

Gender in The Swiss Advertising Industry 2021

A DATA COLLECTION INITIATED BY
SWAN SWISS WOMEN'S AUDIOVISUAL NETWORK

Last year, we did the first ever data collection about women in the commercial industry. The low numbers of female nominees were blatant, the response overwhelming. We heard stories of women that have never won pitches – unless they were ghostwriting for men. We heard stories of sexism and of humiliation based on gender. And we heard your feedback and the deep need to finally change something in the advertising industry.

To tackle a problem as vast as this, one first needs a clear understanding of it. We believe that gathering data is of fundamental importance to map the situation. Thus, we decided to this year again collect the numbers of the EDI nominees, to point once more to the extreme gender imbalance of the Swiss Advertising Industry. Even though the numbers of the EDI nominees are a small part of the commercial and corporate films produced in 2021, the incredibly small amount of women in creative positions suggests that the proportion of women is probably not massively higher in the non-nominated films either. This summer, the Federal Office of Culture conducted a Gender Study in Films giving insights and best practice proposals that can be applied to the advertising industry as well. According to their in-depth analyses, there are two central explanations for the underrepresentation of women in the audiovisual branch: 1. stereotypical role models in the form of (unconscious or conscious) attributions from outside and internalised self-doubt within women. 2. structural obstacles, which are characterised in particular by difficult access to the „buddy system“ for women. If one transfers these insights to the advertising industry - an industry characterised by constant pitching, selling one's skills and one's ideas credibly in a mainly male "buddy culture" environment - the disadvantage for women seems obvious.

Luckily, we can see first initiatives coming from the advertising industry tackling these issues. In Switzerland for example, the initiative #gislerprotokoll calls for a multi-faceted gender representation in the advertising industry. In Germany the AdGirlsClub emerged recently, tackling sexism and stereotypes in the industry. SWAN will continue to seek and engage in discussions with production companies and advertising agencies. We will furthermore soon start fundraising for a broader study that addresses to examine the public space: The pictures we see in advertising, be it Billboards, ePanels or the commercial ads in our browsers, subconsciously shape how we see the world. If these pictures are predominantly moulded by the point of view of male creators, misrepresentations of marginalised groups are likely to be perpetuated. It is therefore worthwhile taking a closer look at who designs this public space.

Women make up 51% of the population of Switzerland. They are behind 53% of buying decisions. This target group should be addressed adequately. We believe that breaking stereotypes and including diverse voice enhances creativity and brings new ideas. The gender imbalance in the advertising industry is still blatant. But the initiatives in the industry show that the time for a change has come. This change, however, can only be achieved with a persistent effort. We promise to keep persisting.

Azra Djurdjevic
Producer & SWAN Co-President ad interim

01 INTRODUCTION

The advertising industry offers filmmakers the opportunity of big budget shoots, top notch visual prowess, special technical experience, international connection and the chance to build a portfolio, not to mention a steady income.

The EDI Awards is an annual awards ceremony that honours the best commissioned films in Switzerland in various categories. In 2020 SWAN looked at the gender (im)balance in the numbers of awards' nominations in the years 2015 - 2020. The results were appalling. For the past 5 years, an average of only 4% of all creative nominees were female. The jurors of the 21st edition were overwhelmingly male. As the shortlist for this years' awards is released, we again gathered data and analyzed numbers.

Why is this important?

1

REPRESENTATION MATTERS

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, biased stereotypes and misrepresentations of marginalised groups are likely to be perpetuated.

2

WASTE OF TALENT

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. If we educate and train people, but do not afford them the opportunity to work, we are waisting trained talent.

3

FINANCIAL DISADVANTAGES

When hired to film a commercial, directors can secure a financial basis that enables them to develop long-term feature film, TV and VOD projects, whose development is usually long with uncertain funding.

4

UNEQUAL FINANCES

In 2020, gross expenditure on TV, online and print advertising in Switzerland was around 3.1 billion Swiss francs.¹ An amount that benefits almost exclusively men in creative positions. An immense financial disadvantage for female filmmakers.

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¹ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/741901/umfrage/brutto-werbeaufwand-in-der-schweiz/>

The EDI Awards are organised by the SWISSFILM ASSOCIATION and under the patronage of the EDI, the Swiss Department of Home Affairs. This year we are again looking at the numbers and the representation of women behind the camera. This year, from all submitted films, 43 are on the Shortlist. A prize is awarded in the following categories: Commercials, Corporate Communication and Branded Content. This report will look at the gender balance of the jurors and the gender balance of the nominees in the various categories. While films in the category Commercials are characterised by bigger budgets for shootings, bigger media budgets and thus a broader reach, corporate communication films are often used for internal communication and/or brand/imagefilms. So while commercial films are usually campaign based, meaning they are recurring, imagefilms are often produced once in several years and have less reach as they are distributed on limited channels.

