visible are Swiss women directors in the Swiss advertising industry? The previously shown data includes female directors from Switzerland as well as abroad.

RESULTS	Production Company	Total	International	CHE	CHE in %
	Plan B	2	0	2	100%
	Shining Film	2	0	2	100%
	Stories	1.5	0	1.5	100%
	Filmgerberei	6	2	4	66%
	Who's McQueen	3	2	1	50%
	Markenfilm	3.5	2.5	1	29%
	Pumpkin Film	3	3	0	0%
	Rosas'n'co	1.5	1.5	0	0%
		21.5	11	11.5	51%
	Minus double entries			- 1	
		20.5	11	10.5	51%

Half of the female directors in the represented portfolios of the production companies are from Switzerland, the rest is from abroad.

CONCLUSION Visibility is key to success. Very few Swiss production companies offer female directors this visibility. If women are not seen, not proposed and not promoted, they will not get the chance to expand their portfolio and are left behind in comparison to men. Organisations such as Free The Work (6) show that there are many female directors working in the advertising industry. So even when having the opportunity to choose from a variety of experienced female directors, production companies / advertising agencies / clients still favour male directors.

(6) Free The Work is a non profit organisation and a searchable database of underrepresented creators.



RESULTS: EDI NOMINATIONS

QUESTION

How visible are women in creative positions in the advertising industry? Data was collected on the nominations for the EDI Awards over the last 6 years (2015 - 2020) in the positions of director, camera, editor and producer. The numbers show an extreme lack of women in creative positions such as directing, cinematography and editing.

RESULTS: DIRECTING

	Total	M	F	F in %	
2020	58	54	4	7%	
2019	56	55	1	2%	
2018	56	55	1	2%	
2017	67	64	3	4%	
2016	56	55	1	2%	
2015	52	52	0	0%	

In 2015, the percentage of nominated female directors was 0%. This means that not a single woman has made it onto the shortlist of 52 nominated films. In 2020, the percentage rises to 7%.

= Women = Men



RESULTS: EDI NOMINATIONS

CAMERA

	Total	M	F	F in %	
2020	49	48	1	2%	
2019	57	55	2	4%	
2018	58	58	0	0%	
2017	63	63	0	0%	
2016	58	55	3	5%	
2015	50	50	0	0%	

In the last 5 years there were hardly more than 2 camerawomen among the nominees. The percentage of female cinematographers has therefore never been higher than 5% in the last 6 years.

EDITING

	Total	M	F	F in %	
2020	51	48	3	6%	
2019	60	57	3	5%	
2018	57	53	4	7%	
2017	70	65	5	6%	
2016	41	37	4	10%	
2015	49	42	7	14%	

While the share of female editors was 14% in 2015, it has been declining over the years and will reach its lowest point in 2019: 5%. This means only 3 female positions out of 60 nominated films.



RESULTS: EDI NOMINATIONS

PRODUCING

	Total	M	F	F in %	
2020	80	53	27	34%	
2019	72	53	19	26%	
2018	83	55	28	33%	
2017	95	70	25	26%	
2016	58	30	28	48%	
2015	81	55	26	32%	

Production seems to be the only department in which women are in a minority but at least represent one third of the workforce. However, these figures should be treated with caution: Often men act as executive producers and are therefore the decision makers in creative, financial and hiring matters. Women often act as producers and line producers and are mainly responsible for organisational matters. In addition, women are rarely or never nominated alone, but usually share their nomination with a man.

CONCLUSION

The figures show that in most areas women account for a maximum of 7% of nominees. Even in departments such as production, where it is believed that the sector is dominated by women, these figures show a different picture: Women are more often found in this position, but still very far from dominating the sector. In creative positions the figures are consistently low and there has been no increase in the proportion of women in the last 6 years. It is therefore definitely time to address the question of this imbalance.



RESULTS: EDI JURY

QUESTION

Who decides which film is nominated? And who decides who wins? The gender ratio of the EDI Jury 2020 has been evaluated. For 2020, only the names of the Shortlist Jury are accessible online and have been used for this study. The names of the jurors who decide on the actual winners are not published online. It is also not possible to see who is responsible for awarding the special EDI: An „additional expert jury, consisting of specialists from the film industry, visions all the films nominated for the shortlist and awards the Special EDI“ (7), the website says. The names of the jurors of previous years are no longer accessible online and were therefore not collected.

JURY 2020

COMMERCIALS AND BRANDED CONTENT

Total	M	F	F in %	
29	27	2	7%	

CORPORATE COMMUNICA- TION

Total	M	F	F in %	
32	27	5	15%	

The proportion of women on the jury is similarly low as for the nominations. Men accounted for between 85% and 93% of the jury in 2020.

(7) <https://www.edinet.ch/uber-edi/> (last consulted on 01/11/2020)



PROSPECTS

STARTING POINT

In 2019, gross expenditure on TV advertising in Switzerland was around 1.89 billion Swiss francs (8). An amount that benefits almost exclusively men in creative positions. In commercials and PSA - in contrast to cinema - a person's place of residence is not important to get funding or get hired. But even when having the opportunity to look worldwide for qualified female directors, there still seems to be a preference for male directors. Why is that?

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Additional important questions that would be important for evaluating the situation:

- Do women have lower budgets than men?
- How often are women proposed in pitches to clients/agencies?
- How to fix the imbalance in the advertising industry? Where do we start?
- Do women reproduce less stereotypes and create less sexist representation in commercials?
- In general: how are women represented in advertising? Do stereotypes prevail? How much sexism is in Swiss commercials?
- Do female directors have a lower career density?
- What category do they direct? Do they mostly create commercials for industries that are considered „female“?
- What is the status in advertising industries: What is the gender ratio there? Who are the Creative Directors, Art Directors and Copywriters that write commercials and choose directors?

BEST PRACTICE

What can be done about this imbalance?

- **Awareness:** The study serves as a first step to raise awareness of the problem in the advertising industry.
- **Generating data:** There is no data available on this topic. Data has to be collected from production companies, agencies and businesses.

(8) <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/501674/umfrage/bruttoausgaben-fuer-tv-werbung-in-der-schweiz/> (last consulted 29/10/2020)



PROSPECTS

- **Commitment to parity:** The 5050 pledge for film festivals initiated by SWAN shows that even without a quota, but already with conscious data collection, a first step towards parity is being taken. The pledge asks festivals to commit to parity at selection levels and to transparency. This is a first step towards raising awareness for equality. *Free The Work* - an organisation previously known as *Free The Bid* launched a pledge for the advertising industry that engages advertising agencies (as well as production companies and clients) to have at least one female director in a triple bid. Filmgerberei has already committed to equality and diversity in a self-imposed pledge (9):

AS FILMGERBEREI WE PROMISE TO:

- actively seek out directors who belong to a minority
- include at least one qualified female director in every pitch
- give young, promising directors a platform

- **Commitment to parity by the EDI.Awards:** The SWISSFILM ASSOCIATION, organisers of the EDI.Awards could sign a pledge, committing to transparency and to parity at a selection level.

SWAN sees this data collection as a first step to evaluate and implement further actions and measures towards equality in the Swiss commercial industry.

(9) <http://filmgerberei.ch/en/director/the-pledge> (last consulted 31/10/2020)



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