02 THE JURY

The shortlist judging (2.1) takes place online and includes a jury of around 30 jurors. The judging of the winners takes place live and is conducted by another jury² (2.2.).

Jury Commercials:

M: 22, F: 8



■ = Male
□ = Female

Jury Corporate Communications Brand Image / Schulungs und Präventionsfilme:

M: 25, F: 7



Jury Corporate Communications: Marketing / Product and Branded Content:

M: 26, F: 5



2.2. Jury Winners

Corporate Communication

M. 6, F: 5



Commercials and Branded Content

M: 9, F: 2



Jury Winners Spezial.EDI

M: 7, F: 4



The Jury for the Shortlist and thus the first selection of all submissions is once again overwhelmingly male with a maximum of 26% women. Whilst the gender balance in the judging of the category corporate communication is almost equal, it is striking that the category Commercial, the category with the films with the highest budgets has the lowest percentage (18.2%) of women in the jury.

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² <https://www.edinet.ch/>



03 THE NOMINEES

Following the gender balance in the shortlisted films in the various categories in the positions Producing, Directing, Cinematography and Editing. 1 point per position was given. Where a position was filled by more than 1 person, the point was given to the gender in majority.

3.1. Commercials

The category commercials is divided into the 2 subcategories: Commercials between 20 and 90 seconds and commercials up to 20 seconds.

3.1.1 Spots 20 to 90 seconds

Producing

M: 11 F: 6



Directing

M: 17, F: 0



Cinematography

M: 16, F: 0



Editing:

M: 15, F: 0



No women are in creative position in this category. The majority of the producers are male.

3.1.2 Spots up to 19 seconds

Producing

M: 2 F: 1



Directing

M: 3, F: 0



Cinematography

M: 3, F: 0



Editing:

M: 2.6, F: 0.3



No women are in creative position in this category. The majority of the producers are male.

3.2. Corporate Communication

The category commercials is divided into the 3 subcategories: Brand/Image, Marketing Product and training and prevention films.

Producing

M: 4 F: 7



Directing

M: 9.5 F: 0.5



Cinematography

M: 10, F: 0



Editing:

M: 9, F: 1



Sophie Blöchlinger is the only woman among the editors, Mirjam Fröhlich the only female director, however in a directing duo with a man.

3.2.2 Marketing Product

Producing

M: 1.5 F: 3.5



Directing

M: 5 F: 0



Cinematography

M: 4, F: 0



Editing

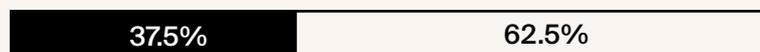
M: 4 F: 1



3.2.3 Training and prevention films

Producing

M: 1.5 F: 2.5



Directing

M: 3 F: 1



Cinematography

M: 4, F: 0



Editing

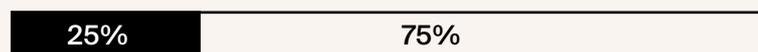
M: 3 F: 1



3.3. Branded Content: Branded Storytelling / Fiction

Producing

M: 1 F: 3



Directing

M: 4 F: 0



Cinematography

M: 4, F: 0



Editing

M: 3 F: 1



3.4 Overall Numbers

Producing

M: 20.5F: 22.5



Overall, the gender balance in production is 50/50. However, it is striking that while the representation in the corporate categories is equal, or in some cases even more women can be found, the ratio in the commercial category falls to just under one third women. Furthermore, there are no figures on the gender balance between executive producers vs. producers. While executive producers are leading the bidding process and propose the director for the pitch and are thus in a position of power, producers often only join the project once the head positions have already been defined.

Directing

M: 41.5 F: 1.5



This year, only 1 woman is nominated as director: Mirjam Fröhlich. She is nominated for 3 films, however, always in a directing duo with a man. No stand-alone female directors are in this edition of the EDI.awards. Furthermore, no women are seen in creative positions in the commercial category, confirming the theory that the higher the budgets gets, the less women there are.

Cinematography

M: 41 F: 0



Women are often underrepresented in technical positions in the film industry. The FOC Gender Map shows up that women directors have a higher tendency than men to hire female creatives. Therefore if only one female director makes it into the nominations, it is not surprising that there is not a single woman in the position of cinematographer.

Editing

M: 37 F: 4



Nominated Editors are Mirjam Fröhlich twice, both times sharing the position with a man, and furthermore Sophie Blöchlinger, Lea Filadoro and Andrea Grumbt. It is striking to see that even in editing, which is usually the sector with most women, the quota drops extremely in commissioned films.

3.5 Conclusion

The 2021 Gender Study by the Federal Office for Culture has shown that stereotypical assumptions lead to women being more likely to be asked to make smaller films with sensitive topics, while the large feature film budgets went to men.³ A similar tendency can be found in the EDI nominations: While women - albeit very few - are mainly to be found in categories with smaller budgets, such as training and corporate films, the proportion of women in the commercial category - where the big budgets are - drops in creative positions to 0% and in production from 50% to 33%. Making diverse role models visible is an essential measure to raise awareness of diversity in the industry. Role models are important to strengthen the self-confidence of students and filmmakers. If creative positions are dominated by men, stereotypical representation will persist, and conscious and unconscious biases will be encouraged and reinforced. These in turn lead to the structures remaining male dominated, promoting „buddy culture“ and making it even more difficult for women to enter. And furthermore, contribute to a sexist climate. A survey by AdGirlsClub⁴ in Germany found out that:

96%

OF THE PEOPLE
ASKED THINK THAT
THE ADVERTISING
INDUSTRY HAS A
SEXISM
PROBLEM

42%

HAVE DEALT WITH
SEXUAL
HARRASSMENT

73%

FEEL THAT THE
MALE VOICE
COUNTS MORE

90%

ASSUME THAT THEIR
MALE COUNTER-
PARTS IN THE SAME
POSITION EARN
MORE

Available data also indicates that the gender of the director or script writer has a positive influence on the proportion of women in the other creative direction positions as well as in the leading roles and their representation. Apart from one exception in the nominees from this years EDI.awards, all films where women can be found in a creative position, the producers were completely or to a majority female. The foreword mentioned that self-doubt of women is mainly the result of a lack of role models and also other female colleagues. Especially on sets for commercial productions, women are often the significant minority, not to say sometimes the only one. This supports and strengthens the assumption that as a woman, one is not the standard, but clearly the exception and the unusual, which is why they always have to justify their actions twice. Which in turn leads to these stereotypes being further internalised.

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³ <https://www.bak.admin.ch/bak/de/home/kulturschaffen/film1/filmfoerderung/gender-filmfoerderung.html>

⁴ <https://www.adgirlsclub.de/>

04 NEXT STEPS

What can be done to overcome this imbalance? SWAN has an action plan with various measures to tackle the blatant underrepresentation of women in the audiovisual sector of the advertising industry:

01. Raise Awareness

With the initiatives emerging in the industry, awareness is also rising. We will continue to talk to advertising agencies and production companies to ensure that the topic receives the necessary visibility and the discussions continues.

2. Generate Data

We know that Data is key! Thus, in 2022, SWAN will start funding for a broader study in the advertising industry. Commercials are part of the public space. This space should not be dominated by the male perspective only.

3. Commitment to Parity

We note that measures like the pledge for film festivals created by Le Collectif 50/50 are surprisingly effective. Effective because not only does this engagement empower stakeholders but it also initiates a conversation with those in power. We will find a way of adjusting and tailor the pledge to the advertising industry to make sure to make sure to further commitment to parity.

4. Fight Uncconscious Biases

Particularly in the case of large budgets, the assumption remains that women are less trusted due to unconscious biases and therefore less likely to win projects with large budgets. We are happy to launch a campaign on the topic of unconscious biases in 2022.

5. Network and Visibility

Furthermore, we will keep connecting women in the audiovisual sector by organising regular networking events and exchange of knowledge through our newly launched SWAN TALKS. SWAN is happy to have implemented the first Swiss Directory of women in the Audiovisual Industry to bring visibility to all the women in our branch.

SWAN Directory is the very first online inventory of women working in the Swiss audiovisual industry. More than 200 female professionals have already created their profile. Enlist! It's free.

www.swanassociation.com/directory

SWAN is a non-profit association which aims for gender equality and diversity in the Swiss audiovisual industry. Founded in 2018, it counts a growing number of members from all backgrounds and levels of experience and gathers meaningful players as well as a myriad of volunteers who work hard to achieve an equal and inclusive audiovisual realm.

IMPRESSUM

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